Walk while ye have the light

lest darkness come upon you

LIGHTS AND SHADOWS OF SACRED STORY.





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THE LOST HOME

LIGHTS

AND

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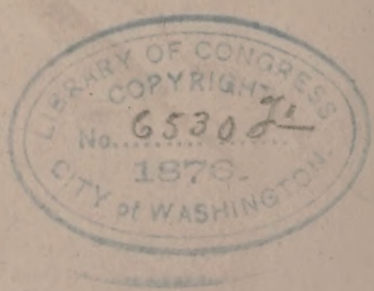
OF

SACRED STORY.

JULIA McNAIR WRIGHT,

AUTHOR OF "EARLY CHURCH IN BRITAIN," ETC., ETC.

"NIL NISI CRUCE."



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PREFACE.

THE cause of God is one. All revelation, for every age, discloses the same animating purpose—the bringing of men to God. Consequently, God's dealings with men, having a common object, are ever generically the same, and the Word of God is largely a record of the varieties of that discipline which seeks the eternal happiness of man.

In this present work, we enter into no arguments on the authority of Scripture. We expect of our readers a prejudice in favor of it, as a rule of faith and practice.

God calls to Him His child, and puts into his hand a key to unlock the mysteries of his present and future life, and this key is the Bible. To him who studies these records, light arises.

Those wonderful ways of Providence, which have been dark as Erebus, glow with a sudden splendor. He beholds not only that "immense hope which has crossed the earth," but sees walking in its sheen men who, from Eden until the present, are the exponents of God's dealings with humanity; in whose toils and conquests; in whose losses and compensations; in whose agony and jubilation; in whose sins and righteousness, we can learn justly to estimate ourselves and our fellows.

For exactly as the world grows practically in the knowledge and love of God, the human mind becomes known to itself, and man correspondingly bends toward his fellows in brotherly love and compassion; becoming less an unjust judge, but more and more a Christian Philosopher, and therefore more largely a Christian Philanthropist.

We are God's little children, set to learn in His school, and He teaches us, as becomes our simple estate, rather by object lessons than by abstractions. We hold this vast advantage in these lessons of the Bible, that they are absolutely true to human experience. Here they are lifted infinitely above the productions of human imagination, which forever tends to extremism in one form or another. In God's Word we have not only the history of good men's virtues, but of good men's direful sins.

In human romance the hero is generally perfect, and we know better than to believe in him; in God's true Book the heroes are of our "fellow-servants," fashioned of that same frail clay whereof we ourselves are made.

So also as man inclines to make his hero a saint, he is apt to make his sinner a criminal of the most notorious type. On the contrary, the Bible exhibits to us not only the openly ungodly, who receive their meed of shame and contempt, but the Christless moralist, who maintains a gracious outward seeming, who climbs high in all the honors of earth, and who falls at last like Mulciber, "sheer from the crystal battlements of heaven."

In these chronicles we find answered for us many of those puzzling queries over which worldly philosophy has stumbled. As the Sphinx sat on the road to Thebes, with an unanswerable riddle

on her lips, the world has sat on the great highway of the stars, puzzling all her servants with questions none can understand, until faith finds them definitely settled in the Scriptures.

The history of worldly philosophy is a history of profound mistakes; but when we enter into Bible history and Bible philosophy, we escape from what Goethe called "a wearisome circle on a barren heath," and are come into a realm of peace, order, beauty, classified facts, unfolded reasons, and the sunshine of Divine guidance and over-ruling.

When we turn our backs on this region of light, and go wandering into the mists of human wisdom, we, little children, are lost children; we are far from home in wilderness shadows; horrible spectres crowd about us; dismal echoes mock our cries; and dim, disastrous twilight lies over all our world.

But in the study of Scripture nothing is more deplorable than a divorce of the heart from the head; and in no department of Scripture are we more prone to this error than in a study of its Biography. The scholar is apt to look on the Biographies of Scripture as a sort of statistics of the Kingdom; its men and women are a mere array of facts and figures—census tables of a far away time, of no practical daily importance. The careless reader beholds in it a Sabbath Dream-Book and Fairy Tale. To others, the Old and New Testaments speak of those set by remarkable circumstances of their life entirely out of the range of our sympathies and present exigencies. If we indulge in mere fanciful musings, these personages become to us shadowy ideals, rather than bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh.

To gain from the people of the Bible that instruction for which

they were embalmed in Holy Writ, we must believe in them and think of them until we have brought them into the immediate circle of our acquaintances and friends.

We must live in their atmosphere. We must go out of our homes and dwell with them in the storied east when the world was young. We must sit in their tent-doors and turn our faces as theirs are turned, toward that distant horizon where was to arise that Sun which is called Christ.

We must learn and love and hope with these Bible men and women. We must with them sit by the cradles of mighty empires, and we must realize that while the Book of God is growing piece by piece, first by oral tradition, and then by written record, the religion of God, the plan of salvation, has come to the early families of the race full armed and beautiful, the true Athene.

Having thus learned these people as real people in their own age and region, we must make them part of our own lives; we must bring them into our surroundings; lead them with us in the jostling ways of modern business; set them down in our studies and libraries; inspire them with our ambitions; perplex them with our cares; enlighten them with all the garnered lore the earth has laid up for us; and, as they once always looked forward, we must place them where they can *now* look back to that dear Christ who came, and onward to that glorious King who is coming still. Put them where we are, between the two advents of our Lord. Then shall all the galaxy of Scripture character warn and instruct us what our God would have us do, shun, and be; how He helps us; why He tries us; and what shall be the end of steadfast faith and of perverse desire.

Such studies teach us the unity of the human race, the unity of God's plan for man; we realize Christ as the central thought not only of the Bible, but of all history; we are learners in that grand school of Theology which Zuingle has aptly called "God's thought in his own Word."

The object of this present volume has been not to exhaust such a plan as this, but simply to exhibit it in a few suggestive outlines; to encourage and popularize the study of the Scripture; to show that this study is no dry, repellant task, but can be made cheerful and most inviting; that general reading, and classical studies, and the severer researches of modern criticism, can be as comely priestesses to minister at its shrine.

There has been of late a general awakening of interest in regard to the Holy Scriptures. Copies of the Bible are wonderfully multiplied, and there is a vastly increased demand for all books serving to explain or assist the study of the Sacred Oracles.

This is evidently God's great day of preparation for tremendous events and trials, when men shall need all that armor of truth which is now being forged for them. It therefore becomes every reasonable being, not only every Christian so-called, but every thinking mind which desires to be a competent judge in its own behalf, to take advantage of every increased opportunity for acquiring this knowledge.

To the noble array of works on Biblical subjects these few studies of the "Lights and Shadows of Sacred Story" are offered as an humble contribution. Inasmuch as they contain the golden truths of God, they have in them an imperishable element. The Author has endeavored to gather about certain prominent characters of Scrip-

ture some of the products of historical, geographical, and critical research; designing especially to give those who have not opportunity for extended studies and libraries at command, part of the results of the investigations of others. The wish has been, not merely to cast the Biblical narrative into some other form of speech, but to cluster about it its correlated facts, and those incidents of time, place, and influence which the Lord has left the readers of His Word to search out for themselves.

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CAIN AND ABEL.

THE GENESIS OF RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE.—CAIN THE BIGOT —ABEL THE BELIEVER.

MAN from his narrow outlook over the world studies and classifies the phenomena of his fellow-men in a hundred different forms: he talks of races, creeds, colors, and periods; of Greek and barbarian; and again divides and subdivides.

The Lord God, with the sweep of infinite vision, regards each eternity-bound soul with an eye single to its unchangeable destiny. Before him the countless generations separate into two great bands, as they shall stand on the mighty day of his last assize; those who have accepted justification in the Beloved, and those who have clung to their own righteousness, or have "cared for none of these things."

From the very earliest history of the race we mark this distinction. When Eve, our mother, had two sons at her side, they were the types and leaders of these two forever-divergent lines of humanity. Of these babes, who learned in the land of Eden, but outside of the Paradisaic gate, the language of infancy from the pair who had never been children, one was a saint of God, the other a rebel sinner.

And, as a picture of what should come to pass in all the history of the ages, we find the first parents seeing and judging, not as

God; and the sinner Cain so comporting himself through a long course of years that he is accounted a true child of glory. It is the forever-repeated story—echoed in Samuel's choice among Jesse's sons, and in the arguments of Job's three friends—of man drawing his conclusions from his own perverse idea, and from some shining outward show, and God gazing unchallenged and undeceived upon the secret heart.

Adam and Eve, each perfect in kind, but not in degree or attainment, forfeiting their high estate, passed weeping out of the Edenic portal and the Edenic dispensation; beyond them lying four other dispensations, through which humanity must wander wearily before the heir of the Universe should come into his own again.

These, our parents, had a glorious promise, the shining sun of their hope, to light their troublous way, and they looked for its immediate realization. They could not apprehend that a thousand of our toilsome, earthly years are to our Father as a watch in the night; that all time is present to him, while before us it stretches a boundless future. The sorrowing pair did not know that generations must die like the falling of autumn leaves, and centuries be added to centuries before the Deliverer should come to enter into his priesthood by the sacrifice of himself; and centuries more before he should claim his kingdom and bruise the Serpent unto death.

We are not to suppose that those who had sat under the shadow of the tree of life, who had talked with God in the garden, and the shrine of whose worship was the glory between the Cherubim, keeping the way to their lost home, were left to grope blindly in the dark regarding their Redeemer. They expected a personal Saviour, divinity in the flesh; they apprehended the God and man two distinct natures mysteriously united in one personality. This they knew assuredly by a direct revelation, for they had no God of history or Providence to look to, and what they knew of him must

have been unfolded by himself. We see that they expected the *human* flesh and nature in their Jehovah, else Eve would not have seen him in her new-born son; while we are equally sure they apprehended his *divinity*, because the terms of salvation were the same for them as for others—there is no name given but that of the God-man, whereby men may be saved; and Paul speaks of the faith of Abel as identical with that of the Church after the days of Jesus.

But it was not necessary that the long ages of preparation for his advent should be unfolded; for it is not for us to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath kept in his own hand; nor was it important that they should be taught the wonder of his conception; that was the destined lesson of a later day. All that was needful they were told. God, co-equal Son of the Father, coming in the flesh to vindicate his sovereignty, to save the souls of his chosen, to subdue the revolted earth unto himself. Having learned this much, our parents' ardent desire outran the stately progress of the divine intention, and grasped at immediate restoration. They did not yet realize the tremendous consequences, the full importance of their transgression.

The finite has never yet, can never compass an expression for the infinite: it is not in man to invent a name for his Creator, upon which that Creator will set the seal of his acceptance. No more was such power in her, the mother of the living. God must first have revealed himself to Eve as Yahveh, Jehovah, the Angel of the Covenant, before she could so denominate him on whom her hopes were set.

When Eve first looked upon her man-child, her anxiety was mother of her confidence, that here was the Deliverer, and she cried, "I have borne a man, the very Jehovah." It was the mother love and hope expressed in its most unlimited degree. Mothers even yet have immense hope, and reach immense disappointment.

We cannot be shocked at Eve's language or expectation when we feel how her knowledge of *time* was limited, as well as her knowledge of the degree in which humanity was to have part in the person of the Mediator. Her language holds a subjective truthfulness, and the strong light of her hope. The bitter, the terrible disappointment of our first parents in this their son was a sharp portion of their ordained punishment.

But there was no immediate awakening to the truth.

On the birth of Abel we find our first mother in a different frame of mind. She calls him not the very God, but the *perishable!* Abel.

We wonder whether by this time the slow physical development, the weakness, or the traces of human depravity in her eldest-born had discouraged her; whether she named her second son *perishable,* because she esteemed him without the divine element of his brother; or whether, having been possessed of the Coming One, she thought no other worthy of her rejoicing.

We cannot tell; but we know that here, as elsewhere, God chose the weak things to confound the mighty, and the despised to put to nought the pride of men.

There is no doubt that the mother's idea of her two sons entered largely into their training. God can make use of every foolishness of human nature to further his own designs, and in these brothers he was to set forth a lesson for all coming years.

The primary duty which God assigns a married pair is the training of their children. It is evident that this is the first affair of their lives, because of all their possessions to which they can put their hands the children are immortal, and their training is work of weal or woe for eternity. Now-a-days we find the cares of business, the laws of custom, the diversions of fashion, putting the education of the children out of its legitimate pre-eminence. Adam and Eve had no such cares and customs, and we doubt not

that they gave themselves ardently to the culture of the first children of the race.

Here, too, often we are treated to low views of the mental, moral, and religious standing of the first household. Forgetting that the race, like the stream and the Church, is purest nearest its source, the scholar no less than the homilist has frequently given currency to opinions which are as opposed to the laws of our nature as they are contrary to the direct teachings, or the legitimate inferences of Scripture.

Equally doubtful have been our estimates of their *means* of instruction. Theirs were the halcyon days of humanity, and they themselves, regarded in the light of their early promise, and their unrivalled advantages, its brightest flowers.

How then shall we account for the character of Cain? What was the antecedent preparation which, despite so many and great restraining influences, culminated in the ruin of the hopes and peace of the first family?

We have spoken of maternal disappointments; and we opine that Adam and Eve, like many other parents, worked out much of the destruction of their own hopes. We frequently see parents, by taking no means or the wrong means to secure the fulfilment of their high aims, coming short altogether, and breaking their hearts over their broken dreams!

In explication of this, we must turn to Cain's supposed mission and the central idea of his earliest education. In this study we may find perhaps that Cain, like Jacob and some other sons, received more from his mother than her blessing.

The sorrows of their earthly exile, and the bitter sense of high offending against their God, filled the lives of Adam and his wife with the cry, caught up by Paul, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" and stung them to put the most generous interpretation upon the one promise given for their consolation.

Thus they assigned Cain his mission, in their eagerness running before the face of Providence. Thus think Luther, Philippi, Tayler Lewis, Lange, Edwards, and many others.

When the sons grew to manhood, to Cain were given the privileges of birthright. He, as the eldest born, was the legitimate proprietor of the earth, and took his father's earliest avocation, the tilling of the ground. He was also trained in expectancy of the religious headship; and the worship of the Lord was the occasion of the real unfolding of his character.

"It is very probable," says Edwards, "that sacrifice was instituted immediately after God revealed the covenant of grace as the foundation on which the custom of sacrificing was built. That promise was the first stone laid towards this glorious building, the work of redemption; and the next stone was the institution of sacrifices, to be the type of the great sacrifice."

Now upon Cain, as the future head of the family, the priesthood would devolve; he should lead the worship of the household of earth in this divinely appointed way. The position in itself was sufficient to keep a man humble, reminding him constantly of his sin and the sin-offering; but if his over-eager parents taught him that he was the foreordained seed, to bruise the serpent's head, and regain Paradise; if he looked on himself as the strong intercessor, whose arm should bring salvation to his parents and his brother, here was a false idea, sufficient to insure his ruin and the double disappointment of parental wishes.

However great the religious privileges of Cain—and they were incalculable—however grand his mental superiority, yet continuous training in his parents' belief that he was the Promised One, and its logical sequence of personal holiness and infallibility, would pervert the highest gifts, and press the rarest attainments into the service of bigotry.

Whenever Adam, "God's long-loved husbandman," talked of

his fair, lost garden ; whenever the mother of men grew discouraged with her strange lot, fugitive from Paradise, and in melancholy was

> "like a spirit strayed who lost the way,
> Too venturesome among the farther stars,
> And hardly cares, because it hardly hopes,
> To find the way to Heaven : "

would be suggested to their son his high destiny as their restorer and avenger. The loftiest aspirations, the most soul-subduing anticipations, the richest faith and piety left to humanity, would be thus perverted to minister to the egoism of Cain.

Theudas, Mahomet, Pius IX., and a host of others have risen to the summits of fanaticism with far less claim to a heavenly mission than Cain could show.

Taught in the spirit of his mother's words, and viewing his mission in the full sense and solemnity with which they announced it to him, there could be no limit to the prerogatives which in time he would arrogate to himself. To him would of right belong the pre-eminence by a law of heaven.

Supremacy in morals and in religion, with full authority to regulate and protect their interests, has ever been the slogan of fanatics. To guide and guard his family in the worship of God, gain his favor, claim and secure the honors of a Deliverer, as projected by poor human reason, and seen in the light of his own fancy, was very probably the fatal ambition of Cain.

Parents often come to realize the fallacy of some cherished idea ; and bitterly to lament some error in their conduct to and training of their children, so late that an uncontrollable impetus has sent those children on a course of evil doing. Long after the parent has bemoaned his folly or his crime, he is forced to harvest its bitter increase ; he awakes to truth while his child is blinded still ; the beloved son is the victim of his father's short-comings, and revenges it upon that father's head.

As Cain grew to manhood, Adam and Eve, who carried golden memories of hours when God walked with them, who knew what the veiled glory of Deity was like, found in their son only humanity without divinity! Lo, he was like their fallen and fallacious selves; there may have been no overt act of wrong, but they who had held communion with spirits from on high saw that their son possessed the taint of the transgression that had lost them Paradise; he was not like God, who had questioned and condemned them, and even while condemning had consoled! He was not like the angels, bright servants of his will; he was not even like themselves when they dwelt in Eden.

But while they awoke to a realization of this truth, their son grew more confirmed in misbelief.

Meanwhile Abel, the younger brother, was proving that human nature thrives best in lowliest places. He had not been taught to trust in himself; faith had been the lesson of his infancy, and faith reaching past his elder brother, took hold on God. His mother had called him "a vapor," "vanity," "a breath." His name, instead of crowning him with glory, like that of his elder brother, told of the shortness of his life, the insufficiency of his strength, or the fact that for him, younger brother of the all-sufficient deliverer, was reserved no mission upon earth. His name, however, did not rob him of his immortality; vanity as he was, he should endure forever, and he reached after his eternal home, and rested his love upon the Everlasting Father. Abel, the vapor, drawn up to heaven as the dew is exhaled by the sun, comes again like that dew descending to bless the ages with the record of his faith and his acceptance.

Excluded from the hope of personal honor, as expected by his brother, and which formed in that primitive society the only object of ambition; with a mind left singularly free to follow the teachings and worship of the True Deliverer, wandering alone

with his sheep, with no care or prospect to drive from his mind the legends of Eden, the converse of the King of kings, and the promise of the blessing yet to be, there fell to the lot of Abel the happiest encouragements to faith and humility.

Thus far back on the very verge of human history stand two grandly representative men—types ever after of our own race in all that is dark and conflicting and holy and peaceful. Educated and inspired by sights and sounds which will probably never be repeated short of millennial days, they lived and moved and died, and dying left a personal contrast so sharp and conspicuous that it is marvellous that all the world under its influence has not been saved from that religious intolerance before whose door lies the blood of righteous men that has flowed from Abel to the present, a dark stream "crying unto God from the ground."

To these two brothers belonged traditions undimmed by time, and unequalled since the morning stars sang together, of their ancestral Paradise, with its bright river, whence flowed four royal streams in beds of gold and gems. There were fruits and flowers of which Hesperides is but a faintly remembered dream; pleasures were there which never palled upon the senses; conscience unchallenged, and singing sweetly in the bosom, and above all, and including all, as the atmosphere in which we live and move, the benedictions of the Father, in his gifts and in his presence.

These memories of their forfeited home, together with the cause and incidents of their exile, and the promise and means of restoration, formed a staple of instruction which others of earth's children, however favored, have never known. Obviously we must consider their character in the light of their singular parental training, and their ineffable surroundings.

We are apt to misjudge the character of Eve's first-born in the light of subsequent events. We see him a murderer, a fratricide; the obstinate rebel who will not yield when God stoops to reason

with him; who does not feel penitence; who is merely in horror of consequences when his sin has found him out. We regard him with anger or disgust, we condemn him from the beginning, and neglect to see that if Cain had lived in the present day he would have doubtless been, until the direful moment of his fall, "a fair and flourishing" professor of religion.

Until the day when, in fierce wrath, Cain slew his brother, he had had no great temptation, and had consequently been guilty of no great sin. In his own way he was a religious man; he had a zeal for God, he had made up his own mind why and how God ought to be worshipped, and he was ready to prescribe rules for men in their service, and for Deity in his acceptance. We hold Cain the very prince and exponent of *moralists*. In his soul lay, planted maybe by paternal hands, the root of self-righteousness, which should flower into deadly poison; but its leafage was goodly to the eye; Cain was the industrious cultivator of the earth, the precisian in worship, the self-constituted example for succeeding generations. God, recognising Cain's lofty position as a landmark of the ages, took the most efficient and summary means to show how poor a thing is self-righteousness, how cruel, unholy, and heaven-condemned that intolerant religion of the letter that would force all mankind to its own measure; and how frail is that morality that is not established upon divine grace.

God had already set forth the grand principle that without shedding of blood is no remission of sins. There has been suggested the fanciful idea that Abel killed the firstlings of his flock, that wearing their skins for his covering he might typify himself as clothed upon with the righteousness of his Mediator; but this is aside from the present theme. Doubtless the dead lamb showed forth death as the necessary and unavoidable consequence of sin; the flowing blood showed that, whereby sin can alone be washed away; the innocent victim proclaimed that the sinless might and

would die for the guilty. Abel laying his hand upon the lamb to slay it, laid in spirit his sins upon the Lamb of God: from time immemorial we find the lamb the ordained *sin-offering*, and with such sin-offering, Abel, the sinner, came up before the presence of his Maker.

But how came Cain?

He came with an offering which God afterwards not only permitted, but commanded to be brought to his altar; but Cain brought it in an order of his own. Cain brought the fruit of the ground, a *thank-offering*—but he brought it first, and brought it only.

Now a thank-offering is well-pleasing unto God, provided it be preceded by a *sin-offering*. Our soul should bless the Lord for all his benefits; but the benefits must be recognized as flowing to us through the grace of Jesus, our Saviour, our Sin-offering.

Cain had, as he considered it, no sins to be done away.

At first, as he offered no opposition to his brother's form, and had doubtless seen it used before, he may have felt perfectly willing to have his parents and his brother recognize themselves as sinners, and shed blood as a token of their guilt, need, and self-abnegation. Or, Cain may have arrogated to himself the right of decision as to the mode of worship, and have concluded that its end was thanks rather than petition; that the unbloody offering was less cruel, and every way more excellent than the bloody; and that man was to be his own judge as to what he should bring before his God.

Here, then, the two brothers appeared before the flaming Sword-symbol between the cherubim keeping the way of the tree of life, to have the guiding principles of their hearts tested by their Maker. They are the models and leaders of all who have worshipped before God, from that day until the present. Christ describes their exact counterparts four thousand years later:

"Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, the other a Publican. And the Pharisee stood, and prayed thus with himself: Lord, I thank thee that I am not as other men are." Here is the thank-offering, here is Cain. "And the Publican, standing afar off, would not so much as lift his eyes up to heaven, but stood and smote upon his breast, saying, Lord, be merciful to me a sinner!" Here is the spirit of Abel, and the desires for a sin-offering.

The Scripture does not delay, in the very opening of its momentous records, to furnish us circumstantially a mere murder case, such as newspapers are rife with. No, it throws, of high design, into tragic prominence the two representative types of society, intolerant bigotry, and humble faith; and we see in this early record, what history in all ages continues to teach us, and what Christ plainly set forth in speech—the inexorable certainty with which religious opinions bring the sword, whenever these opinions have asserted control over nations or individuals. The conflict between Cain and Abel was one of religious conviction; it was a kind of prophecy, a precursor of what must ever be earth's bitterest chastisement until the end of this dispensation.

"And God had respect unto Abel and his offering,"—therefore the offering of Abel was no human invention, nor had it a finite signification; it was evidently of Divine prescription. The true worship of God can have no human origin; to be acceptable it must be appointed by God himself. "Oh, that I knew where I might find him! How much less shall I answer him, and choose out my words to reason with him,"—is the cry of our humanity.

Man could no more invent his way of access to God, than he could invent the rainbow, or the law of gravitation. "But unto Cain and his offering he had not respect." The fruit-offering was made in a wrong time and spirit. Cain came before the Lord

to offer thanks, when he should have brought repentance; or, at best, he came to consecrate himself and his valuable services—supposing, like many another, that hereby he did his Creator great honor—when he should have looked to the Mediator, and craved an atonement.

To this offering God had not respect. We know not how the Divine choice manifested itself, whether in fire descending, in the blazing of the cherubim-guarded sword; whether by the ineffable smile of the Highest, or a voice speaking to the worshippers. However it was, the election was made, and Cain, called his mother's joyous possession, had lost his birthright and high prerogative. Through self-righteousness his sin had been made to show forth; through self-confidence he lost his lofty estate. Thus goes the history of the world, and thus often the blessing of the first-born becomes his greatest curse; if high honor is not girt about with humility, if loftiness is not twined to lowliness, the normal blessing is transformed to the prerogative of guilt and wretchedness.

And Cain was very wroth. There had been a devil couchant, unnoticed heretofore in his spiritual coat of arms; in a twinkling it became a devil rampant and domineered over Cain. And now we catch a trace of something hereditary. *Envy* reached up and overshadowed the whole heart of Cain. We have here a trait similar to that of Eve.

> "So when deceived,
> She fell by great desire to rise."

Or as Milton represents her, as self-communing, thus:

> "In plain then, what forbids he but to know,
> Forbids us good, forbids us to be wise?
> Such prohibitions bind not."

The "Book of Wisdom" in the Apocrypha, declares that the first motive of the first sin was envy. The first sin of man came from

a demoniacal temptation, and manifestly behind that lay some early demoniacal sin. This does not explain the essential origin of sin, nor how it could arise in the spirit world; but it lays bare its genesis among men; Satan envies against the Highest; he also envies unfallen man, and plots his ruin; and the means to his end is to instil in the heart of Eve *envy* of the knowledge of the gods. "Yea, hath God said, ye shall not eat of the tree? . . . For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened; and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."

Envy is the root of ambition. Eve envied the knowledge she had not, and from this root sprung up ambition, to be as the gods knowing good and evil; from this stem of ambition unfolded the leaf and deadly fruit of her disobedience and its train of ills.

> "Her rash hand in evil hour
> Forth reaching to the fruit, she plucked, she eat!
> Earth felt the wound; and nature from her seat,
> Sighing through all her works, gave signs of woe,
> That all was lost."

Terrible was her punishment: the loss of the Eden-home, the sharpness of the curse, but not the lightest part of it, was to see developed in her son in tenfold strength, her own envy and ambition!

Every race of man retains the story of our first parent's loss. The Zendavesta tells of Ahiram bringing death to Rajomord, and adds the story of Meschia and Meschiane; the Scandinavians have the fall of Asen, and the death of Baldur, the beautiful; the Greeks embalm the same memory in the legends of Prometheus, and the age of gold. Egypt, Ethiopia, China, and Mexico, have traces of our heritage and its loss; but sweet and simple, clear and grand in its ungarnished truthfulness, stands the revelation of the genesis of sin, and its close successor the genesis of religious intolerance.

The third chapter of the first book in the Bible gives the archi-type of the one, the fourth chapter follows with the form of the other. Cain assumes something for himself which God never gave him—the right to dictate the manner in which his Creator should be approached in worship. Cain has no heart worship, but he brings a ritual of his own, and leaving out that which God particularly demands, sorrow for sin, and desire for forgiveness; he insists upon acceptance. God bends to reason with the work of his hands!

"Why art thou wroth," demands the Lord, seeing the face of Cain blackened and bowed down, because of his fierce ambition to be first, and his envy against the younger brother so strangely preferred before him.

Nor does the Almighty fail to point out the reason of his rejection of Cain. He has not done well. He has ordained his own way, without taking counsel of God. But now that he has done ill, God tells him there is yet a way of escape, *i. e.* by a *Sin-offering*, by such an offering as Abel had brought, holding in itself an intimation of the Redeemer's blood, setting forth in type the essentials of salvation, atonement by life blood!

Cain's poor offering lay alone, unpresentable, unacceptable, holding no intimation of his lost estate and the way of restoration —a religion without Jehovah, the Covenant Angel! A religion beginning and ending in thankfulness! But thankfulness must come after self-abnegation, after penitent faith. The view God took of that fruit-offering on Cain's altar was, "this ought ye to have done, but not to leave the other undone!"

True Christian thankfulness, the thankfulness accepted of God, is grounded upon a right appreciation of the person and work of Jesus Christ.

God continues his argument on this wise: "It is true you have held yourself as the future head of this human family; the birth-

right is yours, but it is no sinecure; you forfeit it by marking out your own way and worship, and asserting your holiness in the presence of the Holy One. Do you wish to regain the birthright; to be accepted and preferred? Take, then, the only way; come to Me in humility with a *sin-offering* in your hand: lay your guilt on Him who shall come—then, and not until then, you shall be reinstated, your brother shall be your subordinate; to you shall be his desire, and thou shalt reign over him."

Here was a plain way set before Cain, he could be the ruler of the coming generation, he could reign over his brother; but at what price?

Only by ruling in humility and in the fear of God. Only by at every act of worship proclaiming himself a sinner, crying after a Christ.

The price was too heavy. The self-righteous Cain could not, would not pay it.

Instead of humility, hate rose in his heart. His immense privilege of being instructed and reasoned with by God, increased his condemnation. Thus often do men make their opportunities of salvation to be millstones about their necks!

He would not yield to his brother; he would not admit that brother's God-given superiority; he would not brook the ever-recurring insult of seeing a sin-offering made, mutely asserting that all men are sinners. He would not escape by God's proffered way, so he chose a way of his own; and lo, the moralist, the self-righteous one, the man who had no sin to cover, becomes a murderer!

He will not permit this religion of faith, of which Abel is the personification, to exist. This hated creed of the sinful soul saved by blood-bought grace, by that only, shall not endure. Cain will blot it out; he will strike from his path this man, brother though he is, who dares believe and worship in a way different from his own.

It was no new thing that Christ told his disciples, "I come not to send peace on earth, but a sword." For the first Christ-promise to the first family woke the deadly feud, and wet the ground with brother's blood.

This was the first war, and it was a religious war. True, there was but one engaged on a side, but that took two-thirds of the men on the face of the earth; judged by this comparison, it was a very great war indeed. It also continued until one side—and that the right one—was completely blotted from existence.

Cain may have considered that in this achievement he had gotten the better of God, in having destroyed his favored worshipper.

The result was only to show that all power, all resources, are in the keeping of the Eternal One, and that his cause can never perish. The voice of Abel's blood cried to God from the ground. God might have revivified that gory corpse. In place of that, he raised up another seed to Adam, instead of Abel whom Cain slew: Seth the righteous, a man in the spirit and power of Abel.

From Abel began the noble army of martyrs. His death which appeared a defeat, was the inception of victory. The beginning of Old Testament history is marked by the death of Abel for his faith; the New Testament shows us the bloody deed—its counterpart, in a more awful form—the murder of Jesus the God-man; thence flows the purple tide of martyr blood across the earth, but like the Danube strewn with the ashes of Huss, it carries life wherever it goes! Every drop of this blood is seed of the Church.

Out of this strife between brothers before the altar of God, in the land where the sword of the Lord glowed between the cherubim, have come the motive and the coloring of all the wars in the world's history.

The altar, the centre of faith and pious act, from that hour became the centre of the terrible and the destructive, for it is the

religious idea that in some shape or another is the motive power of humanity, in even its worst developments.

In the wars of the present day, religion is more an impelling principle than is generally thought; unwind the twisted threads of national ambition and political intrigue, and among them, perhaps strongest of all, if most hidden, we shall find the religious idea.

The more clearly Cain has his wrong set before him, the more obdurate does he become; the moralist having the saving efficacy of his morality questioned, changes in an instant to the fanatic. Here is a right creed, and a wrong creed; and it is at once apparent that they cannot exist in peace together.

It is also noteworthy that the aggression is from the side, from the creed, that is in the wrong.

Christ did not say he came "to bring not peace but a sword," because his followers should push their doctrines by the sword. But because evil cannot permit truth to flourish unassailed at its side. Error demands all the world as the legitimate territory of its growth, and attacks with the sword the Christ-kingdom wherever it lifts up its head.

But though religious wars are horrible evils in themselves, they are not necessarily evils in their results. There are some plants that grow into best strength and beauty by being thoroughly well pruned, and we find the church striking deep its roots, spreading and establishing itself under the very influence of religious persecution. Thus God turns the wrath of men unto his own high praise.

"It must needs be that offences come, but woe unto that man by whom the offence cometh!"

When Cain was wroth his countenance fell. God set his mark on Cain. There has been much discussion as to what this mark was. When Cain was angry his lowering brow, and features de-

prived of the inner light of peace and hope, revealed his earth-born passion. When he slew his brother, darker grew the traces of his misery and sin. Sin writes its history on the human face; it wrote its painful and pitiful lines upon the countenance-fallen Cain.

"From thy face shall I be hid!" cries Cain, feeling his birth-right and his celestial inheritance lost forever.

He wanders forth from the Eden-land, but not alone; for while his mother rejects him as the destroyer of her hopes, and the murderer of her son, his wife cleaves to him and shares his hopeless exile.

Cain and Abel were not men merely for the age in which they lived, they were the grand exponential religionists who appear in every generation. Abel is the man who can give up father, mother, brother, life, everything, for his faith; who seals his belief with his blood, and dying rises into higher being. He is the heroic spirit which shall never perish, which lives in many ages, when it is not called into extreme action. There are men who could and would die for conscience sake, who are not ordained to do so; but when occasion demands men to suffer to the bitter end for a principle, there are men ready to meet the emergency; just as when Elijah thought the fear of the Lord lost, and lo, there were seven thousand hero souls in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal.

Cain is the relentless bigot, who shall assert himself until the end of time. He is the man who lays down a pattern of his own, and is resolved to cut all men to fit it. He considers every variation from his own standard an aspersion cast upon his judgment, and a doubt of his future safety.

In the present day the spirit of Cain may be by strong measures repressed for a time, but it is neither dead nor asleep, it is biding its opportunity. Though the Cain spirit may not now have the

power and the daring to develop as it did when the valleys of Piedmont were full of corpses; when blood flowed over the Netherlands like the flood the hardy Hollanders let in from the sea; when Philpot and Latimer were led to the stake; when Bartholomew's Massacre appealed to Heaven for vengeance; or when it pursued men like wild beasts in the fastnesses of Scotland; it is still ubiquitous, and shall live until the Son of Man comes in his glory.

In the study of men and times we must ever estimate this spirit of religious intolerance, this dominant, autocratic spirit of creed and form, at what it is worth, as a leading idea, and a tremendous power in society.

The Bible takes up great themes and questions in their order. Creation is the first grand fact before us, and it is explained as far as need be. Sin, in its cause, its effect and its antidote, is handled next; and, third theme, comes the rise, the development and the animus of religious intolerance. It is set before us as something ever to be met, to be endured; to serve us, as we may wrest from it the sharp, sure means of arriving at a purer devotion, a loftier faith, a more abundant reward.

Differences in sect may be needful and beneficial to our motley-minded human race; these can exist without the bigotry that would force our creed upon our brother, whether he will or no. The diverse sects may cordially unite in the evangelization of the world; in philanthropic work, in deeds beautiful in the sight of Heaven, the succor of the weak and poor.

> "For one in generous thought and deed,
> What mattered in the sufferer's sight
> The Quaker matron's inward light,
> The Doctor's mail of Calvin's creed?
> All hearts confessed the saints elect
> Who, twain in faith, in love agree,
> And melt not in an acid sect
> The Christian pearl of charity!"

These fifteen verses of the fourth chapter of Genesis mean very much more to the student than to the casual reader of Scripture. Take the seventh verse: if here *hattoth* is translated not *sin*, but, as it doubtless may be, *sin-offering*, we get a new light and interest at once. "Sin lieth at the door," like a wild beast ready to spring; this is the idea of many excellent commentators, and indeed is the gist of our common version of the clause. Then the latter portion of the verse refers to *sin*, and here is a wonderful diversity of opinion. "Unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt reign over him."

But read *hattoth "a Sin-offering."* Then we have the passage running thus: "a Sin-offering lieth at the door," that is, "a remedy is at your door; in your reach; the Sin-offering, a vicarious sacrifice provided by God, pregnant with prophetic meaning; the revelation of the "Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." Here is a method to set Cain at one with his Maker; it is his acknowledgment of soul guilt, and living faith in the Coming One. Now if he accepts that Sin-offering he regains his birthright, and has what he claims, supremacy over his brother. By serving God, in God's way with a Sin-offering, Cain becomes spiritual head of the family. "Unto Cain shall be Abel's desire, and Cain shall rule over him"—the same expression which we have in Chap. iii. 16; and this meets the idea of Cain, and his grand cause of provocation. Read *Sin-offering* instead of "*sin*" and we have God preaching a full gospel to Cain; giving him great light, and every opportunity of restoration. But if we read merely "sin," we have God uttering a mere truism, and talking aimlessly with Cain, without suggesting any remedy in his direful exigency.

II.

ENOCH.

THE PREACHER OF THE RESURRECTION.

THE name of Enoch brings before us a very wonderful page in the history of the Church and the World. Enoch lived in the middle period of the antediluvian dispensation; half way between the fall and the flood. His dwelling was in Eden—"the land of delight." Eastward in this land, the kindly Father had planted his children's blissful dwelling, "with every tree pleasant to the sight, and good for food;" when they had sinned, He, who is just as well as generous, took the abode from them, for a season. The curse of sin rested on the Eden territory, causing it to yield its best things only to the hand of toil, and spontaneously to produce the thorns and thistles emblematic of the perverted course of nature; and even yet it was a glorious land. Amid it stood untouched by blight, the temple, the holy of holies of that day, the garden beautiful exceedingly; hedged about with thick trees; guarded at the gate by cherubim; shining in the night time in softened glory, like the pillar of fire, which later came to lead the people in the wilderness; in the day its splendors veiled by purple and silver mist, like the pillar of the cloud: and there the exiled race knew their Jehovah walking—He whose dwelling was not then in the flesh, but who disdains not to tabernacle upon the earth.

The name of Enoch is made to signify the "devoted," the

"mysterious," the "learned:" all of which have a singular fitness; but, as says Tayler Lewis, "In general little reliance can be placed on the etymological significance of these early names." In the Koran he is called Edris.

The fifth chapter of Genesis contains the "generations of Adam" from our first parent to Noah. Let us begin by considering that in this chronology we find embalmed the line of the faithful. We must not look on it as simply the record of successive first born sons, but the list of those who received the birthright, in virtue, rather of faith, than primogeniture. Some undoubtedly were the eldest born: this explains the unevenness in the birth figures, the ages of the father varying from sixty-five to one hundred and eighty-seven years.

Says Tayler Lewis: "It was the line of the pious, of those who had the spiritual birthright; the idea is unwarranted that each was a natural first born."

At the head of this chronological table stands God: not merely as creator, but as parent. So writes Luke: "Adam, which was the son of God." "Not without a purpose," says Gerlach, "does holy writ record the divine origin at the very apex of the species." If in all time since the first singing of the morning stars, there had been no need shown for this clear statement whence we came, such need has been fully developed in the nineteenth century, by those gross philosophers, who throwing aside the glorious prestige of our likeness to and paternity in the Highest, proclaim man the development of Simiadæ; as if He, who hung worlds in space, and with delicate design wrought the lilies of the field, and the wonders of the butterfly's existence, when He came to crown creation, to set in the midst of his work some one to apprehend it, and grow by it, could do no better than detail an ape! But the theory is no new one. Here indeed is man's demon-grotesque, running on as ever parallel with the grand, or the pathetic.

Again this fifth chapter of Genesis is the great battle-field of life and death. "He died," repeated and re-repeated after each name—but one. Under the history running a mighty monotone—*memento mori!* as the sound of the sea waves undertones the lighter echoes of the shore.

Where so fine a place to set the fact of triumph over death as here, right in the midst of the annals of its sway? Thus in the very centre of those, who after fighting for long centuries, succumb at last to the tyrant of the race, stands one who is conqueror, through that higher conqueror, the coming Christ.

We have noted the name, time, and dwelling of this shining light among the patriarchs; now we proceed to give some suggestion of his wonderful surroundings, and advantages. When Enoch was three hundred years old, he had about him every Antediluvian Patriarch but Noah. Adam was a hoary old man, within eight years of his death, and Lamech, Enoch's grandson, was a promising youth past forty.

There are no physiological grounds for demanding so retarded a manhood for the antediluvians, as some would claim; that they lived long, does not force the belief that they matured late. The blood of the race was untainted; it was full of the vigor its progenitor had breathed in under that tree of life, of which, if he had eaten, he would have lived forever; the sons of that elder day pursued their course with no false philosophy; life was to them a benediction from God; they cherished it; they enjoyed it; and these men, whose names are immortalized in the sacred word, were filled full of that faith and godliness which are ever nature's best preservative. They were men with a mission, men of high destiny; there was no time for them to lay down the harness early, they must live out their dispensation, teaching lessons, and being in themselves types which even yet we but dimly apprehend.

Men, in the arrogance of their nineteenth century wisdom, have been wont to take too low a view of the culture, scientific and religious, of the people before the flood.

Let us consider first, that they had among them Adam and Eve, who were not only children, but pupils of God himself. According to the older theologians, Adam was a man of surpassing knowledge. Later teachers, very much in the spirit of the present day, in which the rosy schoolboy feels fully competent to teach his parents, have inclined to the notion that, in the childhood of the earth, men were babes in knowledge.

When we consider what advances in learning can be made now by one, who, withdrawing his mind from the distracting follies of life, diligently applies himself to study for twenty, thirty, fifty years, and that, while health continues, the mind does not deteriorate with age; but, as say Goethe and Coleridge, "power to conjure up lively sentiments is in no measure lost as men grow in years; whereas, ability to utter them forcibly is vastly increased;" let us imagine what man might do, and how his intellect might reach high and compass lofty themes, during the study and contemplation of eight, and even nine centuries. To-day, man does not need so long a period for his intellectual development; he has not to begin at the beginning of learning; he finds an easy path, well trodden by his predecessors; he has the work of others ready to his hand; he needs not first to make his tools and then use them, but they are prepared and fitted in his grasp. This is providential, that with so few days to labor, labor is facilitated; if not, the wisest among modern men would be fools indeed. We are speaking now of the knowledge which especially concerns and takes hold upon earth; and of the advance of this we may catch a wonderful glimpse in the memorial of some years later—the Pyramid of Cheops—built 800 years before Moses. This is the enduring witness of the wonderful advancement of these early

generations, in the natural and exact sciences. Mathematicians and astronomers of the present age have gone to study at the feet of this prodigious monument of the learning of the past; and such exhaustive knowledge of abstruse points has it revealed, that there have been those who have considered the Pyramid of Cheops a product of especial revelation. Enoch missed Noah by sixty-nine years. Noah lived to see the Pyramid of Cheops sharply defined against the skies of Egypt. When we meditate on the opportunities and advancement of these men of the earliest antiquity, we must dissever our thoughts from the fact of the present, that "one generation passeth away, and another cometh," and must consider how successions overlapped; so that in the chief part of the times before the flood, these nine cotemporary generations exchanged their reminiscences of the past, their discoveries, their explanations of things present, and the promises revealed to them of the future.

But we must look for a moment at a higher wisdom than that of earth. In things finite, God gave them time to grow wise; to search out for themselves; to expand the capacity with which he had endowed them. But there is a "pure and peaceable wisdom," which can only reach us from above; it has not its spring in our spirits; it is the emanation of the Infinite; it comes to us only by direct revelation,—now by the written word; once by him, the divine *Logos* in the flesh; in this elder history, by the Yahveh-Elohim, the Lord God, the Covenant Jehovah, instructing his offspring, as afterwards he taught them from the burning bush; in the pillar of cloud and fire; in the Shekinah on the mercy seat; in the glory upon Sinai.

Herbert, the sweet singer, catches a choice vision of this happy period, and sends forth his yearning in his song:

> "Sweet were the days when Thou didst lodge with Lot,
> Struggle with Jacob, sit with Gideon,
> Advise with Abraham, when Thy power could not
> Encounter Moses strong complaints and moan.

"One might have sought and found Thee presently,
At some fair oak, or bush, or cave, or well.
Is my God this way? No, they would reply;
He is to Sinai gone; as we heard tell."

The Greeks and Latins loved to contemplate the fables of the Age of Gold. We linger, wooed by the sweetness of these suggestions of the days when, in the delightsome Eden-land, walked the nine Macrobii of the primitive time.

Theirs was a family life; they dwelt in households; they were united by ties of kindred. It was a religious life; their chief teacher was God; their best recollection, a state of holiness; their dearest hope, the coming of a Deliverer from Heaven. The shrine of their worship, we have every reason to believe, was that glory, cherubim-guarded at the Paradisaic gate.

The ordinary dealings of Providence, reason, and the most venerable traditions, teach us that theirs was a scholarly life, a life of intellectual appetites and advancement, of the keenest mental pleasures, the loftiest pursuits. Who could be a better historian than Adam, who had learned of Creation from the Creator, who had seen nine centuries with their tragedies?

The Mohammedans and later Jews hold that Enoch was a man of remarkable scientific attainments. The fictitious "Book of Enoch" shows the immense knowledge supposed to have been reached by this prophet, and the revelations wherewith he was favored.

It was one of the advantages of this primordial school that they needed waste no time disputing over phenomena or different apprehensions of things. Facts were facts to them, about which there was no question. The structure of the earth, the march of creation, the realism of the garden, and the meaning and influence of its wonderful trees, were not to be carped over while Adam stood among men. So many other great matters which have occupied the years and the tomes of scientists and theologians since Christ

was caught up from the Mount of Olives, were open as the day to these ancient scholars.

The record is that Enoch *lived* sixty-five years and then begat a son. After that *he walked with God* 300 years. Enoch was an heir of faith; he held the spiritual birthright; he was not merely of the godly Sethic line, as diverse from the heaven-daring Cainites, but he was of that royal succession, the distinctly named progenitors of Christ the Lord. We suppose him then from the dawn of reason to have been an humble-hearted worshipper of God, leading a blameless life, the example of his brothers and sisters, the joy of Jared his father, the choice companion and pupil of Seth, Cainan, Mahalaleel, and the others of that glorious galaxy. But after a son was born to him, Enoch gained a deeper knowledge and a better love; hitherto he had obeyed and adored his Maker, now he was brought into some blessedness of communion, some singular nearness to his Lord, so that amid the shadows of earth, feeling after him he haply found him, and thenceforward walked with him as a man walks with his friend. This change from the "living," as other good men of the day lived, to the "walking with God," shows us some marked change in Enoch's inner spiritual experiences. He now possessed a "permanent view of the present Deity, and continually followed after his guidance," says Lange.

Enoch, the youngest now of these old world patriarchs, became wiser than all his teachers; he shot beyond them in the heavenward way, and walked there; but he had by him a companion so glorious; a fellow traveller of such ineffable beauty, and supernal wisdom, that Enoch, in his grand advance of his kindred, was meekness itself; was humblest among the sons of earth, as best becomes the highly dowered son of heaven. We think of Enoch among his seniors, wiser than they, yet modest as Elihu, of whom in the days of Job we get a brief glimpse. He has a loftier

spiritual knowledge than his peers; he unfolds it, yet prefaces it with humility. "I am young, and ye are very old; I said, days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom. But there is a spirit in men, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding. Therefore hearken to me, and I also will show you mine opinion."

The phrase, "and Enoch walked with God," is twice repeated; in the first place it defines his ordinary thought and act for three hundred years; in the second it gives confirmation of his translation.

He walked with God. Here is the assurance of the perseverance and soundness of his piety. He did not flag, nor turn aside; he did not run one while and creep another; but he walked on, in the maturity of his godliness, keeping pace with the will of God concerning him.

He neither feared his path nor desired another: as with Paul, things present and things to come, were all as one to him; all was swallowed up in the realized presence of his Jehovah. He walked with God not into the wilderness, or the bowers of the garden-home out of reach of the affairs of his fellow-men, taken from their cares and society; he walked with God not in some strange trance, some supernatural experience of his flesh on earth, but he walked with him in the ordinary practical avocations of his daily life. He was not Enoch the hermit saint, but Enoch the family saint. He maintained and exemplified that higher walk in the bosom of his household, a husband and a father, a glorious proof that the married estate can and should be holily maintained.

Enoch walked with God as his witness: first that there are degrees of piety; that, as in heaven there are angels, archangels, principalities, and powers; so in God's family, the Church, are some gifted with clearer views, tenderer sentiments, warmer emotions, deeper sense of sin, and nearer apprehensions of Christ. than

others. And in this view, it is wonderfully comforting to realize that it is not by works of righteousness that we have done; not by the blessed knowledge bestowed upon us, that we are saved, but by the blood of Jesus.

Enoch was also a witness for that mystical kernel of religion, its heart of hearts, communion with God.

He also bore in himself, and exemplified the assurance of the higher everlasting life, the "earnest of the Spirit," that flows out of a life at peace with God.

Again, Enoch was a type of Christ in his divine human walk; and to all men he is the exponent of rich personal piety.

All this was Enoch to the Church of that, and of all ages; in himself he was a revelation from God to the Sethic race. This was his errand where he dwelt, where

> "Eden stretched her line
> From Auran eastward to the royal towers
> Of great Selucia, built by Grecian kings,
> Or where the sons of Eden long before
> Dwelt in Telasser:
> Not that fair field
> Of Enna, where Proserpine gathering flowers,
> Herself a fairer flower, by gloomy Dis
> Was gathered.
> Nor that sweet grove
> Of Daphne by Orontes, and the inspired
> Castalian Spring, might with this Paradise
> Of Eden strive."

But beyond this gracious dwelling Enoch had a mission to an apostate race; to the children of Cain, who held themselves diverse from the sons of God, and whose iniquity was coming up like a flood, threatening the virtue of the Sethites—precursor of the deluge, which blotted out the scars of sin from the sight of an angry God.

We have the Cainitic genealogy in the fourth chapter of Genesis; beginning with a murderer, it also ends with one; Lamech,

the seventh from Adam, was the chronological parallel of Methuselah; we find him a murderer and a polygamist; he takes the musical instruments of his son Jubal to aid his song of self-justification, when with the weapons fashioned by another of his sons, Tubal Cain, he had "slain a young man."

From the time when Cain built his city Enoch, and fortified himself there, trusting rather to the walls his hands had raised, than to the promise of God for his safety, his descendants had given themselves to the practice of arts, and the firm establishment of themselves in their earthly abode. The world-feeling was strong in them; they were at home below; they had no yearning after the city that hath foundations, built by God. They did not seek a better country; this land of Nod was good enough for them. The idea of the Cainites was *culture*, of the Sethites, *cultus*, or worship. The sons of Cain did well for themselves, and men praised them; the children of Seth established themselves by a calling "on the name of the Lord."

But the elements of the fall worked in the children of Seth, and already, before the days of Enoch, many of those "sons and daughters," who are mentioned, but not by name, had begun to run "greedily after the error of Cain."

In Luke the seventeenth, Christ declares that the occupations and manners of the people in Noah's day were as those of Sodom in the time of Lot. He describes the stir and pleasures of a worldly population: "They ate, they drank, they married, and were given in marriage."

Now, in the seventh generation from Adam, even in Enoch, the antediluvian dispensation culminated; from thence it rushed downward to its destruction. There were fewer and fewer of the godly to withstand the inroads of evil example. So the time had fully come, when a Preacher and a Witness should go from God, to warn the Cainites of the dangers of their way, and call them

to repentance, and to proclaim to the recreant Sethites what judgments were at hand.

Behold now this wonderful preacher! He has gotten his lesson from his God. He believes it with his whole heart; his prophetic eye beholds the advancing doom; his holy anger waxes high against the enemies of the God with whom he walks. He trembles for the fate of sinners; he yearns after them, and with righteous indignation he chastizes their crimes.

The Preacher leaves "the land of delight," his kindred, and the congenial friendship there surrounding him, and first of foreign missionaries, he goes eastward to the land of Nod, "the land of desolation and banishment." We know no more of this land than its name; but wherever Cain went he would have found only a land of desolate banishment, filled with the demons of remorse, terror and despair.

We are possessed not only of Enoch's destination in his mission, but of the names of his chief hearers, and the text from which he preached to them.

Eden was a rural, pastoral land; there they had quiet homes scattered over the peaceful plain, instead of cities entrenched and fortified for war. In Eden were altars, in Nod were walled houses and barricades; into these entered Enoch in the majesty of his embassy from above. To hear him came Irad, "the townsman," and Methusael, "the strong man," Lamech, "the warlike," Adah, "the beautiful," and Zillah, "the shadow."

Before these stood up Enoch, strong and fearless in his faith; he stretched forth his arms toward heaven, his voice was as the clarion, calling to battle: "Behold, the Lord cometh, with ten thousand of his saints!"

Now when the race of Cain heard of His coming, which had been so long delayed, they might lift their frightened eyes, expecting to see heaven opened. But no. Their preacher saw it, like

Stephen, in the years to come. They saw nothing but the unchangeable blue, smiling above Cashmere and Armenia, and all the joyous cradle-land of the East!

But the glorious spectacle unfolded to Enoch was the morning of the resurrection; for who are these legions that accompany Jehovah-Jesus? Not angels, but *saints;* and who are saints, but the spirits of just men made perfect?

He cometh in the glory of his Father and the angels; angels shall be about him, and his ministers as flaming fires. But nearer shall be the *saints.* "Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world?" They come, all their earthly pain but a morning mist, which serves to refresh and brighten the day. They come to judge those who have derided, despised, afflicted, or slain them. "Blessed and happy is he who shall have part in the first resurrection of the dead." Let every man be "striving if by any means he may attain thereto!" Far from the world's faint flush of dawning, through the heat and blaze of its day, the darkness of its night of desolation, looks this steadfast prophet, who stands with his face to the east, and he sees the breaking of the jubilant, eternal morning, when the face of the returned Son of Man shall make the sun as the glimmer of an expiring taper, and shall brighten with splendor the whole circle of the skies.

So wide a sweep of celestial vision had God given the man who "walked with him," that even then he looked on past the first coming of Christ to Mary's bosom as a babe in all lowliness, to that tremendous day when he shall come in the clouds of heaven with hosts of angels at his feet: Enoch beheld his return, like John the latest of the seers. "He cometh in clouds, and every eye shall see him; and all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him."

There stood Enoch between the living and the dead, between the race of Seth and the race of Cain; the sabbatic seventh man,

proclaiming the Resurrection! Oh, ye sons of Cain, there is more in death than dying. The earth cannot cover you from the eye of your Maker, he will bring you forth of your covert, and set you before his face. "Behold, he cometh!" For what? Here then is the burden of the first prophet's soul, "to execute judgment."

And now Enoch does not fail to proclaim the whole counsel of God. If there is to be a judgment he will plainly declare for what. Jabal, "the nomad," may grasp his bow, and Lamech, "the strong," may frown; Adah and Zillah, defiant in beauty and in power, may sneer, but the swelling current of Enoch's speech cannot be stayed. He cometh, "to execute judgment upon *all*, and to convince all that are ungodly among them, of their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches, which ungodly sinners have spoken against him."

If at this day, a man should arise in the spirit of Enoch, and should thus chastise the ungodly with the rod of his mouth, there are few congregations who would endure it—even so well as the Cainites!

But to be just to all, perchance this is because there comes no man in all this age who stands so near the Lord as did Enoch, who "walked with him, and was not."

Enoch had fulfilled his mission to the Cainitic families; but he had the same message to proclaim among the sons of Seth; for there were many who were walking in the ways of the ungodly. Worldliness was growing up among them, a deadly upas; they, sitting under its shade, forgot the garden-home of the past, and the eternal city beckoning them towards its golden streets.

Enoch saw this celestial city; he had marked well its towers and bulwarks; he had counted her gates of pearl, and her "twelve foundations fair;" he had seen her King in his beauty in the midst of her. Walking in faith here on earth, he had sent on his soul to take possession of that blessed abode. He rejoiced in

its light; to him was borne on every evening breeze the fragrance of the "royal land of flowers,"

"Whose ageless walls are bonded
With amethyst unpriced,
The saints build up the fabric,
And the corner-stone is Christ.
And through the sacred lilies,
And flowers on every side,
The happy dear-bought people
Go wandering far and wide.
Jesus the gem of Beauty,
The God and Man they sing;
The never-failing Garden,
The ever-golden Ring."

We are not told what individual converts Enoch made, but he could not stem the tide of wickedness that was rising up over the habitations of men. Enoch saw men going farther and farther astray, he knew that a judgment was imminent; he beheld the end of the dispensation approaching. Of this he doubtless assured his compeers, and his descendants.

The influence of the saintly Enoch would be first and most deeply apparent in the hearts of his son, Methuselah, and his grandson, Lamech. They would treasure up the memory of his example, of his prophecies, his warnings, and his instructions as to how they might seek the Lord and find him.

But Enoch was to be, not merely God's preacher of the resurrection, but he was to be a witness of it in himself.

Death and the future existence are questions of the deepest moment to all men in every age. What can more insure our happiness than the certainty that when we and our beloved are lost to earth, it will not be, "dying as the dog dieth," but it will be the beginning of a better and an endless existence. Doubtless the antediluvians had been instructed, that dying was but a change of state. Adam may have taught them that in his "flesh he should see God." But the Macrobii clung to life, and before them rose

the perpetual "how?" Among them, as among the Corinthians, were some who would say, "there is no resurrection of the dead," and the peevish query, "How are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come?"

God was to make Enoch a sign of the absolute fact. He was to mark out his most faithful servant by his most distinguished favor.

Men should no longer question as to the reality of the abode of the blessed, when one of themselves had gone thither. Death is chastisement, and the bitter fruit of the curse. The disintegration of the body is no comfortable anticipation. This Enoch was to be spared.

He was to stand before all ages a sign of the saving power of faith. For three hundred and sixty-five years Enoch shared the consequences of sin, bearing about a corruptible and dying body. Now through the faith of Enoch was to be introduced into the world, a fuller faith of the life beyond death.

There had come a turning point in the life of the world. The Sethites now forsook the theocratic pureness of their line, and married into the curse-loaded race of Cain; polluting marriage. They wedded not with the blameless daughters of the faith; but they made sensual beauty their love, and moreover followed the sin of Lamech, the polygamist, and "took them wives of all that they chose."

We come now to the repetition of the important clause, "And Enoch walked with God." Here, it is the preliminary and confirmation of his translation.

Closer and closer had grown the tie; nearer the companionship. There remained now only to lift Enoch out of earth. He was transformed—perchance "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," he was clothed upon with the heavenly garment. He walked with God on through life; lo, they came to the gateway between this

world and the next; a golden portal where none had passed ever before, and the walking together extended through it to the regions of the blessed, and on earth Enoch "was not." "Was not, for God took him."

A strange and solemn protest against the unworthiness of a corrupt world. A tender dealing with his servant; a witness given by Him who teaches men in the clearest and most excellent manner all that is needful for them to know.

They sought him, as afterwards the sons of the prophets sought Elijah. They searched for that blameless example, and wisest of all the teachers.

It is the opinion of Luther, that the Sethites believed Enoch had been slain by the children of Cain, and that they received an especial revelation concerning what had become of him. Enoch was the first of three great phases of the revelation of the world beyond, of the higher and unending life—Enoch, Elijah, Christ.

The first removed without death—absent from earth, present with the Lord—exhibiting the reality of a future place and state.

Elijah going up in a whirlwind, escorted by horses and chariots of fire; seen of his servant; dropping down his mantle from the blue distance in which he vanished away.

Jesus, dead, buried, risen, ascending, blessing his disciples, conversing with them in his human voice, until a cloud receives him out of their sight, and angels brought a promise of his return.

"He was not," they missed him; they sought him mourning. "So," says Luther, "the disciples missed their Lord, and looked for him weeping." "Where have ye laid him?" "We trusted that it had been he who should have redeemed Israel." As the apostles sought "the living among the dead," the Sethites sought Enoch, who had been transferred to the land of the living, from among the dying in this earthly valley of death.

"So shines out, in the midst of this narration of the dead, like a fair and lovely star, the pleasing light of immortality. Enoch confesses another life without death, for out of this world's misery, and without pain of dying, he goes straight to everlasting life."

Enoch was the seventh from Adam. Seven is the sacred, the Sabbatic number. Moses was the seventh from Abraham; Phinehas the seventh from Jacob, and they correspond to the seventh day, the consecrated day of rest. In Enoch, the seventh from Adam, the grand climax of the antediluvian period, there may be a shadowing of the seventh of earth's thousands of years; the seventh mighty world-period; and that after six weary lapses of a thousand years, laden with sin and death, shall dawn a millennial seventh, when Christ shall rule from the river to the ends of the earth, when his feet shall stand on Mount Zion, Satan shall be bound, and death shall be a memory of the past. "Blessed are they who shall be watching when the bridegroom cometh!"

Enoch was not permitted to see death. His son, Methuselah, reached the highest life-period, nine hundred and sixty-nine years. We find in this, one evidence of his holy life and conversation; for faith was the great antidote of death. Rich in power, in knowledge, in physical vigor, in a godly paternity, in children, and in children's children, Methuselah, like Moses, stood in the breach between God and men, and prayed back the wrath of the Eternal. Sixty-nine years after the translation of Enoch, Noah was born, and Lamech, mindful of the prophecies of his grandsire, of the approaching end of the dispensation, and of God vindicating himself among an apostate race, yet evidently not clearly understanding them, called his child Noah—"Consolation,"—saying, "This same shall comfort us concerning our work, and the toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed."

Five hundred years lived Noah, and then God gave to him, as to his ancestor, a commission as a preacher: not of the resurrection,

but of righteousness, warning men to repent because indignation had gone out against them.

Hoary Methuselah heard the prophecy, but still prayed on; the evil should not meet his eyes. Yet a hundred and twenty years, while the ark was building, the most venerable of the sons of men proved the efficacy of prayer. He stood among his brethren, as Ararat among the Armenian mountains, white with the snows of centuries. But when the limit of that long, long life was touched, when the white hair of Methuselah was laid in the dust, and the voice of his prayer went up no more to the throne of the Highest, there was none to "stay his hand," and he called unto Noah, "Come thou and thy house into the ark!"

Faithful to the third and fourth generation to those that serve him! Enoch seated on the heavenly hill did not see his descendants swept away with the floods ordained to avenge the Lord on the ungodly; but he saw them floating safe, shut in by the hand of the Lord, from danger and desolation.

Here end the annals of the Sethic race. From Noah the current of humanity divides into three streams, flowing far and wide. Noah and Shem, born in the primitive age, holding in their blood the vigor of the Macrobians, lived to see the depopulated earth repeopled. They lived to see Egypt a kingdom building landmarks for the centuries; to see Abraham reviving the ancient piety and God-communing; to see Jacob, who had visions of angels, and wrestled with God.

There has been a wide misapprehension of the Sethic economy; it prefigured the New Testament state, and its sons held a faith kindred to that of the apostles in the Redemption. Says Luther, of these long-lived, grand, and God-distinguished men: "They are the greatest heroes that, next to Christ and John Baptist, ever appeared in this world; and at the last day we shall behold their majesty."

III.

ABRAHAM.

A FELLOW-CITIZEN OF THE SAINTS.

IN the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, the Apostle Paul strikes the key-note of the life of Abraham. He was on earth a sojourner and stranger, travelling to his heavenly home.

God set this princely patriarch in the world, in order that he might teach the Church in all coming time, not to expect its abiding place below, but to find its citizenship in heaven. In this lies the true root of happiness; amid the perplexities, the buffetings, the loneliness of the world, shrinking from its uncongenial air, and longing with agony of home-sickness for something dearer and satisfying, we find true comfort only in this fact, that we have here no abiding city; we are pilgrims, and wayfaring men in the midst of the world. The Church is God's great nomad, and Abraham, prince of nomads, is her type. The wanderings of Abraham, their cause, their consequences, all find their antitype in the Church.

Abraham was the ninth remove from Shem, in whom was retained the godliness and the spiritual birthright of the line of Seth. When the three sons of Noah received at their father's altar of burnt-offering their commission, "Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth," Shem and his family settled themselves in Mesopotamia, extending their line from the Red Sea,

along the shores of Aden and the Persian Gulf. Theirs were Ophir and Havilah, theirs the sacred mountains, theirs the storied Tigris and the Euphrates. Doubtless Noah remained, in the separation of his family, with the son likest himself, who was indicated by God as the heir of his richest inheritance.

In Northern Assyria, at Arrapachitis, the family of Shem in the covenant line, established itself, but it was emphatically a pilgrim family from its inception. Eber, the great grandson of Shem, and the progenitor of the Hebrews, was named "the emigrant," or "wanderer;" he, without doubt, by divine direction, crossed the Tigris, and straying southward, found a new sojourning place for his family; but here he was near the children of Ham, a race cursed like the Cainitic line, who worshipped the deities of their own imagination. Here dwelt Peleg, at the time the earth was clearly divided between the worshippers of God and of idols, between the theocratic and untheocratic line. In the name and time of Reu, we are taught the friendship of God for the family he had chosen and dowered with blessing. But this early Church dwelt in dangerous places; in the days of Nahor, the conflict with the earliest form of idolatry—the adoration of fire and the heavenly bodies—was sharp, and the time for another migration came with the age of Terah. This household had no continuing city; they were moving by slow degrees toward Jerusalem, the city of peace, and to Mount Zion on earth, as the Church still marches onward to the heavenly city, and Mount Zion which is above. Close upon the boundaries of Eber's family pressed the Chaldean fire-worshippers, exalting the claims of their most subtle creed. They had the traditions of the sword of fire, and the fire leaping upon the altar. What of all the visible is more lofty than the marvellous cycle of the heavenly planets, the sun and the moon pursuing a majestic way, holding the life of earth in their beams, and drawing the floods by their influence?

What more mysterious than fire?—leaping out of an infinitesimal spark, kindled often times, men knew not how, by the heat unseen, towering to a giant, devouring everything in its reach, dying away to nothingness with its vanished spoil, trembling and waving sometimes a heat line in mid air, that cannot be caught, or followed, or restrained! The heart of Terah felt the mystic spell. He had three sons, the chosen of the Lord, and yet the patriarch faltered in his early zeal and faith, and began to mingle the service of the god of fire and the hosts of heaven with his own.

Thus says the stern Joshua centuries later: "Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood, in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, and they served other gods." Not Abraham served other gods, for if we take that view, we must admit that the Lord permitted the holy birthright line to lapse away from his service, which cannot have happened, for the doctrine of a remnant must remain ever sure, the little bands that have stood up for God on the earth—the salt that has preserved an unrighteous world from destruction. Of this remnant we find Abel, Seth, Enoch, Methuselah, Noah, Shem; and when Abraham was a young man in his father's dwelling, Noah, his mighty ancestor, remained among men: Noah, who was six hundred years old when he entered into the ark—the pupil of Methuselah and Jared—who with his sons had gone up to worship at the gate of Eden, who had stood by the graves of Abel and Adam. With such ancestors and instructors as these yet living, and more than all, with that choice of God upon him, we cannot for an instant imagine that Abraham swerved from the right course of worship. With Terah there was a mingling of the true and the false, and in his better moments he may have realized this, and struggled with his infatuation. We find Terah ever weaker than his princely son. God roused this man with a judgment; his is the first case on record where a father saw his

child die a natural death in his early life. In the wealthy Chaldean home, Terah saw Haran his beloved youngest son, sicken and expire. "And Haran died *in the presence* of his father, in Ur of the Chaldees, the land of his nativity." Weeping Terah built his darling's tomb, but he had been warned of God by this judgment. Doubtless he turned his tear-blind eyes on his remaining sons, and exhorted them: "Let us go: here we have no continuing city, we are called southward still, away from this worship of fire, away from these seducing children of Nimrod." The little Church prepared for their hegira. Nahor, the second son, cleaves to his birth-place; but Terah takes Abraham, Sarah, and the orphan Lot, and they go forth together. The soul of Abraham rejoices in this exodus, because it is obedience to his Lord; but all the fibres of Terah's love cling close about Chaldean Ur. Every departing step is pain, his life is rooted in his cradle home; there Nahor lives at ease, complacent, yielding a little to his neighbors' worship, and retaining much of his own; there is that tomb dewed with a father's tears of anguish. O skies that he has loved, hills and rolling plains, and fruit bearing trees, and rush of waters, that he has known from life's first dawn! He cannot go. In the conflict between duty and inclination, he gets as far as a town site on the Chaldean border—some say no more than twenty miles—there the weary old man halted, and exercising his authority as head of the household, proclaimed a stay. We call Terah an old man; he was now one hundred and forty-five; a child to the Macrobians. Shem was still living. Noah had recently died, having passed nine and a half centuries in sojourn below. But the lives of men had shortened rapidly. Shem saw three and a half centuries less than his father; the next three generations decreased the life-term by two centuries more; in Peleg it shortened once more by one-half, so that well might Jacob, the descendant of these veterans, say, amid the

short-lived Egyptians, who marvelled at his one hundred and thirty years—"Few and evil have the days of my life been, and have not attained unto the years of the life of my fathers in *the days of their pilgrimage.*"

Terah, when he gave up the idea of reaching Canaan, withdrew himself finally from the pilgrim Church ordained by God; when he paused he built a walled city, and full of paternal love and sorrow, called it from his dead son, Haran. It was no ephemeral habitation, blotted out by a few years. Ten centuries after this Haran was a city, capable of a defence, and worthy to be captured, and noted as a victor's trophy. After this settlement Scripture has no further interest in Terah than to record his age and death. The birth-right had been passed forward to his nobler son. The eleventh chapter of Genesis, in its last verse, reaches onward in the narrative, to note Terah's decease; thus the history of Abraham may be uninterruptedly pursued. As Noah passed through the corrupted race, and through the flood, uncontaminated and unharmed, so Abraham passed through the temptations of Chaldean heathenism, and through the semi-idolatry to which his father's house declined, all untouched, the pure Jehovah worshipper.

When his parent paused in Haran, Abraham, with a son's duty, obeyed him, and stayed his step. But here to him came a voice from heaven, constituting him the head of the family, and bidding him be on his way.

Abraham; the "High Father" of a race, thou art also Abraham *the passenger,** God's exile, homeward bound, be on thy journey. Terah recognized the divine call. He was relieved that the burden of the spiritual birthright fell from his unwilling shoulders upon his hero son, who rejoiced in it; strong to wander and to

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* Tayler Lewis.

endure; whose loves and hopes were all garnered in the future; who was ready to go up and down viewing the inheritance that should fall to his seed, and be consecrated by the footsteps of his heavenly son and Saviour.

We see that Terah assented to his son's departure, and yielded to the rights now vested in him; for, unless this had been, he would not have passed Lot, Haran's son, over to his departing uncle; rather, he would have bade him stay, to close his own dying eyes, and inherit the city called from his father's name.

But no, the line of Eber is a pilgrim line, and it must wander on, and Lot must go to catch his portion of the descending benediction.

"He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me," saith Christ.

Abraham, the Hebrew, loved not his own life, nor stayed to bury his father; but, recognizing the superior claims of his God, he set out sixty years before Terah's death. In the strife between filial love and the call of faith, Abraham was true to the higher duty. Terah had failed, torn between desire, home-loving, and God-serving; his son was of a stronger heart.

When we behold Abraham thus going on his way, we must remember all that he was leaving. The family affection of these Hebrews was strong; he left all his kindred. The sons of Shem were distinguished by their Jehovah worship from the children of Ham and Japheth. He went forth never to return, going among aliens and enemies, weak-handed entering the realm of the heathen, a stranger in strange lands, bearing in his bosom the long, long pain of his childless estate.

The earth was at this time no uninhabited desert. When we consider the longevity and the vitality of the period, we can estimate, in the third century after the flood, a population of 45,000,000 of souls. Disperse these over the world, and in

another century, which marks the time of Abraham, we must expect to find vast territories overspread with a numerous and civilized people. Nimrod had established his kingdom in Nineveh and Babylon; Shechem, Luz, and Kirjath-Arba were built; the empire of the Pharaohs towered in Egypt. Resen, "the great city," lifted its walls between Nineveh and Calah; Damascus was already strong, and thence came Abraham's steward Eliezer. The Syrian plain was divided among kings and nations, walled towns, and clustered villages. Amid these rulers and peoples, who claimed the earth as their abiding place, who builded themselves up in the midst of it, wandered Abraham the nomad; and let us not despise his life. The nomadic state is the basis upon which the highest human culture may rest. In its quietude and retirement, lofty, religious minds may grow into the princes of humanity; while lower spirits find but opportunity for becoming more gross and savage year by year. In Abraham the post-diluvian dispensation reaches its highest development. As to its essence, the faith of Abraham is distinguished from that of his pious ancestry, in that he has and holds the promise not only for himself, but for his family, and he has the beginnings of the truth that in him shall all the families of the earth be blessed. The Sethic race had grown corrupt, and lost itself in the line of Cain; Noah alone remaining. Now the line of Shem shows no well defined opposition to all prevailing heathenism; the taint diffuses through the chosen race, and Abraham only is pure of infection. But in all this time, in the households of the apostates, God kept to himself witnesses and servants, as later we shall find in Melchizedek.

Abel introduced the sacrifice of faith; Enoch the assurance of resurrection; Noah carried faith on triumphant to God's salvation in the midst of judgments; and Abraham vindicated his faith in renouncing this world, and living by the hope of the everlasting inheritance.

The call came to him in Haran: "Get thee out from thy country, from thy kindred, and from thy father's house." Next, the promise of guidance, "to a land that I will shew thee." Then, as the faith of Abraham was without fanaticism, generous and loving to all—"Thou shalt be a blessing: in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Here was the promise of the Shiloh, the coming One, the Christ, the birthright blessing upon Terah's son. This is enough for him; Jehovah and the Celestial City fill all this man's horizon; so he departs with his wife "and all that he had," for he means to return no more. "And they went forth to go to the land of Canaan." That was just what Terah had done.—"And to the land of Canaan they came."—Ah, this was more than Terah, who lingered and remained at the beginning of the journey.

The place where first he tarried was Sichem. It was only to rest awhile, he had here no continuing city. There his God and Friend appeared to him, and pointing through the plain of Moreh, along the swelling Jordan, to the slopes of Lebanon, cedar-clad, and all the beauty of the land of olive, vine, and palm, declared: "To thy seed will I give it."

Abraham was a great altar builder. So was Isaac, his son. Where Abraham tarried he built an altar of unhewn stone, to remain token and incentive to the worship of the Lord. He was a well digger; all through the fruitful valleys he left wells for refreshing of man and beast, and so passed on his bountiful way, as the Church should pursue her course, raising the altars of her God, and pouring forth streams of blessing on every hand.

Anon Abraham is at Bethel, "House of God," and here his altar is set up, and still the wanderer moves southward.

All is not sunshine and plenty before him. The heavens withhold their dew; no showers fall in the valleys; the corn ceases to wave in the lowlands, and there is no purple cluster jewelling the swells of the upland. God's wayfarer does not find the place of

his exile over-fair; it has its sore pressing wants; however, there is no lack up yonder, where life's transplanted Tree, watered by a river flowing from the eternal throne, fails not to yield fruit every month. Before the wanderer lies Egypt, Nile-enriched, while the land of his future inheritance is sere and impoverished; places are all one to this man, so his God goes with him, and he enters the kingdom of Rameses. The dynasty and residence of this king are not now fully determined; perchance the ancient of the nations, gray Egypt, holds among her hieroglyphics this and kindred knowledge, which shall yet be given to the hand of science. The patriarch may have reached Pelusium, "the strength of Egypt;" or "populous No, among the waters;" Zoan in the field, or Moph, the mighty. Quite as much darkness seems to envelop the proceedings of Abraham in this country. Among the dusky children of Canaan and Egypt, the fair Sarah, daughter of Shem, shone like a star; the fame of her beauty was carried to the palace of the king. Rameses sought her for his wife. And here some opine that Abraham acted from cowardice; others, "from a simple exaggeration of faith." Calvin says that "Abraham had a good end in view, but failed in the choice of means." Whichever way it was, whether he acted from too bold or too feeble a faith, God did not fail to take care of his servant, make his power known, and lead him forth of Mizraim with all glory and safety.

By the time Abraham returned to Bethel, he was "very rich" in all that comprised wealth in his age and clime. He had not sought the riches of earth; God had heaped them upon him; he found "godliness profitable for all things." Perhaps this abundance was a trial of the man's faith, to see if he would build a city or a house for the preservation of his goods; whether his soul would be beguiled by this accumulation of finite treasure. Not so; he remains in tents, a pilgrim still; and his abundance abounds to his liberality, for he says to Lot his nephew, "Let

there be no strife between thee and me. Is not the whole land before thee?" The father of the faithful puts himself on an equality with his nephew; he calls him up to some mountain spur, or broad plateau, and shows him all the future territory of the beloved nation. Behold the lower plain of Jordan, fair as that vanished "garden of the Lord;" see the cities set in it like gems; mark the Jordan, a stream of gold in the setting sunshine; westward and southward sweep great seas of bloom; flocks and herds stray knee-deep in luscious herbage; all is Abraham's; yet he forgets the beauties of the earth in the beauty of the upper land, and he bids Lot take whatsoever he may choose. Lot craved the glorious plain, thoughtless that it drew him far from Abraham, the head of the house of faith; and Abraham dwelt amid his oak trees well content.

The character of Abraham is one of the most magnificent in Scripture. We see him rich in faith; brave in obedience; grand in a holy contempt of the transitory wealth of earth; noble in his generosity to Lot; humble in the quietness of his life in the oak groves of Mamre. We next find him wise in diplomacy; dwelling in the plains of the Amorites, he becomes confederate with three princely brothers abiding there; and next we have him bold and skilful in war; the righteous defender of the weak.

Lot, wooed by the wealth and pleasure of Sodom, had cast in his fate with its ungodly citizens. He had left his native land to follow Abraham for the service of God; we learn from the apostle that he retained his integrity, and was still "just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked." Yet being found among these arrant sinners, he suffered with them; in common with them he received the judgments of the Lord, and thus his worldliness was chastised. When a servant of God finds himself followed by losses and trials, and sees iniquity spreading in his household, let him pause and consider whether he is not God's servant dwelling

in the wrong place, for worldly pride, or greed, or pleasure-seeking.

When news came to Abraham that the four strong kings of Asia had conquered the feebler rulers of Sodom and the Jordan plain, Lot being of the captives, swept away with his family and his property in the train of the victorious Chedorlaomer, all the ardent family affection of the sons of Eber awoke in Abraham; the expression is significant, "when he heard that his 'brother' was taken captive." The news was brought "by one that had escaped," therefore a member of Lot's family; for the ordinary fugitive of Sodom would have appealed to a Canaanite.

We may judge of Abraham's patriarchal state when we find that on a moment's warning he could arm three hundred and eighteen *trained* servants. Servants trained to instant obedience; trained to family affection, to the service of God, and the practice of war. At the head of these men went Abraham; and we may imagine the heroic Sarah, her maidens, and the children of her retainers, standing under the shadowing oaks, watching this band depart, and with hearts of prayer casting their eyes upon the altar of God. Abraham is a skilled general; at Dan (in Gilead) he divides his force; he pursues in the night time. This night the victory-vain Assyrians spend in feasting and mirth, and Lot in humiliation. As the stars grow pale in the amethystine flush of dawn, Abraham sweeps down on the host of the four kings from the left hand of Damascus, and smites them with his arm of strength. They are driven away like chaff on the summer threshing-floors. They leave behind in their headlong flight the captives and the spoil, and Abraham begins his triumphant return. The monarch of Sodom comes out to hail the conquerer of kings.

But a greater than this heathen prince greets the victor, even one who has stood before the world a holy mystery, Melchizedek, king of Salem, but moreover priest of the Most High God. With-

out genealogy in his priesthood or his kingdom, he is set forth as the clearest early type of Messiah, He who came a priest and king, in each of these without father, without mother, without beginning of descent or end of days. Christ and Melchizedek had each progenitors in their humanity, but in their priesthood and kingdom they were alone. Eminent in office and in piety, this man was yet a Canaanite; Apostle of the primeval monotheism; greater than Abraham, in that he was the last shining representative of the period of the primitive religion looking back to the lost paradise; he stood with his face lit with the splendors of that evening sky which shoots its level rays across the centuries. Pupil of Noah and Shem, following in the holy way of Enoch, he shone a glorious planet in the night of Canaan's heathenism. Type of Jesus, he met the Church in Abraham its exponent, bearing those holy symbols which Christ divided as his memorials on the night before he died. Not without a purpose, did God send forth this worshipper and priest of the pattern found before the flood, to give to Abraham and his servants the symbols of the Jehovistic covenant, and the world's last dispensation. He gave them with his blessing; and the Patriarch confessed the glory of the age to come after the advent of his eternal Son, by paying tithes to Melchizedek his type.

They reached the plain of Sodom, and Abraham, who had not fought for spoil, delivered to the lately vanquished people of the plain all the booty, suggesting only that his confederates should be given their lawful portion.

We have in Abraham the earliest hero warrior and his tactics. From these Cromwell learned the fundamental principles of warfare; from him patterned Napoleon, Gneisenau and Blucher, and a host of other heroes. But they have fallen short of their master, who lifted up the sword for truth and justice, and scorned the greed of plunder and demoniac lust. If nations to-day followed

the example of the brave, skilful, diplomatic and peace-loving Abraham, we should not see people of kindred faith and tongue drawing the sword, each against his brother!

Abraham bore in his heart a heavy grief: "I go childless, and my heir is Eliezer of Damascus." God came to him: "Fear not; I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward!" Verily, oh church and child of God, great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee, therefore fear not. Then God led his servant out under the star-set canopy of heaven. Those wheeling orbs, objects of the Chaldeans' worship, were but types of Abraham's illustrious and numberless seed. Note what follows: "He believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness."

From God Abraham received a glorious revelation, but it came to him through "a horror of great darkness."

Symbol again of what must happen in every age of the Church militant.

Out of darkness—light.

"The night is mother of the day,
The winter of the spring,
And ever upon old decay
The greenest mosses cling."

Out of persecution comes the strength of the Church; out of trial endurance; out of the martyr flame the martyr crown; out of great tribulation the white-robed throng on high; from the crucifixion day the jubilant Paschal morning; out of the tomb in the garden the living Christ!

"But who shall so forecast the years,
Or find in loss a gain to match?
Or reach a hand through time to catch
The far-off interest of tears!'

In the horror of great darkness Abraham learned the dark age of his descendants; their weary bondage; then through the

black smoke passed a burning lamp, and Abraham was assured of the final triumph of his race, coming out of prison to reign, and the vast extent of their inheritance.

During this night in Syria, under the beam of "heaven's high twins," and amid the rustle of the oak leaves, was foreshadowed all time to come; here the fundamental thoughts of Holy Writ, *righteousness* and *faith*, were set forth; here Abraham stands in the inward life of justice before God; here that mighty plant, brought from heaven and rooted in the earth, salvation by faith, shot forth its flower, bloomed in its matchless beauty before the patriarch. Then came a personal promise: "Thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace, and be buried in a good old age." Thus, "He who will not suffer any to be tempted above that they are able," strengthened his servant in the hour of his need.

When Abraham had been twenty-five years a pilgrim from his father's house, and still the fulfilment of the promise of an heir was delayed, God again appeared to him and renewed the covenant. At this time God revealed himself by a new name, The Almighty God (El Shaddai), and in sign of the closest inward union between himself, Abraham and Sarah, changed the names of these great parents of the people Israel. Circumcision was given as a sign, distinguishing the chosen race from all others. Abraham, saint of faith as he was, had endeavored to anticipate the movements of God, and in his eager desire for offspring had run before the face of his leader. Now through thirteen years since the birth of Ishmael, God kept him waiting, that he might clearly apprehend that Isaac was a promised, a miraculous seed, showing forth the wonder of the birth of Jesus of Nazareth. In the joy of the renewal of the promise, and the surety of his faith, Abraham fell on his face and laughed. His is the first laughter mentioned; Hagar's weeping in the wilderness is the first record of tears.

After this, Abraham is set before us in two new phases of his character and work, still typifying the Church and her mission. In his tent at Mamre he entertains the Lord of Hosts. He comes to him as a traveller.

"Oh, hope of Israel! The Saviour thereof in time of trouble, why wilt thou be as a stranger in the land, and a wayfaring man who tarrieth but for a night!"

God comes into the tabernacle of Abraham, and communes with him. He enters to no ceiled house in the grand cities spread abroad in Chaldea, or the Jordan plain; but goes to him, the stranger upon earth, who journeys, guided by his hand, and "nightly plants his moving tent a day's march nearer home."

This is the "Lord who dwelleth in Jerusalem forever."

The Lord dwelleth in Mount Zion. The Holy Spirit dwelleth in the lowly and contrite heart; maketh his home among men, and the King of the Church is in the midst of her.

Abraham, model of hospitality, seeing first only three tired fellow-men, with haste addresses himself to the supply of their wants. But he recognizes in one, a Being loftier than the sons of earth, the object and centre of his life-long adoration, the Guardian and Guide of his pilgrim way. He serves with humble zeal his guests; he only can wash the feet of these travellers from the skies clad in humanity; no servant's hands must knead the cakes; Sarah, the princess, addresses herself to the honorable task; Abraham selects the food, and serves it with his own hands. So Zaccheus, ages after, entertained the Lord Christ. The meal over, two of the guests passed on before, and God, who would not hide from Abraham the thing which he did, stood face to face with his servant, and through the fleshly garment beamed the ineffable glory as on the Mount of Transfiguration.

"The cry of Sodom is great," said the Lord. Here was about to be a prelude of the last day—the evening of the world had

come for the cities of the plain. Wrath had gone out against them; with the rising morn should fall a shower of fire, as if all the glowing planets rained themselves upon them.

Abraham here assumed another office of the earthly Church, that of an intercessor with God for sinners. Let the ungodly scoff at the righteous, know they how often their prayers have stayed the eternal hand made bare for war? Remove God's Church from the world, set the households of the saints suddenly into the land whither they are travelling, and how long would the world remain?

Abraham reaches the true ideal of intercession. He does not pray *against* God's justice, but in behalf of it. "That be far from thee, to destroy the righteous with the wicked! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Abraham intercedes with all the strength of faith. He asked, believing. If the conditions which he made had been met, Sodom would have been saved. In his prayer we trace not only the humane heart deprecating the sufferings of fellow-creatures, but the tenderness experienced by benefactors for those they have favored. He had saved Sodom once by his sword, now he endeavors to save by the voice of petition. Abraham ceased asking before the Lord ceased granting, but this does not indicate that he ceased asking too soon. He set a limit for himself, and was guided in that by his consciousness of right. He regarded first of all the glory of God; the glory of mercy; and when mercy is defied, the glory of vengeance. In his self-limitation he remains an example to the Church, as to the true position of the Christian in reference to the corruption of the world. There was no fanaticism, no phrenzy: he excuses his boldness; he makes prudent progress in his requests, and when the Lord says, "I will not destroy it for ten's sake," Abraham considers the vastness of Sodom, its splendor, its thronging population—what! not ten in all these? Morally conditioned, he bows his head, and asks no more.

The storm was gathering over Sodom, but the voice of Abraham's prayer withheld it till the night closed in—the last night of the guilty city ripe for destruction.

Doubtless for Abraham this was a most solemn night; he remembered Lot and his family, and wondered if cleaving to heathenism they should be lost, or if serving yet the Lord, as his children, they should find a place of safety. He knew the secret shared by no other human heart, that the next night-fall would see the fertile plain a scarred desert; the proud cities ruinous heaps; the jostling crowds mere ashes whirled upon the winds. Early in the morning he hastened to the spot where he had talked with God. Nowhere else dared he meet confirmation of his horrible fears; there he would be strong. He looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, "and lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace."

Mythology bears trace of this significant visit of the Lord to the father of the faithful. In the myth, Jupiter, Mercury and Neptune visit an old man named Hyricus: he prepares them a feast, and they bless his childless age with the glad possession of a son. Again, we have the king of gods and men, with Mercury, his messenger, entering at night-fall the hut of Philemon and Baucis. This pair extend to them their best welcome; they place the choicest of their humble fare before those disguised ones, who feast on nectar upon Mount Ida; then the departing gods carry off the kindly couple, and a black flood rises up, and covers the inhospitable dwellings near, and all the dreary moor.

In strong contrast to the lofty character of Abraham, the pilgrim saint, we find Lot, the weak, the covetous, the erring; who seeks for himself a portion on earth; who does not command his household in the fear of the Lord; who leaves the society of the father of the faithful for the orgies of the Sodomites; who yet retains some spark of the divine life; who is saved as by fire; pulled

out of the jaws of destruction; who disappears at last, stripped of wealth and honor; dwelling in caves like a wild beast; parent not of a race of righteous men, but of two bastard lines, who wander farther and farther from the Light of life. He built his house, but he counted not the cost.

Unless the Lord build the house men labor in vain. Hoary with a century of wayfaring; sick sometimes with hope deferred; looking forward to the inheritance still, the patriarch entered a land of laughter; there was a son born to his old age, the son of Sarah. Laughter then in the tent of the nomad; laughter rippling forth to be shared by all who heard; by the confederate Amorites, and the court of the friendly Abimelech in Gerar.

With this Abimelech, a worshipper of God, and king of those Philistines, who soon after lapsed into idolatry, we find Abraham making a covenant at Beersheba. They seal the covenant with an oath, and Abraham builds an altar to his God, and sets it in a grove of tamarisk trees. So should every civil compact have the recognition and presence of Almighty God, that it may be honorable and enduring.

Beersheba was the name given the place of this treaty of peace. There was reared the altar of the Lord before whom they stood; there waved the evergreen tamarisk trees, emblems of the eternity of God. Here was Abraham, to Abimelech, the preacher; he stood forth to teach the heathen and the partially enlightened, as, on the place where he talked with God, he became their intercessor. Three great works are recorded of Abraham. He labored, he preached, he patiently endured his life-long exile. Truly, if he had been mindful of the land whence he came out, he might have had opportunity to have returned thither; the way was open; there would have been a warm welcome in the ancestral home. But, no; he who puts his hand to the plough, then looks back, is not fit for the kingdom of God; his eyes must still be on the heavenly

habitation; his desire must take hold of a better country, and because of this, God is not ashamed to be called his God.

Tried long by exile; by toil; by poverty; by riches; by rumors of war; by the seductions of heathenism; tried and found steadfast still, Abraham had yet to endure another and more searching test of his faith.

At this point in this most tender and beautiful story, we too often miss the richest meaning, by considering Isaac as a child. Isaac laid upon the altar was a type of Christ; this he would not have been as an unconscious or helpless child-victim; but, instead, he was in all the vigor of his young manhood; probably twenty-five years old, strong and hopeful; life bright before him; power in his sinews to burst the bands and resist the intention of that gray old father. But, instead of this, while Abraham is like God the Father, "who so loved that he gave his only Son," who "did not spare his own Son but delivered him up," Isaac is like the Saviour, who "laid down his life of himself," who "loved not his own life unto death."

To Abraham came the command: "Take now thine only begotten son and offer him up."

Having obeyed the Lord during all his long life, the good man does not now hesitate. Fully realizing what it will be to have this joy of his eyes and staff of his age removed from him, he yet also realizes what it would be to have the light of God's countenance withdrawn; to lose the fatherly approbation; to have the clouds come between his soul and the heavenly city; to miss the serene fellowship of the immortals.

Isaac is doubtless accustomed to go with his father to offer sacrifice, on one or another of the many altars which marked the place of his wanderings. Wood is prepared, the young men-servants put it upon the ass, and go their way as directed; Abraham and Isaac bid farewell to that loving old mother in the tent

door, Sarah, the blonde beauty, still fair and defiant of the ravages of time; all her youth has been renewed by this beloved son of the promise. She watches him depart, rejoices in his manly form and active step; one day he shall bring a wife of the holy Hebrew family to her tent, and she shall have his children in her arms. Sarah turns to set tasks for her maidens with her face bright with hope; she knows not that her husband goes to Moriah, the mountain of the Lord, to slay her son!

Meantime, the first thought of Abraham will be of the hour when he shall return alone, to break the heart of that wife and mother. The knife in his girdle will stab her heart when it enters the bosom of her son.

Then he thinks of Isaac; they have worshipped together well pleased before; what will he do now, when he himself must become the bleeding type of redemption? But Abraham knows the unquestioning obedience, the holy zeal, the intense devotion of his child; that son's will has ever run parallel with his father's, and the twin current has flowed in the line with the divine intention. There will be no hesitancy there. Then in his secret thought he acts and reenacts the soul-thrilling scene; the strength of his aged hand must come from Heaven, or it will not suffice to strike so fatal a blow. What! to see that active frame grow limp, and then freeze to death's marble; to see the blood that now reddens in the cheek dripping, dripping over that unhewn altar, and dewing the appalled earth; no more to hear that voice in sweet tones saying, *my father!* See how the young man rejoices in his own exuberant vitality; how he looks up to the clear skies; follows the flight of birds; marks the beauty of groves of oak, tamarisk and palm; turns well pleased to vine and blossom; and fixes often his gaze on the mountains towering against the sky.

"*He thought* of their white raiment, the ghostly capes that screen them,
Of the storm winds that beat them, their thunder rents and scars,
And the paradise of purple, and the golden slopes atween them,
And fields where grow God's gentian bells, and His crocus stars."

These glances must grow dark in death! Then faith spoke: "In Isaac shall thy seed be called, that seed like the sand grains numberless." Isaac must live; children and children's children could not grow out of his grave; therefore Abraham remembering how Isaac had in a manner sprung from death, being born when human hope of progeny was dead, comforted himself in the hope that God must and would reanimate the body of his slain son. Faith believes in the physically impossible. In all the history of earth there had been then none raised from the dead; but Abraham looked past the fact to the power of God; as, says the apostle, "accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he had received him in a figure."

This was a consoling faith, but it could not do away with the sad thought of the precedent death. Abraham knew what death was; he had seen it in Haran his brother; he had seen the lamb laid on the stone, and marked the pitiful imploring of its look.

"But oh, 'tis dowier far to see
The wa' gang o' ane the heart gangs wi',
The dead set o' the shining e'e,
That closes the weary warld on thee!"

Musing thus; strengthening his heart betimes by calling on his God, Abraham reached the last stage of his journey. They were beyond the folds and the flocks, and Isaac began to wonder whence the offering would come.

On the third day Abraham beheld the ordained spot, Moriah, Mount of Vision, where in days to come the marble and golden splendors of the temple should delight the land. The patriarch spoke calmly to his servants, though his heart was dying within him: "Abide ye here with the ass: and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you!"

The wood is laid upon Isaac, and with his parent he begins the ascent toward the thicket-crowned summit of the mountain. Then he asks:

"My father! behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt-offering?"

It is a terrible question for a father in Abraham's position, but he replies, with holy confidence: "My son, God will provide himself a lamb."

Together they reach the appointed place, they build the altar, lay the wood in readiness, and the trembling father, natural anguish contending with obedient faith, unfolds to his son the vision from the Lord. From that godly heir his faltering spirit receives encouragement. Isaac at once cheerfully agrees to die. He has been trained to seek first the celestial inheritance, and while earth is dear and beautiful, the city on high is fairer still. A last tender embrace—his love with his child is laid on that lone altar; then, crowning act of faith and submission, the patriarch took his knife to slay his son! Again comes the divine voice, never more welcome than now: "Lay not thine hand upon the lad; now I know that thou fearest me; thou hast not withheld thine only son." Glad as the trumpet of the angel proclaiming the first resurrection from the dead! At this respite the old man's strength is renewed. He sees a ram caught in the thicket, and recognizes in it his son's substitute. He runs for the new victim; he offers it with an overflowing heart. Here on the mountain the father and son make a new consecration of themselves; they have given all to God, even life, his first gift to them; thenceforth they are more than ever bought with a price. But richest experience of all is the unfolding of the plan of salvation, the mediatorial work, and the doctrine of substitution.

Abraham in old age, Isaac in early manhood, met together the crucial test of their living faith. Abraham had been tried and tried again, an ascending series of temptations; but Isaac met all his fate at once. This was a sufficient experience for a lifetime; after this complete self-immolation, the life of Isaac rolled through more than a century of peace.

Standing together on the Mount Moriah in a rapture of gratitude and adoration, these two listened to the words of the angel of the Lord, prophesying of the time to come, and the perpetual blessing.

With this account of the scene on Mount Moriah ends the spiritual history of Abraham; his trials and his inward growth. The narrative passes on to the building up of his household, and nation. This man had come forth from the furnace as gold: the Refiner had seen at last his own image clearly mirrored in the flame-purified spirit; and had said, "it is enough."

Between the journey to Moriah and the death of Sarah, is an interval of some years. The first portion of this time Abraham spent at Beersheba, and there he heard of the death of Terah, and of the prosperity and increase of the family of his brother Nahor, in Ur of the Chaldees. Later, the patriarch removed to Kirjath-Arba, and there Sarah died, her grave becoming the centre and cradle of the Abrahamic kingdom. She is the only woman whose age at death is mentioned in the Bible; and she receives this distinction because, as the mother of the seed of promise, she is the mother of true believers in all the years to come. Kirjath-Arba is Hebron, afterwards called El Chalil. from Abraham "the friend of God."

A sore affliction is this death, entering into the love-united household; we learn the strength of Isaac's tenderness and sorrow, in that he is not comforted for three years—not until he sees the blooming Rebekah established in his beautiful mother's deserted tent.

Sarah was gone; the lifeless body lay in the midst of the weeping family; all around the tent spread the beauty of Hebron, vineyards, olive trees and orchards. From his flocks came the shepherd prince, and sat down at the feet of her whom he had loved, to mourn.

Then he drew near to the gate of Hebron, and addressed the citizens: "I am a stranger and a sojourner, give me a place where I may bury my dead!"

The holy family would not mingle its dead with idolaters—the beloved Sarah was yet Abraham's own, and he would lay her by herself in solemn state, his most precious treasure. He desires from Ephron, the lord of the city, that cave famous in history as the burial place of those names of renown; the three great patriarchs and their wives, ancestors of kings and of Christ; and here we notice that Jacob was placed in Machpelah, not beside Rachel his best loved, but by Leah, the mother of the royal line of the house of Judah.

The story of this purchase of Machpelah is one of singular beauty and simplicity; each sentence is a well-cut cameo. We see Abraham in the dignity of his sorrow, courtly, prudent and decided; Ephron, elegant and stately, with all the flowers of eastern courtesy in his speech; the children of Heth standing by, protesting: "Hear us, my lord, thou art a mighty prince among us; in the choice of our sepulchres bury thy dead." Then the price is fixed, the money weighed, the boundaries and possession are made sure.

Smith assumes that four hundred shekels, or two hundred and fifty dollars of our money, a large sum for that time, was an exorbitant price for the spot, and marks Ephron as avaricious and over-reaching; but to this it is properly replied, that while the Rabbins describe Ephron as greedy, we cannot decide with them, while the limits of this purchase, and the ordinary price of land at that time, are unknown to us.

After this burial comes a bridal. Abraham, anxious to preserve the purity of his house, sent Eliezer to Mesopotamia, to the city of Nahor, to bring thence a wife for Isaac. From this union shone the beautiful family life of devotion and affection which

the Jews commemorated in their nuptial benediction. The speech of Eliezer, the first recorded, is worthy of its place; it flows sweet as a poem, every sentence some golden truth; it sets forth the man loyal to God and to his master, having duty ever before his eyes, honest, gracious, dignified. Would that every government had an ambassador of kindred spirit! This love story of Isaac and Rebekah, is the true model for all time. It begins in God fearing and serving; it is sanctified by prayer; it is a blessed theocratic marriage, the true foundation of a happy, holy household.

There were fair maidens in Canaan; there were such men as Melchizedek and Abimelech among the children of Ham; but their light was waning; the curse of Sodom was amid them, their end was decreed; from the godly line of Shem must come the wife Isaac could revere as well as love. He looked first for grace of heart, and God who giveth liberally, sent him also the matchless personal beauty of Rebekah. Nor was this charm without its effect on Isaac's messenger; the good old man was anxious to crown his mission with such a radiant loveliness as he remembered in his mistress Sarah; and when the glorious perfections of Rebekah shone on him at the well, he made haste to choose her from the maidens, and apply the test on which he had prayerfully decided.

This marriage of Isaac removed Abraham's last care on earth. He lived to see his twin grandsons, Jacob and Esau, reach their boyhood; then his pilgrim days were ended. "He died in a good old age, an old man and full of years." He had spent his years day by day in God's service; now they seemed as days for shortness; and he was "*gathered to his people*," not in that he merely died, or was laid in his family burial-place; but he had his *citizenship* in heaven, he was a fellow-citizen with the saints; all those from Abel were his kinsmen in flesh and faith; and now at last he joined them. It was emphatically a *getting home:* he

who had no abiding city here, dwelt at last among sure foundations, and entered a home eternal. The wanderer found a place whence he should go no more out. He had reached the true Mount Zion, and had come to the "City of the Living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, the innumerable company of angels, the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven; and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant:" to all this had he come; so shall all those come, earth's pilgrims and sojourners, who with singleness of heart, and unconquered faith, climb like Abraham the steep and starry road to the dwelling of the Infinite.

Fellow-citizen of the saints was Abraham, father of the faithful and friend of God; such may each one be who sets his affections on things above, rather than on things below. This citizenship is that to which we are ordained, and we fail of it not by God's will, but by our own error. The inheritance of the saints in light is for us; heirship of God is set before us; we see in Abraham how faith becomes fruition, and yet we are prone to build our nests on some great place of earth, and desire to rise no higher. But there is a better way. Lay up treasure in heaven, unmindful of the fleeting things of time.

"What though unmarked the happy workman toil,
And break unthanked of men the stubborn clod,
It is enough, for sacred is the soil,
Dear are the hills of God."

IV.

JACOB AND ESAU.

THE STRIFE OF NATURE AND GRACE.

THE physical, moral and intellectual variations, which exist between offspring of the same parents, have in all ages formed a subject of interest and investigation to every thinker. The father vainly queries why, while one of his sons, in early maturity, soberly and industriously takes his place, a man among men; another is an erratic genius, doomed to perpetual unrest, a wanderer over earth, or, at home, is ever a parent's sorrow.

The mother wonders how it is, that one of her children, religious and loving, forms her chief solace; and another, with singular moral discrepancies, furnishes a source of continual perplexity and distress. While these are to the parental heart questions of vital importance, the philosopher is attracted by them as provocative of deep psychological research.

These diversities in families have been variously explained, as the result of ante-natal states or impressions; of physical changes, or advanced or imperfect mental development of the parents; and by altered views and modified systems of the educator. But just as a carefully fabricated theory is in a state conducive to cheerful assurance, Nature, in some new product, sets the explications of reason at defiance.

In the first family we have seen a murderer and a martyr; an

heir of heaven and a servant of Belial: in the sons of the saintly Isaac, we behold an almost equal contrariety exhibited in twin-children; hereafter, we shall be called to view this singular converse, not only in brothers, and offspring of a single birth, but in one and the same soul and body, in the one individual.

To those who scan the laws of inheritance, Jacob and Esau afford studies of deep interest, dividing and combining, as they do, the traits of both their parents. The great love of Isaac and Rebekah was doubtless intensified, because each was the complement of the other. Rebekah was active in nature, Isaac passive; the wife was ardent, ambitious, far-seeing; the husband contemplative, mild, content. Isaac dealt more in faith, Rebekah in reason; the woman was by far the best strategist, and singularly enough in the exhibition of parental tenderness, the father gave ear to natural instinct, and would, in behalf of it, have set aside that Divine verdict which had been the rule of his life: while the mother, becoming a fatalist, put her will, hope and choice in the line of the heavenly prediction, and, in accordance with it, anticipated her children's future.

While each son had characteristics of both parents, Esau was, on the whole, more like his mother, Jacob like his father. The elder-born had his mother's bounding vigor; her ardent temperament, her brave frankness; but from Isaac he received a contented dwelling in the present, an unambitious satisfaction, a hopeless yielding to the pressure of circumstances, and an innocence of craft; Jacob had his father's delicate frame, his domestic, contemplative habit, his devoutness; from the mother he had heired the ability to think rapidly and prudently, an abundant cunning, and, chief trait of all, a valuing of the future beyond to-day, and an ambition that did not centre on the spoils of the passing hour, but reached forward to his children and his children's children, for all the ages to come. It was a greedy, earthly, human ambition at

first, but was capable of being purified by sharp fires of affliction, letting go its hold on time, clasping itself about the everlasting glory, reaching through the æons of æons, and realizing the transcendant restoration, the splendors of the New Jerusalem, the mystery and majesty of the incarnation, and the final consummation and perfection of the economy of God.

Between these two was the strife of the physical with the spiritual, the finite with the infinite; and from the very beginning of their history we see the active reasoning mind of Jacob, intent upon the really valuable, while Esau craves chiefly the present good, however evanescent. At the first flush, Esau was doubtless the man to enlist liking and sympathy, but Jacob would wear better, and had within himself the material from which a truly grand character might be educed. We must consider these brothers in the light cast by the growing years upon them, in their surroundings and possibilities. The young, and the cursory reader of Sripture, is ever inclined to take the side of Esau in the contest that goes on for years; to consider him by all odds the better fellow, very hardly used by brother, mother, and perhaps by his God! But looking closely into the history, we shall find that Esau got all that he desired, that he received exactly what he had use for, and what was best fitted for him; and that the distinctions of Jacob would have been a mere burden on Esau's hands. Jacob was suited to the position to which he was called, Esau to that in which he was left. When we have examined their motives and their lives, we shall find that the acute Rebekah read her sons aright from the beginning, and we know she judged them by the light of prophecy. Now there was in the family of Jacob a spiritual birthright, which had come down from Seth; there was also an earthly inheritance of flocks, herds, tents and other nomadic wealth.

The spiritual birthright had its privileges, and they were these: its inheritor was the priest and intercessor of his family; he com-

muned with God; he was directed in his actions by the clear mandate of his Lord and Maker; and he had the sure hope that from him, in the direct line of his posterity, should spring the coming One, Jehovah in the flesh.

The birthright had its conditions. He who received it must be a pilgrim and stranger on earth; he must be obedient to every behest, even the most difficult and unexpected, of the divine Voice; he must have his treasure, his love, his dwelling-place, in the Unseen; and he must keep his race pure, making in the fear of the Lord a sacred, single theocratic marriage. Piety, and not the lusts of the flesh, must be the aim of his life. This was Isaac's view, drawn from the practice of his ancestors; alas, soon deviated from by his heir! These possibilities, expectations and restrictions, had Isaac made known to his two sons; and he designed the privileges and the obligations of the spiritual birthright for Esau, his elder born. But Esau had no moral aptitude for these things.

Esau stood before his father, a model of manly strength. The mild, philosophic, devout parent regarded with wondering pride the dashing young athelete, the stately hunter, roving fearless of those Philistines whom his father had ever dreaded; standing among the tents of the patriarch, a youthful lord. The temperaments of the father and son were antithetical, and in the vigorous young prince he had begotten, Isaac took refuge; here was a defender, here was he that should drive out the heathen, and bring in the kingdom; he was forgetting the prophesied bondage, the travail of his race in Egypt, the long-delayed empire.

The mother, looking at her eldest son with clearer insight, saw the spirit weaker by far than the flesh; saw that the sacred birthright would be a hated burden; saw her Esau the servitor of himself; saw that the inheritance this man craved was riches, wives, power, feastings and revelries. By some subtle law that no one can explain, the blood of father Adam in Esau had developed a

new Lamech, weapon in hand, bold, jubilant, and claiming many wives; the life of Noah distilled in Esau, awoke a second Nimrod, a mighty hunter, a law unto himself, a rebel to all law that did not acquiesce with his desire; and still the vital current reaching through generations had procreated him another freebooting Ishmael, who would go here and there as suited his wild whim, and did not tremble at thought or sight of blood.

Jacob listening eagerly while his father set before the jolly, careless-hearing, undevout Esau, the spiritual birthright and its entailed duties, craved it for himself; he communed of it with his mother; he studied with regard to it the history of his ancestors; he gained from his father every possible item of information; he grew to long for it with a passionate yearning that would not be denied; to regard it as the one thing beyond all others worth living for; and without which, life, riches, descendants would not be worth the having. Studious like his father, he sat in his tent-door, or slowly wandered with his sheep, pondering of the birthright in the purely spiritual sense. It was not the greed of servants and herds, and goodly garments, that possessed him; Esau might have them; but to plead with heaven for his family; to commune with the eternal world while yet dwelling in the flesh; to have a chosen, consecrated house; to have the world's King and salvation, the Divine-human proceed from himself! Ah, here was a glory, grand and far-sweeping enough to match the boundless ambition of Rebekah's dearer son.

How he envied his brother that possession; how he wondered at the hunter's lofty indifference to its richer part, and marvelled when he saw him regarding it as simply a coming into the heaped up temporal wealth of Abraham and Isaac. This spiritual birthright he hungered for with inexpressible desire; his father coolly ignored his passion of covetousness for the unseen and future; but his mother! Ah! she understood him; she knew how he longed;

she felt that he would live with eye single to this glorious possession; yea, more, she told him that he ought to have it, that Esau would not know what to do with it, and that beyond all this, it had been promised to him unborn, by the voice of the angel. Rebekah also pledged herself to obtain satisfaction for her son; and son and mother alike bent all their energies to wresting from Isaac—for the first time in his life grown obstinate and self-willed—the blessing which should confirm the birthright.

Even while experiencing this intensity of craving for a purely spiritual gift, Jacob was an unconverted man. But in this stage of their soul-life he and his brother exhibited two distinct varieties. Esau's every thought, wish, ambition, took hold on earth; he could not realize or appreciate anything higher. If there were anything better than the mad excitement of the chase, pursuing roe and gazelle, and savage beast across the plain, and through the deep defile; if there were anything more desirable than those daughters of the Hittites, the black-eyed Judith, and the beautiful Bashemath, Esau did not care to know it; he would not hear nor confess the supremacy of the spiritual.

Jacob, on the other hand, realized a more excellent way, and desired it; prudent as Rebekah, thoughtful as Isaac, he learned all that was possible of earth and of heaven; he sat down and weighed the original glory with its mere reflection; he compared time to eternity; the celestial with the fleshly; the future with the present; the spirit of grandfather Abraham was in him so that he elected the better part, and preferred the kingdom of the future, to the possibilities of to-day. Having seen this, and felt this, he set himself to obtain what he wanted, and did not take pains to seek a suitable method. Careful like Isaac, he had not yet been afflicted into being prayerful. His first idea was to *buy* the heavenly birthright; and we have now many men of a kindred spirit; their views are broad enough to take hold of the

need of salvation, of changed hope, of the life beyond death; they know there is something better than worldliness; they mean to have it if possible. They do not ask God to give it to them, but they buy it—if they can—by large charities; and sometimes they make the matter surer by joining the church; but these unconverted Jacobs are in better case than their Esau brethren, for they are chastized by continual unrest; and are goaded on until in some blessed hour of desolation, loneliness and self-despair, they cast themselves upon God, see a ladder between earth and heaven, and rise up to build an altar to the Lord.

Esau is the man of impulse; the man of nature, uncontrolled by religion; he is not like Cain, a specious moralist, nor is he like Canaan an age-despising blackguard; he is simply the highest type of the physical, combined with the very lowest form of the spiritual. He has natural affections, natural hopes, natural desires; for instance, he loves his father; he cajoles the old man, he brings him his favorite venison, and entertains him with tales of how he pursued the antelope and wild goat on the mountain, and made the wandering Philistine quail as he dashed by him on the plain. We can imagine him casting some of his spoils at his mother's tent-door; lounging near her to rest; challenging her admiration for his goodly garments, and the rich perfumes which he has maybe bought, maybe taken as toll from an Egypt-bound caravan—for he is a bit of a Sybarite as well as a hunter; he flatters his mother; makes her presents; jeers a little at her petting of Jacob; in his free and easy way considers himself a model son; the stay of his house, and fully as affectionate as need be; but he never mentions to these parents his love-making in the tents of Beeri, and in the dwelling of Elon; he never consults them about choosing a wife; he clearly considers the business none of theirs; and some bright day he brings to his tents two wives, and these charming idolatresses set up their images and adore their false

gods, and are a bitter withering, killing *heart sorrow* to Isaac and Rebekah.

The depths of the individuality of these two brothers were never more clearly shown than in the selling and buying of the birthright. Esau, in his hour of weakness, becomes a type of all who give up the greater for the sake of the less; who exchange the higher for the lower, the eternal for the temporal. "Let us eat and drink for to-morrow we die," was Esau's motto. But Jacob knew how to prize the promises. Esau, manly, placable, careless, stands in contrast to his crafty, over-reaching, far-seeing brother, and the heart instinctively leans to him; but he is evidently the reckless child of the hour, utterly unfit to be a patriarch of the people of the future. And here just where Jacob shows himself in the least pleasant light, we are apt to blame him too severely.

What Esau asked was not necessary to his existence; it was merely the demand of an appetite never restricted; the indulgence of which was the first thought of his life; he exhibited his customary gross bondage to sense, and it was impossible for Jacob to fail to see this. Moreover, Jacob asked Esau to sell him a possession which was a matter of perfect indifference to Esau; he did not ask for the temporal but the spiritual birthright; not for the property, but the priesthood of the family. We see this afterwards when Jacob having gotten the blessing, flies staff in hand, nor pays the least heed to worldly goods; nor do we learn that he is ever enriched other than by the blessing of God on his own industry. Here we see the brothers; Jacob, domestic and economical, preparing his vegetable food, stooping over his fire, stirring the red lentil porridge; Esau stands by, holding his bow and arrows, and leaning on his spear. The question between them is of future importance, the safety of a world: behind the savory steam that rises upward, Jacob sees a lengthening vista of years, a kingdom of earth and heaven: it is the ruling idea of his life.

Esau sees nothing but a favorite pottage: we behold the religious inclination of the one; the spiritual superficiality of the other. "Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage, for I am faint," said Esau.

Looking up from his occupation, Jacob hastily speaks his ever-present desire: "Sell me this day thy birthright." Esau knows which birthright is intended—a something that is little good to him; rather of an infliction in fact, demanding self-sacrifice to which he does not wish to attain. He replies carelessly: "Behold, I am at the point to die, and what profit shall this birthright do me?"

He is not at the point of death from starvation, but he is speaking in a general manner: he is a hunter, a rover: he is daily in danger of death from Philistines, and from wild beasts; the priesthood, the future empire, the Messiah among his descendants, will do him little good when he is dead: he forgets that these saved Noah, their inheritor, when a world was drowned; and preserved Isaac his father, bound on the sacrificial altar.

Jacob is amazed and delighted at his brother's acquiescence; he has shown meanness toward Esau, in asking so much of him, when he is weary and hungry; meanness in taking advantage of his bondage to appetite; but Jacob does what is still more unbrotherly and condemnable, when he says: "Swear to me this day!"

Esau should have resented the idea of an oath to bind the contract; his manliness should have revolted from the imposition; but he is placable and easy, as was Isaac when he suffered the Canaanites to drive him from well after well. He replies: "I swear unto thee," and thus he sold his spiritual inheritance; the one great possession handed down from the days of Seth!

Jacob with alacrity serves his hungry brother with bread and pottage. By his greater strength Esau could have taken this by

force; but he good-naturedly *buys* it, at a price which he cannot comprehend—as a savage gives an ingot of gold for a string of glass beads, and a diamond for a clasp knife.

In his eager demand for his brother to confirm the sale of the birthright by an oath, Jacob shows an inborn trait, suspicion, which was the bane of his whole life. He exhibited it to Laban when he fled from him secretly; to Esau again, when, after their touching re-union, he refused to accompany him on the march; to his sons, when he would not suffer Benjamin to go with them to Egypt; and when he doubted their report concerning Joseph. the Prime minister; to his God, when he cried in bitterness of soul: "All these things are against me!" In fact, this is the penalty ever paid by the exceedingly wary and crafty, that they are always suspecting their fellows of an attempt to overreach them.

"Thus," says the sacred historian, "Esau despised his birthright!" It gives the fact, and makes no comment. We pause a moment to consider what Esau despised. And here we find the keynote of his life, utter indifference to matters of faith. He is the creature of the senses.

In this birthright Esau despised the covenant fellowship with Jehovah; the future possession of Canaan, a kingdom under God, a fief of heaven; he despised moreover the progenitorship of the Messiah, of Him "in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed." No wonder that for this contempt the Apostle calls him a "profane person;" while Jacob is praised for rightly appreciating a benefit set so far in the future, and the invisible. While Jacob wanders apart to rejoice over this property in the unseen and intangible, Esau feasts on bread and red porridge.

"Oh, not by bread alone is manhood nourished,
To its supreme estate!
By every word of God have lived and flourished
The good men and the great,
Ay, not by bread alone!"

Having obtained by purchase from Esau the birthright, it remained for Jacob to win the confirmatory blessing from Isaac. This he was not able to do until he reached his seventy-seventh year. At this time he was yet unmarried, for Isaac having resolved upon giving the birthright to Esau—in spite of his heathen marriages—had taken no trouble to procure a wife for Jacob; and Jacob, fixed in his resolution to be the heir of the spiritual privileges, and knowing what duties belonged thereto, would not ally himself to unbelievers of the land of his sojourn.

The story of the deception which Isaac's blindness and infirmity permitted to be carried out, it is needless to repeat. Weak and old, Isaac expected soon to die; though in fact his life was prolonged for forty-three years. The representations of Rebekah, the prophecy of the Angel, and the evident unfitness of Esau for the position into which his doting father would thrust him, had no effect to alter an old man's obstinate resolve.

We come now to a profound tragedy of the patriarchal life, and see through human vicissitudes, anguish and perplexity, the Divine Will holding its calm, majestic way.

Isaac, knowing the opposition of his wife and younger son to his proposed course, intends to bestow the rich blessing in a shameful secrecy; and the easy-going Esau is willing so to accept it, for all he knows that it will include what he has already sold with an oath. Isaac realizes what divine afflatus he may expect at his death hour, making him to choose between his children as God chooses; but he will not wait for that.

The old man has on his side human will, wisdom and descent, without any spiritual certainty. His wife has the advantage of him, holding on her part divine will, and wisdom, and commandment; Isaac is about to utter, as by heavenly dictation, a mere human caprice; his error would have been fatal; in comparison with this danger, the course of Rebekah was right; it was the last

desperate effort of a wise Christian woman to preserve the purity and safety of her household.

But as a consequence of these painful family deceptions, the dignity and lustre of Isaac's age are obscured; brothers part in wrath; the mother is deprived of her best solace; and the son becomes a poor outcast. It is a sad scene in this dwelling of the saintly Isaac; this deceit and separation among the saints of God. There are no flawless saints this side of heaven; their pattern and their future are perfect, their earth life bears the taint of the earthy.

The explication of this portion of the history now demands an excursus on the apparent contradiction of Esau's contempt and Esau's tears. Esau despises and sells his birthright to Jacob, and anon he breaks out into bitter wailing: "Bless me, even me also, O my father!"

In the matter of selling the birthright, for the absurd price of a mess of red pottage, we must consider first, Esau's ruling characteristic—a living in the present, and an undervaluing of the future. At that moment all Esau wanted was red pottage; he had tents, wives, food, servants, garments, all the riches of the nomad; red pottage alone he craved at that minute, and to supply that need was his first desire. He knew that his father had yet probably very many years to live, and it would be therefore long before the property came to his heirs; and in the changes and chances of his hunter, freebooting life, Esau was quite likely to die before Isaac. Next, we must remember that while these considerations led him to undervalue his inheritance *in toto*, he fully understood Jacob's prevailing passion, and when speaking with him knew that the reference was mainly to the spiritual birthright; Jacob was willing to take that and resign flocks, herds and other patriarchal wealth; Esau so understood it, and absolutely in his secret soul thought the spiritual birthright more a burden than a profit, and thus *despised* it.

But now when Isaac, grown very feeble, talks of blessing his sons, the excitable Esau believes his father has had a premonition of speedy death; he sees himself now more than likely to outlive his parent, and his chance of heiring the property becomes a matter of importance. Moreover, when Isaac speaks of birthright and blessing, Esau sees that it is in a temporal as well as a spiritual sense; the flocks and the tents are going with the priesthood; the servants and the wells of water are to be part and parcel of that birthright benediction; the tangible is to be joined to the invisible. Esau cannot let all go; what if he did in a limited sense sell out to Jacob, and swear to the bargain, he will now ignore that transaction, and get the blessing; he had rather be weighed down with religious duties than be shorn of temporal wealth. It is this apparent nearness of the disposition and division of the property, and the fact that finite wealth is to be joined by Isaac with the strange kingdom of the future, that fires Esau's slothful soul, and wakes in him desires which when disappointed gush forth in unavailing cries and tears. It is this which spurs him into wrathful threats to slay Jacob; for if Jacob is dead there will be no one to dispute Esau's sole heirship; and it is this which causes Esau's fury to moderate, and thoughts of murder to fade from his mind, when Jacob has run away to Mesopotamia, with only a staff in his hand. It is this that when Isaac still lingers after twenty years, but is evidently near death, and Jacob after so long exile seems suddenly returning to get possession of the property, which caused Esau to go to meet him with four hundred men; and only a meeting with God, and a change of heart, would have changed Esau's purpose, and have caused him so peaceably after his father's burial to move to Mount Seir, and leave the land to Jacob; though we have no doubt that then at least half that was Isaac's went with his elder son; but by this time both Esau and Jacob had grown so wealthy that the land was not able to yield food for the dependents

of both, and each had more property than he well knew what to do with.

But now, to return to the scene in the tent of Isaac, when Rebekah's wile disappoints her husband's intention. Jacob had received the parental blessing, and gone out from his father's tent in a tumult of joy, terror, triumph and shame. Then Esau enters in. There is no scene more touching in Holy Writ. The disappointment and despair of Esau; the trembling of Isaac at the indignity put on him by the deceit, and his consciousness that in this God had taken the reins from his wilful and unworthy hands; and that exceeding great and bitter cry lifted up by the hunter son, which has woke its echo in all hearts in all the passing years, form a most pathetic story.

Esau's cry is another exhibition of his passive, hopeless yielding to the pressure of circumstances, a trait inherited from Isaac: "Bless me, even me also, O my father!" he entreats, and each heart entreats with him, moved by his pathos. He bewails his fate from his birth hour to the present. He cries, "Hast thou not reserved a blessing for me?"

The partial old parent had never thought of reserving a blessing for the subtle Jacob; and in dismay he enumerates what he has under a mistake bestowed.

Still with weeping comes that prayer: "Hast thou but *one* blessing, O my father? Bless me also, O my father!"

Then was Isaac enabled to give his hunter son the very blessing that suited him best; the very one he had use for; the blessing of earthly power and abundance; the posssession of families and treasure; the dew of heaven from above; the fatness of earth beneath; the blessing of the strong arm and the glittering sword; domination resented; the yoke broken. The heart of Esau revived, when he found that in Jacob's blessing the very good he valued most had been omitted, had been left for him. However, he was angry

with his brother, and treasured up against him the hot memory of his bitter cry and tears. He consoled himself with hope of vengeance, and turned to his sword to vindicate him. Therefore Rebekah sent Jacob from her until wrath should be past. With his usual submissiveness Isaac resigns himself to what has happened. He sees in Jacob his theocratic heir, renews his blessing, and sends him away, portionless but hopeful.

Esau having found that his marriages have been displeasing to his parents; a matter which previously had not presented itself to his inconsiderate heart; with his natural recklessness, and entire ignorance of righteousness, or propriety, takes his cousin Mahalath, the daughter of Ishmael, for his third wife. Esau could not see that this but made a bad matter worse; he thought the proceeding a beautiful concession to family feeling. It took powerful impressions to make this man understand anything; in all these years he had not perceived any wrong in his heathenish marriages. He is the type of the low and earthly mind, clogged with its earthliness, even in its highest ideals.

Jacob fleeing from Beersheba to Haran comes to Luz, and lies down to rest on the barren stony hillside. Here he meets the most wonderful experience of his life; the one which re-creates him, and sends him on his way a new man.

Behold, say some, the favoritism of God! Esau, robbed and miserable, had a much better right to comfort than Jacob. But not so. This was a kind of comfort that Esau would not have valued. Jacob had, and cherished capacity for the spiritual. Esau did not desire anything of the kind. As to favoritism, during the course of these two brothers on earth, the odds are in favor of Esau. He remains in his native home; he serves no man; he is rich; he does just as he pleases; he lords it royally over his neighbors, friend and foe; we hear of no troubles in his family life; five sons become the ancestors of royal lines of dukes,

that " were kings that reigned in the land of Edom, before there reigned any king over the children of Israel," and who had " their habitations in the land of their possession."

The favoritism extended to Jacob visited with chastisement all his sins, in this life. We behold in him exhibited the eternal and needful connection between crime and its penalty. He strove with Esau, and his twelve sons strove among themselves; he demanded an oath from his hungry brother, and he saw his sons Simeon and Levi despising an oath, fierce in wrath, cruel in anger, self-willed, and making him odious in the land of his sojourn; he coveted Esau's richest possession, and Laban coveted his goods, and changed his wages ten times; he deceived his father and Laban, and after that his own children deceived him; he wore Esau's coat, and had poor Joseph's bloody garment spread before him; he finds himself cheated in a wife, and resolved not to resign his idolized Rachel, he yields to the crime of polygamy, and has in his home the strife of sister-wives; the concubines and their sons, the diverse children of so many unions, and the shame and horror of Reuben's defilement. When at last he gets rest in the cave of Machpelah, it is not by Rachel or his concubines, but beside the one wife whom God had ordained for him, Leah, the ancestress of Christ.

The rejection of Esau, referred only to the headship of the nation, the priesthood and the progenitorship of Jesus. There is no reason for supposing that God rejected Isaac's first-born from salvation. " He found no place for repentance, though he sought it carefully and with tears," does not refer to his seeking soul-safety, and finding none; but to his great and bitter cry after the birthright, which he had deliberately sold to his brother. He sought the first-born's relinquished blessing with tears, after it was irretrievably gone from him. God's " loving" and " hating," moreover, refer to his sovereign choice between these two for the

recipient of the covenant blessing, of ancestorship of Messiah. We make no reference to any other, or further choosing of the Divine Owner and Disposer of all things; we consider but this case immediately in hand; and when Esau the hunter and the careless is older, we find God evidently operating powerfully upon his mind, and impelling him to meet his penitent brother with a royal love and generosity.

Perhaps on the night when Jacob strove at Jabbok, not for himself alone, but for his brother, Esau obtained such an experience in proportion to his spiritual ability, as Jacob had at Bethel.

Jacob reached Luz the unconverted man, tortured by a knowledge of some better life than he possessed, yearning for it, and groping blindly. As he lay on the hill-slope, a stone for his pillow, and his staff by his side, too wretched to sleep, the starry worlds sweeping in their infinite altitude above these ripples of time, mocked in their purity and peace his fever-tossed soul. Looking up into the solemn and mysterious quietude of that purple, star-set sky, he realized how far was his life from God; how far from the models of Abraham and Isaac; this passion-tossed adventurer cried out for the Lord. He longed with deeper apprehension of its meaning, for that holy fellowship with Him who had set the starry feet of Orion to pace their rounds along the Syrian sky in unapproached splendor: star after star rising and setting, wheeling out of sight, carried his humbled spirit along with it toward that throne of God, the centre of the universe. Wearied out he slept, and in that blessed slumber came the celestial vision. He beheld a ladder, the humanity of Christ, reaching between earth and heaven; a ladder, type of the Daysman, who can lay one hand on the dust-bowed head of his worshipper, and with the other take hold of the Eternal throne of the Father; on this symbolic ladder, the angels of God's rich mercies passed to and fro; only by Christ can they come! Moreover,

above this ladder, framed of light, stood Jehovah-Jesus, proclaiming and confirming the covenant of Abraham and Isaac. Thus Jacob recognized the house of God, and here he vowed and worshipped.

There is but one great saving work of God—Faith. One sole saving act—Faith: into this now had Jacob come.

The next tremendous, far-reaching experience of Jacob is, after more than twenty years, at the ford of Jabbok, on his return to Canaan from his long exile.

Jacob, the lone wanderer, has become a mighty prince. He has a countless train of flocks and herds; oxen, asses, and camels, with servants to care for them, and food sufficient for his household; his camels are laden with tent furniture and goodly raiment; he has two wives, two concubines, and eleven sons. With native caution he advances over the lengthening plain. His youth's sowing of greedy distrust is bringing now a harvest of fear and care. Far out of sight, yet approaching this caravan, comes the band of Esau from his abode; Esau, the warrior and hunter, with four hundred armed men at his beck; every one strong, bold, and well equipped.

Jacob shows his changed disposition in that he now betakes himself to prayer instead of fraud. He does his best for the safety of his dependants, then flies to the Strong for strength, to the Defender for defence.

Jacob has been drawn from Mesopotamia by homesick desire; he has received no recall, no intimation that the old time danger is gone. He sends a propitiatory present, a gift of penitence and restitution; this, and his meeting with the hosts of God give him courage with regard to Esau; he thereafter strives with the angel for a deeper internal realization of the divine life, and for a higher spiritual appreciation of the promises. In this struggle his strength is that very core and heart of his nature—adherence to

faith in the future; as this deep spiritual strife draws to its close, Jacob's human strength and courage are gone, withered by the angel's potent touch; but his divine strength rises to its loftiest altitude in utter self-renunciation; the crowning purpose of his soul, the obtaining of the celestial blessing, cries out in speech; he clings all the closer for the words, "Let me go." The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence; Jacob is of the violent who take it by force; and he wrests from his spiritual antagonist a blessing, and a new name, Israel—prevailing Prince. In the ardor and boldness of his soul-victory, he seeks more than God will grant; the name of that man—that Divine Man. "It is secret," says "the angel of the Lord's face." Later by half a century, he learned what he sought; and the name of *Shiloh* was whispered by the Spirit into an ear dulled to the sounds of earth.

In the hour when Jacob, in the presence of the Angel of the Incarnation, had made a vast step onward in the spiritual life, Esau had come to a sense of the glory and need of forgiveness, and that most miserable day of strife and division in Isaac's home, when the couch of the patriarch became a second Mount Moriah, when in the words, "Yea, and he shall be blessed," he offered as a sacrifice to God his preference for his first-born; when Rebekah with heroic wisdom sent forth her beloved to find a pious wife—is counterbalanced by this ardent, loving, generous meeting between these two long-separated brothers. Having humiliated himself before God, Jacob humbles himself to Esau; reconciled to God, the brothers are reconciled to each other. Here was the resurrection morning of their life, old things had passed away, and all things had become new.

At Hebron Jacob and Esau, with filial love, closed the long sightless eyes of Isaac their father; laying him to solemn rest in the cave of Machpelah, they stood, as Isaac and Ishmael had done, friends by their father's grave. Then the wealthy Esau, with

the greatest cordiality, moved his vast possessions to Mount Seir, that he might give Jacob free possession of the promised land.

Another tender scene of the history is, when Jacob, in his old age an exile for the second time—Jacob, who had seen the host of God at Mahanaim, is set before the king of Egypt. He says to Aphophis, "Few and evil have the days of my life been."

His closing years were peace, the troubles of his life died out like great waves when the storms have passed by; the spirit of prophecy was in him, and he saw the future glory arising from bondage, as morning from night; he saw the Redeemer of Israel and the Gentiles, in his first advent of humility, in his second coming with power.

Jacob, the supplanter, had been the cunning man of strife; Israel, the prevailing prince, was a man of peace.

In his last hours Jacob does not fall into the grand error of Isaac's life. Again, God has decreed that the elder shall serve the younger; and Jacob recognizing this, when he comes to bless the sons of Joseph, guides his hands wittingly, crossing his aged arms, on their way to those bowed heads. It is Rebekah's sagacity, shining out in the dying moments of her son!

This Prince with God, Jacob the converted, Jacob the product of grace, goes to his grave mourned by his kindred, and by the land of Mizraim.

"Chariots and horsemen, a very great company," go up with his embalmed body toward the cave of Machpelah. The Canaanites see this wonderful mourning as for a king; the elders of the land of Egypt wail at the threshing floor of Atad seven days, with all the pomp and circumstance of Eastern woe. And thus the last of the three great patriarchs is gathered to his fathers.

V.

JOSEPH.

THE PROFITS OF GODLINESS.

"GODLINESS," writes the Apostle Paul to Timothy, "is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come."

Between the Flood and the Advent, Godliness especially received the promise of worldly prosperity. The rule that wealth and security should follow a godly life was so general, that when Job, in his hour of trial, became its exception, his three friends, evidently wise men in their day, could only refer his troubles to some secret sin, some flagrant dereliction known only to his God, and by Him chastised.

"Remember," pleads Eliphaz the Temanite, "I pray thee, who ever perished being innocent; or where were the righteous cut off?" If Eliphaz had lived under this dispensation of the last days, he would have found more chances and changes in heaven and earth than were dreamt of in his philosophy. However, when this long-bearded, long-lived logician, discoursed of the righteous, that "he would be in league with the stones of the field; the beasts of the field would be at peace with him; and he should come to his grave in old age like a shock of corn fully ripe," he reasoned very well from the data within his reach.

In those earlier ages, God set before the world his sovereignty, by crowning his servants with every earthly blessing, that all

men might recognize Him as the ruler and possessor of the bounty and richness of the universe. In these later days the particular promise is for the spiritual gift; contentment in adversity, confidence in the midst of trial; faith in darkness and woe; and a celestial peace and patience, taking hold on the heavenly.

Joseph, in the early Scripture history, stands forth as a symmetrical, beautiful, and nearly perfect Christian character. He was one, who climbing heavenward with swift, sure steps, at the same time strode up the steep ascent of earthly greatness; and, arrived at the height of human pomp and power, wore his holy humility and grace about him like the nimbus of the gods; in every act and word, shining upon men in the pure and singular beauty of his godliness.

From the thirty-seventh chapter of Genesis, the history of Jacob lives on in that of his sons, the heads of all the tribes of Israel, the chosen race, appointed by God to show his mercy and his justice, and to type the Church of the Living in all coming time. The history of Jacob the man, broadens into that of Israel the people: and the history of Israel the people, swells into mighty significance as the history of the Church; a history gathering and growing, and rolling on in its splendor and wonder, through that utterly incomprehensible something, which men name often—and Scripture but four times—Eternity.

Among these twelve sons, the history of two was of the greatest moment: of Judah, that the genealogy of Messiah might be traced; of Joseph, because through him came the mightiest changes, the most important events, in the annals of the nation.

The history of Joseph is a triple cord: there runs through it the genesis of Israel in Egypt; the development of special providences bringing good out of evil, and the exhibition of the Profits of Godliness: the rewards which in this life follow the practice of virtue.

Joseph stands at a great turning point in the Israelitish history; not merely as marking their descent into that bondage which was to prepare the way for the conquest of Canaan, but because with him the shepherd nomads enter into the splendid civilization of Egypt. The children of Jacob are for long years the pupils of the most learned, refined and artistic nation then existing; and the Church in Israel lays hold of the wisdom and culture of the world as a robe for her adornment. Hereafter the religious Hebrew spirit is entwined with Egyptian art and literature.

From birth Joseph was a marked character—as his father says long after, he was separate from his brethren. The first especial mention of this son of Jacob's age reveals the lad as a person of wonderful naïveté and simplicity, and also of great moral earnestness. He accepts and rejoices in the promises of the future; and expects every one else to do the same; he hates sin as sin.

Being seventeen years old, the youth is taken from the child-life he has enjoyed in the tents, and set as a shepherd boy under his half brothers, the sons of the concubines; his father prefers Joseph in his heart, but metes out justice in act, giving him no undue advantage. In the company of these brothers Joseph soon discerns their evil nature; he sees their ungodly character, and speaks of it to his father; thus four of his brothers are turned against him. After this, Jacob dressed his favorite in a robe of peculiar richness and beauty; it has been thought that this garment was a token that he intended the spiritual birthright and family headship to be bestowed upon this son. This view of the case was probably taken by the elder brethren, the six sons of Leah; who by their priority, and from the fact that they were the offspring of the first wife, resented their father's preference, and revenged it by warring against Joseph. In this manner the ten brothers, and doubtless their three mothers, were rendered hostile to Joseph, and he found in his own home no friends but his father and the child

Benjamin. To comfort him in this trial, and give him hope in the years to come, while he was being matured by privations, he received two dreams, each tokening his future lofty estate. The dreams coming from God, and expressing the Divine intention, were very welcome to this youth devoid of spite or envy, and he simply expected his brothers to accept the will of God, and admire the promise as much as he did himself. Although his brothers could not speak peaceably to him, this genial boy ran to them with his dreams, unconscious of the malice and jealousy of which the depraved heart is capable. The brethren again read the sign as referring to the birthright, an inheritance which with the passing years was growing an object of greater and greater moment to the chosen house. These men, resolved that what each chiefly craved should not go to the boy brother, undertook to outwit heaven by disposing of Joseph. We see here how wicked men overreach themselves. Judah was the person to whom that birthright should descend; but instead of making common cause against him, they turned their enmity upon one who was destined to uphold and increase the immediate glory and prosperity of the whole family. Jacob with mingled feelings soothed his perturbed elder sons, and mildly rebuked the younger; but he hid the portents in his heart, to see whereunto they would grow. Jacob had had his experience, and learned what it is to hasten on before the solemn march of divine Providence.

Joseph's sagacious condemnation of his brothers' character, and his straightforward narration of his dream, mark the moral earnestness of his disposition. What was right was his first question. Righteousness was the ideal of his soul, the one cherished object of his life. This moral earnestness was the root of his self-reliance and force of character; which in every phase of his history marked him out as the man for high position, great responsibilities, and therefore great honors. This moral earnestness was a drop of honey

in his being, while his brothers were permeated with the gall of envy; most miserable emotion, which, as says Æschylus, in "Agamemnon," so tortures man that

> "Of inward pain the heavy load he bears,
> At sight of joy without he mourneth ever."

By Jacob and Moses, Joseph is mentioned as a Nazarite; a consecrated or separated one; and among his turbulent brothers he stands a boy prophet, uttering presages of the future; simple as a child; prudent as a patriarch of many days; so generous and noble, that he is set a precious type of Jesus, the Saviour of a world.

The life of Joseph has three periods: his childhood, in Hebron, at his father's side, including his first seventeen years; his servitude in Egypt, embracing the next thirteen; and his eighty years of splendor, at the helm of state in the kingdom of Mizraim.

In the first period his obedience, purity and earnestness, made him his father's favorite; secured him long protection and tenderness by that father's side, and clad him in the robe of honor, dear as a sign of parental approbation; here, also, he received from heaven those two golden visions which were well-springs of confidence for the future. Thus growing in wisdom and stature in Hebron, Joseph the boy learned the profits of godliness in the favor of God and good men.

Between the close of the first era in Joseph's life, his boyhood at home, and the second era, his slavery in exile, we have a truly Oriental picture. We behold nine of the sons of Jacob seated under the shade of Dothan's spreading trees to eat their noonday meal. Their flocks graze in peace about them, wading deep in the lush, green herbage, sweet with blossoms. Far other than peace is the emotion of the patriarch's sons; they look askance at each other; remorseless hatred glows upon the faces of the children of the concubines. Reuben, the firstborn of the house, has left

them, Simeon and Levi, whose "habitations are cruelty," have resolved to let an evil deed go on; Judah is in conflict between horror of a mighty crime, desire of amity with his elder brothers, and secret displeasure against Rachel's son. Issachar and Zebulun showed the spirit their father, years later, indicated in his blessing; they side with the majority, and now the majority is for murder, for fratricide. Joseph, the son preferred, the dreamer of dreams, and the wearer of the gorgeous robe, token of parental partiality, Joseph, suddenly fallen from happiness and hope, exhausted with struggles, prayers and fruitless cries for help, is cast down into a pit near at hand. The agitated elder brothers, as they make pretence of eating, look here and there; and now one spies a low, dark line, creeping along the edge of the eastern sky. The heavens are like a dome of burnished brass, the air quivers with the hot noon; beyond the verdant, watered plain of Dothan, stretches a broad dry waste; and through it runs the highway winding from Beisan to Ramleh. This creeping line assumes definite shape; the brothers see that it is a caravan, bound to the land of the Pharaohs.

From the balm-dropping forests of Gilead the Ishmaelites heading their tributary Midianites are going to the granary of the world, Nile-enriched Egypt, to exchange luxuries for bread. The camels of these traders are loaded with "spicery, balm and myrrh." The forests of the mountain Gilead have yielded them sweet-scented woods; they carry also the world-renowned balm, which the prophet has chosen as a type forever sacred, of the heavenly consolation. They have gathered the gum-tragacanth of Syria, the fragrant rose of the cistus, and heavy weight of rare spices, craved in Egypt for the embalming of the dead. Removed from the odorous forest glades and sunny defiles, these precious spices are carried on the long journey across the scorching plains to find their last use and hiding in the grim mausoleums of Egyp-

tian princes. Out of life, out of the realm of blossoming flowers, the stirring of the perfumed breezes, the murmuring of bees, and the ecstatic carolling of birds, they are going down to the region and shadow of death, the dark, rock-hewn, last abodes, of the worshippers of Isis and Osiris. But mingled in this advancing train are dark lithe forms in humble guise; these Ishmaelites deal in men as well as in balm and spice; they carry slaves for Egypt's living princes, when they take her myrrh for her dead. Nearer and nearer they come; they will pass not far from the resting and unrestful shepherds; the tortured transgressors watch the strangers' motions, with that intent desire the wicked feel to find some external interest to distract them from the thoughts of their sins. Suddenly Judah speaks. Reuben has gone away, apparently despairing because he may not save his brother; Judah can not be reconciled to the quick shedding of blood, or the greater cruelty of leaving the lad to die in the agonies of thirst and hunger in the dry pit. He sees a third resource: "Come," says he, "let us sell him to these Ishmaelites. Let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother, and our flesh; what profit shall it be to slay him, and conceal his blood?"

The brothers spring up with alacrity; their difficulty is solved: the slave in Egypt will never win the birthright; their revenge will be sweet and perfect; no avenger of blood can dog their footsteps; Reuben and Judah can never betray them as murderers. They cannot sell him in that princely guise; they tear off the coat, object of their envy; they sell the grandson of Isaac to the descendants of Ishmael. Slowly the caravan, passing south and west, winds out of sight, leaving the air sweet with its perfume, carrying with it one slave more, the weeping favorite of Jacob.

When Jacob's sons returned to their father at Hebron with their report of Joseph's death, and his bloody robe as their token, the grief of the old man was inconsolable. There was self-re-

proach for sending the lad so far alone; anguish for loss of one so dear; but, bitterest element in the father's grief, we see his suspicion of his elder sons; suspicions which he cannot and will not speak, but which, for twenty-two years, corrode his heart, until the dark day when Simeon has disappeared, and Benjamin is demanded, and he cries in terror and pain, "Me, have ye bereaved of my children." Truly the sting of death is sin. This thought of sin darkens all Jacob's hope of the future; he, in his hour of agony, is no longer Israel, the prevailing prince; he loses, at the moment, both the loving endurance which shines in Isaac, and the hopeful energy of Abraham; faith and promise, the two correlated factors of the saints below, are lost out of Jacob's life for the time, and he cries out, "I will go down into the grave mourning unto my son!" He will not seek him among the saints redeemed, whom Enoch saw in vision, but he will go to him into that dreary, earthy, unlighted future of the heathen, *Sheol*, the land of shadows, to "Hades, awful and unseen."

After this loss of Joseph, while with hypocritical sorrow the sons of Jacob strove to comfort their mourning sire, Judah separated from his brethren, and went to dwell among the people of the land. Here falls that singular shadow over the family history of Judah, the ancestor of Messiah, where the royal heir of Jacob shows in such dark contrast to the chaste and godly Joseph. But through temptation, downfall, trial, repentance, and self-conflict, Judah reaches that magnificent fulness of character, which marks him worthy his place in history, sire of a line of kings, root of an everlasting empire. Beside this man, whose goodness and glory bloom late, like an aloe or a century plant, the early spirituality and placid self-reliance of Joseph, are like the lilies and roses that crown a passing summer.

Meantime, we follow Joseph in his exile: lonely and terrified as he is, the youth, with boyhood's bouyancy, finds interest and

consolation in the varied experiences of his journey. He recalls his father's progress from Laban's Syrian home to Hebron; he yearns for his loving father and the baby brother—and how deep that fraternal tenderness is, we can see in those after years when he falls on Benjamin's neck, and, sobbing, kisses him. But the beautiful mother is in her early grave, and no craving for her smile and blessing can intensify the bitterness of the exile's lot.

The land of Egypt is reached, and Potiphar, Captain of the Guard, selects Joseph, the handsomest of the slaves, as his own purchase. This man was the "chief of the executioners"—says Lange, "first of the eunuchs," says Knobel, "chief cook to the king," pronounces Josephus; the position first assumed, his authority over the prisons, and the captaincy of the executioners, is doubtless correct.

Joseph had brought his best friend to Egypt with him; the Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, was ever present to his youthful servant, and the profits of godliness were patent in all the lad's life. As when Jacob entered Laban's dwelling, new prosperity flowed in upon the abode of the half-idolatrous Syrian; as the Ark of God brought celestial benedictions to the home of Obed-edom, thus Potiphar experienced new affluence and happiness; and so marked was the period and manner of his unusual successes, that he attributed it to a divine blessing following the presence and labor of his Shemitic slave.

Purity and simplicity had adorned Joseph in life's first era, and he had realized their profits; in his estate of serfdom and exile he recognized still more the advantages of a godly walk and conversation. He found grace in his master's eyes; he was like a son rather than a servant; he was made the ruler of the household, there was none greater than himself, whatever he did was good; the Lord blessed him alike in house and field; all that belonged to Potiphar was put into Joseph's hand, and none questioned what

he did. Thus the lad passed ten years, and went from youth to the vigorous maturity of early manhood. The house of Potiphar was his training school for the prime ministership of Egypt. Here the son of the nomad learned the arts, the courtliness, the necessities of those who dwell in cities. The home of the Captain of the Guard was one of Egypt's gorgeous palaces, rich in paintings and sculpture, full of feasting and slaves, fragrant with perfumes, gleaming with gems and gold. Here Joseph had his business training, and developed the germs of that far-sighted policy which made him afterwards the king's right hand, and the real head of Egypt.

"Joseph was a goodly person and well favored," says the Scripture. A love of physical beauty was deeply imbedded in the Hebrew mind; the instinct of the race was æsthetic and poetical, and forbidden the pictures and sculptures in which other nations early excelled and delighted, the Hebrew turned with profound admiration and joy to charms of person and demeanor. Joseph was the living image of Rachel, long famed as one of the most beautiful of women; a creature of such rare type as Rebekah, Esther, Judith, and Mary of Nazareth. "*Joseph sanctum pulchrum corpore, pulchriorem mente,*" says St. Augustine, and it was this excelling beauty of the mind which rendered the physical beauty so transcendant. Holiness, confidence, peace, love, rayed from each feature; frank, upright, joyous, his slavery was an unfelt fetter, his exile was a forgotten pain: his dearer Father was ever with him; the Spirit indwelling compensated him for sundered fraternal ties; heaven bent as near the fertile vale of Egypt as it did over Hebron and Shechem.

But while Joseph experienced the profits of godliness each day, he was strengthened and ennobled by trials: he had been tried by unjust enmity, by parental partiality, by great success and prosperity in a usually painful position; now he was tried by the al-

lurements of flattery and lawless love. "The stranger which flatters with her words," met him, "with her much fair speech to cause him to err." But all that guileful persuasion which Solomon had, centuries later, to record, fell unheeded on Joseph's ear. The judgment of the Lord is the touchstone to which he applies everything. Like gold the single-hearted probity of the man shines forth as he says to the bold enchantress, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

From this scene in Joseph's life John Bunyan drew his picture of Standfast and Madame Bubble. This Standfast was one who went down into death's river amid a great calm, and standing "easy" in the waters of the stream "that has been a terror to many," held converse, his feet fixed on "that whereon the priests that bare the Ark of the Covenant stood, when Israel went over Jordan." Another trial comes to refine yet more beautifully the fine gold of Joseph's character. He should now reach the profits of his godliness through a fire. "For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God, endure grief, suffering wrongfully." Thus Joseph suffered. "But if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God." Thus was Joseph patient; and from the history we can see that the sting lay in Potiphar's condemning Joseph, *knowing him to be innocent.*

Doubtless the Captain of the Guard, with ten years' experience to guide him, was acute enough to discern right and wrong between his accusing wife, and his favored slave. If he had believed Joseph guilty, the severe laws of Egypt would demand his death; but if he, following his conviction, pronounced him innocent, the sentence would reproach and condemn his own household. With the calm selfishness of an Eastern despot, he makes up his mind to sacrifice the servant, whose personal attractions doubtless rouse him to some envy. His wrath was kindled,

the history does not say, against Joseph; but he had cause for rage, and the most suitable victim was the foreign bondman. Yet even here, he cannot carry his fury very far; he puts Joseph in prison, deprives him of office and emoluments; but he puts him in the king's prison, where great men are put; and there presently the captive experiences the profits of his godliness, for he gets the freedom of his house of bondage; is given office and employment, and in the capacity of an unsalaried sub-warden he is free to exercise the philanthropy and wisdom of his soul.

"Better," saith Solomon, "is a poor and wise child, than an old and foolish king . . . for out of prison he cometh to reign." This young stranger was preparing for the real royalty of the mightiest kingdom in the world. The prison was to Joseph the path to the throne; the destinies of Egypt, and of all the tribes that cried to her for corn, hung evenly balanced between safety and destruction, and only the hand of Joseph laid upon the scale should assure the life of nations.

But for a career of such dazzling splendor, such unlimited power, a man must be fitly trained in God's School of Tribulation and Experience, or his success should prove his destruction. To all the trials gone before—hatred, indulgence, contempt, prosperity, false accusation, the charms of the Siren that killeth souls, unjust punishment—was added the cruel sting of ingratitude. A ray of hope came to the captive when he solaced the misery, and predicted the joyous future of the king's cupbearer. To him he told his unhappy story, praying, "Think on me when it shall be well with thee, and shew kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me to Pharaoh; and bring me out of this house." The conclusion of the story of his hope, the fading of its trembling ray into despair, is an epitome of the history of half the benefactors and clients upon earth, "Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgat him."

It was the last strong flame scorching the true soul in God's crucible, and it proved, for "two full years," the temper of Joseph's spirit.

Thus the second era of his life, that of slavery and imprisonment, passes away. As in his boyhood's home, he had been of sons most cherished and honored; so of prisoners and slaves he had on the whole the happiest history, the most favors, and the best ameliorations of a trying lot.

One hour swept him from Pharaoh's prison to the side of Pharaoh's throne; from being servant of servants, he became lord of lords. He types in this, as in many other phases of his blameless life, Jesus, in the hour of his humiliation, and the supreme ages of his exaltation.

The prophetic, dream-interpreting spirit, with which from early years he had been endowed, became the means of the grand change in his fortunes.

One moment he languishes in the prison, sick of heart; pining for the dear freedom of those Syrian plains; the simple pleasures of the tent life; the flocks of sheep; the stately droves of camels; the grave old family servants, who watched, like so many parents, his buoyant youth; his father's heartful blessing. Oh, to be free! He cries after freedom like a child's lamenting for its mother.

A stir at the gate. A messenger post haste from the royal abode of the Hamitic autocrat. Rameses, among his people like a god, summons the bound soothsayer to read him the riddle of his dream.

At once Joseph throws aside his weakness of longing, and is a man. He has lived so long with Potiphar, that he knows how he shall order himself to approach a king. Nor is Potiphar a whit behind: he likes Joseph; secretly pities him; he sees in him now a future possible stepping-stone to greatness; or, alas! a possible ruin, if the king's whim sets the servant above his whilom lord, and Joseph is resentful!

Therefore Joseph cuts and trims the long disordered locks. He is provided with becoming raiment. Those who came for him are hasty and excited. Joseph, calm in prosperity as in his grief, meets them with dignity and grace; and as he had in his misery let his hair and beard grow long, after the Egyptian custom of mourning, he tarries now for a little, that he may go to the king in the guise of joy.

"And Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh." He was a prince in grace and beauty; wise as a seer; polished like the most accomplished of the despot's courtiers; so evidently imbued with divine spirit, that the astonished lord of the race of Ham asks of his attendants: "Can we find such an one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?"

When the Lord's time has come to act, he makes quick work of it. Short space was between the black door of the prison and the court shining in scarlet, gold and blue, those deathless tints, which glow upon our eyes to-day, in their resurrection after centuries of hiding, in Egyptian sepulchres.

"I have dreamed a dream!" cries Pharaoh, in terror and excitement. "I have heard say of thee, that thou canst understand a dream to interpret it."

Joseph can never go anywhere unless his God goes first; he now sets evidently forth the directing providence of the Power he serves. "It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace."

Thus sheltered behind the ægis of his Holy One, Joseph is not dazzled by earthly pomp and displays. His calm soul can fix itself upon the king's narration; and, unallured by the magnificence around him, he sets his mind, not on his own liberation or reward, not on the scenes new to his eyes; but on the singular providence revealed in these dreams; on the wonders of the divine plan; and on the great possibility of saving a nation, lying in the

most imminent danger. His swift, heaven-instructed thought takes in all that is needed; the plan to be pursued; the demand for an overseer; and all the perfection of that simple, yet stupendous project for saving half the known world from the jaws of destruction.

Mark it, Joseph has been asked for exegesis, but not for exhortation! He has been required to unravel, but not to advise; without the slightest idea of his own aggrandizement, he makes haste to charge the mute, amazed king, as to what should be done to turn this foreknowledge to the best possible account. Wisdom from above shines through every syllable of that golden address. No wonder that, bending from the splendors of his royal couch, Aphophis exclaims: "There is none so discreet and wise as thou; thou shalt be over my house; according to thy word, shall all my people be ruled; only in the throne will I be greater than thou!"

Thus, by looking steadfast-eyed to the right; regarding the good of the world rather than his own fortunes; setting forth the honor of his God before all things else, Joseph the prisoner becomes Joseph the prosperous.

Happy, but indeed seldom to be found among the children of men, is he who can, in the midst of sudden and unusual prosperity, possess his soul in calm humility. He only can do this, whose heart is stayed upon his God; who has in sore adversity learned to look beyond the seen, to the Land of Delight, where no mildew rests on the unfolded blossom of our hope.

Hidden in God's good Providence, in safety during the evil day, as Noah was preserved in the ark, and David kept in security in the cave of Adullam, Joseph came from his prison, bearing the happy fruits of his time of trial; purified and strengthened by its painful discipline, as was Moses by sojourn in Midian, David by exile, and Daniel by his captivity in Babylon.

He went out from the presence of Pharaoh, with the seal ring of grand vizier on his hand; the white byssus robe which marked his equality with the lofty rank of priests, and the golden collar of the judge about his neck. Thus was he presented to an obsequious people; proclaimed as ruler by a new name; made to ride in the second chariot of state, while before him went a runner, commanding all Egypt to bow the knee.

Happy now in the confidence of a sovereign; happy in being a fountain of good to all the people round about, Joseph makes the land of his exile the home of his adoption. He has no desire to return to nomad life in Palestine; a cosmopolite in the best sense, he does not keep aloof from those among whom he lives; a wise ruler, he propitiates his people by being of them; he adopts their dress, manners, language; so that nine years later, his brethren consider him a true Egyptian.

Joseph, at the head of a nation, is now also at the head of a family; he marries Asenath, daughter of the chief priest of On. On is Heliopolis, the city of the sun; the city and temple were sacred to Ra; here by that magnificent temple was the college of the Priests; and here were gathered the most learned men of Egypt, or, perhaps, of the world.

Complaisant to the forms of his new country, Joseph is yet not lost in them. "Strictly speaking," says Delitzsch, "it was an assumption of Egyptian modes, by one devoted to the religion of Jehovah."

During the seven years of plenty, Joseph became father of two sons. The first born he named Manasseh, because he had been "caused to forget his own people and his father's house."

For this expression Calvin blames Joseph, while Luther asks: "Could it be right for him to forget his father's house?"

The subsequent history fully shows that the forgetting referred only to his ceasing to pine as an exile; to his having grown

content in a strange land. That he had not forgotten, is proven by the tender love that leaps out in the repeated question, "Doth my father yet live?" and in his beautiful filial service in that father's age.

The name of Joseph's second son indicates an increase of his contentment to joy: "God," he says, "has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction."

Even this expression: "The land of my sorrows," shows a mournful tenderness toward Palestine, the promised inheritance of his race.

The history of Joseph's reconciliation with his brothers extends through four chapters; this particular account shows that it is of great moment to the Church in all time. Indeed, as a record of human hopes, fears, struggles, repentance, chastisement, forgiveness, light beaming out of darkness, it is most wonderful and beautiful, appealing to every heart. But it is more especially valuable as typing, in a variety of forms, the history and philosophy of Redemption.

The twenty odd years of absence, in which the early piety of Joseph has grown so matured, and the change in his appearance and worldly circumstances has been so great, have not been without their influence on Joseph's brothers.

God has evidently visited in mercy the disunited house of Jacob, and has bowed and harmonized those turbulent sons of many wives.

We left the brothers in the field of Dothan, murderous, deceitful, cruel, envious, timid—cowards in the right; braggarts in the wrong. We find them now—when two years of famine have added to the lessons of the other years gone by—humble and obedient to their father; penitent for their conduct to Joseph; helpful and anxious for family safety; true as steel to each other; and every strong man among them a second parent to the youthful

Benjamin. They have laid aside their insane prejudice against Rachel's son; they rejoice in him as the comfort of their beloved father's declining years.

This change which is manifest in them, is a thing unknown to Joseph; and perhaps is not fully appreciated by the doating old parent.

Luther, Keil, and many more, consider the course of Joseph toward his brothers as one merely of trial; that he may, by learning their present dispositions, ascertain how much kindness he may show them, and how he can best benefit his father and Benjamin, and promote the family interests. Kurtz, Lange, and others, view his words and acts as a strife between anger and gentleness; and declare that to show Joseph as calmly, in the midst of his forgiveness, studying the characters of his brothers, would be to ascribe to him a superhuman holiness and perfection, quite above that intended in the Old Testament account. It is considered that Joseph only by severe struggles reaches forgiveness toward them; and that his wavering decisions and postponement of judgment show the tremendous moral contest in his own breast.

We must however remember, that from the beginning of his career, Joseph was not merely human but godly; that he had in him largely-developed holy charity, that suffereth long and is kind; that he had the fruits of the Spirit, love, peace, joy; that every step of his life had been the development of a grand religious nature. Moreover, the prudence which could sway all the varied and intricate affairs of Egypt, would teach him to move very cautiously in an affair so delicate and momentous. If these men were bad men, to give them countenance, power, wealth, would be to increase their means to do evil. Joseph yearned toward them as his brethren in the flesh; but before he bade them welcome to his adopted home, he must know that they were

brethren according to the spirit. Else, they might work ruin for themselves, disgrace for him, confusion in all the land of Pharaoh.

Besides this, in the keeping of these brothers were the feeble old father and the helpless youth, Benjamin; to secure a separation of these two and a transfer to his own care if needful, demanded even all the wisdom for which the discreet Joseph was famous. But if the ten brothers were true men, far be it from Joseph to divide them; he would clasp them all to his great heart of love.

Joseph had seen so clearly the leading hand of God in the persecutions and troubles of his early days, and had reaped so rich a reward for all his sufferings, that we cannot suppose that he retained any resentment toward those who, instead of being the occasions of his ruin, had proved to be only the foundation stones of his greatness. Lifted to the pinnacle of power in Egypt, blessed with all and everything that earth could bestow, Joseph had no need to sigh over the steps which led him in his upward way.

It may be hard to forgive while suffering wrongfully; it is easy, when that suffering has been the footstool to a throne! If the brothers had come when Joseph languished in the prison house, and then, in his dark trial, he had forgiven them, we should call it a "superhuman perfection beyond the Old Testament standpoint," reaching to that of Stephen, kneeling at the moment when, under the blows of his death missiles, he was being rapidly carried forward to the perfection and complete sanctification of the saints in glory.

Standing as Joseph did, a godly man, whose bondage had blossomed into the primacy of the greatest realm on earth, we can easily understand how forgiveness filled all his heart.

They had come! journeying from Palestine, dusty, worn, and travel stained; the anxieties of famine written on their faces; every step of their way had been a step in fulfilment of that long

lost brother's early dreams. If instead of coming from Hebron or Shechem, they must needs have made their journey from the remotest bounds of earth, from the shores of the Eastern Sea, from the hot slopes of farther India, or the heights of distant Thibet, they would yet have been brought on their way by the irresistible drawings of that Divine decree, that they must come and bow themselves down before Joseph, the godly one.

They were late indeed; at least twenty-three years had elapsed between the dream and its fulfilment; they come, not because Joseph dreamed, but because God inwove his decrees in those visions of the night. So in the hearts of men, slumber, stir, awake, grow, and come to flower and fruitage, the germs of destiny.

The ten stand before the ruler of Egypt. At his gracious and dignified presence, not only their knees bow, but their hearts; they make not merely a ceremonious and compelled, but a voluntary and most hearty obeisance.

"They knew him not." Years had moulded that boy brother to a princely manhood. The slender, weeping, struggling, pleading slave has developed to a maturity of self-conscious power. They have envied him the many-hued coat; now he wears the fine linen of Egypt, worth its weight in gold; and a kingdom's ransom of gems gleams upon the person of Pharaoh's favorite, not adorning him, but by him adorned.

"And Joseph saw his brothers, and knew them."

Every lineament of those haughty faces is written on his heart. The noble figure of Reuben, the eldest; the kingly bearing of Judah, the chosen Prince with God; the fiery countenances of those twin spirits, Simeon and Levi, hasty alike in ill and good; the subtle eyes of Dan; the indolent grace of Issachar; Naphtali, with his melodious, persuasive tongue; Gad, strong of arm and swift of step, a desert king! How Joseph's forgiving soul

yearns to them, as they prostrate themselves before his royal seat.

But he is not a madman, to accept them unquestioned and unknown; if their spirits are lawless and cruel as in days of old, let them go back to kindred natures, descendants of Ishmael and Edom.

But, lo, they speak to him with reverence, discretion and self-respect. When they are falsely accused, and cast into prison, he hears them, in self-reproach and humility, acknowledging the crying guilt of the past; lamenting it as those who full often had bemoaned it in secret conference; and recognizing, with submissive spirits, the punitive justice of the Lord.

These words are a balm to Joseph's heart; yet more is he consoled and encouraged by all that he learns of them, until that crowning hour, when he sees them as one man returned to share Benjamin's fate. Instead of hating their younger brother, and striving to be rid of him, they plead his cause; and Judah, type of his Divine descendant, stands up as Benjamin's surety, and offers to suffer in his room. Then is the cup of Joseph's happiness full to the brim with sweetness unalloyed.

Where, in any human history, can be found a parallel for that grand speech of Judah?

In this narrative the portraiture of Judah gathers brightness with each successive touch. To his father he is forebearing, gentle, firm; to Joseph courteous, true, logical, earnest, self-sacrificing; he has risen to a heroic grandeur, worthy his lofty place in history.

In this story, we have very many types of Christ in his work and character; Jacob, Reuben, Judah, Joseph, Benjamin, all serve in their turn. There was heavy guilt resting on the children of Jacob; it was purged away only by Jacob's delivering up the beloved, only remaining son of his Rachel; by Judah's

offering to suffer—the innocent for the guilty; by Benjamin, the gracious, standing a reconciler between his offended and offending brothers.

There are choice points where the student of this early world life loves to linger. Joseph has found the true root of peace, content, forgiveness, joy, every blissful emotion, when he has learned to see in each event of his life not the cruel, marring hand of man, but the wise, loving, guiding hand of God. In God all discords are lost, as in his home of perpetual peace.

What must have been the tender flood of recollection sweeping over Joseph's soul, when he handled that present sent by his unconscious father to a stranger son? Those choice fruits of Canaan; connected with his childhood, his home, his beautiful mother: balm, honey, spices and myrrh, nuts and almonds: noble gifts of the heaven blessed soil of the land to be made forever sacred by the footsteps of the Son of God! To the exile ruler in Egypt how they appeal, recalling the bliss and wonders of his youth, the glories of his native land.

The influence obtained by the godly Joseph in Egypt is especially seen in the welcome, for his sake, extended to his brethren, and the benefits heaped upon them. Thus for the sake of the Church, the world is blessed.

Behold the scene when that gorgeous "second chariot in the kingdom" is made ready to go and meet Jacob. Its gold and purple splendors flash under the sun; before it run dark slaves; the horses are caparisoned in silver and scarlet, and nodding plumes; it is attended by a noble escort. So it goes up to Goshen, and there the long parted parent and son are re-united; and Joseph, in a passion of tenderness, "fell on his father's neck, and wept on his neck a good while."

As prime minister of the kingdom, Joseph is more and more acceptable; as in Potiphar's house, everything prospers under

his hand; he accomplishes in the realm a bloodless revolution; and becomes alike the saviour of monarch and people.

It is Joseph who, after seventeen years of tender ministrations, closes his beloved father's eyes. Israel's dying is not, as once he said in his despair, a going down into the shadow mourning; but it is the setting forth for a higher life; he is laying down infirmity and age, to be clothed with deathless vigor.

> "Now purified at last, with hope revived,
> For life's new goal he starts."

The glorious spirit of Prophecy irradiates his dying bed. Grand visions are, like Elijah's fire chariot, to bear him upward. His blessings had "prevailed above the blessings of his progenitors, unto the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills."

To the end of his life, Joseph was doubtless prime minister of Egypt, filling that lofty station for eighty years. In that time he had not forgotten Palestine, nor failed, Hebrew-like, to live in the promise of the future. He seals his godly trust, and his hope in the Coming One, by the oath he exacts from his descendants to carry up his bones when they return to the heritage of their fathers, the land of Israel's possession.

Until that grand Exodus, Joseph the Hebrew lay in state in the tomb of kings; swathed in costly linen, wrapped up in priceless spices, his sarcophagus encrusted with gold, and painted with the impervious colors of the early orientals, slept the once slave boy. The burial was not too costly and honorable for this exponent of godliness—this fair model for all men.

> "All the kings of the nations lie in glory,
> Cased in cedar and shut up in sacred gloom!
> They reigned in their lifetime, with sceptre and diadem,
> But thou excellest them;
> For life doth make thy grave her oratory,
> And the crown is still on thy brow;
> All the kings of the nations lie in glory,
> And so dost thou."

VI.

PHARAOH.

EGYPT AGAINST HEAVEN.

IN the period of time comprised between the fifth and twelfth chapters of Genesis, Moses, the Israelite, and Sethos II., the Egyptian, are described as pitted against each other in a desperate struggle. Moses stood the divinely appointed leader of the Church of the Lord; and thus God, and not Moses, was the real antagonist of Sethos, the unlimited despot of the greatest kingdom of the world.

The strife was between Earth and Heaven—between the servants of God, acting under his orders, and the highest civilization, the greatest wealth, and the chief military skill then existant.

The extreme rationalistic view of Baron Bunsen is: "The Palestinians in Egypt struck a grand blow to avenge liberty—others of their race came from Syria to help them; and the day when they united forces, was the great Sicilian Vespers in which Asia avenged herself on Africa."

The Chevalier, like Pharaoh, leaves God out of the record. In direct opposition to this human view, and liberty theory, is the Scriptural statement of the strife and its ulterior causes. Liberty was indeed avenged; but only because it is good, and, like all good, is wrapped up in the furtherance of the Divine glory. "I will send all my plagues on thine heart," proclaims the Lord to Pharaoh; "and on thy servants; and on thy people, that thou

mayest know that there is none like me in all the earth. For now will I stretch forth my hand, that I may smite thee, and thou shalt be cut off from the earth; and in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, to show in thee my power, and that my name may be declared through all the earth."

Pharaoh deliberately challenges Jehovah to the conflict. "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice, or let Israel go? I know not the Lord; neither *will* I let Israel go."

Jehovah enters into the lists with braggart humanity, enters as Defender and Vindicator of his Church, to teach man in all time that "his people shall dwell safely; their place of defence shall be the munitions of the rocks," and whoso strives against them shall not prosper. Thus the Lord answers the boast of the Egyptian: "Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh, for with a strong hand *shall* he let them go; and with a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land."

Our first care in pursuing this theme will be to learn something of the royal splendor and power, the training and habit of thought, which moved this Pharaoh to assert his strength against the Almighty.

Sethos II., the Pharaoh of the Exodus, was the grandson of Sesostris-Rameses, the Pharaoh "who knew not Joseph," *i. e.*, who did not choose to recognize the compacts and conditions between the throne and the Israelites.

This Sesostris-Rameses united all Egypt under his sceptre. Thebes was the centre of his power, and after a reign of forty-four years he bequeathed to his successor a united kingdom at the climax of its glory.

Sethos II. found himself possessed of a kingdom reaching from the Delta to Syene, from Baal Zephon and Migdol to the Great Desert. Never a broad land in extent, but most magnificent in its resources; it was the world's granary; it was filled with

populous cities, and with vast momuments and art treasures; it had horses and chariots; it was the grand depot for all the traders on earth; it was rich and cultivated beyond all lands in the early history of the world; and memorable as the abode of four millions of Hebrew slaves. This immense force of serfs was busy upon great buildings, the treasure cities, Pithom and Rameses. This work during the reign or regency preceding Sethos had moved slowly, but the newly enthroned tyrant pushed it with all his cruel pride and power.

These Israelitish slaves were settled in Goshen, "the land of flowers"—a region of country lying between Canaan and the Delta, a frontier province of Egypt.

The land of Mizraim was "the land of ancient kings." The Egyptians belonged to the Hamitic race, a line which heired the culture, the warlike spirit, and the genius for building, characteristic of the Cainites of the early-world period. The land was covered with stupendous monuments of human greatness, destined to become equally the monuments of the avenging wrath of heaven. Earliest and most magnificent of these monuments, standing lonely and peerless on the dim borderland of pre-historic life, is the great pyramid of Cheops. Around it settle the mists of obscurity; from these it has loomed out in proportions, which, in strength, completeness and indestructibility, seem to hint for it some lofty origin. The waves of time, of doubt, and questioning and theorizing have dashed against its impassive feet, and rolled back broken. Before the wisdom locked in it, the world has stood waiting and groping these thousands of years. The age of consummation shall discover the key, and shall learn the meaning of

> "The mystery hid
> Under Egypt's pyramid."

Other pyramids there were, lesser copies of the first. There were also the obelisks, and the temples; temples built for every

city, and wildernesses of tombs; "there was not a wall, a platform, a pillar, an architrave, a frieze, or even a door-post in an Egyptian temple, that was not carved within and without," says Lepsius.

"Egypt," cries Bunsen, "was the monumental land of the earth, and the Egyptians were the monumental people of history."

The southern limit of Egypt was Syene, a city of enormous extent, surmounted with a massive wall. The tower of Syene is called by the prophet, "the pride of Egypt's power." And here we find ruins of cities which have grown and flourished and fallen on this ancient site, like successions of primeval forests. In the vicinity of Syene were the red granite quarries, whence the mighty engineers and architects of Egypt cut obelisks and pillars, which should astonish all the generations to come.

Moving towards the Delta, we find the city of Thebes. Says Nahum to Nineveh, "Art thou better than populous No, that was situate among the rivers? that had the waters about it, whose rampart was the sea, and her wall was from the sea?" Of all the desolate cities of antiquity, this is, in its destruction, the most stupendous; no pen or pencil can compass the matchless grandeur of this sovereign city, even in her desolation. Here was the seat of the Pharaohs' power, the stronghold, the jeweled throne, the glowing pavilion of that royal line who held themselves the climax of the ascending series of humanity; who claimed that the Egyptians excelled all other men, and the king stood with all the Egyptians beneath his feet. Of Thebes, old Homer sings:

> "The world's great empress on the Egyptian plains;
> That spreads her conquests o'er a thousand states,
> And pours her heroes through a hundred gates."

At Thebes was the temple of Rameses the Great, with the pillared Memnonium about it, built of black Nile brick, and stuccoed. For their building the Egyptians used brick, porphyry,

basalt, granite, sandstone and limestone, which, in the dry atmosphere of the country, are nearly indestructible.

Another gorgeous capital under Sethos, was Moph or Memphis, a city of fifteen or twenty miles in circumference. Here were the greatest and most ornate repositories of the dead; here the underground galleries; the cenotaphs of Apis; the colossal statue of Rameses; and, chief over all, the great pyramid.

South a little is the Sphinx, whose stony lips yet hold the riddle the world has failed to solve, and who lies an awful sentinel guarding the solemn sanctuary above, yet keeping on its benignant features a genial promise of some good to come. Thebes is the vast necropolis of a vanished kingdom.

Pharaoh also stretched his sceptre over On—Heliopolis—"the sacred city of the sun," of Herodotus, the Bethshemesh of Jeremiah. Here one lone obelisk towers, to mark where the Libyan desert has buried kings and palaces in a common grave. When Abraham went into Egypt, this obelisk was pointing its lofty spire to the Heaven which was fading from the mind of the Egyptians like a morning dream. When Sethos reigned, at the feet of this monument were gathered towers and palaces and shrines; artizans and traders, caravans and armies ebbed to and fro about it. All are gone, and the desert sand has for a thousand years been their sepulchre.

Another choice jewel of the royal crown was Tahpanhes, called Daphne by the Greeks; here, in Jeremiah's day, Israel was wooed to the worship of the sun and moon, and all the heavenly host. This city was on the Pelusiac arm of the Nile, where it could gather into its lap the treasures of land and sea.

Sixteen miles from Daphne was Pelusium, "the strength of Egypt." It was, in its day of glory, the key of the land; the bulwark of its frontier, a place of lofty importance, strongly fortified, noted for extent, wealth, and the vigilance and number of its

garrison. Almost every historian of ancient times has a word in its praise.

Thirty miles from Pelusium was Zoan "in the field." It was on the eastern branch of the Nile, in the midst of the richest alluvial plain in all the Delta. It was one of the royal cities; and remains of temples, towers, columns, walls, obelisks, fortifications and statuary yet attest the lavish beauty of its prime.

While Thebes was the capital of upper Egypt, Memphis was the royal city of the middle and lower kingdom.

Between all these vast towns and those "treasure cities," Pithom and Rameses, were stretched chains of smaller towns, none without its temple and its rock tombs. Around all lay the fertile plains which Nile has redeemed from Saharah. These fields "stood thick with corn." The river-fertilized earth brought forth more than an abundance of wheat, barley, flax, millet, and all varieties of vegetables. Groves of date palms lifted their leafy crowns against the clear sky; the beautiful lotus garlanded all the land; the fig, date, grape, melon and pomegranate abounded; the flocks and herds were scattered through the rich pastures. In the marshes of the Delta the papyrus flourished, giving its stalks for boats, and its delicate leaf for paper. The Nile and the lakes swarmed with fish; purple pigeons wheeled in the air, swallows found their homes among the temples, the stately Ibis Religiosa and the stork loved Egypt for their home. Even the slaves could not complain of poverty, for the Israelites held great wealth in the province of Goshen, owning flocks and herds; and when they reached the wilderness of Sin, they murmured after the flesh-pots of Egypt, saying, "Would to God we had died in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh-pots, and did eat bread to the full;" and again, "We remember the fish which we did eat in Egypt freely, the cucumbers and melons, the leeks and the onions and the garlic . . . . who shall give us flesh to eat, for it was well with us in Egypt."

The country was also rich in building materials; manufactures flourished, the pottery was famous, the fine linen was worth its weight in gold; here the Israelitish women learned the elegant weaving and embroidering "in blue, purple, and scarlet and fine-twined linen," on which they labored for the tabernacle. Aaron's making the calf at Horeb, and Moses' destruction of it, are sufficient proof of Egyptian proficiency in the arts.

With these hints of the affluence and strength of the kingdom as it came into the hands of Sethos, we turn to glance at his training, and the habits of thought, which made him such a daring opponent of Heaven.

The priests of Egypt were the tutors of the heir-apparent, who always belonged to their rank; they taught him in all their wisdom; but the beginning and end of every lesson was, that the people were created for the king; that he was master and disposer of the souls and bodies of the common horde. He was instructed in cruelty as a fine art; and was made to feel that his own desire was to be his ultimate law.

Says Piazzi Smyth: "Self-justification was a leading principle of the race. The power and right of an Egyptian sovereign, not merely to justify himself against men, but against God, was an essential part of their system. They wove this arrogant self-righteousness with other threads of bad religion and perverted morality, until it proved a veritable cart-rope for drawing the national ruin."

The ritual of the Egyptian "Book of the Dead" taught every Egyptian to stand up to confess his own holiness; through seventy-four distinct enumerations, the worshipper cleared himself of every suspicion of every known and unknown sin. "I have not done," was his protestation in regard to all evil. "Hence, the more religious the Egyptians grew in their own fashion, the more they rebelled against the God of Heaven." Therefore, the hour of

their highest religious development must be the hour of their greatest antagonism to God, and of their consequent ruin; while the man, who was the supreme impersonation of the Egyptian idea, was the most truculent mutineer against the King of kings.

Man in Egypt thus vindicating and justifying himself, became, in a measure, his own deity; but he also served a complete pantheon of the most monstrous creations of his debased imagination, and loathsome beasts elevated to the shrine of divinity.

Says Clemens Alexandrinus: "The temples are surrounded with consecrated groves and pastures; their courts are infinite numbers of columns; their walls glitter with foreign marbles and the richest paintings; the shrine is resplendent with gold, silver and precious stones from India; the adytum is veiled with cloth of gold. But within is no god, but a cat or a crocodile, or some such brute—the Egyptian deity—a beast rolling himself in a crimson coverlet." Such being the gods, such the moral and religious ideas of the Egyptians—"for a while this Pagod Figure grew and flourished mightily on earth; but, in the hour of its greatest apparent strength, it was touched by a more than mortal hand, and calamitous ruin then supervened and has never yet ceased."

This ruin came in the reign of Sethos II., in the direful hour when he matched himself against the Highest, and was blasted by the breath of his Adversary, before whom the sons of earth are as the small dust in the balance.

Sethos II. ascended the throne a graceless profligate; no sooner did he grasp the reins of government, than the groans of the oppressed rose to heaven, appealing for vengeance.

Says Osburn: "In spite of the loving care lavished on him by his Regent-aunt, and the 'special books written for his sole use and behoof, containing all the good deeds of his ancestors,' he turned out an exceedingly bad and abandoned character."

Sethos found himself a being raised above all law; his courtiers and soldiers were mere puppets in his hands, avenging angels on all his foes. No one addressed him save with "O King Sethos, living forever!" as both exordium and peroration for their speech. Wherever he turned his eyes, on temple, tomb, palace and monument, he saw the debasing records of his religion in the grotesque animal-headed gods; for, as says Renan: "Egypt had been invaded by a whole pantheon, numerous, and accompanied by fictions horrible, and at the same time the most silly that the human brain ever conceived."

According to the same authority, Sethos was the son of a race who were mentally on a uniform dull level, "where never appeared a great warrior, a great philosopher, a great poet, a great artist, nay, not even a great minister; for Joseph, who wrought such wonderful changes, was not a native."

While this tyrant, dull of brain, cruel of heart, and strong of hand, was in the full flush of his power, there appeared before him a man of the Israelites, long an exile in the land of Midian, once his rival to the throne, a man indeed who had refused this throne, and who had been predicted by the astrologers as one who should build up Israel on the ruins of Egypt.

Sethos had hoped this man was dead, had believed that he had perished in the wilderness; but now, at eighty years of age, he stood before him, vigorous and ardent like one endowed with immortal youth. Beside him was his brother, another grand model of humanity; and they came vested with supernatural powers; "Surely," had God said, "I will be with thee."

The king of Egypt had never received a command from any; it was to him a new experience, when these two Hebrews stood before him, and in authoritative tones addressed him: "The Lord God of Israel saith, Israel is my son, even my first-born: and I say unto thee, Let my son go that he may serve me, and if thou

refuse to let him go I will slay thy son, even thy first-born. Thus saith the Lord; let my people go, that they may hold a feast to me in the wilderness."

Wrath blackened the monarch's countenance; his eyes flashed baleful fires; he would now have had these men slain in his sight, or, as show the many paintings, have struck off their heads with his own royal sword; but some power, which he could neither resist nor comprehend, held him back. He replied, in high indignation, "Who is the Lord? I know not the Lord; neither will I let Israel go."

The Hebrew brothers were fain to argue the case, and thus presented a singular spectacle in the Egyptian court.

The sovereign vented his malice on the multitude of Hebrew serfs; doubling their burdens; berating and beating them, until "for anguish of spirit and for cruel bondage," their hearts died within them; and they hearkened not to the encouragements of their heaven-sent deliverer.

The grand battle now commenced; from first to last it was an ascending series of judgments, directed against the idolatrous king and people, through the very gods they worshipped.

Wm. Osburn criticises these plagues most minutely, showing that each of the first nine were "particular intensifications of natural features of country or climate, as if the Almighty especially intended to show" that the gods of the nations are vanity, and to prove to the Egyptians the inefficiency of the divinities which they had set up over the elements, and over the animal and vegetable kingdoms.

We are apt, in reading this account of the plagues in Scripture, to imagine them compressed into a few weeks; but in fact, as Osburn carefully shows, they were extended through very nearly a year. And this not only gave the immense host of the Israelites time to complete their preparations for their departure, but it

marked the deliberation and determination of the Divine mind, giving each plague time fully to impress itself on the Egyptian heart, and to warn them of the consequences of rebellion; permitting the better-inclined part of the people time to repent, fear God and save themselves and their property from that untoward generation, that the whole nation perish not. To this cause we may assign the preservation of any part of the Egyptian wealth and the conservation of the empire; so that, though broken and forever weakened, it yet existed, a lasting memorial of the power of Almighty God, and of the utter futility of human opposition to the Divine will. As we shall see, in tracing these plagues, some part of the Egyptians were warned, and by obedience and humility, preserved a portion of their flocks and herds; while even the magicians and courtiers were forced to admit that here was "the finger of God," and to plead with their monarch to submit himself to one stronger than the sons of men and the gods of the heathen.

The whole country of Egypt is a *Donum Nili;* as the river has shrunken, and as the hand of the Lord, according to his prophecy, has "made the rivers dry," and has been against Egypt and her rivers, and the streams of outlet in the Delta have diminished, Egypt has become a "hissing and a desolation."

The Egyptians worshipped as a god the river which had given them their country, and upon whose overflowings their food and wealth depended. The river was a sacred mystery; high up as they could trace it, it flowed the same; its sources were hidden in the storied realms of equatorial Africa. If Nilus, in displeasure, withheld his life-giving floods, the land grew black with starvation; if in wrath the god-river swelled beyond benign limitations, the inundation swept homes and villages and crops away, and shrieks of terror and despair re-echoed on his borders.

No wonder, then, that among an idolatrous people such a river was worshipped.

Now, in the very season when this stream is most clear, the outstretched rod of Moses brought upon it the first plague—the plague of blood. Not only this, but all the fish in the river—those fish on which the people largely depended for food, and probably also those crocodile-gods, before which they bowed the knee, perished in the singular visitation. Not only was the country distressed and impoverished, in a very great degree, by this plague, but it was also deeply humiliated; because in it, its gods were put under the feet of Moses. The plague began instantaneously "in the sight of Pharaoh, and in the sight of his servants," at the moment when the king and his court went early in the morning to bathe and worship, at the sacred stream.

Seven days this plague lasted, and was then removed.

Smith, in his Bible Dictionary, appears to indicate that the second plague followed immediately on the first; but there was doubtless a respite; not only as the Lord warns before he strikes, but it is far from him to destroy the righteous with the wicked; and he permitted the more thoughtful of the people time to consider their ways, and renounce, if they would, the ungodly practices of their king.

As the history moves on, we see this leaven of fear and repentance working in the nation.

Again came the word to Moses, after an interval, and with Aaron, his mouthpiece, he returned to the presence of the irate king.

His message of command and warning was unheeded. Pharaoh was of the line of priest-kings, and the religion of Egypt was wrapped up in his sovereignty. The jealous priests saw in the success of Moses the downfall of their own domination; and in their different grades of magicians, astrologers and temple priests, they gathered about the monarch to strengthen his heaven-daring resolution and pride; to beguile him with their enchantments,

and to confirm him in a belief that the gods of Egypt could equal Jehovah in the strife.

Among these divinities was HEKT, the frog-headed goddess. The frog abounded in Egypt, and being sacred, must needs be unmolested; one comfort had always been, that these loathsome reptiles kept in the damp places about the streams, and the people were able to be out of their way.

When "The potent rod of Amram's son" waved over the Nile, out of it came up countless hosts of frogs, which, like an invading army, took possession of the whole land. Forsaking their natural instincts, they swarmed even in the driest places; disputed possession of beds, cooking utensils, ovens and kneading troughs, the frogs suddenly became inhabitants of the houses, ousting the rightful owners; but these hapless wretches found themselves no better off when they had resigned their abodes in favor of their disgusting gods, for they were overrun with the troops of them in the streets; and Pharaoh himself found his couch, his throne, his robes of state, and his royal dishes, infested with his hopping deities. Never was there such an opportunity for the study of Batrachia!

The piety of Pharaoh was not proof against such an intimacy with his gods.

He yielded a little; he sent for the Hebrew brothers and said: "Entreat for me, that the Lord may remove the frogs, and I will let Israel go."

Moses, with the greatest courtesy, asked when this should be. The wary monarch set the next day; he did this as secretly hoping the frogs would before that take themselves off; yet assured that if they did not, twenty-four hours longer of their presence would be the extreme limit of his endurance. Moreover, he wished to try the power of Moses, by giving him a set time in which to work.

Respite came: sudden death smote the frog-gods, and their worshippers gathered their putrid bodies into heaps. The land was emptied of the plague, but all the fœtid air kept it in remembrance.

Finding himself thus relieved, the king gracefully forgot his pledge; the Lord waited for a time to make it evident that Pharaoh intended to break his promise, and that the odium of the next plague should rest on its regal provocative.

Suddenly, while Pharaoh congratulated himself on getting his own way, the rod of Aaron was stretched forth, and smote all the dust of Egypt into a horrible, crawling life.

"This plague," says Smith, in his Bible Dictionary, "does not seem especially directed against the superstitions of Egypt."

Let us consider this point. Chief goddess of Egypt was Isis, wife of Osiris; similar to Scandinavian Bertha, and Ephesian Diana, the universal mother. "Isis," says Anthon, "was the earth, or sublunary nature in general; *to them the soil of Egypt in particular.*" Now this, their great goddess, became transformed to the foul vermin which devoured her children. She had been the fond mother whose bountiful breasts fed their veins, and whose beauty was their pride. They called her Lady, Mistress, Mother, Nurse; yet now she had died doubly, and become corrupt, and loathsome plagues crept on them from her corpse.

Until this time the Egyptian magicians had been able, either in fact or in seeming, to keep pace with Moses in his miracles, in so far as *producing* the plagues went; though they had been utterly helpless about *removing* them: in this act the power of the prophet shining forth supreme. In the third plague the magicians, whom the Egyptians looked upon as filled with the spirit of their divinities, found themselves unable to contend with the Hebrew brothers, and said to Pharaoh: "This is the finger of God." Not of Apis, Osiris, or any other of the Egyptian

Pantheon, but of some superior Deity such as the Greeks confessed—"The Unknown God." Thus *ignorantly* have the heathen ever been compelled by the voice within them, to own a Lord above their own lords.

Josephus says that there was found no wash or ointment to stay the ravages of the third plague; and that from it many of the Egyptians miserably perished.

The third plague accomplished its mission: the people of Egypt had begun to fear and tremble, and to desire the departure of the Israelites. Pharaoh and his nobles were yet resolved to hold fast that multitude of slaves, which were building up Egypt from one end to the other. "And the heart of Pharaoh was hardened." A terrible resumé of this king's life, and not alone of him can it be written; how many have their hearts hardened in a long course of iniquity and chastisement? Not always

"Sweet are the uses of adversity."

Each morning Sethos and his court went down to the river to bathe and to worship. Full often as the despot turned to the green swelling bank of the stream, he was met by that man of majestic beauty, stern as an avenging angel—the man who had outlived fear, Moses the Prophet, denouncing the vengeance of the skies upon the land of Mizraim.

Thus as a prelude to the fourth plague came these sons of Levi, with the often repeated mandate: "Let my people go: else, will I send swarms (ârôb) upon thee . . . and all the houses of the Egyptians shall be full . . . and the ground whereon they are. And I will sever in that day the land of Goshen, where my people dwell . . . to the end that thou mayest know that I am the Lord in the midst of the earth. And I will put a division between thy people and my people."

Josephus indicates that these "swarms" were all manner of known and hitherto unheard of beasts, which invaded the land,

"by whose means men perished; and the land became destitute of husbandmen." Others have considered these swarms to be of the common house-fly, which are ever singularly plentiful in Egypt, and a terrible infliction. *Oedmann* advanced the opinion, supported by Dr. Hawkes and many others, that the *Blatta orientalis*, or Egyptian beetle, is indicated by *ârôb*, and in this case we see the people again chastized through one of their own idols, for the beetle was sacred.

Sethos had stubbornly endured the lice, but the clouds of Scarabæi conquered him. He reluctantly sent for Moses, and proposed that if worship was his object, the Hebrews should hold a grand religious festival for the propitiation of their God, in Goshen.

The ambassador of Heaven would not abate one jot of his demands. He replied with the utmost calmness: "It is not meet so to do; for we should sacrifice the abomination of theEgyptians... lo, will they not stone us?"

The ordained sacrifices of Israel were lambs, cattle, goats, and doves. These would be the *abomination* of the Egyptians in various ways.

The cow, the sheep, the goat, and the bull apis were especially sacred to the Egyptians. Some of these animals were worshipped as gods in themselves, others as the symbols of divinity.

The superstitions of this people were most deeply rooted. Diodorus tells us that when the humbled people were most anxious to propitiate the Romans, all their fear of the dominant nation could not prevent the destruction of a Roman soldier, who had thoughtlessly killed a cat. Whoever laid violent hands on a sacred animal was doomed to death. So great was the reverence for their holy beasts, that their bodies were embalmed. The cat, now starved, beaten, hunted, killed and flung out upon the highway, has had in its history a golden age, when its tastes were gratified; when it dwelt in kings' palaces; was nourished and

respected, and found a burial superior to that of half its human servitors!

The word "abomination" refers not to the view taken of the animal itself, but of the act of its slaughter. Oxen might sometimes be offered, as the loftiest act of worship; but it must be a perfectly *red* ox, one single black hair rendering it unfit for sacrifice. Cows were consecrated to Athor, and could never be slain.

The exception taken by Moses to the king's proposition was so just, that even Pharaoh gave it heed, saying: "I will let you go . . . only go not very far away."

He meant to have them where they could be environed by the royal armies, and driven back to servitude.

"Entreat for me," cried Sethos.

"I will entreat that the swarms may depart to-morrow," replied Moses.

At this promise, a gleam of exultation lit the face of the regal liar, and the prophet read it well; he knew that the king meant to play false. Therefore he turned and said, in mingled warning and scorn: "Let not Pharaoh deal deceitfully." The Egyptian standard of morality was not very high, and the sovereign was little abashed at this reproof.

He coolly carried out his intention; and being rescued from trouble, refused to fulfil his pledge. Egypt has ever been an unchivalrous land, lost to all idea of honor.

Each plague was ordained to be more severe than the one preceding it. The fifth visitation was the *murrain*, which fell very heavily in two ways. Death reigned among both the *sacred* and the useful animals. The enumeration here is very valuable: cattle, horses, asses, camels, oxen, sheep.

It was long objected, by the despisers of the Bible, that this record was at fault; that Egypt had no camels, as there *were none pictured on the monuments.* We cannot understand the claim

that the pictures of Egypt must contain the whole circle of Egyptian zoology; but, even admitting it, it does not militate against Scripture, for the camel is several times repeated in pairs of heads and necks on the obelisk at Luxor.

Taking the brutes enumerated as the especial victims of the fifth plague, we have, first, those sacred: cattle (kine), oxen and sheep. We have then the most useful animals: horses, asses, camels, their beasts of war and burden.

Egypt was ever famous for horses and chariots; the horse was extensively used in all the land, and its loss would be a crowning calamity. The ass and the camel were chief beasts of burden; and the ox, besides being sacred, was widely used in drawing up the river water for purposes of irrigation.

The Egyptians were an agricultural people, and we can understand the wide ruin occasioned by the destruction of their domestic animals; while, as in the other plagues, they suffered in their religious idea.

To prove the truth of Moses' declaration, that a division should be made between his own people and the Hebrews, the king sent into Goshen to see how it fared with the dwellers there. "Of the cattle of the children of Israel, died not one."

The effect was only yet further to harden his adamantine heart.

The sixth plague was accomplished, not by the sign of the rod, but by sprinkling toward heaven the ashes of that furnace, wherein the bondsmen toiled. The act was one of deep significance. God had covenanted with Abraham, that he would bring his seed out of the strange land, after four hundred years; judging the cruel nation, and bringing forth the captives with great substance. At this time, Abraham had seen *a "smoking furnace,* and a burning lamp." Egypt was the furnace of affliction wherein the Lord would try Israel; from that furnace had their God promised to

bring them forth, and this sign was to remind Him of his covenant, and that the time had come.

The important feature in this plague of boils was, that it touched the sacred persons of the scrupulously clean priests and magicians. Manetho calls the Hebrews a "nation of lepers;" he strives to make it appear that the Egyptians drove out Israel, because of their uncleanness; and calls their departure the *leper exodus*. We see in this the falsehood of a prejudiced enemy, making history the vehicle of his slanders; nor is it only in ancient times that history has been made more false than fable! Apion roused the wrath of Flavius Josephus, by stories of a national taint and a "leper exodus," as we see in "Josephus against Apion."

This sixth plague brought a form of leprosy on the priest-caste (of which was the king), and on all the holy magicians, shaking the faith of the people in their power and purity; and showing them unable to contend with the God of the Hebrews.

Still the heart of Pharaoh grew harder; and now again, "early in the morning," Moses appeared like a wraith on the track of the king. The sun rose bright over Nilus, and the sacred droves went to the god-river to drink. Impotent were all these divinities of Egypt! Moses lifted up his cry: "Thus saith the Lord God of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me. Now will I send all my plagues on thee... Thou shalt be cut off... For this cause I have raised thee up.... To-morrow will I send a grievous hail, such as hath not been from the foundation of Egypt until now."

The haughty king set his face as brass against this declaration. Moses then turned from him to warn the deputies, magistrates and officers who stood by. As Goshen was spared for Israel's sake, now all who feared God among the Egyptians, all who had been turned from their evil ways by the exhibition of Almighty

power, should have an opportunity to save their property from the impending judgment.

This visitation had a remarkable effect on Sethos.

The skies of Egypt are cloudless and stormless. The tempest which followed the uplifting of Moses' rod, was not merely a storm such as for intensity would have been appalling anywhere in the tropics, but was in Egypt unnatural and unprecedented; no land on earth would have been so smitten with consternation at such meteorological displays, as the valley of the Nile. Egypt worshipped the heavenly constellations, and looked to the planets for favoring breezes, and fair weather; her gods deserted her. Thunder pealed through the sky, rending the heavens, and shaking the earth. The hail rattled down furiously, killing man and beast; cutting off leaf and herbage, while the roused winds snapped the stems of the palm trees, mowed down orange, pomegranate and fig, and scathed the vines. More than this, wild lightnings leaped from the clouds, and, instead of passing with a swift flash, seized on grass blade and grain stock, on melon and cucumber vines, as their food, and ran in ominous flames along the ground. All the splendors and terrors of "heaven's dread artillery" were let loose on Egypt. Men, women and children wept, shrieked and trembled. Pharaoh quaked in his palace; he sent in haste for Moses and Aaron. Heaven preserved his messenger; and, unmoved amid all the awful wonders of the tornado, the sons of Amram came before the royal throne. New and strange confession for an Egyptian king, Pharaoh cries: "I have sinned, *this time.*" It was not penitent confession, but merely an admission of folly: he had erred in matching himself against an adversary too strong for him; and must now cry for quarter. But even so he would renew the strife, and take advantage of a truce to strike some unexpected blow. He was a complete coward, and would stoop never so far to gain relief. He sees he must concede yet

more, and he says to Moses: "The Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked." But he has no intention of being any better. He will try his Machiavellian game yet the third time: "Entreat the Lord, for it is enough, and I will let you go; and ye shall stay no longer."

"The goodness and severity of God" shall be displayed by removing the plague; but Moses knows full well what the effect will be. Fixing his piercing eye on the shivering catiff before him, he says: "I will spread forth my hands and the thunder shall cease, that thou mayest know that there is a God. But as for thee and thy servants, I know that ye will not yet fear the Lord."

And the event justified his assertion; for when this seventh plague was stilled, there was no permitting the bound to go free.

The eighth plague came, after some little interval; and was preceded by a warning, giving king and people twenty-four hours in which to avert it, by obedience to the command: "Let my people go."

The besotted monarch preferred to brave the coming judgment; but his courtiers and advisers pressed about him, demanding angrily: "How long shall this man be a snare unto us? Let the men go, that they may serve the Lord their god. Knowest thou not yet that *Egypt is destroyed?*"

They had been warned of locusts; and no visitation is more dreaded in the east. At different times Egypt had suffered, in a measure; and if they came, fierce and numerous, increased to a miraculous multitude and voracity, how should anything in Egypt stand before them?

Says Denon: "The locusts make the land bald. They devour every green thing; we looked on them, and all the plain seemed to move, or to be covered with a dark, sluggishly rolling stream."

By this time, the nature of the contest between the king of Egypt and the King of Heaven was obvious to all. Hebrews and

Egyptians stood looking on, waiting for the result; the labors of the bondsmen had ceased; preparations for their going forth hastened among them; and they anxiously turned to each new plague as the signal of deliverance.

Faltering a little in his stubborn resolution, before the angry representations of his subjects, Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and proposed a second compromise: The adult males might go; the children and their mothers were to be left behind, as hostages for the speedy return of the valued slaves.

When Moses had rejected this half-concession, he was driven from the royal presence with contumely.

Only when the land was naked of vegetation; when the swarms of this miraculous cloud of locusts blackened the face of the heavens; when there remained not any green thing in the trees nor herb in the field through all the land of Egypt, did Pharaoh fear famine, and perhaps revolt in his dominions, and too late, sent in hot haste for the Prophets.

Again barren promises, and heartless confessions; and again that hardening of the heart.

The ninth plague breaks upon Egypt without warning. The people worshipped the setting sun; from the far plain of Shinar they had brought this portion of the Chaldaic faith. They poured out, also, incense to the queen of heaven. The sun and the moon were objects of profoundest adoration. But now, lo, these their gods seemed blotted out from their orbits. A new night fell on the land; a night without a star; when morning forgot to return; when the brooding blackness was like the face of chaos before God spoke light into being. "There was darkness in all the land of Egypt, even darkness that might be felt." Three days, stupefied with the new horror, sat king, priests and people. They made no note of time; the long anguish seemed years of solemn desolation, when no man saw his neighbor; when the babe could

not find consolation in the face of its mother, when none rose from his place; food, sleep, hope, comfort, all were gone, commited to that black burial. The land where Death was soon to reap his greatest harvest, was clad in a premonitory pall.

After the record of this long, long, terrible night, comes the shining sentence: "And all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings."

When God wars with the wicked, his people sit in peace in the beauty of his presence.

When the day of vengeance is in his heart, and the year of his redeemed has come, they are called to shelter:

"Come, children, to your Father's arms,
Hide in the chambers of my grace:
Till the fierce storms be overblown,
And my revenging fury cease.

My sword shall boast its thousands slain,
And drink the blood of mighty kings,
While heavenly peace around my flock
Stretches its soft and shady wings."

Darkness terrified Pharaoh to a little further yielding. He called Moses, and consented to the departure of the nation, provided the property were left behind.

"There shall not a hoof be left behind," retorted the resolute leader of the people.

All the hatred of Pharaoh's heart broke forth. He shouted: "Get thee from me! In the day thou seest my face, thou shalt die!"

We may here pause to consider that Pharaoh had not dared to put Moses to death, because only through his intercession could plagues be withdrawn. It was this salutary fear, also, which prevented the impoverished Egyptians seizing the flocks, herds and beasts of burden belonging to the Hebrews, to make up for their own losses.

Moses did, however, enter the presence of the king once more, with his last and most tremendous threat, and then the Prophet and not the king was enraged, and Moses "went out from Pharaoh in great anger."

The last blow was to be struck. The passover, type of the wonderful passion of our Lord Christ, was instituted. All through the land of Goshen, there was, on door-post and lintel, a sanguine stain, emblem of the atoning blood; and by this, all Israel should be saved.

The exhausted land of Egypt lay in midnight sleep; some of the impoverished people yet, for a few brief hours, forgot their care and fear; others waked and watched; for the rumor of that heavy prophecy of him who had never threatened in vain, had gone abroad.

Sethos in his palace hugged his pride; he despised the threat. Life and death were in the keeping of the immortal gods, not in this Hebrew's hand. Like unbelievers of the present day, Pharaoh sought to attribute the nine great plagues to natural causes, and to sever them from any interference of the Lord.

At the very beginning of this conflict, God had said: "I will slay thy son, even thy first-born."

In the execution of this most terrible judgment, God thrust forth his own arm from behind the veil of nature, and her laws, and himself struck the fatal blow.

That angel whom the Lord, centuries later, commissioned as the messenger of his wrath on Israel; whom David saw standing between heaven and earth with a drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem, went abroad in all the kingdom of Mizraim. When the Divine Babe fled from Herod's rage, all the Bethlehemite mothers wept for their children; and Israel fled from Pharaoh amid the lamentations for the first-born.

"At midnight the Lord smote the first-born in the land of Egypt, from the first-born of Pharaoh that sat on his throne, to the first-born of the captive that was in the dungeon, and all the first-born of cattle. And there was a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead."

Now was the pride of Sethos broken into pieces beneath the feet of his Adversary. In that extreme hour he drove forth his slaves, and they, in going, demanded and received the reward of years of servitude.

At this time Israel numbered probably four millions. Although for so long they had been preparing for a remove, we can only account for their speedy and entire exodus by a special intervention of Providence. As says Wm. Osburn: "This departure of the Hebrews would be impossible in our day; but we must remember, it was a continuation of the several great immigrations of the human race, which had been directed and assisted by the finger of God."

Once more Egypt lifted her head to renew the combat with heaven. On the third day, king and people realizing that they had lost slaves and wealth, and burning for vengeance, determined to pursue the Hebrews.

Pharaoh himself headed the attacking host: he was followed by "six hundred chosen chariots;" horsemen, captains, and foot soldiers, and went in haste to carry on his war with God, with earthly weapons. *Eusebius*, quoting from Manetho, says that "this great army was accompanied by the sacred animals."

"In these Mosaic times," says *Hereen*, "the warrior caste first appeared in Egypt." And Herodotus states that the towns in the Delta were well garrisoned, and names the sixteen and a half nomes, or provinces, in that region, where the standing army of Egypt was stationed. Thus in haste a host could be summoned

and set forth. They followed Moses and the Israelites blindly and madly, even into the very midst of that wonderful way which God had opened for them in the midst of the waters.

"The Palestinians," says Bunsen—and it is a grand admission from him—"were messengers of the Lord. The courage and judgment of the Egyptians failed before the moral faith of the Prophet of God. An army despatched to attack the departing multitudes perished in the waves."

A heathen would not write in favor of Christian truth; but Diodorus Siculus states that he had collected from the traditions of nations near the Red Sea, "that once its waters retired and left the bottom dry, then returned with great fury."

The Egyptian chronologer writes: "It is said, that fire flashed on the Egyptians from in front, and destroyed them."

Moses himself records that at this final point in the strife between Egypt and heaven, "In the morning watch the Lord looked on the hosts of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians; and took off their chariot-wheels. And they said, Let us flee from the face of Israel, for the Lord fighteth for Israel. And the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. And the waters returned, and covered chariot and horsemen; and there remained not so much as one of them . . . And Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the shore."

"Egypt was humbled as never before," says Bunsen, who explains the tenth plague thus: "The Palestinians swooped down on Egypt, and *slew all the first-born*, even to the king's son in the palace, and from this blow the land never recovered."

Here the Chevalier stultifies himself, for how could an invading horde know how to select the first-born; or wish to confine slaughter to them? The erring king would have been slain before his son, had men been dealing with Egypt. But God's ways

are not as our ways, and He had beaten his defiers small as the chaff on the threshing floor. Flocks, herds, grain, fruits, sacred animals, chariots, horses, army, first-born, king—all were gone; the rebellious land was left wasted and bare.

Here this tremendous battle, this long warfare of Egypt against Heaven ended; and as it closed amid prodigies of nature, and a terrible harvest of death, we pause to consider the character of this most daring of mortals, who openly and deliberately entered the lists of combat with the skies. Pharaoh was the product of a godless culture. Egypt, like that glittering Pandemonium which fallen spirits built in hell, towered high, made broad her shining battlements, and multiplied her palaces, but in every stamped brick, in every sculptured frieze and painted wall, defied the One True God. Pharaoh was the very acme and exponent of Egyptian cultivation; he had absolute and perfect confidence in himself; he put the world under his feet, and claimed parity with Heaven. A creature of unfaltering cruelty and boundless pride, loving himself only, seeking his own gratification as the one object of his existence, he was placed where he could give free rein to every inordinate passion. Men he treated as his toys; he moved them like puppets at his will; he had no one on earth to curtail or oppose his power, and the perversity of his fallen nature rejoiced in finding One with whom to contend.

In his mad phrenzy he still fought on, when he was in each encounter stripped of something wherein he had exulted; his wealth, the prestige of his sacred caste, the heir of his throne, were taken from him: stripped of all his jewels, suddenly, in the chill, gray dawn, he found himself amid the boiling sea, tossed, struggling and gasping on the wave; and then the waters washed the dead body of Pharaoh to the feet of Moses. On that supreme night history was born, and Egypt died.

VII.

MOSES.

FAITH IN ACTION.

THE heroes of Faith are the true heroes of the world; yet more, they are the heroes of the immortal life.

They may be broadly divided into two classes: the men of patient endurance, and of vigorous action. Of these last have ever been the long line of the Reformers, whom God has commissioned to arouse and purify his Church, and lead it on to a higher destiny. They are men Divinely moulded to their time, fitted singularly to the exigencies which have demanded them.

Great type of these was Moses, Israel's God-sent "ruler and deliverer;" Moses, the law-giver; who left his impress not on the Jewish polity alone, but on the world. His exploits and his judicial enactments have changed the face of all succeeding time.

The family of Jacob was doomed to a long bondage in Egypt. Thus for a while the blessing of Noah was reversed, and Shem, in whose tents his brethren were to dwell protected, became a servant to Ham.

Says Piazzi Smyth (Royal Astronomer of Scotland): "The Egyptians undoubtedly fled from before a judgment in the land of Shinar; but arrived on the banks of the Nile, unrepentant and unsubdued."

When the Lord scattered the nations abroad on the face of the whole earth, flying before Omnipotent wrath, Mizraim, the second

mentioned of the sons of Ham, carried the standards of his host across the desert to the valley of Egypt; while Canaan, his brother, spread himself over the land which thereafter bore his name.

Among these the knowledge of the true God was doubtless long preserved; their worship becoming corrupted by degrees. We know that Abraham was met by Melchizedek, a descendant of Canaan, and priest of the Most High God.

In Egypt Abraham found the Great Pyramid of Cheops completed; and the Egyptian tradition has always been, that this Cheops, or Shofo, was no respecter of the gods of Egypt; and that, *therefore*, his remains were desecrated in later years by the priests.

Thus not only do we find Shofo an anti-idolatrous sovereign, setting up on the borders of his kingdom that mighty mystery of the centuries; but, singularly enough, we find that in his labor he was helped by one Philitis, a shepherd king, who fed his flocks in that locality.

So great a share in this work did Philitis have, that one tradition runs that he, instead of Shofo, was the builder of the Pyramid.

Over this Philitis, the students of Ancient History have lingered long. John Taylor, of London (author of "Our Inheritance in The Great Pyramid") is disposed to imagine that the name Philiton "holds a remembrance of the expiatorial feasts, wherein is a shedding of blood for sin; a characteristic of the religious idea of Abel, the first shepherd."

"He looks," remarks Piazzi Smyth, in "Life at the Pyramid, "exceedingly like a Scriptural character. No man of humble origin or station would have been thus allowed a separate interest or identity among the Egyptians."

Jacob Bryant ("Dissertations on Ancient History") says: "The Philitian Shepherds retired from Egypt to the land immediately south of that afterwards occupied by the tribe of Judah,

and later withdrew into the upper part of Mesopotamia, whither the ten tribes were driven after their dispersion."

When we consider that the life period of Noah's sons extended to six hundred years, or thereabouts, and that his grandsons and great grandsons, in one line, reached the good old age of four hundred and thirty odd, and four hundred and sixty odd years, we might not be far astray in supposing that Cheops, or Shofo, was the Hamitic parallel of Eber or Reu; as Mizraim was of Nimrod and Arphaxad; and that Philiton, the shepherd king, was Melchizedek himself, who, later in his long and godly life, led his subjects out of apostatizing Egypt, and at Salem met Abraham and blessed him.

King Shofo left his memory built in imperishable stone upon the face of the earth forever. The land of Egypt made rapid strides in grandeur and culture. Climate, soil, position, all were in its favor; learning flourished; the arts were cherished. Living among themselves, going little beyond their own boundaries, these Chinese of antiquity, believing that nothing was good that was not Egyptian, as they fell more and more into their abominable idolatries, their kingdom grew rotten at the core, while it was outwardly fair and flourishing. At the height of its grandeur, Aphophis, or Appapus, swayed the sceptre. In his time Joseph came into Egypt, and from being a slave, was made prime minister.

This Aphophis was a gentle sovereign, called to royalty in his childhood, and reigning nearly a century. Before him the venerable Jacob bowed himself in unfeigned respect.

The Bible, having nothing to do with the line of Egyptian sovereigns where they are not mingled with the history of the Church of God, next mentions the "Pharaoh who knew not Joseph."

After the death of Aphophis, the government became an unlimited despotism; and all the circumstances of the monarch's

life tended to make him a tyrant to the last degree, fearing not God, neither regarding men. The Israelites, who had been most tenderly planted and nourished in Goshen by the good Aphophis and Joseph, were more and more persecuted and degraded by his successors, until arose Sesostris-Rameses, of Biblical mention, who deliberately trampled on all their ancient rights and chartered privileges, and ground them into the dust the most abject of slaves.

By the character of this Sesostris-Rameses, Baron Bunsen seems entirely carried away. He makes him out a mighty conqueror, by sea and land (though where he could have gotten wood for his navies is a matter of curiosity), and says that he carried his conquests through Arabia, India, Persia, and all the world of Central Asia.

On the contrary, Osburn, Renan and Smyth, show that Bunsen's Sesostris-Rameses and his deeds of valor, are priestly myths. The Sesostris who really lived had one conquest, one battle, one aim; he conquered the Memphian sovereigns of Lower Egypt, in one fight, bringing all the land under the Theban sceptre.

He devoted his life and treasures to memorials. He painted and carved his one conquest over all the palaces, tombs and temples in his kingdom (thus deceiving some little while later Baron Bunsen!), and was in all respects a braggart, and most truculent knave. Like other boasters, this king was a terrible coward to the unseen; he was the slave of priestly threats and superstitions; in this like Philip II. of Spain.

While Sesostris was exerting his authority over the Israelites, and making their lot most miserable, he was startled by a prophecy; from one of his astrologers, says Josephus—while the Targum of Jonathan says, by Jannes and Jambres, afterwards Moses' opponents.

The sacred scribe foretold that presently a child would be born

to an Israelite, who would bring the Egyptians low, and exalt the Hebrews.

This, says Josephus, was the mainspring of that terrible edict for the destruction of the male children.

Sesostris-Rameses lived in Upper Egypt; the Hebrews were nearer Memphis, the seat of the Xoite dynasty. After his conquest of the Delta, Sesostris married his daughter Thuoris (Jos. Thermuthis) to the two year old heir of the Xoites, Sipthath; and sent her to be regent of Memphis for this child husband.

Thuoris seems to have been a gentle and learned woman, the very opposite of her royal father.

Josephus tells us that God, in a night vision, showed Amram the future of his expected child, and encouraged him to rear him in hope, as the Deliverer of the nation. The manner of the infant's birth, and his singular strength and beauty confirmed the Divine prediction; and after three months, Amram, thinking his concealment a distrust of Providence, and likely to prove an injury to the child, committed him in faith to the river in a fragile ark of rushes. This ark was placed among those luxuriant reeds which have now nearly disappeared from Egypt. The mother departed, unable to endure the sight; yet clinging to the promise of the Eternal. Paul, in Hebrews, speaks of the faith of Moses' parents, antecedent of the faith of their illustrious offspring; it was to him a most glorious heritage, and valued above a throne.

As the child lay in his bed of reeds, Thuoris, queen regent, came to the river, and moved by womanly pity, and the craving of her childless heart, as well as by the wonderful beauty of the deserted babe, adopted him as her son.

By the directing care of Providence, the child was brought up to years of discretion in the home of his own parents, and thus received that bias of devotion to the cause of his people which distinguished all his after life.

"He was," says Josephus, "by the confession of all, as well as by Divine prediction, the best of all the Hebrews; being the seventh from Abraham our Father. His tallness at three years old was wonderful; and no one seeing him was so impolite as to disregard the beauty of his countenance!"

"He was exceedingly fair," cries Stephen in his speech. And the writer of the Antiquities, delighting to dwell on the picture of the leader of his nation, explains that Thuoris presented the child to her father Sesostris, saying: "I have brought up a child of divine beauty and most generous mind. I received him as the gift of the river, and have adopted him for my son and heir."

The historian also declares, that at this time the child despised the diadem of Egypt, casting it from his brows; and Jannes, the astrologer, renewed his prediction of ruin, directing it to Moses as the instrument, and striving to kill him, which the Lord prevented.

Thuoris, therefore, educated Moses "in all the wisdom of the Egyptians," lavished on him the love that could not be called forth by her cruel father, or imbecile husband; and expected to make him her successor in the kingdom.

Sesostris-Rameses died after a reign of forty-four years. His only son succeeding him, reigned two years; at his death, Thuoris became sovereign of Upper, Middle and Lower Egypt.

Josephus and Irenæus state that during the regency of Thuoris, Moses, at her request, and that of the king, took command of the troops in a war with the Ethiopians; besieged and captured Saba, afterwards Meroë, which was delivered up to him by Tharbis, the king's daughter, who fell in love with the splendid appearance of the General of the Egyptians, and offered him the city and her hand, both of which were accepted. Perhaps this expedition and victory were referred to by Stephen, when he said that "Moses was mighty in words and in deeds."

The story of the surrender of the city is exactly that enshrined in the fable of Minos, king of Crete, and the siege of Megara, when Scylla, the king's daughter, fell in love with the enemy, and delivered up to him the city, and the fated purple lock of Ninus.

At the age of forty, Moses refused the position of heir apparent to the crown offered him by Thuoris. He "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, preferring rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season."

Doubtless feeling in the vigor of his manhood great internal power, which would fit him for the deliverer of his race, Moses at that time expected to be recognized by his people as the messenger of God, and to lead the house of Jacob out of their weary captivity.

But the Lord's time had not yet come. The Israelites themselves besottedly turned against their ardent compatriot, and Moses, heartsick and hopeless, fled into the land of Midian.

Thuoris, having lost the cherished son of her adoption, devoted herself about equally to the building of a grand mausoleum for herself and her husband, and to the education of her brother's only son and heir, who should succeed her in the empire. This nephew was Sethos II., whose character and history are developed in the preceding article on "Pharaoh."

Manetho tells us that Moses was born and educated at On, or Heliopolis, and was instructed in all the learning of Greek, Chaldee, and Assyrian literature; and "was especially trained in mathematics, to prepare his mind for the reception of truth." He taught Orpheus, and was thence called by the Greeks Musæus, and by the Egyptians Hermes. (For these statements see Philo V. M. i. 5.)

The Egyptians made frequent conspiracies against the life of this distinguished Israelite.

While Moses has ever been noted as the meekest of men, he was a person of vast courage. The fire of patriotism in his heart prompted him to slay an aggressing Egyptian, and also to be the peacemaker between his brethren. Flying from the assassin into the land of Midian, for forty long years Moses was lost to his countrymen, to his friends, and his foes; and apparently to his work.

Moses, continuing his flight in Midian—here first mentioned in history—arrives probably at the peninsula of Sinai, inhabited by the Arabians. Here he married Zipporah, the daughter of a priest, his first host in the country.

During these forty years of Moses' exile, King Sethos was wringing out to Israel the bitter dregs of their cup of misery; the enslaved nation was being prepared by affliction to welcome deliverance; and chiefly, Moses was being moulded and perfected for his future greatness by the hand of God.

The lonely shepherd, leading his flock on the confines of the desert, had time to apply the garnered knowledge of his life to the problems in the history and need of his people. In the seclusion and simplicity of his servile life, the learned courtier became endued with the prophetic spirit. Removed from the glaring splendor, and the rank idolatry of the Egyptian court, this Moses grew in spiritual graces. Divided from earthly cares and enchantments, his soul fixed itself in a passion of devotion first on his Lord, with whom he pleaded afterward: "I beseech thee, show me thy glory;" and next on his people, for whom his love grew so strong and pitiful, that he could cry: "If thou wilt not forgive them, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book, which thou hast written!"

Year after year of desolate exile rolled on. When a son was born to him the wanderer sighs his name—Gershom, "for I have been a stranger in a strange land."

It was his whole history wrapped up in a single word. He was born a stranger in the foreign land of Egypt; Midian was his second abode of exile; long was the wandering in the wilderness, and or ever his pilgrim feet had touched the blessed shores of Canaan, the true home of the Hebrews, he must die upon Nebo. A pilgrim and a stranger, he knew no fatherland, until he entered the "city that hath foundations, whose maker and builder is God."

When this forty years of probation had passed, Moses received his distinct call as the prophet leader of his people. God's time had come. While once the man had been eager to assume his place, he is now sorely distrustful. His self-distrust passes out of humility into absolute weakness, and thus kindles the wrath of God.

Such a wonderful experience as had been vouchsafed to Abraham beside his sacrifice, and at his tent door; and to Jacob on the hill Bethel, and by the ford Jabbok, came to Moses on the back of the desert, in the plain of Horeb, the mountain of God.

Here the Angel of the Covenant appeared to him as a flame of fire. This was such a flame as had blazed at the gate of Eden *between* the cherubim then, as afterwards on the mercy seat—"Thou that dwellest between the cherubim!" Meeting Abraham, Jehovah was the "God of Glory," as says Stephen; and from the burning, yet unconsumed bush, the ANGEL proclaimed himself the "God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."

Here begins a singular argument and struggle of Moses with God. The wondering prophet drew near to see the strange sight of a thorny acacia, which, glowing with the Divine presence, was an unquenchable, inexhaustible torch. He recognized the Holy One, and put off his shoes before he trod upon the sacred ground. But even with the voice of God sounding in his ears, this prophet

of eighty, hearing the glorious promise of deliverance, seeing the wonders wrought in his own person, commended by the Lord of his life, yet pleads and protests, grown for the first and last time a coward. "Who am I, that I should stand before Pharaoh? The people will not believe me. I am slow of speech. I am not eloquent . . . send by the hand thou shouldst send."

But just here we touch the secret of all Moses' future bravery; we learn how he can stand firm before despotic Pharaoh; and undaunted before the raging mob of the Israelites. "The wrath of God was kindled against him." Its instantaneous blaze consumed all his resistance and self-will, and left him plastic in the Divine hand; but after that sudden exhibition and experience of Almighty fury, Moses could see nothing human to fear.

He saw the glory of God, and would remain forever undazzled by the splendors of earth. He saw the wrath of the Lord, and when that passed by him like the lightning's flash, he had forgotten how to be afraid.

Going forth to do the bidding of the Lord, Moses was met by Aaron at that holy mount.

The brothers were eighty, and eighty-three years of age; but time had perfected, instead of marring them.

Their lofty bearing, firm and eloquent speech, and resolute gaze, marked them as leaders, born and trained for their position.

The history of the ten plagues, and of the passage of the Red Sea, has been already given; and we next find Moses in Shur, at the head of that mixed and turbulent host, who had gone three days' journey into the wilderness, and found no water.

This multitude did not consist merely of men, brave of soul and inured to hardship. There were thousands of babes, whose wailing cries would melt the stoutest hearts; there were frail women, whose new privations would crush the spirits of fathers and husbands; there were the old, trembling on the brink of the

grave; and flocks and lowing herds, the riches of a pastoral people, who, in losing them, would lose their all. The Israelites were, beyond doubt, sorely tried; and, save in a few instances, they have ever shown themselves a faithless nation; they have been glorified with such names as Abraham, Moses, Samuel, David, Daniel, Gedaliah, but as a people have not been so noble of soul as to prefer death to slavery; nor to be able to cry: "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him!"

From the moment when the high-hearted Moses ended his song of deliverance on the shores of the Red Sea, he was forced to contend with a rebellious, unbelieving and idolatrous people; with the envy of friends and family; with ingratitude, disobedience, and the grossest misapprehension of those who should have best understood him.

For forty years after the Exodus, the history of Moses is the history of Israel. Some have so misconceived the character of this wonderful man, as to consider him rather a *passive* than an *active* instrument in the Divine hand; as though he bore no conscious part in actions or messages, but that they flowed through him as through some soulless implement. This is a low view of the man; of his ruling motive; and of his Master.

He was a hero of marvellous gifts, highly endowed by nature; wonderfully tutored by experience; filled with wisdom that is from above; and brought into a closeness of intercourse with God, such as was never vouchsafed to any other Old Testament character.

Of him the Lord said: "If there is a prophet among you, I, the Lord, will make myself known to him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. But my servant Moses is not so, with him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the Lord will he behold."

Moses, as a leader, was the most discreet, energetic, decided, long-suffering, and self-sacrificing that the world has ever known.

As a general, he had military talents of the first order; as his campaigns against Sihon and Og fully prove. We are apt to forget that, at the time of his death, Moses was as great in warlike renown, as Joshua ever became.

As an orator, his last address to Israel proves him most eloquent; if he were indeed "slow of speech" in Midian, his defect must have been done away on Sinai.

His songs show him one of the most rapt and felecitous of all the glorious line of Hebrew poets.

As a judge and law-giver, he must have been wonderfully eminent, even if we leave out of the account the grand code of laws which he received on the mountain; for Jethro, his father-in-law, found him bearing the burdens of all that mighty host encamped in Rephidim; busy from morning unto evening in adjusting the differences, and settling the grievances of six hundred thousand men. The greatest jurist of modern times would not pretend to such a position.

When we consider Moses as a prophet, it will suffice us to remember that he was the high and shining centre of a great prophetic circle; and that the Lord himself proclaims of Moses, that there arose not like unto him a prophet since in Israel.

Moses was singularly free from all selfish ambition. God never offered a man such an opportunity to aggrandize his family, as he did to Moses, saying: "Let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation."

Never has there been exhibited such an instance of the power of God's saints in staying his hand, and lengthening out his mercies and forgiveness to the ungodly, as when Moses cried out: "Remember thy covenant! Why should the Egyptians say,

For mischief did he bring them out. Forgive them . . . or blot me out of thy book."

"And the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do."

While thus living in his nation's good, bearing its woes, repenting of its sins, clinging fast to its promises for the future, Moses was not of a stolid nature which cannot be aroused to strong feelings. He slew the aggressing Egyptian: he went out from Pharaoh in great anger; his anger waxed hot when he saw the calf and the dancing, and he cast those precious sapphire tables from his hands—tables traced with the golden finger prints of God.

He was angry with Eleazar and Ithamar, because they had not eaten the sin-offering in the holy place; but when Aaron explained their sufficient reason, at once he was content.

Alas, he was also filled with anger, and this, in an unholy manner, in Kadesh, and crying to Israel, "Hear now, ye rebels, must we bring you water out of this rock?" lost his entrance into the promised land.

The self forgetting of this man shines out very beautifully when he says to Joshua so tenderly: "Enviest thou for *my sake?* I would God, that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them."

When that supreme moment comes, and the Lord warns him: "Get thee into Mount Abarim . . . thou also shalt be gathered to thy people, as Aaron thy brother was gathered." Then the soul of Moses speaks eagerly, not for himself, but for others: "Let the Lord God . . . set a man over this congregation . . . which may lead them out and bring them in; that the congregation of the Lord be not as sheep which have no shepherd."

Moses has been celebrated as the meekest of men, from the passage: "Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men that were upon the face of the earth."

Perhaps, if *meek* had been rendered *disinterested,* or *long*

suffering, or *unselfish*, we should come nearer the true meaning of the original; and have a better exposition of the chief trait of the man.

Another eminent characteristic was his reliance on God. To God he resorted in all his private troubles; in all his anxieties for his people; in every difficult question.

When Shelomith's son blasphemed; when Zelophead's daughters claimed their inheritance; when a man gathered sticks on the Sabbath day, Moses ventured on no unassisted judgment; but appealed for the verdict of the Lord. When accused by Korah and his company of arrogance, all his reply was to fall on his face, and pour forth the silent anguish of his soul to his Maker.

At his own request, seventy of the elders of Israel received prophetic spirit, and executive power; and when Jethro advises him in a plan for a division of the administrative functions, he at once agrees, and gives the honor of the plan to its author.

The life of Moses was full of beautiful and wonderful types, and lessons for the saints in all ages. We are able but to hint of a few, that seeing the richness of the treasure to be gained from the study of this history, each may pursue it for himself.

At Marah bitter waters mocked the thirsty and fainting people. Children wailed to their mothers for drink; fever parched the fair faces of the women; the strength of the strong man failed; and the eyes of the herds grew red, and their tongues hung from their mouths for thirst. They looked for help in Marah, and lo, the nauseous and poisonous tide renewed their pains. Then Moses cut a branch from a tree which God showed him, and cast it into the cruel stream, and the water became sweet.

Thus Christ, fair branch of life's immortal tree, is cast into the bitter streams of this painful, unsatisfying world, and man's sojourn below becomes his stepping-stone to heaven; becomes the preparation for his everlasting rest; and is no longer a bane, but is a boon.

At Rephidim, again the people cried out for water, the grand need in a desert. At the word of the Lord, Moses smote the rock in Horeb, and water flowed forth—an unfailing supply. As says the Apostle: "They drank of that spiritual rock which followed them: and that Rock was Christ." Here the Apostle renders the Old Testament symbol so plain, that he may run who readeth it.

In his intercession Moses is a type of God's Church. The Church delays the destruction of a world, heedless and unthankful for her power. Over how many a godless man's way have the prayers of a mother, which are lying not unheeded before the throne, brought blessings. How many dangers have a Christian father's pleadings averted from his children; how many souls have been given as an answer to importunate prayers.

How have pestilences been removed, wars ended, famines prevented, by the strong cryings of God's beloved for mercy. "Let me alone, that my anger may wax hot," said God. "Remember Abraham, Isaac and Israel, thy servants," replied Moses, standing fearless in the breach.

As a Prophet, the Lord himself holds this Moses as a singular type of the Mediator God-man. "They have well spoken . . . I will raise up a Prophet from among thy brethren, like unto thee."

The people dared not abide the terrors of the law, they prayed one to stand between them and the great fire; the Almighty voice. So God would for the fearful majesty of the law give them the tenderness of the Gospel, through a Prophet like unto Moses. Lest this promise might be in any manner misapplied, Stephen develops it in his inspired address before the council.

This brings us to another point in which Moses was a type of Christ. "Like unto thee," says God. "Moses was exceeding fair," says Scripture; "of divine beauty," say traditions. He was of the comeliest, noblest, most striking and glorious bearing;

when he died, at the great age of one hundred and twenty years, his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated. We have no sympathy with the proclamation of a physically marred, feeble, imperfect Jesus. We believe that Moses types him in being "fairer than the children of men;" "grace is poured into thy lips!"

He was the "fullness of the godhead, bodily;" the "express image" of the Father's person. He was the "strong son of God," incorruptible, untainted, perfect, physically, as Adam before he fell. He bare our sicknesses as he bare our sins, in the profound knowledge and sympathy and tenderness of his infinite soul.

"There arose not a Prophet since in Israel like unto Moses." He was without a peer, until there walked forth a man in Galilee, one "chiefest among ten thousand," "altogether lovely," "his head like fine gold," "his countenance as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars." "This is the Church's beloved, and this is her friend, O daughters of Jerusalem."

Moses typed the Church of God when he was hidden in the cleft of the rock, and covered by the Almighty hand.

"I beseech thee, show me thy glory," was the outpouring of the sensuous Egyptian worship, diverted to the channels of grace. The Lord replies: "Thou canst not see my face, for no man can see me and live. Behold there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand on a rock, and it shall come to pass while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in the cleft of the rock, and cover thee with my hand."

Thus from the storm of God's wrath, from the consuming splendors of his face, from all the terrors of the judgment day, the Church of the Living shall be secure; standing like Moses on a rock, hidden in a cleft, covered by the Lord's hand; for Rock, and Cleft, and hiding Hand, shall be none other than the Jehovah Angel, the Man Christ Jesus!

"'Tis he, the Lamb! to him we fly
When the dread tempest passes by;
God sees his well beloved's face,
And spares us in our hiding-place."

For forty days, upon two separate occasions, Moses abode on the mount, and did neither eat nor drink.

Elijah and Christ alone have partaken of such an experience.

When Moses returned from his long communion with God, his face shone, and he "wist it not." There is many an humble believer, of whom all men take knowledge that he has been with Jesus, but he does not realize the radiant beauty of his daily life. Intercourse with Christ sets its bright seal upon men; and here below they shine with a reflection of the beauty of the upper Sanctuary.

Moses, in the wilderness, lifted up the brazen serpent; standing between the living and the dead, like Aaron with the censer, and staying the plague. "Look and Live," was the word; it was a whole Gospel in three syllables. Christ shows its meaning to Nicodemus: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so shall the Son of Man be lifted up."

In these all too cursory and unsatisfying glances at the life of Moses, we come to some of the points where his active faith is exhibited, and close with the unparalleled hour, when that faith reaches its highest development, and becomes the choice legacy of the Church forever.

Upon some of these salient points, the Apostle Paul seizes in his Epistle to the Hebrews. "By faith, Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." This is no idle story; no record of small sacrifice; it tells us of a man who, in the prime of his power, at an epoch when the actualities of life are most potent, when the lust of glory is most ardent, turned his back on the grandest throne beneath the sun; on Heliopolis, school and patron of art and science; on Egypt,

fairest, richest, most fertile kingdom; on a crown whose lustre outshone all others then on royal brows, and chose poverty, contumely, proscription, weary travail, all because it was better to suffer affliction with the people of God for a while below, and enter with them the rest that remaineth, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.

"By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king." He was a favored courtier, he became the tutor of slaves; yea more, himself the servant of Jethro, the shepherd. It was no small thing to dare the wrath of Pharaoh, in an effort to redeem his serfs from bondage.

"By faith he kept the Passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the first-born should touch them."

Perhaps we should have passed this over in the list of mighty *works*, had not inspiration especially directed attention to it. But consider the faith which could stand up, and, in face of friend and foe, predict that most wonderful visitation—the death of every first-born of man and beast in all that great nation; and then should propose by death to save from death: by the slain lamb to rescue the Hebrew first-born, and standing in the full splendor of an Egyptian day, should strike blood on the door post as a sign for that invisible destroyer, who was to pass by in the solemn darkness of night. This was faith indeed.

Was it a natural or ordinary occurrence, the refluence of the sea waves, that for miles of dry pathway nearly a million of people might go through in safety? But Moses, with the clamorous host of triumphant Egyptians pressing on the rear of the terrified Israelites, speaks to his people that they "go forward," go on when the land's limit is reached; and stretching out his rod, expects and obtains a path such as mortal foot never before trod, and sees the wall of waters towering up on either side, clear and firm as the crystal battlements of the new Jerusalem.

It was a deed of loftiest faith to lead into the wilderness a body of six hundred thousand men, besides the mixed multitude, the women and the children, without provisions for the journey, in a waste destitute of water, when their progress would necessarily be very slow, and all that lay at the end of the way was the promise of exterminating a strong people, who were of unusual physical development, skilled in war, and dwelt in cities "walled up to heaven."

The Philistines were a race of soldiers; the Hebrews of shepherds. They were naturally about as equally matched as a lion and a lamb. Yet the strong faith of the leader assured his people that they should enter in and possess that land, because he had seized firm hold of the truth that Jehovah would be their Captain, and nerve every arm with his own eternal strength.

What a steadfastness of faith was required to lay down to that dissatisfied, envious, rebellious people of Israel, a code of laws and worship so different from the customs they had learned in Egypt; so severe upon the idolatry with which they were most deeply tinctured; forbidding them all images, paintings and similitudes, because they had seen no manner of similitude on the day when the Lord spoke to them out of Horeb.

Every occasion on which Moses promised his people flesh, bread, water, in the wilderness, drew upon him for a faith greater than that possessed by all the million of the Israelites.

Every judgment which he pronounced, every punishment whereby he vindicated the outraged honor of his Lord, required such grand faith as has ornamented the martyrs; for before him stood the enraged people like wild beasts at bay, yet making ready to spring in a last paroxysm of fury: they "were ready to stone him;" murder glared from their eyes, as "they chode with him."

All his prayers for help in direful extremity; all his pleadings

for mercy in the midst of "plagues and burnings;" all his battles, bringing his undisciplined horde against their superior foe, were achievements of faith. This faith stayed the wrath of the Eternal, and procured the presence of the Angel.

Behold his faith's last triumph in the victory over death. Life was strong in his veins; his foot was swift as the roe on the mountains; his hand was steady; his eye was like the eagle's; his form was erect as the cedar; age had scattered no hoar-frosts on his brow, written no lines on his cheek; the clarion tones of the leader rung out full and clear as when he, at life's prime, refused the throne of Egypt.

In all this abounding strength he was called on to make ready to die. He might not lie down in his tent, surrounded by children and friends, counselling and blessing them: alone he was to climb the mountain of Nebo, and standing on the brink of his lonely grave, look his last on earth, in the midst of some great silence.

This desolation and loneliness would be the limning of natural imagination. But the supreme faith of Moses saw something very different. He saw that from the fullness of strength in this life, he should step into the immortal vigor of the life to come. His last sight would be the length and breadth, the splendid future of the land of Israel's inheritance, even unto the coming of the Son of Man. The Lord God would be with him in the valley of the shadow of death. No sepulchre built for the sons of men; not the grandeur of the Pyramids; not the Theban tombs; not the gorgeous mausoleums of kings; not the burial place of Hephæstion, whereon Alexander lavished his fortune; not the jewelled Taj, or the sculptured splendors of Greek and Roman crypts and shrines, could be compared to the last resting-place of Moses—for "The Lord buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Bethpeor, and no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day."

The faith of Moses sufficed him for all the emergencies of this life, and for the exigency of death.

To that solemn burial, perchance, came the hosts of God to perform funeral rites. Angels, archangels, and cherubim may have looked on the sacred dead, whom no human eye saw, and laying the clods of that Moabite valley over his clay, accompanied his soul into the city of God.

We hear of Moses, the exponent of the law, accompanying Elijah, Prince of Prophets, to the holy mount where the Christ of the Gospel shone, transfigured into his heavenly beauty.

Jude tells us that, about the body of Moses, the Devil disputed with Michael. Perchance that evil spirit held then what he has ever loved to teach, that "there is no resurrection of the dead."

The word of the Lord to Moses was: "Thou shalt *be gathered to thy people*, as thy brother Aaron was gathered to his people."

"God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." "The people" of Moses were the souls of just men made perfect; the redeemed in the upper sanctuary, the Church of the first-born: to these Moses was to go. He was to be gathered to his people. This, his last joyful assurance; his last object of faith, re-union with his saved and sanctified brethren, was his legacy to all believers to come. The dying believer has no dreary void, no unknown waste before him. But he shall see Jesus as he is, and seeing be like him. Where Jesus is, there also shall his servants be.

Bright vision that dawned on the last hour of Moses; his warfare was accomplished; his iniquity was pardoned; he went to join, and be one of his people, those cherubim near the throne, who cry: "Thou art worthy to take the book and to open the seals, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood."

"There arose no Prophet like to Moses." He was a giant in

all that captivates the human heart. Wondrous in personal power and beauty; a pure unpurchasable patriot; a Prince of statesmen; a most unselfish benefactor to his race; purged of private ambition. He could command the forces of nature; pray open the windows of heaven; control a whole nation in a tempest of passion; vindicate the right, punish the wrong; sympathize with all sorrow; subdue armies of foes, and leave the impress of his admirable wisdom and virtue on all coming time.

VIII.

MIRIAM AND DEBORAH.

THE THEOCRATIC STATUS OF WOMAN.

"I read before mine eyelids dropt their shade
'The Legend of Good Women,' long ago
Sung by the morning star of song, who made
His music heard below.

"Dan Chaucer, the first warbler, whose sweet breath
Preluded those melodious bursts that fill
The spacious times of great Elizabeth
With sounds that echo still."

THUS the "Legend of Good Women" was written, and later the "Dream of Fair Women," by another master in the art of song; yet have they left unsung two, whom the Scripture sets before us as glorious types of womanhood, both in domestic and public life; two who teach us the status of woman before her God; and in these times when the questions of woman's rights and position occupy so much attention, it is well to go back to the fountain of all truth, and draw our lesson thence.

Miriam and Deborah, separated by nearly three centuries, were twin souls, animated by the same high genius, by the same lofty patriotism, by the same ardor of self-sacrifice, by the same prophetic impulse.

The traditions about Miriam differ, some asserting that she was a Jewish vestal, the vigin governess of the Israelitish women; and the Talmud tells some singular stories of her office, power and

achievements. Josephus, on the contrary, states that she was the wife of Hur, of the royal family of Judah, and grandmother of Bezaleel, the divinely-gifted craftsman of the tabernacle.

Hur was associated with Aaron on several especial occasions, as on the Mount he stayed up the hands of Moses; and was left with Aaron in charge of the people during the absence of Moses on Sinai. We do not read that either Miriam or Hur consented to the idolatry of the calf.

Miriam is first mentioned as the eldest born of the wonderful family of Amram the Levite. Through all her life she retains that ascendancy which in childhood she took as her natural right. Doubtless a young child at the important hour when the babe Moses was committed to the Nile, she was yet deemed capable of watching alone that frail bark and its most precious freight, whereon hung the destinies of a nation, we may say of a world.

Artists have loved to paint the loveliness of that earnest child-face; the dark Hebrew beauty, the shade of a new care mingled with the sunny bouyancy of her childhood; mother, sister, guardian angel, all in one, peering through the tall reeds by the river. She is too full of her parents' faith to believe her brother will perish; she has heard of the vision foretelling the babe's destiny, and awe mingles with her tender looks; there is pity too for the forlorn case of the nursling; fear lest it should suffer; wonder as to what will happen. The enthusiasm and imagination of the child-woman are wrought up to the highest point; she has been nurtured in Egypt, a land teeming with fable; and perhaps expects now some wonderful spiritual manifestation. When the princess takes the babe, the watching Miriam fully justifies her parents' trust in her capacity. Recognizing the human saving agency, she at once boldly projects the return of the babe to its mother's bosom; and shrewdly works for it. We see her plan growing in her mind; she is not over-hasty; she permits the child to cry, and the princess

to compassionate for a while; with wonderful self-repression she gives no sign of recognition, or personal interest; she speaks to the point, strong common sense; and when she goes for her mother, most likely she indicates to Jochebed the part that is to be played; and Jochebed receives it as a heavenly inspiration.

These traits, thus early shining forth, were only strengthened with the strength of Miriam's advancing years.

"Miriam, the prophetess," is her acknowledged title at the time of the Exodus, and she is the first person in the sacred household to whom the prophetic gift is directly ascribed. This inspiration took the same form in which it displayed itself in Samuel, David, and others—poetry, accompanied by music and processions.

The sister evidently shared the unusual personal beauty, and more particularly the remarkable physical vigor and long-extended youthfulness of her brothers. Though at the time of the Exodus she must have been nearly ninety years of age, she takes her timbrel and goes forth before all the women of the Hebrews, leading their triumphal procession, singing and dancing in the joy of the deliverance. Clear over all the host rang the words of her praise, which they caught up and repeated, echoing them over desert and sea, as the waves rolled their dead foes to their feet. "Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously! The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea."

Miriam also must have shared the superior culture of her brothers, for she is ever mentioned as their peer; and she ever maintains toward them an independent and high position. In Numbers, twelfth and first, she is mentioned before Aaron as the leading spirit who swayed his judgment; while Micah the prophet names her as one of the three deliverers of the Hebrews: "And I sent before thee Moses, Aaron and Miriam." This last passage suffices to fix her position as one of high honor and leadership.

This princess of the Hebrews was a proud woman, and her na-

tional zeal was boundless. The Cushite wife of Moses found little favor in her eyes. Perhaps she felt the pure blood of the priestly race polluted by union with one who had not Abraham to her father. Perhaps the daughter of Jethro defied some of the national customs, or undervalued the national privileges of the Hebrews. She certainly appears in a most unfavorable light in the journey from Midian to Egypt. Miriam failed, however, in that she did not yield to the inevitable. Respecting the sanctity of the connubial tie, she should have felt that the marriage of her brother was a fixed fact, which could in no wise be bettered by arousing strife, and expressing dissatisfaction. The Cushite wife was a wife in very truth, and as such it behooved Miriam silently to accept her.

But in her family and national pride, Miriam urges her feelings on Aaron, until he is brought to the same indignation as herself, and together they attack Moses. The fashion of the onset is singular, they say: "Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? Hath he not spoken also by us?"

Here Miriam claims a parity with Aaron, which he does not dispute. The High Priest and his sister assert the same prophetic gift in equal ratio; and the Lord does not challenge their claim. He only makes it plain, that while they may be inspired, and that equally, they are far below the measure of his servant Moses, like whom there is none other.

When the Lord in anger had rebuked them and departed, lo Miriam, as the prime leader of the wrong, was covered with the abhorred Egyptian leprosy.

The proud prophetess could not have received a greater blow, and the cry of horror which at once rises from her two brothers, attests the lofty dignity of her station, and their own ardent love for her.

Not only this, but the whole nation is bowed in silent grief;

and during the seven days of her ostracism from the camp, the host of Israel abode in Hazeroth in keenest sympathy, waiting for the restoration of their prophetess.

Miriam died in Kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin, in the month Xanthicus, in the fortieth year of the wanderings, says Josephus. In the same year died Aaron, aged one hundred and twenty-three, an age which his sister surpassed by some years. Josephus tells us that the people made Miriam a great and costly funeral, and mourned for her thirty days, as they afterwards did for Aaron. The Arabians claim that her sepulchre is yet extant in Petra, as also that of Aaron.

We see from the history of Miriam, that when God called the people of Israel out of Egypt, giving the nation manners, laws, customs, exactly such as were pleasing to him, he made it evident in the position which he accorded Miriam, that woman was neither a slave, a plaything, nor a household drudge; but was meant by her Maker, as man is meant, for any station, public or private, *where she was needed.* Womanhood suffered in Miriam no degradation in occupying a public place, because there was a demand for her in that place. God chose one especial family to lead his Israelites to freedom. He found in that family a daughter as well as two sons; and he used her as he used her brothers, in some particular part of the leadership. Aaron did not do the work of Moses, nor Moses of Aaron; neither of them did Miriam's. One says, "but she was especially inspired." Yes; and so were Moses and Aaron. It was a particular emergency. Every age is full of particular emergencies.

"But she sinned, in regard to the marriage of Moses." True, she did sin; God works below, by imperfectly sanctified instruments. Aaron sinned when he made the calf; Moses, at the rock in Horeb. We do not hear that Miriam's integrity failed on either of these occasions.

The gift of Miriam shows that the spirit of prophecy, like genius, has no sex. However, in these days we find many—and that of both sexes—who undertake to prophesy having received no afflatus but in their own imagination.

There were many men in Israel who rose up to strive with Moses and Aaron for the leadership. We do not read that the women of the nation ever made such an attempt, to wrest power from Miriam. This speaks well for their common sense. Miriam had been gifted and trained for her position; she was equal to it, and that capacity vindicated her divine right to occupy it.

Women, it has been said, have no right to interfere with government; it is not their part to rule nations. Possibly the Lord thought differently, when he cut off all the male heirs of the crown of England, and put Victoria upon the throne. Just as evidently he has never given any woman a call to the Presidency of the United States. If He ever does, he will make it so plain that no one can dispute it, more than they can dispute his call to other rulers.

France has Salic Law; England has none. Salic Law delivered France over to the long line of the dissolute Louis, and the Revolution; absence of that law in England made Elizabeth sovereign, and the land Protestant.

Theories have been advanced, asserting what a woman may and can do; what she may not, and must not do. These assertions, on both sides of the Woman's Status question, are called "Divine principles:" they are directly antagonistic to each other, yet each is claimed as taught by human instinct, and the revelation of heaven!

We do not understand that God has hedged himself in by any of these rules; He has shown that He gives men and women missions, irrespective of sex. There was nothing but Divine intention to hinder Amram from having three sons, instead of a

daughter and two sons. But the Divine intention proved a great matter; and if that intention had been to teach that the status of women was ever and undeniably to be domestic privacy, and entire separation from public life, cares, action, and the great deeds of the world, the Lord took a most singular fashion to teach the lesson, in setting Miriam, Deborah, Jael, Huldah, Priscilla, and others in Holy Writ.

There is no disputing that all the great deeds which God has performed by the hands of women, he might have performed by the hands of men. When he has made women rulers, prophetesses, and warriors, he might have placed men in those positions instead. His employing women as he has, for such labors, has shown that there is no divinely ordained incongruity between women and any of these offices. In general terms, God has assigned men one line of work in the world, and women another; in physical conformation, he has fitted them for their grand and customary departments of labor; but he has made it no sin to go out of one sphere into the other, *if there is necessity for it.* Women rear babes, and guide the house; men till the soil, and strong-armed defend the home. But there have been some small muscled men, and some very large muscled women. As a general principle, men had better guide the ploughshare; but there have been women who have handled that implement excellently well, because there was a necessity.

"Necessity knows no law," is a frequent saying. Let us alter it to "Necessity makes a law."

This law of necessity is developing new phases of feeling. "The spirit of the age has always kept pace with facts, and outstripped the statutes." Let us say, that "the spirit of the age" is nothing more than the recognition of the necessities evolved by that age; let us also add, that as nothing is ever gained by running before Providence, so nothing is ever made by going with a loud clamor before the call of necessity.

Progress is not made by flying before demand, by becoming an *avant-courier*, like Malise bearing Clan Alpine's cross of fire.

Best wisdom waits prepared, like Roderick's "plaided warriors armed for strife," until need gives the signal. Not the messenger henchman, but the waiting host, was to gain victory. When once the rash and blatant age has learned the true Theocratic Status of Woman, they will see that God set her as man's equal, as he has made men equal one with another. Between man and man, as between man and woman, there are muscular and intellectual variations. The first Divine Right of Woman is, to do her own duty in her own particular sphere; and the second right is, to be wise enough to know when she has the call and capacity to fill any other sphere.

But this legitimate position of woman has broadened with the broadening energies and culture of all the world; and the woman who now lives but to sew tapestry, make love, and forget her alphabet; or the woman who sets her whole mind on knitting and spinning, is behind her age; as much as the general would be who should go into battle, clad in armor, carrying bow and arrows, and riding in a war chariot of the days of Alexander.

The Bible is a book for all time: developing the thought of God for all human history. Miriam and Deborah were, perchance, women before their age; women suited to the growth of later centuries, and showing what place woman could *lawfully* occupy.

We turn to Miriam's sister soul, Deborah, the Prophetess and Judge of Israel, and there are some salient points in her history.

Under that solitary land mark, the palm tree in Ephraim, later called Baal Tamar—the sanctuary of the palm—dwelt Deborah, the wife of Lapidoth.

Ehud and Shamgar were dead: the long peace conquered by those men of valor was at an end; and Israel's sin had sold them

to be slaves to Jabin, king of the Canaanites, who dwelt in Hazor. The right arm of Jabin's strength was Sisera, captain of the host; a very valiant man, who maintained an almost royal state on the spoils of his victories.

Besides foot soldiers and horsemen, Sisera had in his command nine hundred chariots of iron. Very likely these were armed with scythes, and as they swept over the battle field, mowing down men like grain, they were indeed formidable implements of war; and a people who could only equip themselves with bows and javelins, would easily be overborne by such a force.

At this time God put his spirit upon Deborah, a woman of Ephraim, the wife of Lapidoth, and Israel recognizing her prophetic gift, went to her for judgment. From her lips they received instruction, advice, exhortation, reproof. To her they unfolded their griefs and difficulties, and from her they learned the error of their ways, the wrath and the forgiving mercy of their God.

The high position of Deborah, as a judge of her people, did not militate against her true womanliness, or her domestic life. She judged Israel, but she exercised her office as the wife of Lapidoth, dwelling in the sanctity of his home. She did not go up and down the land to proclaim her abilities; to call the people to her standard; to inquire into their wants, or their wrong doing; to exhibit her gifts and power. On the contrary, she *dwelt* under her palm tree, and when she was wanted, the people went to her.

In courage, faith, patriotism, self-sacrifice, and humility, she was the very person suited to Israel's dire extremity; this fitness in herself secured her the dominion, and that dominion she exercised just as circumstances demanded.

For twenty years the people of Israel were punished for idolatry, and were led back to their ancient faith, by cruel slavery. They had grown cowards exceedingly, because they were sinners

exceedingly. Jabin's iron yoke bowed the necks of the once free and holy people; and they were weeping tears of blood.

A woman of unusual faith, Deborah must also have been a woman of prayer, and under her palm tree, day and night, she had cried to her God for the salvation of her people. She mourned before the Lord, as afterwards she sung jubilantly to him. It was this woman's faith and prayerfulness which made her a prudent ruler; this, her godliness, was her crown and her shield.

At length the answer to her prayers came. She was informed from heaven that God would lead out Sisera and his host to the river Kishon. This should be the river of death to the army of Jabin, and its mighty waters should sweep away the oppressors of the Hebrews.

The chariots and foot soldiers should perish; the proud head of Sisera should bow down under the clods of the valley beneath Tabor. Here was military glory waiting for some one, but Deborah did not seek it.

It was written in her destiny that she should lead that line of warrior women who shine on the historic page; but a true woman, she did not covet such renown, and would willingly have waited for another victor, to sing his achievements beneath her palm.

She sent for Barak, the son of Abinoam, a dweller in Kadesh-Naphtali.

The tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali, lying near the territory of Jabin, felt most keenly his oppression; it was meet, therefore, that they should bear the brunt of the warfare.

Barak promptly obeyed the summons of the prophetess, and appeared before her. Deborah addressed him in words of fervent faith and patriotism, which would have stirred the most sluggish soul:

"Hath not the Lord God of Israel commanded, saying, Go and draw toward Mount Tabor, and take with thee ten thousand

men of the children of Naphtali, and of the children of Zebulun? And I will draw unto thee, to the river Kishon, Sisera, the captain of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his multitude; and I will deliver him into thine hand."

Listening, Barak had more faith in the rapt prophetess than in his God! Deborah's grand courage drank its strength from the fountains of the Infinite, but Barak dwelt more in the seen.

The enthusiasm of Deborah fired him; she grasped the promise of the coming triumph, and her holy confidence rang in every tone.

"Her warbling voice, a lyre of widest range,
Struck by all passion, did fall down and glance
From tone to tone, and glided through all change
Of livliest utterance.

"When she made pause, I knew not for delight:
Because with sudden motion from the ground
She raised her piercing orbs, and filled with light
The interval of sound!"

This woman could command victory, thought Barak, even in the face of six hundred armed iron chariots.

And straightway he spoke his thought: "If thou wilt go with me, I will go: but if thou wilt not go with me, I will not go!"

We can imagine the look that swept over the noble face of that mother in Israel. Indignation, surprise at the faith in flesh and lack of confidence in God, half scorn, and abundant self-sacrifice. She had not sought to lead the army; she had avoided it, but the fate of Israel rested on her heroism. It was needful for her to lead the advance of the ten thousand Hebrews; this being so, she could do it.

There was reproof in her answer. "I will surely go with thee: notwithstanding the journey which thou takest shall not be for thine honor; for the Lord shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman."



J. John.

Engraved by J.R. Rice.

WAITING FOR THE SIGNAL.

Even this prophecy and reproach did not alter Barak's resolution. He probably reasoned that as her prophetic gift was so well known, her presence in the army would be a pledge of victory. Zebulun and Naphtali were much more likely to come at his summons, if their beloved Judge were with him.

As he in no wise abated his demand, "Deborah arose, and went with Barak to Kedesh."

"And Barak called Zebulun, and Naphtali to Kedesh; and he went up with ten thousand men at his feet; and Deborah went up with him."

There were men enough in Israel to judge the people and exhort Barak; there were warriors, priests, legists, and the princes of Judah; but God called this woman to stand in the breach, to destroy Jabin, free the tribes, and judge them. She had such inspiration and fitting for her office as Gideon and other judges. We see her grandly suited to her position; she is never in advance of demand; never behind it; she keeps majestic pace with necessity.

When the hosts of the Canaanites and Hebrews were arrayed against each other, Deborah gave the signal of battle, saying to Barak: "Up! for this is the day in which the Lord hath delivered Sisera into thine hand; is not the Lord gone out before thee?"

It was a glorious announcement; it nerved the arm of Barak, and thrilled every one of the ten thousand hearts in his camp. They rushed forth assured of victory. "*The Lord* discomfited Sisera." The very stars in their courses fought for Israel. The soul of Barak rose to meet the hour; the clash of the battle electrified him; he pursued the flying host of the enemy unto Harosheth, dealing death, and foes fell before him like leaves cut off by the frosts. "And all the hosts of Sisera fell by the edge of the sword; and there was not a man left." Those six hundred

chariots of iron were abandoned on the field; wildly dashed the horses, their leaders lost, and the tumult of the strife in their ears. Kishon, rolling seaward, carried swollen corpses, spears, shields, and flung up warlike equipments upon its banks.

Among the multitude of the dead, the Hebrew soldiers sought for the hated body of Jabin's general. Barak knew well that the prediction would be verified; that no warrior's sword or spear would be found to have cut down Sisera; in some retreat he had surely been slain, by the hand of a woman.

So it was. Heber, the Kenite, a descendant of Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, a princely nomad, was living in his tents, at peace with Jabin. Heber had his dwelling in *Zaanaim*, "the oaks of the wanderers." In the heart of Jael, this Bedouin's wife, glowed a friendship for the people of God. When she saw their oppressor lying asleep in her tent, the cries of women and children wailing for fathers and sons whom he had slain, seemed to fill her ears. This was the man who had seized Hebrew maidens to crowd his harem; here was he who had reaped the fields he never sowed; the proud idolater, who had contemned that One God whom Moses wrote of, and whom Jethro served. Her soul burned to revenge the sorrows of the kindred people.

A moment, the nail and hammer did their work, and Sisera passed out of sleep to sleep's twin brother—death, and lay all lifeless at Jael's feet.

A daring deed! The enemy of Israel was slain!

And yet, as the next chapter closes, with that Canaanite mother's watching for her stately son; as one moment her maternal pride swells high, and next her fears prevail, and we think of the white corpse on which Barak gazes in Heber's tent, and know this mother's heart must sicken and perish in its hope deferred, we pity her. She is a woman who has leaned from her lattice, with her wise ladies about her, and for more than three thousand years has challenged and received the sympathy of a world!

The day of slaughter closed with song. Deborah and Barak meeting when the oppressor was vanquished, and their people were made free, burst forth into the praise of God. Instead of self-gratulation there was worship. "Praise ye the Lord!" "I will sing praise to the God of Israel." This began the pæan, and when the glowing numbers ceased, they ceased in praise. "So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord; but let them that love him be as the sun, when he goeth forth in his might."

After this deliverance "the land had rest forty years." The passing of each Hebrew generation seemed to mark a new lapse into idolatry.

Behold this Deborah! her piety, her discretion, her wisdom, her patriotism, are an inheritance for a world.

She grew up at her birthplace; there she married; there when called to lofty station she still abode; and Israel went up to her for judgment. Her high position and mighty deeds did not unsex her; she was not a king, but *a mother in Israel.* The trouble-tossed, worn, grieving, penitent people, needed *a mother*, and that mother was Deborah. She sang them songs of salvation and of patriotism comforting them. Hers was no feeble lullaby; she sang gloriously as David, Isaiah and Habakkuk. That swelling triumphal ode seals her a prophet.

The history of Deborah, of her prophesying, judging and warring, shows us that in the thought of God there is no unfitness in woman's undertaking those toils, and filling those positions, if need be, which more ordinarily belong to men. There are times when a woman can do a man's work more nobly and fitly than he can do it himself. When that time has come let her do the work as God has called her. And we shall see that the women thus needed and thus employed are not the women who have been loudly vaunting their fitness and demanding opportunity; but those who with souls intent on duty, rather than renown, have given their hearts

to each toil as it found them; and having been faithful in least were found to be equally faithful in much.

Since before women under Divine government lie these possibilities, we work in the line of the Divine intent when women are educated, as men are educated, in the ratio of their capacity. The capacity of women for learning is, on the whole, the same as that of men. More than half of each sex is unequal to a liberal education. Given unlimited opportunities, each growing mind will by natural selection receive that for which it is best suited, and which will in the end be found to be a proper furnishing for the exigencies of its future.

Not every Paduan maiden could have become professor of six languages in the university, as did Elena Cornaro; and, as was proven by the fact, not every Paduan lad; for she found none to compete with her.

Fenelon taught that feminine purity was as incompatible with learning as with vice. God being the great fountain of knowledge, we do not presume that he has ever fashioned a creature so holy as to be defiled by wisdom.

Dr. Channing is horror struck at woman's meddling with theology. The excellent divine would not have had Miriam prophesy; Deborah deliver the oracles of God; or Priscilla be one of the professors of theology, of whom Apollos the eloquent learned. The good doctor is not the only man who has been wiser than God.

There has been much prating about woman's *intuition* and *instinct*, and her weakness being her strength. Woman's weakness is *not* her strengh; for her as for man knowledge is power. Intuition is no more the peer of education than the dog's instinct is the equal of his master's knowledge. Instinct and intuition are well enough when they are all that can be had—and no longer.

Given a sound religious, moral, and mental training, and we

think other problems will work themselves out—when it is time. It took many years to teach men that there is a better implement than the sword; and that woman could manage anything beyond her spinning wheel; and the lesson in either case is yet far from well learned.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of all wisdom. The Creator bestows this on women as he does on men. He demands of each the best exercise of the talents, whether few or many, which he has bestowed. In proportion as the soul and brain are educated, women will appreciate the dignity and extent of what is evidently their first sphere, the sphere of home. When they go beyond this, it will be because their home work demands *less* than their capacity; because outside work calls for the surplus power; because they are equal to the new demand made upon them.

In considering this "woman question" most people ignore the fact that marriage is the God-implanted instinct of the race. The majority of men and women will marry. Unconquerable nature will then set the claims of husband, children, home life *first* in the heart of every educated and godly woman. Therefore, there need be no more masculine trepidation lest women usurp the pulpit and the gubernatorial chair, the general's star, and the sea captain's floating kingdom, because wifehood and motherhood will interpose their mysterious ban. There may be no legal disability, but there will be in general the natural disability and disinclination. When there is an exception, it will be so fitting and so necessary that, as in the case of Deborah, Miriam and Huldah the prophetess, no one will wish to condemn. For any body of men to legislate against the entrance of woman into any honest sphere, we hold to be action running before the face and will of God, which will be forced to run back again.

Woman shines fitly in her home, as shines a jewel in a ring;

but, as says John Quincy Adams: "Women are not only justified, but exhibit the most exalted virtue, when they do depart from the domestic circle, and enter on the concerns of their country, of humanity, and of their God." For the first specification, we see a bright array of those who have been warriors, rulers, martyr-patriots. We admit the vast incompatibility between womanhood and war; that, however, is an argument against war and not against the sex. We see an incompatibility between God's ministers and war; between all good men and war. Leaving home, women have blessed the earth, as nurses and teachers—as missionaries, and the sustainers and pioneers of missions.

"Times change, and we change with them." The nineteenth century has demanded more of and for women than any precedent. The next century may do more, but loud outcry, and wild demands for that, for which the fulness of time has not come, will not hasten the years, slipping like sands from the hand of the Creator.

The status of woman under the Divine Government is a mental and spiritual equality with man. Add to this piety, and only in those exceptional cases where there is a clear need and call will woman trench on the *office work* of man.

The honorable women of the centuries, whose names are written in light, have not been those who clamored for great honors in public places, but who, doing whatsoever their hands found to do, grew into fame without intending it. If there is a loftier good, a higher sphere for woman, she will reach it by showing herself equal to all the emergencies of the present.

If the day comes when the affairs of State government, diplomacy, and politics need her guidance, she will find herself standing quietly at her post, lifted there *because she was needed.*

In such need, while manhood ignores the sentimentalism of a Dunois, it will possess the unselfish recognition and reverence of

Barak, for one whom God has animated and moulded for the occasion.

"If Barak had believed like Deborah, he would have been as near to God as she was," says Lange. Faith was the measure of valor. Not legions, but prophets, guard the kingdom of our God. God has called his prophets from either sex as it pleased him; but in the main the duties of the prophetic office have been suited rather to the physique of the man than the woman.

When all men and women have faith, when all are Christians, then all fear of mutual aggression and oppression will be done away. The scriptural assertion of the unity of their flesh is the assertion of their equality; to claim equality is not to deny a difference. In religion only these two find their true oneness, their highest destiny:

> "As Heaven's high twins, whereof in Tyrian blue
> The one revolveth: through his course immense
> Might love his brother of the damask hue,
> For like, and difference.
>
> For different pathways evermore decreed
> To intersect, but not to interfere;
> For common goal, two aspects, and one speed,
> One centre and one year."

IX.

ACHAN.

THE SINNER IN THE CHURCH.

IN the annals of the Church of God the same elements have entered into every dispensation. The history of the Church militant is a unit. Those phases of character; those diverse elements; those rhapsodies, and declensions; those warm-hearted labors, and strange apathies, which wake our wonderment now, puzzled Shem; preyed on the soul of Methuselah; astonished Abraham; and discouraged Moses, until he cried, "Kill me now, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favor in thy sight, and let me not see my wretchedness."

Christians now-a-days feel religion disgraced, and sinners triumph to see so many *in* the Church, who are evidently not *of* it. It is common to hear people remarking that though this is painful, it is nothing new—"Judas was one of the twelve." Judas was only a central figure in a long line of "fair and flourishing professors" who have proven themselves false. There were many, beginning with Cain, before Judas; there have been many since. Christ has plainly declared that thus it shall be until the world ends, and the angel reapers go forth: "Let them both grow together until the harvest."

Such a vast concourse of evil doers have doubtless exhibited the hardness of the unregenerate heart, in every imaginable form of sin; but after all, ninety-nine hundredths of the false professors

show their spiritual idiosyncrasies in one and the same form—*covetousness.*

If a member of any evangelical church breaks the third, sixth, seventh, or eighth commandment, he is pretty certain to be exscinded at once. If he trespasses on the fourth, fifth, or ninth sections of the moral law, let us hope that he is invariably reproved and exhorted. But we must aver that cases where any exception is taken to the infringing of the tenth commandment by "church members in good standing," are so few and far between, that none seem to be on record. This is, when well considered, the more singular, since he who breaks the law against coveting, evidently has at the same time broken those most solemn statutes: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." "Thou shalt not bow down to them nor serve them." We see that a covetous Christian should be an impossibility; alas, he is hardly an anomaly.

Before the Christian's eye should be ever, as in the legend, the crucified Christ, saying: "All this for thee; what hast thou done for me?"

If it is possible for the saved soul entering the better world, to feel wonder-struck and bitterly repentant for his past, it will be in proportion, we think, to the amount of his covetousness. The covetous Christian is, like covetous Lot, saved so as by fire.

In nearly every church there is to be found a very lofty, self-assuming and thoroughly self-satisfied individual, whom the Lord has never converted; and whose covetousness and self-content keep equal pace one with another.

In studying Biblical characters, we have come now to Achan, a man of this type, and shall, for a little time dwell upon the individual, his influence, and his destiny. There had been men of his stamp before him. Milton goes still farther back, and tells us of a covetous spirit among the rebelling angels:

"Mammon led them on;
Mammon, the least erected spirit that fell
From Heaven; for e'en in Heaven his looks and thoughts
Were always downward bent, admiring more
The riches of Heaven's pavement, trodden gold,
Than aught divine or holy, else enjoyed
In vision beatific."

The name Achan is more properly, as Josephus has it, Achar —a troubler. He was the fourth generation from Judah; a prince of a princely house.

The city of Jericho was given to Israel by the direct interposition of God. The people marched around it to the sound of their sacred music; and when the ordained signal was given, the mighty wall fell inwards with a great crash, and all that each Hebrew had to do was to go up straight before him, to seize the captives and the spoil. The city of Jericho was especially accursed; it had, like Sodom, sinned exceedingly, and was to be left a monument of the destroying wrath of God upon high-handed idolatry. Therefore, before its mighty bulwarks withered and fell beneath the touch of God's finger, Joshua had strictly commanded the people, saying: "And ye in any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing, lest ye make yourselves accursed, when ye take the accursed thing, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it. But all the silver and gold, and vessels of brass and iron, are consecrated to the Lord: they shall come into the treasury of the Lord."

This was an exceedingly plain, impressive warning. We must remember that it came immediately after the miraculous passage of the Jordan; the solemn celebration of the passover at Gilgal; the new circumcision of the people; the ceasing of the manna, the angel's food which had nourished them for forty years; and the appearance of the Covenant Angel, Captain of the Hosts of God.

We see the tremendous impression made on the minds of the

Israelites by these events, and by the prohibition delivered to them, in the fact that among all those millions there was found but one man who dared to disobey. Indeed, we feel it a matter of amazement that even one should have ventured so much, when to reach his forbidden prize he must pass over those strangely smitten walls, beholding the destruction God dealt to his foes, and seeing how, when his reckoning time comes, he requireth all the past.

Achan was an honorable man, of a most honorable family; he was doubtless highly respected by the people, and had no little esteem for himself; when the royal banners of Judah led the advancing host of Israel, he went with them, feeling himself a credit to his nation.

He had nourished a great vice in his bosom. A man, in a sudden burst of passion, may be betrayed into a sin, of which he has never dreamed; but selfishness is a plant of slow growth; it only, by culture, attains strength; it is not like Jonah's gourd, a thing to grow up in one night, and wither in another.

The whole manner of Achan's crime showed that covetousness was a habit with him. He was so secret, so wary, so presistent, so utterly obstinate about his deed.

As he went up, sword in hand, over the prostrate wall, he came to the dwelling of a great man of Jericho, perhaps even to the palace of the king. The greedy eye of Achan was alert for plunder. He had not laid it to heart that Jericho was accursed, and all its gold and silver were consecrated to the Lord, and were to be brought into the sanctuary, purged by fire, and converted to sacred use.

The wealth of Jericho was the gain of vice and oppression. Its treasures were sacred to Baal and Ashtaroth: now the wrath of man was to redound to the glory of the God of Heaven, and

the spoils of the idols were to decorate the sanctuary of the King of kings.

Looking eagerly about him, keeping guard neither over his eyes nor the lusts of his heart, Achan saw a noble trophy. Before him lay a right royal robe, a Babylonish garment. Even when he is about to die for its sake, it is so precious in his eyes that, with a miser's relish, he calls it "a *goodly* Babylonish garment." "It was," says Josephus, "woven entirely of gold, fit for a king." Near this garment were two hundred shekels of silver, probably in some wrought purse or bag, and a wedge of gold, in weight fifty shekels.

Achan at once desired these for his own possession; he did not consider how worthily they would grace the Tabernacle; he did not remember that they were already the Lord's, and that the eye of their Owner was fixed on him.

"Will a man rob God? But ye have robbed me, saith the Lord of Hosts."

We see that Achan was a true miser, one who loved treasure for its own sake, not on account of what he could do with it. There is a vast difference between these two classes. The world unites in execrating men who get gold to gloat over it in secret; to cherish it, and cling to it, and love it like a human thing.

Others gather money with equal avidity, but they get it as the means of amassing treasures of art and literature; of securing education, and lavishing beautiful gifts on their families and friends. If they add to this, that as they get they give; that their money is a fountain whence flow a hundred rills of blessing to the needy, and which make the waste places of the Church bloom like the rose, then men rejoice in their success, as the securing of a positive good.

Achan loved the golden garment, the silver shekels, and the shining wedge, for themselves. He at once appropriated them

to his own use, and made all speed to his tent to hide them. His family, as we learn from the sequel, were like-minded with himself. They shared his doom; and, as God is just, it is evident that they shared his crime. A trench was dug in the earth under the tent of Achan, and there they hid away God's property, the consecrated firstfruits of the spoils of Canaan.

Achan had plenty of time to deliberate, to repent, to make restitution, but he had no idea of doing either; he gloated over his booty.

Before long he began to see the effect of his sin, for his people were smitten at Ai; and instead of coming again in triumph, the defeated army returned, rending the air with their cries, and bringing the dead bodies of thirty-six warriors.

Shame and confusion of face were Israel's portion. In thirty-six tents the wailing women took up the lamentations for the dead. The "hearts of all the people melted, and became as water."

Joshua, with torn garments and dishevelled locks, lay weeping on his face before the Ark of God.

The seventy elders of Israel put dust on their reverend heads, and refused to be comforted.

Achan knew why this blow had fallen: he saw the chiefs of his own tribe, Nahshon and Zabdi, lamenting thus before offended God, and he knew well that the root of all this bitterness was golden, and planted in the earth in the midst of his tent. Still he did not repent. It was open to him to confess and to restore; but no, he valued his treasure more than the lives and happiness of his people, more even than the fate of his nation.

His sin cannot be hidden, and God becomes his Accuser. The meaning of the disaster is made plain, *there is a sinner in Israel.* The inexorable lot pointed its ghostly finger directly to the culprit.

Achan stood confronted with his wronged, indignant people; before his grieved, astonished leader; before the tabernacle of his outraged God.

Not till then; not until vengeance had taken him by the throat, and cried, "Thou art the man," did he confess; then, driven to the wall, he made a *statement of fact.*

Suddenly the hidden garment, the gold and the silver, gave tongue against him; when the trench was opened, the trembling messengers beheld the fatal ingot, the shining of the folded cloth of gold, and under all the silver shekels. They brought them forth, laying them as silent accusers before the Lord.

That is a solemn scene in the doleful valley, thence called Achor. Achan, his family, his tent, his goods, his flocks and herds all make one mighty funeral pyre.

Joshua says to the culprit: "Why hast thou troubled us? The Lord shall trouble thee, this day."

Doubtless as Achan looked upon the fruits of his crime, when he saw garment, wedge and shekels, they seemed a strange thing to die for.

"They stoned them with stones." Thus Israel cleared themselves of all complicity in the iniquity. They burned them with fire, emblem of the fierceness of that anger which had gone out against Jacob. Then they raised over them a great pile of stones—a memorial of the sin, and punishment of covetousness. "Wherefore the name of that place was called Achor," that is—trouble.

This is the brief and bitter history of the man. His epitaph is written in the Book of Chronicles. "Achar—the troubler of Israel." Thus is he set on the page of history forever.

The baleful influence of the man is to be noted. His sin had impregnated his whole family. If there is a sin which is hereditary in its essence, we think that sin is covetousness. In this the

son is very apt to be like his father. Close, narrow dealings, neglect of charities, the withholding of the Lord's tithes, are traits handed down too often from one generation to another. Hardness of the fist is more apt to be perpetuated as a mental than a physical characteristic.

Not only did Achan ruin the moral character of his household, but he was the cause of their violent destruction. Beyond this he was the troubler of his whole nation. He brought military disgrace upon Israel, and made them the mock of the heathen. He was the real murderer of thirty-six valiant men; and widows and orphans whom he had made, come near to behold his doom.

The influence of the covetous man poisons society. This covetousness it is which makes envies and heartburnings in families; foments a hatred of the poor against the rich, and awakes the scorn of sharp-witted worldlings, who see the vast incongruity between some church members' profession and practices. There is full many a man who *prays* missionary who will not *give* missionary.

The destiny of Achan was temporal and eternal infamy. Such destiny lies before any one who goes regularly to church every Sunday, and considers of the state of his finances, while in all apparent rectitude he is waiting for the elements to be passed at the communion. Such an one readily partakes of the bread and wine and fails to see the contribution plate at the close of the service!

We would that Achans were as scarce in the modern church as they were in Israel at the sack of Jericho. People seeing a church in difficulty, in a cold, dead, unhappy state, are apt to say: "Alas, there is a Jonah there!" If they should say an Achan, they would come much nearer the mark. The Jonahs are the fearing Christians, the Achans are the *covetous professors*, and they are by far the more numerous.

It sometimes seems that if we should sift out of the church all

the Lots, and all the Achans, there would be hardly anybody left, so has this sin of covetousness grown among us. Troublers of God's Israel, they sit in their places, and the arm of the Lord is stayed. The helper of Israel will not reveal himself. The cause of Christ languishes; devout souls cry like Joshua: "Ah, Lord, what shall I say when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies!"

The answer of the Lord is now as then: "Get thee up; wherefore liest thou upon thy face? Israel hath sinned . . . for they have even taken of the accursed thing . . . and they have stolen and dissembled also."

Covetousness is no doubt the crying evil of our time. With increase of means have come increase of luxuries, and the more men have the more men crave. Very good people who desire the prosperity of the Church, and the glorious return of their Christ, must, like Israel in the day of Amos, be at ease in Zion; must live luxuriously, and feast and sing and be jubilant, until there is little left for the Lord's cause.

In these days the whole world is open to the entrance of gospel light; opportunities abound; there is a cry for help going up from all the dark places; if it were not for covetousness, there would be men and means in abundance, and suddenly from the open windows of heaven should rain down spiritual plenty; blessings making rich all the earth with true riches. The trouble is, men are too covetous to hasten the second advent of their Beloved.

The increase of this horrible vice of covetousness may possibly be owing to a laxity of church government. If this sin like others, considered more flagrant, but truly not so deadly, were a matter of church discipline, a very great improvement might take place. People would be led to examine themselves, to try their spiritual temper, and see if they really loved money more than the name of Jesus.

To us has come in Holy Writ the prohibition of covetousness, just as clearly as came to Achan the forbidding to touch the spoils of Jericho. "Abhor covetousness." "Let it not be so much as named among you." "Covetousness which is idolatry." We have held up before us the terrible fate of Achan, of Demas, of Ananias and Sapphira, and yet—O strange perversity of our hearts!—we covet still.

The warning comes to the covetous man as to Achan. He goes on and sins like Achan, he robs God. He sees the disastrous effects, the sneers of the world, the grief of holy souls, the hinderance of gospel work, the perversion of his own family, as Achan saw it. He is obstinate and clings to his greed as Achan clung. Then in the midst of his sin, or perchance after a long success in it, at the hour of death, the Lord becomes his accuser, and he meets the doom of Achan.

Beggared and hopeless, the soul reaches eternity, and stands a stranger at the gate of a city where no friends or kindred in spirit are dwelling; where none know the comer's name; where no surety has been bespoken, no advocate retained to plead its cause, no treasure sent before, no mansion prepared. The glorious accents of that far-off land are all unknown to the tongue that has hitherto only made the bargains and counted the gains of that dim planet Earth, which now has faded out of sight.

There is, to be sure, remaining a name on the church rolls; the modern Achan has removed to a land where they do not receive "church letters of dismission" from this lower sphere, but where they have a divine test beyond all the crucial skill of the church on earth.

Would it do any good to bury Achan with a placard on his breast, that when the resurrection angel comes he may know this dust and ashes once professed to be a Christian? Alas, no! Achan's hour for repenting and doing better has passed by. When

he comes forth in his grave clothes it will do no good to profess: "Lord, we have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets."

Who can abide hearing that reply freighted with doom? "I tell you, I know not whence you are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity."

From the history of Achan let us take this lesson home: flee covetousness, which is idolatry; for ye cannot serve God and Mammon. And ours is a God which searcheth the reins and trieth the heart, and will accept nothing less than entire consecration to himself.

X.

SAMSON,

A SAINT OF IRON AND CLAY.

IN the world of Nature and Providence we frequently admire seeing a need met by an exactly suitable supply. We note effects, and superficially wonder how they arose, and whence came their nice fitness to an emergency; their causes may be deep as the glowing centre of the earth, or dwell high up among the stars.

In the records of Scripture we are shown the cause lying far back of the effect; we see God through successive years preparing for the exigencies of his children. This long preparation is nowhere more prominently developed than in the book of Judges.

If ever there was a people stiff-necked and rebellious and besottedly set against learning anything by experience, it was the people of Israel. God had selected them to show forth in their history, and beyond all controversy through time and eternity, the magnificence of the riches of his mercy, and the abundance of his long suffering. We doubt if ever sons of Moab or Ammon or Canaan could have made more tremendous drafts on the Divine patience, or tempted more presumptuously Almighty wrath, than did the descendants of favored Shem and faithful Abraham.

"These be thy gods, O Israel!" had been the cry at the foot of Sinai, which had sounded the death-knell of three thousand men. The smoke of the sacrifices to Baalpeor had proved the

funereal pall of four and twenty thousand of the wayward and chosen race. Yet in spite of such experiences, with the thunder of Horeb and the curses of Ebal ringing in their ears, Israel still followed after strange gods. For such high treason against Heaven, the bitterness of bondage had been decreed by a law, of whose immutability the unaltering statutes of the Medes and Persians were only the faintest shadow. God foresaw after the chastisement the deep repentance, and then the swift smile of his forgiveness, and through long trains of years he again and again prepared the men who were to be his right hand in working salvation for his people.

Even before Israel corrupted themselves with those Moabitish idolatries which sold them into the hand of Eglon for eighteen years, the wife of Gera, a left-handed Benjamite, nursed on her bosom the ordained deliverer of her nation, and the unconscious earth yielded the metal that made his two-edged dagger.

When Israel cried mightily unto God because of Midian, that arm had already grown strong in beating out wheat, which should sweep away the oppressing Amalekites, like the chaff of summer threshing floors.

"We have sinned," wailed the loved and wayward nation, smarting under the hand of the Zidonians. Then the soul of the Lord "was grieved for the misery of Israel," and lo, he who had been driven out of his father's house, and inured to all hardships and trials as a harlot's son, was ready to grind Zidon and the Maonites like dust beneath his heel, and sit a strong judge over the desolated and trembling tribes.

"And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord; and the Lord delivered them into the hands of the Philistines forty years." But God foreknew that at the end of the forty years, Israel would humble themselves with deep self-accusations before his righteous throne—would be forgiven—would need an

avenger to stand up for them; and while this repentance was yet unstirred in the hearts of these sinners, the King of kings fashioned for himself the man who as a sharp sword should divide asunder the strength of Philistia, and smite to the earth the pride of the heathen.

As has often happened, to especially mark the Divine interference, the coming deliverer was to be the child of one long barren among women—Manoah's wife.

Manoah was of the tribe of Dan, and dwelt in Zorah, a part of the inheritance which had fallen to that tribe, when the land of Canaan was divided by lot among its new possessors. Dan was the fifth son of Jacob, borne by Bilhah, and receiving from Rachel the name of Dan, or *judging*. We find Dan prophetically described by Jacob, and by Moses, as a judge, a serpent, an adder, and a lion's whelp. A little later than the time of Manoah and his son, we find the Danites, a band of marauders, knowing no law but their own power.

Dan in Manoah's day was as deeply imbued with idolatry as any of the tribes of Israel, but through all the nation were scattered families who lived in the fear of the Lord, and maintained the pure worship of him who had led his people through wilderness and sea by fire and cloud.

"Among the faithless faithful only found" were these two, who doubtless lamented together the sin and sorrow of their people. The home was lonely without the faces and voices of young children; there had been a promise left long ago of Jehovah, a God clad in flesh, and this daughter of Dan had had her longings for a maternity that should make her most happy among women. Her hope had never had fruition; her husband tilled the field, she toiled in the house alone. So as she toiled, musing perhaps on happiness that might have been, there came to her the Angel of the Lord—the Jehovah of the old dispensation—the Jesus of the

new. She knew him not, his name was secret; the Israelitish woman had not reached to the grandeur of the revelation that the Ransom of the race, he who should hereafter lie, divinity and dust, on a Jewish mother's knee, was here on an errand of mercy to his beloved nation, now as ever the shepherd and care-taker of his wandering flock. Manoah's wife beheld this stranger differing from all men that ever she had seen, a man of God, his countenance very terrible, even with its splendors softened to meet her feeble sight, bearing impress of the skies.

In the brief and magic touches of sacred writ we have a very clear picture of Manoah and his wife, and the chief traits of their character.

Faith shone in them like a star: "A man of God came to me, but I asked not whence he was," says the wife, and her husband prays, "Let the man whom thou didst send come again unto us."

Then the angel returns, and the grace of humility clothes this pair: "How shall we order the child, and what shall we do unto him?"

Holy reverence is like a crown to them; they made an offering, fell on their faces, and worshipped.

Then the man's fears awoke: "We shall surely die, because we have seen God."

Then the wife's grand common sense shone out: "If the Lord were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt-offering and a meat-offering at our hands; neither would he have shewed us all these things, nor would, as at this time, have told us such things as these."

A splendid piece of logic this. They were decreed to be the parents and tutors of one who should deliver Israel from the hand of the Philistines. The dead could not bear nor bring up children; so it was evident that their lot was to live even after that wonderful vision of God.

When we follow the history of the strong man of Dan, we cannot but wish he had inherited this sturdy sense, this reasoning force of the mother, who comes before us with no name but "Manoah's wife."

So Samson was born; child of such promises that it needed no infant exhibition of strength to indicate his future.

William the Conqueror grasped a handful of straws with such unyielding tenacity that his nurse foretold that he should grasp and hold kingdoms; but these Danites needed no sign to show to them in their boy the scourge of Philistia, for they had the word of the Angel of the Covenant.

Now, as her son grew daily in the "camp of Dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol," a glad young Nazarite before the Lord, Manoah's wife was prouder and happier than ever the "Berecynthian mother in her turreted chariot, joyful in a race of heroes;" her hero's course should wax brighter and grander, like the sun, and shine over the world in the glory of his faith forever.

Yet, if we can predicate anything of Samson's boyhood from the record of his manhood, the lad must have exhibited discrepancies of character sufficient to appal the stoutest mother-heart that ever beat. No man that has been held up before men in the clear light of history presents more glaring inconsistencies than Samson. He was weak just in proportion as he was strong; his humanity was of the feeblest, and the grace that was in him, that throbbed in his mighty veins, and knit his sinews like bands of steel, was strong as an archangel's; there was no limit to his strength but the limit set by his own irresolution. He who was to send the story of his prowess singing down the centuries like an arrow from a prodigious bow, was to send also the story of his folly and his shame.

It is the old tale, so often repeated, of energies running to waste and power misapplied, and a lofty mission trailing its banners in

the mire. God gave this man a destiny, to the grandeur of which he never fully rose. The reservoir of his strength was in the Almighty, and no demand on power would have exhausted his supply. We cannot calculate the grandeur of the deliverance he might have wrought for his people had he fixed his unflinching gaze in high patriotism on his country's greatest good. As it was, he made great spirts of strength and courage, and then lay back on his oars, conscious of reserve force ready whenever he chose to exert it.

Whatever religion Samson had was of the intensely muscular variety. These are the days when the gospel of muscularity has everywhere had its apostles and adherents. Beginning in a wise appreciation of the fact that spirit itself may be ennobled if its home of clay is fair and comfortable, desiring simply *mens sana in sano corpore*, this wish has outgrown its legitimate limits, and men have developed body at the expense of brain, have seemed to seek only to make of a reasonable being—a magnificent brute. Men seem to be reverting to the old days when nations flocked to watch the athletes struggling and racing in the public games. We cross continents and traverse seas, and devote days to see men making so many motions per second, and being bet on like the fast horses of the turf. It is being questioned whether this extreme development of the physical does not destroy the balance of a perfect manhood, does not deteriorate mind and conscience, and put man down to the level of some splendid beast that he emulates. Not that we would depreciate physical strength; it is a glorious gift; but mind should still be master over matter, and he who develops bodily prowess should still see to it that reason is lord over all.

> "But what is strength without a double share
> Of wisdom? Vast, unwieldy, burdensome,
> Proudly secure, yet liable to fall."

The boy of Zorah grew apace, mocking at that which made

other men weary; finding men and brutes and all the strong things of this world toys in his grasp of power. He was of a buoyant spirit, fond of frolic and of practical jokes doubtless. He who told riddles and tied firebrands to foxes' tails in maturer life, probably kept "Mahaneh-Dan" on the *qui vive* as to what he might do next. We may imagine Manoah rejoicing greatly in the youngster's hardihood, while the mother, amazed, perceived that the future deliverer loved his own pleasure in the same proportion as he hated the oppressors of his people; that he was nothing loath to do evil on excuse of good to come; and that to persistent beguilings the easy spirit in a giant frame could not say *No!*

That subtle thing *spirit* is moulded by nature and by circumstance; we are to a great extent the product of our surroundings; the sons of the hill countries have been ever brave and hardy. The poet sings:

> "For the strength of the hills we bless thee,
> Our God, our fathers' God;
> Thou hast made thy children mighty,
> By the touch of the mountain sod."

The tribe of Dan had received in the great plains of *Shefelah* and *Sharon* one of the most fertile portions of Palestine, but the Amorites contending for their olden possession, "forced the children of Dan up into the mountains." It is thus that we read that Samson *goes down* to Timnath with its vineyards, and to the placid valley of Sorek, and that he *goes up* to his father's house. We are also expressly told that he had his dwelling between Zorah and Eshtaol, at Mahaneh-Dan, that is, at the fortified camp of his warlike people. We may judge something of these warrior companions of Samson's youth from what we read a little farther on in the history, when the camp of Dan furnished six hundred men appointed with weapons of war; the record is very emphatic about these armed and trained soldiers. Not only this, but they

were as arrant freebooters as ever existed; bold, sagacious, grimly humorous; wanting more room for themselves they spread abroad over the land, with admirable coolness, to select what best pleased them. Laish, a fair city, dwelt secure, and they captured the place with fire and sword, and built their own homes over the corpses of the slain; not only this, but they stole a priest and all the paraphernalia of worship, like the pious bandit who fasts on Friday and murders the passing traveller. When Micah goes after them, crying, heart-broken,—"What aileth thee?" amiably asks the freebooting Danite.

Micah thinks he has abundant cause of complaint, and the leader of the band, the earliest of Robin Hoods, confidentially advises him: "Let not thy voice be heard among us, lest angry fellows run upon thee!"

Here is the sardonic humor of Dan, which Samson largely shared. Such men were the friends and tutors of his youth, and in them we must not overlook a very prominent characteristic of Dan in these rude elder days—a deep religious feeling. When they saw a Levite exercising priestly office, the rude warriors besought him: "Ask, we pray thee, counsel of God, that we may know whether our way which we go shall be prosperous." Then when they would build up a new city for themselves, they seek this son of Levi out: "Go with us, and be to us a father and a priest." When Laish lies before them, what say they? "God hath given it into your hands." Manoah had not forgotten the faith of his fathers; he offered on the rock a sacrifice acceptable unto God.

In this camp of Dan a new element entered into Samson's life, the "Spirit of God began to move him at times." Hitherto he had heard his high destiny from his mother's lips; from earliest childhood he had been told of the "man of God" who had twice appeared to predict his birth and mission. He had grown up

different from the other Danites, a Nazarite unto God, consecrated from his natal hour, no razor touched his head, no unclean food passed his lips; the grapes of Timnath might yield their wines for others, but not for him; meat from the flocks, and the fruits of the field sustained him, while the cool waters of the noble fountain of Zorah filled all his veins with strength. Every grand athletic exploit that woke the applause of the camp of Dan, was the sign that God had not forgotten him. Now came the divine power, moving within him, lifting him up to a new greatness; these were hours when the soul matched the might of the body, and he felt truly strong. Hitherto we have seen him with unreined physical vigor, an impulsive, ungoverned and ungoverning soul in him,

> "of wisdom nothing more than mean;
> This with the other should at least have paired,
> These two proportioned ill, drove me transverse."

Samson was like nothing so much as the feet of the image seen in Nebuchadnezzar's vision, iron and clay. "Strong as iron; forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things;" but like those feet, he was partly strong and partly broken; "forasmuch as iron was mixed with miry clay;" but they could not "cleave one to another." The divine grace, that was the iron of his strength; the human weakness and self-serving, following his own pleasure, and giving free rein to his besetting sin, this was the clay. Strong to do, not to resist; valiant against foes without, weak as a babe to the foes within. Loving his country well, himself better; without the wisdom to direct his strength or the humility to suffer it to be directed by others. God had ordained him to avenge and deliver his people; Samson could not defeat the divine will, neither could he alter it a hair's breadth; but it is evident that if his life, his passions, and his energies had been consecrated to God, had he been a Nazarite in soul as in body, had

his will run like a joyous young angel in the line of God's will, then his life would have grown in gladness and beauty unto everlasting day. As it was, the Lord's way was worked out in darkness and in pain, the work was accomplished, the instrument was broken.

With wine this Nazarite could not be tempted; forever proof against the allurements of strong drink, which, like Minotaur, devours so many of the young men and even maidens of our day.

> "But what availed this temperance, not complete
> Against another object more enticing?"

"Give not thy strength unto women," was the counsel of King Lemuel's mother, but Solomon fell a prey to the princesses of the heathen; so in this earlier day, Samson yielded to the enchantments of the daughters of the Philistines.

Among the vineyards of Timnath dwelt an idolater with two daughters, each fairer than the other. The dark eyes of the elder sister shining on Samson through the vine-leaves, lit a new fire in his easily stirred bosom. Lips redder than the wine she pressed from the grapes beguiled God's strong young Nazarite. He would possess this woman at all hazards; but he remembered doating Manoah and the loving mother up in the mountains of Dan, and he would not be false enough to them to marry without their consent; but with his usual inconsistency he meant to force that consent,—a fashion of proceeding not entirely ignored by sons and daughters of the present time. Manoah, not being like his son in love with that charming and treacherous idolatress, very reasonably inquired if love and beauty were vanished from among the homes of Israel, that a Nazarite must ally himself with a worshipper of Dagon.

Here the clay nature asserted itself: "Get her for me, *for she pleaseth me well.*"

Whatever other argument he might have brought to bear on the subject, he deemed none so decisive as his own pleasure.

Out of all this God was to find an occasion of chastisement to those idol worshippers, and we trace the lengthening chain of events from the not unusual circumstance of a hungry lion roaring in the desert places, to the discomfiture of the Philistines, and the Judgeship over Israel through twenty years of national safety.

"A young lion roared against him." He had nothing in his hand; but instead of thoughts of slaughter, his mind was full of his love-making as he went down to Timnath. For Samson to exercise his strength in these ways beyond the strength of ordinary men, was to exercise his faith, and draw on heaven for power suited to the emergency. No sooner did he make the needed effort than all his nerves and sinews were strung with superhuman might. He darted at the threatening lion, and seized its yawning jaws; "the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him;" he rent the great beast like a kid, and flung it back beside the road.

Any young man might be pardoned for boasting of such an exploit; but Samson was no boaster; he did not even tell his admiring parents of the deed.

Samson made no long wooing; the next time he went down to Timnath, was to take the bewitching Philistine to wife. His parents had gone before him, probably to make arrangements for the nuptials. Time enough had elapsed for the bees to take possession of the bleaching carcass of the lion, and already the combs dripped with honey—here was another link in the chain of circumstances. Samson took honey and went on eating, royally bestowing a portion on his parents, who were reluctantly taking their part in the marriage.

Thirty young men were feasting with the hero for seven days. To make the merry time yet merrier, Samson put forth a riddle, secure of its not being divined, and expecting by means of it to

add to his own possessions and plunder these foes of his people whom he hated in his heart. It was the cropping out of the shrewdness and humor of Dan.

But Samson was to show forth forever the danger of strange marriages, of being unequally yoked with an unbeliever. The Philistine wife had no sympathy with her Hebrew husband; her cares were for the sons of her people, not for the servant of Jehovah. Here another weakness of this weakest of strong men comes out. Unable to resist importunity, he feebly denies her pleading for a time, and conscious in his heart of her faithlessness, on the last day of the feast he yields to entreaty, and unfolds the meaning of his riddle. This is apparently to defeat all plan of punishment to his enemies, and to force Israel yet further to contribute to the pride and pomp of their oppressors. But no; a tempest of wrath wakes in Samson's soul, he sweeps down on Ashkelon like a tornado; thirty of the Dagon servers lie dead before him; he goes back to Timnath to pay his wager to his comrades, and flings at them in bitterness the spoils of their brethren. His whole soul glows with passion at the treachery of his bride; the fragrant plain and the honey-dropping vineyards of Timnath are now hateful in his eyes. He goes up to the mountain fastness where his anxious parents dwell, and leaves behind him his traitorous wife, who speedily gives herself to his former friend. Here is another link in the chain; for visions of bright eyes and luring smiles flit through Samson's dreams; his hasty passion, that has been no righteous indignation, no zeal for God or country, dies, and down he goes with a present in his hand to visit his wife.

He finds himself betrayed. That fairer younger sister cannot lure him; wrath burns hot as a volcano in his heart. The Philistine land is green with standing corn, fragrant with wine-full vineyards; the olives are in their prime; the hope of the winter

is in orchard and in field; the wealth of the nation is between the nourishing earth and the dew-dropping heaven. Vengeance he will have that shall cry out of its completeness through all coming years; yet, Danite that he was, he makes the tremendous punishment a ghastly jest; three hundred foxes are his messengers of woe, and bear black desolation over all the Philistine plains. The fair valleys from which the Amorites drove the sons of Dan, lie scorched and smoking; they may cry to Dagon in vain, for the dead roots shall send up no stalks again, and the scarred, cracked earth has no nourishment for her children. But was this enough? No. When the Philistines flocked together enraged at the ruin, and burned the false wife and her false father, Samson fell on this multitude, executing ancient lynch law, and "smote them hip and thigh with a great slaughter." What then?

He grew weary of working before his strength had failed. He hesitated in the deliverance of his people. "I will cease," he said, and first of hermits, weary of strife, of passion, of gratification, and applause, he climbed to the bald top of Etam to abide alone.

His hermitage was in the boundaries of Judah, the tribe lying next to Dan. In years gone by Judah had helped the children of Dan to maintain themselves; they had heard of Samson's strength, his punishments of the heathen foe, but hitherto he was the hero of Dan alone; he was not the champion of a united Israel. It was a pitched battle now—Samson entrenched in Etam, and all the host of Philistia came up like locusts over the inheritance of Judah, to seize their enemy. The men of Judah cannot sacrifice themselves to Samson; but three thousand of them go up and speak mildly to him. "What hast thou done to our rulers, the Philistines?" ask the faint-hearted men of Judah. "Just what they did to me," replies the champion. One cannot but smile at three thousand warriors begging permis-

sion to bind this one lone man on Etam. Their request was no flower of eastern courtesy—it was the absolute expression of their awe.

Samson seemed bent on jesting even in the most critical experiences of his life. He permitted these friends to bind him with two new cords, and lead him captive. Over this captive, brought bound to them at Lehi, the Philistines shouted too soon; when that cry of triumph went up towards heaven, the Spirit of the Lord filled the deliverer of penitent Israel, and Judah looked on amazed while Samson vindicated his leadership, not of Dan alone, but of all the descendants of Jacob. It had seemed a slight thing that a weary creature of burden here had died, and the yet moist jaw-bone from which beasts had torn the flesh, lay on the ground; it was a weapon prepared for a valiant hand, and armed only thus Samson laid a thousand Philistines dead at his feet.

This famous weapon not only conquered his enemies and confirmed the allegiance of his friends, but when the victor, warm with the battle, fainted from thirst, God, who ever preserved him, touched the hollow of the bone, and from it sprung such pure and life-restoring waters as blessed the eyes of Hagar in the wilderness, when all her hope and love lay perishing in her dying Ishmael. The devoutness of his Danite blood appeared in his call upon God in his extremity, and in the name of the well by which he perpetuated the memory of his deliverance.

After these vicissitudes came the palmy period. Our ordinary Biblical chronology makes Samson at this conquest over Philistia scarcely twenty years old. For twenty succeeding years he judged Israel, and by the terrors of his name kept their foes in awe, and made the subjection to the Philistines merely nominal.

Samson's strength well directed would doubtless have exterminated the Philistines, and have united Israel in one government; measureless in strength and poor in purpose, we find him govern-

ing only a portion of the tribes of Jacob, and in the latter part of his life, that other Nazarite was raised up—Samuel, in whose day the Jewish Theocracy became before all nations the very crowning type of government.

We see Samson,

> "Whose strength, while virtue was her mate,
> Might have subdued the earth,"

governing in a conquered peace for twenty years. But in this his mission was not fulfilled; it was his to deal mightier blows on the followers of Dagon. In peace and prosperity he would not rise to the greatness of his destiny; like Ephraim, he "settled on his lees," content with lower happiness than the fulfilment of a lofty purpose.

Again, he coveted a heathen beauty: a girl of Gaza, fair in face and free in manner, won the roving eyes of the Judge of Israel. With their enemy shut safely within the walls of the strongest of all their fortified cities, the Philistines were sure of their prey, and eagerly watched for the morning light, which was to gild their triumph. Gaza was the key to the southwest country, and its gates and walls were so strong that its siege occupied Alexander the Great for five months. The wary Samson did not wait for daybreak; at midnight he rose, took the "doors of the gate," probably such "two-leaved gates" as we find mentioned in Isaiah's prophecy of Cyrus, and not only took the gates, but the "two posts with the bar," and, putting them on his shoulder, carried them "to the top of the hill which is before Hebron,"—"no journey of a Sabbath day," says Milton in his "Samson Agonistes."

Samson had never failed to be deceived by heathen women, and yet he always suffered himself to be beguiled by them.

The valley of Sorek possessed a graceful, bold-eyed enchantress named Delilah. And when we come to this part of his history, we are more than ever amazed at the utter folly and weakness of the

strongest of men. No more a boy, but a man in the splendid maturity of his powers, he wilfully put himself in the way of temptation, yielded, saw clearly the net, and yet deliberately walked into it. He knew that this woman had sold herself to do the bidding of the lords of her people; knew that she kept men lying in wait to capture him in some hour of weakness; and thrice deceived, he yielded at last to the siren's tears and entreaties, and betrayed not merely his own secret, but the secret of God, the secret that Covenant Angel had told to Manoah and his wife, the secret of that strong spirit which worked in him mightily. Samson's power was truly a treasure in an earthen vessel; iron and clay from babe to boy, from boy to man; and now a temptation shattered him, drove those diverse parts of his nature asunder, and left the hope of Israel a wreck in the hands of his foes.

Where now is Samson? With the dropping of his shorn locks on Delilah's lap his strength fell from him: the spirit of God deserted him: the Philistines put out the dark eyes that had blazed with the lightning of his fury against them; they bound with brazen fetters the hands that had smitten them at En-hakkore-Lehi; Samson, the glory of Israel, grinds Philistine corn, and all Gaza scorns and taunts him who carried off her gates. "Strongest of mortal men," "man on earth unparalleled," "heroic, renowned, irresistible Samson," fallen from the topmost pinnacle of earthly glory, he whose name should shine in holy writ, and should echo through the finest tales of all the mythology of heathendom. Was his mission ended? No. The Almighty will had not yet been wrought out in him. He might have done God's bidding, rising in grand strides from glory to glory. He had served himself in equal measure as he had served his God; he had followed his own pleasure even before his country's good. Now in darkness, in captivity, in pain, God would eliminate the weakness of his nature, would beat out, break up, drive away the clay, and weld

the iron over into a true weapon for his service. How many a man, how many a nation, that would not rise to the splendor of their possibilities, has thus been wrought anew in the furnace of a merciful wrath, that burns but to improve. Months of serfdom passed; once more the long hair of the Nazarite hung over his shoulders: he had repented before his God; we know this because he was forgiven. Now in poverty and humility of spirit, faith grew in him, a grand overtopping emotion, which should make him a hero before God. Himself, like his country, in bondage, Samson learned that glorious patriotism that will offer life itself a free sacrifice for the nation's good; he learned how not alone to be a ruler or a warrior, but a martyr. He would not now turn aside from waging the battle of God against Dagon. From the mornless night of his dungeon God heard Samson, like Ephraim, bemoaning himself as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke. "Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised: turn thou me, and I shall be turned. I repented: I was ashamed; yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth."

Then did the Lord "earnestly remember" his fallen Nazarite, even as he remembered that other rebellious son; and the grand hour of Samson's deliverance alike from the bondage of the Philistines and the bondage of sin drew near.

The heathen believed that Dagon, their god, had delivered this greatest of their foes into their hand, and a day of high festival, kept in honor of their idol, was to shine in double splendor, when Samson came with feats of strength to make sport for his masters. We watch him led to the temple by his guard: we see the son of Dan recalling the ghost of his former frolic humor to wake the laughter of his foes. The craft of Dan shines out in the wily entreaty, "Suffer me to lean upon the pillars whereon the house standeth." Then the hush of expectation, the sightless Samson cries to his God in his heart: he offers himself freely on the altar

of his country and his faith. He feels no strength in himself; he remembers all his feebleness; when he is weak, then is he strong. "I pray thee, this once, O God!" Here is his faith taking hold upon the mighty. "Let me die with the Philistines." Here is a most magnificent self-immolation. No more to sit at thy threshold, father Manoah: no more to join thy tumult of joy and arms, O camp of Dan. But, as he grasps these pillars, already the glory of the everlasting morning beams before his sightless eyes; above the din of heathen rites he hears the chorus of angels welcoming the hero of Israel; the Angel of the Covenant smiles forgiveness and help upon this servant, who in all his life had been so erring, and only at life's close had learned to serve his Maker and forget himself. "He bowed himself with all his might;" a loftier than mortal strength is within him; the pillars snap like reeds, the walls are rent in sunder, the roof crashes down on the glory and flower of Philistia; what was but now a rejoicing host, defiant of the Most High God, has become a mass of quivering human clay, and fragments of architectural splendor; the strong son of Dan lies in the midst of the slain, like a thunder-smitten tree, and seeing now Him who is Invisible, and bought him with His blood, Samson rises before the throne of God, where all those wailing shades of idolaters have gone up for judgment.

"So the dead which he slew at his death were more than all that he slew in his life."

"How died he? Death to life is crown or shame."

He who had shamed himself so often died well, was crowned in death a Christian patriot, a hero of faith. "They buried him in the burying-place of his father, between Zorah and Eshtaol."

Almost twelve centuries later, Samson's name is set on the sacred page among those faithful "of whom the world was not worthy, who obtained a good report through faith."

On the page of fable, the traditions of Hercules are probably

reminiscences of Samson. The slaying of the Nemean lion; his slavery to Omphale, when he lived effeminately and spun wool with the maidens; and his death, through the agency of his wife, mark a wonderful connection between the pretended son of Jove and the strong child of Manoah. But fable holds sometimes faint shadows of the loftier truths of religion. When Hercules laid himself down on his own funeral pile on Œta, only the earthly, material part could perish: the divinity of Zeus within him was immortal. How this reaches our theme; he was earthly and heavenly; he was the imperishable iron and the frailest clay; the fire consumed the one, and left the other unsubdued. So, in Samson, the weakest of the many weaknesses of our humanity clogged divine life; in the furnace of his affliction he was fashioned over, fit for higher uses. How often since has this been seen not only in the book of revelation, but on the page of secular history, and in the society of our own time. "What," we say, "is such a man God's instrument? Why is he, then, so weak?" Is this man a son of the Highest? Behold he errs like a son of Belial. Is he one ordained to a grand mission, how does he then dally on his way? Such questions are offsprings of our weak human judgment. We reason thus: the gospel and its Source being absolutely perfect, we ought to receive it at the hands of a perfect messenger. How often are we proved false in our most careful reasoning! Science itself puts its votaries to shame. The chemist, from the analogy of experiments, would predicate that when he had poured together a solution of permuriate of mercury and a volatile alkali, he would obtain the precipitate of the red oxide of mercury. But what does he find? In apparent contradiction of law, a white sediment is his result. If nature will not bear out the reasoning we base upon her laws, how much less will our Creator, in the lofty realm of spirit?

We say that the fulness of divine grace ought to be unfolded

to us by one complete in that grace; but the magnificent comprehension of the Divine eye sees for us something better: grace in action, grace conquering temptation, grace giving strength for repentance, grace laying hold of God, believing that he will forgive seventy times seven offences. In the eternal city we shall see grace triumphant; here we are to see it warring, sustaining the shock of battle.

As it seemed good to God that the Captain of our salvation should be made perfect through suffering—that the Divine Son should not take upon him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham—so it seemed good that that "treasure," "the light of the knowledge of God," should come to us in "earthen vessels," "that the excellency of the power might be of God, and not of us."

Were the preacher of righteousness a glorious archangel, is there any reason to suppose that we would do less than John on Patmos, who fell down to worship him? If Jesus, having been tempted, knows how to succor them that are tempted, shall we not suppose that the shameful backsliding and cursing of Peter were made to subserve some high moral use, that he went to the erring and faltering with an especial fitness for his errand? Can we not believe that when Samson, the sinful and self-serving, came out of prison in one high act to assert his faith victorious over fear of death, to rise and reign with God, that patriotism and piety were lifted grandly before all Israel; and that when the falling crash of Dagon's palace, and the death cry of his votaries, were caught up and echoed at Mahaneh-Dan, the shackles of fear and idolatry dropped from Israelitish spirits, and they returned again to their allegiance to Him who in the fires of his judgments had burned up the earthly evil, and wrought anew in strength his servant who had for forty years stood before them a Saint of Iron and Clay?

XI.

SAMUEL.

RELIGION IN GOVERNMENT.

IN the history of Samuel we are impressed not so much by the man himself, as by the ruling ideas, the leading thoughts of his time. These concerned questions of government, and to this day they possess deep interest. He lived at the hour when the Theocracy was in a measure lost in the monarchy; when the government of Israel became in all outward appearance, like that of the nations round about. To understand the reasons of this change, and to be able to weigh its advantages or disadvantages, we must take a brief review of the political history of Israel, from the establishment of the nation; and the political is inseparably the religious history.

The first form under which the coming Christ was revealed, was that of an Avenger upon the serpent. Jehovah, he who should come, was to be the Restorer of Paradise, and the Deliverer from sin and death. Thus Eve expected him; thus Enoch beheld him from afar, with ten thousand of his saints, whom He had rescued from their graves.

Jehovah, the soul's Saviour, was the Morning Star of hope, from the hour of exile from Eden; but Messiah as King, as the Anointed Ruler, first beamed upon the prophetic eye of Jacob. The old man prophesying, lies on his dying bed; when he turns to Judah he gets a new revelation. Shining beyond the son, he

sees the coming King, he cries out in triumph, "Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise. The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come. And unto him shall the gathering of the people be."

It is a brief vision, accorded to one who has suffered much; it passes in the mists of death, and for weary centuries of servitude returns no more. But the time came for the unfolding of this idea, the kingship of Christ. Christ had been exhibited as an intercessor, in his priesthood, his mediatorial work; probably with far more clearness than we, puffed up with the wisdom of our later day, are willing to admit. When the Israelites reached Sinai, the hour had arrived when should be laid the foundations of Christ's kingdom upon earth. To this end was constituted the kingdom of Israel; a kingdom without a visible king; in a word, a pure Theocracy. Behold then, in the wilderness before Sinai, a scene without a parallel. Here we find a great people, let us say four millions strong; they are rich; they are seeking for a promised seat of empire; they are among their foes; and they have no king like the nations round about. God gives them the first specimen of an elective sovereignty. To the people waiting before the mountain is submitted the question whether they will have God to reign over them, whether He, who had with a strong hand brought them out of Egypt, and had gone up before them in the luminous cloud, who now thundered from the rocky height, and shot the glistening arrows of his lightnings athwart the sky, should be forever their acknowledged king; whether they would bring their tribute to him as their suzerain.

The question was put with entire clearness and particularity. "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagle's wings, and brought you unto myself. Now, therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then shall ye be to me for a peculiar treasure unto me above all people:

for all the earth is mine. And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation."

When Moses had delivered this message, the people with one accord took up a shout: "All that the Lord hath spoken, will we do!" It was a unanimous vote; ay, more, it was a most solemn and binding obligation to fealty; it was a holy infrangible covenant; it was a constitution composed of one article, one provision, that Jehovah should be their King, and they his people; and they would cleave solely and purely to the religion which he ordained. In token of his thus entering into supreme possession of them, as their King, by their own elective choice, they presently gave him *seizin*, when they brought of their choicest property, gold, silver, brass, purple, blue, scarlet, linen, skins, and cedarwood, to build him a house.

Israel thus became literally Christ's kingdom on earth; a type, we take it, not only of his spiritual regnancy, but of the coming day, when he shall be a true King over all the world, and his subjects shall delight themselves in the abundance of his peace.

God, the sole Head of the Jewish Theocracy, administered his government by prime ministers chosen, and spiritually endowed by himself. Of these Moses was the first, and he would in a year's time have safely established the Hebrews in the land of Canaan, had they not rebelled against their sovereign, refused to enter that country, and almost immediately insisted on so doing, when plainly assured that God's presence was withdrawn, and consequently, with it was taken away all hope of their success.

At the end of forty years' wanderings, the people were placed under the care of Joshua, and bidden to cross the Jordan, and take possession of the land of the Philistines. This order coming to them, when their hearts were softened by grief for the loss of Moses, was humbly obeyed. The manner of their crossing the river, and the immediately subsequent events, produced in the

whole nation a deep religious feeling. They were at this period loyal to their King; they had full confidence in his power, desired nothing so much as his approbation; looked for his guidance, and implicitly obeyed him. At this happy juncture, all the world, and all its best possibilities lay before the Hebrew nation. Their human strength was wedded to Omnipotence; they were endowed with an immense moral power, before which the peoples of the heathen fell prostrate. No good thing would have been kept from them, if they had held fast their allegiance to their King.

Jehovah the sovereign of Israel was present, their leader in battle; as such he appeared visibly to Joshua, as we may see in the wonderful story: "And it came to pass when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, there stood over against him a man with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us or for our adversaries? And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face and did worship. . . . And the captain of the Lord's host said unto Joshua: Loose thy shoe from off thy foot, for the place where thou standest is holy." From this we see that He who appeared to Joshua is He who appeared to Moses in the bush that burned unconsumed.

The destruction of Jericho should have humbled Israel, inasmuch as it was not wrought by an arm of flesh. The awe which spread through Canaan, however, began to make the Hebrews vainglorious, as we see in the report brought that two or three thousand men would be enough to smite Ai. This assertion shows that they were trusting to their own valor, and not to the accompanying power of their King. The defeat at Ai humbled them, but its conquest inflated their pride; for they at once became so self-sufficient that without consulting the will of their sovereign, they entered into a covenant with the Gibeonites. The insult

and enormity lying in this unallowed compact will be seen, when it is considered, that they held the same kind of obligation to God that subjects acknowledge to a lawful earthly ruler; and that they had no right to administer their affairs without the royal sanction. It is a monarchical myth that the king never dies. "The king is dead, long live the king." The incumbent may perish, but the office is immortal. The difference between the King of the Jews and the kings of other nations, was that the head of the Theocracy was immortal, eternal, and invisible in his own person; the only wise God our Saviour, to whom be glory and power.

This treaty of peace with some of the inhabitants of the land was the sowing of a deadly seed. By this act Israel had relinquished a portion of their promised inheritance; they incurred the wrath of their King; by friendship with idolaters, they laid themselves open to temptations before which they frequently fell; and as they had begun to take their affairs into their own hands, God, offended, suffered them for long periods to proceed in their own way to their ruin.

If they had not been traitors to the covenant solemnly entered into; if they had not broken the laws, and despised the high privileges of their Theocratic government, there was no shining pinnacle of success to which this nation might not have climbed. They had a code of laws upon which the noblest and most refined nations have since built their judicial statutes; they had the high prestige which their departure from Egypt, their victories in the wilderness, and their entrance into Canaan, had purchased for them.

As long afterward the Aztecs looked for the Children of the Sun, a golden-haired race of insurmountable bravery, the offspring of Quetzalcoatl, to come and subdue them; so the Philistine nations looked to the children of Jacob as their destined conquerors.

Even after they had shorn and well nigh ruined their prospects, the Hebrews had such military triumphs as clearly evidenced what they might have attained, if they had been true to their constitution, and had not incurred the anger of their King. Five kings and their armies were destroyed in the going down to Beth-horon, at the time when Joshua commanded the sun and moon to be stayed in the heavens. Seven kings more were slain in their fenced cities; their towns were sacked, and their lands became a possession to Israel. At the waters of Merom, Joshua again obtained a grand victory; he swept the country from Seir unto Hermon, and cut off the Anakim in their mountains. Thirty-one kings are named as subdued and slain by Joshua, before he had obtained the half of the land which had been devised by the Lord to Israel.

Of the wonderful victories of Joshua, we have trace in profane history. Moses, of Chorêne, an Armenian historian, has written: "When Joshua was destroying the Canaanites, some fled to Agra, and sought Tharsis in ships." This appears from an inscription carved on pillars in Africa, which is extant even in our own time, and is of this purport: "We, the chiefs of the Canaanites, fleeing from the robber Joshua, have come hither to dwell."

Procopius, the secretary of Belisarius, thus expresses himself, while mentioning Tigisis (now Tangiers), "Where there are two columns made of white stone, near the great fountain, having carved on them Phœnician letters, which read thus: 'We are they who fled from the face of the robber Joshua, the son of Nun.'"

Again, Suidas, the lexicographer, says: "And there are up to the present time such slabs in Numidia, containing the following inscription: 'We are the Canaanites, whom Joshua the robber drove out.'"

These records seem entirely those of eye-witnesses, and the

epithets they apply to Joshua are those naturally given by enemies; and evidence that they have not a Jewish origin.

The Hebrews had laid a glorious foundation of empire at Sinai, when they sent up that shout for the Lord as their King. A little later they laid the foundation for sore national disasters, when they took idolaters as their allies; and after the death of Joshua, they began to suffer the consequences of that ill doing.

In Kings (1 Kings vi. 1), the period from the Exodus to the Temple is stated as four hundred and eighty years.

Paul calls the government of the Judges "about the space of four hundred and fifty years." There are in the history periods unaccounted for, as the interval between Joshua and Shamgar, and the judgeship of Shamgar; other periods may overlap each other. We find, however, that between the death of Joshua, and the birth of Samuel, there were one hundred and eleven years of abject servitude to the Philistines; when homes were invaded; grain fields were ravaged; when there was not a smith in all the land of Israel; when the people were utterly disarmed, and for fear of their enemies must gather fruit, and thresh grain with the utmost secrecy.

This was the fearful result of their rebellion against God, their Sovereign: the fruit of their broken covenant.

The last servitude of Israel was in the time of Samson. The iron hand of the "giant judge" broke finally the oppressor's power.

The lives of Samson and Samuel overlap each other. Samson was probably captured before the death of Eli, and the seizure of the Ark of God. The Ark was in the hands of the Philistines seven months; its return marked the cessation of the plagues sent on the cities of the Philistines, and they may have simultaneously celebrated their relief from these torments, their conquest of Samson, and the completion of their fated temple of Dagon, on that day when the blind giant brought down ruin on himself and them.

Samuel is set before us as the child of many prayers; a child of the covenant. His history, like that of Moses and of many shining lights of later days, begins with a mother's faith.

The descent of his father, and the place of his birth, are among the vexed questions of sacred genealogy and geography. Elkanah is called an Ephraimite, and a Levite. He was probably a Levite, who had his dwelling in a city reserved from the inheritance of Ephraim, when each tribe made an appropriation of towns for the dwelling of the priests.

At the time of Samuel's birth, his father was living in Ramathaim-Zophim—Ramah being a contracted form of the same name; and Samuel seems to have clung lovingly to that place, for there he lived, built an altar, died, and was buried.

Hannah, the mother of Samuel, was a woman of unusual gifts and godliness. From her reply to Eli in the Tabernacle, we may gather that she was almost a Nazarite in her practice; her gifts were those of a prophetess, as was fitting in the mother of him who was to form the first in the long unbroken line of prophets which ended in Malachi; having filled a period of seven hundred years with revelations of the will and intentions of the Lord.

The time in which Hannah lived, was the great age of vows; thus, when beyond all things else she desires a son, she vows that the child shall be a Nazarite to God. Perhaps she had in her mind that other Nazarite, Samson, whose mother had been so long childless. The prayer of Hannah in the sanctuary is the only instance of the kind on record.

It was a passion of devotion, a long agony of voiceless entreaty, when, with her eyes toward the Holy of Holies, the sorrowful woman forgot all surroundings; saw no one who was near her; had no thought in her heart, but her great wish, and Him who is the Hearer of Prayer.

Hannah next appears at the Tabernacle, when she comes to

consecrate her son to God, that he may dwell in the house of the Lord, as she says, abiding "there forever." She makes a full dedication of her son to her Maker. She shows her ardent faith in the name she gives him, and in her address to Eli: "For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of Him. Therefore, I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth, he shall be lent to the Lord."

The song of Hannah on this occasion is akin to that of Miriam, Deborah, and Moses. Until the day of Samuel, the prophetic office had shone out occasionally. The three great patriarchs had been prophets; Joseph also had spoken of things to come; perhaps Ehud had shared the Divine inspiration. The three wonderful children of Amram had possessed it; we see it now gleaming in Hannah, and anon it glows in her son with celestial radiance. After him it is like a beacon fire, springing from peak to peak; before it dies in one, it reappears in another, until comes at last that dread silence and darkness of nearly four centuries. But when the fire of inspiration blazes up once more across that gulf of blackness, the light is in the home of Zacharias. Mary the Virgin it is who prophesies, and her song is singularly like that of Hannah at the dedication of Samuel.

HANNAH.	MARY.
"My heart rejoiceth in the Lord: my horn is exalted in the Lord."	"My soul doth magnify the Lord; and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour."
"The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength."	"He hath scattered the proud in the imaginations of their hearts: He hath put down the mighty from their seats."
"They that were full have hired themselves out for bread. The Lord maketh poor and maketh rich. He bringeth low, and lifteth up."	"He hath exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things, but the rich hath he sent empty away."

All that we hear further of this mother is her faithful love, in coming yearly to see her consecrated child, bringing him a little coat; and also that for the child whom she lent to her God, she had given her three sons and two daughters. We know not when, nor how she died; but we know that she had accomplished a great mission for her people, when she dowered her son with her faith, and set him to minister in the sanctuary.

Scripture sharply contrasts the youthful sanctity of Samuel with the profligacy of the sons of Eli. The boy-priest had his duties in the holy place, attending to the lights in the seven-branched candlestick, and opening the doors at sunrise. His whole time was passed in the Tabernacle; he seems to have slept in the sacred court. Here he must have seen one of those nameless prophets, who come forth in Holy Writ, deliver their message and disappear, showing that the Lord kept to himself witnesses who are not recorded on the inspired page. A man of God came with a word to Eli. We imagine the holy child standing appalled as he listens to the doom denounced on the unrighteous priests: "There shall not be an old man in thy house forever, all the increase of thine house shall die in the flower of their age." With this denunciation ringing in his ears, with this scene of the warning prophet, the grief-struck, remorseful, yet submissive Eli, present in his memory, we wonder that in his own old age Samuel repeats Eli's error, and suffers his sons to do wickedly, provoking the people of the Lord to sin.

Samuel was in his early youth called to the prophetic office in a vision. He also was made the bearer of a doom to Eli, the foster father, whom he loved.

From this hour, when he had heard the voice of God, the Israelites recognized in him their leader and teacher. They came up to him to the Tabernacle, and, as says the Scripture, "the Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to

the ground. And all Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord."

For a long time, the indignant King of Israel had withdrawn himself, and would hold no communication with his rebellious people. He now turned with favor to them, and chose Samuel as his prime minister.

Samson had grown to manhood, his physical exceeding his spiritual strength. He had failed to rise to the greatness of his mission; and now God chose another man, and glorified him spiritually; and in the manner in which the son of Elkanah surpassed the son of Manoah, living long, guiding the people, building up the kingdom of God on earth right gloriously, we see "how wisdom excelleth strength;" we see how true strength is in spiritual rather than physical development.

Once more Shiloh, the place where the Tabernacle was pitched and the Ark rested, became the real capital of the nation. There God, returning to his people, throned himself between the cherubim on the mercy seat; there again the Sovereign answered by Urim and by Thummim; there he spoke with an audible voice to Samuel; the golden age of Israel was begun. A shadow was yet to fall, on account of the sins of the house of Eli.

Over the dawn which had broken gloriously with the beginning of Samuel's prophetic career, came a cloud and a storm. In a pitched battle, the Israelites were defeated by the Philistines.

In their dismay, they turned to the *Ark* of the Covenant, rather than to the *God* of the Covenant. They brought this Ark up from its sacred resting in the Holy of Holies. To rebuke this incipient idolatry, the enemy was again permitted to triumph, the Ark was carried off as Philistia's trophy, the two traitor priests were slain, and Eli, after a judgeship of forty years, broke heart and neck, when he heard that the Ark was taken.

When the Tabernacle at Shiloh was desecrated, Samuel dis-

appeared. He never afterwards is exhibited in connection with the Tabernacle. For twenty years he is lost to sight. His early precocity was, in retirement and devotion, nurtured to that strong faith, that wisdom, that prudence and self-abnegation, which fitted him for his subsequent long and stormy public life.

From the hapless hour when Eli's sons brought the Ark to the battle field near Aphek, it was divided from the Tabernacle until late in the reign of David. Thus the Throne and Royal Palace of Israel's King were dissevered. He withdrew his face, till suddenly becoming conscious of their desolation, they "lamented after the Lord."

Now Samuel returns to them: like Moses, he has learned much in his seclusion. He left the people in his youth, perhaps before his twentieth year; he returns in the meridian of life, after two decades of absence.

He came in power, proclaiming pardon to the penitent. The people had given themselves to the lewd worship of Ashtaroth. Samuel cried to them to put away their strange gods, and prepare their hearts for the Lord, who would return in power to them.

Long trial had softened these erring hearts; the people remembered him whose child face had glowed with Divine inspiration, whose early years had been devoted to God, who had been the mouthpiece of their King. From one end of the land to the other spread a revival. Baalim and Ashtaroth were put away, "and they served the Lord only."

This teaches us how, in these days, to secure the Lord's presence, and his reviving grace. Let us put away our false gods; cease to worship Mammon and pleasure, serve the Lord only, and haply he may return to us, and usher in his kingdom with power.

Samuel appointed a great National Convention at Mizpeh. During the Theocracy religion was politics; politics was also religion. It is very different now-a-days. For the nation to

come together, re-affirm their Covenant, re-accept the Constitution proclaimed on Sinai, and cry after their King, was at once their highest religious, and soundest political act.

The people looked to Samuel as an intercessor, who had peculiar favor with God; his prolonged shout or cry for help seemed to possess grand power in drawing down that help. At Mizpeh, the people wept, fasted, and poured out water before the Lord, crying, "We have sinned!" "Samuel judged the people at Mizpeh." He probably rehearsed the law; pointed out their errors and shortcomings; made peace between man and man, and put away their strange gods.

While thus occupied in the renovation of the body politic and the re-establishment of the Theocracy, it was found that their ancient enemies, the lords of the Philistines, were coming up in strength against them. The enemies of the Lord chose a poor time for attack, coming thus in the midst of the ardent zeal, self-sacrifice, and faith of a revival.

The people evidenced their renewal in their exhortation to Samuel: "Cease not to cry unto the Lord for us, that he will save us." This was Israel's harvest of wrath. Now they learned what the nation could do when their King was with them. Every arm was strong; every heart was high; as they flung themselves on the advancing foe, the Lord shot forth the arrows of his lightnings. He thundered against the heathen; the solid ground reeled under the feet of the Philistines; their souls grew faint from fear. As Philistia faltered, Israel renewed strength. The battle became a wild rout of the heathen, who were smitten as they fled, and the glorious times of Joshua seemed restored.

So complete was the subjugation of the insolent Philistines, that they gathered head no more in all the days of Samuel.

This seems to be Samuel's only military enterprise. His achievements were in the fairer fields of peace. He had secured

for his country the restoration of all the cities which had been captured from them; he made peace with the Amorites; and then devoted himself to the establishment of pure religion, the enforcing of the ancient laws, the developing of the resources of the land, and the culture of the people. We can see the immense work which Samuel thus performed, when we contrast the condition of Israel shortly before his day, with that of Israel shortly after his death. About the time of Samuel's birth the tribes were without a common centre or judge; the Danites were freebooters; the Benjaminites were nearly destroyed; they were without arts or education, without weapons of war, or the ordinary implements of husbandry. At the end of probably twenty years after Samuel convened the people at Mizpeh, Saul was made king of a united nation. We soon find him with an army; with palaces; and all the usual equipages and splendors of a king. Forty years more, and the dominion of David is the acme of Israel's glory. For this rapid and wonderful prosperity, Samuel, the judicious judge, laid the foundation.

The fear of this warrior prophet rested on the Philistine nations. The diplomacy of Samuel is exhibited in the restoration of cities which he extorted from his humbled foe; his systematic execution of his duties, is shown in his yearly circuit through the land, when he held his court in the three cities of Bethel, Gilgal and Mizpeh. In this yearly circuit he saw that justice was dealt to the least and to the greatest; that every beginning of idolatry was destroyed; that the law was honored; the Sabbath observed; the will of the Lord was inquired for. A godly nation is a prosperous nation; godly prosperity insures national happiness. Says Vattel: "Felicity is the legitimate object of all men." Plenty in the State is not sufficient for the happiness of a nation. A nation must first provide for its necessities; it must then provide for its true felicity. To succeed in this the people must be

instructed to seek *felicity* where alone it can be found. Virtue is the purest source of felicity, but nothing so assures virtue as piety. "Piety is that disposition of soul which leads us to have a view of the Divine Being in all our actions." A nation should then be pious, and it should be the care of rulers to teach the nation piety.

"If all men ought to serve God, the entire nation *in its national capacity* is doubtless under obligations to serve and honor him." States being moral persons, the duty of serving God rests on them equally with private individuals, and a failure in that duty is sure to be chastized like the corresponding failure in the single individual.

"Plenty and virtue," argues Vattel, "secure the perfect happiness of a nation." God had promised plenty to his Israelitish subjects, so long, and in proportion as they held fast their allegiance to him. When Samuel, the Lord's vicegerent, saw to it that his nation held pure their ancient faith, he took the very best and shortest means of building up the prosperity of the nation in all points.

A valiant general; a wise and honorable jurist; a firm, far-seeing ruler; Samuel was also an example of godliness in his own person. He had established his dwelling at Ramah; there he set up an altar to his God. It is strange and sad, that after the warning experiences of his youth, Samuel should have fallen into the sin of Eli. While governing the nation well, he forgot to govern well his own household. He had two sons whom, with parental partiality, he made judges of the people, and established them in Beersheba. Their course shows the dangers of hereditary authority. The high position of their father made these young men arrogant and grasping. The entire history of the Scripture is against the law, and so-called right of primogeniture. Primogeniture asserted its claim on the race of Cain, and in the next dispensation in the

line of Ham; but in the Theocratic succession it was steadily put aside; first-born sons, no oftener than other sons, received the birthright. Isaac, Jacob, Judah, Ephraim were not first-born. So later, David and Solomon were younger sons.

Samuel made his sons judges when he began to feel the feebleness of age. He was now past sixty. The reign of Saul was forty years, and Samuel lived nearly to its close; he must have almost reached one hundred years. Kitto gives the age of Samuel as ninety-two.

As we come to the time when the Theocracy was merged in the Monarchy, it may be well to glance for a moment at the period of the Judges. It was certainly by no means a barbarous age, as some would have us suppose; neither was it what Heeren calls it, "an heroic age." Not only by the Hebrews themselves, but by all surrounding nations, God was recognized as the *King in Israel.* The history of the seven months' sojourn of the Ark among the Philistines, proves this. During this period of the Judges all the varying fortunes of Israel were so many sensible proofs of the power and dominion of God their King; for just in proportion to their faithfulness, their loyalty to him, was their success. They were prosperous just in the degree that they were pious. And this ratio of prosperity and piety is not confined to that age or nation. We may apply it to-day to ourselves. When the Hebrews were united under their King, Jehovah, they gained splendid victories, and the heathen became their vassals. When they followed false gods, transgressing the conditions of the national constitution, they became the servants of their foes.

Jephthah, Samuel, and others of the judges were called to their position by the electoral voice of the people, who perceived that God had endowed them with especial gifts for that office. Some of the judges, as Gideon, were taken from very humble station, others were high priests, military men of renown, or prophets.

The first duty of the judges was to administer the laws, of the Mosaic code, in the fear of the Lord. In emergency of war, the command of the army fell to them as the highest executive officers. Their authority was limited by the divine law alone, and in cases of perplexity they were directed by the holy Oracle. There seems to have been for the judge no salary, no state, no retinue. In war he may have had a larger share of spoils than other men, and the people brought them presents, as to Samuel and Saul. That they should take bribes or pay for administering justice, was a token of unusual depravity, as we see in the case of the sons of Eli and Samuel.

According as the judge was the servant of God, the zealous upholder of his worship, and the defender of truth, his judgeship was long and successful. We find these judges men of faith and prayer; men of noble, magnanimous character and lofty patriotism; who sought their country's good, and did not, as William of Orange said of Egmont, "fill their own purse while ignoring the need of the State." Under the Theocracy, religion and patriotism were so welded together, that to be religious was to be patriotic, and *vice versâ*. In these suggestions of the judges and their office we have followed the thought of Jahn in his survey of this period.

The Judgeship was not hereditary. When Samuel gave his sons the office to exercise in Beersheba he erred; it may be ignorantly. Perhaps he did not apprehend the true character of his children. If he did, he treated their sins too leniently, and bitterly did he rue it. The increasing feebleness of Samuel, and the rampant wickedness of his heirs, turned the thoughts of Israel to having "A king like the nations round about."

While the venerable Judge was rejoicing in the prosperity of his people, and predicating great glory for their future, if they held fast the principles of the Theocracy, he was filled with anguish

by having them come before him, in the persons of the elders, with the astounding request: "Make us a king to judge us like all the nations." The bitterness of his grief was increased by the reason they gave: "Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways."

Alas, he had neglected the government of his children, that he might apply himself to the government of the nation, and now his undisciplined sons were ruining that nation.

The Theocracy of the Hebrews might have been perpetual while the world endured; their monarchy was the beginning of their national dissolution.

As in the day when Adam took of that fateful fruit and did eat he began to die; so in the hour when Israel's elders came up to Ramah saying: "Give us a king," they began to disintegrate as a commonwealth. This inception of decay was not at first visible; as in autumn, dying nature covers herself with tenfold splendor, so under David and Solomon the history of the Jews increased to a singular magnificence, the nation shone in its scarlet, purple and gold, but under all was the deadly touch of the finger of decay. All the prosperity attained under the three first kings could have been gained under a consistently maintained Theocracy, for in discussing this subject further we shall see that only as the kings were Theocratic were they successful. Success under the Theocracy would have been permanent; under the monarchy it was evanescent.

God had his own plan to work out, the typology of the kingdom of his Son to carry forward even by means of this rash demand of Israel's elders. The losses and troubles of the Hebrews had arisen, first, from national cowardice and effeminacy; second, from tribal jealousies. But cowardice arose from want of faith in their King; their jealousy from lack of love to him, which would have extended itself to his subjects, their brethren. Thus their disasters

were occasioned by treachery to the fundamental principles of their Theocratic government; and the remedy they proposed was a yet further divergence from those principles.

Samuel was highly displeased. Too shocked and indignant to reply to the demand of the elders, he carried the case in prayer to God. The proposition of the people greatly angered the Lord, because in its intent it was a direct violation of the constitution framed at Sinai. They were rejecting Jehovah as formally as they had elected him. Moreover, the demand of the people was for "a king like the nations;" that is an unlimited king with authority to frame and execute laws. In regard to the request for a visible king God saw fit to grant that, for his intention was to choose a godly monarch, and give him a perpetual kingdom in making him the progenitor of Messiah. A Theocratic king, a king who felt himself God's deputy, his satrap, governing under him, carrying out God's laws, and paying him tribute, the Jews might have. But first they were to see the folly of their own request in having for a space a king—like the nations. The reply of God to the praying Samuel was: "Hearken unto the voice of the people. They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them. . . They have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they do to thee." This is akin to what Christ told his disciples: "The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master; and the servant as his lord." This comforted Samuel, and it would be well if we all of us laid it to heart in many of the storms and vexations of this earthly life. "They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me." "It is enough for the servant to be as his lord."

Samuel convened the people, and taking their request as they made it, described the king who should be to them as the kings of neighboring nations, the sovereigns of Damascus, Zidon and

Nineveh. Wildly rose up the one-voiced shout of the rebels: "Nay! but we will have a king."

The people stood before their Judge. He was showing them on the one hand Jehovah their anointed King, on the other the human despot. It was such a scene as angels looked upon amazed a thousand years later, Pilate standing before the tumultuous assembly and giving them their choice between the Lord of glory and a murderer, and led on by their chiefs, they doom their race by their criminal demand: "Not this man, but Barabbas."

The Judgeship of Samuel did not end with the election of a king. "He judged Israel all the days of his life." His greatest anxieties and labors were yet to come. These are so entwined with the lives of Saul and David that we leave them for consideration under their separate monographs.

At Gilgal Samuel formally presented the new sovereign to the people, and in an eloquent address rehearsed the way the Lord had led them, and sketched his own administration. The Lord answered his protest by thunder, and all the people trembled. That thunder in wheat harvest was a sound ominous to the new government. Thus, after about four hundred years, the Theocracy was apparently superseded, and Israel had "a king like unto the nations."

XII.

SAUL.

GOVERNMENT WITHOUT RELIGION.

WHEN God acceded to the request of the Hebrews for a king, he reserved to himself the right of choosing a man for that high position. The Lord meant that the desire for a human sovereign should fall in with his own purposes, accomplish his own designs, and unfold the Messianic reign. The king of Israel must not, like the kings of the heathen, arrogate to himself the right to make laws, or to offer sacrifices. The headship of the Church was at once dissevered from the crown. So long as God alone was King in Jewry, Church and State were indissolubly united. When a *man* came to the throne, then the Church was separated from the State; the High Priest was supreme in his own functions, and never more should there be, with God's consent, a union of Church and State in one person, until the feet of the Returned Christ should stand upon Mount Olives.

Thus, because the king of Israel was chosen by the Lord; because he exercised the sovereignty under God; was obedient to his pleasure, and removable at his will, he was styled: "The Lord's Anointed." And we shall see in the case of the first Hebrew monarch that when he assumed for himself more than the Lord allowed, he was cut off. The first man whom God raised to the throne of Israel was Saul, the son of Kish. Kish was a powerful and wealthy Benjaminite, living in Zelah. The tribe of Benjamin

was the most warlike of the twelve. Old Jacob well described it when he said: "Benjamin shall ravin as a wolf; in the morning he shall pursue the prey, at evening he shall divide the spoil." Fierce, wayward, fitful, lawless, the whole tribe was very like its crowning blossom, the man who came out of it to be first king of Israel.

The territory of Benjamin lay between Judah and Ephraim; the possessions of Dan shut off Benjamin from the Philistines; it was bounded on the east by the fertile valley of the Jordan; in luxuriant plains and beautiful dells it swept along to the dark-wooded slopes of Kirjath-jearim. Lofty eminences afforded positions of advantage in war, and the valor of the tribe made each one historic; the table-land was fertile; the valleys were capable of being admirably defended; the water courses were abundant; in the centre was the delightful plain of Jericho, the city of palm trees. There were many places of note within the boundaries of this tribe. The ark after its captivity remained at Kirjath-jearim in Benjamin; here also was Bethel, one of the most ancient sanctuaries in Palestine; Gibeon, "the great high place;" Mizpeh, where were held the assemblies of all Israel; and here also was Gilgal with its grand associations.

Of all the young men in Benjamin, Saul the son of Kish was the most princely; yet more, it is said that in the twelve tribes he had not his peer in beauty. Like the heroes of Homer, he was of exceeding height and strength; the historian of Scripture tells us that he was "a choice young man, and a goodly, and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he; from his shoulders upward he was taller than any of the people."

When we first find Saul he is as remarkable for humility and simplicity as for splendor of appearance and exceeding bravery.

When God showed this young man to Samuel as the future king of Israel, the aged seer experienced for him a fatherly affection.

The nature of Samuel was æsthetic, with true Hebrew ardor he doated on personal beauty; we see this in his unconcealed admiration of Saul, and yet later when his eye rests well pleased on the seven stately sons of Jesse, and on the boyish beauty of David.

Saul was privately anointed king by the prophet. At a public meeting in Mizpeh he was pointed out by lot, and when Samuel presented him to the multitude, saying: "See ye him whom the Lord hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people," the easily impressed multitude shouted with joy. Nevertheless, rioters arose, disputing the claim of the newly elected king; and as the time for his inauguration had evidently not come, Saul went home to Gibeah. That he departed out of wisdom, rather than fear, is proven by his immediate attack on the Ammonites, and the great valor he there displayed. By this act he *conquered* the homage of his new subjects, and Samuel, taking advantage of his protegé's popularity, convened the nation at Gilgal to swear allegiance to the new monarch.

Gilgal was memorable for the pillar of twelve stones set up by Joshua, after the miraculous crossing of the Jordan. There circumcision was renewed; there the grand first passover after the wanderings was held; there the manna ceased; there the Captain of the Lord's host appeared; there they camped when God smote Jericho; when Ai was taken; when Achan sinned; when that fatal covenant with Gibeon sowed an eternal discontent in Israel. Here, on this storied plain, rich with some of the loftiest memories of their people, with ruined Jericho lying in the distance, stood Saul and Samuel before the assembled nation.

"Behold," said the aged seer, pointing to his companion, "your king walketh before you! And I am old and grey headed . . . and I have walked before you from my childhood unto this day."

He next formally took the people to witness the purity of his

life, and the strictness of his justice in all his own administration. With one voice they bore testimony to his probity and benevolence.

He laid a heavy charge against them. After rehearsing the way in which the Lord had led them, he said: "And ye said Nay, but a king shall reign over us, when the Lord was your king."

Samuel had already laid down the laws of the kingdom, "written them in a book," and read them to king and subject. As he now continued his address, the bright summer sky grew ominously dark; unusual clouds crowded like armies the horizon; cold winds surged from the distant mountains, chill with unmelting snows; a winter storm broke upon the assembly; the thunder pealed, and whirling rain dashed into the awe-stricken, up-turned faces. It was an hour of evil omen for the coming reign.

After this exhibition of the Divine Presence, Samuel assured the people and the new-made king that the only danger of the future lay in forgetting the Covenant of God; in failing to acknowledge Jehovah as Supreme Ruler. So long as Saul and his subjects remembered their subordination, that Jewry was only a satrapy of the sky, so long should prosperity attend them. "God forbid," said the prophet solemnly, "that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you."

This calls to our minds how God entwines his own cause and honor in that of his people. "They shall prosper that love thee," sings the Psalmist of the Church. Christ says: "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me." From the protest of Samuel, we see that it is a sin against God to cease to pray for the prosperity of the Church. The scene closed with a fearful warning: "But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both you and your king."

Samuel in relinquishing the government to Saul remained still the Prophet of God, the prime-minister of the kingdom; and, as before, expounded and carried out the Mosaic law.

There is something very tender and pathetic in the feeling between Samuel and Saul. The Seer doats on the king as on a son; the beauty of Saul, his bold, ardent temper, his strong affection and reverence for the prophet, bind the old man closely to him; while in all Saul's perversion, and mad, downward career, he cleaves with pitiful longings to the sanctity of Samuel, as if it could save him; he depends on his intercession to avert the ruin which only his own penitence could hinder; and mad or sane, he receives with humility the prophet's rebukes.

Saul was one of the many characters who are safest and most beautiful in a private station. When he was lifted to the dizzy height of royalty in a manner so unexpected, he knew not how to control his passions and ambition.

He had been made *The Lord's Anointed.* This he should have considered his choicest designation, his highest honor. The beginning, the cause, and the completion of his awful failure in government was, that he forgot his vice-regal position; he failed to apprehend his true estate, and regarded himself rather as an independent monarch, than as the Viceroy of the Sky. Instead of being holden by the grand fundamental principles of the Hebrew constitution, he assumed the autocratic state of the despots of the heathen. Having inaugurated this error, and begun this real rebellion against *his* King, God Almighty, Saul went from bad to worse. The anguish occasioned by the accusations of a naturally tender conscience; the self-reproach for the ruined prospects of his children; his terror of a doom which he could at times see looming up from the darkness of his future, and the unnatural excitement of his strife against heaven, begetting jealousy, distrust and hatred of men, worked havoc with the originally noble nature of Saul, and poisoned "the sweet and gentle current of his blood."

The tendency of Saul to establish a rule "like the nations,"

was exhibited in his gathering a standing army at the very beginning of his reign. In less than two full years he also erred vehemently in assuming to himself the right of leading the worship of the nation in the offering of sacrifice. The Israelites being assembled at Gilgal to fight with the Philistines, only waited for the prophet to come and secure for them the benediction of their God. This was the hour to test the obedience of Saul, and to decide the light in which he looked on his royalty. The test was a severe one, for Saul was a heroic man, his patriotism, natural spirit, and kingly pride, were all enlisted in the approaching conflict; and in every hour of waiting for the prophet's tardy feet the cowardly Hebrews were deserting their ranks, and the forces of the Philistines were augmenting. However, Saul had been warned by Samuel of the exigencies of this hour, and if he had been firm to his duty as a rock, obeying like a true soldier the orders of his Great Commander, he would have had his kingdom assured to him forever. Misjudging his real position, the vassal of heaven assumed supreme rights. The bold hand of Saul laid on the altar a burnt-offering, and presented it an unblessed sacrifice to God; he offered a peace-offering to inaugurate the war between himself and his Liege! Scarcely had the blood of the victims ceased to flow and the smoke to ascend than Samuel appeared.

Saul, aware of his sin, endeavored to excuse it. Heavy was the task assigned the prophet; to pronounce vengeance on him whom he loved as a son. "Thy kingdom shall not continue."

Immediately after this sentence, the rashness of Saul's character appears in the interdictive curse laid on any who should taste food; a curse which nearly resulted in the death of Jonathan; raised a tumult in the army, and caused the starving people to transgress, in eating the bleeding flesh at evening, contrary to the law: "And the blood, which is the life thereof, thou shalt not eat."

From that hour, Saul had fits of madness or melancholy which,

as he advanced in years, came at shorter and shorter intervals, and wrought him to wilder phrenzy.

"O what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!
The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's eye, tongue, sword;
The expectancy and rose of the fair state,
The glass of fashion, and the mould of form,
The observed of all observers, quite, quite down!
Now see that noble and most sovereign reason,
Like sweet bells jangled out of tune and harsh,
That unmatched form and feature of blown youth,
Blasted with ecstasy!"

With the self-will and towering pride of Saul, a religious and prophetic spirit were strangely blended. This power of prophesying first came upon him as he left Ramah, after the anointing oil had been poured on his head.

We see the mind of Saul tossed to and fro like a rudderless boat on swelling waves. One hour the king appears prophesying before the Lord; in another he is an arrant liar; we behold him building altars, and anon with cruel eye approving the slaughter of the priests of the tabernacle.

During the first eleven years of his reign the kingdom of Saul became strongly established by many victories. He was a warrior of whom his people might well be proud. Moab, Ammon, Edom, and Zobah submitted themselves to him.

Josephus says of him: "Saul had many chariots and horsemen, and against whomsoever he made war he returned conqueror, and advanced the Hebrews to a great degree of success and prosperity, and made them superior to other nations."

By this time the king had assumed a royal state of living; having palaces, body guards, and all the luxuries and ostentation of the Eastern despot.

About the end of the eleven years, Samuel went to the king with a message from God: "I remember that which Amalek did to Israel.... Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all

that they have, and spare them not; but slay both men and women, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass." Here we see the command was absolute and explicit; it left no loop-hole of escape for Saul; no excuse for doing his own will. The order came from the Supreme Ruler to his Viceroy, and all that remained for him was to obey, or openly to rebel.

In passing cursorily over this point, we remark, how though the vengeance of the Lord may slumber awhile, it is never forgotten. When he has laid up of his wrath for any people, it will break upon them in a terrible tempest, although it may be long delayed. God never forgets.

"Though the mills of God grind slowly, yet they grind exceeding small;
Though with patience he stands waiting, with exactness grinds he all."

When the hour of retribution had come for Amalek, the doom was—entire destruction.

Saul rejoiced to receive this command; his was not the joy of the obedient heart, but the joy of the warrior when he may unsheath his sword.

By this time the army of Israel was numerous and well equipped. Abner, the son of Ner, Saul's cousin, was the chief captain under the king. Abner the ill-fated, and Saul "the gazelle of Israel," were men well matched either in peace or war. They went up elate before the host; they smote Amalek utterly. Two hundred thousand footmen, and ten thousand men of Judah, were the soldiers numbered in Telaim. These overran the whole territory of the Amalekites and laid it waste. This victory added to the dangerous pride of Saul. The thought seized him to have a king for his state prisoner, like the kings of the nations. It was a favorite idea of monarchs then to grace their train with captive sovereigns. Agag, a man of lofty height and royal port, was therefore preserved alive, and disobedience to God began; Saul spared also the finest of flocks, herds and beasts of burden.

"What was vile and refuse that they destroyed." Thus Saul had deliberately despised the authority of his Chief and King. After this conquest he went home to Gilgal.

This was the turning-point in Saul's history; from that fateful day, his life was one long tragedy. The Lord forsook him, and the unchained demons of his own nature grew rampant. He is an instance of what every man would be; even those whom we set the highest for graciousness and probity, if the Lord should withdraw his Spirit from them. How little does that man who boasts his morality, while he knows himself to be unconverted, realize that his virtue, in which he prides himself, is the product of God's grieved Spirit lingering about him still, chained, perhaps, by some good man's prayers?

Thus far in the history, Samuel, potent with his God, had held the erring king of Israel up into the light of heaven, on the strong arms of his intercession. Now in the night, God came to him, saying: "It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments."

Nothing can add to the pathos of what follows: "And it grieved Samuel, and he cried unto God all night."

We note the debasing effect on Saul of the quick withdrawal of God's Spirit, in that the king comes out and meets the prophet with a lie on his lips.

"Blessed be thou of the Lord: I have performed all the commandment of the Lord."

The answer of Samuel is most pertinent. "What meaneth then this bleating of sheep in mine ears; and the lowing of oxen which I hear?"

The blush of shame must have crimsoned Saul's cheek at this, but he added another idle falsehood: "The people spared the best of the sheep and the oxen to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God."

Mark, Saul did not say "our" or "my" God, but "thy." There is nothing which will more provoke a righteous indignation, than to have religion quoted as the cover of baseness. When the word of the Lord is made a cloak for injustice, evil seems tenfold more shameful.

Doubtless the gray, majestic prophet eyed the king with anger, scorn, and wonder, blended with pity and grief for the fall of one he loved so sincerely. Solemnly he spoke: "Stay, and I will tell thee what the Lord hath said to me this night."

Quelled, the king bent his haughty head, answering: "Say on."

The address of Samuel began with the question which suggested the great beauty and reward of Saul's early humility. "When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made head over the tribes of Israel? and the Lord anointed thee king over Israel." This reminds the king to whom he owes fealty.

Here we see a striking difference between Saul and David. Saul needs to be reminded of his lowly origin; David himself recalls his own, glorifying God. Samuel next rehearses the plain behest concerning Amalek.

Saul reiterates his defence. He saved for sacrificial use. "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft; and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he also hath rejected thee from being king."

It is an important lesson; one we would do well to heed. It is one we could suitably call to mind in some grand church, beautiful with gilding and frescoes, carved wood, stained glass, marble and damask; with spire nearer heaven than the hearts of its worshippers; where a rich-toned organ fills the intervals of the prayers of highly reputable, wine-drinking, card-playing, Mammon-serving *Christians*.

Smitten with terror and anguish, Saul cried: "I have sinned! Pardon my sin, and turn again with me, that I may worship the Lord."

His evident intention was a reversal of his sentence. Samuel so understood it, and replied: "I will not return; for thou hast rejected the word of the Lord; and the Lord hath rejected thee from being king over Israel."

So saying, Samuel made an effort to depart, when Saul, in a passion of despair, laid hold of the skirt of his mantle, and in the violence of his detaining effort rent it.

This mantle was a characteristic garment whereby the last judge was known through all Israel. Perhaps Hannah's loving hands had designed the fashion of it, for her boy Nazarite; and in tender remembrance her son copied it, for his garb in all his life. Looking on the rent, the Prophet used it as a sign. "The Lord hath rent the kingdom from thee this day; and given it to a neighbor of thine, that is better than thou. And also the Strength of Israel will not lie, nor repent."

This word was decisive. Saul felt now that he was hopelessly rejected. He ceased his prayer for the future, and only asked an outward honor before the elders of Israel. On this ground of present courtesy, Samuel turned with the remorseful king, and worshipped.

An act of vengeance remained to be performed. Said Samuel: "Bring ye me hither Agag, the king of the Amalekites!"

Agag came with pride, and mincing delicacy; he flattered himself that the bitterness of death was passed, and that he could live in luxury, Saul's captive king, to grace his royal pageant, and eat at his board in golden chains. He was a murderer and a tyrant, against whom was a black record written in the book of doom.

Short shrift was allowed him. The gray-beard seer was an

old athlete. His wrinkled hand was strung with thews of steel. He dropped his rent mantle from his unbent shoulders, furnished himself with a well-tempered sword, perhaps from Saul or Abner, and pronouncing sentence thus:—

"As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women." He hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord. King and courtiers stood mutely by, as the Prophet thus vindicated the justice of him who had long ago pronounced this sentence on the royal Amalekite.

Thus they parted, Saul and Samuel; between them ran the red tide of Agag's blood; Saul's sword was wet with the retribution the seer had wreaked; Samuel's mantle had been rent by the hand of Saul, and thus torn had become prophetic of a kingdom rent away.

Slowly the old man went back to Ramah; his heart was sore and heavy; wildly in his palace did the king strive to wake mirth, and maintain pomp; ever in his ears rang the words: "The Lord hath rejected thee," and before his eyes waved the torn mantle of the man of God.

They met no more in the flesh. Withdrawn from him, whose downward career he could no longer stay, Samuel mourned apart. The depth of his love for his king, and the sincerity of his sorrow, are shown in the rebuke of the Lord, *fifteen years* after these events: "How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him? Fill thine horn with oil, and go; I will send thee to Jesse, the Bethlehemite, for I have provided me a king among his sons."

Here enters an important element into the life of Saul, his acquaintance with David, and the tender love, the bitter hate for him, which battled in the half mad monarch's soul.

As Saul's anointing came in the midst of Samuel's life, and Saul the king, superseded Samuel the judge, who yet lived on,

and whose life and work were entwined in that of the new made monarch; so now, when Saul's reign is little more than half over, David is secretly anointed, is brought to court as a harper; becomes a warrior, and as heir apparent of the throne by the decree of God, fills a large space in the annals of Saul's unhappy reign.

The Spirit of God departing from the rebel Saul, rested richly on the loyal heart of David. This redounded to the advantage of the miserable king, for David became the champion of the kingdom, and, moreover, by his divine gifts, soothed and solaced the perturbed soul of his sovereign.

Saul, the ardent and humble young man; Saul, the bold warrior, must ever wake our warmest admiration. All the best traits of Saul shine out in the rarely beautiful character of Jonathan, than which a nobler is not embalmed in Holy Writ. Jonathan, the pious, the brave, the patriotic, the unselfish, the ardent, shows us what Saul might have been had he consecrated his life and his sovereignty to the Lord.

It would be wrong for us to suppose that the three or four acts of disobedience detailed in Scripture were the only errors of Saul; or that for them solely he lost the kingdom. These instances are merely given out of many, which clearly showed that Saul was incapable of appreciating his true mission or status. As the first king of Israel, he occupied a position of note; if he went on, unchecked in arrogating to himself power to direct the national affairs, and trample on the ordinances of Jehovah, there would be no hope for the nation or its future rulers. Saul must be made an example of, lest bad rules and evil precedents should be established for future reigns. Had Saul been permitted to go on unchecked, the principles of the Hebrew state, and the object of its foundation, would have been utterly annihilated.

It was about the date of the anointing of David that Saul's mental malady so greatly increased on him, that friends and cour-

tiers began to seek for remedies. The peculiar susceptibility of the king to sweet sounds, occasioned them to seek for a skilful musician to calm his perturbed spirits, and thus David was sent for to come to court, and the king and his successor stood face to face.

Saul's need not be supposed a case of demoniacal possession; once let the spirit of God be withdrawn, and a man needs no other tormentors than the unloosed demons of his own disposition to dethrone reason, and goad him to most exquisite anguish.

From the time of this meeting with the son of Jesse, Saul was tossed between extremes of love and hate. He admired the musician and the hero. He listened, lulled to unwonted calms, to the singing of some of those matchless strains which have been alike the cradle songs, the battle cries, and the martyr hymns of the Church for ages. He exulted in the courage and high faith which cut Goliath down, and in a little while, the praises of the Israelitish women, the favor of the court, and the thought of the future royalty, stung him to such a phrenzy of rage and hate, that he was thirsty for David's blood.

In these black moods Saul often sought the life of David; he also tried to kill his own son; he ordered the slaughter of the priests, even eighty-five of them in one day; he perverted the married faith of his daughter; broke his own covenants; bribed his people to gross treachery; and at the head of his army pursued from fastness to fastness his most loyal subject and faithful friend, the unoffending son of Jesse. In the midst of these mad pranks Saul was sustained in his throne by the faithfulness of the members of his father's house; the fraternal loyalty of the tribe of Benjamin, and the prestige of his valorous past. So daring and successful a warrior had firmly established himself in the hearts of the people of Israel.

Thus passed twelve tempest-lashed years. One while the re-

morseful monarch would weep and be reconciled to his "son David." Again he set a price on his head, until David fled the land, and, an outlaw, took refuge with his country's foes, but even there remained true to his nation.

The fierce, wild acts of Saul were multiplied; Samuel died and was buried in his own house at Ramah, mourned by united Israel. Until he died there had been a fountain of justice, an administrator of the law in the kingdom; when he was gone, virtue and piety seemed perished; the kingdom which Saul's valor had established was tottering to its fall; its centripetal force was gone, and it began to drop asunder of its own weight. Thus will any kingdom where God is not, begin to perish. It may endure very much longer than this of Israel, but its ruin is inevitable. Thus the Roman nation fell; thus Spain and France in our own day have lost their high estate. Whenever a nation leaves God out of its account, that nation is condemned already, and over it, as over Troy, shall be written, *Fuit.*

The Philistines, elated by the death, long delayed, of their arch enemy Samuel, and seeing the weakness of the kingdom, under its maniac ruler; knowing that David the champion was in exile, gathered head once more, and marched up to the plain of Esdraelon, and with horses and chariots and weapons of war, made a formidable array, defying Israel. Along the slope of little Hermon by Shunem were pitched the myriad tents of Philistia.

Saul, like an aged war horse discerning the battle from afar, organized his forces, and went up and encamped in Gilboa. Three noble sons went with him; for a while the fire of heroism brightened the royal soldier's eye. He had established himself on historic ground; here was a spot made glorious by the faith and achievements of Gideon. It was by the spring Harod, whence the youthful judge had sent back all who lacked his own grand faith in the coming event. The name of the spring, Harod—

trembling—was a fateful augury for Saul. An emotion hitherto unknown took possession of him: "When Saul saw the host of the Philistines he was afraid, and his heart trembled greatly."

Samuel was dead. God had departed from him: "And answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by the prophets."

In this horrible premonitory silence, Saul grew desperate. Once, in his zeal, he had rooted out of the land wizards and soothsayers; now to them he turned, when earth and heaven alike were deaf to his cries. Alas for the man who has shut upon himself the gate of mercy, and stands without, bemoaning to the darkness!

Ever a wayward mixture of religion and superstition, Saul disguised himself, and, accompanied by two faithful servants, went at night to Endor, to consult a woman dwelling there, who claimed to have converse with a familiar spirit. On the scene which follows volumes have been written, discussing whether the apparition which appeared was real or an imposture; whether the woman had an evil power or had none; whether she was surprised at the result of her own incantations, was playing a part, or expected an answer to her spells. It matters little; the salvation of the soul is not wrapped in questions such as these. The important lesson lies in the thought of Saul, who might have risen so high, who fell so low; who might have touched the verge of life full of years and honors, and as he lost sight in death of his weeping courtiers, might have met a convoy of angels. His humility would have been his exaltation; his arrogance was his sore defeat.

As Saul stood waiting for the witch-woman to bring him an answer as to the issues of the morrow, she beheld a godlike figure rising in threatening majesty before her. An aged man wrapped

round with that sacred, peculiar mantle, which she, as well as all living in Israel, knew as the garb of Samuel.

Alas, the mantle of the vision had an ominous rent, the token of the lost kingdom.

When Saul had received a description of the Appearance, he bowed with all his old time reverence for Samuel.

There is nothing more wonderful in Scripture than the conversation which ensues: "Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up?"

That painful answer: "God hath forsaken me, I am sore distressed."

That close inquiry: "Wherefore dost thou ask after me, seeing God hath departed from thee, and become thine enemy?"

Surely in the dying hour, no beloved saint in glory, no Christian friend or relative, no man of God, can help the soul which is not stayed on Jesus. In Christ alone is provision for the hour, when flesh and heart shall fail.

"To-morrow, thou and thy three sons shall be with me. God shall deliver Israel into the hand of the Philistines."

The only intimation here is of death; the king and his sons should have passed out of the land of the living, into *Sheol*.

At these dread words, Saul's gigantic form bowed, and he fell fainting upon the earth. At last his servants and the woman forced him to eat, and before dawn he returned to the camp.

He had made up his mind to die, and, like a brave man, he would die sword in hand. His pristine courage returned; if the decree had not gone out against Israel, his valor would have redeemed his people that day. He saw his army scattered; on Gilboa those three goodly sons fell down slain. Above their dead bodies, exposed to the onset of the archers, stood Saul, fighting like a lion at bay, "sore wounded of the archers," and striving still amid blood and pain. His sons were lost; his

kingdom was lost; hope was lost; but he would sell his life right dear.

When the ranks of the Philistines were closing in, and captivity was imminent, Saul, having asked death as a favor at the hand of his armor-bearer, fell on his own sword and died. His devoted attendant followed his example. Saul lay there, frozen in all the majesty of death; his crown on his brow, his royal bracelets on his wrist, his gleaming armor girding him, his sword hilt clasped by his self-destroying hand. "The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places. How are the mighty fallen!"

The triumphant heathen set up a shout of joy over that princely group, the hero father and his three hero sons, lying slain upon Gilboa. "How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!"

The armor of these royal soldiers was sent to the Philistine lords, and hung up for a trophy in the Temple of Astarte in Bethshan; over the walls of this city were suspended the stripped corpses, while the heads, whose splendid projects had desolated Philistia, were sent to the Temple of Dagon at Ashdod.

But almost forty years before Saul had cast bread on the waters, he had done a noble deed, now to be recompensed. He had delivered Jabesh Gilead from Ammon, and now by night, the grateful citizens, who had since their rescue loved him well, arose and secured the insulted bodies of Saul and his sons; carried them to Jabesh, made for them a royal burning, and buried them with due honors under a Tamarisk tree. Still later, mindful of his early friendship, David removed the inurned ashes of Saul and Jonathan to a tomb in their native city, Zelah of Benjamin.

XIII.

DAVID.

A GREAT SINNER AND A TRUE SAINT.

THE most flourishing period of Jewish history commences with the reign of David, and lasts eighty years, "until the kingdom, like the cloak of Jeroboam, is rent asunder." This bloom-time of the nation is about as long as the later glory day of the Babylonian Empire.

At the death of Saul, the reign of David began in Hebron, over the tribe of Judah alone; after seven years, he became sovereign over all the tribes, making Jerusalem, and the stronghold of Zion, the trophy of his valor, his capital.

At the time when the anointing oil, poured on his head by Samuel, consecrated him Saul's successor, he was but fifteen years of age. In probably no more than five years from that time, he became the object of Saul's envious hate, a fugitive and an outlaw, until at thirty he was relieved from his chief troubles, by the death of his unhappy foe.

Glancing at the ancestry of David, we find two very famous women—Rahab, named by the Apostle among the heroic vindicators of their faith; and Ruth, who shines forever in Scripture, a model of self-devoted affection.

David heired the high soul, the far-seeing wisdom, and the burning faith of Rahab; the beauty, the humility, and loving heartedness of Ruth, fairest of gleaners. He is best known to us

of any old Testament character, his life being given us with much minuteness of detail; and in his Psalms we have the record of the trials, the falls, the temptations, the victories, the joys and woes, of his soul.

In David, Judah the brave, the rash, the ardent, the eloquent, seems to live again, endowed with a double portion of God's Spirit; and never was there a man who needed a double portion more, to contend with the madness of his passions. Types of character are forever reproducing themselves; as in David, Judah seemed to live anew, so since David, there have been those who have found in his traits and experiences an amazing similarity to their own.

David had a rare genius for music and poetry; he had an unusual talent for government, being able to win and control the hearts of men; his soldiers experienced for him an ardent affection. Remarkably bold and successful in war, he yet cultivated, with equal enthusiasm, the arts of peace; he could make treaties, and chastise enemies with the same facility. He seems to have had strong family affection, as evinced in his care for his aged parents, and for his nephews. He was the child of his parents' old age, and probably trained up with his nephews as his companions. His rashness is shown in his march against Nabal, and in many warlike achievements; his humility, in the readiness with which he accepts the advice of Abigail and Nathan.

In personal appearance, David was fitted to attract the admiration of his beauty-loving countrymen; he was remarkable for comeliness of countenance, and grace of manner. The brightness of his eyes, and his strength and agility, are noticed in Scripture. Swift as a roe of foot, his strong arms could break a bow of steel; his hand was sure in throwing sling-stone or javelin, and in wielding the sword. He lived in a troublous day, and was a man of war; he fought with giants, and yet his chief wars, his fiercest

enemies, his strongest giants, were fought in the battle ground of his soul, and he was full often worsted in the strife.

Perhaps no character delineated in Scripture, unless it be that of Jacob, has excited so much amazement. The sins of David were so tremendous, his falls seemed so great, even to the very lowest depth of hell; and yet he is called the "man after God's own heart." He has led in enraptured strains the worship of the Church for centuries; he has risen to lofty heights of love and devotion; has had such wonderful revelations of Divine glory and mercy, and yet has blackened the story of his life with so many crimes, that men stand astonished before this complex character—one of the world's greatest sinners and greatest saints, welded into a single human soul. Add to all this, while he was a man who sinned most and yet was most saintly, he was also a man who suffered and enjoyed far beyond ordinary mortals.

There are two passages in Scripture which unravel for us the mystery of David's life. "I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."

David was as remarkable in his *repentance*, as he was in his erring. His contrition was profound as the depth of his guilt; there was never a man more humble before God; he was strong, not so much in resisting temptation, as in sorrow for sin; and in the complete casting of himself on the mercy of God. "To whom much is forgiven, the same loveth much." Very much was forgiven to David, and the ardor of his love was like a seraph's.

As we shall see in tracing the story of his life, his eminent characteristic was his childlike lowliness toward God.

The history of his saintly and sinful life naturally divides itself into three parts. His childhood at home; his vicissitudes

from his appearance at court to the end of the life of Saul; his reign. The first two periods are of fifteen years each, the last of forty. We know little of his early days, save that he served in the menial office of a shepherd; that alone and almost unarmed he slew a lion and bear who attacked his flock, becoming in these instances a type of his Glorious Descendant, who made himself a servant of servants, and who was the faithful shepherd, ready to lay down his life for the sheep, and losing none of all those which the Father gave him. The last and favorite child of his parents, he was called David, "the beloved," "the darling," and was destined to become alike the darling of the nation and the darling of the skies.

During his second period of persecution and of favor, an April day of storms and sunshine—one while in court, chief favorite, another hour hunted like a partridge or a hart upon the mountains—David developed his soldierly bravery, a loyalty which made him worthy to reign, a patience which is rarely joined to so much boldness, a devotedness of friendship, "passing the love of woman," and a craftiness that was all his own. In this period come those tender episodes of his sparing Saul's life, his covenant and parting with Jonathan, his thoughtfulness for his parents, his rescue of Keilah. Those darker records follow of his falling into polygamy, one of the grand errors of his life; his freebooting career, his high-handed manner toward Nabal, his artful feigning of madness at Gath, his deliberate lie at Nob, which was the cause of death to eighty-five priests and Levites, and his remarkable course of deceit, slaughter, and robbing at Ziklag.

During this period David was sometimes counselled by Samuel, who dwelt with him a while in Naioth. As Samuel's life drew near its end, God sent another prophet, Gad, who was for years David's mentor.

As this second period of his life closes, David appears most un-

lovely. He had become to a great extent a bold freebooter. Nothing can justify his false and cruel conduct toward Achish, who, in his honest confidence, saying, "Thou art good in my sight as an angel of God," makes all David's friends blush for him. This portion of his history closes with the wild scene at Ziklag, where his lawless followers, driven to despair by the loss of their families and property, seek to stone David; and after mutual wrath and upbraiding, the voice of Abiathar, the priest, falls like oil on the tossing waters of strife, and David redeems all which the Amalekites have carried away. While flushed with this victory, rejoicing in recovered fortune, and in the renewed loyalty of his adherents, David received the news of the death of Saul and Jonathan. Here the magnanimity of his character shines forth resplendent. Jonathan he loved as a brother, Saul as his king. He did not pause to consider that their death had paved for him a short road to the throne; he forgot the injuries received at the hands of Saul; he remembered only what was good, and bursts forth into such a lamentation as has seldom embalmed the memory of king or kaiser, or crowned a tomb with imperishable beauty. His song was Saul's best epitaph.

Not only this, but the Amalekite, who brought the news, imagining that it would be welcome, strove to glorify himself as the slayer of Saul, exhibiting the diadem and bracelets, rifled from the dead body, as the proof of his tale. In noble indignation against one who had presumed to slay the Lord's Anointed, the gray old warrior Saul, David ordered the man to be slain. The Amalekite had unwittingly pronounced his own death warrant.

Thus, at the end of his fifteen years of wandering, the better nature of David shines forth; he appears once more as worthy of his high place in the Church and in the world, and fulfils the generous promise of his beautiful youth.

During this long period of probation, there had appeared in

David one lofty virtue—his willingness to await the time of the Lord; the humility with which he sought to have all his steps directed. Again and again might he have slain Saul, or raised the standard of a successful revolt; but his reply to all temptation was, "Who can stretch forth his hand against the Lord's anointed and be guiltless? As the Lord liveth, the Lord shall smite him, or his day shall come to die, or he shall descend into battle and perish. The Lord forbid that I should stretch forth my hand against the Lord's anointed." It was thus that David was content to let the Lord lead the way. If all Christians possessed this characteristic, they might be sure of being more comfortable and more successful. There is a deal of time lost by good people in going where the Lord has not gone before them. They find no thoroughfare, and must needs return, and always more weary and despondent than when they set out.

While in the grand affairs of his life he took counsel of God, David often fell into difficulty by neglecting this precaution in other matters. He did not go to Gath by direction of God. This was the time of David's life when he was especially a learner. By all his trials, his errors, his success, he was being trained for forty years of kingcraft. His disasters, his follies, his victories ripened his mind and enriched his heart. Through all these adversities he became not only a great king, but a psalmist whose writings have been as the diary of religious life in all ages since. How many tempest-tossed, distracted, overwhelmed souls have found their deliverance through some of the experiences of David?

After the death of Saul David went up to Hebron, where he was formally anointed king at a gathering of the tribe of Judah. The family of Saul had set Ishbosheth, the last of Saul's four sons, on the throne. David's crossing over to Achish had worked against him in the minds of Israel. Ephraim was ever envious of Judah, and Benjamin naturally clung to the house of Saul.

When Saul was dead all his virtues were remembered, his sins were forgotten ; the heart of Israel turned to him as one martyred in their defence, and they would have paid their debt of gratitude by yielding their allegiance to his son. Again David waits. Seven of his manhood's best years pass by while in Hebron he kings it over Judah, and patiently abides the Lord's time.

Hebron was a city of note, a very ancient place. In the time of Abraham, Ephron the Hittite was lord of the town. Here the patriarchs and their wives were buried ; here the spies gathered of the fruit of the land ; here Caleb had his portion. It was one of the cities of refuge, a Levitical city, in the midst of one of the most fertile districts of Palestine. Hebron lies in a deep rich valley, twenty-two miles to the south of Jerusalem, and is yet, after that capital, the largest city in Palestine.

At the end of several years, the violent deaths of Abner and Ishbosheth left no claimant to the kingdom but David. Doubtless during these years David had vindicated his patriotism and his ability to rule. The peace and prosperity of Judah had won the admiration of the remaining tribes, and with one acclaim they hailed David as their king. For the third time he was anointed and crowned, and for three days the joyous people celebrated the happy event. The little band of exiles who had hidden in the caves of the hills had become "a great host, like to the hosts of God." Now was fairly inaugurated that glorious reign when foes were held in awe ; when rivals made treaties of peace with Israel ; and when the internal prosperity of the kingdom was such that want was unknown, and perfect order reigned throughout the land.

The nation under David reached its acme by direct favor of God. Never a very large domain in extent—indeed only a little territory like Wales—hemmed in by the immense empires of ancient Egypt and Assyria, Palestine was the theatre of the most momentous

events in the world's history, the battle ground of centuries, and for eighty years wielded a power second to none on earth. The land possessed a wonderful variety of climate and vegetable productions; it had also a diversity of inhabitants, from the valiant dwellers in the hills to the luxurious and æsthetic inhabitants of the valleys; its swarming millions were architects, artists, agriculturists, shepherds, scholars and soldiers, finding in themselves capacity to develop the singular resources of their small but beautiful land.

The first exploit of David, after his final coronation, was the capture of the fortress of Jebus. With wonderful prescience, David coveted this stronghold to his capital, and began to fortify and enrich the city which became the choice jewel of the world. A little later he undertook an expedition which is preserved for us in profane history. Eupolemus and Nicholas of Damascus, the friend of Augustus Cæsar, chronicle David's conquest of the Syrians from Damascus. "At the Euphrates," says Nicholas, "David of Judea fought and vanquished the monarch of Damascus; who in the battle proved himself a most valiant king."

This victory probably confirmed Hiram, the monarch of Tyre, in his admiration of David, and his design of becoming his ally. Now Tyre, the gorgeous queen of the Mediterranean, first appears in sacred history. Hereafter this empress of the Levant moves through the record in her gold and purple an unchallenged splendor; until withered by the curse of the prophets she shrinks back to her throne by the sea, and the chroniclers of the heathen show how the dwelling-place of her glory became a barren rock, where starveling fishers dry their nets.

Hiram sent to David workmen and cedar wood to aid in building palaces at Jerusalem. Right royal abodes rose as if by magic; the new metropolis became the rival of Tyre, Sidon, Damascus, and even Babylon, in beauty, though so far inferior to them in size. No city has stood such terrible sieges as Jerusalem.

The religious idea largely predominated in every act of David; and so as he began to beautify his new capital, he desired especially to make it sacred, and with many imposing ceremonies and general jubilation, he brought up the Ark and the Tabernacle and placed them there, that once more the people might have a centre of worship, and come up together to keep their feasts and serve their Lord.

David is one of those rare creatures who are unspoiled by prosperity. Before his God he was as a child in happy humility. Laying aside the robes and insignia of royalty, in that spirit which inspired the words: "I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of the Lord than to dwell in the tents of wickedness," David girded himself with a linen ephod and led the procession of priests and people, shouting, singing, and dancing "before the Lord with all his might."

There are those who think it a sad sacrifice of their dignity to express an *enthusiasm* in the service of the Lord. Not thus felt the son of Jesse.

After this David devoted himself to the internal organization of his kingdom. He arranged for the services of the Lord's house; this was his primary thought; he provided for the stated public worship of all the people; for the administration of laws and preservation of order in every part of his dominion; for the maintenance of the royal household and the standing army; for commerce with nations near and far off. While the united empire lasted less than a century, this organization of its resources and the regular administration of court and camp remained until the final extinction of the monarchy. David became a king on the grand scale of the sovereigns of the Orient; like those of Egypt, Nineveh, Babylon and Tyre. He was the founder of a dynasty which was unbroken through every chance and change, until like an aloe tree it bloomed late and most beautiful, into Christ the Crown of humanity, very God and very man.

In the record of David's court we find the most polished civilization. Joab was the minister of war; Abishai the general; Ahithophel and Jonathan were secretaries of state; Hushai was chief councillor; Adoram was minister of finance; Sheva was keeper of the records; Jehoshaphat was historian. He had revenue officers and boards of trade!

About him were envoys and ambassadors from neighboring powers, and Gad and Nathan stood in loftiest honor as ambassadors of the skies.

The High Priest and his assistants upheld the rites and principles of religion, and David showed himself the "man after God's own heart," in being a truly Theocratic king. He shunned the error of Saul, admitted and gloried in his vassalage to heaven, and took his orders from his Liege. Tribute to the Highest he never forgot to pay. The Lord's tithes were gladly yielded by king and people, and all the gorgeous and solemn pageant of the Tabernacle service went on from week to week.

Rational piety is the firmest support of lawful authority. In the heart of the people it is the pledge of loyalty, in the heart of the king it is the assurance of national safety. As all men ought indisputably to serve God, and as all states are moral persons, it is equally indisputable that all states, entire nations in their national capacity, ought to serve Him. The original obligation of man to his Maker is not lost when man unites with his neighbors in forming a nation. The will of the nation is the result of the united will of the citizens, and remains subject to the same laws which governed the separate individuals. As it is the duty of a nation to be pious, it is the duty of rulers to teach the nation piety. This can be done, and is only properly done, without a union of Church and State.

David reached the true ideal of a righteous ruler; in his example as a worshipper, his humility and zeal, he set forth the importance

of righteousness to his people. And here, perhaps, it would be well to suggest that the greatest crime of David, as an individual, the one which brought down the heaviest judgment on his house, was probably known to but very few men of his own time.

David not only set an example of a religious life, but he upheld such laws as should conserve religion among his people. While a ruler has no right to compel acceptance of any dogma, or prescribe the opinions of his people, he is under an obligation, laid upon him by his position, to make such laws as will further the interests of, and opportunities for, religious observance. For instance, it is the duty of the Executive to preserve the sanctity of the Sabbath, to stop the ordinary course of traffic and amusement, that there may be no interference with the religious exercises of those who wish to worship.

David was a man after God's own heart, because he knew so well how to be humble and repentant; he was also a king after God's own heart, because he remembered his allegiance to the King of kings; because he never perverted public justice; because he sought the good of his people; because he upheld religion in example and precept.

The highest glory of David, however, lies, not in being king of Israel, but ancestor of the Messiah. This fact turns our thoughts to his family relations, and here unfortunately we see his most egregious errors, and his greatest woes.

David in his family life committed two grand mistakes. The first was that he married many wives; the second that he did not choose them from the daughters of the faith, but made marriages with idolatresses. We see the evil influence of this, not only in the distractions and family feuds which tormented even his dying bed, but in the effect of this example on Solomon, who followed his father's ways until he himself fell into idolatry, and caused the division of the children of Jacob, and the destruction of the empire.

David's first wife was Michal, Saul's daughter; Saul took her from him, giving her to Phaltiel; this was perhaps David's excuse for marrying Ahinoam of Jezreel, the mother of Amnon, his eldest and most wicked son. He next took the prudent and beautiful Abigail. These two shared the last years of his exile, and went with him to Hebron when he was made king of Judah. At Hebron he married four wives more; probably to strengthen himself in his kingdom, and to add, as was the custom of the day, to the lustre of his regal state, for the first wife whom he espoused in Hebron was the daughter of the king of Geshur; in birth and beauty she was superior to the other wives, which probably is one reason for the audacity of her son Absalom.

The Hebrew tradition is, that Eglah, the mother of David's sixth son, Ithream, was no other than Michal whom Abner restored to him; and therefore this Eglah is called in the narrative *David's wife*, as the first and lawful wife. The haughty daughter of Israel's first king could not brook the presence of the other wives, nor the respect paid to Amnon as the eldest born son of David. Fourteen years of separation had turned her heart from one whom she regarded as her father's rival, and perhaps she looked back with regret to Phaltiel, and her life east of the Jordan among her kindred. The bringing up of the Ark from the house of Obed Edom was made the occasion of a quarrel, which was never settled between David and Michal.

In the strifes between these many wives and their children, and in the idolatry practised by some of them, the peace and piety of David's household perished.

The ardor of David's zeal for religion, and his gratitude to God who had "chosen him from the sheepfolds" to be a king, were the sources of his wish to build for the ark and for sanctuary services a most glorious house, more rich and elaborate than the temples of the heathen. "See now," said David to the prophet, "I

dwell in a house of cedar, but the Ark of God dwelleth between curtains." His example might well be laid to heart. Christians are not unknown in these days, who never think that because their own dwellings are beautiful and costly, the church in which they worship should at least be decent; they are content to sit out services, in a building which is a disgrace to the cause of Christianity, and be ministered to by a hapless man in a seedy coat, without a roof to live under. Let them remember David who thought that *because* he lived in a cedar house the ark should be at least as well sheltered. The fact is, in modern times, that *because* people live in so fine houses the house of God must often be left unprovided.

For this pious wish and intention of David concerning the sanctuary, God greatly blessed him. "Thine house and thy kingdom shall be established forever before thee; thy throne shall be established forever," said Nathan to the king.

On hearing this promise David went into the tabernacle "and sat before the Lord." His prayerful meditation is of singular beauty and devotion; his humility appears so fair, even in the sight of men, that we can no longer wonder that "Whoso humbleth himself shall be greatly exalted."

David during all his life maintained his eminence as a man of war. We may judge of the magnitude of his victories when we learn that at one time he captured a thousand chariots, seven hundred horsemen and twenty thousand footmen. At another time he slew in one campaign twenty-two thousand Syrians. Many kings became tributary to him and sent him gifts, and it is recorded that David "dedicated to the Lord" the gold, silver and brass which he received from subject nations and from allies. This treasure was laid up for enriching the temple and filling its treasure rooms, so that for many generations these trophies of David became a vast reservoir from which his falling house drew succor; thus returning to the heathen what had been taken from them and devoted to the Lord.

David taught his people the art of war much more thoroughly than he taught his sons to be masters of their passions; and this error was so great that it occasioned in a later reign the dismemberment of the empire, and the misery and degradation of his descendants.

With Joab and Abishai to lead his armies; and with Hushai and Ahithophel, "whose counsel was as if a man had inquired at the oracle of God," David reached the height of earthly power and magnificence; there was never a more popular sovereign, and reasonably, for it is written of him, as can be written of few crowned heads, that he "Executed judgment and justice unto all his people."

In the narrative in Scripture we get one or two hints of the character of the man, which bring him clearly before us. He not only gives Saul and Jonathan royal burial, but he remembers his covenant with Jonathan, and seeks out Mephibosheth, setting him among his own sons and treating him as a royal prince. When Nahash of Ammon died, David in the kindness of his heart said: "I will show kindness unto Hanun the son of Nahash, even as his father showed kindness unto me." But it was an evil day for Ammon when they despised the envoys of David. In the ardor of battle David was so rash that his servants finally insisted on his remaining at home, lest in some untoward moment the hope and bulwark of the kingdom should fall in the person of its king.

When Joab sent his messenger to tell of a repulse at Rabbah, he said to him: "And if so be that the king's wrath arise and he say unto thee, Wherefore approached ye so nigh the city when ye did fight? knew ye not that they would shoot from the wall? Who smote Abimelech the son of Jerubesheth? did not a woman cast a piece of a millstone upon him from the wall, that he died in Thebez? Why went ye nigh the wall?" We have a

very complete picture of the king. We see the bold man versed in the history of his country, in the arts of war, and the annals of sieges; firing up at thought of waste of his soldiers' lives, and at the shame of defeat roundly reproving, and that with historical parallels, the failures of his generals.

But for all this wisdom and strength and bravery, as David grew old, he has proved, as many another king has done, that there may be a power behind the throne, greater than the throne; that the king may be the servant of some crafty mayor of the palace, or iron-handed head of the armies, and we hear him crying out: "The sons of Zeruiah are too strong for me!"

We have now reached the grand tragedy of David's life, from which came all the exceeding sorrows of his declining years. The blessing of the Lord had hitherto been about him like the nimbus of the gods; now a sword should hang like that of Damocles, forever over his head, and over his household.

The splendor of the conquest of the Ammonites half veiled a black and painful story from the eyes of men, but in all its shame it lay naked and open to the eye of God. David suddenly trampled upon that Divine law which he had cherished. Carried away by a mad passion he coveted his neighbor's wife, and possessed himself of her.

Over the unfaithful spouse now hung the legal penalty of death; and shame awaited David. To avoid these dire consequences he sacrificed the life of Uriah, and to conceal that murder, was forced to involve several soldiers in the brave captain's fate. Greatly relieved at his escape from exposure and danger, David brought the beautiful Bathsheba to his palace, and she became his favorite wife.

It was a crime such as was often committed by an Oriental despot, but should have been far indeed from the *Lord's Anointed.*

We see in it an alarming fall from those days of David's virtue, when his heart reproached him for having cut off the skirt of Saul's

mantle. Now he can cut off life, and that of his devoted friends, and feel no compunction until Nathan comes to him with his parable and its application: "Thou art the man!"

Would that all ministers of God possessed Nathan's tact, sincerity and moral courage. How eminently qualified was he to deal with the sinning and unrepentant heart.

David pronounced judgment on himself under this guise of another. The man who hath done this thing shall die: "He shall restore four fold."

"The sword," said Nathan, "shall never depart from thy house."

The hearty penitence of David; his humility under Nathan's rebuke; the anguish of his conscience at the thought that he, whom God had so richly blessed, had "given the enemies of the Lord great occasion to blaspheme;" the exceeding grief which he feels when for his sin Bathsheba's little babe lies dying on her knees; the coming of his household and friends about him to comfort him, are scenes that belong to David the beloved, David the Lord's Anointed, not to the heathen kings whose sins he had copied. "Four fold shall be restored," had David said, and from his own sons he paid the price he named. The young child of Bathsheba was smitten of the Lord. The unwritten poetry of its little life should never grow to tragedy or epic; it was only a lark's song borne swiftly upward, and lost in the sunny spaces of the eternal morning.

In the palace sat Bathsheba gazing with anguish and remorse at the marble face on her knee. In the corridors whispered the courtiers, fearing to tell the king that the child was gone. The eye of love is quick. David saw that vengeance had fallen, he bowed to the will of his God in a manner characteristic of himself, and comforted his heart, as many a parent since: "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me." "Four fold" had David said; this was but one reprisal, his own verdict was executed when

Amnon fell in the hour of his pride by a brother's hand: Amnon, the haughty elder born, whom even David seemed to fear; Absalom, the beautiful and favored one, was cut off in his prime; and Adonijah as a stirrer up of sedition was condemned to death; thus the blood of Uriah was repaid four fold.

In his Psalms, David poured forth his penitence, and before long he expressed in them the troubles of his house. For a brief time the birth of Solomon, long before predicted as his most illustrious successor, threw a joy-beam on his path; but presently followed the sin of Amnon, the disgrace of Tamar, famous among the virgins of Israel for her loveliness; and then the brooding vengeance of Absalom. In two years more came the murder of Amnon and the expatriation of Absalom; and then David for a long while pined for the son who was dead, and for him who was outlawed. It was five years before the breach was healed and Absalom saw his father's face. In this time Solomon had doubtless been publicly designated and honored as the heir of the kingdom. At the time of his reconciliation with Absalom, David was approaching sixty years of age.

The story of the revolt of Absalom, his death, and David's return to the kingdom, will be treated in another article. We should, however, particularly notice the temper of David in his troubles. He takes his sorrows as a deserved chastisement from God, and they lead him to deeper and deeper repentance. He feels no enmity toward men, the instruments of the Divine wrath. When Shimei cursed, and Abishai, in loyal zeal for his unhappy king, wanted to take off the enemy's head, David forbade it, saying pathetically: "Behold my son seeketh my life; how much more may this Benjamite do it? Let him alone, the Lord hath bidden him."

When Zadok would carry out the ark to accompany the exile, David in noble faith says to him: "Carry back the ark into the

city; if I find favor in the eyes of the Lord he will bring me back again and show me both it and his habitation. But if he say, I have no delight in thee; behold here am I, let him do to me as seemeth him good." Never was there a more complete example of humility before God, of entire submission to the Divine will.

When Ittai would share his exile, David unselfishly advises him to remain and make peace with the new king. For all devotion and loyalty shown him he cherishes most profound gratitude, and toward Absalom he expresses the deepest paternal love, the most hearty forgiveness. In fact, in his trials the godly character of David shines out like fine gold.

There was indeed in David's life much of moral failure; it is well, therefore, not to condemn him causelessly, as has by some been done for the death of Saul's descendants, who were delivered to the Gibeonites. These Gibeonites, according to the *lex talionis*, had a right to demand blood. The death Saul had occasioned in their households must be recompensed by the blood of the house of Saul. David offered them blood money, a fine which they rejected with scorn. There then remained, according to Jewish law, nothing for him to do but to give up to the avengers of blood the lives they demanded. This concession was needful for the national good, for now three years of famine had expressed the anger of the Lord against unchastized crime. Two of Saul's sons by a concubine, and five sons of *Merab*, the sister of Michal, Saul's grandsons, were the ordained victims. The text in Second Samuel gives Michal as the mother of the five doomed brothers, but every probability is that they were her nephews. The lonely watch of Rizpah on the hill by her beloved dead, is one of the most pathetic of pictures. It touched the gentle heart of David, and now that the *manes* of the slain Gibeonites were appeased, he gave the hapless children of an evil doer royal burial.

Next great event in the history is a battle with the Philistines,

where, as Philistines loved to do, they brought gigantic champions into the field, but, as ever, they fled before the prowess of David and Joab.

Finally, we find David, the Theocratic king, rising up against his God, planning and executing for himself; opposing the expressed will of his King. David not only made a sudden revolt against the authority of God, but against the respectful domination of his warrior cousin, Joab. Hitherto he had felt himself obliged to wink at the great captain's ill doings; now, for once, David persisted in his own way, and yet was wrong where Joab was right.

The king showed the instinct of the man of war, relying on the numerical strength of a nation, where all who had grown to man's estate had been practised in arms. He exhibited also the obstinacy of an old man in the execution of his design.

Joab, when he obeyed David in numbering the people, obeyed, as was his custom, rather as a matter of courtesy than necessity.

After arguing the question, and finding the king resolute, he went out to number the nation; but as the order was "abominable" in his eyes, he counted only part of the tribes, leaving Levi and Benjamin out of the enumeration. In this affair, Joab seems to have had a true appreciation of David's offence, the lack of faith displayed, and the imminent wrath of God. His answer to David is pertinent: "The Lord make his people a hundred times as many more as they be. But are they not all my lord's servants? Why will he be a cause of trespass to Israel?"

This census was evidently taken with a design of increasing the standing army, by forcing the people into military service. Hitherto the Hebrews had been numbered by the priests, who thus registered the joyous increase and prosperity of the household of God. David sent the military leaders to take the statistics, and we can only infer from the narrative, that the act

was repugnant alike to soldiers and civilians; probably being looked on as threatening the liberties of the people.

Considered as an act of deliberate intention, of arbitrary power, and of failing faith, it is the most reprehensible of David's reign, savoring more of Saul and Rehoboam, than David, the beloved of the Lord.

As the work of numbering went on, marks of Divine indignation alarmed Joab and his assistant captains, and stirred the easily awakened conscience of the king. We hear him crying, not as Saul, or Pharaoh, or Judas, but in David's own hearty, thoroughly repentant tone: "I have sinned greatly, because I have done this thing. Now I beseech thee, do away the iniquity of thy servant, for I have done very foolishly."

David's *childlike* spirit is continually revealing itself; never did he leave a better portraiture of himself, a more perfect spiritual photograph, than in the soft cadences of his Psalm:

"Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child!"

This humble casting of himself upon the Lord is again speedily shown when God goes to David, offering him his choice of three evils. War, famine, pestilence—a terrible trio. David pondered; in vision he saw the troops of his foes for three months ravaging beauteous Palestine, and revenging themselves of David's forty years of victories. Then another picture rose: three rainless years; a parched earth, and a brazen sky; dry water courses; lean, fevered flocks and herds; leafless trees; fields unsown; the black, wan, haggard faces of men, women and babes, looking curses on their king!

Again, a picture of terror—the sweep of the pestilence through the once happy realm. Cries from every house; the winding of burial trains over all the verdant champaign; the hill-sides black with those who buried the dead in rock-hewn tombs;

depopulated cities; grass grown villages, where once had lived and been happy the peasant subjects; the royal palace half empty; friends, kindred, children, wives, dead for David's sin, himself walking alone amid the ruin he had wrought, feeling himself a murderer! No wonder that he cried out to God: "I am in a great strait. Let me now fall into the hand of the Lord; for very great are his mercies; but let me not fall into the hand of man."

David had lived long enough to distrust his race! The choice of the Lord for David was a pestilence. In three days, seventy thousand men of Israel had perished of this horrible visitation.

Joab had returned to the king lists of five million two hundred thousand souls, according to the usual proportions of population. That is, he had found one million three hundred thousand adult males, without enumerating Levi and Benjamin, both large tribes. There must, therefore, have been a population of at least six millions of all ages.

When we read of the frightful ravages of this plague that fell upon the people, we are inclined with our usual haste to accuse the Lord of injustice in this chastisement; as if he visited upon the innocent the guilt of the guilty. It is, therefore, advisable to stay for one moment to inquire into the guilt *of the nation* in this matter.

Let us first consider that the people of Israel, having entered into a covenant with God as their Sovereign, owed their first allegiance to him, and to the laws of his kingdom. They were bound to behold their earthly monarch simply as the viceroy of the Heavenly Ruler, and to yield their first obedience to the higher law. They were covenanted to see to it, that their king did not exceed his delegated authority. Therefore, the people, with one consent, should have prohibited the numbering; and in yielding to it, they had aided the satrap to revolt against the fixed decree of his liege lord.

Again, the law of Moses was: "When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel after their number, then shall they give every man a ransom for his soul unto the Lord, when thou numberest them, that there be no plague amongst them when thou numberest them."

This last clause is worthy of especial attention. When David sent by the hand of Joab to number the people, he did not provide for the collection of the *soul ransom.* This was *his* sin. His neglect did not relieve the people of the duty of paying their ransom to the priests at the Tabernacle; that they failed to do it, was *their* sin.

And here let us add, that the guilt of sustaining a ruler in legislation opposed to Divine law is characteristic of ungodly nations, and is a grand cause of their disintegration.

Nations are punished for the sins of their wicked rulers, because they support their rulers in their sins. People should obey their rulers *in the Lord,* just as children should obey their parents *in the Lord.*

Family government is the primary type of all government; the household is the original root of the State, and child and subject owe their first duty to the Lord, and to parents and rulers, in the Lord, and not one whit outside of his laws and ordinances.

Let a king or a governor trample on the constitutions and charters by which men have hemmed in his power, and the most probable result will be a great popular rising and protest. Let the king or governor trample on the Divine law, and people are very sorry—some of them; but in effect shrug their shoulders, get about their business, and cry, "Let Baal plead!"

Then the Lord does plead his cause, but as he did to Israel, with the rod of his wrath.

Catherine de Medicis and her effete son held a Bartholomew, at which France trembled; but the French, as a people, never disallowed that act.

In 1871, the Lord began his reprisals, and held *His* Bartholomew, at which all the world stood aghast, crying: "Behold the bloody city!"

The scene where the Angel of Destruction stands in midheaven with his drawn sword in his hand to smite Jerusalem, and the Lord from his central Throne repents of the evil, and cries in his compassion: "It is enough, stay now thy hand," has its parallel only in Apocalyptic ecstasy. Then David and his court, then Araunah the Jebusite, and his four sons, saw the Heavenly vision; then was consecrated with prayer and acceptable sacrifices that Holy Mount whereon the Temple was to stand; becoming from the hour when Israel's plague was stayed, a place sacred in the eyes of men and angels. At that moment, the Sun of Righteousness, delaying so long his coming, shot a herald ray across the night of the ages, and kissed into glory the hill of Zion.

David had now reached his seventieth year. He had reigned forty years, and long toils and cares had worn his mind and body. As he crouched in his palace in the chilliness and languor of age, the reins of government dropped from his numb fingers. Adonijah, his fourth son, and probably the eldest then surviving, a man possessed of beauty, tact and ambition, like Absalom's, determined to possess himself of the kingdom in time to crush the claims of the youthful Solomon, then about twenty years of age.

Joab, who had so long maintained the cause of David in glory and adversity, was drawn into this rebellion, as was Abiathar the priest.

The prudent counsel of Nathan the prophet, and the energy of Bathsheba, mother of the heir apparent, frustrated the attempt of Adonijah. These two, with Zadok and Solomon, roused the energy of David to its olden vigor. Once more he could plan wisely, and execute suddenly. He at once provided for the coronation of Solomon, and abdicated in his favor. It was the last

flicker of expiring strength. When Solomon, the goodly and gracious youth, was established in his kingdom, David felt that his own hour had come to die.

He survived the coronation of Solomon but six months. On his dying bed, the wise old king gave his successor various charges, which showed his acute reading of character, and his far-seeing policy. Various acts of justice which, in his age, he had been too feeble to perform, he left as a legacy to his royal son.

It was the great misfortune of some of David's enemies that they survived him; had they died sooner, they would have died easier!

When his last charge was given to Solomon, this noblest of monarchs left an heirloom to all men who should be kings after him. Had all the sovereigns of earth regarded and cherished it as their best crown jewel, their annals would not so frequently have been written in blood and tears; crowned heads would less often have fallen on the scaffold; royal hearts would not have been pierced by the assassin's knife.

"The anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet Psalmist of Israel said: He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of the Lord. And he shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even as a morning without clouds."

But however interesting the varied record of David's life, it is his ethical history which especially commends itself to us, after all these years. Here is a Saint who conducts himself more vilely than many sinners. What then is a Saint; what is a sinner?

A Saint is a free moral agent, whose standard of duty is the Divine law, and who desires to perform that duty. He is one in whom the dispositions and intentions which lie anterior to moral action, run in the channel of the will of God. He is subject to moral and mediate influences of grace on the will, which are common to all men; these influences we find the Saint of God on

earth, at times resisting through the law of sin remaining in him. But there acts within him another influence of grace, which is most efficacious, because it carries the will spontaneously with it; and so he desires to obey God; he feels and acknowledges his errors, repents and forsakes them, and does not quarrel with his Maker on account of bitter, personal retributions which flow from them.

What is a Sinner? He is one whose permanent habit or state of mind is *aversion from God.* He has an absence of right dispositions toward God, which, in the onward sweep, the momentum of the spiritual nature presses him into absolutely wrong and sinful dispositions toward God. It is the disposition toward God which makes the moral character of a man, and by which he will finally be judged.

The right or wrong of an act rests not in the outward development, but in the actual intention.

This is an ethical principle, which lies at the base of all civil law; of all our judgments of our fellows; and is the foundation principle of God's government.

From some predominance of caution, of prudence, of coolness of passion, of selfishness, self-control, or ambition, the man whose heart is all wrong toward God, may maintain a greater propriety of demeanor than his neighbor who loves God with all his heart, and falls at his feet in an agony of remorse for the errors into which indwelling sin has betrayed him. For this let not the godless moralist plume himself. His superiority will last him just long enough to be written on his tombstone:—

"Thrust high to whiten in the graveyard sun."

But on that dread day of assize to which all other days are tending as waters toward the ocean, God will sweep aside all sophistries, and will cut to the root of all acts, with sole eye to the thoughts and intents of the heart.

XIV.

ABSALOM.

MAN'S CAPACITY FOR FAILURE.

IF there is one thing which has been thoroughly developed in the history of the human race, it is man's capacity for doing ill whatsoever he undertakes. Failure is the rule; success the exception. It seems a hard sentence to pass on humanity, but it is the verdict compelled by the testimony of six thousand years, each one of which comes up to the tribunal of investigation, and bears witness with uplifted hands, that man's capacity for failure is his predominent characteristic.

God put man in Eden, and he failed to keep it. He was turned out into the world, and instruction and encouragement in the way of righteousness were given him, but he failed to pursue holiness, and the flood washed the earth clear of its iniquities and presented it a fair page whereon man might write the story of his future; that story was failure, as far as man could compass it.

In building up nations, in making laws, in advancing culture, man has failed again and again, and has reached success only over multiplied disasters. That general is called most able in the art of war who knows how to use a defeat. The Christian is that man among other men, who knows how to reach eternal victories through his present failures, who climbs to heaven on the ruins of his best designs.

In religion, which is the highest theme man can reach, he has

made his most egregious blunders. Set a man to alter, or fashion, a religion to suit himself, and alas, poor wretch, he makes one which is not fit to live by, nor fit to die by!

He is like one who has built a house so pervious to wind, sun and rain, that it would only be an endurable dwelling—provided it did not have to stand out of doors!

God has mercifully taken the making of a religion out of man's hands, and man is left to some other field for the display of his chief ability.

No where has the capacity for failure been more broadly manifested than in domestic government, in the training of children. Here some of the best people have made prodigious mistakes. There have been some most magnificent theories, some most miserable practice. The promises of our God to faithful parents are immutable; but there have never been promises so maligned, misinterpreted and despised as these. Men seem able to believe almost anything but that, if their children are covenanted to God, and are trained for God, they will indubitably belong to God and be owned by him.

Men forget that they must be faithful in act and in feeling; they must be faithful to their children, and have faith in God. To demand an absolutely perfect management, is to predicate the absolute perfection of the parent. What God requires is a hearty endeavor to train the children for heaven, and an implicit, unquestioning reliance on his promise. Here, above all, will we be dealt with in the measure of our faith: "According to your faith be it unto you." If faith makes solemn covenant with God for the new-born soul, then, though from ignorance, men may fail in outward act, the Lord will not fail, and he will "supply all our need;" "make up our lack of service."

David, the glorious king of Israel, made his grand failures in life in the rearing of his numerous children; he brought them up

to be his curse. "The evil that men do lives after them." David's mistakes survived him to ruin his empire. In Germany the field of blood became a field of flowers, where crimson poppies grew a mass of bloom above the bodies of the slain—beauty was the heir of death. David's lot was to bring ruin after glory; the beauty of his own life and reign was followed by the sins and miseries of his children; by means of them the fair and fertile land of Palestine became an Aceldama. David lived to see but part of this ruin. The course of Absalom weighed down the old king's declining years with sorrow, and the story of David and his son has become a landmark for the ages.

David's mistake began, like that of many another man, in his marriage. He had many wives, and he chose them rather because they were pleasing to his own eyes, than in the eyes of God. As the first error of David, his polygamy, is not the danger of the present day, we pass it by, to dwell on the thought of the danger arising from irreligious marriages.

Godliness should ever be the foundation of the family. God united in Eden a pair whose faces were set toward immortal holiness and happiness, alike his children, into whose joint home his presence came—who, fallen and driven from the Paradisaic gate, cherished still the worship of the Eternal, and waited for the coming Christ.

The man or woman who, professing righteousness, makes a marriage with one who neglects godliness, has started most likely a wave of evil which will widen and widen with all the widening ages of eternity. Godless marriages have peopled hell.

Learn, young men and maidens, as from a parable, from the early story of our earth. When the sons of God united with the children of men, there came a race of giants that were not of the race of heaven. When the sanctity of the household was desecrated by a union of God's friends and foes, irreligion spread

abroad, type and precursor of the flood, and the world was doomed.

Soon after his coronation at Hebron, David espoused the daughter of the king of Geshur; she was Maacah, an idolatress. Doubtless her beauty as well as her gentle birth attracted David, for we find frequent mention of the loveliness of her two children, Absalom and Tamar.

We infer that she maintained frequent intercourse with her own kindred, because when Absalom lies under his father's displeasure he promptly takes refuge with his maternal grandparents, and is well received.

In considering the history of Absalom we must recognize three facts: First, that in Oriental nations the sons were heirs according to the estate of their father at the time of their birth. If a man had children before he came to a throne, those children were heirs of their parents' private station; and a son born to him in the kingdom was preferred as the inheritor of the crown. This was a common but not invariable custom.

Next, it must be remembered that where there is a plurality of wives, the rank of the mother in her own right has much to do with the future of her child; a woman nobly born, then, expects that her son shall take precedence of his elder half-brothers, whose mothers may be of plebeian extraction. This feeling is dominant in Oriental nations in the present day. For example, in Persia, Abbas Meerza was, during the present generation, preferred to the throne, because his mother was nobly descended, while the mother of his elder brother was a merchant's daughter; and the reason was deemed a legitimate one in all the Orient.

Again, we must notice that the throne of Israel was not a hereditament to be left by law of primogeniture, or by Eastern custom; it was a fief of Heaven, and the Lord claimed and exercised the right of nominating a successor, each time that the reigning life lapsed.

The claims on the Throne of David were these—Amnon, the first-born, expected it from his position in the family, claiming the honors of the eldest son.

Chileab, the second son, probably died in childhood.

Absalom, the third child, based his claim on two strong points; first, that, on his mother's side, he was royal; and second, that he was to be preferred to Amnon, because Amnon was born when David was a private individual, and Absalom when his father was a crowned king.

When Amnon and Absalom were dead, Adonijah claimed the succession as the eldest son living, and as having been born after David was made a king. Finally Solomon could urge the superior plea that he was born to the united kingdom, after his father reigned over Israel and Judah, while Adonijah at best could only plead a sovereignty over Judah. Besides, Solomon was the divinely appointed Theocratic king. Jehovah had the *right* to dispose of the royalty of Israel, and He gave it to Solomon.

At the time of Absalom's rebellion, Adonijah may never have pressed his claim; but Absalom knew perfectly well the intentions of David concerning Solomon, and the reasons for those intentions.

As far as David himself was considered, if the choice had been left to his love, he would most likely have bestowed the splendid and coveted inheritance on Absalom, whom he loved with extraordinary fervor. This was peculiarly likely to have been the case after the death of the arrogant Amnon, who had a certain prestige as the first-born.

The culpable indulgence of David to his children is very plainly exhibited in Scripture. In all their follies, they proceeded unchecked.

When they sinned with a high hand, he failed even to reprove,

much less to inflict the penalty of the Jewish law—a law which was made by the king's King, and which David and all his subjects were equally bound to obey.

Amnon, for the forcible injury he inflicted on his unhappy sister, was, by Mosaic law, guilty of death. David, as a king, if not as a father, was bound to avenge the wronged; but though "very wroth," took no action in the matter whatsoever.

When Absalom slew Amnon, Jewish law ordained the shedder of blood to death, but after a time David received his son into full favor.

When later in the reign, Adonijah began to assume royal state, and indulge in great extravagance, having horses and chariots and runners; David offered no remonstrance, but permitted him in everything to take his own way.

We see that early in life, David gave his sons separate establishments, and abundant means of support. Amnon and Absalom had houses of their own; and Absalom had an estate at Baal-hazor, where he made a grand sheep-shearing festival, which seemed a not unusual occurrence. At this time, these sons could not have been much more than twenty-one years of age.

Absalom was famous for his beauty, his grace, and an urbane manner, highly prized in the courteous East. He displays many admirable, and many evil traits of character. Naturally, he was fitted to delight the Israelites. Beautiful, artful, daring, ambitious, high spirited, lavish in display, fluent of speech, warm in all his feelings, his animus was the animus of the Jewish nation.

We hear little of Absalom until after the sin of Amnon. Then we see him cherishing his unhappy sister with a brother's tender love. By eastern custom, a brother by the same mother is a woman's natural protector, even in preference to the many-wived father. Absalom was Tamar's legitimate defender, and having received her into his home he consoled, and prepared to avenge her.

That he possessed a very tender love for his sister, we see in his naming for her his only daughter, who heired the fatal beauty of her aunt and father, but achieved a happier destiny, and was mother of one of the queens of Israel. Besides this daughter "of a fair countenance," there were born to Absalom three sons, who died early.

Absalom finding himself without an heir to keep his name in remembrance, buried his children in the King's Dale, which was, perhaps, among his possessions; and set up over them a grand pillar or monument, intending to be buried by it himself, and expecting the tall and costly structure to hold in the memory of the nation, Absalom, the peerless in beauty, who had, "from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot, no blemish in him."

The King's Dale was memorable in Jewish history as the place where the king of Sodom met Abraham, after the slaughter of Chedorlaomer, and where Melchizedek came out with bread and wine to bless the victorious patriarch.

The pillar of Absalom became one of the many memorials of human failure. It told the story of a ruined house and perverted life. Gloriously as was Absalom endowed by nature; popular as he was among the people, he might, if he had cultivated the virtues of his father, have become the greatest general, or minister of state, in Israel. Instead of being remembered only as a rebel subject; an ungrateful son; a would-be parricide; a man stained with a brother's blood, he might have shone in history a worthy son of David, and brother of Solomon. It is painful to remember that laxity of parental rule served to encourage the evil and check the good in the character of Absalom.

The silence of David over the crime of Amnon awoke a sullen anger in the soul of Absalom. Suddenly the love of the brother and the son became antagonistic. The chivalry of Absalom fixed him on the side of the wronged woman, rather than of the

powerful king. During the two years in which he cherished rage against Amnon, his heart first grew cold, and then opposed to his royal father.

The sons of David had a very evil counsellor in Jonadab, their cousin—a son of David's brother Shimeah, called in Scripture a "very subtile man." This Jonadab it was who encouraged Amnon in his crime, and was the silent confidant of Absalom's revenge.

When the servants of Absalom fell upon Amnon, the other brothers sitting at his feast imagined that this was an attempt to destroy the seed royal, and secure the reversion of the crown, a proceeding not unprecedented in the Orient; therefore being unarmed, they fled in haste.

The ill news flew fast, and gathered terrors as it went. Instead of the murder of the eldest son, David heard that all the princes had been assassinated; thus rumor grows.

> "viresque acquirit eundo:
> Parva metu primo: mox sese attollit in auras,
> Ingrediturque solo, et caput inter nubila condit."

Hearing such frightful news, David arose, rent his garments, and flung himself weeping on the earth, while all the court stood about him with marks of woe, bewailing the ruin of the hopes of the empire.

Here the crafty Jonadab, who had known and concealed the plot, came in with the cool remark: "Let not my lord the king suppose that they have slain all the young men, the king's sons; for Amnon only is dead: for by appointment of Absalom, this hath been determined from the day that he forced his sister Tamar. Now, therefore, let not my lord the king take the thing to heart."

Meanwhile, his plot executed, Absalom made all speed to the protection of his maternal grandfather at Geshur. The watch-

man on the palace tower presently saw a train of people pressing toward the city. They came in disorder, with dishevelled locks, torn and dusty garments, and affrighted faces. They were the princes of Judah and their attendants; mere boys many of them, having but lately left the innocent seclusion of their mothers' apartments in the royal harem.

"Behold," said the matter of fact Jonadab, "as thy servant said, so it is." He had a singular idea of consolation, bringing it in the news that one son was a murderer and an outlaw, and another was murdered, cut off—

> "grossly, full of bread;
> With all his crimes broad blown, as flush as May,
> And how his audit stands, who knows, save Heaven?"

The princes hurried into the presence of their father, and telling their tragic tale "wept; and the king and all his servants wept very sore."

What a beautiful touch of nature comes in this narrative: "And David mourned for his son every day. And the soul of king David longed to go forth to Absalom; for he was comforted concerning Amnon, seeing that he was dead."

The father submitted himself to the inevitable; Amnon he could not bring back from the shadows of death; but he yearned to call from Geshur that goodly prince Absalom, his favorite son—a man like Saul in heart and person, like Saul, alas, loved all too well!

The plan by which Joab gratified the secret wish of his royal cousin and secured the return of Absalom is detailed in Scripture at great length. It is given so much importance, in order to exhibit a fact, which we seem more and more inclined to ignore: namely, that the plan of salvation was fully developed and understood before Christ. God preached a full gospel to men from the time of Abel, and if from the time of Abel, doubtless also from the time of the exile from Eden. The terms of salvation are for-

ever the same, and God made them known freely in every age to men.

Joab was an able and headstrong soldier; there is not the least reason to suppose that he shone as a theologian, or had unusual religious light; he knew what all the people knew, and no more. The wise woman of Tekoah, called to the aid of this rough warrior, was no prophetess, and probably not without her peer among the women of Israel. But these two, warrior and woman, laid the scheme of Redemption fairly before David; recalling what he knew of God's dealings, and exhorting him to follow in the footsteps of the King of kings. "For we must needs die, and are as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again; neither doth God respect any person; yet doth he devise means that his banished be not expelled from him."

For two years after the return of Absalom David refused to admit him to his presence. During this time Absalom's secret hostility increased. He mused with himself that David had not refused his countenance to Amnon even when he had committed a crime worthy of death; but now that Absalom, avenging his sister's honor, had executed on his brother the sentence of the Mosaic law, David forbade him his presence. Absalom's anger gathered intensity from the fact that Solomon was now set before all the other princes as heir to the throne, a position which the ambitious Absalom claimed as his right.

There has here crept into our Scripture text a gross corruption. In Second Samuel we read, "after forty years" it came to pass, etc. It cannot be that this means after forty years of David's reign, for the whole reign was but forty years, and Absalom's rebellion was some time before the close of the reign. But it is still more absurd to consider that the forty years date from the last event, to wit, the reconciliation, for Absalom at his death is called a *young man*, and if he plotted forty years he would have been over sixty when

he died in battle; besides, the suggestion of the whole length of David's monarchy, which is given with exactness in several places, applies here. Josephus doubtless gives us the exact chronology; he says that Absalom plotted for *four* years after his reconciliation with his father. With this coincide the Septuagint version, and the Armenian translation.

The history of Absalom's treason shows us the work of a very crafty man, one who knew well how to manage men and take advantage of every weakness of the human heart. He stole away the love of the nation; he simulated piety, justice, energy, business diligence. While the old king rested late in his palace, and men waited at his gate for justice, Absalom rose early, sat in a public place, heard causes with brotherly interest, and greeted petitioners with the kiss of peace. His manner of leaving the city, and taking with him two hundred men, perhaps royal guards, who "went in the simplicity of their hearts not knowing anything," shows us the depths of his guile. Craft was a family trait among the descendants of Jesse. Absalom was cousin of Jonadab who advised Amnon; cousin of Joab who planned with the woman of Tekoah; son of David who beguiled Achish twice, once as insane, once as a pretended friend!

We cannot readily understand how the revolt of Absalom should gain head so rapidly under a government so popular and powerful as that of David. We have to recall, first, that this rebellion was part of the punishment of David for his sin against Uriah. Very likely also, as David grew old he grew feeble and forgetful of that exact justice which he had once rejoiced to mete out among his subjects; and was less able to hear those civil causes which occupy so large a portion of the time of an Eastern monarch. Absalom was so attractive, so outwardly congenial to the Israelitish spirit, that he captivated their affection; and, besides this, they looked on him as the lawful heir. From his going

to Hebron, we divine that as David had sought to conciliate all Israel, the haughty tribe of Judah felt that under his rule they lost much of their supremacy; they did not wish to be merged into a nation on an equality with the lesser tribes; the king *belonged* to them, and they wanted him to realize it, and treat them with especial honor. After the battle, we see David recognizing the secret animosity of Judah in his message to them: "Ye are my brethren, ye are my bones and my flesh; wherefore then are ye the last to bring back the king?"

"The conspiracy was strong." "The people increased continually to Absalom."

David had no safety but in flight. He went forth from the city with his household; from that beloved capital where he had reigned so long and well, and been so happy and so honored. From the fortress which he had captured by his warlike arm; from the palace Hiram built him as a pledge of peace; from the ark and tabernacle of his God, went the gray king and his household, weeping toward the wilderness, fleeing from that idolized and parricidal son.

Absalom coming, mad with triumph and gratified ambition, to Jerusalem, was met by Hushai, who cried lustily: "God save the king!"

Hushai was David's bosom friend, and Absalom saw the incongruity between his past professions and his present attitude. He said, sneeringly: "Is this thy kindness to thy friend? Why wentest thou not with thy friend?"

Here was Satan reproving sin, most assuredly. The reply of Hushai was a very triumph of sophistry; it beguiled the artful Absalom, and saved the Throne of David.

The deliberate intention of Absalom was to kill his father. That counsel was most pleasing to him which tended toward this end. When we compare the son's deadly, bitter, settled hate,

with the father's yearning love, for "the young man Absalom," "the son Absalom," for whom he mourned and longed for five dreary years of absence, the blackness of that son's ingratitude comes clearly before us.

Here began a fearful civil war. Father against son; Hebrew pitted against Hebrew; dark weight of sin was on the soul of Absalom, who sowed this discord over all the smiling land.

Absalom headed his army in a parricidal fury: thirsty, like a wild beast, for blood.

David, on the contrary, stood at the gate of Mahanaim, and as the troops filed past him, uncovered and looking with more than filial love on their cherished king, he said to each band earnestly: "Deal gently, for my sake, with the young man, even with Absalom!"

The army wound out of sight, going to the battle field in the great plain, hard by the forest of Ephraim.

David, with his few attendants, was left in the city, to await the issue of the day. He stood by the double gates of famous Mahanaim, where Jacob had met the Hosts of God. It was a Levitical city, of much sanctity and importance, well fortified; and here Ishbosheth had lived out his short and feeble reign.

Fatal was that day to Absalom. The blessing of the Lord never rested on the undutiful son.

David had respected the Lord's anointed when he was a stranger and a deadly foe; Absalom had armed himself against his lawful sovereign, his too indulgent father.

The adherents of the prince were sorely defeated. The battle field proved ill chosen for them; "the wood devoured more that day than the sword."

Flving from the lost field, Absalom dashed under the low branches of an oak or terebinth tree, and was dragged from his mule, the favorite riding animal of kings and princes in those

days. The affrighted beast rushed on with the rout of the fugitives, and Absalom was left suspended—"taken up between heaven and earth."

Here he was seen by one who loved David too well to slay Absalom, yet hated Absalom too sorely to rescue him. This soldier went and told Joab how Absalom was held captive.

The unscrupulous captain quickly demanded: "Why didst thou not smite him? I would have given thee ten shekels of silver and a girdle."

"Though I should receive a thousand shekels," quoth the honest soldier, "I would not put forth my hand against the king's son." And added: "I should then have wrought against my own life, and thou thyself wouldst have set thyself against me."

It gives us a fine idea of the estimation set by an honest fellow on the probity of general Joab!

The great captain felt the thrust, and could not deny the charge. He turned on his heel, saying: "I cannot tarry thus with thee."

The *argumentum ad hominem* is apt to call to mind a press of business!

Accompanied by his staff, "ten young men, who bare Joab's armor," Joab hastened to the oak tree, and struck three darts through the heart of the living Absalom, his beautiful and wicked cousin. The young men hacked the hanging body with their weapons; then dragged it to the ground, and, as at the call of Joab's trumpet the victorious army crowded back from the pursuit, they cast Absalom's body in a pit, and covered it with a great heap of wood and stones, like the burial of Achan. He was fated not to lie under his lofty pillar in the King's Dale.

Thus ended a life of failure—failure begun by a parent, completed by his child. Foolish indulgence on David's part, gross ingratitude—the chief characteristic of the pampered child—

on Absalom's part, making together a tragedy such as has seldom been paralleled.

Doubtless with Absalom perished the happiness of David's life. When he wept, "O Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son," his heart had gone down into Absalom's dishonored grave.

Joab's sound rebuke roused him from the exhibition of his intense grief, but sorrow so deep does not soon pass out of an old man's life. The young may find other loves and other joys; but when gray hairs come, grief eats into the heart, and cannot be driven out of it.

Like Jacob, David could say, "I will go down into the grave to my son mourning." And probably, as over his loss arose no golden morning of restoration as was Jacob's case, he did so go down. His was the mourning for eternal as well as temporal death. What worse fate than that of Absalom,—

> "Cut off even in the blossoms of my sin,
> Unhousel'd, disappointed, unanel'd;
> No reckoning made, but sent to my account,
> With all my imperfections on my head."

XV.

SOLOMON.

HEAVEN'S EXPOSITOR OF THE WORLD.

NO man has ever so thoroughly impressed himself upon the history of the world as Solomon, the son of David. His name lives in all the most glowing legends of the glowing East.

Jew, Christian, and Mahommedan hold his name in loftiest honor. Persian, Hindoo, African, Egyptian, Arabian and European, entwine his character in their most fantastic tales. We have the gross superstitions of the Saxon, the Teuton, and the Gaul, setting him forth as the chief of magicians, the leading figure in a wild Apocrypha. The Jewish Targum shows him feasting with Rabbis, and teaching them wonderful arts. The Hindoo tells us of spirits and charms, and power to heal disease; a paradise of palms, and cinnamon groves, goblin planted. In the desolation of the desert, the Bedouin breaks the silence of the bivouac with some weird romance of Solomon, who imprisoned the Afrites, and cast them into the sea; who wore the magic ring; to whom, for his piety's sake, God had given the winds as a chariot, and flying birds as a canopy.

In the hot depths of some African forest, the traveller, or missionary, is startled by a name with familiar syllables, and hears of him, whose ivory throne was the shrine of Sheba's queen.

He who seeks Persepolis is told that the *Jinns* built it for

Solomon; and at Shiraz, one is led to the tomb of Bathsheba—*Meder Suleiman.*

Yet of one apparently so well known, little is known. When we sift the mass of legendary lore, but few grains of authentic history remain; and out of these we vainly endeavor to reconstruct, what is to us most important, the moral character of the man.

Is the cry to the law and to the testimonies? On the very threshold of such investigation, we are met by the difficulty that every statement for or against this man is met by another, which is its antipode.

The Scripture compresses the account of Israel's most splendid sovereign into eleven chapters of the book of Kings, and nine of Chronicles; while these are devoted chiefly to his genealogy, and to descriptions of the magnificent buildings, the pride of the Jewish race, which were the product of his wealth and his luxurious tastes.

This Biblical history of Solomon is made up of excerpts from four works, namely: "The Book of the Acts of Solomon," "The Book of Nathan the Prophet," "The Book of Ahijah the Shilonite," "The Visions of Iddo the Seer." None of these belong to the canon of Scripture; they perished with the crumbling of the parchment, or papyrus rolls, whereon they were written. But from them the inspired historian compiled a life which the Lord thought worth preserving for the warning and instruction of coming ages.

Besides these parts of biographical books, cast into one connected narrative, we have three books written by the king himself, during the three great periods of his life, which unfold to us some of his inner history. They are the Song, the Divine Opera, the glowing Celestial Epithalamium of his poetic, peaceful, unfallen youth, when he was in character like that rare boy, the son of Jesse, who stood by Goliath slain.

Next come the Proverbs, the garnered wisdom of him who was given "a wise and understanding heart: so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee."

But these Proverbs were the work of one who, in the meridian of his life, had tampered with his own spiritual purity, who stood snared by temptations of his own providing; who tottered on the verge of failure; who had learned that "much wisdom is much grief; and he that increaseth knowledge, increaseth sorrow."

Lastly comes to us from his pen *Koheleth*, Ecclesiastes, the Preacher; and on the date and character of this book only, can we base any real knowledge of the eternal record, the closing spiritual phase, the salvation, or the doom, of Solomon.

We shall, therefore, take up first those singularly diverse statements of the moral status of Solomon, given us in Scripture.

Next we must collate his history from the Bible narrative, and from collateral data; then we turn to Koheleth, and seek among the twisted strands for an evidence of faith and repentance.

The Saintly Character of Solomon. 1 Kings, Chap. iii. Probably the work of Nathan the Prophet.	The Sinful Character of Solomon. 1 Kings, Chap. xi. Probably from the Book of Ahijah.
"And Solomon loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of David his father."	"And Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord, and went not fully after the Lord, as did David his father."
"And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing."	"And the Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice."
"And he came, and stood before the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord, and offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, and made a feast to all his servants."	"For Solomon went after Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Zidonians; and after Milcom, the abomination of the Ammonites."

"In Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, Ask what I shall give thee. And the Lord appeared a second time to Solomon, as he had appeared in Gibeon."

"The Lord hath performed his word, that he spake, and I am risen up in the room of my father David, and sit on the throne of Israel, as the Lord promised, and have built a house for the name of the Lord God of Israel."

"And if thou wilt walk in my ways, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as thy father David did walk, then will I lengthen thy days."

"On the eighth day he sent the people away: and they blessed the king, and went unto their tents joyful and glad at heart, for all the goodness which the Lord had done for David his servant, and for Israel his people."

"But Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh; women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites; of the nations concerning whom the Lord had said to Israel: Ye shall not go in unto them."

"Then did Solomon build a high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill which is before Jerusalem; and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon. And likewise did he for all his wives which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods."

"Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee."

"The people said to Rehoboam. Thy father made our yoke grievous; now, therefore, make thou the grievous service of thy father, and his heavy yoke which he hath put upon us lighter, and we will serve thee."

Nathan the Prophet was the friend of David's later years, the tutor and adviser of Solomon. His record is that of the gracious, learned and liberal-minded young sovereign, worthy his paternity, and the favoritism of heaven. He exhibits to us the godly young man, endowed with every rich blessing of earth, and with the blessing and revelation of God.

Ahijah, the Shilonite, lived in Solomon's last days, survived him, beheld the reckless career of Jeroboam, and threatened him with the punishment of his sins.

Ahijah, therefore, was the grieved witness, and the historian

of Solomon's shameful fall into idolatry. He saw the Saint degenerate to the idolater; the wise man to the slave of lust; the benignant ruler to the despot; and he chronicled the ruin of the moral nature of Solomon, and the despair of Israel.

And since these two portraits drawn of the same individual, by two great masters, are so amazingly unlike; since they are as that artist's work who drew a heavenly image of baby purity, and waiting forty years to draw despair, found for his model a wretch doomed to the gallows, who was only his child subject grown into manhood and vice, we must finally turn to Ecclesiastes, to fill up the great reach between the time of these portraits, when the change in Solomon was wrought, and to lift for us the veil hanging over his future.

When the history of the world had climbed high enough for a man set in it to be a beacon light to his fellows, God chose one person to show the uttermost value of human love and human possessions. That man was Solomon. If he got nothing worth having out of this world, we may be sure no one else ever shall.

If he found the last residuum of pleasure and ambition to be "vexation of spirit," it will remain that to all mankind forever. If Solomon's resumé of his achievements and honors was "all is vanity," then *vanitas vanitatis* must be ceaselessly the wail of the worldling, as he gropes between the cradle and the tomb, which for him lie all too far apart.

At the birth of Solomon, David was fifty years of age. He had been a man of war from his youth; had made some vast conquests, suffered some sore defeats; had loved, and hoped, and aspired gloriously; had sinned very grievously; had repented very bitterly. He had come to an age when the chief longing of the storm-tossed soul is for *rest*.

When the loving father looked on the peaceful face of his youngest born, the calm beauty of the babe suggested his name.

Here was the child foretold, the pacific monarch of an unvexed nation; his wish was father of his belief, he called Bathsheba's infant, Shelômôh—the peaceful one.

Nathan the Prophet came presently to congratulate his friend and king; and when he blessed the child, called him Jedidiah, "the Lord's beloved."

Nathan had already a namesake among the sons of his royal friend, and now David gave a renewed proof of his love, in making the prophet the tutor and guardian of Solomon's early years.

The three grand influences on the forming character of Solomon were these: his father, his mother, and his teacher, Nathan.

David was growing old; his heart was still greatly engrossed by love for Absalom. Before long, severe family troubles weighed him down. In anxieties for those elder children, who had grown up around him so beautiful, so fascinating, so reckless, so fierce in passion, his thoughts were frequently distracted from the Theocratic heir, the slender boy, training in scholarly seclusion.

Bathsheba we see as a radiant, proud, ambitious, energetic woman. From an humble dwelling she had stepped into a palace; of plebeian birth, she had become a king's favorite wife, and had taken precedence of princesses. The steps by which she reached this high estate are such that the less we say about them the better for Bathsheba. She had already learned that her son was the future king, and, very much younger than her royal husband, she looked forward to the grand position of queen-mother.

Nathan the Prophet of the Lord was, as we see from the history, devotedly attached to his pupil; ardent by nature, gifted with unusual tact, with a keen eye to all that went on about him, most probably a man of poetic talent and studious habits; the early years of Solomon bore the impress of his gentle, earnest nature.

The desire of David was to separate his heir from all the

distracting influences which had marred his own life; no hardships, temptations, dangers or hates should disturb the serenity of the coming king.

His ideal of the future kingdom and its monarch we find in the seventy-second Psalm, where, under the type of the approaching glory of Solomon, he depicts the more distant reign of the Lord Christ.

The youth of David had been pure, humble and content "among the sheepfolds;" his successor's early days were as different from this as possible; petted in the harem, nurtured by an ambitious mother, taught all the learning of prophet, priest and Levite, and receiving additional lustre from the incoming culture of Phœnicia.

Despite his father's precautions, Solomon's youth passed through two great storms of revolt, each of which threatened to deprive him of the throne. Absalom and Adonijah each resented his supremacy, but after Adonijah's speedily-crushed rebellion, Solomon found himself firmly seated on the throne.

Here the current of the history divides itself, and we must follow first the scanty history of his external life, and then the more important revelation of his moral character. When Solomon became king, the Jewish nation was for the first and last time among the chief monarchies of the earth. The young sovereign found at his disposal the almost boundless treasures accumulated by the prudent and successful David. His people were thoroughly loyal, and were all outwardly faithful to the religion of Jehovah. The arts and sciences had under David's liberal sway received a new impetus, and were being carried forward to the highest perfection of which that age and race were capable. At once two powerful allies offered themselves to Solomon; Hiram king of Tyre, chief of the Phœnician races, and Pharaoh king of Egypt, who cemented the friendship by giving him his daughter to wife. This was the

first friendly overture between the Egyptians and the Israelites since the Exodus, a period of nearly five hundred years.

Solomon had already during his father's lifetime married Naamah, an Ammonitess; by whom the year before his accession he had a son, Rehoboam, who inherited the kingdom. The marriage with the Egyptian princess was one of state policy, and of very poor policy, for it had in it no safe religious element.

The general prosperity, the abundance, the learning, the morality of the Jewish nation at the beginning of this reign; the unmatched wisdom and prudence of Solomon, the orderly administration of his affairs, and the magnificent indulgence of his opulent taste, excited the admiration of all the kingdoms about him, and filled his court with ambassadors and princes who came to be witnesses of his wisdom and glory.

"All this infinite prosperity had been secured to him by the single influence of David, *because he had scrupulously conformed himself to the Theocracy of the Hebrew State*," says Jahn.

The result of his foreign alliances, especially with Tyre, was a great change in the Jewish policy. Hitherto they had dwelt shut up in their own land, now they suddenly spread themselves abroad, and developed that amazing genius for trade which has made the Hebrew from that day to this the pilgrim of commerce, whose foot traverses every land, seeking wealth, the shining Mecca of his soul. In ships built along the coasts of Joppa, Ezion-geber and Elath, the Israelites joined with the Phœnicians in voyages of traffic, the Mediterranean was covered with their sails, and every port of the Levant was occupied with their commerce. More than this, the ships went down the Ælanitic Gulf into the Indian Ocean, and found new lands to lay their tribute at the feet of Solomon.

But the commercial spirit once aroused did not content itself with traffic by the sea, it was carried on by caravans wherever there were articles coveted in exchange.

Wherever these traders went they spread the story of the wisdom and splendor of their king, until the name of Solomon became a household word, through all the "cradle lands" of the East.

David had left to Solomon the charge of building a most glorious temple to the Lord. He could have assigned him no duty more congenial. The king had largely developed architectural tastes. He wedded the building instinct of the Hamitic race to the religious proclivities of the Shemites; just as he united the arrogant despotism of the heathen to the Theocratic duty of the Hebrew.

Ages have celebrated the Temple, of which the rich beauty, like its sacred design, was superior to any other building that has ever graced the earth. Its chief artizans, like those of the tabernacle, were peculiarly inspired, and it was modelled after that holy tent, whose pattern was showed to Moses on the mount of God. After three years of preparation, the foundation was laid in the fourth year of Solomon's reign; after a space of seven years and six months, the completed building stood on Mount Moriah. During all these years no clamor of labor had disturbed the stillness of the holy city—

> "No hammer smote, no ponderous axes rung,
> Like some tall palm, the mystic fabric sprung."

On the day when with prayer and sacrifice this temple was consecrated to God, when the priests broke forth into pæans to the Lord of Hosts, the divine glory filled the Holy House and marked the acceptance of the place of Jehovah's rest. When the sacrifices were laid on the altar, fire which no mortal hand had kindled flashed up to consume them. This was the culminating day of Jewish history; already in this grand hour the causes of destruction were hidden in the heart of the empire, and from thence it moved downward, first by imperceptible degrees, then faster and faster until Jerusalem was destroyed by Titus, and the hapless Jews were dispersed in every nation under heaven.

Besides the Temple, Solomon built a palace for his Egyptian wife, who had brought him cities as her dower. This house he placed outside the holy city of David, on account of the idolatry of its mistress. He also built for himself a house so elaborate and magnificent, that its erection occupied thirteen years. He had also a house of the forests of Lebanon, which seems to have been modelled after Assyrian palaces; besides these were the porch of pillars, and the porch of judgment, each of which were costly and extensive structures. He built the wall of Jerusalem; many cities and treasure magazines; also "fenced cities with bars and gates," and Bethhoron and Tadmor in the wilderness.

The wealth and glory of Solomon are celebrated by the historians, Eupolemus and Theophilus. He reigned, they tell us, over subject nations from Euphrates to Egypt.

His works, as they are exhibited to us in Scripture, are very singularly impressed with the spirit of his day. The idea we form of his palaces, as they are described by the sacred historian, is of exactly such buildings as have been excavated at Susa and Persepolis. His ivory throne is such as those ivory carvings, fragments of some similar royal seat, which have been brought from Mesopotamia; the lion's feet are like those on which stood the thrones of the Assyrian monarchs. Even those pillars, Jachin and Boaz, which have excited so much attention, have their duplicates in profane history, in the golden pillar which Hiram set up, containing a full length golden image of his daughter; and in the two costly pillars which stood at the doorway of the Temple of the Phœnician Venus.

But few data remain to us from which to construct a continuous history. We learn of the alliances made; of some few conquests; of much development of the national resources; of the number and splendor of public buildings erected, and of the forty years' length of the reign. Presents, tribute, the emoluments of com-

merce poured into the kingdom; silver was like stones for abundance, and was nothing accounted of; the costly cedar became common as sycamore wood to the luxurious nation. But luxury was never the *alma mater* of piety.

"So Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth for riches and wisdom." "All the drinking vessels of Solomon were of pure gold. . . . Every three years came the ships of Tarshish, bringing gold and silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks; . . . every man brought his present—vessels of silver and vessels of gold, and raiment, harness, and spices, horses and mules, a rate year by year."

Of his throne: "There was not the like made in any kingdom." He had "four thousand stalls for horses; a thousand and four hundred chariots; and twelve thousand horsemen."

In this splendid state and success, Solomon reigned over Israel for forty years.

Closing our glance at the externals of this reign, we consider that no nation could support the extravagant taxation, and inordinate expenses of a government like Solomon's.

Solomon had departed from the Theocratic purity of the Hebrew national constitution; he had defied all the fundamental principles of the commonwealth; he had allied himself with the enemies of God, his King; he had created an immense standing army; he had countenanced and practised idolatry.

His kingdom had thrived on his own personal fame; it had grown great in the greatness of the monarch, and had no inherent vigor to keep pace with and support its rapid rise—it had emphatically outgrown its strength.

We turn now to trace the moral career of Solomon, and we begin with him at his coronation.

In his filial character he was especially beautiful. He carefully obeyed the last commands of his father, and guided himself by his advice.

One may say these commands were such that private vengeance, or a thirst for power, would prompt him to fulfil them. But beyond being the instrument of punishment to those who had disturbed his father's reign, and might overthrow his own, we find Solomon rewarding those who had served his father; choosing the dead king's councillors as his own; remembering Nathan the Prophet with tenderness, taking Nathan's son for his principal officer and best friend; and at the dedication of the Temple, he ascribes to David all the praise: "It was in the heart of my father David, to build a house for the name of the Lord God of Israel."

Among the Eastern nations there is no woman who outranks the queen mother. This naturally arises from the practice of polygamy. Among the many wives, some more influential, some more nobly born, some dearer than the others, one cannot publicly and invariably take precedence; but the queen mother stands above them all, and often assists at the councils of state. Such place the ambitious Bathsheba held, and Solomon gave her loving reverence. When she entered his presence, he "rose up to meet her, and bowed himself unto her, and sat down on his throne, and caused a seat to be set for the king's mother; and she sat at his right hand."

When she speaks he replies: "Ask on, my mother, for I will not say thee nay."

Some have commented on this narrative that the king falls into a violent and unreasonable passion, and uses scoffing and abusive language to his mother at her request.

We cannot understand the passage in this light; the wary king sees a plot which the discreet Bathsheba had been unable to detect. In calm but clear language, he shows her all the meaning hidden in that apparently simple petition, and denies what it is impossible to grant.

All through the book of Proverbs runs this golden vein of filial love and reverence; the cherishing of parental counsels, and setting them in a prominent place.

The second characteristic which we are brought to notice in Solomon is his high appreciation of wisdom. The favorite and diligent pupil of the best man of his day, by the time he has entered into his kingdom, has learned enough to know that he has but touched the very beginnings of wisdom; he is able to see and to desire the treasures that lie beyond.

He values wisdom above riches, warlike conquests, or long life; all those things which other men crave passionately fade for him before the surpassing glory of wisdom. It is evident also that it is not merely earthly wisdom which he covets; it must be that wisdom which has its foundation in the fear of the Lord, because he asks for it with a right motive, and to use for doing good, and his request pleases the Lord. If it pleases Jehovah, it must be very right indeed.

The Lord, therefore, gave him a wise and understanding heart, and added riches and honor as a token of approbation. He also promised him long life *conditionally*. "If thou wilt walk in my ways, to keep my statutes and commandments as thy father David did walk, then will I lengthen thy days."

If Solomon had not ceased to serve the Lord, he might have reached his century, and died "full of years and honors, in a good old age." As it was, this matchless king among men, died about his sixtieth year.

Solomon's reverential, religious spirit is strongly marked. He celebrated religious festivals with a lavish abundance of offerings, such as nowhere else appears in either sacred or profane history. New mercies were the occasion of renewed worship; the joy of his heart found expression in the praise of God. He was favored twice with direct communication with the Lord of Hosts. God

spoke to David by the mouths of Samuel, Gad and Nathan, but to Solomon he appeared twice in visions of the night.

Thus was Solomon at the beginning of his reign; heir of a wealthy and prosperous kingdom; nobly dowered in intellect; rich in the Divine gift of song; the idol of his subjects; the cynosure of surrounding nations; remarkable for personal beauty —his face bright and ruddy like David's in his youth; his raven locks lit with a golden glow in sunshine; his eyes "like a dove's" in his gentler moods; his sympathies large; his humor ready and genial; his heart elate and full of jocund hope—this was the man whom God had anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows.

But now we turn to the darker underlying shades of character, which gradually destroyed the noble beauty of the moral man; and we have yet to see whether he drifted into eternity a hopeless wreck, or whether Koheleth tells us of a penitent soul, come back to shelter in the bosom of its God.

The first evil trait sullying this goodly character of Shelômôh is his inordinate love of magnificence. Scripture tells us of the extravagant expenditure of his household. He resolved to make his reign a gala day, a long, joyous festival. Lo the picture, painted by inspiration: "Judah and Israel were many, as the sand which is by the sea for multitude, eating, and drinking, and making merry." At the head of this revelling nation was the royal court—"officers provided victuals for king Solomon, and for all that came to his table, every man in his month: they lacked nothing."

"He had forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariots." Each province in turn was bound to provide for the king's extensive and luxurious household. The total amount of gold paid yearly into the treasury was six hundred and sixty-six talents, while the value of the payments in kind must have been even greater.

Indeed, the amounts expended in building the palaces, courts, porches, temple and cities, defy calculation. Dr. Prideaux estimates the treasures left by David at eight hundred million pounds —about the amount of the national debt of England. David must have been a financier, to put all modern speculators, brokers, and Chancellors of the Exchequer to the blush.

But when we consider that Solomon covered walls, steps and pillars with gold; that he made every vessel in his palace of gold; that his armory was furnished with the same metal, two hundred targets, and three hundred shields of beaten gold hanging on its walls, we see first that David's mass of treasure must have been as a drop in a mighty sea, that we have no idea of the relative value of gold in those days, and that whatever it was, when we consider the taxes paid in live stock, fruit, olive oil, cereals, and game, no nation, no financial system could have stood for a long period the strain of such enormous outlays.

This taste for magnificence led Solomon into imitation of the heathen kings of Phœnicia, Assyria and Egypt. It was a fatal mistake to abandon the simplicity of the kingdom as laid down by Samuel. Out of these magnificent tastes grew—

Personal ambition. To increase his grandeur, he created, as Saul had begun to do, and as David had numbered the people to do, a standing army. "He had twelve thousand horsemen." Josephus tells us that he had a bodyguard of archers, who were clad in costly Tyrian purple, and whose hair was sprinkled with powdered gold. He had fourteen hundred war chariots, each of which was purchased in Egypt for six hundred shekels of silver; while a pair of horses for it cost three hundred shekels. This ambition was the cause of his alliances with heathen, particularly with the Egyptians; and standing armies and heathen allies were alike foreign to the principles of the Theocratic kingdom.

More than this, ambition entered into Solomon's seeking for

knowledge. At first it had been a pure and lawful desire, a wish to make the most of the mental gifts bestowed upon him; to get wisdom, and use it to benefit his race. But when fame of his learning spread abroad, and the wise men of all nations came to applaud, Solomon's right desire degenerated to curiosity, to an avarice for unlawful secrets; he coveted the tabooed arcana of heathen lore.

The Biblical account of his learning—written, probably, in his early, gracious days—is, "And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea-shore. And Solomon excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men; than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol; and his fame was in all nations round about. And he spake three thousand proverbs, and his songs were a thousand and five. And he spake of trees, from the cedar of Lebanon even to the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts and fowl, of creeping things, and of fishes."

Of all this great mass of Solomon's proverbs, poesy, and natural history, very little has been preserved. Therefore very little was worth preserving. What was thrown away was doubtless rejected very much to the advantage of Solomon's reputation. When the king began to meddle with the superstitions of heathenism, his mind began to degenerate.

In these days of materialism we are prone to reject all that savors of the supernatural. We are realistic to such an extent that we argue away miracles, wonders, revelations, wherever we possibly can.

We expect, some day, to see Tennant's trance referred to an accidental overdose of opium!

It has become necessary to assert that the tremendous fabric of

the Chaldaic and Egyptian and Hindoo astrology, divination, magic and wonder-working, was sleight of hand, or an airy nothing. It makes very little difference, inasmuch as our salvation in no wise depends on the question; but the "*fantastic fables*" woven about the name of Solomon are worthy of a second thought. They are so worthy, because they are so wide spread. They represent the general belief of the nations nearest him in both time and space. A popular belief, especially a belief that is common to varied and widely scattered nationalities, deserves consideration, and has often grains of truth in it. We point with much complacency to the wide-spread traditions of the flood.

The East assigns to Solomon strange knowledge of unholy mysteries. He knew spells to subdue and cast out evil spirits; he had charms and incantations to cure disease and work miracles; he understood the language of beasts, birds, and fishes; the secret virtues of gems and herbs; he wore a magic ring, which opened to him the past, present, and future. Josephus religiously credits the most of these tales; he relates that he himself saw one Ezekiel, a Jew, cast out and command demons, by means of the spells and name of Solomon, in the presence of the whole Roman army.

But the unfortunate case of Josephus, the toady of the Cæsars, is, that we believe him, quote him, rely implicitly on him, when, *in our judgment*, he is telling the truth; and scorn, reject, and reproach him, as wildly unreliable, when, *in our opinion*, he is telling a lie. We use or cast aside the unlucky historian, just in proportion as he suits or fails to suit our theories.

After all, as we survey the character of Solomon, we feel that doubtless he forsook the wisdom which is from above, the legitimate pursuit of knowledge, and turned aside to those themes which are, in themselves, unholy and disallowed of God. It is the natural and often fatal impulse of the human soul. Says Howson, in his Life of Paul, "We can hardly wonder, when the

East was thrown open—the land of mystery, the fountain of earliest migrations, the cradle of the earliest religions—that the imagination, both of the populace and the aristocracy of Rome, became fanatically excited." Tiberius sat upon a rock, *cum grege Chaldæo*, says Juvenal; and Tacitus tells us that astrologers will forever be jeered and retained.

Solomon would never have found such wisdom as he craved in a request that was well pleasing to God: "vexation of spirit" a "weariness to the flesh;" "no profit under the sun." Indeed, in Ecclesiastes we find Solomon telling us of two kinds of wisdom, one is apples of Sodom, bitterness unspeakable, and a weaning of the soul from God, a barrier to immortal life. The other is everlasting "profit;" is "strength;" is "better than weapons of war;" full of "gracious words."

Doubtless this Solomon knew much more than we give him credit for. He was called a wise man, say we, but he knew nothing of the electric telegraph; he never saw a train of cars, nor a needle gun; now-a-days the little boys in our schools could tell him things to astonish him; he was very well for his day—but not for ours.

Probably Solomon had a wisdom so far beyond his day that even yet we fail to appreciate it. There are wonderful scientific truths hinted at in Koheleth, which we do not fully grasp as he meant them. He had a wisdom that took hold on the precious things of the everlasting hills; which understood the mighty economy of the ages; which summed the value of the finite, and drank at the fountain of the Infinite. He was like a glorious young cherub, strong to run his intellectual race. Among men he was like him whom Satan

> "Saw within ken a glorious angel stand,
> The same whom John saw also in the sun,
> His back was turned, but not his brightness hid;
> Of beaming sunny rays a golden tiar

Circled his head, nor less his locks behind
Illustrious on his shoulders fledge with wings
Lay waving round; on some great charge employed
He seemed, or fixed in cogitation deep."

Thus was Solomon seeking wisdom as God wills.

But perchance he wandered into other fields, and was led aside into false deductions, and began to doubt the word of the Lord, and to weigh his Maker in balances of his own poor devising, and limit him with lines of his own drawing. Perhaps he preceded Darwin and Huxley and Renan and Strauss in their heaven-rejecting fields of thought, and found this vexation of spirit, and self-weariness and folly, and vanity and despair; and out of those painful regions of unbelief he came, as similar modern prophets are like to come, to gross idolatry. As Dean Howson says: "*Unbelief, when it has become conscious of its weakness, is often glad to give its hand to superstition,*" and it is a sentence worthy to be held in perpetual remembrance.

And so out of this personal ambition of Solomon we reach the time when he was weak enough to become an idolater, and we turn our attention for a moment to the immediate provocation to that idolatry. Solomon, like most people who are magnificent in their tastes, was inordinately self-indulgent. Let a man give free rein to his passions, beginning even at one which is not particularly evil, and anon he will be swept away in a whirlwind of reckless indulgence. Gratifying his extravagant tastes, Solomon would increase his harem to add to his glory, and before long the purity and dignity of his character were lost in a torrent of licentiousness. "But Solomon loved many strange women; and it came to pass that when he was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods."

Now sunk in base idolatry, the king of Israel, the *peaceful one*, the *beloved of the Lord*, went to bow at the horrible shrine of the Assyrian Venus; abased himself before the outrageous altars

of bloody Molech, and offered incense to Chemosh the abomination of Moab, and Milcom the idol of the Ammonites.

Having thus forsaken his God, we cannot be surprised at seeing him despise human justice. He who is a traitor, is apt to be a tyrant. Solomon forsaking his religion developed an unscrupulousness which had perhaps ever been in some activity, but which piety had restrained. Very likely the king trampled on some private hopes, some domestic affections, when he took the sixty tallest and strongest men of the nation for his body guard; he was like Frederick the Great in his love for grenadiers! He reduced the "strangers in the land," the remnants of the Canaanites, the relics of that fatal covenant with the Gibeonites, to a wretched race of unpaid helots, to serfs who wailed in "bitter bondage." Long after, there lingered about the temple a clan of laborers called, "Solomon's servants." These foreign slaves he treated as creatures without souls or natural affections. He forced one hundred and fifty-three thousand of them from their homes, their little ancestral acres, their family burial places, and sent them to the quarries and the forests of Lebanon. Augustus did no worse when after the civil war he tore the inhabitants of Mantua and Cremona from their homes, and gave their possessions to his soldiers. Many a stranger, who had become part and parcel of the Hebrew commonwealth, might have wailed like poor Melibæus:

> "I wonder if in coming years, my little realm, my eyes
> Shall see above thy waving corn my turf-thatched cottage rise."

During the earlier parts of his reign, Solomon laid these cruel burdens on foreigners, and not upon Israelites. It was an iniquitous but national proceeding. Later, he oppressed all alike; military service, serfdom, taxation, all made the Hebrews groan, until they could cry to Rehoboam: "Thy father made our yoke grievous; now therefore ease thou somewhat the grievous servitude of thy father, and his heavy yoke."

The people hated Adoniram who was over the tribute; their allegiance to Solomon grew cold; dark looks and murmurs of revolt greeted the once popular king. Thus he had fallen; he was growing old; God was not with him; the Levites, prophets and priests who had stood like bands of angels about his throne, now shrunk away, bewailing, and denounced the vengeance of Heaven, as they saw temples of Baal, and Astarte and Molech, proudly fronting and facing the Temple of the Lord God. Enemies were stirred up against him. Hadad the Edomite arrayed himself as an adversary. The alliance with Egypt was broken. Shishak, or Seshonk, the king of Egypt, aided the foes of Israel. Rezon the king of Damascus was another opponent; and Ahijah, sent by the Lord, symbolically gave ten parts of the kingdom of Israel to Jeroboam son of Nebat, and Jeroboam raised a revolt which shook the already tottering throne. The reign of Solomon, as narrated in First Kings, begins with the attempted usurpation of Adonijah, and ends with the rebellion of Jeroboam.

In these dark days of his adversity Solomon wrote Koheleth, or Ecclesiastes. Very many of the German critics stoutly maintain that Ecclesiastes is *not* the production of Solomon. The arguments are, many of them, based on rationalistic theories and interests; and a stronger one on verbal evidence—the numerous Chaldæisms in the work. "The deep and difficult things of Scripture," says Taylor Lewis, "are oftentimes better comprehended by the spiritual than the critical mind." But we have both critical acumen and spiritual discernment in favor of the long-maintained belief that Solomon alone wrote "The Preacher." There is one argument which can only be classed as most atrocious and irreligious, namely, that the Jews knew nothing of the future life until they derived the knowledge of it from the Persians during the captivity, which will be more properly referred to in writing of the Prophet Daniel.

We cite a few sentences from Professor Tayler Lewis, on the Solomonic authorship of Ecclesiastes: "Notwithstanding the plausible arguments of Zöckler, and the authorities which he quotes, the antiquity and the Solomonic authorship of Koheleth, are not lightly to be given up. The rationalistic interest contradicts itself. Once set it loose from Solomon's time, and there is no other place where it can be securely anchored. The internal evidence of the Solomonic authorship, when viewed by itself, without reference to later words or Chaldæisms, is very strong. It is just such a series of meditations as the history of that monarch would lead us to ascribe to him in his old age, after his experience of the vanity of this life in its best earthly estate, and that repentance for his misuse of God's gifts in serving his own pleasures, which would seem natural to his condition." Here the learned commentator strikes the key note of Ecclesiastes—experience and repentance.

When Solomon had sifted all earthly pleasures, had gratified love, pride, ambition, curiosity, lust, every emotion of the soul; when he had sinned profoundly, when he had tried all wisdom, he sat down to write the history of his mental and moral experience.

His first wish had been for wisdom, therefore he wrote of wisdom first, and showed, in the first and second chapters (as they are divided in our English Bible) that "the theoretical wisdom of men directed to a knowledge of the things of this world, is vanity." He might have added that the theoretical wisdom of men directed to Biblical criticism is also very often vanity; and it is a pity that many of the German rationalistic commentators could not lay the idea to heart. "Human effort confined to the conditions of life, and the knowledge of this earthly world," can gain no lasting happiness. This was Solomon's lesson from experience. In the latter verses of our second chapter, Solomon shows that this earthly wisdom is not only unproductive of good, but if

it is not affiliated to a higher wisdom, it is of itself a burden; and he gives his own case as an example. Next, the monarch shows why temporal acts and happiness are restricted, and that the true essence of human happiness is gratitude to God. He finds, also, that all human deeds are temporal and evanescent, in proportion as they lack the element of godliness. The misfortunes of men next engage him, and here, as elsewhere, he drew from his own heart and life history. He found that "the race of men is like the race of leaves," their loves, hopes, hates, joys, woes, are as legends written by the Sibyl on the leaves in her cave, and lo, the light wind carries them away. All human life is vanity. But Solomon has learned, by dire experiences, the means of advancing and retaining human happiness. He sees these means to be, devotion to God's worship, "abstaining from violence and injustice and avarice, and maintaining a temperance in all enjoyments." Alas! for Solomon, he had felt the ills of idolatry, despotism and lust; he had proven in himself how they embitter all fountains of peace.

Then he arrives at the theme of True Wisdom, and shows that it does not clasp itself on earthly happiness, but reaches upward into the region of eternal love. He who loves earth, loves vanity, and pines over a constant loss, but True Wisdom despises lust, and cleaves to patience and the fear of God.

Then he warns against irreligion and the lusts whereby he himself has fallen so low. In his day of folly he had commended *mirth*, as the best good under the sun; grown wiser now, he calls it *vanity*—a vapor. In this book, also, we find the expression of Solomon's penitence for his lapses from the allegiance due Jehovah, the true Sovereign of Israel. The king should be obeyed, as in regard to the *oath of God*, as the legate of heaven; therefore the king must work the will of heaven, he must be subject to the kings' King. Therefore, reasons Solomon, than whom none

can reason better, though earthly wisdom perishes, and is consolatory neither in living nor dying; let us strive after supernal wisdom, by which we live well and die happy.

The destiny of man is full of dark places; God's will and his dealings in Providence are unfathomable; but we are pointed to the wisdom which is from above, as a clue to lead us through these labyrinthine ways, and when we have reached a higher life, the dark places will be made clear.

For in Koheleth we have the certainty of the immortal life, continuance of being after death; the Preacher sees, after the turmoil of living, "a tranquil, holy, conscious rest, under the shadow of the Almighty." Perhaps, also, he catches a divine glimpse of the glorious and beloved Hermes of the Church, of Him who belongs both to the living and the dead, to both worlds, the buried and risen one, Redeemer of our flesh and spirit. Koheleth shows the vast difference between the wise man and the fool; between the saint and the sinner. He can do that very well, for he has played the fool himself, and has had but a poor time of it. Then he shows the beauty of a holy life; the happiness of the heart at peace with God and men; the advantages of religion and humanity. He has come to the conclusion that "the only true way to happiness in this world and the world beyond, consists in benevolence; in fidelity to one's calling, a calm and contented enjoyment of life and unfeigned fear of God from early youth to advanced age."

Here, indeed, is the *Noble Lesson*, the true *Golden Legend*, the absolute *Wisdom of Solomon*.

Himself, an old man, prematurely old, because he has not preserved that temperance and chastity which he has learned, too late, to value, Solomon draws a most wonderful picture of old age. He has followed the later maxim, "Look into thine heart, and then write." He has very likely found those eternal veracities, which

Carlyle says are needful to being a poet, for here Solomon breaks forth into a rare, beautiful, pathetic song, poesy of the highest order. Old age, old age indeed; drawn with wonderful fidelity, but it is the old age of one whose youth was spent in self-indulgence; who left the service of his Lord to serve himself. He represents an old man dwelling in the midst of luxury, surrounded with wealth, servants, entertainments; enjoyment dead; his very heart burnt out to ashes: it is a very pitiful picture, especially when we set it beside that of Moses, who, at one hundred and twenty years, found not his eye dim nor his natural force abated. Set Solomon's old man beside the old man Moses, and they will preach such a lesson of the profits of godliness, as will startle every soul.

At last, his arguments, his heart-history, his self-upbraiding ended; Solomon reaches the conclusion of the whole matter:

"Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."

Here Solomon sets forth his expectation of a coming judgment, a grand and awful world assize, as he has previously set forth the immortal life and the eternal home.

This analysis of earth and its honors, this loyal speaking forth for God, represent to us Solomon as at last repentant. He had sinned, he had been chastised, he had humbled himself; he had cast himself anew on the long-suffering and forgiving mercy of our Lord. Perhaps, for the first and only time, he was right toward God. He may, in his beautiful early youth, have been the moralist, the product of parental restraint and religious education, without the stamina of true piety; then he may have fallen, a sinning soul, wholly estranged from God; and late have learned regeneration, repentance, conversion. Or he may have been God's

true servant in early life, then have yielded to the indwelling sin, and then turned to seek, with tears, self-upbraiding and self-distrust, the Father's face. "Better," said Solomon, "is a poor and wise child than an old and foolish king." The temper of childhood is needful to salvation. At last, when all the world was exhausted, Solomon was ready to enter heaven as a little child; and this was indeed the only frame of mind in which he, or any one, could get there. When he came to cast himself on God in a child spirit, he was safe. Blessed thought! "The difficulty is never on the side of God. The Divine pity never lags behind any genuine human sorrow."

XVI.

JEROBOAM.

IDOLATRY THE RELIGION OF THE NATURAL MAN.

ATHEISM is not an indigenous product of the human soul. Indeed one is inclined to wonder if Atheism can ever be more than a braggart theory; whether it is in any case an absolute belief; for danger and death seem ever able to shock the vaunting Atheist out of his creed of negations, and set him calling upon a higher power, until the cause of terror is removed, or breath fails him.

Religion is natural to man; idolatry is the religion of the natural man.

Man has two natures, the physical and the spiritual. The newborn babe cries for food, opens its mouth, and swallows eagerly its nourishment. The religious instinct is the clamoring of the spiritual nature for the food needful for its life and perfection.

Boucher de Perthes, in his volume on "Innate Ideas," says: "It is impossible for man to extinguish in himself the conviction that there is a God. It has been said that children derive their idea of God from the instruction of others; that it is never original. I am convinced of the contrary. I myself was a child when religion (in France) was proscribed; when one did not venture even to allude to it; yet the intuition of God was within me."

But though this idea, this feeling after a higher power, may be inborn, may be the demand which God implanted for the greatest

good, and which he intended to supply, we must never forget man's very existence began with an inspiration, a revelation which became the grand tradition of the race. God walked in the garden, and those "walking hours" became the golden age, set forever in the memory of even the most degenerate scions of the human family. Cain received from the lips of his parents, and from his own experience of the glory between the cherubim, a *positive knowledge* of a higher overruling power.

There has been much discussion of the "gradual development of the religious idea;" as if man left to himself will spontaneously grow into a knowledge of his Creator, and the life of faith. The history of the race proves that man, beginning with a distinct revelation, as soon as he resisted the teaching Spirit of God, and set up his own will and ideas, as in the case of Cain, began to go astray from the knowledge of the Eternal; and while he could not eradicate the belief in *a* God, speedily perverted his belief in the One God, who had created man and taught him in Eden.

"It has been the glory of the Semitic race," says M. Renan, "that from its earliest days it grasped that notion of Deity which all other peoples have had to adopt from its example, and on faith of its declarations." "Of the Semitic race, however," adds Baring-Gould, "but one small branch, Jewdom, preserved and communicated the idea; every other branch of the Semitic race, like the other races, sank into polytheism."

Evidently the Shemite, the Jew, did not preserve and communicate this idea through his own peculiar, natural, moral force and intellectual strength; for in morals and intellect the uninspired, unregenerate Hebrew has never proved the superior of other nations. It was simply because God chose the Sethite, then the Shemitic race, then its branch the Hebrew, to preserve his name, his idea, his religion, pure upon the earth. He kept a remnant. He left not himself without human witnesses, and he chose them

in one especial line. When he let go his hold on other races and nations, who in rebellious perversity were struggling to be free of him, they "sunk into polytheism;" they developed idolatry—the religion of the natural man.

Idolatry is the only religious idea which man, unassisted by Heaven, is capable of developing. At first it was a simple form of idolatry, fire worship, Bel-worship. As idolaters became more and more separated from the divinely-enlightened line of Shem, their idolatry became more and more gross and complex. Nimrod the rebel, on the Chaldæan plains, worshipped fire and the god Bel. After the dispersion of the families of earth from the tower of Babel this worship of Bel was disseminated over all the world; and because idolatry is so much more congenial to the natural heart, than the pure, spiritual worship of a one, true, holy God, it began to gain a foothold even among the chosen children of Eber.

Bel, the ancient tutelary divinity of Babylonia, the deity worshipped by Nimrod, was the chief god of all the Chaldaic nations. Cushites and Shemites, all save the line of Arphaxad, adored him; and when Abraham was called out of Ur of the Chaldees there were added to the worship of Bel the Sun, the fire god, other idolatries, and the moon was the tutelary divinity of Ur.

This Bel, or Belus, represented the one supreme Being whose existence was an ineradicable idea. He pervaded the worship of all nations, becoming associated with other gods, until he was one deity in a mighty pantheon. He was the Osiris of Egypt, the Helius of Greece, the Apollo of the Latin.

The Assyrian idea of their supreme being, of beauty, was not form, but strength. Their sculptures always reach after the majestic. To-day their winged bulls stand in stately solemnity above the dust of their worshippers, the ruins of their temples. Belus was sculptured as an enormous bull with knotted muscles standing firm and hard; the very impersonation of power. This

idolatry, and this form of the idol, spread through all Syria. Says Rawlinson: "Could Chedorlaomer (who warred with the kings of Sodom, and whom Abraham conquered) have returned from his grave after fourteen centuries of sleep, he would have found little difference between the idolatries of his own day and of Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar—save in splendor of offerings and an increase of music in the worship." So well did this Baal worship suit the genius of the Orient, so impossible was it even in the space of fourteen centuries for that genius to attain anything higher, unhelped by the Spirit of God.

The descendants of Mizraim flying from the plain of Babel, took the idea of Baal with them, and worshipped him under the similitude of the sacred bull; he was to them Osiris, the father of all. In Egypt the captive children of Abraham imbibed their notion of *calf-worship*, which seems to have clung to them with amazing tenacity. The most tremendous judgments of God failed to destroy their secret veneration for Baal. This developed at the very hour when they became an independent nation. As they stood at the foot of Sinai, impatient at the delay of Moses, they clamored for gods to go before them; and their idea of divinity was a golden calf. There has been a question whether this calf meant Jehovah, being a cherubic representation of him; or whether it was an Egyptian god. It seems rather a confounding of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob with Baal, or Osiris, and the choosing the calf as the legitimate representation of him. Baal means lord, master, owner, ruler, and was first referred to the sun, the giver of warmth and light, without which nothing can exist.

Whenever there was set before the Israelites any temptation for Baal-worship, they at once relapsed into it as a nation; having among them exceptions, God-servers, the witnesses of the Holy One. Afflictions brought back the people to their allegiance to

the true God; and anon they fell away. During the one hundred and forty years from the beginning of Samuel's judgeship to the coronation of Rehoboam, the religion of Jehovah had been sedulously and consistently preserved by all the tribes. We have come now in their history to a time when ten tribes voluntarily forsook the revealed religion, and took instead idolatry, the religion of the natural man.

Idolatry was the religion of the natural man from Cain to Jeroboam; it has been the religion of the natural man from Jeroboam until to-day; and by this time a large portion of idolaters have got back to the exact form of Cain their archetype—self-righteousness, self-justification, intolerance.

When a man does not worship the Lord his God, it makes very little difference in his guilt whether his idol is Baal, the sun wheeling in heaven, the golden calf-god, or—himself!

Milton embodies the idea of Baal in the lines—

> "Than whom
> Satan except none higher sat, with grave
> Aspect he rose, and in his rising seemed
> A pillar of state; deep on his front engraven
> Deliberation sat, and public care;
> And princely counsel in his face yet shone,
> Majestic though in ruin; sage he stood
> With Atlantean shoulders fit to bear
> The weight of mightiest monarchies; his look
> Drew audience and attention still as night,
> Or summer noontide air."

Jeroboam, the immediate instrument of this change in Israelitish worship, is first presented to us when Solomon was building Millo, and repairing the wall of the city of David. Jeroboam was then a young man, the son of an Ephrathite named Nebat. His father was already dead; fortunately taken from the sight of the fatal grandeur of his son. His mother, Zeruah, lived, and doubtless prided herself not a little on her boy. "He was," says

Scripture, "a mighty man of valor." So prominent was he among his kinsmen and fellow-workers, that Solomon at once noticed him, and selected him from the rest, for especial dignity. "And Solomon seeing the young man, that he was industrious, he made him ruler over all the charge of the house of Joseph."

He "was a mighty man of valor." We can imagine him in his prime; the dashing athlete, who would soon show that he feared neither God nor man.

One who mocked at toil and hardship; who was incapable of fear; who knew how to control his fellow-men; to beguile their hearts; who was just the rash, ardent, exuberant Saul-like nature, to delight the men of Israel. He stood at the head of "the house of Joseph"—of those mighty tribes, Ephraim and Manasseh. He was in the very position to exercise influence; for Ephraim was a proud, turbulent, rebellious tribe; ever jealous of the supremacy of the house of Judah, and ever but half smothering revolt against the family of David.

Years passed on, while Jeroboam, the mighty captain, was prominently before his people, and they were becoming accustomed to his authority, and to seeking his advice.

During these years, Solomon had degenerated to an idolater, and God had already, by the mouth of the prophet, announced the division of the kingdom.

Jeroboam was the man chosen by God to bear rule over the ten tribes. And Ahijah, the Shilonite, was the prophet to make this royal future known. Warned of God, Ahijah went forth toward Jerusalem, to meet the future king. Impelled by that power, which, often unrecognized, guides the smallest events of our lives, Jeroboam in Jerusalem projected a journey.

Perhaps he was going forth on business.

Perhaps filial love called him to the village home of his widowed mother, Zeruah; maybe he was bent on love making,

and some dark-eyed maid among the daughters, awaited his coming in an olive orchard on the sunny slopes. Poor soul, if this were so, the girl to whom this goodly captain should tell his tale of love, would have dark days and very heavy tidings, sore sorrows of wife and mother, as Jeroboam's queen.

Whatever was the cause of his going, he went well clad. He bought a new garment, and walked forth gaily, proud of his array; little thinking that the royal purple, the monarch's crown, awaited him in the future. Down he strode from the hill Zion into the field, and saw coming towards him a well-known form, Ahijah, the old seer; who of late, with darkling brows and lifted hands, had cried out woe and vengeance, because of those temples of crime to Molech, Baal and Ashtoreth.

Very likely Jeroboam gave the prophet good greeting; we imagine him to have been one of those politic men, who never throw away an ally, never lose an advantage, however dimly foreshadowed.

The prophet responded singularly enough. They were together in the field, and he laid hands on Jeroboam like a highway robber, and seized his new garment. Then he behaved like a madman. He tore the cloak in pieces, but there was a singular method in his madness; for the torn stripes were twelve. He turned to the wondering captain, and holding out the fragments of the new cloth, said: "Take thee ten pieces: for thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, Behold, I will rend the kingdom from the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee."

Never was a new garment spared so easily. For the ten torn strips of his gay apparel, Jeroboam should receive ten mighty tribes for his kingdom. Before his eyes swept instant visions of the coming glory; he would be grand as Solomon; allied to kings; wedded to royal princesses; conqueror of nations; founder of a dynasty. His heart was so lifted up, that he hardly heard the

stern voice of the prophet detailing the causes of Solomon's forfeiture of the kingdom. If Jeroboam had but heard and laid to heart this part of the message, his fate would have been very different: "Because they have forsaken me, and have worshipped Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Zidonians, Chemosh, the god of the Moabites, and Milcom, the god of the children of Ammon."

Unfortunately for Jeroboam, he was one of those who never learn anything from the dealings of Providence with other men.

Another very important fact was stated by Ahijah, namely, that God said: "I will not take the whole kingdom out of his hand: but I will make him a prince all the days of his life, for my servant David's sake. . . . But I will take the kingdom out of his son's hand, and will give it unto thee, even ten tribes."

Here it was distinctly explained, that so long as Solomon lived, Jeroboam was quietly to stand among those who served. His controversy was to be with Rehoboam. To say one word, to lift one finger to obtain royalty before Solomon's death, would be rank rebellion.

Still the prophet's speech flowed on: "And it shall be, if thou wilt walk in my ways, and do that is right in my sight, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as David my servant did, that I will be with thee, and build thee a sure house, as I built for David; and I will give Israel unto thee."

Here was made a condition, a promised reward, and there was also set a model. Jeroboam had now no reason, *outside* of his own unregenerate heart, to go astray. He knew all Jewish law; he knew the dangers and the crying iniquity of idolatry; he knew what David's life had been, and that this was the life he must live in childlike humility before his God; and the reward would be a sure kingdom for all his posterity.

The prophet went his way. From that hour Jeroboam was a different man; a change had passed over his spirit. He began

to question of his future, of his present position. He suddenly felt himself a king—every inch as great as Solomon; yet here he wandered unattended on the public way, uncrowned, throneless and sceptreless. He must wait until Solomon was dead, and who could tell how long Solomon might live? Perhaps until Rehoboam and Jeroboam were gray, old men, shorn of ambition, all pleasures palling on their senses.

There was Solomon, nourished and cherished and pampered, shut out from danger, guarded on every hand; and here was he, Captain Jeroboam, jostled rudely by the world, an accident or an enemy might make away with him any moment, before ever he became a king. He forgot that he was immortal until his work was done; and that he was assured of the kingdom in the promise of the Unchangeable One: "And I will take thee, and thou shalt reign according to all that thy soul desireth, and thou shalt be king over Israel." It was utterly impossible for Jeroboam to die before that word was accomplished; floods could not drown him; fire could not destroy him; no arrow could find out a joint in his harness before he reigned, filling all his desires; the prophet hinted of his long envy and ambition! A thousand new cravings were struggling within him. Josephus tells us that after this prophecy Jeroboam "could not keep quiet," and that "he endeavored to persuade the people to forsake Solomon, to make a disturbance, and to bring the government to himself."

Solomon had already been warned, probably by the prophet Gad, of the future division of the kingdom, the consequence of his idolatry. Doubtless he heard of the prophecy of Ahijah, of which Jeroboam would make vain-glorious mention; and now when the young captain began to urge his kinsfolk, and the malcontents, which are in every nation, to revolt, Solomon endeavored to kill him.

Jeroboam found that his efforts to secure an immediate authority

were doomed to failure. God was not with him; he had only shown his own insubordination and unbelief in endeavoring to press on before the Lord's time. Abandoning a cause which he could not maintain he fled into Egypt.

Since Solomon had married an Egytian princess, a new king, hostile to him, had taken the throne of Mizraim. This king, Shishak, offered an asylum to all the enemies of Solomon; before David died, Hadad, the Edomite, and his followers had thrown themselves upon the protection of Egypt. Hadad was then but a child, but he had grown to man's estate, married into the royal family, and was now aided by Shishak to resist the power of Solomon. In Egypt Jeroboam remained until the death of the king. When he heard of that event, and probably a fleet courier carried at once the long-wished for news, he returned from Egypt to Palestine; but mindful of his former bootless haste, and grown wiser with the passing years, he retired to his own city, Zared, to await the course of events. Jeroboam was in no wise improved by years; he was more prudent, more crafty, but far less honest and religious than when he stood the simple, indefatigable superintendent of Solomon's building operations. During his long residence in Egypt, there is every reason to suppose, from the character of the man, that he yielded homage to the Egyptian gods, and took part in all the disgusting Egyptian idolatries. He was never the man to do as well as he knew how; he had a plenty of worldly, very little heavenly wisdom.

On him, however, the eyes of all Israel were set. He was to be their leader in the coming political strife. They knew he was bold and sagacious; they remembered the prophecy of Ahijah.

Therefore, as preparations were made for the solemn coronation of Rehoboam, Israel held back, and let the tribe of Judah take the initiative, making preparations for the gorgeous ceremonial. Judah was of the king's family—his kinsmen in the flesh. The

capital, beautiful Jerusalem, was in Judah's territory. The coronation, however, was to take place at a central city of Ephraim, Shechem, famous in Jewish story, and very frequently mentioned in the Bible. There the children of Israel had renewed, after the capture of Ai, their solemn covenant to be the Lord's.

One sad monotone running through Koheleth we have left until now—a father's disappointment. He whose harem held a thousand wives and concubines, could leave but a "fool" to sit on his throne. He pours forth his distrust of the coming monarch, and Rehoboam fully justifies that distrust. In the first part of his reign he plays the fool indeed.

Yet after all, in some respects, he seems to the full as wise a man as his father. Solomon had succeeded in disintegrating his own powerful empire; Rehoboam knew, after his first mistake, how to make the best of a bad bargain, and prop a falling kingdom.

Solomon came into his royalty under the most favorable circumstances, and left all things crumbling to their fall; Rehoboam heired anarchy, and he managed to reign peaceably and leave his son as much power and wealth as he secured for himself.

Hardly was the most splendid and powerful of the Hebrew monarchs laid in his tomb, than the oppressed seized the opportunity of the coronation at Shechem, and rose in a terrible tumult. They crowded to Rehoboam for redress of grievances. We are apt to think of him as a boy, but he was forty-one years of age. Prudence, urbanity, benevolence on his part, would have saved him the loss of more than half his realm; braggart defiance, audacity and despotism, reduced him to be a petty prince, lording it over a corner of the territory where his father had swayed the sceptre.

Yet poor Rehoboam is what we might expect him to be; there had been far too much gold in his early surroundings. Gold couches, gold dishes, gold caparisons for horses, gold armor, gold powder on his hair; he was a far-off Hebrew Miss Kilmansegg;

and like that unfortunate, he was ruined by a surfeit of the precious metal. There is more truth than fable in the story of the miseries of king Midas.

Already were the wishes and welfare of Judah and Israel seen to be diverse. If Judah should come up to Shechem strong in a lineal successor of the late renowned king, Israel would come with the valiant Ephrathite, who could plead the promise of the Lord by the mouth of Ahijah. Therefore the ten tribes sent to Zared to call Jeroboam to appear as their head and spokesman at Shechem.

Rehoboam was not wise enough to concede at once what was respectfully and reasonably demanded. Neither was he prepared instantly to refuse. He asked three days for consideration; these days he spent rejecting the advice of the wise old councillors, who had added lustre to his father's reign, and listening to the flatteries and braggardism of his younger comrades. These days Jeroboam no doubt was wise enough to use in strengthening himself in the hearts of Israel, and in encouraging the tribes to persist in their demand; at the same time, stirring up their jealousy against Judah.

At the end of three days, the gross taunts, the insane defiance of Rehoboam infuriated the disaffected tribes. Soft words, honest promises would have destroyed the influence of Jeroboam, and made them loyal; but this was not to be. No sooner was Rehoboam's reply given—and we can imagine how the old men blushed and trembled at its idle boasts—when a shout arose from the adverse camp; the ten tribes had taken up their song of insurrection—the Hebrew Marseillaise. As the Bourbons quailed at the sound of "*Allons, enfans de la patrie!*" so the line of David was made to tremble at the cry: "To your tents, O Israel!"

Rehoboam heard it, and it was the signal of his defeat. Israel was no longer a great kingdom of the earth.

Jeroboam at once proceeded to strengthen himself. He probably retired to Zared for a short time until the people were in a mood to receive another king, and had fairly separated themselves from the house of David. Rehoboam meantime retired to one of his country seats, and resolving to ignore the late action of the tribes, sent Adoram to collect tribute. This tribute had been the chief source of contention. It was cruelly heavy, and was ruining the power of the nation; the imposts were so great that agriculture and commerce were suffering terribly through all the land. The people cordially hated Adoram, because he was the officer who levied these taxes; and forgetting that if their wrath was due to any one, that one was the king, and not his unhappy treasurer, they stoned Adoram to death. On hearing of the fate of his officer Rehoboam was filled with terror; fled to Jerusalem, for safety behind its mighty fortifications, and called together an army of one hundred and eighty thousand men.

Seeing these preparations to reduce them to submission, the ten tribes resolved to resist, and felt that their first want was an able commander. They therefore sent deputies to Jeroboam, and probably brought him to Shechem, and there formally crowned him king.

The tribe of Benjamin had ever been especially favored by David, who sought to conciliate the family and friends of Saul, the first king; Benjamin therefore clung to Judah, and remained faithful to Rehoboam. All the families of the Levites were also loyal—for the altar and temple of their faith was at Jerusalem; Rehoboam was nominally faithful to the religion of Jehovah, there was little reason to expect that Jeroboam would be so. The division was therefore nine tribes against three, but still numerically the people were almost equally divided, for Judah and Benjamin had always been among the most powerful tribes, and only Ephraim could in any wise compete with them.

Jeroboam at once established himself in Shechem, making that the seat of his government, his capital. The city lay between the mounts Ebal and Gerizim, which towered high above it; some of the dwellings climbed the grape-clothed slopes of these two mountains; all around lay the fertile and beautiful plain of Moreh. Groves, orchards, gardens, verdant fields, girdled the ancient city with loveliness.

Jeroboam, like the rest of his nation, had an eye for beauty; a warrior, he properly estimated strength and a capacity for defence. His capital was in every way well chosen; it was central, strong and fair. It had also the aroma of holiness lingering about it; for it had been a Levitical town, and one of the six cities of Refuge.

The words in Kings, "Then Jeroboam built Shechem, and dwelt therein," mean that he enlarged and improved the city: added to its fortifications, and, perhaps, built there a palace.

He also built a town called Penuel, which has vanished from the earth.

In the mean time, Shemaiah, a prophet of God, went to Rehoboam with the message: "Ye shall not go up to fight with your brethren, the children of Israel: return every man to his house; for this thing is from me."

The prompt obedience of Rehoboam, in disbanding his army, is the best thing which thus far we have heard of him.

Jeroboam, taking counsel with fear rather than faith, began to think that if his people went up to worship at Jerusalem, the loyal Levites would lead them to return to their allegiance to the house of David, and he would lose his kingdom; forgetting that for a specified reason it had been given him by the Lord; and on one condition assured perpetually to his family. In all his history, Jeroboam appears as an entirely faithless, irreligious man.

He determined, therefore, to have holy places in his own

domains, and to give the people a form of worship differing from that at Jerusalem; free from Levitical influence, and of a nature to attract and retain them. What more natural than that he should turn to Baal worship? The Israelites had full often served Baal; he had been a household word to them for generations; and their evil hearts yet longed for his seductive rites. It was the religion they had seen practised in Egypt; Jeroboam himself had lately been a worshipper before the sacred bulls in Heliopolis.

He was disposed to be very complacent to his people, to indulge them in every way. Shechem, in Ephraim, was his royal dwelling. In Gad he had built the city Penuel; now he chose Dan and Bethel for places of worship; Dan was the ancient Laish, settled in the limits of Naphtali by Danites. Choosing this town as a principal seat of worship, the wily Jeroboam secured a place very far from Jerusalem, and one in which Dan and Naphtali were alike interested.

Bethel, the other high place, had ever held a historic sanctity. Here Jacob had dreamed and vowed. The town belonged, in Jeroboam's day, to Ephraim. Samuel had been wont to hold his court of justice there, in his annual circuit; it was near enough to Jerusalem to lie in the way of many going up to the Temple, and thus to beguile them. From the day when Jeroboam chose the spot as a place for his idolatries, Bethel, the House of God, was polluted by Baal worship, for three hundred years.

Jeroboam now made two golden calves, such as were worshipped in Assyria, and were sculptured and painted in Egypt; such as Cushite and Shemite had adored since the days of Nimrod. These he exhibited to the great congregation of the people, saying —with what simulated and dangerous kindness—"It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt."

Is it thus a king should be a father to his people?

The gods who had brought them up from Egypt? Truly these were gods, such as they had worshipped with music, feasts and dances, at the foot of Sinai; and so the faithless nation ran greedily after their monarch's sin, and worshipped in Bethel and in Dan.

The Scripture notes two important facts in connection with Jeroboam. First, his instituting for his new kingdom a new national worship: formally taking Baal for their god in the place of Jehovah, and second, his ordaining a new national festival.

The feasts of the Israelites were especially ordained for them by the Lord. They were in number three—the Passover, the Pentecost, the Feast of Tabernacles. The National Fast, the only one, was the great Day of Atonement, five days before the Feast of Tabernacles. The Passover was celebrated between the fourteenth and twenty-first days of the month Nisan—the first month of the religious year. Pentecost was kept fifty days later, Tabernacles came in autumn, after the gathering of the harvests.

Jeroboam set apart a new day for observance, "the fifteenth day of the eighth month, even the month which he had devised in his own heart." He was evidently doing all that he could to oppose the laws and ordinances of God.

The *heart* of Jeroboam is several times mentioned. It was open to the scrutiny of God, and that God had seen his passionate craving for royal power, when Jeroboam was only superintendent of the public works. The Lord knew all his vain castle building of what he would do if he were king. He sent by Ahijah, and told him he should reign according to all that his heart desired.

A sad privilege, for his heart desired very little that was good—and in this respect was not very different from many other hearts.

Here again he is spoken of as devising out of his own heart a

new time for a new festival. The historian is careful to make it evident that the hand of the Lord was not with Jeroboam.

For these, his ungodly and idolatrous doings, Jeroboam got a name that has ever clung to him. He is ever mentioned with the expressive phrase—"he who made Israel to sin."

To sin in one's own proper person is bad enough; to drag others into crime is infinitely worse, and adds tenfold to one's condemnation. He who carries with him, in his sinful career, souls who but for him would have lived in peace and well-doing, piles up for himself a tremendous weight of iniquity. It would be better for such an one, in the very beginning of his history, to have a millstone hanged about his neck, and be cast into the sea.

At this feast which Jeroboam devised, he, like other idolatrous kings, acted as chief priest, offered the sacrifices on the altar, and burnt incense. It was a privilege not allowed to Theocratic kings.

At one of these feasts at Bethel, where Jeroboam was officiating, he was arrested in his impious work by a message from the Lord. It was not a joyful errand on which the prophet, a nameless, unhappy, and ill-fated man of God, came.

Jeroboam, in royal state, uniting the offices of priest and king, offices divorced by God's decree since the days of Melchizedek, stood by his altar offering incense to the golden calf, Baal.

The prophet cried out against the altar, and uttered one of those singular prophecies, over which unbelievers have thought fit to distress themselves—as in the case of the prophecy about Cyrus—calling a man by name long before he and his parents are born. The prophet named Josiah, who was crowned king some three hundred years later. A very hard thing in man's view—nothing to Him before whom thousands of ages are a little space.

The nameless prophet cried and said: "O altar, altar! Thus

saith the Lord, Behold a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name; and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense on thee, and men's bones shall be burnt on thee."

He paused. It would be easy for an enthusiast from Judah to speak thus, these idolaters might think, they must have a sign; therefore, the power of Jehovah over their altar must be evidenced.

The man of God held out his hand. "Behold, this is the sign which the Lord hath spoken; behold the altar shall be rent, and the ashes that are upon it poured out."

The wrath of the interrupted king and idolater rose high at these words; stretching forth his arm in command, he cried: "Lay hold on him!" But as the royal guards sprang to obey, the king's arm withered and stiffened, still held out in an attitude of defiance; and "he could not pull it in to him again." At the same moment the altar was rent, and brands and sacrificial ashes were scattered far and near upon the ground.

The life of Jeroboam was full of telling situations; this was one of them. The only man who could heal his paralyzed arm was now roughly held in custody by the guards.

Jeroboam need not entreat a god who could not save his own altar; here was a man stronger than Baal, and he was forced to humiliate himself before him.

When his hand is restored, something of the old time, free and easy, soldier disposition of Jeroboam flashes out; he forgets anger in gratitude, and he invited the man of God to his palace, promising refreshments and a reward.

Not only the prophecy, but the sudden and violent death of the prophet, would have been calculated to arrest most men in an evil course; but the record of Jeroboam is that he went on in sin, and to his inaugurating the worship of Baal, and intercalating feasts, he added the crime of taking vile persons and consecrating



J. John. Del

Eng. by J. Mc Goffin

DOOM OF THE ALTAR.

them for priests. Thus as king, he made himself the absolute head of this idolatry, assigning the object of worship; establishing the festivals; offering sacrifice; and elevating to the priestly office whomsoever he would.

Jeroboam was by no means at rest in his kingdom; for between himself and Judah there was constant disturbance, probably a sort of guerilla warfare, as we read of no pitched battles during Rehoboam's life; unless Jeroboam aided his old friend Shishak.

Hearts which may not be reached by the prophecy of a coming evil, are sometimes softened by a present sorrow.

Jeroboam seemed to have in his life almost every opportunity; every variety of training, "but was nothing made better, and only grew worse."

The king had established for himself a dwelling in Tirzah, a place long famous for its beauty. Solomon remembers it in his Song, "Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah!"

The city stood to the north of Mount Ebal, in the midst of sheltering olive groves. Here the queen and her children lived, and this suggests one virtue which we may remark in Jeroboam. Despite the example of the kings of Judah, of David and Solomon; and despite his own reckless nature, Jeroboam seems in all his life to have retained a sturdy matrimonial virtue. We read of no harem and no concubines, but we have instead the touching story of these two royal parents, anxious and weeping at the bedside of their first-born son, the gracious Abijah. The heir was better than his parents. Perhaps his grandmother, Zeruah, was a godly woman, and had trained him in holiness; perhaps Ahijah, the Shilonite, had prayed for him and instructed him. God was remembering the pious prince, and was calling him from the evil to come. The father and mother cannot give him up, and Jeroboam, in his anguish, remembers that noble old man, Ahijah, who foretold for him the kingdom. He hopes that, as

once before, some good word will come from the prophet. He forgets that he has despised warnings and advice, and has done all those evil deeds which must inevitably draw down on him a curse. Perhaps he thinks that the pitying prophet will intercede for that beloved child's life.

In their hour of distress, how often do wicked men seek refuge in the piety of some one whom in prosperity they have neglected, and whose Christianity they have despised.

Disguised, sorrowing, reluctant to be one moment absent from her sick son, yet hoping much from her embassage, and anon fearing much, as she remembers their ill desert, the wife of Jeroboam reaches Ahijah and receives heavy tidings. The blind prophet sets before her all the sin of her godless household. She has called to her mind the abundant mercy of God, who exalted Jeroboam from the midst of the people to be a king; an example was furnished him, which he would not follow. The exceeding iniquity of Jeroboam is set forth, then vengeance is denounced against him and his family until "all be gone." Violent deaths, dishonored corpses, bleaching skeletons in street and plain; these pass before the hapless woman, as if the prophet's words were some hideous panorama. Yet more, the fate of all Israel, the apostate people, is shown the queen; and then she hears the fatal words: "Arise thou therefore, and get thee to thine own house; and when thy feet enter into the city, the child shall die."

We can imagine that mother's woe; she was not to close her child's eyes; never to see him in life again. With her every homeward step, there was for him one pulse beat less, one shortening breath; and as she entered Tirzah's gate, the child gave up his spirit, the one saved soul in the house of Jeroboam.

A man can never sin for himself alone; like Jeroboam, he causes the death of his children, the anguish of his wife, the destruction of all connected with him, or dependent upon him.

In the eighteenth year of Jeroboam, Abijah, the son of Rehoboam, being king of Judah, attacked him as a rebel. The fate of battle was against the worshipper of Baal; Jeroboam lost all the flower of his army, fled ignominiously, and was forced to yield several cities to his conqueror, among them Bethel, the high place. In four years more he died: "Struck by the Lord;" died a hopeless death, leaving Nadab, his son, a vile idolater, to hold the kingdom for two hapless years, which should end with his assassination. "For I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, to the third and fourth generation of them that hate me."

Jeroboam exhibits the heart left to its own devices. "Thou shalt reign according to all that thine heart desireth," was said to him, and his first acts were rebellion against God, and idolatry.

Paul, in Romans, teaches us that the idea of one Supreme Being is implanted in every soul. The pagans know in their hearts that there is but one God. This knowledge does no good unless the man has a holy belief in the God whom he knows.

Man is a religious being by nature, at the same time he is a fallen and sinful being; he is averse from God, and as his nature impels him to have some sort of religion, he betakes himself to idolatry, lifting up the creations of his own imagination, or the forms of nature, between himself and the God whom he both fears and hates. "He invented idolatry," says Professor Shedd, "and all those gay religions full of pomp and gold, in order to blunt the edge of his sharp spiritual conception of God, which was continually cutting and lacerating his sensual heart."

And no one need wonder that races of men developed idolatry so soon, for even now we see in one short human life space for the innocent, religious, tender-hearted child, to become the bold unbeliever, mocking at judgment and the future doom; declaring Nature to be God, and himself her prophet. "Man," says Pro-

fessor Shedd, "so distorts and suppresses the consecrated idea of the Deity, that some speculatists assert that it does not belong to his constitution!"

Other speculatists assert what is equally abhorrent to religious common sense, namely, that a knowledge of God, of immortal life, of right and wrong, of the necessity and manner of salvation, was gradually developed in the human soul. All history teaches the ingenuous mind that the only religion the human soul can develop is idolatry. Whatever is better than that comes from Heaven, by direct revelation. As man cannot invent for the One God a name which He will accept, so he cannot develop a plan of salvation, or religious belief which He will accept. Those who do not believe that God in the very beginning of man's life upon earth preached to him a *full gospel*, must believe that the terms of salvation are not the same for all men; that God varies the terms of his salvation to suit the changeful eras of this lower world.

Or, they must believe that up to a certain point in religious development very many generations were irretrievably lost, because they had not developed far enough. Accepting neither of these theories, they are forced to a third, that is, that the religious knowledge at which men have now arrived is redundant; very much more than is needful to everlasting safety; that a small part of what he knows as truth will be enough to save him; and of this part, our religious development men seem to think that every individual may select for himself what he shall intellectually believe, and what he shall rest upon as a means of salvation.

Not so; in the first hour of our danger and exile, God made known salvation through a Redeemer; through Divinity in flesh; to him a line of believers looked as the Coming One for four thousand years until he came. They were enabled to hold fast their faith, only by the influence of the Holy Spirit. Whom the Spirit did not thus instruct, fell into idolatry; first a monotheistic

idolatry, then polytheism, until their monstrous pantheon made each soul a Gehenna.

For almost two thousand years, the pilgrim church, journeying worn and travel-stained down the ages, has carried the memory of her Lord, the God-man, died, risen and ascended; and yet, as in her earliest days, looks with longing eyes for her Coming One, who shall return to her in power, and bring her to Himself.

XVII.

JEZEBEL AND HER DAUGHTER.

THE STATUS OF WOMAN WITHOUT RELIGION.

FIFTY years after the death of Hiram, king of Tyre, the friend of Solomon, Eth-baal, the father of Queen Jezebel, reached the Tyrian throne, by the murder of Phelis. Eth-baal was one of the most depraved of Phœnician sovereigns. The friendship of David and Solomon, the close intimacy with the Jews, and the diffusion of Jewish knowledge and religious light, had done much to modify and purify the belief and customs of the Tyrians.

In the half century that had passed since those happy days, vice and idolatry had more and more abounded, and the iniquities of the Zidonians culminated, when Eth-baal, the chief priest of Astarte, the Phœnician Venus, became unlimited monarch. Eth-baal had reigned for twenty years, when Ahab, son of Omri, became seventh king of Israel. Weak and wicked, not without some good impulses, the slave of his own desires, and the tool of whoever of those near him was strongest, Ahab lives in history to show us, that weakness is often the worst kind of wickedness.

The capital of Israel was now Samaria, a city built on a hill by Ahab's father, Omri. For six years, Omri lavished all his wealth and ingenuity upon this city, and, thus suddenly grown up into magnificence, it became a capital sadly famous in Syrian history. Ahab, from his childhood, was accustomed to the idolatry

instituted by Jeroboam, the worship of the golden calf. This calf was undoubtedly Osiris or Bel, but it represented the earliest and simplest form of idolatry, a monotheism; with this calf-worship were entwined many Jewish ideas, and it was in Israel, until Ahab's day, divested of the shocking rites and additions which it had already gained in Chaldea, Phœnicia, and Egypt.

Into this calf-worship Ahab entered cordially, because other people did. But he was soon to exceed in wickedness and idolatry all who had been before him.

His first care was to strengthen his position by an alliance with some powerful nation. This was the more needful, as the rival kingdom of Judah was ruled by Asa, whose "heart was perfect with God all his days," and whose government was strong, flourishing and peaceful.

At this time, there was in the court of Eth-baal, his eldest daughter, a princess noted for wit, bravery, and beauty, Jezebel.

The Biblical account of Jezebel is confirmed by Menander, the Tyrian historian. The only exception which can be taken to the Scriptural narrative by the captious is, that Eth-baal is called king of the Zidonians. It must be remembered that this name, Zidonians, was the generic term applied by the Jews to all Phœnicians, and that now the power of Zidon was waning in the greater glory of imperial Tyre, as the morning star pales its "ineffectual fires" before the rising sun.

Born after her father became a king, Jezebel had been reared in luxury, and from her earliest years the priestly office of her parent had drawn her passionate spirit toward the worship of his gods. The Tyrians were a luxurious and cultivated people; the early life of Jezebel was one gorgeous pageant. She dwelt among those "princes of the sea," who sat on thrones wearing "broidered garments;" accompanied by a chorus of singing maidens, who kept time to the oars of the rowers, she floated about the harbors

of Tyre, in one of those gorgeous galleys, which Ezekiel describes, which spread forth embroidered linen from Egypt for their sails, from which floated upon the waves blue and purple draperies, brought from distant isles; whose benches were carved ivory, whose boards and masts were cedar.

The princess walked through the city; lo, here were the busy fairs, where men traded in all manner of riches, "brass, silver, tin, ivory, ebony, horses, emeralds, linen, coral, agate." She saw the men of Arvad set in watch upon the walls, their glittering armor gleaming against the back-ground of sky or sea. From tower to tower called the Gammadim night and day, and their shields covered the walls. Ambassadors, seeking the royal city, brought gifts to the princess of the house; and, among the rest, came sons of Israel, with presents and soft words, to seek a queen.

It was better, thought the ambitious Jezebel, to be a queen in Samaria, than a princess in Tyre. Therefore she went forth in glorious state, a proud, resolute, unscrupulous girl, to begin a career of crime; to immortalize herself in vice.

Over swelling hills, through fertile valleys, across broad flower-strewn plains, swept the royal cortege, the princess and her escort, the trains of servants; the camels and mules laden with the bride's treasures; the showy groups of dancing women; and among all, conspicuous in their sacred garments, with cruel, sensual, dark faces, the priests of Baal and Astarte, whom the wicked and fanatic princess took with her to increase the corruption of her future subjects. Through the fertile territories of Asher, yielding fruit and corn; across the fields of Zebulon; among the vineyards and olive groves of Manasseh, and into the domains of luxurious Ephraim, the seat of the kingdom, went Jezebel. From Samaria Ahab came forth to meet her in a procession, where music and songs and flowers expressed the welcome of the stranger queen.

From that moment of meeting, the yielding and sensuous

Ahab resigned himself to the dominion of his audacious, self-reliant, cruel wife. Daughter of a royal priest, and wife and mother of kings whom she ruled, Jezebel was the Catherine de Medicis of ancient days.

Her entrance into Samaria was a turning-point in the history of Israel. Her husband was a puppet in her hands; her reckless licentiousness spread a torrent of vice over the land. This Oriental queen, shameless as the goddess Astarte, was stern and strong as Bel himself; her fierce, masculine nature knew no thought of pity, no softening hours; her rage blazed up into those fearful vows, by which the Shemitic leaders have become so terrible. From this woman, wild, gaudy, luxurious, fearless, fierce and conscience-seared, all the Clytemnestras, Bloody Marys, Lady Macbeths, and Cleopatras, of history have caught their tone.

Almost the first act of Jezebel in Samaria was to remodel the religion of the state. The more morally depraved an idolater is, whether that idolater is a South Sea Islander, a Hindoo, a Romanist, or a Mammon worshipper, the more zealous does he become in his idolatry, because thus he best can hew and hammer every tracery of God out of his soul. Professor Shedd, speaking of pagans, says, "The contrast between the Divine purity, and the sinfulness that was wrought in their heart and will, rendered this constitutional, inborn idea of God a very painful one."

Immediately after the arrival of Jezebel, Ahab built in Samaria a temple to Baal, after the fashion of the one in Tyre, where his father-in-law was priest. Here Baal was worshipped with all the ceremonies of those gross conceptions which had struggled forth from the perverted original idea of God. Besides this temple of Baal, Ahab "made a grove;" that is, an oracular grove to Astarte, where her image was set up.

So infatuated was the queen with her idolatry, and so imbued

with the Phœnician ideas of splendor in worship, that she entertained at her own table as part of her household, four hundred and fifty priests of Baal and four hundred of Ashtaroth.

"With these came they, who from the bordering flood
Of old Euphrates to the brook that parts
Egypt from Syrian ground, had general names
Of Baälim and Ashtaroth.
For those the race of Israel oft forsook
Their Living Strength, and unfrequented left
His righteous altar, bowing lowly down
To bestial gods.
With these, in troop
Came Ashtaroth, whom the Phœnicians call'd
Astarte, queen of Heaven, with crescent horns;
To whose bright image, nightly by the moon,
Sidonian virgins paid their vows and songs."

For these idolatries, the historian thus sums up the ways of Ahab: "And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel, the daughter of Eth-baal, king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him."

"And Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him."

"But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up."

Three children of Ahab and Jezebel are mentioned in Scripture; Ahaziah, Jehoram, and Athaliah. Children, who were weak as their father, cruel and wicked as their mother.

While Samaria was the seat of Government and the headquarters of idolatry, Ahab's favorite residence was Jezreel. Here the royal family made their abode; here the three unhappy children of godless parents passed their early and only peaceful years.

Ahab had a taste for splendid architecture, and though he

built several cities, palaces and temples, he exhibited his proclivities principally in Jezreel. This beautiful city stood in the plain of Esdraelon; and, as palace, tower, park, seraglio, and pleasure-garden rose to ornament it, it became the Versailles of Israel.

One man, one character alone, made the reign of Ahab noteworthy. But for this solitary name, the reign and doings of Ahab and Jezebel would have been written most probably in a single sentence. When the land was overspread with the abominations of Phœnician worship, a man hated by Ahab and Jezebel above all others appeared upon the scene—the Prophet Elijah. He denounced a famine as the punishment of sins against the Lord of earth and heaven, and for three years and six months neither rain nor dew fell from the pitiless sky. Josephus tells us that this famine spread far beyond the confines of Israel. The Bible story refers to it as impoverishing Zidon, where, in Sarepta, Elijah took refuge. Menander also mentions a terrible drought during the reign of Eth-baal. Perchance wherever Baal and Astarte were worshipped this dearth prevailed.

Three years of poverty and suffering broke the rebellious spirits of the children of Israel; their new gods were impotent, they remembered Him who had threatened famine as the penalty of departure from him. The king also began to tremble; he knew the holy worship that prevailed in Judah; he had heard the traditions of the people Israel; his kingdom was sown with monuments of the power and glory of the Eternal. Being a rational intelligence, unable to unmake himself, "he could not unmould his immortal essence, and eradicate all his moral ideas." He feared the One God, and he feared his Prophet. Therefore, when, mysteriously as he had appeared and disappeared, Elijah came again, Ahab, at his command, and at the glad promise of rain, gathered together the priests of Baal and Astarte, to contend with the Lord

on Carmel. In his call, Elijah mentions eight hundred and fifty false prophets; again he appeals to Israel that he stands alone against four hundred and fifty.

There were hundreds of thousands in the cities and tribes of Judah; among them all were only seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal.

Ahab collected priests and people for a grand trial of strength between God and Baal. The nation looked on to see fair play, caring very little who was victor. They feared Elijah because they had felt the weight of his prophecy; they have forsaken Jehovah, and Baal has deceived them; with true Eastern indifference they are ready to shout for the strongest, without a care which that may be.

Meantime, Ahab, rejoicing in hope of rain, and in the prospective safety of his mules and horses, established for himself a pavilion, and got ready for a feast with a few chosen friends. He was an easy-going man; he dared not kill Elijah, though he hated him; the eight hundred and fifty prophets were more expensive and less profitable than horses or architecture; let Jezebel look after her favorite worship; if Baal went now into ignominious obscurity, the golden calf at Dan was left to Ahab still.

Meantime, Jezebel, sixteen miles off, in the seraglio in Jezreel, is unconscious of the danger of her prophets. Perhaps she may be marking, with ambitious pride, the child Athaliah, and already forecasting a royal alliance for her.

The dread day wears to evening. Baal's sacrifice is unconsumed. The sun god has sent no kindling ray upon his altar, but, leaping from heaven, celestial fire has devoured on Jehovah's shrine, sacrifice, wood, stones, and water in the trench, and the admiring people have sent up a great shout, "The Lord, he is God!"

It is the death-knell of Baal's prophets. Ahab is feasting,

drinking and singing, careless of their fate; Jezebel is painting her face and tiring her head in Jezreel. The excited people hem them in like a wall of fire, and strong arms deal death, until Kishon runs red with blood, and, as in Deborah's time, the enemies of the Lord are swept away by "that mighty river, the river of Kishon."

Night was falling when Ahab reached home: he had bad news to tell, and might as well be done with it. He went to his wife's apartment; perhaps she sat before a mirror, adorning herself with jewels which were to snare somebody's soul. He told her the prophets were slain. It was Elijah's work; he, Ahab, had had nothing to do with it; no, he was feasting in the joy of his heart for coming rain, and even now the sound of the rushing wind, the swirling of the rain against the casement, and the thought that the heaven was black with water-freighted clouds, drove from him the agonies and despair and death-shrieks of the prophets of his gods.

Jezebel thought of her priests rather than of the end of the famine. She turned in a fury from Ahab, and summoned a fleet messenger. She took one of the terrific oaths scattered through history: "So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them [the prophets] by to-morrow about this time." This was her message to Elijah, and we are simply left to wonder why she informed him of her intention, and why she did not commission the messenger to kill instead of threaten her enemy.

The next revelation of Jezebel's character which comes to us, is in the famous history of Naboth's vineyard. Here the weakness of the king, and the wickedness of his wife, are especially apparent. Denied the vineyard which he covets, Ahab throws himself on his couch, and refuses to eat. News of this unwonted dejection goes to Jezebel, and forthwith she marches to his apart-

ment and demands the reason. As he unfolds it, the proud Tyrian listens with unmitigated scorn. She looks on Ahab as a weak boy, idly fretting for an advantage which he should boldly grasp.

With lofty irony she asks him, "Dost thou now govern the kingdom of Israel?" Her idea of government is, that it is for the benefit of rulers and not of the ruled. She believes in no limitations of power: kingcraft to her means despotism over body and soul. "Arise; eat thy bread, and let thy heart be merry: I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth."

Here we see what is often remarked, that while a bad man may find some bounds to his wickedness, a thoroughly bad woman dares everything, and will scale the very heights of heaven to compass her designs, like "Moloch, sceptred king,"—

> "No, let us rather choose,
> Arm'd with Hell flames and fury, all at once,
> O'er Heaven's high towers to force resistless way."

Jezebel broke every commandment of the moral law, commandments not written on the sapphire tables alone, but on the fleshly tablets of the heart, just as remorselessly as she broke off the scarlet clusters of pomegranate flowers to deck the flowing masses of her hair.

In this matter of Naboth, she shows her unscrupulousness. She wants a vineyard, and the easiest way to get it is to murder the owner. She will kill poor Naboth that Ahab's appetite may return before he is hungry. Her power in the state is shown in the forged letters and the possession of the king's signet-ring. Her craft is seen in making use of Jewish law, a law which she despises, to obtain her end. She hates God, and would slay his servant, one of those sacred seven thousand holy souls doubtless; and she does it under pretence of honoring God. Divided by ages

and by continents, this Jezebel must have been twin-soul to Hamlet's mother.

Now, when the evil deed is done, and word has come to Jezebel that Naboth is dead, and his lands are forfeited, without one thought of remorse, the queen goes to Ahab elate, saying, "Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give thee for money"—(alas! poor Naboth, this was all thy crime)—"for Naboth is not alive, but dead."

Ahab, however, is just as bad as his wife. Too weak to execute, too dull to plan, he yet takes advantage of all, and with alacrity rejoices in the spoils of sin. Ahab's joy was suddenly turned to terror, for, as he walked exulting in the vineyard of Naboth, Elijah, with his hairy garment and leathern girdle, appeared before him. The guilty king started back in mortal terror —this prophet came and went like some angry phantom. Ahab gasped: "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?"

"I have found thee!" cried Elijah. "Him that dieth of Ahab in the city, the dogs shall eat; him that dieth in the field, the fowls of the air shall eat!"

No sooner was the curse pronounced, than Ahab humbled himself; "he rent his clothes, and put sackcloth on his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly."

Then the Lord spoke again to Elijah. "Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? Because he humbleth himself I will not bring the evil in his days."

This shows us that our merciful Father regards the prayers and the repentance of wicked men; and though their repentance is not unto life, he removes from them judgments and saves them out of trouble when they call on him.

From the slaughter of the wicked prophets at Kishon, the worship introduced by Jezebel had not recovered strength: the presence of Elijah and his school of prophets, and the friendly inter-

course that was resumed with Judah, did much to check the spread of gross forms of idolatry.

During Ahab's reign, Ben-hadad, king of Damascus, made two campaigns against Israel, and in each was defeated with great loss. Three years after his last victory, Ahab and Jehoshaphat, the godly king of Judah, entered into an alliance, and Jehoshaphat went in state to Samaria to make a visit. Here he saw his future daughter-in-law, the curse of Judah, the princess Athaliah, probably the youngest of Ahab's children; a woman, in boldness and wickedness, exactly like her infamous mother.

Jehoshaphat had a young son, Joram. This prince had already been led astray by the worship of Baal, still practised in groves and high places by many of the people. This Joram was probably already married, and had a daughter, Jehosheba, who was afterwards united to the High Priest of the Temple. Jehoshaphat had been prospered beyond any of his predecessors since the days of Solomon; his fear rested on all the nations about. Philistines and Arabians brought him tribute; his army was well-equipped, every soldier was "a man of valour." "He had riches and honor in abundance." This made him a most desirable ally, and when he went to Samaria, Ahab and Jezebel received him with every mark of affection. They feasted Jehoshaphat and his followers, killing "sheep and oxen in abundance," and consulted him on all affairs of state. Jehoshaphat, in turn, was very cordial; he most likely informed Ahab of his plans for the future; how he should richly endow his six younger sons, and establish each in a fenced city, while the kingdom should be the portion of Joram.

All these plans were repeated in the apartments of the queen Jezebel, in the ears of young Athaliah; her daring mother sketched for her a royal future. To be sure the way to it lay through seas of blood, but when did the house of Ahab shrink from that?

As Queen Catherine de Medicis planned, in secret conclave, the

slaughter of the Huguenots, years before it took place; so did Jezebel suggest those cold-blooded murders which should well nigh exterminate the royal family of Judah.

Meanwhile the friendship of kings was cemented by marriage between their children. Jehoshaphat was to go to war with Ahab against Benhadad, and Joram was to come to Samaria for his bride Athaliah.

Very likely the wedding was among the festivities of Jehoshaphat's greatly prolonged visit; while the hum of warlike preparations mingled with the songs and revelries of the marriage guests.

Joram and Athaliah going to Jerusalem, assumed royal state. Joram was, perhaps, regent during his father's absence, and for aught Athaliah knew, her gracious father-in-law might be killed in battle. The plan of the exchange of armour between Ahab and his ally, savors of the craft of Jezebel.

The war ended in disaster. As the fatal day closed in, Israel was seen scattered like sheep without a shepherd, flying here and there in panic. Judah had heard the proclamation: "Every man to his own country, and every man to his own house," and gladly were they going homeward. Ahab, wounded unto death, had stayed himself up in his chariot with grim resolution, while from between the treacherous joints in his borrowed armor the blood ran down into the floor of the chariot—an ominous pool.

"Turn thine hand," faltered the dying king, and the chariot driver turned toward Samaria. The victorious Syrians moved before the king's failing sight, like the clouds in the sunset sky—strange, airy forms; faintly to his dull ears came the trumpet notes, sounding retreat; far off over the hills went the hosts of Judah, and he saw them dimly as trees walking. Long gone scenes were before him;—jocund youth; his marriage day; the priests of Baal and Astarte, with their odious rites; the weird

figure of Elijah foretelling doom; the stern fierce face of his Phœnician queen; his children, in their baby sweetness, and in their reckless, cruel youth. There would be no one to weep for him. His strength grows less, the chill of death is on him, his hand relaxes its grasp on the chariot. The sun is going down, and shoots a last level ray between the sheltering hills, and across the oval plain, in the midst of which rises the city, the nation's watch tower. With a groan the king sinks down dead in his bloody chariot, and on pressed the driver up the steep ascent, and calling the servants of his lord, they carry in dead Ahab, and lay him at the feet of Jezebel.

While they buried Ahab, and proclaimed Ahaziah, Jehoshaphat had reached his own kingdom, and was met by the prophet Jehu, with the close question: "Shouldst thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord?"

This is a question which Christians should lay to heart. He who loves the Lord should never ally himself in any manner with the foes of his Master.

The seer's question referred to the late marriage as well as to the battle. The question stirred up the king to renewed zeal for his God; but while he did much for the conversion of the nation, he could do nothing for Joram and Athaliah; for already, as her mother before her, Athaliah had gained unbounded influence over her husband, and was, following still the maternal example, "his counsellor to do wickedly."

Meantime Jezebel, as queen-mother, had lost none of her prestige. Her weak-minded son yielded even more completely to her dominion than his father had done. He was a worshipper of his mother's gods; base, cowardly, superstitious.

Only two years of reign were allowed him; having fallen through a lattice, he became very ill, and in his extremity finding his own gods did not restore him, he sent to ask aid of Baalzebub,

god of Ekron. Like his father, he was met by a prophecy of evil from Elijah, the ordained opponent of his house, and in a few days died, leaving the kingdom to his brother, so that Jezebel was still queen-mother, "first lady of the kingdom."

Jezebel maintained close and dangerous intercourse with her daughter Athaliah; she had exulted in the birth of Athaliah's son, glad that descendant of her own should lord it over Judah.

The kingdoms of Judah and Israel were now cursed by the sway of Jezebel and Athaliah, ruling through the yielding son and husband. The worship of God languished; idolatry lifted its head; famines and pestilences walked abroad; wars and rebellions were on every hand; poverty, anxiety, secret hate, and open vice, made either kingdom a gate of Gehenna.

At this time Jehu, the avenger upon the house of Ahab, was anointed king. Jezebel had now been a widow, reigning through her sons for fourteen years. Her son Joram being wounded in battle by the king of Syria, had gone to his mother, at beautiful Jezreel, to be healed. Ahaziah, the son of Athaliah, went down to Jezreel to visit his wounded uncle, and his royal grandmother. He left Athaliah, his mother, as queen-regent at Jerusalem; for within the year Joram, her husband, had died of a horrible disease, sent as a curse upon him by the Lord. After two years of sore sufferings, the unhappy king died, and was denied a royal burial. He was hastily entombed near Jerusalem, but not among his kingly ancestors, and Athaliah found herself one step nearer the throne. She sought to be absolute monarch in name as well as in power. When her son Ahaziah left her, to go on a visit to his like-minded relations, Athaliah, accorded regal honors, and holding the helm of state, found how good a thing it is to reign! She was served not by love, but by fear; the eyes of her subjects glared hate upon her. They saw her white hands ever red with blood. Who but Athaliah had counselled the cruel murder of

those six princely sons of Jehoshaphat, and their friends among the princes of Judah?

For this hate, so long as she could curb it with a strong hand, Athaliah cared not; she held levees, and sat in judgment, and betimes walked through the places, and so walking heard her grandchildren shouting at their play. They were young children all, but their baby laughter woke no tender womanly feelings in Athaliah's bosom; she hated them every one, because out of them should come a king for Judah, and then some stranger would fill her place, as queen-mother.

At Jezreel, Joram, son of Jezebel, was recovering, and was entertaining right royally his guest and nephew, when Jehu, driving furiously, with his army at his back, was spied, by the watchman on the tower of Jezreel, sweeping, like a war cloud, across the plain.

Surmising evil, Joram sent forth two messengers to demand the cause of Jehu's coming; each went over to the enemy. The two kings of Israel and Judah then each made ready his chariot, and with a small retinue went out to overawe the rebel captain.

Face to face were they placed, Joram and Jehu, each standing in his chariot.

"Is it peace, Jehu?" falters the monarch, made a catiff by the burden of his crimes.

"What peace," thunders Jehu, "so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many?"

At these bold words Ahaziah and Joram turned to fly. They were in the bloom-lined way along the royal gardens of Jezreel, the fatal plot of ground for which Jezebel had murdered Naboth.

Jehu, the mighty captain, drawing his bow with his full strength, shot an arrow at Joram, which entering between his shoulders went out through his heart. The king fell dead, and his chariot stopped.

"Bidkar," said Jehu to his chariot driver, "take him up and cast him into the portion of Naboth, the Jezreelite; for remember how that when thou and I rode together after Ahab, his father, the Lord laid this burden on him."

But Jehu could not forget that the accursed blood of Jezebel ran in the veins of Ahaziah, of Judah; therefore, he pursued him flying, and dealt him his death blow at Gur. His servants carried him to Megiddo, and there he died.

Passing through the country to establish himself in his new kingdom, Jehu entered Jezreel.

This was one of the chief places of the kingdom; here Ahab had built his ivory palace, and here Jezebel maintained the temple of Astarte. The palace was on the eastern side of the city, and the tower of the seraglio was at the gate of entrance.

Jezebel knew that as queen-mother, the most eminent personage in the land, she was the especial mark for the vengeance of Jehu; she resolved to brave danger, and to make a last effort to maintain her power. If she must now die, she would die royally; she would face her destroyer as became a Tyrian queen.

Still there was for her one last hope; to establish himself more firmly, Jehu, according to eastern usage, might take her for his wife, especially if she could win his admiration. Jezebel was beneath or above the refinement of hesitating to marry the murderer of her son!

She had but little expectation of this however, and with iron resolution decked herself to meet a probable death. She painted her eye-lids with antimony; put false bloom upon her pallid cheeks; braided her dark locks as in her younger days of pride, and crowned herself with a regal diadem; on neck and arms and hands, she put jewels of the costliest work of Tyre; her robes were of blue and purple, from far-off isles; the embroidered linen of Egypt, the woven gold of Damascus; in all her glory, the

ancient princess stood the rival of her own dauntless, brilliant and most wicked youth.

Like Cleopatra, she would cry,—

> "Give me my robe; put on my crown; I have
> Immortal longings in me—
> I am fire and air, my other elements
> I give to baser life."

Jezebel was not unversed in the history of her adopted land. She knew how to taunt, and she called to mind the story of Zimri, who usurped the throne, and reigned but seven days.

As the chariot of Jehu rolled in at the city gate, followed by a great train of friends, the crowned and painted "descendant of so many kings" leaned from the window of the seraglio tower and called to him: "Had Zimri peace, who slew his master?"

Behind her at the window gathered her eunuchs, and court ladies. Jehu looked up, undazzled by the brilliant decorations of the idolatress whom his soul loathed, and cried, "Who is on my side. Who?"

Several eunuchs behind Jezebel made signs to him.

"Throw her down," said Jehu, bluntly. And they flung the queen from the tower. She fell directly before the foaming and champing horses of Jehu's chariot; her blood flying up over the wall, and over the gaily caparisoned steeds, as they trampled her under feet, and the heavy wheels rolled over her, crushing costly robes, and jewels, shapely limbs and face of mocking beauty, into an indistinguishable mass.

When Jehu had feasted, he remembered his last victim. He called his servants, saying: "Go see now this cursed woman and bury her, for she is a king's daughter."

But Jezebel was to have no burial. "Dogs shall eat Jezebel in the portion of Jezreel," had been the word of Elijah, and now it was fulfilled; for while Jehu ate and drank in the ivory house,

the dogs of Samaria devoured the flesh and even the bones of Jezebel, daughter of Eth-baal, king of Tyre.

Athaliah, in her palace at Jerusalem, received the tidings of the death of her mother, son, and brother, at the hands of Jehu. The news was as a war cry to her. She was athirst for blood; mad for power.

Between her and the crown were only the lives of some half dozen or so of little children, a paltry consideration to Jezebel's daughter.

She has two enemies in the land that she knows, the holy high priest, Jehoiada, and Jehosheba, his wife, Athaliah's step-daughter. Piety in Judah is now at a discount; Athaliah has managed to trample out nearly every vestige of goodness or patriotism; she has been afraid to kill the high priest; she has a superstitious dread of him and of his God, so she lets him alone in his house, while she calls guards as ferocious as herself, and leads them into the harem nurseries to slaughter the innocents. Poor babes, they are cursed for the drops of her blood in their veins; for the life tide of Jezebel, princess of Tyre!

We all know how Jehosheba was before the queen, hiding and saving one little year old babe, her pretty nephew, whose young mother was Zibiah, a girl from Beersheba.

Athaliah has six years of triumph: six years of royalty according to all that her heart desires; pomp, luxury, debauchery, idolatry. She has had Jezebel for her pattern and teacher, and proves an apt scholar.

Six years she riots, and is fiercely glad, while all around her the smothered hate of her subjects rages like fires in a volcano, until the day of eruption—the day for the lava tide of wrath and reprisals is come.

When that day came, a great, glad shout, and a wild clash of music rent the air: a new sound in the miserable city. Another

cry, the acclaim of a new monarch! Out of her palace, across the court, rushed Athaliah, in her bedizened robes, in a towering rage, ready to proclaim a hundred deaths, and fill the city with rebel blood. The people stand about the Temple, they give her way; she enters the outer court, and is face to face with that calm seven year old boy, who stands by a pillar with the crown of Judah on his brows.

Athaliah is her mother's daughter; she is Tyrian in face and heart. The boy before her is a Jew; Jehoshaphat and Zibiah are copied in his features, where years after shall crop out a line or two of Jezebel.

"Treason! Treason!" cries Athaliah, rending her gold-sprinkled garments. There has been a terrible treason years ago. There is a long account of unavenged murders, brothers-in-law and grandchildren, to be settled. They that use the sword must perish by the sword. Therefore, they drag her forth into the common way and dispatch her, and because she is of the blood of Ahab and Jezebel, she may have no burial.

The earth is rid at last of Jezebel and her daughter. These are women without religion. Here are samples of womanhood set free of God's laws and worship. For a woman to cut herself loose from God is not for her to lose power; no, but it is for her to have and to wield power like a devil. Eternal law places woman by man's side. Is she godly, then she helps him on toward Heaven; is she godless, lo, she is "his counsellor to do wickedly."

Says a pleasant writer in a recent pamphlet: "I venture to assert then that woman's social inferiority in the past has been, to a great extent, a legitimate thing. To all appearance, history would have been impossible without it, just as it would without an epoch of war and slavery. It is simply a matter of social progress—a part of the succession of civilizations. The past has been

inevitably a period of ignorance, of engrossing physical necessities, and of brute force—not of freedom, philanthropy and culture."

This is the statement of a fact. We can go back of the fact for its reason. Why has an era of social bondage and of war been necessary? Why has the past been an epoch of ignorance and brute force? Because humanity cut itself loose from God; because of irreligion; because the impiety of the Cainitic and Hamitic races rose up like a flood, and carried away purity and justice and godliness, almost wholly from the earth. Where impiety has abounded, woman has been debased, has been made a bond-slave, has been, too often, denied a soul.

But, say some, this was the fact even in the Shemitic line, in the Hebrew nation; what Saxon woman now would wish to exchange her status for that of the women of Palestine two thousand years ago? Now we think that under the Theocracy the position of woman was very much more one of social and intellectual equality than is generally conceded. Sarah, "my princess," and Rebecca her daughter-in-law, seem to have had and used as many rights and privileges as any one would desire.

Certain agitators of the present day would fancy they had made a vast stride forward, if they could lift a woman into the Presidential chair of the United States; but, after all, they would be no farther on in social progress than the year thirteen hundred and twenty before Christ, when Deborah judged Israel. "Ruth and Naomi could not read!" cries Sylvain Maréchal. We have the same, no less and no more, reason for asserting that Boaz could not read. The accomplishment was neither so needful nor so universal in those days.

Mr. Gladstone, speaking on the Marriage Amendment Act, says, "When the Gospel came into the world, woman was elevated to an equality with her stronger companion." This is the

spirit of the Gospel, but while the spirit of the Gospel may be the *theory*, it is not always the *practice* of the day. Let the Gospel be in the heart as well as in the head, let Gospel intention mould the letter and practice of law as well as sentimental discussion, and there will need be no more outcry about disabilities.

Says Jean Paul: "Woman, both before and after being a mother, is a human being, and neither the maternal nor conjugal relation can supersede the human responsibility, but must become its means and instrument," and the first grand and chief demand in virtue of this *human responsibility*, is godliness. A woman owes it to herself, to her sex, to the age in which she lives, to be religious. In proportion as she is godly, she does her part toward solving that knotty problem of the day, "What is woman's position, and what her work?"

In godless days and nations, where one woman towers high in power, as did Semiramis, Jezebel, and Athaliah, her sisters lie in abject misery and shame. This powerful and godless woman does nothing to lift others up; her elevation is not the elevation of her sex, of the human race, scarcely even of her own family, for godlessness is selfish, and neither works nor hopes beyond its own immediate advantage.

In a godless age, a woman may be seen, like one in France, dragged about the streets in a chariot and worshipped as a goddess, as a living impersonation of "Reason," so-called. But while this is being done, before her eyes, one portion of her sisters are led to the guillotine, and another, amid shame and slaughter in the streets, are turned to fiends.

People prate to some extent about women's unsexing themselves. Nothing so thoroughly unsexes a woman, so eradicates her finest qualities, and destroys her claim to being respected, as ungodliness.

When the Countess of Richmond and Lady Bartlett were Jus-

tices of the Peace; when Mistress Rowse sat on the bench at assizes and quarter sessions *gladio cincta*, when Countess Pembroke was hereditary Sheriff, and Christina was a queen, woman was not so unsexed as by those against whom Isaiah cried, and has kept on crying until to-day, "The daughters of Zion who are haughty, and walk with stretched-forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go;" women devoted to "the bravery of tinkling ornaments,—chains, bracelets and mufflers, bonnets and ornaments, headbands, tablets and earrings; changeable suits of apparel, mantles, wimples, and crisping pins." Because of women like these, Israel was well-nigh destroyed; while the prophecy of Huldah moved the people and their king to a new covenant with the Lord.

"Success silences." "There is nothing so successful as success." Those women who have conquered prejudice, who have taken and have held a noble place in the world, who have truly elevated womanhood, who have helped to bring woman back to that moral, spiritual equality which God gave her in the beginning, have been godly women. It is true, there have been very great and shining lights in art, science, literature and civil government, among women who had genius without religion; but their work was for themselves, their renown was their own; they neither taught nor helped other women to be worthy of their creation.

This broad work has been left for godly women, has been often pursued in such silence, that all we see of it is its result, as we can trace some hidden stream by the lush verdure and beauty of the meadow through which it flows.

XVII.

JONAH,

THE STUMBLING SAINT.

AMONG those whom the Prince of Dreamers saw going on a pilgrimage, were Mr. Feeble Mind, and Mr. Ready to Halt, who limped along in company. Good people in the church have frequently found themselves unable to compassionate their often-failing brothers; but the patience of the Lord is great, and he bears with those whom men would soon cast out; even sometimes choosing them to do for him an especial task. The Lord does not always work with strong, bright, well-tempered instruments.

One of these timid, querulous, selfish brethren, was sent on an important errand to Nineveh, and his name and character are preserved for us in Scripture, not only because he is one of a numerous class, but because in his history we have illustrated the singular benevolence of God's dealings with men.

Children seize upon the story of Jonah, as a fragment of a legalized fairy land; he seems like a figure which has stepped out of the Arabian Nights, with the added glory of having been a real personage, and one whom they may read and speculate about as much at they choose. To children of an older growth, like himself, Jonah has furnished a curious study in mental philosophy, his character is so full of contradictions; he is one moment absurd, selfish, callous to human suffering, dastardly; and anon is honest,

fearless, and generous. However, on the whole, Jonah is a man doomed to make a very unpleasant impression upon the world at large; and will never become a hero, or a popular idol.

The history of Jonah is so unique, contains so many startling revelations, and is so different from the ordinary progress of human events, that many critics, who have set themselves up as censors over God's word, have been inclined to reject the whole or a large part of the story as fable. Many of the German critics call the supposed improbabilities of this narrative mere fictitious or fanciful ornaments, as if God, in his Book, pandered to a depraved human taste for the extravagant and impossible: others claim that the unparalleled incidents related are simply allegorical, or parabolical in origin and design.

We are prohibited any of these conclusions by the fact that Scripture never beguiles its readers by offering a fable in the guise of an absolute historical truth: and, moreover, by the express words of our Saviour, who confirmed the most wonderful part of the Prophet's experiences, and made them typical of himself. Of this, Wordsworth says admirably: "Here is an observable instance of the uses of the Gospel in confirming the Old Testament. By this specimen of Divine exposition, our Lord suggests the belief that whatever we may now find in the Old Testament difficult to be understood, will one day be explained, and perhaps seen to be prophetic and typical of the great mysteries of the gospel: and that, in the meantime, it is an exercise of our faith, and a trial of our humility,—a Divinely-appointed instrument of our moral probation. And it is *because* they are strange and marvellous, that such histories as those of Jonah and Balaam are the best tests of our strength of faith."

Jonah was probably of the earlier prophets. He lived after the reign of Jehu, and prophesied before or during the reign of Jeroboam the second; his date is most likely about eight hundred

and sixty before Christ. He was some three-quarters of a century later than Homer and Hesiod, and perhaps a cotemporary of Dido, the foundress and queen of Carthage.

Jonah was the son of Amittai, and his birth-place was Gathepher, a town of Zebulon. The Territory of Zebulon bordered on beautiful Lake Gennesaret, and Jonah's early years were spent in scenes afterward made sacred by the presence of the Son of Man, as he lived in Nazareth, Capernaum, Cana and Nain.

The first prophetic mission of Jonah was congenial to one who was by nature a time-server, and in whose bosom very much of the old leaven of unrighteousness strove with in-dwelling grace. The mission, moreover, would have been most pleasing to any patriotic and benevolent soul, for he was to bear to Jeroboam Second the word that God saw the loss and bitter affliction of Israel, and that the people had no helper; therefore, lest the name of Israel be blotted out, the Lord would return to them, and save them by the hand of their king. Agreeably to this prophecy, the king was enabled to reconquer the ancient territory of the nation, "from the entering in of Hamath to the sea of the plain."

The great work of Jonah's life, however, was one against which he rebelled with all his strength. He was no fiery, zealous Elijah, his whole soul kindled into courage by his love for his God. He was no patient, earnest, unflinching Jeremiah, who would speak his message, come what might. He was only Jonah, who one hour recognized the power and greatness of his God, and the next believed that he could outwit him, or get beyond the reach of his arm; he was only Jonah, who felt as if his own pitiful life were worth the lives of a hundred thousand of his fellow men; only Jonah, who regarded his own credit as a prophet beyond the safety of souls; only Jonah, whose weak vision full often could reach no further than the narrowing horizon of this earthly life.

His errand was to Nineveh, "the bloody city," whose mer-

chants were "multiplied above the stars of heaven," whose crowned ones were like the innumerable hosts of locusts, and whose armed men were like grasshoppers for numberless myriads.

Nineveh, like Babylon, had been founded by Nimrod. That mighty hunter, having established one city on the banks of the Euphrates, went north some three hundred miles, and built Nineveh on the Tigris. This city afterwards became the great rival of Babylon in wealth and splendor. As Babylon was the enemy and the victor over Judah, Nineveh was the arrogant master of Israel.

Like Babylon, Nineveh was as notorious for wickedness as for strength; it matured earlier in power and in iniquity, accomplished its race, and sank into so profound and starless a night, that for twenty-five hundred years no eye of man rested on its buried idols and palaces, and no stranger's foot disturbed the stillness of those paved ways, where chariots once raged in the streets, where valiant men walked in scarlet, where had sounded, day after day, "the noise of the whip, and the noise of the rattling of wheels, and of prancing horses, and of jumping chariots."

Among its sovereigns Nineveh numbered Sargon the cruel, Shalmaneser the warlike, Sennacherib, and Sardanapalus the magnificent.

According to the computation of Bonomi, the city was but nine square miles in area less than Babylon, and was almost twice as great in extent as London. Layard supposes it to have been an oblong, thirty-four miles in its greatest diameter. Its ruins now comprehend parks, temples, fortified enclosures, and stupendous palaces, each of which was probably capable within itself of sustaining a siege. The population of Nineveh, in Jonah's day, may be estimated by the fact that there were "more than sixty thousand infants there, unable to distinguish between their right hand and their left."

The wickedness of the "great city" had now come up before God, and Jonah was commissioned to go and "cry against it."

On receiving this command, instead of preparing himself to obey, Jonah began to consider what to do. He who hesitates is lost. When we begin to bring up our own views and preferences against the performance of plain duty, we are on dangerous ground indeed.

Jonah had but one fault to find with his Divine Master, and that was, that the Lord is "gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth of the evil." He had heard this character of God from the days of Moses; he had seen it exemplified in past history and in his own day, and without pausing to consider that to these very qualities of Omnipotence he owed his life and whatever hopes he might have of the future, he began to believe them very much in the way of his own renown as a prophet.

The intense selfishness of Jonah is something wonderful to behold, even among selfish humanity. His pride had been greatly gratified by the fulfilment of his prophecy concerning the conquests and success of king Jeroboam Second. He now reasoned concerning Nineveh, first that at his prediction the city would be greatly alarmed; next, that fear would bring repentance, then that repentance would obtain mercy from a gracious God, and that consequently Nineveh would be saved in spite of his prophecy.

This, one would suppose, a consummation devoutly to be hoped for; but not so. To go and prophesy destruction upon the invincible city; to wait and behold the ruin; to return home while every ear was tingling, and every heart was quailing at the tremendous judgment announced by his mouth, would be a mission worthy of Jonah's powers; but to be the means of the repentance of Nineveh, and a lengthening out of the probation of that city;

to be the instrument of mercy rather than of wrath, was a degradation in Jonah's eyes. Go to Nineveh and stultify his own predictions? Not he. He did not object to travelling, and he meant to get himself out of reach of his Master as soon as possible; one thing was certain, he would not go towards the Tigris.

In Jonah was very largely developed that characteristic of the Jewish nation—exclusiveness. The Jew claimed salvation as his right; the favor of God was one of his hereditaments. He considered it beneath the dignity of Almighty God to be interested in any creature save an Israelite. The farther the nation fell from its high estate, the more widely it departed from God, the more paramount became its contemptuous hate for other nationalities. Abraham, the father of whom they boasted, was a shining example of religious brotherhood; he had Abimelech and Ephron and Melchizedek for his friends; his descendants became narrower in their views as they became less spiritual in their experiences. Never was there a narrower-minded saint than Jonah; he preferred death rather than being the instrument of salvation to Nineveh. He would, if possible, have forbade the sun to light or rain to refresh a Gentile, and he meant to do his part to keep the sun of Divine truth and the reviving of Divine grace from the aliens from Jacob. Just here he was to learn his lesson, God's *fatherhood*, his creating and providing interest in all the works of his hands. It was a lesson that the apostles and Paul had also to learn. God showed Jonah that he nourished not only the Rose of Sharon and the cedar of Lebanon, but the wild gourd of Assyrian plains.

Far off, in the Spanish peninsula, was a city called Tarshish; thither the Phœnicians sent their trading vessels. The son of Zebulon had heard strange tales of this land; it was an earthly paradise full of wonders; thither he would go; it was quite on the other side of the world from that fated city of Nineveh. The

port of departure for him would be Joppa, whence since Solomon's time vessels had gone out to trade along the Mediterranean coast.

He arose, therefore, and fled with haste through the western territory of Manasseh, across Ephraim, with its crowded villages, into the narrow seacoast country which the Philistines had held for years against all the forces of Israel; where, swarming in Gaza and Ekron and Gath, they worshipped Dagon, and whence they swept forth to ravage the land of Jacob. At the extreme northern limit of this territory, Solomon had built Joppa, when he was trading in company with Hiram, king of Tyre. Since then Joppa had been a busy port, and here Jonah, to his great delight, found a vessel about to sail so far away that it seemed to him that it was going even beyond the reach of Heaven. Alas for Jonah, if it could have been so!

The prophet does not seem to have lacked means; he paid his fare, was entertained on the vessel as an honored passenger; and as the ship spread its white wings to fly away as a dove, Jonah stood on the prow, seizing the blue distance with his eager eyes, and imagining that he was going out of the presence of the Lord.

When the armies of Damascus asserted that the God of Jewry reigned over the hill countries only, they were soon taught that he was equally strong in the valleys; and now Jonah was to find that his arm stretched out over the sea; that he "held the waters in his fist," and "taketh up the isles as a very little thing."

Before long a furious gale arose. "There was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken."

We have here a very vivid picture. The ship tosses on the waves at the mercy of a constantly increasing storm. The sailors and captain are at their wits' end: they cast out the cargo, because all that a man hath will he give for his life; and as the laboring, creaking vessel seems every instant likely to go down,

they address themselves to preparation for death, and each man calls upon his god.

Tyrians are there, who shriek to Astarte, fair Venus, offspring of the sea; Zidonian mariners, who cry out after Belus, king of men, and guardian of the day; there are Philistine estrays, who howl to Dagon, the fish-god; Egyptians, who remember great Isis; the sons of the isles and Iberians, who now despair of ever again seeing the pomegranate groves of lovely Spain.

Amid the babel of voices; amid adjurations to that strange pantheon man has preferred to his Maker, the ship-master suddenly perceived that one tongue was silent; one suppliant was absent, one God was unsought. He remembered that a Hebrew of noble aspect had taken passage on his ship; and he had heard that the God of the Hebrews possessed singular power, and was, in a very especial manner, an answerer of prayer.

Strange to say, this Hebrew was in the lower part of the ship, sound asleep amid the tumult of the elements, and the wild confusion of human tongues. A long journey and great mental distress had exhausted Jonah, and he slumbered profoundly; perhaps also the poor wretch, who had never before seen salt water, was sea-sick. If he were not, he richly deserved to be.

"What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not!"

Thus adjuring him, the ship-master brought him forward, and they found the crew and passengers prepared to cast lots—the ancient fashion of determining vexed questions.

The lot having fallen upon Jonah, the prophet was at last convinced of his error, and frankly told his history.

A great awe of the Lord and of his recreant prophet fell upon the listeners. But now the violence of the tempest increased; the waves leaped up as if to snatch a victim; the winds howled like unappeased demons.

"What shall we do to thee, that the sea may be calm?" asked the seamen.

For once Jonah plays the man. "Cast me forth to the sea. So shall the sea be calm unto you; for I know that for my sake this tempest is upon you."

The conduct of these heathen sailors is most admirable. The sea seems a nurse of noble qualities in human souls. The mariners "rowed hard to reach the land." They strove, but vainly; for, unconsciously, they were contending against God. Seeing the futility of their efforts, they prayed the Lord to forgive the deed they did, and as their last resort cast Jonah into the boiling waves.

The prophet yielded himself with firmness to his fate. When he sank under the foaming billows, lo the sea ceased from its raging, and all was calm and placid as a summer noon.

The waves fell; the winds were held in leash again; softly from the prow slipped the waters; light kissed the distant hills, and lay on the sparkling brine; and they were speeding on toward Tarshish, as if their course were aided by the compelling of invisible hands.

They looked over the hushed sea in amaze; the man they had cast forth did not once struggle, gasping to the surface; some god, they thought, had seized him, a desired victim, and carried him down to pearl and coral caves, where Tritons and Mermaids dwell.

They could have imagined nothing more wonderful than what really occurred, for "The Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah;" wherein he should be conscious for three days, and from which he should escape unharmed.

Over this part of the story, many men have proven themselves as great stumblers, as was Jonah at his very worst. Those reprobates, who think that the words of the Lord are to be received

like those of many men, *cum grano salis*, have made very great difficulties over the adventures of Jonah.

The fish does not necessarily mean a whale, (as the E. V. has it,) but any sea monster. Doctor Philip Schaff says: "We suppose it was a shark—the white shark—*Squalus carcharius*, also called *lamia*, which is found, to this day, in the Mediterranean, sometimes as long as sixty feet."

Heubner relates an instance of a sailor who, in an inauspicious hour, went down the yawning throat of one of these monsters, yet was preserved, and lived to tell the tale.

Heubner's account may be perfectly true, but we put infinitely more confidence in the story of the Prophet Jonah.

The prophet here becomes a type of One far greater than himself—even of the Son of Man.

It is very seldom that in flying from duty one reaches his loftiest honors; here the Lord shows us "that it is neither of him that runneth, nor of him that willeth, but of God that showeth mercy," that we arrive at any good. Jonah was for three days buried in the sea; Christ for the same time was inhumed in the earth. Jonah emerged from the depths to preach repentance; Christ rose from his grave to bring life and immortality to light in the Gospel.

Trouble sets those men praying who have in them any spark of the Divine life. The Lord acknowledges poor, selfish, stumbling Jonah as his servant, and now we see him in his calamity calling upon God. He found that the long-suffering and mercy of God were his only hope; he had thought them over-abundantly exercised to the Gentiles; he realizes at last that even prophets have sore need of the lovingkindness of the Lord.

Being cast safe upon the "beloved land," Jonah took leisure to recover himself; and yet made no motion to go to Nineveh.

Another time came the command: "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee."

Warned by past experience, Jonah went upon his errand, and, entering into the gate of the city, he cried aloud: "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!"

The word of the prophet came with power; conviction was carried to the hearts of all. The charioteers and warriors in the busy ways; the workmen plying their tasks; the shop men in the streets; the guests at their feasting; the courtiers in the palace; the king on his throne; even the beggars, who, in wan-eyed misery, paced the narrow lanes, believed the word, and were in terror at the coming overthrow.

The warning entered the palace, and the king came down from his throne, rent his robes of broidered Tyrian purple; cast aside his jewels, wrapped himself in sackcloth, and, like Job, sat in ashes.

This fast and repentance at Nineveh teach us how the knowledge of the Jews' religion, and the fear of Jehovah, had spread abroad; the Ninevites knew that the God of the Jews had threatened; their humiliation was in the Hebrew form; they did not sacrifice to their own idols, nor entreat their own divinities; the account of their season of confession is such as we might have had of Jerusalem or Jericho.

Here we see, as in many other places in Scripture, not only that the prayer of a righteous man availeth much, but that the kindness of God goes beyond his covenanted mercies, and accords those favors sought by the evil and impenitent. There is another important point to be considered, namely, that the ruin of Nineveh was only *delayed*. The sinner by an external reform, and by prayer for favor, may avert temporal judgments, or delay his imminent doom, but only by repentance unto life can he secure his final salvation, or prevent the horror of that extreme hour when he shall feel that all indeed is lost.

As God findeth no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but de-

sires exceedingly that the sinner may turn from his iniquities and live, those his ministers who proclaim his truth should be, and indeed generally are, like minded, and experience the greatest satisfaction when men "cry mightily unto God," and "turn every one from his evil way and from the violence that is in their hands."

Jonah was of a vastly different temper; his bitter spirit demanded the destruction of these aliens from Jacob; he gloated over the idea of the magnificent ruin that might come as unto Sodom; he valued the fulfilment of his own word above the lives of so many thousands, and above the glory of God. His prayer is the most amazing on record; probably never before had a man in set terms reproached his Creator for his most glorious attributes. Because he could not return to Zebulon covered with strange glory as the means of the fall of that proud capital, which defied kings, and which armies could not subdue, Jonah preferred and requested to die. The Lord knew that he was in a very poor frame of mind to leave this world, and was more merciful to him than his request. How calm the question to this turbulent, cruel, malicious, passion-tossed spirit: "Doest thou well to be angry?"

After this, Jonah fell into the most notable fit of sulks recorded in history. He went out of the east gate of the city, and seeking probably some eminence where he could view the mighty panorama of life in Nineveh, he built a booth, and sat down with a lingering hope that the blow threatened might fall; that his anger might outweigh the prayers of a repentant nation; and that he should have the supreme satisfaction of seeing his prophecy accomplished.

Never did man look on a sight more glorious than this which lay at the feet of Jonah—the imperial city of Assyria. Crowded palaces of enormous dimensions glowed in barbaric splendor, each seeming to rival its neighbor in sculptures and paintings of most vivid dyes. In courts and temples stood groups of

stone deities, where the eagle-headed Nisroch contended with the winged bull of Babylon and subdued it. There was the lofty temple of Nisroch, where afterwards Sennacherib was assassinated by his sons. Brick buildings were faced with alabaster; pillars fluted and carved stood thick as forest trees; carnelian, agate and marble of the finest polish united in the decorations of the houses; the luxurious people delighted to array themselves in costly fabrics of the richest hues; the remains of painting and sculpture show that blue, purple, scarlet, and embroidery were used for clothing; and that gold, silver and gems were lavishly displayed. The streets looked like some gorgeous masquerade; musicians with instruments inlaid with ebony and pearl gathered in the courts of the nobles; the markets were crowded with traders of every nation, while bands of soldiers constantly went and came; for these fierce Assyrians made their conquests by might and held them with a strong and cruel hand; fear, not love, was the ruling motive of the day.

He who framed the worlds, and fashioned each evanescent flower of grass; who keeps the stars moving orderly in their mighty circuits, and watches each little bird which having lived its tiny span drops lifeless to the earth, had glorious leisure still to teach his weakest servant a wonderful lesson. Jonah was such a creature of the senses, such an obtuse spirit that only an *object lesson* could reach him, and that God gave him.

While the prophet slept, a gourd with miraculous rapidity of growth burst the soil behind his booth, clambered over the frail structure, draped it with greenery, and when day broke, by its broad palmate leaves shut out the hot beams of a southern sun from the fainting prophet. Thus all through the hot tropic noon Jonah sat under the shadow of his wonderful tree with great delight. Night fell with its sudden darkness, and its dews, which the prophet fondly trusted would increase the luxuriance of his

gourd. But at the root of the fair vine lay a worm, which gnawed the stem, and fading as swiftly as it grew, in the morning, lo, only dry, dead stalks clung upon Jonah's booth, and were twisted and swept away by a "vehement east wind." This hot wind parched the prophet's veins; his flesh felt scorched with the fervent heat; the pitiless sun smote him; pain racked him. Below him in that hated city were cool retreats; were deep shadows filled with the sweet sounds of falling fountains; he had no shelter from wind and sun, no water to cool his lips; he fainted in the fierce blasts of midday, crying out that he would rather die than live.

"Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd?" asked the Lord. And with matchless audacity Jonah retorted: "I do well to be angry, even unto death."

Then the Lord took up his parable, a lesson to teach us patience and pity, and the value of human life and happiness. "Thou hast had pity on the gourd for which thou hast not labored, neither madest it grow; which came in a night and perished in a night. And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six score thousand persons which cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?"

All revelation does not contain a more wonderful picture of God's tender care, infinite consideration, and everlasting goodness to all that He has made.

At this point the story leaves Jonah as suddenly as it introduced him. One tradition tells us that he returned home, and was buried where he was born, at Gath-hepher; another account is that he died at Nineveh, and a mound called Nebi-Yunus, opposite the ruins of Mosul, is pointed out as his sepulchre. The words of our Saviour, and the phrase "the word of the Lord which he spake by the hand of his servant Jonah," tell us that this much-erring prophet was one of the children of the kingdom. The prophet's

prayer, in the second chapter of the book of Jonah, shows the deep repentance and humility of which he was capable; perhaps after his lesson at Nineveh he brought forth better fruits.

The story of the prophet may have given rise to the myth of Arion, who being cast by sailors into the sea, was at once received by a fish, who carried him to land, and he presented himself in the palace of the king; though with the usual poetic additions of mythology Arion owes his escape to his music. As Spenser says:

> "Arion with his harp unto him drew
> The ears and hearts of all that goodly crew;
> Even when as yet the dolphin which him bore,
> Through the Ægean seas from pirates' view,
> Stood still by him, astonished at his lore,
> And all the raging seas for joy forgot to roar."

XIX.

ISAIAH,

THE HERALD OF THE MORNING.

THE history of the world is the history of its religion. Religion is the supreme power of society; it is also the measure of its elevation or debasement. The chronicle of the religious idea is the chronicle of men on the earth. As man's soul is his chief part, the record of the development of his soul is the highest and most comprehensive history of the man. Jesus Christ is the grand centre of history; in him all lines of religious thought converge; from him every form of benevolence, of wisdom, of good, radiates. From Paradise to Bethlehem; from the sin of Eve to the maternity of Mary, the world toiled onward lighted in its gloomy night by the constellations and the daybeams, which were the heralds of the Sun of Righteousness.

From Calvary until to-day, the Christian Church pursues her pilgrimage, expecting her rest and her refreshing only in the high noontide of our Lord's return.

When sudden night enshrouded the fortunes of the race; when the lately brilliant destiny of the children of Adam was forfeited in an evil hour, a promise of a Deliverer was given, else human hearts could not have endured their weight of woe. This promise was the common property of all the descendants of Adam; however they defiled it by their debased imaginations, however they misapprehended or misapplied it, they all clung to it in one

poor fashion or another, and the Egyptian carved on his obelisk "The Begotten of God; the all-radiant One;" the Persian wrote of Ormuzd, the pure eternal light, and fountain of perfection; and the poetic Greek cherished the story of Prometheus, half human, half divine, suffering for the sake of men.

Christ, God in flesh, seed of woman, destroying the serpent and restoring the pristine happiness of man, was revealed to Adam. With lapsing years, Christ in his person, work and offices, was more and more clearly presented. Types of Him were an ascending series; becoming constantly more complete; Adam, Enoch, Job, Abraham, Jacob, all the goodly galaxy of ancient worthies, as they strode on toward the hour of his appearing, saw brighter and brighter tokens of his rising.

As man drifted farther and farther from the primitive knowledge of the coming salvation, lost like Cain in the mists of his own theorizing; as by indulgence in evil passions humanity became obtuse, it was necessary that the Lord of Life should be more and more revealed in type and shadow. The sensual heart needed sensible images to instruct it.

It was not that the system changed. Christianity is not necessarily self-developing; from its inception it was like Minerva, full grown and equipped. It appears to be gradually developing, because man has become so debased, his apprehension has been so dulled, that to give him as much light in one age as in another, that the knowledge of the third and fourth world-period should be equal to that of the first, types and prophecies of the Redeemer and his work, became more numerous and distinct. The revelation of the Infinite has mercifully kept pace with man's advancing depravity. The soul grows on the same pabulum from age to age; Enoch, Noah and Moses were as full-grown saints as Isaiah or any who came after him; they had not had as minute or explicit word-teaching, but less had gone a longer way in conveying

knowledge to them. Our Lord in every age has been careful to supply all our need, and demand has been great, for, in spite of philosophers, since the fall man has been, when let alone by God, not an appreciating but a deteriorating animal.

Different prophets exhibited different phases of the Messianic reign; various types revealed various graces and offices of the Coming One. The Revelation of the Infinite was given to minds of diverse mould, and took their impress, just as light is colored by the medium through which it passes. Streaming through a rose window, the rays are blue, green, crimson, golden, according to the shade of the glass which transmits them, but the light itself holds all hues, and every exhibition of it is a legitimate part of the whole.

One prophet, burning with the wrongs of his nation, sang of a coming Avenger, a strong arm of the Lord, a consuming fire to devour the offenders; another, gentle and complaisant, tuned his harp to the name of Shelômôh the gracious, the pacific Prince; a third, fired with patriotic ambition, foresaw the King, the Mighty Potentate in Zion, whose sceptre should sway all the earth; yet another, weary and oppressed, beheld the Burden-bearer, the Saviour from self and sin, the Mediator before God, the Priest presenting the prayers of humanity in an acceptable hour.

Again, we must remember that to some prophets was given a wider range of vision than to others. Daniel saw as far as John; the revelation by the Hiddekel was of that *man* who on Patmos walked in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. The "man greatly beloved," and the "disciple whom Jesus loved" each beheld the final consummation of all things.

Other prophets had no revelation beyond the first coming of our Lord. Some of the seers wrote both of the first and the second Advent of the Son of God; and here the Jew became con-

fused, and by reason of not setting himself to understand the word; by accepting the easiest and most agreeable interpretation, the son of Israel ignored the fact of an earth life of sorrow, and a vicarious death for his Messiah, and chose rather to expect Him, who would come in the clouds of heaven in power and splendor.

None among all the gifted seers of old read so clearly the character and work of his Lord, as Isaiah, the son of Amoz. His was one of the most sublime and noble minds which the Holy Spirit ever employed to pour forth His Voice unto a listening world. His intellect was "a lyre of widest range, struck by all passion." Full of the glowing imagery of the Orient, he painted the most tremendous scenes of the world's history, with a magnificence worthy of each theme.

Israel and Egypt; Tyre and Ethiopia; Moab and Damascus; Babylon and Syria; the golden isles of the Gentiles; the freebooters who dwelt in the desert; Nineveh, with its astrologers; all were exhibited in the pride of their glory, and were followed from the zenith of their splendor to the dark grave of forgetfulness, whence the legend of their imperial power, stealing down to coming generations, should be but as a dream of a dream, "the memory of a night vision."

Bearing thus God's messages of doom to the nations, Isaiah had one joyous refrain running through every "song of the sword"—the coming of The Christ. "Immanuel, God with us," was the favorite burden of his speech. The Branch from the Root of Jesse; He who came "glorious in his apparel," the Redeemer of Zion; "The God of Israel the Saviour,"—this was the darling thought of the ecstatic seer.

In the outpourings of his prophecy, he preached a full gospel; precious beyond speech are his delineations of the fatherly goodness of God, and the redemptive work of the Divine Son of Man.

The prophet had seen the Lord of Hosts, and his lips had been touched by a live coal from the altar, so that he was enabled to behold and declare those golden millennial ages, which, like the freeness, fulness and simplicity of salvation, are felt by many too good to be believed.

The materials of which we can reconstruct the personal history of Isaiah are few indeed. His lineage and birthplace are not preserved to us, but the probability is that he was of the house of Judah. It is enough that he was born endowed for a transcendant mission; that he belonged to the race of holy prophets, and whether he had his paternity in Levi, Judah or Ephraim; whether his infancy was cradled in Benjamin or Zebulon, he was the "chosen vessel" to bear the grace of the everlasting Father to the weary and groping sons of men; he was the artist whose brush was dipped in celestial light and color, that he might limn for humanity the Christ,

"Strong Son of God, Immortal Love."

Isaiah entered upon his prophetic office in the reign of Uzziah. As he continued his prophecies until nearly, or quite the close of Hezekiah's reign, he must have first appeared in a public capacity at an early age, and during Uzziah's closing years.

The vision of Jehovah Jesus, enthroned in the earthly tabernacle and served by seraphim, occurred in the year of Uzziah's death.

During the sixteen years of the reign of Jotham, there seems to have been no public prophecyings by Isaiah.

The seer dwelt in retirement, sorrow devouring his heart, because of the sins of his nation and the judgments which were hastening upon them. He had cried of woe to the people, and the woe was to him a continual presence, a "Priestess in the vaults of death." But his sorrow was not hopeless; he cherished a sweet assurance of the blissful dawn; a resurrection from this grave of the nation's holiness and happiness.

Nor was the seer left alone to his griefs and his hopes; in his own household God sent him companionship.

Isaiah's wife was one of that splendid succession of women, who, from Eve to Mary, graced the line of God's chosen people. Like Miriam, Deborah, Hannah, and Huldah, she was a prophetess.

God gave his servant, who must bear the burden of life, proclaiming the burdens of the chief nations of idolaters, and who must, with anguished eyes, view the coming desolation of his kindred and nation, a companion soul, lofty as his own, to help him heavenward. The two were married hearts and intellects, and stood with the "children God had given" them, as signs before the world.

In the reign of Jotham, this prophetic pair were given a son, whom they named Shear-jashub—*a remnant shall return;* the name was the low moan of their sorrow, and whispered a suggestion of their solace.

The remarkable prosperity which attended the fifty-two years of Uzziah's reign, had continued through the sixteen years when Jotham occupied the throne. These two kings, ruling in the fear of the Lord, secured the present felicity of their dominions.

Of Uzziah, we are told that "he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord." One great sin he committed, his sacrilege in the Temple, and for that he was sorely punished in his leprosy.

Jotham also "was mighty, because he prepared his ways before the Lord his God."

Jotham was followed by the weak and wicked Ahaz. This king turned aside from the path of his fathers, and "made images to Baalim."

Early in his reign, Israel became confederate with Syria, and the combined forces marched against Jerusalem. At the command of the Lord, Isaiah, taking with him the child of mystical promise—Shear-jashub—went to Ahaz.

The prophet and his boy met the armies of Judah where the Lord had especially ordained the conference—"at the conduit of the upper pool, in the highway of the fuller's field."

This place was southwest of Jerusalem, in the Valley of Gihon. Here Solomon had been anointed king; by the pool there was a living fountain—type of the everflowing mercy of God toward Jacob. Where Solomon had received the crown in peace, his descendant, in the eleventh generation, heard a cheering message from the King of kings: "Take heed and be quiet; fear not, neither be faint-hearted."

For some time after this, Isaiah was as one engaged in a deadly hand to hand combat. The wicked king, trusting in man and forgetting God, was resolved to make an alliance with Assyria. He became tributary to Tiglath-Pileser; stripped the Temple of its treasures to send him presents, and even visited him in conquered Damascus as his vassal.

More than this, he sought help from false gods. He worshipped Molech, and offered his own children to the monster deity; he consulted wizards; sacrificed to the Syrian pantheon; brought an altar from Damascus for new worship in Judah; and erected on his housetop altars to the heavenly hosts.

By word and by sign, Isaiah sought to awaken the remorse and terror of his apostate nation; to drive them from their idolatries, and to prevent alliances with enemies of Jehovah. The king and court clung to the treaty with Tiglath-Pileser; but many of the people were inclined to unite with humbled Damascus, to throw off the Assyrian yoke.

"Fear none but Jehovah," cried Isaiah; but cried in vain. "God was not in all their thoughts."

"Ask," said the agonized prophet to the besotted Ahaz, "a sign of the Lord thy God: ask it either in the depth, or in the height above."

"I will not ask," replied Ahaz; "neither will I tempt the Lord."

"Hear now!" exclaimed Isaiah, stretching forth his arms to Heaven. "Is it a small thing to you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign. Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and call his name Immanuel."

This was a sign far off; there was another for the present. The prophetess bore a son, and her husband called him, as his brother, by a mystic name.

Before court and people they brought the babe for a sign. Uriah and Zechariah were faithful witnesses, chosen to make record of the prophecy. The young infant smiled, sleeping in its mother's arms; "Lo," said the prophet, pointing to the little one, "before this child shall have knowledge to cry my father and my mother, the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be taken away before the king of Assyria."

Such warnings fell on heedless ears. Ahaz was given over to strong delusion; he could believe in the oracles of the heathen, but not in the words of one who was the voice of the Living God. The people partook of the gross unbelief of their sovereign. Isaiah had written the name borne by his infant son upon a "great roll," and set it up before the nation in a public place. As they went to and fro on business or pleasure, the ominous word "*Speedspoil*," stared them in the face.

To Isaiah and his faithful witnesses, it meant the direful hour when Zion should be trampled under foot by the heathen. To the majority of beholders it was nothing but a madman's babble.

The words of the prophet were heeded by some few chosen souls throughout the kingdom; the remnant, salt of grace, whose children's children, far away, should be the returning families to plant anew the nation of Judah.

We can picture to ourselves the seer, "rapt Isaiah," in his home, pouring forth his visions, while, with awed faces, his faithful scribes and witnesses record the words, trembling with the weighty import of the prophecy.

No other poet ever uttered so magnificent an ode as that in the fourteenth chapter of Isaiah. Babylon, the queen of nations, on the Chaldean plain, shook back her golden locks, and, wrapped in purple, smiled supreme at suppliant nations crowding to her feet—queen of a world. That obscure man of Judah, who should be a household word when Babylon's very ruins had been swept away like chaff from a summer threshing-floor, stood on the crumbling walls of Zion, looked toward the regnant city, and spoke of her glory as already a thing which had passed away. Higher and higher rise the notes of his jubilant song. They were lent him from heaven, and like the smoke of the incense, and the prayers of the people, they speed to their celestial home. "All the kings of the nations lie in glory, even every one of them in his own house. But thou art cast out of thy grave." "Hell from beneath is moved to meet thee at thy coming."

Since this was sung, all the rhetoricians of the ages, all the æsthetic critics whom literature has nursed, have come to learn at the feet of the son of Amoz.

After sixteen years of profligacy and of disaster, Ahaz died, and as he drew his last breath, the nation broke into a jubilee. They were free from their chief curse—a godless king.

They refused him burial in the sepulchres of his fathers, and placed upon his throne Hezekiah his son, a man who was in all things unlike his parent; one in whom the goodly type of David returned. His mother was Abi, daughter of Zachariah, probably that Zachariah whom Isaiah chose as his friend and "faithful witness." Hezekiah entered upon a long and happy reign of twenty-nine years. He was one of the three most excellent kings

of Judah, the chief of that royal trio, for says Scripture, "After him there was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him."

The reign of Hezekiah began with the opening and repairing of the Lord's House. His proclamation to the people and the Levites is marked with the godly simplicity of his character; and we can imagine what hearty response it awoke in the bosom of Isaiah. He had now a monarch who would honor his office and heed his counsels. Ahaz, the unbeliever, had been bitterness to his spirit; Hezekiah would become his consolation.

Elijah had felt himself alone upon the earth. "I only am left," had been his plaint; Isaiah had a happier lot, in that he heard about him the clarion voices of brothers, who, like himself, bore messages from the Eternal.

His cotemporaries among the prophets were Joel and Micah in Judah, Hosea and Amos in Israel. The life of Hosea seems to have covered about the same period as that of Isaiah—the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah. Micah prophesied during the reigns of the last three; and as the voices of these great witnesses reverberated among hills and valleys, each seer strengthened his brother's faith.

King Hezekiah leaned upon Isaiah as his counsellor and friend; he regarded him as the chief bulwark of the kingdom; when war from Assyria burst upon Judah, when the resistless hosts of Sennacherib, with cruel taunts and lofty boasts, summoned Jerusalem to surrender, before calling out his armies, Hezekiah sent his lord chamberlain, the chief of the priests, and Shebna, most honorable of scribes, robed in sackcloth, to Isaiah, to ask his prayers and counsels.

Hezekiah had gone to the right place for comfort. "Be not afraid," said Isaiah to the weeping monarch. "Behold, I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumor and return to his

own land, and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land."

The almost countless host of Rabshakeh lay before Zion spread like swarms of locusts over the fertile plains, and upon the sunny olive-clad slopes; Sennacherib himself had been for a long time besieging Pelusium, but according to the prophecy of Isaiah, he "heard a rumor." This rumor was that Tirhakah, King of Ethiopia, was coming to make war on him. The mighty Assyrian saw that he must join forces with his most powerful general, and hastened to unite with Rabshakeh. While the king was drawing near to his general, the angel of the Lord, who smote the first-born of Egypt, and whom David saw standing above the threshing-floor of Ornan, passed, clothed in terrors, through the camp which besieged the holy city. On the very first night of the siege, a hundred and eighty-five thousand of the Assyrian soldiers, with their captains and generals, were smitten in a single hour.

In the morning, when Sennacherib effected a junction with his lieutenant, he found all the host in confusion and dismay; the dead were more than the living, and in an agony of dread the Assyrians began a rapid and disorganized retreat. The last clause of the prophecy remained to be accomplished. Sennacherib, having returned to Nineveh, entered the house of his favorite god to worship, and there, before the eyes of his idol, his two sons assassinated him.

Though given later in the narrative, chronology makes it probable that the sore illness, and miraculous recovery of Hezekiah, were a year prior to the invasion of Rabshakeh.

By Isaiah was sent to Hezekiah the prophecy of his approaching death. At that time there was no heir to the throne, and the affairs of the kingdom were in a troubled condition. The tears and prayers of the righteous king procured for him a lengthening of his days, which grace was announced by Isaiah, who doubtless

came with alacrity upon so joyous an errand. The king lay in a chamber opening upon the court of the palace—a paradise of beauty. Here the fig tree and the pomegranate were burdened with their luscious fruits; flowers of splendid dyes were refreshed by the waters of a cool fountain, which flowed in grateful music through all the tropic day.

In the midst of the court was "the sun-dial of Ahaz," a trophy of his intercourse with the astronomical Assyrians. It is a pity that all fruit of that intimacy had not been so innocent and so useful.

"This shall be a sign unto thee from the Lord, that the Lord will do as he hath spoken; behold I will bring again the shadow of the degrees, which is gone down in the sun-dial of Ahaz, ten degrees backward," said the prophet.

The languid gaze of the king fixed on his father's favorite dial-plate. Would the winged hours which he had spent in prayer and tears return?

The shadow, which had crept over the dial-plate, slid slowly back. The flowers, which had drooped for the coming of the twilight, were conscious of a hotter noon; never had the people of Jerusalem known the time so long from rising to sun-setting: it was a day which left its trace upon history, like its mate, the day when Joshua commanded sun and moon to stand still. The priests of Heliopolis, the astrologers on the tower of Belus, the star-gazers of Nineveh, on the top of the house of Nisroch, looked to the heavens and to each other in amaze; the reason none could understand, none but one—the seer of Judah; he knew it was a sign from the Lord his God.

David wrote, "Before I was afflicted I went astray;" Hezekiah went astray after he was afflicted. Merodach Baladan, king of Babylon, heard of Hezekiah's illness; but what proved of more interest to him was the astronomical wonder connected with it.

It had become known that the miraculous lengthening of that mysterious day had been ordained at Jerusalem as a sign from the Lord of Hosts.

To gratify the curiosity of the learned men of his kingdom was one object of the gorgeous embassy now sent from Chaldea to the City of David. The king, however, had another object in view. Sargon, king of Assyria, was very powerful, and threatened to absorb all monarchies in his own, and Merodach Baladan desired to become confederate with Judah and Egypt to resist his rival of Nineveh.

Elated by the honor of an embassy travelling in such splendid state, and with the offer of friendship from the king of mighty Babylon, Hezekiah was eager to conclude a treaty. To impress his guests with his own greatness he displayed to them the temple, palaces and fortifications of Jerusalem; and all the treasure which the goodness of God had permitted him to accumulate.

The guests soon departed for Egypt, and when they were gone, Isaiah came to the king, asking with a severe countenance what had been shown them. The exhibition of wealth had been vainglorious, not comporting with Christian humility; but it had been more than this. Hezekiah, the viceroy of Heaven, had put himself on a par with idolaters, appearing to them as one who trusted in armies, silver and gold. Besides this, he had stooped to feel honored by an alliance with a heathen power, as if he, the Theocratic king, were inferior to the worshipper of Belus; and, moreover, the law forbidding confederation with the enemies of Jehovah had never been annulled, and such a coalition was in itself a treason against the fundamental principles of the Jewish government.

To Isaiah's questioning, Hezekiah made honest answers worthy of himself. The judgment that was pronounced upon him seems, at first sight, heavy, but we must consider the circumstances and

aggravations of the offence, and moreover that this sin was merely one of a long series committed by the kings of Judah, each of which had been heaping up judgments; and that the people had run greedily in the evil ways of their masters, and incurred in their own proper persons the vengeance of Heaven.

This embassy from Merodach Baladan appears to have been in 713 before Christ. The same year Sargon, aware of the Babylonian attempts to make common cause with Egypt and Judah, sent a host under his son Sennacherib to besiege Pelusium, the strength of Egypt, while Rabshakeh advanced against Jerusalem. As these armies moved southwest, the tireless Sargon himself made haste to attack Babylon. He overcame Merodach Baladan, who fled to a foreign island, having reigned twelve years. Sargon himself died almost immediately, and Sennacherib occupied at Pelusium found himself king of Nineveh. Then came the rumor of Tirhakah's federation with Egypt, the union with the dismayed hosts of Rabshakeh, and the hasty return to Nineveh. Some years after, Sennacherib was assassinated, as has been said, by his sons.

Merodach Baladan, in whose proffered friendship Hezekiah vainly exulted, remained in his exile for some time; anarchy ruled at Babylon, and at last Merodach returned and threw off the Ninevite yoke. His second reign lasted but six months; being again dethroned, he took refuge in a strange land, passing out of the memory of his countrymen, and dying in loneliness and exile.

From the prophecy after the illness of Hezekiah, Isaiah seems more and more occupied with visions of the kingdom and coming of his Lord Christ.

Once he turns aside from the Messianic prophecy to cry out against Bel and Nebo, but even that strain ends in a promise: "My salvation shall not tarry; and I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory."

Once also he calls to the daughter of the Chaldeans: "Come down and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon," and utters the curse reserved for the "Lady of kingdoms."

But Christ, the God and man, redeemed Jerusalem, the restored city; the fulness of the Gentiles, the ransomed of the Lord, singing themselves along the road as they return to Zion with everlasting joy; Jesus the smitten and wounded One, satisfied with his soul's travail, and dividing the portion with the great, and rescuing the spoil of the strong; these are the jubilant themes which hold the soul of the aged prophet transported with joy. Age has not quenched his enthusiasm, nor untuned the flowing numbers of that heavenly oracle. Never sung soothsayer so sweetly where

> "Nightly trance or breathed spell
> Inspires the pale-eyed priest from the prophetic cell."

John, the latest seer, saw no more glowing image of the New Jerusalem than dawned upon the fading eyes of Isaiah, when he cried: "I will lay thy stones with fair colors, and lay thy foundations with sapphires; and I will make thy windows agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones."

When unbelievers mocked and foes derided, the prophet protested: "For Zion's sake I will not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest." His soul labored forever in the fire for the sake of his people, but the hour of his resting drew nigh. The Lord giveth his beloved sleep. At the accession of Manasseh, Isaiah must have been about ninety years old. When that son of Belial entered on his reign, the noblest of his subjects was called "where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest."

The nearer the grand old prophet approached the end of his earthly pilgrimage, the deeper insight did he gain of heavenly mysteries. The unalterable decrees and transcendent power of

God shone upon him in their glory; the benison of peace was on his hoar head, and he called to his people that the Lord would extend to them "peace like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream." He foresaw the painful journey of the Church through a desert world, and sent a lay of cheer: "As one whom his mother comforteth so will I comfort you." And the reason of the Church's comfort the prophet holds to be the coming of her Lord in judgment. A perverted idea has been impressed upon Christians, as if they must fear and dread the coming of Christ; must wail of the "dreadful day," and of the "hour of terror." This was not Paul's view; he was looking for and hastening unto the coming of his Lord, as the bride longs for her bridegroom.

Beyond the judgment, Isaiah beheld that fairest vision, the new heavens and the new earth, where from moon to moon, from Sabbath to Sabbath, all men shall worship in the joy of the Lord. Warning transgressors to the very last, Isaiah sends after them a shout of the doom that must overtake them, wherein the righteous shall of necessity justify God. Thus, threatening and imploring sinners, Isaiah laid down the burden of his mortal life, and went into the presence chamber, to behold the "King in his beauty, in the land that is very far off."

Had he perished in his youth's glowing morning, he would have been set chief of sweet singers by the soft symphonies of his lyric of the vine: "Now will I sing to my beloved, a song of my beloved touching his vineyard; my well-beloved had a vineyard in a very fruitful hill."

Added years only added to his glory and to his usefulness. His mission grew in greatness with the growing decades of his life; his book, while it cannot fail to be a glorious monument of the author's genius, yet hides the prophet and the man, in the rare fulness and perfection of its matchless delineation of Jesus our Lord.

XX.

JEREMIAH.

GLORIFYING GOD IN THE FIRE.

ABOUT the year 640 before Christ, during the reign of Manasseh, a child was born to Hilkiah, the Priest, in Anathoth, who was destined to hold an immortal place in the history, not only of the Jewish Church, but of the Church universal.

Anathoth was a village in the portion of Benjamin; it belonged to the reservation of the Levites, and was about three miles from Jerusalem.

The Israelites dedicated to their Lord, and to the use of his servants, no starveling portion, but the best of their possessions. Anathoth was an important and beautiful town.

Its priestly owners enriched it by their labor and wealth. The fortifications of the place were strong and extensive; to this day, its quarries supply Jerusalem with stone; and the memory of the sons of Levi lives yet in grain fields, vineyards, and olive orchards, which once were cultivated by their hands.

Hither Abiathar, the priest who joined the conspiracy of Adonijah, was banished by Solomon to his own "fields." Here Abiezer, one of David's captains, and Jehu, one of his mighty men, were born; here, long after Jeremiah's death, the men of Anathoth returned, under Zerubbabel, to build up their waste places.

It has been thought by some, that Hilkiah, the father of Jeremiah, was that high priest who zealously aided Josiah in his work of reformation.

From his birth, Jeremiah was chosen of the Lord; even before his birth, God tells him that he was called and sanctified.

The boy grew up in Anathoth among the priests; living so near Zion, he heard continually of the abominations of Manasseh, that hoary old sinner, whose long reign was dedicated not to godliness, but to idolatry.

Amon, succeeding his father, and bearing his sins with his sceptre, reigned but two years.

The boy of the Levites, perhaps, went up to the city of David, to see the crown placed on the brow of that other boy, the child of Judah, eight years old when he entered upon his inheritance.

There was now a sudden end to the abominations and cruelties practised by the minions of idolatrous kings. Peace came to the weary nation; glad lips told of the piety of that young monarch, who, unallured by power and flattery, had turned his face to seek the Lord his God.

Meanwhile Jeremiah, remaining at his early home, pursued those studies natural to his position, and congenial to his sanctified spirit. By his parents and teachers, he was carefully trained in the ordinances and traditional precepts of the Law; the precious books of Moses, and the sacred songs of David, the records of the earthly kingdom, and the ecstatic visions of elder seers, of the Divine Ruler and his heavenly realm, were day and night the study of the youth, who revolved high themes beyond the ken of his teachers.

Doubtless, he questioned much of old men who had seen Isaiah, concerning the looks, acts and words of that notable prophet, whose mantle had fallen upon himself.

His eager spirit also turned toward the gifted wife of Shallum,

who, dwelling in Jerusalem, was the oracle of God to men; and in the midst of that grand rénaissance of Josiah's reign, was thus far alone in speaking the Supreme Will by direct inspiration.

Living so near Zion, going, as was his joy and duty, so often to the Temple, it would not be wonderful if the youthful Levite lingered often in "the college," at the home of Shallum, to seek counsel and instruction from Huldah, to whom a king was not ashamed to appeal in his extremity.

In the twelfth year of Josiah, the purifying of Judah and Jerusalem began. At the age of twenty, Josiah, full of fervent zeal, a royal iconoclast, headed the bands of those who "broke down the altars of Baalim, and the images that were high above them."

With kindling eyes, he watched his servants cut down "groves, carved images, and molten images."

It was a grand day; it had been foretold before the smoking altar of Jeroboam, and now Josiah, the son of prophecy, cleansed Judah and Israel of all their idols.

The year after this exhibition of righteous zeal, Jeremiah received his call to the public office of a prophet.

The wrongs heaped up by two base kings; the religious enthusiasm of Josiah; the devout spirit of Huldah; the friendship with the pious family of Neriah; the Levitical training, and a childhood and youth of spiritual contemplation and profound study, had nourished in Jeremiah all the traits of a religious, fervid, wrapt ascetic. Conscious with an intense humility of his own weakness; wearing his body as a clog and burden to his struggling soul; sensitive to every look and every word; keenly susceptible to all emotions of joy and pain, but finding much more pain than joy in a world framed for ruder spirits, Jeremiah entered upon a life-long martyrdom when he was called to a public place.

Left to himself, remaining unknown and unnoticed in "Ana-

thoth," the man might have done some unobtrusive reforming work, might have shone in the mild radiance of a good example, and have gone down to his grave in peace. But an irresistible Voice called him to come from seclusion, and stand before kings.

The thoughts and feelings of a holy man, which he would have cherished as secret treasure in his own bosom, must be dragged forth as weapons, and used against priests, kings and people.

"I have ordained thee a prophet to all nations," said the Voice of the Potent Ruler.

The announcement filled the shrinking listener with strange pain. "Ah, Lord," he mourned, "I cannot speak, I am a child."

"Be not afraid of their faces, for I am with thee to deliver thee," replied the Lord.

From that hour calm and pleasure lay behind the prophet. Green were the fields of Anathoth, purple hung the clusters of the vine, golden grew the olives in the sun; but while other youths might gather fruit and bear home the harvests, he must go out into that world, whose wrath and lust, whose hate and scorn and hardness of heart, were like scorching furnace fires, blasting the joyous springtime of that young prophetic soul.

Five years passed, and the gentle prophet, speaking as he was bidden by the Lord, had not yet been fully recognized by king or nation. The memorable eighteenth year of Josiah came, and when the Book of the Law was found hidden in an obscure and neglected corner; when the dust was brushed from the parchment, and the words of the mighty God flashed forth red fires like long-hidden rubies, the alarmed king, seeing how much had been required, and how little had been performed, sent his committee of five eminent priests and officers, not to Jeremiah, but to Huldah, to ask the mind of the Lord.

The book, the reply of the prophetess, and the public reading of the re-discovered statutes of the law, could not have been unnoticed by Jeremiah.

Such themes as these had fed his soul from infancy; every word of his God was precious; studying the book of the law, he learned a terrible truth. This recent reformatory work in the nation was surface work; it was external.

The hearty godliness of the king, and some of the people, had made piety popular; it was an honorable thing now to be a devout Jew, and thousands who had cried, "Great is Baal," and would cry it again on occasion, were shouting, "The Lord he is God!"

The case of Judah in Josiah's day finds its parallel in the nineteenth century. We are fallen upon times when piety is the proper thing; when a certificate of church membership has a flavor of respectability about it, like a family pedigree. If storms of trouble should arise, if persecution should light its fires, our churches would be reduced by very many. The reduction in numbers might be an addition to their vital strength; those that would be left would at least be whole-hearted.

Pursuing his office as a priest and his work as a prophet, Jeremiah was more and more impressed with the consciousness that the religious life of his nation was rotten at the core. Strange visions sent to him from Heaven, convinced him that the judgments ordained would hasten, and his voice of prophetic woe rang out like a dirge over the careless nation. While Josiah was his friend, he who could warn and upbraid so incessantly had bitter enemies. The hostility of which he was the object was anguish to his tender spirit. He dared not refrain from speaking the Voice of the Lord, which was as a "fire in his bones," but when he spoke the multitude gnashed upon him, and would have done him violence. He cries, out of his tribulations, "Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me a man of strife and of contention to the whole earth! I have neither lent on usury, nor men have lent to me on usury, yet every one of them doth curse me."

While threatening, Jeremiah also entreated; he held forth the righteousness of Christ; he pleaded for God with a rebellious generation. Heart-sick and lonely, we hear him plaining in the night watches—"O hope of Israel! the Saviour thereof in time of trouble, why shouldest thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night!"

False prophets swarmed through the land; Huldah was dead; during Isaiah's lifetime the kingdom of Israel had been swept away by the floodtide of Assyrian wrath; there were no brother prophets to echo Jeremiah's voice, he was like the lonely bittern sounding her cry through the desolate land.

Now came another trouble; the good Josiah fell in battle. The king had, probably by the advice of Jeremiah, attached himself to the new Chaldean kingdom; and in an attack on the king of Egypt, in behalf of his new allies, the gracious and godly sovereign lost his life. Here the prophet might indeed feel deserted, and ask if the loving-kindness of the Lord were gone forever. "Thy words were found, and I did eat them," he says, probably, of the book of the law found in the Temple; "I sat not in the assembly of the mockers, nor rejoiced; I sat alone because of thy hand," he pleads. "Why is my pain perpetual?" he queries; "wilt thou be to me as waters that fail?"

Then, into the pitiful gloom wherein he sat, stole the Voice of consolation: "I am with thee to deliver thee," saith the Lord.

The prophet was doomed to dwell alone; the Lord said to him, "Thou shalt not take thee a wife, neither shalt thou have sons or daughters in this place." But there was mercy folded up in the decree, for the Lord added, "concerning the sons and the daughters that are born in this place they shall die grievous deaths, and shall not be lamented."

To Josiah succeeded Shallum, whose short reign lasted but three months; he was deposed by Pharaoh Necho, and this shows that

he pursued the line of policy favored by Jeremiah, which was anti-Egyptian: Jeremiah speaks very touchingly of the captive king: "Weep not for the dead, neither bemoan him, but weep sore for him that goeth away; for he shall return no more, nor see his native country. He shall die in the place where they have carried him captive, and shall see this land no more."

Already Jeremiah was enduring persecutions; one of the chief priests was Pashur, the son of Immer; he was so enraged at the prophecy of the coming desolation of Jerusalem that he "smote Jeremiah and put him in the stocks." He seems to have been a life-long enemy of the man of God, for we find him petitioning the king to put Jeremiah to death.

After Shallum, reigned Jehoiakim for eleven years; he was an ally of Egypt, an enemy of Jeremiah. In this reign rose up Urijah the prophet, with words of warning; the king endeavored to kill him, but he fled into Egypt. There the royal hate pursued him; he was captured, and brought back to Jerusalem, where, by order of the monarch, he was killed with a sword, and refused honorable burial. Jeremiah would have shared the same fate for similar offences. At the end of a public prophecy the mob seized him, saying, "Thou shalt surely die." The priests and false prophets joined in the outcry, and appealed to the princes for his condemnation. Jeremiah, brought before the court, boldly repeated his words, and declared that they would prove true. He bade his judges amend their ways or they should perish; and added, that, as he was helpless in their hands, they would do as they chose with him; but that, if they put him to death, God would avenge his blood.

By the powerful influence of his old friend Ahikam, Jeremiah escaped; the friendship of this prince was one of the few alleviations of his unhappy lot in life.

At this time the king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, had con-

quered Pharaoh Necho, and had made Palestine tributary to Chaldea; he came up against the city Jerusalem and captured it after a short siege. Here occurred the interesting episode of the Rechabites, who, having with other inhabitants of the open country, taken refuge in the royal city, were made use of as a sign by the prophet.

Baruch, the son of Neriah, was the scribe and chosen friend of Jeremiah. When Jeremiah was unable to go to the Temple to read the roll of his prophecies in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, Baruch fearlessly took his place; the king hearing of the threatening deliverances, would have killed both seer and scribe, but warned by their few friends in power, they fled, and the sovereign solaced his wrath by cutting up the parchment in a childish rage, and throwing it in the fire.

Nebuchadnezzar carried from Jerusalem many of the vessels and ornaments of the Temple, and numerous notable captives, of whom were Daniel and his three friends. The restive conduct of the Jewish king, who vainly hoped to throw off the Chaldean yoke, brought on him the armies of Babylon; siege, pestilence, famine, were upon the doomed city with all their horrors. The king and the chief treasures of Zion were carried off by Nebuchadnezzar, and Jehoiachin enjoyed a three months' royalty. Zedekiah then was placed on the throne by the Babylonian despot.

Zedekiah seemed, at first, willing to be guided by the prophet; he sent for him to come and counsel him, and asked the aid of his prayers: wicked men are often more willing to be prayed for, than to pray.

Set up in the kingdom by the power of the oppressors of the land, Zedekiah was but a poor shadow of royalty. He hated the Chaldeans, his masters; he desired the aid of Egypt, and was enraged that it was so feeble or so long withheld; he feared his own princes and counsellors, was false to the God who would have been his help and his shield.

A powerful host having come out of Egypt, the Chaldeans at Jerusalem were too prudent to risk a battle, and withdrew; Jeremiah warned the Jews that the departure would be for but a short period. "The Chaldeans shall come again, and fight against this city, and burn it with fire."

So great was the popular indignation at this announcement, that Jeremiah resolved to fly from the noisy city, and take refuge for a season in the fair inheritance of Anathoth, where his kindred dwelt.

He naturally left Jerusalem at the gate of Benjamin, but there Irijah, captain of the ward in charge of the gate and defences on that part of the city, recognized him, and putting his quiet departure with his well-known advocacy of submission to the Babylonians, charged him thus: "Thou fallest away to the Chaldeans." "It is false," replied Jeremiah, "I fall not away to the Chaldeans."

The pretext for imprisoning an unpopular man was too precious to be let slip; the prophet was at once confronted with the angry princes.

They had made the house of Jonathan the scribe a prison for political offenders, and there Jeremiah was to be in close duress; but, more than this, they gratified their hatred by smiting him, and putting him in the vilest and most painful wards; "in the dungeons and the cabins for many days."

The strong hand of God prevented them from killing him; and against their cruel wish the man—immortal until his work was done—survived his dungeon discipline. We pause to consider that no persecutions, no deprivations, no sore bereavements, when it seemed to human vision that God *might* have helped him and would not, ever made Jeremiah flinch one hair's breadth from the path of duty. The prophet was fashioned of the stuff that martyrs are made of; he belonged to the goodly army, which from

the smoking altar of Abel, unto the altar of God in heaven, have marched through this world, a glorious host; who have loved not their own lives unto death, and whom the Lord will avenge.

A hero in his chains and starvation, Jeremiah still, like Job, held fast his integrity; until he, in a measure, wore out the malice of his foes. Zedekiah sent for him, and in a private conference asked, "Is there any word from the Lord?"

"There is," replied the man, strong in weakness, the sensitive spirit, which in calm scorn of his own tortures, daily bore witness amid sharp fires; "thou shalt be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon."

He then protested against the cruelties practised upon him; appealed to the fulfilment of his prophecies as an evidence of his divine commission, adding, "Let my supplication be accepted before thee; that thou cause me not to return to the house of Jonathan the scribe, lest I die there."

Moved by his remonstrances, the king gave orders that Jeremiah should be kept in the court of the prison rather than in the dungeon, and that a piece of bread should be given him "daily from the bakers' street," until all the bread in the city was spent. This suggests the extremity of the people in their present state of siege, and the obstinacy of their resistance.

Even in the court of the prison Jeremiah uttered renewed predictions of disaster, and a deputation of the hostile nobles waited on the king, requesting that he should be put to death.

"Behold," replied the puppet sovereign, "he is in your hand, for the king is not he that can do anything against you."

Even now, when, to all appearance, these enemies might have torn the prophet to pieces, God restrained them, and they cast him into a dungeon. But what a dungeon! Horrible as any the inquisition could boast; far worse than that where the "prisoner of Chillon" wore out his doleful days. The only communication

with "upper air" was a trap-door in the roof; through this they let down the inspired Levite of Anathoth, by cords. The bottom of this vile place was covered deep with foul mire, and into it the prisoner sank. There was no water to supply his thirst, nothing but that slimy ooze. Here he must die. But still he would concede nothing. He had spoken the truth, and must continue to do so with his latest breath.

A friend yet remained to him—Ebed-Melech an Ethiopian; one of the eunuchs of the king's household. This man, hearing of the seer's doleful condition, went in search of the king. Unhappy Zedekiah, beset by foes without and foes within the city, a monarch lacking power and wealth, with no reliance on God, no promise for the future; but dragged, like one standing on quicksands hour by hour, to a horrible fate, was even more to be commiserated than Jeremiah. Ebed-Melech found the king sitting in the gate of Benjamin, and urged upon him the instant need of a rescue of Jeremiah, for, said he, "he is like to die for hunger in the place where he is; for there is no more bread in the city."

Moved to tardy compassion, Zedekiah ordered the Ethiopian to take with him thirty men, and release the captive. From that day until Jerusalem was taken by the Chaldeans, Jeremiah and Baruch, his friend, abode in the court of the prison.

At last the overthrow of the holy city was complete, after a year and a half of siege and famine, the defences were carried, the victorious Chaldeans rushed into the stronghold of Zion, burned houses and palaces; overthrew the shattered walls; pillaged, murdered and carried captive, until the "city had become solitary that was full of people." Her Nazarites lay at the head of every street, black unburied corpses; the Temple was sacked, and then destroyed, while Zedekiah, who had made the most miserable of failures in king-craft, had the death-throes of his children for his last sight on earth.

One gleam of light falls across the dark picture of a nation's ruin: Nebuchadnezzar gave particular charge concerning Jeremiah. "Take him and look well to him; do him no harm, but do unto him even as he shall say to thee."

Jeremiah was accordingly given up to the care of the new governor, Gedaliah, one of the noblest characters sketched for us in a few salient touches by the pen of the inspired historian.

Gedaliah's father, Ahikam, had long been the prophet's friend; rest seemed at last to have come to this troubled-tossed spirit: he went to fair Mizpeh, a town perched on a lofty height, some four miles northwest of Jerusalem. Hence Gedaliah swayed the vine-dressers, and herdsmen, the "poor of the land," by a law of love.

The blessed calm lasted but two months: then Gedaliah was murdered. Jeremiah and Baruch escaped the massacre which had been plotted to exterminate all the adherents of the governor. Ishmael, the murderer, carried them off in his train, but they were rescued by Johanan. Now only one friend was left the seer —Baruch the scribe.

Johanan added to his other iniquities that he brought Jeremiah and Baruch prisoners to Egypt, to Tahpanhes. This city, the Daphne of profane history, was on the Pelusiac arm of the Nile.

Jeremiah had ever been the enemy of Egypt and its abominations; yet here the immortal author of the Lamentations, a kingdom's elegy, was compelled to dwell among a race of apostates; beholding their idolatries, as "they poured incense to the queen of heaven."

For forty years of his full intellectual and physical strength, Jeremiah, eating the bread of affliction, prophesied for the Lord "in the midst of an evil and adulterous generation." If he wrote the last few verses of the book of Jeremiah, recording the end of the captivity, he must then have been more than a hun-

dred years of age. The tradition of the early Christians is, that he was stoned to death by angry renegades at Tahpanhes. An old Alexandrian story relates, that Alexander the Great, venerating so pure a life and so marvellous a prophet, brought his bones to the city Alexandria, and entombed them there.

The Jews, on the contrary, affirm, that when Nebuchadnezzar conquered Egypt, Jeremiah and Baruch accompanied the victorious army to Chaldea, and spent their last days in peace, comforting the exiles.

Cassandra of prophets, this man forever foretold the coming evil, and was forever unbelieved. Other seers were sent to cry "Turn to your God, and be strong in him;" but it was borne in upon the shrinking soul of Jeremiah, as upon Phocion, that there was no safety but humiliation; no help but entire submission; Judah's day of grace was past.

But amid hatred, scorn, vice and treachery, from which his mimosa-like spirit shivered away in acute agony, the man had a grand consolation.

The Divine face of Christ shone upon him through the darkness; he saw the thorn-crowned and glorified head of the Redeemer; as his earthly pathway wound into deeper and deeper night, the voice of a God clothed in humanity, filled and solaced him; a hand, a Brother's hand, pierced, yet strong and loving, led him up the steep ascent, the blackness of his Sinai, cloud-hung and thunder-girt, yet bearing on its heights the pavilion of the All Radiant, "the God of Israel, and there was under his feet a paved work of a sapphire stone, as it were the body of heaven for clearness." Into that glory the worn and weeping prophet passed at length, and all was glad. Through his earthly life he was peculiarly a type of a suffering Saviour, despised and rejected of men, bearing alone the burden of the world.

A lower comparison presents itself between the writer of the

Lamentations and the sweet singer of the *Divina Commedia*, the man of Anathoth and the Florentine. In every age, aye, in every generation, these sorrowing, devout souls, lonely in a crowded world, appear; for these hundreds of years they have mourned in the strains of the Levite of Anathoth, their great prototype. Of him they learn to hold fast a good confession of their faith, and look for rest, where rest is only to be found, in the fair land where

"GOD SHALL WIPE AWAY ALL TEARS FROM THEIR EYES."

XXI.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR.

THE FALL OF THE HEAD OF GOLD.

SIX hundred and four years before Christ, there entered into peaceable possession of the greatest monarchy on earth, one whom God himself calls "a king of kings, to whom the Lord of heaven had given kingdom, power, strength and glory"—even "Nebo, the protector against misfortune"—Nebuchadnezzar, the magnificent.

This sovereign stood on the very apex of human splendor; all the empires before him formed an ascending series, culminating in him; all that came after him slowly declined from his glory, which none could equal.

If, with modern self-sufficiency, we were inclined to question this; to point to one or another most potent nation, which has formed one of the mighty landmarks of time, and claim for that the supremacy, we should yet be silenced by the fact, that when He, before whom all realms from the Deluge to the Second Advent were present facts, framed a vision which should express his estimate of the relation of the successive dominions of earth, he set the kingdom of the Chaldeans as its crowning point, and Nebuchadnezzar as its HEAD OF GOLD.

The first assured notice which we have of this prince in history shows him chastising the insolence of Pharaoh Necho, ruler of Egypt. This is the dayspring of the young Chaldean's power;

here, in the camp of the Assyrians, shines forth the morning splendor of the king of the fire worshippers, and Nebuchadnezzar begins, like the day god of their adoration, to run his race.

"The Babylonian Empire," says Rawlinson, "lasted only eighty-eight years; nearly half of that period, it was under the dominion of Nebuchadnezzar, their greatest monarch. It is scarcely too much to say, that but for him, the Babylonians would have had no place in history."

Nebuchadnezzar was not only born great, heir of a throne, but he achieved greatness for himself. He was a man whose splendid genius has never been paralleled. In him almost every form of greatness united, and in every gloriously developed talent, he had no peer but himself. Nebuchadnezzar, the unrivalled military strategist, found no equal on earth but Nebuchadnezzar, the sovereign diplomat; Nebuchadnezzar, the artist, had no rival but Nebuchadnezzar, the architect; in grandeur of aesthetic conception, and in skill of mechanical construction, this man stood with the greatest builders of antiquity at his feet.

He was a conqueror, who would have laughed in the face of Cyrus and Alexander; and when he had spread his conquests so far that he knew no limit to his kingdom but the boundaries of earth; he was so high of soul, that he recognized the grand regions of art as new fields for his achievement, and found no barrier to his advancement, but his own mortality.

He was a true oriental; he comes before us, evoked from the solemn splendors of the past, in all the romance of the storied east. A tiger lies half asleep in his veins; one moment it is a creature of strange grace and beauty, the next it darts somewhither like a lightning flash, and is drinking blood!

This Nebuchadnezzar was a despot the most unlimited that the world has ever seen; because, while living in a land where law is the will of the sovereign, he was doubly entrenched in the abject

fear and unbounded love of his subjects. At once their tyrant and their benefactor, the whole heart of the empire beat in his pulses, and was swayed by his thought.

He was a being of moods as various as the climes under his dominion. Frosty Caucasus, corn and peach bearing plain, and burning wild that scorched all life, found their antitypes in his soul. High above other men as the sun is high above earth; generous as the sun which blesses; relentless as the sun which blights; and as the sun unchanged, shining on, perfecting both death and beauty; glorious as the sun sweeping from rising to setting in unchallenged state, was Nebuchadnezzar, the Head of Gold. There was but One higher than the king of Babylonia, and that One covered with darkness his magnificence, as some day he shall darken all of earth's unholy splendors.

Hardly had Nebuchadnezzar, the young warrior, wrested the conqueror's laurel from Pharaoh Necho, when the dying hand of Nabopolassar yielded him, from the Babylonian palace, the imperial diadem.

Kingdoms, in those days, were apt to be disputed inheritances. The first on the spot, provided his hand were strong enough, grasped, and held the glittering prize.

The funeral obsequies of Nabopolassar had already been celebrated, before his hero son arrived at the capital; but at the eagle glance of the heir, opposition sank palsied, and Nebuchadnezzar gained that firm seat, whereon he afterwards withstood so great a shock, as would have rent the throne of any other oriental king.

Isaiah, the most eloquent of the Hebrews, seems to hesitate to choose speech that shall befit his theme, when he prophesies of Babylon, the centre of Nebuchadnezzar's power. He calls it "Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency; the golden city; Lucifer, son of the morning! exalted above the stars of God."

The foundations of this city had been laid by Nimrod, the heaven-defying rebel of the days of Shem. Nabopolassar advanced it to be the capital of his kingdom, and Nebuchadnezzar so garnished, enriched and glorified it, that no creation of finite hands has ever touched the hem of its splendors. Beside this Babylon, Rome would have been a bauble; Paris, in her hour of pride, a fragile toy. Herodotus gives it an area eight times as great as London; it held in its bosom adornments which would have graced whole continents; beside its wealth, the abundance of Solomon was poverty. Compare Babylon as we may to other cities, we shall still be in the case of the shepherd Tityrus, who, likening great things to small, compared Rome to Mantua, and making his pilgrimage to the seven-hilled empress of lands, found that—

> "Verum hæc tantùm alias inter caput extulit urbes,
> Quantum lenta solent inter viburna cupressi."

To this city and empire, Nebuchadnezzar was what was Solomon to Jewry; he built, enlarged, strengthened, adorned, rendered beautiful and terrible, until the kingdom was Nebuchadnezzar, and Nebuchadnezzar was the kingdom.

Immediately around this capital lay the province Babylon, one of the most fruitful, enchanting and salubrious regions of earth. Herodotus says of it: "All this country is like Egypt, well watered; no part of the known world produces so good wheat; and it so abounds in corn, as to yield two or three hundred fold. Wheat and barley carry a blade four digits in breadth; the palm tree grows over all the plain, bearing fruit, whereof they make bread, wine and honey."

In a district so fertile, this oriental despot fortified and embellished a city which has long been the theme of historians and poets; whose surprising grandeur, when it passed into darkness,

was as if a planet had forever robbed the skies by its decay, and the very heavens were become mutable.

"O sirs, O sirs! a light is quenched afar,
Look up, my masters, we have lost a star!"

Berosus says, in his third book on Chaldea: "To the old city, Nebuchadnezzar added a new one, and adorned the temples in the most magnificent fashion; he walled the city in a becoming manner, and decorated its gates gloriously. It would be too much for me to attempt to describe the vast height and immense riches of the palaces."

Megasthenes, another ancient writer, records: "This Nebuchadnezzar, in his fortitude and the greatness of his actions, exceeded Hercules."

Writes Josephus: "He surpassed, and was more fortunate than all the kings which ever went before him."

Pausanias says of Babylon: "It was the greatest city that ever the sun rose upon."

In this city were the tower and temple of Belus, the Chaldean Jupiter, of which the furniture in the sacred chapel was solid gold. On the summit of this tower was the great observatory, where the Babylonian astronomers, who excelled all others of their time, watched the rising and setting, and all the solemn evolutions of the heavenly hosts; and wrought the problems of their astrology. Even when the kingdom was waning to its fall, this temple yielded twenty-one millions sterling in gold to the spoiler Xerxes. The walls of the palaces were encrusted with precious stones and paintings, glowing in deathless tints, that mock a burial of two thousand years. The floors were marble, the pillars alabaster, jasper, agate, lapis lazuli, and sardonyx; sculptures of infinite variety, representing every form of animal life, decorated corridors, stairways and porticoes.

Not the least of the wonders of this capital were the hanging

gardens, the most magnificent love gift ever offerred or received. Nabopolassar had married his son to Amyitis, the daughter of Astyages, the Median king. Nebuchadnezzar received his bride with ardent affection; all the wealth of his kingdom was at her feet. When she pined in the broad Chaldean plains for the wood-crowned hills familiar to her childhood, the genius and devotion of the royal husband created these wonders of the world; mountains covered with forests, flowers, shady groves, fountains, pleasure houses; prodigious structures, which the Greeks were never weary of celebrating.

To Babylon flowed the spoils of Egypt, Nineveh and Palestine; all that was most precious on earth; thither, pilgrims from the falling empires of Mizraim and Phœnicia, journeyed the arts and sciences; there also flocked the philosophers of the west for instruction.

But while creating a capital such as it had never before entered into the heart of men to conceive, this monarch of Chaldea did not fail to extend his boundaries, and beautify his kingdom to its remotest outposts. He was the conqueror of Tyre, famous for merchandize; whose traders were princes, whose beauty was like the garden of the Lord: Jerusalem and Egypt became his vassals, and recovered Syria yielded him its treasures.

Megasthenes says, "He subdued Africa, Spain and the Iberians;" indeed, this author goes farther and gives his hero-monarch power over the shores of the Euxine Sea, between Armenia and the Caucasus; thus making him reign undisputed from the Atlantic to the Caspian, from the frost-white mountains to the burning Sahara; from sea to sea, all climes and nations were bringing tribute, up to the glorious city; and throned in its midst, was Nebuchadnezzar, supreme over all, the Head of Gold.

Enthusiastic in architecture as he was bold in war, this sovereign, besides the temple, gardens, walls and palaces already enumerated, undertook other labors and improvements, each one of

which would have secured earthly immortality. He constructed the grand Reservoir of Sippara, one hundred and forty miles in circumference; and the Nahr Malcha canal, between the Euphrates and Tigris; he founded the city Teredon; while a hundred sites near Babylon bear on their bricks to this day the story of the wealth, power, and far-reaching wisdom of this indefatigable king.

The Arabs are ever recounting his glory and valor; they ascribe to him or his wife, the building of the canal Kerek Saïdeh, and others without number; also the reservoir in the city of Babylon.

Thus briefly viewing his achievements, we see that this was a man at the pinnacle of earthly power. If ever a man had reason for pride and vain-glory, it was this one: high birth; great genius; unexampled success; the adulation of a world, these combined to provoke pride and self-sufficiency. In him came a grand lesson to mankind that God will not brook pride, even in the loftiest. A haughty heart he will not suffer. In the eyes of Jehovah, angels are chargeable with folly, the heavens are unclean, and wheeling worlds, to which our sun is a wan spark, are as the dust beneath his feet.

We have sketched the external splendor and circumstance of this royal Chaldean; we would now gain a few glimpses of his inner, spiritual life: the oriental nature was never more fully developed than in Nebuchadnezzar. He was deeply religious, but variable as to his creed: he "feared the Lord, and served his own gods." "Of a truth," he says to Daniel, "your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings;" and anon he makes a mighty image of gold for his master, Belus, before which all men shall fall down and worship.

In awe and adoration, he exclaims: "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego; come hither, ye servants of

the Most High God!" Finally, he reaches that grand declaration and testimony—"I praise and extol and honor the King of heaven; all whose works are truth and his ways judgment."

Like a true despot, he feels that in him is vested a right to govern the thoughts and religious dispositions of men; his subjects' faith must be submissive to his; he may define their creed and alter it ten times.

He begins by being a worshipper of Belus, and all his people kneel before his god; after this, for Daniel's sake, the Lord of eternity is admitted to equal honors with Bel. Next, he bids every one worship and serve his gods, and adore the great golden image, which he has set up; but the sun of that day does not go down before he makes a decree that no man must open his lips against the Jehovah of the Jews, who is undoubtedly Highest in earth and sky. Thus, over the religion of his people, Nebuchadnezzar sits like Olympian Jove:

> "He spoke, and awful bends his sable brows,
> Shakes his ambrosial curls and gives the nod,
> The stamp of fate, and sanction of a god.
> High heaven with reverence the dread signal took,
> And all Olympus to the centre shook."

Like the supreme divinity of the Hellenic nation, this king would throne himself in majestic repose, and rule nations by a nod! In wrath he is violent as a tiger; "cutting men in pieces, and turning their houses to a dunghill," is his favorite threat. If the Chaldean astrologers could not tell him his dream, which had fled from the royal mind as an image reflected in a pool flees when its original departs, they should be "cut in pieces and their homes made a dunghill;" the same fate was reserved for all who did not worship the God who had delivered the three Hebrews. The prince of the eunuchs, Melzar, pathetically tells Daniel that if he fails to grow fat and beautiful, he will endanger his tutor's head

to the king. With the most admirable *sangfroid*, the tyrant threatens a burning fiery furnace to those whose faith is stronger than their fear of him; has it promptly made ready for the contumacious, and, unmoved, beholds the most mighty men of his army consumed in executing his commands.

Nebuchadnezzar, as a conqueror, puts to death one captive king, Jehoiakim, and blinds the eyes of another, Zedekiah. These being the ordinary proceedings of victors in his day, we may partly excuse them, but what apology can be offered for that refinement of cruelty which insults the gory corpse of Jehoiakim, and makes the murder of his sons Zedekiah's last sight on earth? This glorious Head of Gold is subject to fits of insane rage: "He was angry and very furious, and commanded all the wise men of Babylon to be destroyed." To the three Hebrews, "He was full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed." After these paroxysms of passion, he could be humble, devout, and grateful. He "fell on his face and worshipped Daniel, and commanded that they should offer an oblation and sweet odours unto him." Obedient to Daniel's suggestion, he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego as provincial governors; and, unasked, made Daniel himself chief over wise men and rulers. To his whole empire he makes proclamation of his folly and his fall, his sin and repentance. While he can be cruel as Sargon, he is the fondest of lovers to his Median wife. Though he is arrogant beyond expression, he exhibits toward Daniel a faithfulness of friendship like that of David for Jonathan.

God showed this monarch especial favor in all his reign; not only in crowning him with glory and prosperity; but by imposing a tremendous judgment; and yet earlier in placing among his servants four sons of Judah, who were of sterner stuff than the Assyrian courtiers. These four men did the splendid despot a favor seldom accorded to men in his position, they freely spoke

their minds, and set before him ungarnished truth. Besides this, the great learning which Nebuchadnezzar himself cherished in his wise men, struck the shackles from *their* spirits, and they stand before him saying, "There is not a man upon earth that can show the king's matter; therefore no king, lord, or ruler hath asked such things at any time from any magician, or astrologer, or Chaldean; it is a rare thing that the king requireth, and there is none other that can show it to the king except the gods, whose dwelling is not in the flesh."

After this manly speech, we feel highly pleased that Daniel saves these wise heads.

The three princes of Judah also gave the monarch a splendid specimen of free speech: "O king, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter; be it known unto thee that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."

But Daniel, as befits his lofty character, goes beyond the rest, into such rebuke and exhortation as it has not often been the good fortune of an Eastern king to hear: "O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee; and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity."

To Nebuchadnezzar came three grand experiences superior to any granted to other heathen. The first was in answer to his earnest desire to know what might be in the kingdom after him. Before him was set a vision of the great empires of earth; the marvellous splendor of the dream suiting the exuberant imagination, the vigorous thought, and the ardent ambition of the mind before which it was painted upon night and sleep. The dreaming sovereign of Assyria beheld his own mighty empire, himself its Head of Gold; he saw the lesser glories of the Persian power, and that third kingdom which under Alexander should bear rule over all the earth. Before him rose Rome, the iron

dominion, strong, breaking in pieces and subduing all things; Rome pagan, "breaking and bruising." He saw Rome pagan lapse to Rome papal, Church and State mingled in such poor union as iron and clay, which cannot be welded together; dividing into ten kingdoms, each a diverse interest, like, yet different. Then, lo, before him rose the kingdom of our Lord Christ; a stone, cut out of the mountain without hands, falling first on the feet of the image; crushing clay, iron, brass, silver and gold; until all were like the chaff of the summer threshing floors, carried away by a whirlwind of the wrath of God; while the stone became a mountain, and filled all the earth, a kingdom that should stand forever. Thus, such a vision as was accorded to Daniel, Ezekiel, and John, the latest seer, was given to Nebuchadnezzar, the idolatrous Chaldean. Surely it betokened some signal mercy of God toward him.

After this came in the very acme of his pride, cruelty and false worship, a yet more marvellous revealing. He who has been taught that his will was to sway all souls like the breath of God; he who has never by suffering learned pity, looks with eyes of triumphant rage toward that blazing fiery furnace, heated to sevenfold fury. He looks, and the obsequious servants round his footstool direct their gaze with his; but the hand of the angel which touched the eyes of Elisha's young man in Dothan cleared earthly film from the vision of Nebuchadnezzar, and rendered him capable of the sight celestial. Divine discernment became his: "Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; *and the form of the fourth* IS LIKE THE SON OF GOD." He had heard the Jewish exiles telling of their Coming One. He had heard of Him by the hearing of the ear, but now his eye saw Him; he beheld a human form, and was given power to discern one fairer than the sons of men, the divine effulgence shone through the fleshly veil; it was his, as it was Manoah's, to see God and live.

By this wonderful revelation Nebuchadnezzar's idolatry was rooted out. We hear of him no more as a worshipper of false gods. He proclaims, "There is none other God that can deliver after this sort."

Between this proclamation, and his penitent history of the greatest experience of his life, Scripture leaves the narrative of his exploits to profane history; the only hint of his doings that we have in Holy Writ is Daniel's monition: "break off thy *sins* by righteousness, and thine *iniquities* by showing mercy to the poor." From this, we judge that the monarch had been carrying matters with a high hand; indulging himself extensively in whatever he desired, and wringing the price of his magnificent surroundings from a helpless and overburdened people.

The king, moreover, records of himself that he was "at rest in his house, and flourishing in his palace;" there was none to stay his hand; no foe without, no traitor within. None dared wag the head against Nebuchadnezzar. This prosperity was feeding his arrogance; his heart was more and more haughty; he likened himself to that King of Day whose blaze never was hidden from his empire; the cries of sufferers never entered his gorgeous palaces; he saw sapphires and lapis lazuli and the jeweled spoils of Tyre, but no piteous tears nor coursing blood of his groaning serfs; it was all the old story of despotism:

> "The people here, a beast of burden slow,
> Toiled onward, pricked with goads and stings;
> Here played a tiger, rolling to and fro,
> The heads and crowns of kings."

But a watcher, and a Holy One, had eyes on this royal tiger, and would bring him to "*a man's heart.*" Conviction had come to Nebuchadnezzar when he beheld the Lord of earth and heaven walking in the furnace with his saints; conversion came to him out of a terrible judgment. Strong natures demand strong mea-

sures. The judgments of the Lord do not fall unannounced, like lightning from a clear sky ; God warns before he strikes.

All the bondage, the famine and pestilence, and bitterness of servitude which visited recreant Israel, were foretold by the prophets late and early, and were cried aloud upon Mount Ebal. David "saw the shadow ere it fell;" Nineveh had space for repentance; Egypt was warned again and again. Before the ungodly, the Lord unfolds the advancing doom. So, when for the pride of Nebuchadnezzar's heart, vengeance was prepared, a vision came as its *avant courier*. No human power caused the king to tremble, he laughed his enemies to scorn; but in the midst of his glorious ease came a sign from Heaven, and he was afraid. To his trouble the magicians, astrologers and soothsayers, whom he summoned from their watch in the tower of Belus, brought no comfort. If they had any dim guess of the intention of the dream, they dared not utter it.

There was one man in Chaldea "in whom resided the spirit of the holy gods," ever the king's refuge in perplexity, and to him he appealed. Daniel had received no forewarning; and when, as the king's speech flowed eloquently on, describing what he had seen, a flood of grief and consternation poured over the prophet's soul. Daniel "sat astonished for one hour."

From his friend's dismay the monarch gathered courage. His high heart rose to meet the emergency. Evil was threatened to his house, but he says bravely and kindly: "Belteshazzar, let not the dream, nor the interpretation thereof, trouble thee." He is not like Ahab who condemns Micaiah to prison, to the bread and water of affliction, because he had a vision of all "Israel scattered on the hills as sheep without a shepherd." "I saw a tree in the midst of the earth, and the height thereof was great," says Nebuchadnezzar. He bends forward, and intense anxiety is written on every feature. "It is thou, O king," replies the

prophet, "that art grown great and strong; for thy greatness is grown and reacheth unto heaven, and thy dominion unto the end of the earth."

The gloom of the advancing desolation darkens on Nebuchadnezzar's face; ruin had in dream swept over that goodly tree. But he is no coward, afraid to learn his fate; and in earnest tones he proceeds with his dream, awaiting its explication.

"I saw a watcher and a holy one come down from heaven, and he cried aloud, Hew down this tree, and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, gather his fruit; let the beasts get away from under it; and the fowls from his branches."

Here was utter desolation decreed the leafy monarch of the forest. Nebuchadnezzar had doubtless, on his campaigns, seen some tremendous tree rush to its fall, under the woodman's stroke; dragging down all lesser growths, and shaking the earth with its ruin.

Solemn is the prime minister's reading of the omen. They who visited the oracles of Dodona, Delphi, Jupiter Ammon, and the Sibyl, and received answers from the rustle of the sacred oaks, from the intoxicated Pythia, or written upon leaves, were ever left in doubt by interpretations capable of varied reading. Between diverse answers, they were quite as much in the dark as before they approached the shrine. But Daniel's interpretation of his monarch's dream is capable of no misconstruction. "This is the decree: they shall drive thee from the dwellings of men . . . thy abode shall be with the beasts of the field . . . and seven years shall pass over thee . . . until thou know, that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will."

This is the grand lesson to be learned by the wayward and vain-glorious despot; and was through him to be taught to all the earth. Strange, we say, that having it so plainly set before him, he did not lay it to heart then and there.

But this is a marvel common to the perverse human soul. Christ cries: "I am the way," "There is none other name given," "He that cometh not in by the door, is a thief and a robber."

But in spite of that, men have ever since been going about to find ways of their own—have sought to establish their own righteousness, and have risked appearing before the judgment seat as thieves and robbers.

Those two men—Formality and Hypocrisy—whom Christian saw "come tumbling over a wall on the left hand of the narrow way," were not the only specimens of their kind. And although these two, and all their successors, shall be "lost in the great wood—Danger," or "stumble and fall amid the dark mountains of Destruction, and rise no more," they will have followers in all time to come.

There was yet a glimmer of hope in Nebuchadnezzar's dream: "Leave the stump in the earth," proclaimed the holy watcher. "Let it be wet with the dew of heaven . . . until seven times pass." "Thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee," reads the seer; "after that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule."

Here is a repetition of that one lesson, which the king found it so hard to learn; and which the Almighty was resolved to fix upon his mind.

After such a portent, one would think the royal dreamer would have humbled himself and taken warning, at least for a time. Instead of this, in a twelve months, he provokes the fulfilment of the vision.

But when had human heart so much occasion to be puffed up? Every breeze bore to him the submission of conquered nations; the praises of his poets; the flatteries of his subjects: he heard hammer, axe, and trowel ringing, the music whereby arose wall, palace, and tower, as great Thebes rose to the swelling strains

of Amphion's golden lyre. Wherever he looked were the creations of his hand; the trophies of his power.

Thus it came to pass, that on a summer's day he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon; probably upon the lofty terraces of the hanging gardens, constructed in the court of the favorite palace. All the wealthy province lay spread at his feet. The plains were covered with waving crops, that could laugh at threat of death; between them ran the broad Euphrates, from which the corn drank its strength. The feathery palm trees, with their crimson clusters of honey-dropping fruit, were set against all the sky. Here wound a caravan coming up from Egypt bearing linen, wine of Helbon, and treasures of art; yonder the train of camels, drifting in like ships from the wide sea of the Sahara, were laden with spices and fragrant gums, and tropic fruits. Here Tyre sent her purple, ivory, precious stones, gold, chests of cedar filled with rich apparel. Syria entered at the western gate, with her store of "emeralds, purple, and broidered work, fine linen, coral and agate." Here hung banners captured from Africa, Armenia, and distant Spain. There were the Greek scholars passing along the streets, who had come to learn wisdom of the wisest. In yonder prisons, kings were lying captive. Chariots jostled each other in the crowded ways; battalions of armed men went forth for assured conquests. Elephants from India were kept to swell his train of state; he had horses, on whose crimson bridles rang bells of gold, whose hoofs were shod with silver. His eye ran along the mighty wall, "five hundred million solid feet of masonry," says Rawlinson. Slaves toiled on the sides of the hanging gardens, those mountains of beauty. From the court of the harem below rippled up laughter from the loveliest of the lovely of all the beauty-rich east, who bowed at the feet of Median Amyitis.

Then swelled the monarch's bosom with new access of the pride

hateful to high Heaven. He lifted his face to the dome of the sky, and challenged the King who sitteth on the circle of the firmament: "Is not this great Babylon, which *I* have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of *my* power, and for the honor of *my* majesty!"

> "His trust was with the Eternal to be deemed
> Equal in strength, and rather than be less
> Cared not to be at all."

Delay was ended; swift came the answer, "even while the word was yet in his mouth;" destruction swept upon him sudden as the coming of the Son of Man, "like the lightning that shineth from one part of heaven even unto the other!"

"O king Nebuchadnezzar, unto thee it is spoken; the kingdom is departed from thee. . . . Seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will."

This king of kings was to learn that he was only a vassal of the sky, and must render the homage of his heart to Him from whom he held his dominion in fee.

A horrible form of mania seized the despot. Lycanthropy, a madness that levels man to a brute, took supreme possession of him, who had built great Babylon.

In the hour "when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride," he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they "took his glory from him. And he was driven from the sons of men; and his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild asses; they fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven."

Thus, in after years, Daniel describes this insanity, and its consequences, to Nebuchadnezzar's grandson, Belshazzar. And again the important lesson is repeated: "Until he knew that the most

high God ruleth in the kingdom of men, and that he appointeth it to whomsoever he will."

This fact of an ever-present, jealous, all-ruling God, dividing and disposing the affairs of men great and small; feeding the raven, and meting out crowns and sceptres, is the grand doctrine men should lay to heart. If it were made a first principle in the tuition of kings, perhaps there would not now be sixteen throneless monarchs remitted to the charities of Europe.

Mad; no more a man and a sovereign, but a beast in human form, Nebuchadnezzar tore off his gorgeous robes and the glittering insignia of his power. Strange hunger seized him; he craved the grass and rank weeds of the field for food; his human speech was exchanged for the cries of a brute. He grovelled on the earth; refused the shelter of the palace dome with its painted splendors, and the luxury of his couch; and wandered out into the dew-wet plain, under the shining stars.

There were no mad houses in those days; had this maniac been a common man, they might have cut his throat, or chained him to a pillar, to starve his fury and his life out together. But no one could coerce the Babylonian despot, even when he was lost to his humanity; he must have his own way, mad or sane. Medicine, in those days, was the least understood of the sciences. The royal physicians had no remedy for this case, but a hope that like would cure like; and that being turned adrift among his beastly compeers, he would soon get enough of it.

Another king might have here lost all his future; some usurper would have seized his abandoned state, and have put an end to the rabid sovereign. But the care of this man's dominion was with God, and the decree was that the kingdom should be sure unto him. He had sinned in a high place; he was to repent, and do better on the same lofty eminence.

The Lord works by natural causes; he had girt the royalty of 'Nebuchadnezzar with the love of his subjects, the devotion of a high-spirited wife, whose hands were not too weak to hold the reins of government; a prime minister such as Daniel; and a sure prophecy that seven years should end the direful visitation, and restore the man, not only to himself, but to a nobler estate.

Thus the Scripture records, "He was driven from men; and did eat grass with the oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown as eagles' feathers, and his nails as birds' claws."

Ah, how the Head of Gold had fallen! Who that came by, would believe that this was Nebuchadnezzar, chief of the kings of the earth? When was royalty so debased, so shorn of its beams? The nations may now look upon him narrowly, and say, "Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, and did shake kingdoms? All the kings of the earth lie in glory, even every one of them in his own house, but thou art cast out like an abominable branch, as a carcass trodden under feet."

He who would have set his throne among the stars was cut down; his courtiers could cry:

> "If thou beest he, but oh, how fallen! how changed
> From him who, in the happy realms of light,
> Clothed with transcendant brightness, didst outshine
> Myriads though bright!"

Seven years thus pass, when as suddenly as his reason fled, it returns in full strength. His last mental act had been self-glorification; his first use of returned intelligence is adoration of God; truly affliction had worked in him some very excellent fruits.

Wisdom and voice came back together. He is alone in the

wild. Beasts are his only comrades; winds whisper, leaves rustle, the skies shine over Babylon; he lifts his eyes, his heart rises to heights of joy before unknown, he sees his fallen estate and appreciates his coming exaltation; and he cries aloud, "blessing, praising and honoring the Most High who liveth forever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom from generation to generation." He has reached now the fulness of the lesson set him. He acknowledges, "He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?"

The last words of this king recorded in Scripture are a glorious outpouring of penitence and praise: "I extol and honor the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase."

It was worth a terrible experience fully to have learned this lesson; having laid it to heart, we may hope the throne of Chaldea was to this grand monarch the stepping-stone to a higher kingdom; and that the close of his reign on earth marked the beginning of his reign with God.

During the sovereign's incapacity his wife held the power for him; his son and successor made an effort to forestall his future inheritance, but the revolt was suppressed. Nebuchadnezzar found ready for him a kingdom which, during the seven years of his own aberration, had only grown in strength and glory. The remainder of his reign was but added prosperity; the sun which had risen so bright, which had had so glorious a march through heaven, obscured but by one swift tempest, which rolled away and left the sovereign orb in full effulgence, wheeled to setting with unshorn magnificence, and went down without a cloud.

After a reign of forty-four years, Nebuchadnezzar died, aged eighty. With him perished the real strength and glory of Chaldea. His two successors, weak and wicked, lost what their royal parent had gained. Foes besieged the city, the Euphrates itself turned traitor; conqueror after conqueror passed his hosts through glorious Babylon but to spoil and destroy. None who went against the golden city, went in vain. He who stood whole nights on his watchtower, "saw a chariot with a couple of horse-men, and he answered and said, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, and all the graven images of her gods are broken to the ground."

Babylon, as foretold by Jeremiah, "has become an astonishment among the nations. Her cities are a desolation, a dry land and a wilderness; a land where no man dwelleth, neither doth any son of man pass thereby."

Isaiah delivered a kindred prophecy, which is every whit fulfilled: "The wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there; and the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant palaces."

At this day, Babylon is a place of deserted heaps; the Arabs, full of superstitious fear, will not camp upon the spot accursed. The mighty fabric of empire raised by Nebuchadnezzar has melted away like cloudy tower and battlement, painted on a sunset sky. To her half-forgotten site wanders the lonely antiquarian, to question of the past. On scatttered bricks and broken base and pilaster; on crumbled wall and ruined aqueduct and arch, he reads the name which once bowed the knees of nations—Nebuchadnezzar. He hears the bittern cry, and the owl hoot along Birs Nimroud; he turns, with his pick, the earth, piled into strange tumuli, and he finds these hillocks the grave of a

nation, the sepulchre of a once regnant race. Above them grow bending grasses with evanescent flowers, and small blue and starry blossoms, and as they bloom they write the kingdom's epitaph:

"LO THIS IS THE NATION THAT MADE NOT GOD HER TRUST!"

XXII.

DANIEL,

THE SAINTLY COURTIER.

GOD never puts a man in a position so trying that it is beyond the power of divine grace to sustain him. The Strengthening Spirit is infinite; the cares, vanities, trials, and seductions of earth are finite. With every temptation there is opened a way of escape. The reason of so many failures is, that men will not see or accept the opportunity of safety. One man proclaims that if he were not so persecuted, tried and baffled, he would be a shining light among Christians. Another cries out, that he has been forced to a position so eminent, is so laden with cares of state, the exactions of society, and the expectations of the public, that he cannot find a calm hour to make his peace with God, nor a quiet path wherein to walk, as he truly wishes he might do, toward heaven.

There is a man in Scripture, Daniel by name, who shows us how the most persecuted, threatened, distracted human soul, can cast its cares on God, and walk with him, serene on lofty heights in most glorious fellowship. And by a turn in his fortunes, this same man exemplifies how no sounding honors, no pomp of circumstance, no beguilings of sin, no braggart voice of society, can hedge out the heart from that garden of peace, the constant presence of the Lord; can quell the high spirit seeking duty only; can make the dross of earth outweigh the fine gold of the city that hath foundations.

The scene of this story is Babylon in Chaldea; the time about six centuries before Christ.

At this period, Babylon was the most luxurious and cultivated city upon earth. The foundations of Babylon were laid by Nimrod, the mighty hunter and rebel before the Lord. The metropolis stood upon the plain of Shinar. Like fairest fruits, it matured slowly; Erech, Ur, and Ellasar outstripped it at the first, but these were blotted from the earth when stately Babylon was queen of nations. After the foundations of the tower of Babel were laid, the plain of Shinar was the scene of the most tremendous revolution in all the history of the world. There were gathered the descendants of Ham, and very many of the children of Shem. Probably the family of Arphaxad remained in upper Mesopotamia withdrawn from the builders of the plain.

A paragraph from William Osburn's "Ancient Egypt" gives a vivid picture of the terror and the inward compulsion when God drove asunder the nations of the earth. "The fathers of Ancient Egypt first journeyed thither, across the Isthmus of Suez, taking with them the worship of the setting sun. How is it possible to resist the conclusion that they came thither from the plains of Babel, at the first dispersion of mankind, and that the civilization of Egypt was derived from the banks of the Euphrates? They marched westward before the mysterious impulse which drove them from the fertile plain of Shinar. They fled before it, nor dared to tarry on the grassy slope of Jordan, nor in the shady valleys of Judah, nor by the waters of Shiloh which flow softly. The voice of a greater than man sounded in their ears; the terror of an invincible power awed their spirits, and they dared not disobey. They braved perils and privations over an unknown desert before the same fearful impulse, nor were they ever allowed to rest, until they had reached the uttermost borders of the land which He who pursued them had destined them to people."

Thus also fled the Canaanites, and the people who filled Ethiopia and Havilah. At Babel were left those who spread themselves over Mesopotamia, founded Nineveh, and peopled Assyria.

Speaking of the Scriptural account of the tower of Babel, Hereen says: "There is perhaps nowhere else to be found a narrative so venerable for its antiquity, or so important in the history of civilization, in which we have at once preserved the traces of primeval international commerce, the first political associations, and the first erection of secure and permanent dwellings."

On the plains of Shinar the descendants of Asshur, the second son of Shem, united with the children of Ham. The Hamitic was emphatically the building race, as the line of Cain had been before them. While other nations wandered far and long, the early Chaldeans remained in their first home, and filled the land with cities. Slow of growth as Babylon itself, the Chaldeans reached by degrees a power, strength and culture which made them lords of the world. They were a progressive people; in all their works they made sure advancement. Egypt, on the contrary, suddenly blossomed into its best, and then degenerated.

The Babylonians used the arch; made aqueducts and tunnels; understood the lever and roller; engraved jewels; manufactured glass; were acquainted with the lens; and practised the arts of enamelling, inlaying and overlaying metals; they lived luxuriously; they were bold in war; learned in sciences; prosperous in wealth, strength, commerce and resources.

While thus far cultivated and enlightened, they were in other respects barbarians; their government was rude and despotic; their religion grossly sensual; their art materialistic. They served their day, and the purpose for which God made them a nation; they by their very errors prepared the way in the East for centralized government; and were God's scourge upon Jacob.

Executing their mission of wrath against Judah, in the third year of Jehoiakim, Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem, and took with him to Babylon many of the noblest families.

Among the captives was a youth named Daniel. We know nothing of his parentage, except the hint that it was royal, or very noble; for the order of the king of Babylon was, that "from the king's seed and the princes" should be chosen certain especially bright and beautiful children, to be trained "to stand before the king."

Among the children so selected was this Daniel, of gentle blood, fair face, and noble intellectual endowments.

Some careful parents must have cherished his infancy; for when taken from his home, he knew the Jewish law, and purposed to keep it.

Among other rare traits, the youth possessed, in a high degree, the power of pleasing; a courtly grace, a happy faculty of expressing himself; an engaging frankness, and a most wonderful gift of persuasion, seem to have more than justified the choice of Ashpenaz, when he took him to be trained from his early days as a courtier.

The atmosphere of courts has never been deemed conducive to piety, particularly in the young. Of all courts, that of Babylon, the arrogant, luxurious and idolatrous, was least likely to be the nurse of holiness.

Early privations and sufferings may mould a soul into patience, humility, faith and obedience; but to be early served, and pampered, and flattered, is far less likely to develop good moral qualities. Out of long tribulations, a man may come matured and purified, enabled to resist temptations, and hold fast his integrity.

To be taught in childhood paganism, despotism, and how to gratify the ear of kings, is a strange preparation for a manhood of sobriety, industry, and the fear of God.

Alone—separated from familiar faces, far from the wise mentors of infancy; shut out from the hearing of the law of his Lord, Daniel not only preserves the integrity of his spirit, but grows in heavenly wisdom, prays without ceasing, speeds onward in the way to Heaven, and takes with him those dearest friends, his fellow captives, his kinsmen, according to the flesh no doubt, who followed all the heavenward leadings of his stronger spirit.

Martyr souls were they, ready to die, if need be, for their faith, yet able to live and maintain that faith in the midst of the most voluptuous court in the world.

It was a common custom of Assyrian kings to forcibly remove the whole, or most important portion, of the population of conquered nations to distant parts of their kingdom. The city Babylon overflowed with Jews, Egyptians, Phœnicians, Syrians and Moabites. The Babylonians were themselves a mixed race, and this continual introduction of foreign elements fully justifies the term Jeremiah applies to them—"the mingled people."

The education of Daniel first attracts our attention. The command of the king was, that during three years he should be carefully instructed "in the learning and tongue of the Chaldeans." This includes also the Chaldean manners, customs, beliefs and prevailing ideas—none of which, in a human view, appear suitable pabulum for the mental and moral development of a prophet of the Lord.

The Chaldeans were deeply religious; their Bel worship was part and parcel of every thought and act of their lives. This is indicated by the size of their temples; the devices of their seals and signets; the remains of their painting and sculpture; the names of their children; even by their banquets, where they sang the praises of their gods over their wine cups.

The life of Daniel at Babylon was initiated by a change of his Hebrew name to one compounded with that of Bel, the ruling

divinity of Chaldea. Doubtless the high soul of the Jewish boy rebelled sorely against this imposition.

One of the principal themes of instruction at Babylon would be the Assyrian religion. Next after this would come the national morals.

Nicolas, of Damascus, says that the Babylonians especially cultivated two virtues—*honesty* and *calmness;* both of these would commend themselves to Daniel, and we see the fruits of an early training in them, in his after life.

In astronomy, the Chaldeans were the teachers of the world; and to this grand science Daniel doubtless devoted much of his time. We can imagine the beautiful Hebrew youth standing among the ancient sages on the summit of the mighty tower of Bel, watching the evolutions of the planets in the midnight sky, and tracing the constellations. Each star he is told has its influence on human destiny; each one possesses some strange power upon our mortal life; the Heavens are divided into *houses;* the instant of an individual's birth was a *theme;* and from the starry house, and its planet lord, a man's life was to be forecast.

Daniel listens submissively, but there is a song in his heart—the song whose glorious cadences echoed once through the temple. "When I consider the heavens the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained, what is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou visitest him?"

David, watching his sheep on the Judean plain, grew in the knowledge of his God; and the prisoner Daniel, on the Tower of Belus, shall use the lore of David as his armor against the enchantments of a false faith. "The Heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork: day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge." And then Daniel remembers the law of the Lord, which is perfect, sure, and holy. "Praise him, ye sun and moon: praise him,

all ye stars of light. Fire and hail, snow and vapour, stormy wind, fulfilling his word."

Thus Daniel kept his heart while he was the pupil of the priests of Belus. "These priests," says Diodorus Siculus, "were devoted to the pursuit of learning. They guarded the temple, served the gods, studied the skies, read omens, explained visions; and no man questioned of their wisdom."

We see from the narrative in the Scripture, that Daniel was made a member of one of the Babylonish sacred orders, and here the ignorance of unbelievers has raised a loud outcry. A Jew become a member of the Chaldaic priesthood! Impossible. The story is a romance!

Not so. In Babylon, as in Persia and Egypt, there was a peculiar class of priestly philosophers to which foreigners were admitted, if learned enough to attain the highest privileges. A body at once sacerdotal and learned, they studied history, astronomy, chronology, grammar and law; but chiefly astrology.

For admission to this order, Daniel was three years in training, that he might stand an accomplished astrologer before the king.

Beauty, however, was a qualification almost as necessary to a Chaldean courtier as learning; therefore, the teachers of Daniel devoted themselves to his physical training as assiduously as to his mental culture.

The diet of the Babylonian court was luxurious: fruit, milk, vegetables; fish, game and choice meats, with unlimited quantities of wine, were daily served at the king's board; and from thence a portion was sent to the captive pupils of the priests, that they might grow "fat and fair," and that their "countenances might be in good liking."

Daniel, however, knew that idolatrous ceremonies and consecrations were supposed to have made the king's food more nutritious; and also that there would be mingled with it such food as

was unclean to a Hebrew, and especially that the flesh would have been killed in a manner to render it impure to an observer of Mosaic law.

These matters he laid before his companions, and with wonderful self-denial they resolved to abstain from royal dainties, and eat such common food and fruit as was beneath the pampered appetites of Chaldean rioters.

Melzar was tutor of these four Hebrew lads, and the affection which they excited in his heart, together with the earnestness, piety, and discretion of their appeal to him, show us these lads as already singularly mature and attractive.

A blessing followed their pious resolve: they were favored with unusual health of body and cheerfulness of heart: quiet consciences shone in the beauty of their faces, and with untroubled spirits and untainted blood, their minds were left free and active, so that, at the end of three years, the four Jews stood peerless before the king; wiser than all their teachers, brave, ready, acute, yet gracious and persuasive; "and in all matters of wisdom and understanding that the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in his realm."

Daniel entered upon his life as a courtier after three years of captivity. All the temptations and false teachings of these years had in no wise sullied the simplicity and purity of his spirit. His calmness in danger is shown in his gentle and reasonable remonstrance with Arioch, captain of the guard, who at the order of a furious despot, had come to behead him. His winning eloquence stays the hand of the executioner, and gains a reprieve from Nebuchadnezzar. His prayerful faith, his entire dependence upon the God of his fathers, are exhibited in his consultation with his three comrades, and the night of prayer that ensues. His ascription of praise to God, when his supplications are answered, is evidence of the most ardent piety.

Thus the youthful exile entered upon the trying duties of his manhood, eminent in holiness. Of his religion he made no secret. He says to the king plainly, "There is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets and maketh known to king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days." This, his God, he elevates at once over Belus and his mouthpieces and servants, the magicians and astrologers. And as he immediately gives proof of the supremacy of the God whom he adores, Nebuchadnezzar accepts it humbly.

He preaches the coming dominion of the God of heaven, who shall reign over the conquered empires of the earth; and preaches it with such eloquence, simplicity and sincerity, that the truth is fully impressed upon the mind of the king. There is no ring of the coward in the brave words:

"And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever."

Never was a courtier so honored in the beginning of his career as this Daniel; for, impressed with his divine wisdom, Nebuchadnezzar, the greatest potentate of the earth, "fell upon his face and worshipped Daniel, and commanded that they should offer an oblation and sweet odors unto him." Treated thus as a god, Daniel did not for one moment lose his sobriety, humility and frankness as a man; and he had instant need of every virtue which humanity can possess, for the king loaded him with gifts, and then made him ruler over the royal province of Babylon, and chief of the governors of the Magi. Firm in his friendships, Daniel took but one advantage of this bountiful kindness of the king; he remembered the graces and learning of his three dear friends, and petitioned for their advancement. Nebuchadnezzar at once gave them lofty positions in the state, but kept Daniel in his palace, to counsel him in every emergency.

We find that Daniel passed much of his time at Susa, or Shushan, a royal city, where was a favorite palace of the kings of Babylon; and he may have been administering the affairs of that part of the kingdom, at the time of the famous trial of the integrity of the three Hebrew princes, who would not obey king Nebuchadnezzar, "to worship the golden image which he had set up."

The friendship of Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar seems to have been very sincere; it is especially shown in the interpretation of the king's sadly significant dream of the fallen forest tree.

This dream occurred probably within the last twelve years of Nebuchadnezzar's life. The reign of Nebuchadnezzar lasted forty-four years. Daniel was carried into captivity during the first or second year of Nebuchadnezzar. He seems to have been absent from Babylon, doubtless acting as governor or viceroy for his king, when that fatal dream disturbed the royal peace, and Daniel, the gifted, was called to relieve his sovereign's perplexity. During this long period of his public life, Daniel had grown in grace and holiness, for Ezekiel, whose captivity and prophecy occurred within this time, mentions him twice as conspicuous for purity and knowledge; setting him with Noah and Job, those great types of godly living, and favorites of Heaven. "Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord."

The scene when Nebuchadnezzar narrates his dream is one of surpassing interest. The two friends, the mighty king and his chief counsellor, are alone. When the vision has been told, excess of grief keeps Daniel for one hour speechless. It is not fear that binds his tongue, as we shall soon see, but it is anguish of soul, that one whom he loves, and for much admires, has, by his sins, incurred the so heavy wrath of Heaven, that he must now unfold and presently witness this sore affliction.

The king, seeing his friend's trouble, comforts and encourages him: "Belteshazzar, let not the dream, nor the interpretation thereof, trouble thee." "My lord," says the gracious Daniel, and the true love of the friend rings through the suavity of the courtier, "let the dream be to them that hate thee, and the interpretation thereof to thine enemies."

For more than forty years Daniel was in the court of Nebuchadnezzar. At the death of that great monarch, the most troubled period of Daniel's life began. Evil-Merodach, the son of Nebuchadnezzar, succeeded to the throne. There are various traditions of this unhappy prince. One account is, that during his father's insanity, Evil-Merodach attempted to seize the government, and was cast into prison, where he contracted a friendship for Jehoiachin, which resulted in his delivering that king from his long captivity as soon as he had power to do so. There is also a tradition, that from intercourse with Jews and other strangers in his land, Evil-Merodach had begun to think lightly of his own religion, and despise the priests, whose hatred he aroused by curtailing their powers and privileges. The circumstance of his particularly honoring Jehoiachin and making him his favorite companion, may have given rise to suspicions that he was departing from the ancient policy of the kingdom, and was giving precedence and authority to strangers instead of to his legitimate subjects. After a reign of two years, Evil-Merodach was deposed during a revolt headed by Nerigilisser his brother-in-law.

This man had acquired popularity and prestige in three ways: he was the son-in-law of the famous Nebuchadnezzar, and, in Chaldea, princesses had royal rights, and not unfrequently came to the throne; he was an experienced warrior, and had conducted the siege of Jerusalem, which is mentioned by Jeremiah as beginning in the ninth year of Zedekiah. He had also gained influence as a Rab-Mag, which is chief of the magicians.

This Nerigilisser reigned four years, and dying, left the empire to his son, Laborsoracus, a poor, unhappy boy, who paid with his life for his father's usurpation of royal authority. This luckless creature reigned but nine months, and is said to have been put to death by torture. Thus, after a period of seventy years, the kingdom left the family of Nabopolasser.

Nabonadius now succeeded to the throne; he was a conspirator, who had also been Rab-Mag, and bricks are now found among Babylonian ruins where this title is appended to his name. There is reason to suppose that he married a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar, very likely the widow of Nerigilisser and mother of the murdered boy king.

Thus Daniel saw the reign of five Babylonian sovereigns, the last four following one another in quick succession, amid the uproar of conspiracies and revolts.

For many years the foes of the Bible made a grand difficulty of the story of Belshazzar and his reign in Babylon. The monuments, they cried, the bricks, the stamped cylinders, mention no such king, and the history of his rioting and death was a gross fabrication to exalt the name of Daniel.

The researches of Rawlinson gloriously vindicated the statements of the Scriptures. The bricks and cylinders after a burial of centuries came forth from their graves, to testify against those who appealed to them to destroy the truth of God. These exhumed records of the Chaldeans show that Nabonadius had by his wife—probably the daughter of Nebuchadnezzar—a son Belshazzar, or Bil-shar-uzzar, who was therefore by his mother's side a grandson of Nebuchadnezzar. This prince, Nabonadius early associated with himself in the government; gave him the title of king, and established him at Babylon, with his mother for his chief adviser.

While this young, inexperienced and dissolute prince was in possession of royal authority at Babylon, Cyrus came to besiege the

city. Nabonadius hastening to the rescue of his son and capital, was defeated by the Persian army, and forced to retire to Borsippa.

We have now reached the time of Belshazzar's feast, and the return of Daniel to the story of the kingdom. Belshazzar, aided by the counsels of his mother, and experienced ministers of State, and supported by a numerous and well-disciplined army, for a long time defied the besiegers. The strength of Babylon seemed impregnable, its resources inexhaustible; through all the city the tide of life and its ordinary avocations flowed on, careless of the presence of the mighty host at the gates.

Since the death of Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel, already past middle life, had apparently retired to a private station. The ribald conspirators, and jealous magicians who seized the kingdom saw nothing desirable in that grand life which, bent on duty only, pursued its steady way,

"Like some calm planet shining thro' the night."

Removed from the distractions of the court, Daniel now doubtless was living the happiest part of his life. Ambitious men would have fretted over loss of power and honor; worldly men would have looked back with longing to those "flesh-pots of Egypt," the glitter, luxury and mirth of the palace. Daniel, dismissed by earthly sovereigns, devoted himself with renewed ardor to waiting upon the King of kings. The neglected courtier of Babylon became more than ever the courtier of the skies; he who once governed the royal province, and made laws for "the mingled people," now gave himself to strengthening the hands of the exiled Israelites; animating their faith; and reviving their love for Zion, city of God, Jerusalem the joy of the whole earth. Dearest and brightest memory of Daniel's life was the city of David; the glorious temple of Solomon, now fallen in ruins; the towers and bulwarks, the porches and gardens, the groves and houses of cedar, which orna-

mented the home of his fathers; and whose glory had been the theme on which their lips had best loved to dwell.

The splendors of Babylon, her imperial purple, crimson and gold, had never outvied the lovely radiance of those scenes of childhood. The old man remembered Jerusalem, and as he recalled each walk and way, he heard again the sound of the silver trumpets, and the glad chorus of singing priests; he heard the prayers, saw the smoke of the daily sacrifice; saw the fragrant clouds of incense, the symbolical robes, and listened to the voice of benediction. He heard the swelling of the Songs of Degrees, and saw the multitudes thronging to the Holy City for the festivals.

Oh happy days which should come again to those young men and children of Judah who now dwelt in Babylon; never to him the exiled prophet, the saintly courtier, who had grown old and gray in his captivity. He went among his people infusing his own loving, faithful spirit, wherever he spoke of the approaching restoration; he instructed them to pray looking to Jerusalem, as Solomon had taught at the dedication of the Temple. The great mind which had administered the affairs of millions, now was occupied in cultivating piety and patriotism in his countrymen. The prophecies of release from captivity after seventy years; of the sudden surprise and fall of Babylon, and of Cyrus as a deliverer, were kept before the Jews by Daniel.

For the most part, the Jews were well treated in Babylon; many of them amassed wealth, and were advanced to high positions. But in the heart of the Jew religion and patriotism were closely wedded; Zion was a spot so sacred that no other could be like it; there the blessing was to descend on the nation; there prayer was especially heard; there shone the glory of God; there only the Jew could worship in the manner of his fathers. From all those captives by the Euphrates went up the voice of lamentation:

"May this right hand, whose skill
Can wake the harp at will,
And bid the listeners' joys or griefs in light or darkness come,
Forget its godlike power,
If for one brief dark hour,
My heart forgets Jerusalem, fallen city of my home!"

And now for two years, Cyrus the son of prophecy, whom God had called as his "Shepherd" more than a century and a half before his birth, had been investing the city Babylon, and storming her frowning walls.

Grown reckless in his confidence, Belshazzar remitted his watchfulness and gave himself to revelry.

A fatal night came, in which he made a feast to a thousand of his lords. "The king and his princes, his wives and his concubines," are enumerated as drinking together at this feast. "They drank wine and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone."

All this is in strict accordance with what we learn elsewhere of Assyrian customs. Ahasuerus (Xerxes I.) made a feast for all his nobles and princes, which lasted one hundred and eighty days; at the conclusion of which he feasted all the citizens of Susa for seven days.

It was the custom at feasts to celebrate the praises of the gods in songs, as they drank their wine. The Babylonians were greatly given to excess in drinking; in banquet halls elegantly furnished they reclined on world-famous carpets; were clad in gorgeous garments of silk, linen, woolen and cloth of gold; they wore jewels and trinkets without number; shone in all the dyes of the rainbow; and to the sound of music, which accompanied every feast, they rioted for hours. Ctesias says that one nobleman entertained his guests with the songs of one hundred and fifty women who sang in chorus. At these Assyrian feasts women were always present, and instead of being a check upon the confusion, they drank

as deeply as their companions, and added to the wild abandonment of the Bacchanal.

In the midst of such a scene, Belshazzar saw upon the opposite wall the hand of an uninvited guest, tracing words that none could read. Across the brilliant paintings on the wall ran lines of livid light, a ghostly presage of doom. Above the din of revelry rang the wild cry of the frantic king, calling for his magicians, astrologers and soothsayers. Before that terrible inscription they stood dumb; and now an awful silence filled the banquet room, and pallid faces were lifted toward the writing on the wall.

There was one person in the palace who had held aloof from the ribald and inauspicious glee of that night.

The queen-mother, in her own apartment, brooded over memories of the past, and nursed fears for the future. In her early days she had seen much of Daniel, her royal father's friend. She had heard of the Lord God of Israel, whose word never fails, and she knew what his prophets had spoken of the fate of Babylon. She remembered that after the fall of the "Head of Gold," another inferior kingdom should arise in its stead, and now the mighty fabric of Chaldean power seemed hastening to decay.

In the midst of her anxious musing comes to her word of the supernatural appearance in the hall of feasting. A spectral hand, with a pen dipped in fire, writes ceaselessly four words, that none can read. The wise men are helpless; the courtiers are aghast; the wives and the concubines are phrensied with terror; the king trembles like an aspen, cannot rise from his couch, and with pallid lips cries out for some one to interpret the mystery.

At once the royal mother hastens to her son. With tenderness she reassures him; she has maternal love for this base, riotous youth, the victim of her own godless training: "O king, live forever. There is a man in thy kingdom in whom is the spirit of the holy gods . . . and in the days of thy father, light and under-

standing and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, was found in him."

She, therefore, sends messengers to the humble home of the ex-courtier, and with haste they bring him before the affrighted king.

Belshazzar had evidently never met Daniel. He looks at the old man, clad in a plain Jewish garb, and wonders if this is he who ruled provinces; swayed the counsels of Nebuchadnezzar; governed the Magi, and had an oblation offered unto him as if he were a god.

"Art thou," he cries, "that Daniel which art of the children of the captivity of Judah, whom the king, my father, brought out of Jewry? I have heard of thee, that the spirit of the gods is in thee."

Belshazzar knows of but one ruling motive for the human soul —*self-interest.* He endeavors to excite this in Daniel, that he may serve him well. He details his perplexities, and finally adds: "Now if thou canst read the writing, and make known to me the interpretation thereof, thou shalt be clothed in scarlet, and have a chain of gold about thy neck, and shalt be third ruler in the kingdom."

Daniel had loved and revered Nebuchadnezzar, his benefactor and friend, who had had some lofty virtues; this effete Belshazzar, this drunken debauched viceroy of Nabonadius, who has this very night offered gross and deliberate insult to the King of Heaven, in that he has taken the holy vessels of the ravished Temple of Jerusalem, and given them to harlots, that in them they may drink to Belus and Ashtoreth, Daniel's soul abhors. He replies, with lofty calmness: "Let thy gifts be to thyself, and thy rewards to another."

Daniel knows well that when bad men reign, "the post of honor is a private station."

Standing before that eager, gorgeous, fearful throng, the thousand lords, the women of the harem, the myriads of servants, and before the quailing, awe struck king, Daniel rehearses Nebuchadnezzar's sin and fall. He then reproaches Belshazzar for his crimes, culminating in this defilement of the holy utensils of the house of God.

Then turning to the wall, he sees the writing hand withdrawn, and the four weighty words left, that contain the doom of Babylon.

In a profound hush, Daniel read the message from on High. Belshazzar was weighed, and found wanting; his kingdom was already divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.

Already obsequious slaves had brought the ordered reward. They wrapped about Daniel the scarlet robe, hung upon his neck the golden insignia of office, and leading him forth from the palace, proclaimed him third ruler in the kingdom.

An empty honor—for already the treacherous river had betrayed its trust; a tide of human life flowed through its bed; the armed heels of Medes and Persians rang on the paved ways; their steel-cased forms climbed the waterside stairs, and pressed a silent and triumphant host toward that banquet house, where they would pour out Babylonian blood more freely than wine had flowed into the golden cups sacred to Judah's God.

Morning dawned. The Mother of Kingdoms, the Glory of the Chaldees, had changed rulers. Belshazzar was dead; his people were conquered; his courtiers were banished; his servants owned another lord. Darius, the ally and satrap of Cyrus, reigned on the throne of Nabopolassar.

Perhaps the fame of Daniel had spread through Media and Persia; perhaps the strange story of that night of doom reached the new monarch's ears; perhaps the queen-mother, who had remembered Daniel, was taken into the confidence of Darius, and spoke to him of her great father's favorite friend.

However this may be, Darius at once set about remodelling his kingdom, and Daniel was suddenly restored to all his former glory; becoming second ruler in the kingdom.

Darius set over his new domain one hundred and twenty princes; over these three presidents; and of these presidents, Daniel was first. "This Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm."

A child, in captivity and temptation, Daniel had been firm and pious; a man in the allurements of a court, flattered, wealthy, surrounded with heathenism and immorality, he had been diligent in business; humble before God; brave for truth, and pure in life. Cast suddenly from wealth to poverty, from splendor to obscurity, from honor to neglect, Daniel pursued the even tenor of his way; was righteous in the eyes of his Maker; stood apart from sin; was content; was simple in manner, and religious in practice, neither desiring nor accepting rewards.

Now swept from this quiet nook, where his virtues had thrived in secret, he is carried at once to the very pinnacle of power. The heart of the king was set on him; he lived in the sunshine of royal favor; a hundred and twenty provinces took their law from his lips; he dwelt in the palace; and those who would win favor with the monarch, must seek it through Daniel.

In all this business care and royal display, he finds—as few men do—time to be religious. He does not hide his piety; his is an unpopular religion, not the gorgeous worship of Bel, but the austere service of a captive nation; the adoration of that Invisible One, whose children have languished in bondage these many years.

Wonderful concession is this of his enemies! Here is a public man, whose integrity and industry are such that his foes say of him: "We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God!"

Daniel knows the machinations of his foes. He has lived for God, now he is willing to die for Him.

There are occasions when concealment is a crime. Here is one of them: and Daniel, as is his wont, kneels three times a day with his face toward beloved and desolated Jerusalem, and cries to God for help in all his need. From this Supernal Source, the saintly courtier gained his wisdom, his benevolence, his probity, all which made him invaluable to the state. He knew that that open window about which enemies waited, was as the open mouths of hungry monsters, yawning to destroy him.

Kneeling there, God was with him. Just as a little time after God was with him in that fearful den of lions, where he sat safely shadowed by the King of kings; and while Darius, the Mede, wept in his palace, and the sounds of mirth were hushed, Daniel, in peaceful contemplation, had foretaste of the time when none shall hurt or destroy in all God's holy mountain.

Thus tried by persecution, Daniel was steadfast still, and after this the Scripture tells us he prospered until the reign of Cyrus. Thus was Daniel in Babylonia under seven kings, maintaining through every strange change in his circumstances an unvarying righteousness of walk and conversation.

Most honored of courtiers, he was also one of God's great triumvirate of typical holy men; and as a prophet united the gifts of his cotemporaries in the Old Testament, with the Apocalyptic visions of John, the latest seer.

The first vision which this prophet records, came to him in his retirement, during the first year of Belshazzar; the revelation was a mighty bridge of light, built from the days of Daniel, springing with a glorious arch the stream of time, and completing its span with the glory which shall be revealed when the Son of Man shall have come into his kingdom.

In the third year of Belshazzar's reign in Babylon, Daniel seems to have been for a time at Susa, perhaps engaged in some business for king Nabonadius, Belshazzar's father. Here he had another vision, in which events are set forth with such clearness and precision that they appear rather as a history of what is past than a prophecy of the future.

In the first year of "Darius the Mede," (Cyaxares II.,) Daniel tells us that he set himself to a careful study of the books of Jeremiah with a view to ascertain the length of the captivity, and the "time of the end." This study he accompanied with humiliation, fasting and prayer; making confession for himself and for his people, and beseeching the favor of God.

In Daniel's prayerfulness was his strength. We see him praying in prosperity and in adversity; in joy and in danger; in doubt and in the midst of business. He prays when the decree has gone forth to slay him; in the den of lions; in the palace; about the king's business; in the midst of siege, and in the silence of the night.

His mission to Darius is not the ordinary mission of courtiers, he stood before the king "to confirm and to strengthen him." This was his idea of his office to Nebuchadnezzar also, and to Cyrus, mighty despots, before whom a world trembled. He showed them the right way, upheld the law of his Lord, and dared exhort them, "Break off thy sins by righteousness." Such was his influence that he made these monarchs preachers of holiness in their dominions. Nebuchadnezzar did public honor to the "King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment." Darius made a decree that, "in every dominion of my kingdom, men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel; for He is the Living God, and steadfast forever."

Daniel never seemed distressed by any of his own varied fortunes, but for the afflictions of his nation he fasted and wept; his

countenance was changed as he foresaw their final dispersion. "He fainted and was sick," as he beheld afar off the cruelties practised by Antiochus Epiphanes. The last recorded vision of Daniel is in the third year of Cyrus. Two years before this had gone forth the famous decree for the return of the Jews and the rebuilding of the city and Temple.

At this time Daniel must have been nearly ninety years old: too aged to undertake the long journey across the plains from Euphrates to Judea, and doubtless also more needed by his people as their friend in power, their advocate beside the king, than as their companion on the way to Jerusalem.

The city of Zion to him should be only a memory, like his mother's face, vanished with those innocent delights of childhood, before he became a stranger in Chaldea. But what of this? A voice celestial had sounded in his ears, "O man, greatly beloved, fear not: peace be to thee; be strong, yea, be strong."

Then had he taken heart of grace and made answer: "Let my Lord speak; for thou hast strengthened me."

"Blessed is he that waiteth," had the Lord said to Daniel; "but go thy way, till the end be; for thou shalt rest and stand in thy lot at the end of the days."

After a life so long and so busy, rest was sweet; he found it in Assyrian soil, but he had reached the true Mount Zion, the glorious Land, the City of the Living, the Jerusalem whose Temple is the Lord her God.

The Life of Daniel shows us that there is no situation, whether lofty or lowly, where it is impossible for men to maintain the fear and service of their God. Daniel, during his long life, filled almost every possible position, a prisoner, a prime minister, a private citizen, a prophet; and in all he kept unsullied his Christian character, and shed abroad the light of a pure and devout spirit.

There is nigh to every man a fountain of help and strength sufficient to his need; there is ever open a hearing ear, and outstretched a guiding hand, for all the sons of men in life's tortuous way; and, after the tumult, toil and pain, come to the trusting, patient spirit, the everlasting rejoicing, the rest in the presence of the King of Glory.

XXIII.

NEHEMIAH.

THE PATRIOTISM OF RELIGION.

THE history of Nehemiah must begin with a glance at the Jewish fortunes from the days of Daniel. The first year of the reign of Cyrus at Babylon was signalized by that great act for which God had especially called him to the kingdom—the Restoration of the Jews.

Agreeably to its usual policy, the Chaldean nation had so well treated the captive people, that only a remnant of the great tribe of Judah returned to desolated Jerusalem. This remnant was undoubtedly the very flower of Israel, the most pious, patriotic and enlightened part of the exiles. There still remained in Assyria many noble families of Jews, who maintained their own worship; and felt themselves a part of Jewry rather than of Chaldea; even while voluntarily abiding in a foreign land. The probity, learning and business tact of these men, caused them to be advanced to positions of high honor under the Persian government, and they used their influence ever in behalf of that brave band, who led the forlorn hope of Israel in re-establishing the nationality in the teeth of tremendous difficulties and opposition.

Cyrus lived for seven years after the restoration, and was succeeded by his son, Cambyses.

Several of the Persian rulers were called by the Jews Artaxerxes, a title of honor, meaning *great king:* many kings were

also named by them, *Ahasuerus*. In Ezra the fourth chapter and sixth verse, an Ahasuerus is mentioned who is doubtless Cambyses, the weak and wicked successor of the mighty Cyrus. The reign of this Cambyses lasted seven years. Amid the tumult and anarchy occasioned by his outrageous despotism, it was very easy for the enemies of the Jews to obtain a reversal of the edicts of Cyrus; and thus the building of the Temple was stopped, and the city was left without walls.

Cambyses was succeeded by the usurper Smerdis the Magian, who endeavored to personate Smerdis, the son of Cyrus, who had been privately murdered. This Magian is called Artaxerxes in Ezra, fourth chapter and seventh verse. His reign lasted only eight months, but during this time the active foes of Israel obtained from him a decree against the work at Jerusalem, which still further embarrassed and discouraged the returned people.

The treachery of Smerdis having been discovered, he was assassinated, and Darius, the son of Hystaspes, was made king.

Darius was a disciple of Zoroaster, the reformer of the Magian religion. The school of Zoroaster had imbibed many of its opinions from the Jewish captives. Hystaspes, the father of Darius, had been a favored officer of King Cyrus, and could not possibly have failed to know Daniel, the chief minister of state, and *archimagus*, or governor of the Magians. Indeed, the wisdom of Daniel had passed into such high repute that, as we see from Ezekiel, it became a proverb, "Art thou wiser than Daniel?"

To the office of archimagus, Hystaspes himself succeeded on the coronation of his son.

Thus Darius, by early associations, by religious preferences, and by his just desire to emulate the great Cyrus, was disposed to favor the Jews.

The prophets Haggai and Zechariah encouraged the leaders of the people to resume their work at the Holy City, as God had raised

them up a friend in the new sovereign. The leaders of the Restoration had been Zerubbabel, as civil ruler, and Jeshua as High Priest. The people had now been about fifteen years struggling to rebuild their homes.

An appeal against the Jews, made to Darius, caused him to search the records of the kingdom, and find the edicts of Cyrus; animated by the example of that benevolent ruler, Darius reproved the hostility of Tatnai and his confreres; and decreed to the Jews not only liberty to rebuild, but money, cattle, timber, and any assistance which they might need.

The book of Ezra is not a continuous history. Between chapters sixth and seventh, there is a hiatus of probably fifty-six years. This period begins with the seventh year of Darius, and reaches to the seventh year of his grandson, Artaxerxes Longimanus.

During this time in Persia had reigned Xerxes, the son of Darius, who is called Ahasuerus in the book of Esther. Some have considered Artaxerxes Longimanus to be this Ahasuerus, but the weight of testimony is in favor of Xerxes, as the king who divorced Vashti, and married Esther.

In this fifty-six years, Zerubbabel and Jeshua had died at Jerusalem; many, even of the Levites, had married strange wives; public order relaxed; the services of the sanctuary fell into disrepute; while misery and humiliation were the portion of the disorganized people. In the seventh year of Artaxerxes Longimanus, the son of Xerxes the Great, the Lord stirred up Ezra the scribe, of the house of Levi, to go to the aid of his brethren. Though born in Assyria, Ezra was a Jew in heart; he was scrupulously exact in the performance of Mosaic law, garnered at Zion the dearest hopes of his heart, and like all the sons of the faith, for more than three thousand years, looked "for the consolation of Israel."

Obtaining royal consent to go to Judea and strengthen his

brethren, Ezra, by means of a permissive decree, collected a host of Jews, principally of the tribes of Judah, Benjamin and Levi, to return and establish themselves in the dwellings of their forefathers. Artaxerxes, also, with his court, gave a liberal present of gold and silver to Ezra, and allowed him to invite gifts from all the province of Babylon. The departing Israelites were permitted to carry with them all their property; the descendants of Levi were decreed to be free from taxation, and the provinces beyond the Euphrates were ordered to pay to Ezra a tribute of silver, wheat, oil, wine and salt. The conclusion of this generous edict is notable: "Whatsoever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be diligently done for the house of the God of heaven; for why should there be wrath against the realm of the king and his sons?"

Ezra was a descendant of that Hilkiah, who was High Priest in the reign of good Josiah. The character of the scribe is one of great beauty; his enthusiasm for his religion, and for the land of his fathers, which leads him to abandon court favor and prospect of preferment, and to devote himself to building up the impoverished cities of Israel, an enthusiasm which could fire the souls of so many of his countrymen, and cause them to cast in their lot with his, gives us a fine picture of the Jew of the restoration. His high place in the court and in the favor of the monarch, and the entire confidence placed in his character, are evinced by the liberal donations entrusted to him.

His humility appears in his earnest ascription of praise: "Blessed be the Lord God of our fathers, which hath put such a thing into the king's heart."

His faith is shown in his simple statement that, at the river Ahava he proclaimed a fast, to seek protection from the Lord during the journey to Jerusalem; "For," he says, "I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen

to help us against the enemy in the way; for we had spoken to the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him." Thus was Ezra zealous for the honor of his Lord, and his confidence in the heavenly protection was not disappointed.

Ezra undertook the task of renovating the religious life of his people. He was not a reformer content with clipping off little twigs of error and letting radical wrongs alone. He set himself at the roots of iniquity among the Jews, and made himself an example of thorough work, for all reformers yet to come.

He was however simply a religious ruler; the Jews had no one to organize their state; no one to combat the public enemy, no one to administer civil laws, or keep them in good odor with their Persian rulers.

We have no account of the duration of Ezra's work at Jerusalem, nor of the time and place of his death. It is probable that he died during the first absence in Susa of Nehemiah, who returned to Artaxerxes after twelve years. In that time Ezra had done a great work, in turning the hearts of the people to the Lord; in reforming abuses, and in preparing a way for the energetic administration of the Tirshatha.

Among those Jews yet remaining in Assyria, was the family of Hachaliah, a man of Judah. He had been prospered in the country of his sojourn, and in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes Longimanus, Nehemiah, the son of Hachaliah, stood before the king as his cup-bearer, and favorite courtier.

In the character of Artaxerxes Longimanus, distinguished in history as a benevolent, just and discreet sovereign, we see traces of the bountiful influence of Esther and Mordecai. Artaxerxes was ever a friend of the Jews, and evidently a respecter of the God of Israel.

In the twentieth year of this king, certain Jews from Jerusalem visited Susa, at that time honored by the royal abode.

One of these was Hanani, a kinsman of Nehemiah.

These men called upon the cup-bearer, and he at once questioned them closely upon the state of affairs in Palestine, and the prosperity of the Jews.

The travellers had ill news to tell. "The remnant," said they, "that are left of the captivity are in sore affliction and reproach. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and the gates are burned with fire."

With their capital thus defenceless, in a hostile neighborhood, the Jews were in a sorry case.

Nehemiah was a wise statesman, as well as a favored courtier; and he perceived at once that the hope of his people was in fortification.

It is noticeable that the decrees of Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes had had reference to rebuilding the Temple, returning the Jews to their own land, and to their olden religion; but had given no liberty to do what was, in the circumstances, especially important, namely, to build the city walls. The people needed headquarters, a rallying point, a strongly fortified capital, looking down upon and guarding their vineyards, olive orchards and wheat fields.

Over the picture of the desolation of his fatherland, the heart of Nehemiah grew sick.

Religion is always patriotic, as it is always filial. Religion is the nurse of the noblest emotions of the human soul—and of these patriotism is one. The good man's father is God, his home is Heaven; of these his earthly parent and his earthly home are precious types; they are the stepping-stones whereon he climbs to the unseen.

The word of God carefully nourishes filial piety, and in each heart God plants the emotion, which his law is to foster as with sunshine and shower; so also is patriotism set in the soul, and

precept and example are given in Scripture, to bring the generous impulse to a noble growth. Subordination to just authority; the upholding of righteous laws; the regarding of God as the Chief over nations, and the spirit of self-sacrifice, which looks first to the greatest good of the many, are urged upon us in Holy Writ.

Especially was the Jew called to be patriotic, because when his land was formally bestowed on Abraham, the father of the race, the promise of Messiah among his sons was also given, and the land, and the coming Divine Prince, who was to be born in it, were inseparably associated in the Jewish mind. Moreover, the one true religion—the ordained system of types and shadows prefiguring the Redeeming Monarch—was planted at Jerusalem; there was the house of God; there were festivals and fasts to be kept; there offerings to be laid on the altar, and there vows to be paid. The Jews' patriotism and the Jews' religion were as indissolubly united in him as his physical life was wedded to the beatings of his heart.

For four months Nehemiah considered the sad case of his people; laid his plans, and prayed for a blessing upon them.

During this time, a growing sadness, born of sympathy with suffering brethren, of high resolve, and of secret anxieties, had subdued Nehemiah's countenance.

This change in his cup-bearer called the attention of the king; and after waiting for some time for the sadness to pass away, and seeing it only deepen, Artaxerxes kindly inquired the reason of his trouble.

Now as royalty is courteously supposed never to die, and never to do wrong, so it is supposed never to know that it holds its state in a weary and painful world; and human suffering was prohibited exhibition before kingly eyes.

King Artaxerxes was sitting at a banquet, and Nehemiah was serving him with wine, when the amiable despot demanded:

"Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? This is nothing else but sorrow of heart."

At these words, Nehemiah was "sore afraid." He had been wont to be cheerful in the presence of his master; but now, knowing the woes of his brethren, he could not rejoice; and the fate of his nation trembled upon his tongue. One unwise word, and all was lost!

With a swift-sent thought to Heaven for help, Nehemiah made honest answer: "Why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire?"

There was something lying back of this speech, so the king to discover it asked: "For what dost thou make request?"

The decisive hour had come. For this the cup-bearer had planned and prayed for four long months. He now paused a moment, "praying to the God of heaven."

Then he said, calmly: "If it please the king, and if thy servant have found grace in thy sight, that thou wouldst send me to Judah, unto the city of my fathers' sepulchres, that I may build it."

Not for the Temple did he make request, but for the city; for walls and towers and palaces. Nehemiah was a building genius; on him was laid the burden of planting anew the commonwealth.

He looked at the musing king anxiously; but caught an encouraging smile from a gracious presence by the monarch's side —the queen.

Presently the king replied favorably, with the question: "For how long shall thy journey be? and when wilt thou return?"

This plainly shows the friendship of the king; he cannot deny his favorite's request; he is unwilling to lose him altogether, and he has confidence in his promises of return.

At this intimation of favor, Nehemiah gathered courage to ask

for orders, enjoining the enemies of his nation to leave him unmolested; and to request aid in timbers and building material, to restore the demolished walls.

Artaxerxes conceded all; and making no delay, with a few friends Nehemiah set out for Jerusalem. He did not go unattended, for the king sent horsemen and captains with him, and probably, following the usual royal custom, gave him presents of gold and silver; while it was the practice of the Jews in Assyria to send gifts to their struggling brethren, and the Tirshatha must now have been the bearer of such tribute.

"It grieved them (the Horonite and Ammonite) exceedingly, when they heard that a man was come to seek the welfare of the children of Israel," says the story.

For three days Nehemiah rested quietly at Jerusalem, giving audience to the chief men of the nation. Then, with a few friends, he set out by night to make a circuit of the city; to view the broken walls, and lay his plans for building. Nehemiah rode; his companions were on foot. Under the bright shining of the Syrian moon, this small band of patriots went around their beloved and unhappy city.

"I went out," says Nehemiah, "by the gate of the valley, even before the dragon well." There is a singular fascination in this scene: we have the broken and ruined city, so long scorned by its foes; the Temple, incomplete and lonely, rises in its midst, and about it are the homes of those who have preferred Jerusalem above their chief joy, and who have chosen rather to be doorkeepers of this unfinished and impoverished Temple, than to amass wealth in Chaldea.

The distant hills stand dark masses of shadow, their tops kissed by white light; the plains lie in silver sheen, crossed by cones of darkness cast on them by the adjacent heights; the subduing moonlight lends a tender romantic beauty to fallen column, broken



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arch, and shattered pilaster; ruins of fire and war; outside the broken ramparts wanders that little group, too sad to speak, beholding the desolation, and questioning if "the mercy of the Lord is clean gone forever."

They left the city by the gate of the valley on the eastern side; before them lay the green slopes of the Mount of Olives; beneath their feet descended the banks of the Kidron; following the line of the wall southerly, they came to the fountain of the dragon, and rounding the southern point of Ophel, looking down upon the valley of Jehoshaphat, they sought the gate of the fountain, and then the king's pool; in each instance finding the ground so encumbered with débris that it was impossible for the beast Nehemiah rode to pass. In the stillness of the advancing night they turned north, and followed up the course of the brook Kidron, viewing the broken wall of the city of David, and the more recent fortifications of Jotham and Hezekiah. Alas! gloom and decay were written everywhere. The sacred city, celebrated by her poet sons as the excellency of the earth, the joy of many generations, sat dreary and solitary; haggard empress of a realm of desolation.

"Reft of thy sons, amid thy foes forlorn,
Mourn, widowed queen! forgotten Zion, mourn!
Is this thy place, sad city, this thy throne,
Where the wild desert rears its craggy stone;
Where now thy pomp, which kings with envy viewed,
Where now the might which all those kings subdued?
No martial myriads muster at thy gate;
No suppliant nations in thy temple wait."

Returned from his melancholy tour of inspection, Nehemiah showed his friends his commission as Tirshatha, and the edict of the king, permitting the rebuilding of the city walls. This animated their sorrowing hearts, and they cried, "Let us arise and build."

Nehemiah had to contend with foes without. "Tobiah the

Ammonite, and Sanballat the Horonite, and Geshem the Arabian," united against him, despised him, laughed him to scorn, and accused him of rebellion against the king. These enemies even attacked the builders, so that Nehemiah organized a defence; and his workers with one hand wrought on the wall, and with the other held each his weapon. The Tirshatha encouraged them, saying, "The God of heaven will prosper us;" kept up his own heart by crying, "Hear, O our God, we are despised."

The adversary used craft, sending to the governor, saying, "Let us meet in one of the villages of the plain of Ono." But the wise cup-bearer responded, "I am doing a great work, I cannot come down."

Nehemiah was also sorely tried by the hardness of heart and rebellion of his own countrymen. They held their brethren enslaved, and defied Jewish law. But the Tirshatha had come armed with civic power; he was strong to administer laws; he held the reins of government with a firm grasp, and while he tenderly persuaded the people, they knew that the right to enforce justice was in his hands.

This noble heart was also distressed by a knowledge of the treachery of those whom he had come to aid—as he writes: "Moreover in those days the nobles of Judah sent many letters unto Tobiah . . . for there were many in Judah sworn unto him . . . also they reported his good deeds before me, and uttered my words unto him."

Nehemiah has in modern history his parallel in William the Silent, Prince of Orange. What Nehemiah was to Judah, was William to Holland. These two hero patriots are similar in largeness of heart and brain; in noble devotion that knew no thought of self-aggrandizement; in stern resolution which triumphed over the greatest difficulties; in faith which drank vigor from a celestial source; in firmness under scorn, treachery, flattery, and secret hate.

Had Nehemiah been one whit less upright, less entirely faithful both to his countrymen in Judah, and to his king Artaxerxes in Persia, the cause of Israel would have been lost.

When the wall of the city was rebuilt, Nehemiah set up the gates, repaired the houses and palaces, numbered the people according to their genealogy, and appointed the priests and Levites in their courses of service in the sanctuary. He then established the different families in their own cities; appointed them to come up for the ordained feasts, and, to confirm them in their faith and observances, had Ezra publicly instruct them in the law. With this act of national worship, Ezra reappears in the history. During the few years previous he may have been in Persia, and his death probably occurred during the absence of Nehemiah, when, according to his promise, he returned to Artaxerxes.

When the cup-bearer had first asked leave of absence, he had set twelve years as the limit of his stay. To this Artaxerxes had agreed, and the sequel shows the friendship of the monarch; for at the expiration of these years the cup-bearer was just as welcome and as honored in his office as before he intermitted it. In twelve years Artaxerxes had not been able to find a more gracious, dignified or trusty attendant than this exile Jew.

During the twelve years in which he had served as Tirshatha, Nehemiah had refused to receive any tribute or payment from the people, but had maintained his own establishment and exercised a large hospitality. If the accusations of Sanballat and Tobiah, when they charged him with an intention of rebelling and setting up a kingdom for himself, had had any effect on the mind of Artaxerxes, he soon convinced himself of the uprightness of his servant. After again enjoying the luxury and pleasure of the royal court for a season, Nehemiah got leave to return to Palestine to spend the remainder of his days. His office of governor was restored to him, and he took a final leave of the splendors of

Shushan. It was not that he wanted power, for his position as cup-bearer was loftier than that of governor over the feeble Jews; but his heart was not in the Persian court; it abode in the deserted sanctuary, and with the sepulchres of his fathers; his hopes were set not on foreign potentates, but on Him, the coming One, the Jehovah, Christ, who was to spring from the line of David.

Nehemiah lived eminently in the light of the future life. He measured all temporal and finite good by the greatness of the infinite. He had his eyes ever fixed on that Day for which all other days were made, the day of account. He wished so to live as to stand before his returned Lord a faithful servant. His cry was, "Remember me, O my God, for good."

It was this judging ever with a righteous judgment which kept him firmly in the best way, and delivered his feet from falling into the snares laid by his adversaries. When Tobiah sent for him to come to Ono, there was a determination to assassinate him. Of this Nehemiah was ignorant, but he reflected that his present duty was to build the wall of Jerusalem. His post was among the sons of Jacob; and the Lord could deal with Israel's enemies. This thought caused him to reply, "I am doing a great work, and I cannot come down;" therefore he unconsciously saved his life.

Again Shemaiah was hired to betray him to Tobiah. Pretending to be a friend, Shemaiah revealed an imaginary plot, beseeching the Tirshatha to escape by taking refuge in the Temple. Nehemiah possessed that blessed wealth, *mens sibi conscia recti*; the sanctuary was often made the refuge of the flying criminal; the just governor had done no wrong, and should fear none. He replied calmly, "Should such a man as I flee?" And who is there that, being as I am, would go into the Temple to save his life? I will not go in." Then he perceived that God was not with his interlocutor, but that he was dealing deceitfully.

On his return from Susa, Nehemiah carried forward the work

of establishing the nation in its ancient form of worship and civil rights. He insisted on a proper maintenance of the tribe of Levi; weeded from the chosen race the foreign element which had grown up into it; and again pitted his strength against the mighty and evil influence of Tobiah.

The vitality of the Jewish nation has ever been a matter of wonder. No race has been so persecuted, so trampled upon, yet it has appeared even to thrive upon the efforts made to extripate it. From Pharaoh, to Isabella and Ferdinand of Spain, ungodly rulers have expended on Israel their fury. Egyptians, Philistines, Syrians, Persians, Chaldeans, Macedonians, Romans, fought against the sons of Abraham; murdered them by millions; tore them from their land and carried them into captivity, sought in every way to eradicate their religion, their mother tongue, their ancient customs, and to absorb the nation. Yet never has a people maintained so distinct a nationality.

Wrenched from their beloved land and flung out to die in the world's highways, suddenly they took root and throve everywhere. Pilgrims of commerce, they traversed every soil and every sea; given even the poorest foothold, and they grew rich and strong, became a power to be felt, climbed unexpectedly to high places of the state, and everywhere and at all times were Jews in heart and feature. Mingle never so much Gentile blood in their veins, and the drops of life distilled from Jacob are paramount, so that the beauty who enters the salon, and the broker in his office, may bear any name and speak any tongue, and still an unmistakable something proclaims the seed of Abraham.

Establish a Jew in a palace, pour wealth upon him, flatter him, honor him; you cannot bribe him to forget Jerusalem, though mayhap he has never seen the City of David. Speak to him of Mount Zion, and every fibre of the Jew nature thrills responsive. He cannot help it; the impulse was born in him, will only die

with him. His devotion to Palestine, his clinging tenderness to the site of his temple, and his passionate memory of the traditions of his race, are a part of his religion; out of Zion light is to shine for him; his Star is to beam from Jacob; there the Anointed shall reign over a ransomed people in a glorious land. Let him reach Christianity, the very consummation of his hoary creed, and lo, his land and his brethren are dearer still. Messiah has made every spot of Jewish land sacred. There, says the Jewish convert, was He born, there He died and rose, and shall return my Brother according to the flesh. Patriotism is his religion, and his religion is patriotism; and the history of the nation is such, that while religion and patriotism are in any race closely wedded, in the Jew they are one.

We give a hasty glance at Nehemiah as a reformer.

He was a shining example of the virtues he would inculcate. He was logical in argument against an evil course; left the sinner no loophole of escape, and was especially happy in presenting the highest motive. He says to the people, "Ought ye not to walk in the fear of our God, because of the reproach of the heathen our enemies?" The glory of God was the first thought of his life; it was to him an incentive for the performance of duty, and it was the motive which he set before others.

He believed in no half-way measures; firm and impartial, high position could not bribe him, nor boldness intimidate; Priest, High Priest, Levite, common person, the meanest of the people, and the powerful Tobiah, were in his opinion on a complete equality as respected the law; station could not alter right and wrong.

Nehemiah was the Reformer whom we have seen copied by such men as Calvin and John Knox. We might imagine that the last sixteen verses of the book of Nehemiah were written of the Genevan regenerator, or the sturdy bulwark of the Scottish

Church. In the earnestness and simplicity of the narrative there is something amusing.

The returned Tirshatha has his hands full. The walls are builded and dedicated; the gates are set up; prosperity is returning to Jerusalem; her streets are lined with dwellings; her marts are full of traffic; caravans come and go; the song of the vine-dresser echoes on the hill; the shout of those who tread the wine-presses fills with glad tumult the golden summer air; the countryman brings his sheaves of wheat and barley to the market; girls and women and slender lads troop from the villages, with wine, grapes, figs, butter, cheese, "all manner of burdens." The busy Tyrians have returned to their old-time ally; they come with fish fresh from the bright waters; they bring rich merchandize, and "all manner of ware," and, as at the building of Carthage, the city hums like a full hive through all the busy week. But, alas, when on the Sabbath the good Tirshatha goes to the Temple to worship, the gates of the city are open still; Jews and Gentiles crowd street and stall; the cries of the hawker of fruits, and the chaffering of the buyer, sound as on other days; again this long-wasted land is denied her Sabbath.

At once the governor resolved to destroy these ill practices; he called together the nobles "and contended with them." He exhibited the dealings of God in the past, and warned them of certain judgments. But he would not trust matters to the tardy, or imperfect measures taken by half-convinced nobles. Not he; as the evening before the Sabbath darkened, he went forth and saw to it that every gate was closed; so to remain until the first day of the week should dawn. Suspicious of the integrity of the porters, he set his own servants to watch at every gate.

Now for two or three Sabbaths the "merchants, and sellers of all kinds of wares lodged without Jerusalem." The clamor of their contention, of their complaints, of their appeals to the inha-

bitants, and wrath over the injury done their merchandize by delay, disturbed that solemn stillness which on the sacred day must only be broken by the voice of prayer and praise. Prompt in all his dealings, Nehemiah addressed the camp of traffickers: "Then I testified against them, and said unto them, Why lodge ye about the wall? If ye do so again I will lay hands on you." "From that time forth," he adds with serene satisfaction, "they came no more on the Sabbath day."

Another crying evil that distressed the Tirshatha was the increasing custom of foreign marriages. One of the leading features of the Jewish policy had been to preserve the national purity. They had been particularly forbidden to contract marriages with strangers. In the general declension of the nation, many Jews had wedded women of Ashdod, Ammon and Moab, and to the horror of Nehemiah the streets of the holy city were crowded with frolicking children, who instead of being pure-blooded Israelites, were of a mixed race, speaking a mongrel tongue, half "the Jews' language" and half a Philistine dialect.

The good governor's wrath appears to have risen high. He writes: "I contended with them and cursed them, and smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair." His cursing was not profanity, but a pronouncing of the condemnations and penalties assigned to this transgression by Jewish law; for the rest we see the Oriental passion. To-day a reformer who used Nehemiah's methods would be carried to a police court and charged with assault and battery. *Then* his manner was perfectly in order; simply showed his earnestness, and gained his object.

Finding that one of the sons of Joiada, the High Priest, had made "a strange marriage," with the utmost decision Nehemiah "chased" the offender out of the city; lest an alien should ever reach the highest office in the Hebrew Church. Upon all his acts this ardent, honest, simple-hearted man, whom courts could not

corrupt nor power intoxicate, calls down the blessing of the Lord. He writes his own most excellent epitaph: "Remember me, O my God, for good." It is the cry of the Christian patriot.

"God and his native land," the holy Temple and the sepulchres of his fathers, had been the central thought of his life. For them he labored and prayed, lived and died, and going down into the dust to wait the coming of the Resurrection Angel, supplicated, as may we all: "Remember me, O my God, for good."

XXIV.

JOSHUA, THE SON OF JOZADEK.

THE ROYAL HIGH-PRIESTHOOD OF OUR LORD.

IN our study of Joshua, the son of Jozadek, we shall consider less the man than that office which was the most excellent type ever offered to the world, of the person and work of our Lord.

Says Heubner: "The need of a priestly office manifests itself in all religions, and among all nations." The cry of a world has ever been for a Daysman with deity. Shivering back, affrighted from the abyss of doom, and pining for the celestial heights, man is conscious that his pollution needs an Intermediary to plead his case with Holiness.

Reason scoffs at a "priest-ridden people," but subservience to priesthood is the expression of humanity's self-consciousness of sin, and its yearning for acceptance.

The wild warrior, who is fearless in the shock of battle, trembles at the supernatural; and he who will not drop his head to king or kaiser, will kneel lowly before his priest.

The Levitical priest, chosen and instructed of God, sanctified to his service, and performing the pure rites of true religion, was the climax of all sacred orders. The priesthood of the sons of Levi culminated in Him, their Antitype, the Royal High Priest Jesus, sprung from Judah, wearing the mitre, and swaying the sceptre.

In the earliest ages, each head of a family was priest to his own

household. In the Theocratic line there was no family of priests chosen, until the constituting of the Jewish nation at Sinai. There the Lord took the house of Levi, in lieu of all Israel's first-born, to be a race of holy priests unto himself. This order naturally arranges itself into three divisions; namely, the priests from Aaron to David's day; from David to the Babylonish captivity; and from the captivity to the cessation of the priestly office, at the final overthrow of the Holy City. In this period of 1370 years there were eighty High Priests.

Seraiah the High Priest, at the time when Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem, was slain by the conqueror at Riblah. His son Jozadek spent his life as a captive in Babylon, and transmitted the sacred office to *his* son Joshua, who returned on the decree of Cyrus, with Zerubbabel to Jerusalem. Joshua stands at the head of the third and last series of priests. Joshua was born great; he became great; and he had greatness thrust upon him, by the critical times in which he lived. He inherited the splendid office which he held, being born in the direct succession from Levi. Trained up in captivity, the painfulness of his lowly exile life matured a character of such singular strength and symmetery that he was equal to every emergency; was one of those happy souls who can do the right thing at the right time, while the favor of Cyrus, the restoration of the Jews, and the prominent part Joshua was made to play in the rebuilding of the Temple and the reorganizing of the nation, made him an eminent historical character. Levi had had saintly sons; "Phineas the zealous," "Eli the submissive," Jehoiada the patriotic, Hilkiah the high-hearted reformer, were glorious men, but Joshua, bearing the blessed name of Jesus, assigned the work of restoration, and placed in sacred vision, withstanding Satan before the Angel of the Lord, overtopped his goodly brethren, as the most precious type of Christ among them all.

As it takes countless myriads of grains of sand to even imitate a mountain, so a multitude of finite objects have been demanded to exhibit the Majesty of Heaven, arrayed in flesh, redeeming sinners. In the Tabernacle service, the priest, his clothing, his functions, ministrations, and the victims which he laid on the altar, all were required to set forth Him who was slain for our iniquities.

The two goats, one for *Jehovah* and one for *Azazel*, were needed to typify the Lord who shed his blood for fallen man, and bore away our guilt into the shadows of the land of forgetfulness.

In the same manner, Joshua as a religious leader, and Zerubbabel as a civil ruler, were at the same period the symbols of Him who should be to his church both Priest and King. Thus when the captivity ended, and the *Remnant* returned to build up their waste places, Zechariah and Haggai animated the souls of these leaders, by words of Him who descending from the prince Zerubbabel, should unite his office and that of Joshua, being a crowned priest continually.

The book of Hebrews is chiefly occupied in setting forth the priestly office of Christ, and explaining it in the light of its Levitical type.

"The whole ancient world cried out for a Reconciler;" the promise and imagery of his work given to the Israelites assuaged in them the cry of soul-hunger, which went up from all the nations beside. The modern world sees types perfected, and shadows pass away. The glorious Reality has come, and is revealed to the eye of faith, standing in the upper sanctuary, exercising His office, an eternal and perfect priesthood:

> "And yet we turn away, and yet God's kindness
> Forgives our blindness."

Christ is our prophet, priest and king; in showing him to the world, two of these offices have been variously combined in different

holy men; David was king and prophet; Jeremiah was priest and prophet; Melchizedek was priest and king; but only in Jesus have the three functions been united. Three generations before Levi, Melchizedek, unique and marvellous, the Orion of prophetic constellations, rises upon the horizon of our vision, and paces through the centuries in mystical splendor, changelessly pointing to his antitype, and leading our awed souls far out into the awful profundities of the eternal wisdom.

Melchizedek, king of righteousness, and king of Salem, ruled and defended his subjects in his royal right; and exercising his priestly office stood up between them and God, leading their orisons, teaching them holiness, pleading for their acceptance. Jesus, seated at the right hand of God, having the uttermost parts of the earth for his inalienable possession, subdues his enemies and ours, and rules us with a righteous sceptre; at the same time, he as our Priest in the Holy of Holies, ever liveth to intercede, and to claim our pardon as the reward of the sacrifice of himself.

The High Priest on the great day of Atonement having sacrificed the victim, entered into the Most Holy place, bearing the blood of the sin-offering, and a censer of incense. These he offered before the Lord, the people without in hearty solemnity joining in his act, and regarding it as the ratification of their peace with God. In this rite the priest with his person carefully purified, his garments of spotless white linen, and his thoughts turned for several past days on the important duties of this solemn ceremonial, was a striking type of some holy One, who in his own person was divinely pure, and able to purify his people. The incense was significant of prayer, as in the Apocalypse John saw the "golden vial full of odors, which are the prayers of the saints." This fragrant cloud surrounding the mercy seat, and veiling the glory of the Shekinah, expressed the ardent desire of the priest, in which the people united, for acceptance with the Everlasting Father. The blood

foreshadowed the blood of Jesus, potent in earth and heaven: "For without shedding of blood is no remission of sins."

The High Priest of the line of Levi must necessarily fail in many points as a type of the Royal High Priest of Judah. The priest in the temple was sinful, and must make expiation first for himself; the blood which he presented was of "bulls and goats which cannot take away sin." His expiatory-offering must be yearly renewed, while Jesus shed his blood once for all; the priesthood of Levi was temporal; the sacred line lapsed, its work was done; but Jesus remaineth a High Priest forevermore.

In the economy of God's Providence the Church has now reached that period of her history when the vicarious sacrifice has been made, and her glorious priest has withdrawn into the Holy of Holies. We wait without; our attitude should be prayerful expectation; should be tender love and ardent faith. Within the veil where atonement only can be made, He stands, the First-born of many brethren, performing the highest function of his priesthood. When in the earthly Tabernacle the sin-offering was slain, the atonement was yet incomplete until the blood had been presented with incense at the mercy seat.

Jesus descended to us, to make on the altar of Calvary that grand sacrifice to which all others had pointed from the foundation of the world. The spotless victim having been prepared from all eternity, was slain once for all. With the expiring sigh, "It is finished," our Lord's work of pain and humiliation ended; being so much better than the Mosaic sacrifice, it was not needful that he should be offered up more than once.

Having concluded this part of his work, he retired to the Holiest place of all, the Heaven of heavens, where he remains our potent and continual Intercessor, casting out none who come; with divine prescience reading the wish of each contrite heart, and for every one who throws himself upon his Mediatorial mercy, he

pleads the potent merit of his shed blood, which is ever in the sight of the Eternal Father.

As the Jewish High Priest was a man of like passions with the people, as he had formerly stood in their midst, and could keenly sympathize with their emotions; so Jesus, our High Priest, having dwelt among us in this vale of tears, during his period of humiliation, is touched by a feeling for our infirmities; having been "in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." He is now on the right hand of God exalted as a Prince and a Saviour; his atoning blood is the sufficient price of our peace with God, and is the "life of all vital godliness."

The Lord dwelt among the Jews in prophecy and in person, until they had finally and fully rejected him; when they evidently would not have that man to reign over them, and put him to death, he withdrew from their midst. When in as clear a manner the will of the Gentile nations toward Christ shall be shown, he shall suddenly return. From the eternal heights he shall come down to dwell among us, our Sovereign Ruler; and the Church misses a very large element of her happiness when, instead of looking for her Beloved's coming as the fruition of all her hopes, and the climax of her joys, she trembles at it as an awful judgment scene, when terror and trouble shall culminate in a dread tempest of unspeakable anguish. Is this the frame of mind for Christians? Their High Priest is the "Son consecrated forever." Their sacrifice is the "Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world." The Lord of Hosts has promised, "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."

Joshua, the son of Jozadek, as the Chief Priest of the Restoration, was peculiarly a type of Jesus, the Restorer of Paradise.

After the long captivity among idolaters, the chastened children of Jacob sought "beautiful Zion," the inheritance of their fathers. Traditions of its excellence, throned on the "sides of the north,"

"the city of the great king," and "the joy of the whole earth," had been to them as are to us the Scriptural reminiscences of Eden, and the melodious legends of the golden age.

Across the dreary length of desert, through the mountain passes of Gilead, and over the well-loved Jordan they pressed, weary and travel-stained, upheld by their passionate longing for their home. They found it waste and desolate. The charred ruins of the Temple had for seventy years been beaten by sun and wind and rain; the walls built by a race of kings had crumbled to decay; the fountains which had made music for centuries were choked with rubbish; the houses of cedar and the porches of judgment were perished; the homes of a people had utterly departed; the land had enjoyed her Sabbath, a long solemn rest, the sad stillness of a mighty tomb.

Such was the scene which met the eyes of Zerubbabel and Joshua, as, pressing on at the head of their caravan, they gained the last steep ascent, and saw before them the "place of their fathers' sepulchres."

The High Priest came to a ruined, desolate land, but he came to restore. The fabric of the Temple had been destroyed, but he should build a better house, whose glory should be greater than that of the former. Zerubbabel, the chief of feeble bands, worn by toil and captivity, was to found anew the empire.

Christ came to a world enslaved and miserable; its innocence had perished, its hopes trailed their banners in the dust; darkness had settled on its future; from gloom to gloom it seemed destined to labor on. He came the Restorer of our peace; he had holiness sufficient for us all; he brought the promise of a dearer Paradise than Eden; the crumbled Temple of our early faith he was to build up in Himself, the Temple of the New Jerusalem.

Joshua the High Priest was the central figure in a vision of Zechariah: he was seen standing before the angel of the Lord,

while Satan stood at his right hand to resist him. Perhaps the Evil Spirit used the reproach he has so often found to prevail; affrighting the soul with its exceeding sinfulness and ill-deserving; asserting that our sins are too great to be forgiven, therefore let us go on in desperation. The rebuke of the angel was, "Is not this a brand plucked from the fire?" From the very jaws of destruction, from the leaping fires of our own keen remorse, and the assaults of hell, the Lord is strong to snatch the smoking brand, which he is too pitiful to permit to be destroyed.

Joshua, exhibiting the case of humanity, stood before the angel, "clad in filthy garments." The command was given, "Take away the filthy garments," and as they were removed were added the comfortable words, "Behold I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with a change of raiment."

Here was typified the Robe of Christ's Righteousness covering the beloved of the Lord, so that they are brought unto their King, spotless and acceptable in his presence. But grace yet more abounded, for "they set a fair mitre upon his head;" for the righteous shall be kings and priests unto God.

Having been thus the symbol of redeemed man, Joshua became the image of man's Redeemer. Clad in glorious apparel; crowned with a priestly mitre; resisting the Arch Enemy of humanity; doing the will of the Everlasting Father; the son of Levi became, in a more eminent manner than ever before, an image of our kingly High Priest, the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls. Then came a voice from the Infinite Glory, "Behold I will bring forth my servant the Branch."

Assured thus of the love of his God, and strengthened by a renewed promise of the Coming One, Joshua the son of Jozadek was enabled to carry on his life work among the returned Jews with renewed vigor.

The Temple which rose under his supervision was to endure

until the coming of Christ. When the Holy House built by Solomon was dedicated, the glory of God came down and filled it; the foundations of this second Temple were laid amid joy and tears; the noise of the shout of joy could not be discerned from the noise of weeping: the old men mourned over glories passed away; the young men, buoyant with hope, shouted over good things to come. Despite the tears, the glory of this Temple was to exceed the splendid trophy of the zeal and wealth of Solomon; for He to whom the ghostly fingers of every shadow and symbol had pointed, was to stand within its court on the Great Day of the Feast, crying, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." These arches were to ring to old Simeon's triumph-song, "Mine eyes have seen thy salvation." Here among the doctors should stand the child-Messiah, teaching the teachers of the people; here the healed sufferer should learn that "it was Jesus who had made him whole."

As our only hope of salvation lies in the efficacious priesthood of our Lord, it is well for us frequently to consider his perpetual exercise of that office, as his mediatorial work and person will forever continue the ground of our acceptance with God; having on earth interceded for us, he continues our Intercessor in the skies; he acts as our Advocate, because his work was perfect, and because wearing our nature, and knowing, by personal experience, our wants and woes, he can forever adapt his "ceaseless intercessions to the entire current of our experience."

It is evident that so large a part of the Pentateuch is occupied with descriptions of the priestly office, dress, laws, and observances, because all were designed to lead the heart toward Him, who abideth a Priest forever.

Christ, the central idea of Scripture, is delineated in his humanity, his divinity, his triple offices, that he may never be to us a Stranger, and one far off, but may be entwined with all our

thoughts, and fill with his blessed presence the current of our daily lives. The religion of the Jew preached to him perpetually of the Coming Christ, the crowning glory of his race, and the Hope of the World. All nature, and all the mutations of history, are for us equally full of reminiscences of the Man of Sorrows, and prophecies of the King who cometh in clouds.

"Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.

"For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with a feeling for our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

"Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

THE ERA OF HOPE FULFILLED.

XXV.

JOHN THE BAPTIST.

THE IRON LINK.

AS forty years of wilderness and wanderings stretched between lotus-crowned Egypt, the flowery pasture land of Goshen, and Canaan, flowing with milk and honey, and enriched with vineyards and olive groves; so between Malachi, proclaiming the rising of the Sun of Righteousness with healing on his wings, and the New Elijah, shouting, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand," wound a dreary waste of four hundred years.

In these centuries men groped blinded, like eyeless Orion, seeking all about the horizon for the sun.

As the night is ever darkest just before the dawn, so before the rising of the King of Light, blackness, like the plague of Egypt, wrapt the world, and filled the bosoms of men with brooding despair.

Humanity had cried out fiercely, and struggled passionately with its fate; exhausted now, in darkness and feebleness, like Saul it "lay all along the ground," despairing because the Lord would answer "neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets."

Hope, in these dreary ages, stood a strengthening angel by some holy hearts; as the promise made to Abraham is on the eve of fulfilment, we find brightly shining forth the Abrahamic piety. Through all the years this type had been forever recurring.

Manoah, Jesse, and their wives; priestly, and royal, and peasant saints, had beamed with the undefiled religion of their great ancestor; and now, in the lineage of Levi, we behold a new Abraham and Sarah, waiting the blessing of the Lord.

While in the early patriarchal family, the man had never stumbled at the promise of God, and the woman had laughed in incredulity, here, at the opening of a new era, the daughter of Abraham has heired her father's faith, and the descendant of Sarah has been dowered with his mother's doubts.

Woman, from the days of Sarah and Rebecca, had been gradually falling into serfdom; some there were, in every century, who rose nobly to their legitimate station of mental and moral equality with man, to show that the Lord's view and purpose were unchanged. Now, as the new dispensation dawns in light, woman resumes her pristine position by man's side, his friend and fellow helper, instead of his slave; and Mary and Elisabeth lift up their jubilant voices as "joint heirs of the grace of life."

The gospel period is ushered in with answered prayer. "Fear not, Zacharias, thy prayer is heard," are the words of the angel. There may have been a misconception among Scripture readers as to the subject of the priest's prayers. It is evident that he has come to consider the birth of a son to himself as an impossibility. Like many of us, he limits the power of God, and though in earlier years he may have passionately prayed for heirs, he has now yielded to the inevitable so completely, that the voice of an angel, standing propitiously on the right hand of the altar, cannot at once re-illume his hope.

But Zacharias has had another desire, another ardent yearning: "O that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion!" Where is the long promised One, the Branch of David, the Virgin's son; where the Only Begotten of God, arrayed in flesh? "O Lord, we beseech thee, send now salvation," he had entreated.

God, ever better than our fears, and more bountiful than our hopes, sends Gabriel on a most happy errand. "Thy prayer is heard!" This is the Christ promise; he has expected that, and he sustains the good news. But when he learns that a child, born to himself and his aged wife, shall be the Forerunner, the New Elijah, the Herald of the King of kings, his spirit faints. "Whereby shall I know this?"

The sign is given. He is dumb, and this dumbness is most significant. "When the voice of the preacher preparing the way of the Lord is announced, the priesthood of the Old Testament becomes silent. The Levitical blessing is hushed, when the Seed comes in, in whom 'all the families of the earth are blessed.'"

Zacharias and Elisabeth had lived long enough to be happy; they had not died too soon, so that joy could shed its beams only across their graves. Prosperity goes into some houses only after the long-anxious and suffering owners have gone out forever. This pair were to have at once all they had asked for, and hoped for; their eyes should see a Saviour, and a son; that son the Prophet for whose coming, as the precursor of Messiah, a nation had waited. Elisabeth retired to the hill country, in devout contemplation to nourish her hope, and to prepare for that sanctified child, already filled with the Holy Ghost.

John Baptist was to be the greatest of the natural progeny of women; the last of Jewish Nazarites, he soared above them all in character and office; his mother's faith assumed for him the vows of that separated line, and being yet unborn, he was consecrated to God.

As a son of promise born in old age, John is like Isaac; the child of one written barren among women, he is like Samson and Samuel; in his mission, he is like Elijah, the prophet of fire; and the prophecies of Malachi and Zechariah about him point him out as one called to a lot of strife and sorrow. Every circumstance of

his birth testified to the especial Providence of God; and when his parents received him into their arms, their delight was chastened by the certainty that the child's only peace and joy were to come when he had fulfilled his course, and trod, released from the body, the celestial hills; earth could only offer him sorrow, toil and a grave.

"The new revelation of salvation begins in the days of Herod, when sin and misery had reached their climax, and when the yearning for Messiah was more intensely felt than ever. The Temple, so often the scene of the manfestation of the glory of God, becomes again a centre, whence the first rays of light secretly break through the darkness."

"And the child grew and waxed strong in spirit." Samson, that earlier Nazarite of promise, had been strong in nerve and muscle; here was a man strong in moral purpose, strong in holy faith. At his birth fear fell on all around; but for thirty years came profound silence; expectation grown weary fell asleep at her post; for he, the mighty Elias, was "in the deserts until the day of his showing unto Israel." He dwelt in the weird regions near the Dead Sea, a desert land, a shadow of this world, and of his own life in it, of toil and loneliness and pain.

In this retirement his graces grew; the virtues which he should most need became predominant; zeal, humility, self-sacrifice, courage, were nourished; the Forerunner was fitted for his work, and when the thirty years were ended, his powerful voice sounded out loudly: "Repent!"

The first Elijah breaks on us from solitude, his parentage unknown, his early years unchronicled; he comes a holy ascetic, a fiery reformer. "As the Lord liveth, there shall be neither rain nor dew these years."

John the Baptist issuing from the wilderness, rings his clarion through the nation: "Repent! for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!"

Because before the Omnipotent Eye all ages are a present space; because he lives in an Eternal now, He calls the messenger before the face of Christ, Elijah, seeing the similarity in the earlier and later prophets, both in person and in mission. The man who stood before Ahab was twin soul to him who stood before Herod.

The outward resemblance between the two men was most remarkable. The messengers of Ahaziah described Elijah thus: "He was a hairy man;" that is, wearing a coarse garment of haircloth, as well as having the uncut locks and beard of a Nazarite: "and girt with a girdle of leather about his loins."

Matthew writes of John Baptist: "And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins."

The chief difference between the first and second Elias is, that John did no wonders; his distinctive work was to proclaim Jesus, mighty in word and in deed. It needed no halo of miracles to encircle the head of the last and greatest of the prophets, who preceded the Lord Jesus; to John was given the crowning honor of baptizing his Saviour; and Christ himself pronounced his eulogy: "Verily, verily I say unto you, among those born of women, there hath not arisen a greater than John Baptist."

John stood the representative and final expression of the whole Old Testament. All the law and the prophets were until John the shadow of good things to come, the types and prophecies of Jehovah-Jesus.

John gathered up all this spirit of four thousand years into one mighty voice, crying in the wilderness: "There cometh one after me, mightier than I, whose shoe latchet I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose." In him the fulness of the ages becomes a glorious introduction to Christ incarnate, the culmination of all the affairs of this mortal life. The kingdom of heaven doomed to suffer great violence from friend and foe, breaks into the world with two mighty men, John the strong, and Jesus who is stronger than he.

John, when his hour had come, burst forth from the wilderness, and all the land was shaken. But while John was the expression of the divine meaning of the Old Testament law and letter, and was also the exponent of the highest and purest types of Old Testament religious life, his position and work are unique. He is the link between the old world and the new; between the Mosaic and Christian dispensations. His character, his work, his message and his baptism, all have features distinctively his own. As the lone obelisk standing between the Desert and the fertile Nile valley of Heliopolis greets in its solitary grandeur the traveller's eye, a landmark which none can mistake, John stands unmatched in history, marking the hour when old things passed away from earth, and all things became new; when the early economy of symbolism gave place to the prefigured antitype.

The fiery furnace of the Old Testament world, when the Church was preyed upon by idolatrous nations, when the warfare against the hosts of hell was hand to hand and daily renewed, and carried on amid defeat by bleeding hearts who searched the heavens with anguished eyes to see their King coming to their succor, was not wedded to the New Testament days of sore tribulations, of persecution and intolerance, by a jewelled clasp, by a band of gold, but by an iron link forged in the hottest fires of martyrdom.

This man of the wilderness was not one clad in soft raiment; nay, those dwell in kings' houses; he was no flower of courts and of courtesy; he was the soul-brother on the one hand of Jeremiah in his dungeon; of the Hebrews in the Babylonian furnace; of the Maccabean brothers; and on the other hand of the slaughtered Waldenses, the massacred Huguenots, and the heroes of Smithfield and Holland, knitting the Church of the past to the Church of the present, both of which are under tutelage until the time appointed of the Father; we see him fitted for his place, unostentatious, uncompromising, strong to resist and to endure. There is no gilding, no elegant ornamentation about this man; he is the

iron hand armed with an iron mace, a rude resistless weapon when a giant swings it; and here is a giant, born amid prodigies, nurtured in the wilderness on wilderness food, and coming forth a divinely commissioned iconoclast, he sweeps away a thousand things which have been good in their day, but whose day is done, because the last of the earth æons is at hand, and man is called to a higher exercise of his powers.

Some men are born an age too early for their genius; other men are born an age too late; John Baptist was a man made exactly for his day; we see in him how well God fashions particular instruments for particular work. This thought leads us to a brief consideration of the man's character.

First, then, his self-renunciation. He gave himself up absolutely to his mission. Thirty years he lived apart from the allurements of the capital city; from sweet fellowship with fellow men; from the tender influences of home; denied himself not only luxuries, but what we call the common necessaries of life. This outward renunciation is an image of what should be the inward renunciation of the world by all Christians. "Spiritual life is that state wherein we freely renounce all things for Christ's sake." Nothing has a more wonderful effect upon the world than this renunciation of it by believers. Judgment being at hand, our safety lies in being ready to part with all things but our hope of salvation.

The absolute holiness of John's life is also to be remembered. Gross vice was rampant; while ceremonial trifles were much regarded, judgment, mercy and truth, the weightier matters of the law, were neglected.

All the people bore witness to the prophetic office of John, and to the purity of his example. He represented the spiritual legalism of the Old Testament; he personified the old time righteousness according to the law. This probity of character had been

eminent in him from childhood; he had been enriched by the Holy Ghost with spiritual gifts; we do not read that any devil tempted him in the wilderness; and yet we see that this holiness did not work in him self-justification, for his one longing desire is for the Saviour; and when he watches Jesus walking by, it is with a deep sigh of relief, as of one casting down an intolerable burden, that he cries, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world."

Humility was an eminent trait of the Baptist. His sole aim was to hasten the interests of Messiah's kingdom. He took no glory to himself; he ever held up the overwhelming glory of his Successor, asserting that he himself is not worthy to perform for him the office of the meanest slave. The greatness of John shone most sublimely in his humility, which led him ever to designate that glorious work which shook Israel to the centre, as transitory and preparatory.

John was little in his own eyes; he was great in the sight of the Lord; second only to One; greater than all the Old Testament prophets, he yields the palm alone to Him whose divinity graced humanity.

The heroic constancy of the Baptist is worthy of our attention; it should be a pattern for all believers. He was emphatically a man of one idea: that idea was Christ. Paul determined to know nothing save Christ and him crucified; John knew nothing but the coming of the kingdom of heaven in the person of the Messiah. This single-heartedness, this fervid zeal in one cause, wrought upon the whole Jewish nation; all classes were impressed, the energy of the one lonely preacher put to the blush all ranks and conditions of men.

The eloquence of John was the eloquence of intense belief; it carried captive the consciousness not only of the people but of the hierarchy. When his decision and vigor had so stirred up the

minds of the entire nation that they hung on his words, and might have been swayed to almost any course by his exhortation; when the solemn delegation of priests and Levites came to question him, all the noble characteristics of the man shone out at once. Self-renunciation, holiness, humility, zeal: "I am not the Christ."

"What then, art thou Elias?"

"And he saith, I am not."

"Art thou that Prophet?"

"And he answered, No."

"Who art thou, then; what sayest thou of thyself?"

"I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord."

Only a voice, and nothing more. He might have claimed honors, but he rejected all; he was only a voice crying out of the solitary place. But what a voice! Its trumpet tones prepared the way before the King of kings: the holy ascetic coming up from the desert was the Herald of Jehovah-Jesus, who inhabiteth eternity.

And the wild sounding of this voice, along the rocky defiles of the Jordan, leads us to the words it uttered, to the preaching of this man, who was in himself the epitome and conclusion of all the legal economy, and the *avant courier* flying before the blessed feet of the new Dispensation. In John the New Testament and the Old met and clasped hands, and he wedded them with an iron ring.

As a preacher, John was fearless, logical, picturesque, vehement: and clinched his discourse by his practice. He dealt largely in the *argumentum ad hominem*. Flashing his eagle glance around his audience, he separated it into its representative classes, and thundered against them according to their need and their deserving.

Standing in the solitary district near Jericho, the broad waste

was his synagogue, and under frowning skies, with the rough wilderness for his surrounding, his camels' hair robe girt with leather, and his unshorn locks hanging about his shoulders, he was in keeping with his theme, and his handling of it, for his cry was ever of the bitter work of repentance. Of repentance he cherished those spiritual views propounded by the prophets, rather than the later legalism of Scribes and Pharisees. He demanded uncompromisingly the death of the old evil life, and an entire consecration to the new life of righteousness.

A popular preacher in the highest sense of the word, he seized on illustrations from every-day life, suited to the capacity of his hearers: the woodman swinging his axe against unfruitful trees, or the cedars of Lebanon; the farmer on the threshing-floor, securing the wheat and destroying the chaff, afford him means of pressing home the truth of the sinner's doom, and crying to the careless, "Now the axe is laid to the root of the tree," and "he shall burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

He uncovered their moral characters; he tore the mask from every face, and showed his hearers their undisguised selves. The sight was, as it will ever be, terrifying. When the embassy came to him from the Sanhedrim, he received them with denunciations. Severe diseases demand severe remedies, and the moral disease of the nation was at its worst. "O brood of vipers," he cries to the hypocritical hearers, "who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come!"

To every one he gave commandment for daily life and practice: the jealous, quarrelsome people, devouring each other and betraying each other, were bidden to live in brotherly community: "He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none, and he that hath meat, let him do likewise."

There public extortioners, the tax collectors—and would he were here to preach to their descendants—came to him, and

were promptly exhorted, to "exact no more than is appointed to you."

The turbulent soldiers, seditious against their leaders; ravaging the country, and abusing the populace, got their lesson: "Do violence to no man . . . and be content with your wages." Thus he demanded fruits of the repentance which he inculcated, and they professed.

Then his moral greatness towered to its height; when with one word he might have enlisted thousands on his side, when at his will he might have become the popular idol, he opens his mouth only to sound the praises of his Messiah. "He that cometh after me is mightier than I . . . He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost: whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor."

The Voice from the wilderness swells into a mighty epic; the hero preacher is a divine poet, his rugged majestic words fired all souls, and his life accorded with his utterances. The harmony between this blameless, zealous, world-forsaking Nazarite, and the new life he advocated, did the work of a hundred sermons with those polluted priests and people.

The seal of John's message and work was his baptism. This holds like himself a solitary place; it was not Levitical, nor was it Christian baptism; it was, as said his followers long time after to the Apostles, "John's Baptism."

He affirmed to his adherents that his baptism, like himself, was merely the forerunner of something more efficient; it did not secure salvation; it was simply the earnest of repentance; it was also a preparation for the coming of the Messiah, and its highest object was to point the people to his person.

One chief aim of the Baptist in administering his ordinance was to show that mere legal or priestly lustrations can by no means purify the spiritual nature.

John hesitated to administer baptism to the Pharisees and Sadducees, because he felt sure that they were devoid of that repentance which the act should set forth; their baptism would be a form, and nothing more. He was yet more reluctant to baptize our Lord Jesus, because he had nothing of which to repent; the ordinance was far below so lofty a subject. "It was not in his intellectual discernment, but in his feelings, that John erred in regard to Jesus; he was 'offended' where, in analogous circumstances, Abraham, Moses, Elijah, Mary and Peter stumbled." Now, as later, he is distressed because Christ does not assert his majesty.

With Divine forbearance, Jesus corrects his prophet's mistake. "Suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness."

It is not possible that John could have grown to manhood ignorant of the wonderful circumstances of his own birth, and the more wonderful events grouped around the advent of the Son of Mary. These must have been the theme of much instruction from his parents, and of much profound thought. That Spirit, which sanctified and enlightened him, had promised him a distinct, public, celestial sign, as to the person of the Christ; therefore, while John knew Jesus as a man knows anything by human tuition, and knew him fully enough to shrink reverently from baptizing him, he yet, as the Apostle says, "knew him not," because as yet he had not been granted the prophetic, or divine certitude, concerning his Messiahship.

While John had known of Jesus, and had doubtless seen him on occasions, it is more than likely that the divine allotment of events had been such that the Messiah and his Forerunner had been in so far kept apart, that there could be no accusation of collusion between them.

With the baptism of Jesus, John's public mission ended; his

work was as short as it was important. The rending heavens, the Divine Voice, the Supernal Dove, signified that the Messiah was now formally introduced to the world. John's future testimony was to be in prison, pain, and almost despair.

Still John pursued his ministry, led by his ardent zeal beyond its goal. His sole and burning desire was to prepare the way of the Lord; his continuance of his work, after his office as herald had ceased to exist, occasioned dissensions between his hearers and those of Jesus, and caused the Jews to draw comparisons between the asetic Prophet in the wilderness, and the genial and bountiful Jesus of Nazareth.

This exercise of his ministry did not long continue; the fearless Nazarite was as sharp in his dealings with the crowned profligate who lorded it over Jewry, as he had been with the messengers of the Sanhedrim.

Herod Antipas was a monster, who defied the laws of God and man. He had taken for his wife Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, who was yet living in retirement; Herod the Great having excluded him from any share in the government. Herodias was the niece of both her husbands.

John boldly rebuked the king for his unlawful marriage, and as a reward of his faithfulness was cast into prison.

In Herod Antipas we see the Ahab, and in Herodias the Jezebel of the New Testament.

In her wickedness, Herodias never falters; her towering ambition upholds her, and she still urges her husband on, when his timorous feet tremble at the entrance of that dangerous way, along which she boldly presses.

The most vacillating of mortals, Herod agrees now with his wife in opposition to the people, when he casts the popular prophet into prison; and now he sides with the nation, and against the queen, when none of her blandishments can induce him to put John to death.

Herodias and Herod each feared John; the crowned harlot feared him lest his wonderful influence should sway her yielding paramour toward virtue; and should cast her from that throne which she had sold her soul to obtain.

Herod feared John, says Mark, "knowing that he was a just man and a holy, and observed him; and when he heard him he did many things, and heard him gladly."

What a picture have we here of this poor wretch, bowed in abject fear before the godly life which he has not self-denial sufficient to imitate; with feverish eagerness listening to the preacher's words, trying to hear something which will heal his inward pain, yet will not be too heavy a sacrifice; doing many things, but not all; improving in some few externals, if by them he may buy God's peace; yet utterly unable to reach that self-renunciation which the Baptist unflinchingly demanded as the fruit of repentance.

Josephus tells us that Herod feared the influence of the holy life of the Nazarite, as contrasted before the people with his own glaring profligacy; and was, therefore, the more ready to remove the prophet from public view.

We now see this new Elias, after the performance of his brief mission, cast into prison.

He who had grown to manhood in the wilderness, here, in the early meridian of his life, became a captive in the castle of Machærus, near the shores of the Dead Sea. Here Herod had a summer palace; here are the hot springs of Calirohoe; and here the Zerka Main River rushes toward the Dead Sea.

In the chill dungeon of the castle, John was shut from all those bright summer sights and sounds which beguiled his captor; nothing was left him but to ponder on the past, and to long with bitter heart sickness for some coming good.

When the iron-bound doors of Herod's prison at Machærus

closed upon John the Baptist, the Dispensation of the Old Testament passed away; the Law and the Prophets in the person of their last champion left the field, and Jesus, the Defender of his people, gave freely to the earth the salvation purchased by his blood. "The law and the prophets were until John; since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it," says Christ, who in his life and person magnified the law and made it honorable.

Darkness, inaction, starvation, tell on the stoutest souls; John, who had lived the free life of the wilderness, who had dwelt in the open air, held intercourse with beetling crags, and rushing brooks, and shadowy trees; whose worship had been conducted under the illimitable dome of the sky, and the solemn stars, pined in captivity, like a full grown eagle caged.

In the blackness of his fate, all the past became misty and unreal; the Devil, who had not dared to tempt him in his well knit ascetic youth, came to him now, and mocked him with whispers that the divinity of the Messiah had been his own wild dream; that the voice from Heaven had been an echo of his fevered fancy; that the Celestial Dove had been an accident of Nature; that the Salvation of Israel had not come out of Zion, else would He vindicate himself as a king; and all John's past life had been a delusion and a fantasy, and for that poor cheat he must now pine out slow years of incarceration.

In his agony, John did the only right thing that was left him to do; he sent his disciples to find Jesus, and get from him some word to stay his fainting soul.

In the castle prison John had been permitted to see certain of his devoted friends and disciples, and the staple of their converse had been Jesus. The disciples of John had witnessed the baptism of our Lord; they had heard John say afterwards, "Behold the Lamb of God." They had gone to John, saying,



J. John, Del.

Eng. by John Sartain.

HOREB OF JOHN THE BAPTIST.

"Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou bearest witness, behold the same baptizeth, and all men come to him."

Then John had made full profession of his faith: "He must increase, but I must decrease. He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: He that cometh from heaven is above all . . . for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him."

These words had been the utterance of John's day of strength, when he stood at Enon, near to Salim, surrounded by hearers and disciples, when he had been a vigorous man in mind and body: now a worn captive, he sent to the Lord, whom he had heralded, a pitiful cry.

Two of his dearest disciples took the Prophet's message to Christ. Going to Judea, where Jesus was working miracles, the two envoys found the Saviour and delivered their question: "John Baptist sent us to thee, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?"

Holy men were these disciples of John; men plain of garb and speech, like their leader; men who had brought forth fruits meet for repentance; men who fasted and prayed oft, as said the people. They came now oppressed with the contagious doubts of their unhappy teacher; anxious in their own souls, and torn with sympathy for the miseries of one dearer to them than a father.

What an infinite compassion looked on them from the eyes of the Compassionate One, who felt in his own gracious spirit their griefs, and those of John, his kinsman according to the flesh, his Forerunner and loyal servant.

Here was a trouble too deep to be reached by words; Christ felt no resentment at the hesitation indicated in the message; for, touched with a feeling for our infirmities, he appreciated the circumstances pressing upon John, and knew that even this trembling

question expressed a faith greater than many loud professions from other men.

Motioning the disciples of John into the number of his own, who surrounded them, Jesus pursued the work they had interrupted. These two men, watching by the Master through that busy day, saw the blind opening glad eyes to the beauty of earth; saw the faces of the deaf light up as the harmonies of love and nature first fell on their long sealed ears; saw polluting leprosy fly at the purifying touch of the Holy One; saw weakness grow suddenly strong in Him; saw evil spirits, furious demoniacal possessions, own his sway.

"The oracles are dumb,
No voice or hideous hum
Runs through the archèd roof, in words deceiving.
Apollo from his shrine
Can no more divine,
With hollow shriek the steep of Delphos leaving;
Peor and Baalim
Forsake their temples dim;
He feels from Judah's land
The dreaded Monarch's hand,
The rays of Bethlehem blind his dusky eyne;
Nor all the gods beside
Longer dare abide,
Nor Typhon huge, ending in snaky twine."

Even Death restored his prey, and cold corpses lived again at the mandate of the Divine Nazarene.

Ere evening fell, Jesus turned to the messengers: "Go, tell John what things ye have seen and heard . . . and blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me."

No sooner had these men gone their way than Jesus began to speak to the curious multitude concerning John. The people were prone to look on Jesus and the Baptist as rivals; Jesus desired to dissipate this view, and show himself and his messenger as working in entire harmony. He wished also to defend John

from the imputation of faithlessness, or of retrogression from his own early statements.

We see the Lord zealous for John's religious reputation; he will permit no stain to rest on the purity of his faith. So is he ever anxious for his followers and his ministry.

It would be well for those who lightly lay hands on a minister's reputation to consider this. "Do my prophets no harm," refers equally to reputation as to physical comfort; and he who lays rash hands on the good fame of the Lord's servant, touches, like Uzzah, the sacred ark. Guilty also is he who lightly esteems his own holy calling, and by word or act would carelessly sully the purity of his official character.

Christ vindicated John, lest his mere questioning should mar the shining whiteness of his fame.

"What went ye out into the wilderness to see? a reed shaken by the wind?"

Here he brings to mind the earnestness, the fearlessness, the firmness of the wilderness preacher. Let them not esteem him a man liable to change; he is not a wind-shaken reed; those grow lush and yielding by the water courses; in the wilderness are to be found the changeless peaks pointing to the skies year after year.

"What went ye out for to see? a man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they which are gorgeously apparelled and live delicately are in kings' courts"—not in the kings' dungeons; they are the Herods, the Philips, the Herodiases of society; whose vice flaunts its gay plumage in honest faces; they contrast with this virtuous Nazarite, who could count your priests unholy; they will falter and change, and pursue the vanities of this life. Not so this man, who goes to prison, and will presently meet death for conscience sake.

"A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet.

This is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee."

"Then all the people which heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John."

Thus we see that when God undertakes to vindicate his servants, he does it thoroughly and gloriously.

The return of his messengers brought calm to the trouble-tossed soul of the Baptist. In the prison at Machærus, John had found his Horeb; like his prototype Elijah, he could not fall in with the Divine arrangement of events; he did not understand their slow progress, and he desired to have Messiah at once assert his power. He showed his humanity by his faltering; and Jesus shines by his side in calm Divinity. But the reply of Jesus was to his weary heart the still small voice, on the Mount of God.

John, in his loftiest strength, had fully proclaimed Jesus: in his deepest temptation and greatest physical weakness, he only so far wavers as to question of the Lord himself. We doubt not that with Jesus' tender reply, a full measure of faith was meted out to him, for now indeed the hour of his most sublime testimony had come.

In the gilded banquet hall of Machærus the graceful feet of Salome danced away the last moments of the "greatest of those born of women." Herodias won her way at last; the two keen-witted, diabolical, relentless women, mother and daughter, like spirited, were more than a match for Herod the weak and wicked.

Down goes the executioner to the dungeon; short shrift is allotted, and none is needed; for the fearless John is far more ready to die than live, if God is willing to grant him an end of his troubles. As he sees the executioner enter the dungeon, his eagle soul plumes itself for flight above the sun. There is a wail of grief; it comes from his disciples; he falls, God's matchless Nazarite; so young in years; so old in work and in wisdom. In Herod's

dungeon dies the most elevated human character the world has ever seen. Salome carries on that charger to her mother a head which is even now most brightly crowned, and lifted high among the heavenly hosts that throng the City of our God.

He is dead. Yet Herod fears him still! His spectre seems to haunt the place; to the king's shocked sight his ghost comes forth from the grim castle of Machærus, and lifts that wilderness cry, wildly re-echoed by the mountain fastnesses, "Repent! repent!"

His body has been buried in a rocky tomb, by weeping friends; Herodias has glutted her malice by a sight of that gory head: his disciples have found consolation with Jesus, the loving Comforter of his people; but Herod knows of a phantom which will not be laid; John, whom he beheaded, is forever in his dreams, coming forth from his sepulchre, declaring the vengeance of an outraged law.

Herodias has no spell to charm him; the wanton dancing of Salome cannot wile away the heavy-footed hours; every courier brings news that terrifies; every breeze has a rumor that appals, for the whole land is shaken by Some One who does wonders, and Herod cries out, "It is John the Baptist risen from the dead." Herod's birthday was black with the deed that damned him; but to John it was all white with the glory of an entrance to the better life: six months of imprisonment had been the prelude to ten thousand ages in the liberty of heaven. He had begun his work in the wilderness land of Judah; he had passed on, preaching through the sweet and storied Jordan valley; he had reached the court of Herod, and proclaimed the truth with an Archangel's zeal, and now he had met his death by the cruel shores of the Dead Sea.

Treating the death of John as an insult and injury to himself, Jesus refused to meet Herod, who in restlessness of remorse desired to see him, and withdrew to the wilderness of Gaulonitis, near eastern Bethsaida, in the dominions of Philip the tetrarch.

John was the Abel of the New Testament. Herod was the Cain. John was the ardent Elijah, and Herod was the Ahab, while Herodias was the Jezebel of their day.

The birthday banquet of Herod terminated in blood, like the fatal marriage feast of Navarre. As Charles the Ninth of France was driven to agonies of despair by visions of his massacred subjects, so Herod passed years of doubt and fear, lest the man whom he beheaded should come out of his grave, armed with superhuman power, to execute upon him vengeance like a god.

The departure of Jesus from the dominions of Herod was an emblem of that eternal distance which Herod had put between himself and salvation.

As the mission of John was a prelude to the work of Christ, so his death was the precursor of Christ's death.

As the Baptist entered this life, and began his public career before Jesus, so before him he ended his earthly strife, and entered the mansions of eternal rest. Christ's harbinger on earth, he became above the herald of His return to the celestial heights.

XXVI.

HEROD.

THE TRIUMPH AND FATE OF EDOM.

SCRIPTURE delights in dealing in sharp contrasts. This lively diversity of presentation more effectually fixes its lessons upon the heart. Thus the New Testament opens with the contrarieties of the unbelieving Jews, and the devout Magi; the Divine claim; and the birth in a stable. Before the splendid revelation of that Divine-human, the Light of the World, comes Herod the Edomite, a man sold to the Devil in all that he did.

The broad difference between God's thoughts and man's thoughts is never more clearly shown than in the choice of heroes. The heroes of the world are not the heroes of the faith; we call men *great* when God would write them very vile.

Chief of the line of Idumean kings stands Herod, called the Great, yet great only in selfish ability and in crime.

Of low birth and gross character, he owed his position to a crafty use of circumstances.

He appears in Scripture history only at the close of his life, and that for short and evil work; for the most part he belongs to that mighty chasm between Malachi and Matthew.

Matthew writes of him as king of Judea at that eventful hour when the Heir of the Universe came in the lowly guise of a carpenter's babe, to his earthly inheritance.

To Herod go the Magi; and Herod, already in the grasp of his last disease, stretches forth his bloody hand, to deepen its stain with the life-tide of the little ones of Bethlehem.

To read aright this man's place in history, we must bridge many a hundred years; the beginning of his story is in the tent of old Isaac at Beersheba; and now we see the divine plan running through the slow lapsing centuries, and the fulfilment of a prophecy which all but God had forgotten.

Idumea is Edom; Edom is Esau; Herod was the chief of the Idumeans; in him Esau lived again—Esau in his rough, ungodly, early years; the half heathen freebooter, hating Jacob, resolved to destroy him. The advancing years had deteriorated the race of Esau; the nobility of their sire had departed; they exhibited his vices, and not his virtues. "By thy sword thou shalt live, and shalt serve thy brother," had been the word of Isaac to his elder-born.

The history of Edom since Isaac's day had been this in brief: While Jacob was in bondage and in the wilderness for four hundred years, Edom throve; its boundaries were from the Dead Sea to the eastern arm of the Red Sea, from Ishmael's haunts in Shur to the myrrh-dropping forests of Arabia. The land was mountainous, a fit nurse of daring souls; its fertile vales could sustain a numerous population, and Mount Seir, its pride and glory, sat high above it, the terror of its adversaries.

At this day Edom lies smitten by the hand of God, a land of the shadow of death; as the Lord declared by the prophet Amos, "I will send a fire upon Teman, and will destroy the high places of Bozrah."

Saul the Valiant first reduced Edom to the foretold vassalage to Jacob; David, following him, conquered the land and incorporated it with his dominions. During the latter days of Solomon, the restless sons of Esau rebelled, and conspired against a ruler

whom they hated; in the time of Joram there was a defection, but Amaziah subjected them, and under Uzziah and Jotham, Esau still served Jacob.

In the days of Ahaz, the proud blood which could not brook servitude, again threw off the yoke; but finally John Hyrcanus, with a strong hand, subdued the people, in his day, called Idumeans, and completely absorbed them in his own nation, forcing them to adopt circumcision, Jewish dress, forms and ceremonies, and made them part and parcel of the Jewish people.

At length, in the year 47 before Christ, Antipater, an Idumean, rose high in favor with the Romans, and was made governor of Judea under Hyrcanus II., the Asmonean. Antipater had four valiant sons by his Arabian wife, Cypros, and these sons he early entrusted with power. Antipater has been described as a man "who never slept, and was never wanting to himself." Strong and alert, he forever gained the advantage in his covert strife with the Asmoneans, whom he pretended to support. The Jewish line was weak, the Edomite was vigorous, and as happened in later European history, the palace master became greater than his monarch, and founded a new dynasty.

Antipater rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem, and used his utmost endeavors to render himself popular with the Jews. His son Herod was, at an early age, made Procurator of Galilee, and carried on his government with much ability.

When, at the very table of Hyrcanus, Antipater, that too potent power behind the throne, was poisoned in a glass of wine, his crafty son presently strengthened his own cause by divorcing his wife Doris, and betrothing himself to Mariamne, the beautiful and haughty grand-daughter of the high priest, Hyrcanus.

At the recommendation of this pontiff, "Roman Antony" confirmed to Herod his former powers, and even enlarged them; but the young Idumean was less popular with the nation than his

father had been, and saw himself constantly endangered by revolts among his subjects.

Last scion of the royal Asmonean line was the boy Aristobulus, the brother of Mariamne. Herod's proud fiancée and her mother had not failed to press upon his consideration their own superior birth, and in his danger and perplexity Herod went to Rome, to request that Aristobulus might be given the kingdom of his ancestors, and he himself could govern the country under him, as his father had done under Hyrcanus. Thus he designed to secure the power, and to satisfy the prejudices of the Jews.

Antony, at Rome, made Herod the startling proposition, that Herod himself should be king of Judea.

The bait was a glittering one, and Herod the ambitious caught at it eagerly. Only a few weeks before in his despair, he had been on the point of committing suicide; now he was offered by the Romans the crown of Jewry.

Seven days did he remain at Rome, but in that brief period he, who came a distracted suppliant, was made a king; and standing in the World's Capitol, between Antony and Octavius, the foremost men of the day, he was consecrated, by heathen rites, sovereign over the people of Jehovah.

Three months from the day when, desperate at his failing fortunes, he fled from Jerusalem, he landed at Ptolemais amid acclamations, and now indeed, as Isaac had prophesied, Edom had broken the yoke of Jacob from his neck.

Owing to Jacob's restiveness at receiving his servant for his master, three years passed before Herod was firmly established in his royalty. His entrance into Jerusalem as undisputed sovereign was accompanied by the death of Antigonus, whom he implored Antony to execute, and in whom ended the Asmonean dynasty, one hundred and twenty-six years from its glorious rise.

No sooner was Herod in full power than he destroyed all the

Sanhedrim but Hillel and Shammai, the famous doctors of the law. Hillel was president of the Sanhedrim, and lived to be one hundred and twenty years of age; he was succeeded by the devout Simeon, who took the infant Jesus in his arms with joy; and Simeon was followed by his son Gamaliel, at whose feet Paul was educated.

A career, begun in the murder of the flower of the Jewish nation, was destined to be marked all along its course by bloodshed.

Herod, after a betrothal of four years, married Mariamne, whom he loved with the mad fervor of his reckless race.

Her matchless beauty was shared by her young brother Aristobulus, for whom Herod had once asked a crown. To appease the Jews, Herod made this lad high priest, but his envy was speedily excited by the enthusiasm with which the stripling pontiff's appearance in public was greeted.

Clad in the splendid robes of his office, this last of the Maccabees, stood in the sanctuary beautiful and majestic as a young archangel; the impressible Jews, ever enraptured with charms of person, and mindful of the lofty record of his splendid ancestral line, contrasted him with the low-born Idumean who kinged it over them, and hailed the pure-blooded Israelite with unbounded pride and love.

Unable to endure the pangs of his jealousy, Herod accomplished the death of his brother-in-law, having him drowned as if in a frolic with some youths at Jericho.

Verily the foot of Esau was pressing heavily on the neck of his prostrate brother.

In this period, the history of Edom becomes the history of Herod, and the history of Jacob is that of the Asmoneans.

Against them did Herod work with tireless hate, until every remnant of that race of royal priests descended from Asmonias, of the elder branch of Aaron's family, was exterminated.

Having compassed the death of Aristobulus, Herod next took the life of Hyrcanus, the ex-high priest, eighty years of age. This man had been his best benefactor, was the grand-parent of Mariamne, and living in feeble old age at Jerusalem, when he suffered the sleepless vengeance of the tyrant Edomite.

Next victim was the beautiful Mariamne, a wife whom one moment the passionate Herod adored with extravagance, and anon hated as his rival, the daughter of kings, who flaunted her nobility in his face.

Stirred up by his sister Salome, the worst of women, Herod having several times condemned his wife to death, at last, in a wild phrenzy, ordered her instant execution.

Mariamne had borne him five children, three sons and two daughters; the sons had been sent to Rome, where the youngest had died, and two were yet living, as hostages of their father's fidelity to the superior government.

Mariamne met her fate like a true child of the Maccabees; in the bloom of her beauty she went to lay down a life which had probably become most hateful to her, as shared with the monster who pursued her kindred with such relentless ferocity.

Alexandra, the mother of Mariamne, was soon sacrificed to Herod's rage. She was put to death while the tyrant was in agonies of remorse for the murder of his wife. No sooner was the peerless Jewess dead, than all Herod's passion for her had returned. He raved about his palace beating his breast, tearing his hair, and shrieking the name of Mariamne, entreating her by all caressing names to return; protesting that she could not be dead, and sending his terrified servants to seek and restore her, who was already in her grave.

All the dominion which this royal lady had exercised over the king in her life, was increased tenfold after she had, by his order, been executed. He saw her wherever he turned his anguished

eyes; but when he sprang to clasp her, she faded from his touch, and stood an alluring phantom just beyond his reach, mocking his woe, as once, in her pride of beauty, she had mocked the protestations of his love.

From palace to palace, from city to city he wandered, finding no balm for his pain; his courtiers, unable to console him, shrank trembling from the horrible expressions of his remorse and hopeless agony.

Herod endeavored to find comfort in great enterprises, building cities, towers, fortifications: one moment placating the Jews by tributes to their worship, and splendid works at their temple, and again exasperating them by bringing into their Holy City the games, theatres and spectacles of Rome, and filling sacred Zion with the shouts of gladiators; the cries of fighting wild beasts; and the music of contending poets, singing the praises of the gods of the Gentiles.

In the magnificence of his architectural tastes, and in the number and extent of his public works, he exceeded all the kings of Palestine except Solomon. If he had used the same wisdom, earnestness, and grace in pacifying and attracting the Jews, which he exercised in securing and retaining the favor of the Romans; if he had employed his power first to govern quietly his own turbulent family, and if he had curbed his hatred of the Asmoneans, his reign might indeed have been glorious.

But the evil dispositions of his relatives, especially of his sister Salome, the but half-smothered opposition of his subjects, and the anxieties of his connection with the Romans, called into operation all the darker features of his character.

Esau, his great ancestor, had been frank, generous, brave; wild, but never cruel; careless, and never crafty; hasty, but devoid of malice; low in ambition and gross of thought, but ever ready to meet overtures of friendship, and easily moved by entreaties;

Esau grew wiser as he grew older; his age mellowed his nature, and harmonized him with his gentle father and his devout and far-seeing brother.

In Herod the demon of his evil heart grew rampant with passing years; age found every vice intensified, and every early virtue dead and gone. In Herod flamed out all Esau's antagonism to his brother Jacob; Herod had lost sight of the hour of reconciliation, and of the solemn watch of the brothers at the grave of Isaac; the long serfdom of Edom had wrought in him bitter hatred, and nothing glutted his frantic hunger for revenge but Jewish blood.

As a warrior, Herod was bold and brave; as a financier, he was judicious; he understood the development of national resources, and providing for national defence. He rebuilt Samaria, and founded Cæsarea, making it a magnificent seaport, with a harbor that defied the Mediterranean storms.

When, twenty-two years before Christ's birth, a famine and pestilence smote the land, Herod behaved nobly; he sacrificed his plate and personal treasures to buy food, and spread his benefactions not only through his own dominions, but gave freely to the perishing Syrians.

This generosity went far to atone for past offences; the people forgave him much, and had this new line of conduct been pursued, his life might have ended in peace. Instead, his tyranny grew worse and worse; insensate fury, rioting in robbery and blood, renewed the hatred of his subjects.

Four years later Herod proposed to rebuild the Temple, which he proceeded to do with much splendor; spending upon it some ten years' time and great treasure; the finishing and decorating of it was however carried on at the expense of the sacred treasury for many years.

Herod received from Rome the two sons of the murdered Mari-

amne, and recalled from banishment his first wife and her son. The two children of Mariamne were guilty of possessing Asmonean blood, and this being an offence which the Edomite could never forgive, after long strife, he obtained permission of the Roman power to put these young men to death, and they were accordingly strangled at Sebaste.

Among other deeds which aroused the abhorrence of the Jews, Herod desecrated the tomb of David and Solomon, seeking for treasure which he supposed to be hidden there. He had heard a tradition that Hyrcanus, being in a great strait for money, had opened the tomb of David, and obtained a large amount of gold and jewels.

Josephus says that when Herod opened the sepulchre, he found no money, but utensils and "furniture" of gold, and some "precious goods" there laid up: these he carried away, and resolved to go farther into the mausoleum, even to the embalmed bodies of the monarchs: the report was that two of the guard who accompanied Herod to break open the sacred resting-place, were slain by flames that leaped out upon them, and the king fled in alarm. As a token of his fear, and an offering of his repentance, Josephus farther adds, that Herod built at the entrance of the tomb a monument of white stone, on which he expended a large sum; which monument is mentioned by Nicolaus of Damascus, though not the reason for its erection.

The chronology of the life and death of Herod the Great fixes the birth of Jesus Christ at four years before the beginning of the present era.

At this time Herod had fallen into disgrace at the Roman Court. An expedition of the king against Obdas, king of Arabia, had been so reported in the Eternal City as to rouse the indignation of Augustus, who would receive neither excuse nor explanation. The war of Herod against the kindred race—for through Esau

the Idumeans were connected with the Arabs, and Herod himself claimed a nearer tie, for his mother was an Arabian—had nearly cost him his crown.

As a token of his rage, Augustus reduced the kingdom of Herod to a Roman province, and obliged all the population to take an oath of allegiance to Cæsar. Six thousand Pharisees refused this, and were fined for their contumacy; a fine paid by Herod's sister-in-law.

It was the Roman custom at the enrolment, when the oath was administered, to exact a poll-tax of half a stater; to which all the males between the ages of fourteen and sixty-five, and women from the age of twelve to sixty-five, were afterwards subject. Thus we find Christ paying tax of one stater, miraculously provided, for Peter and himself, or, half a stater apiece. This enrolment and consequent poll-tax is that mentioned by Luke in his second chapter, which also aids us in fixing the birth of Christ as occurring about four years earlier than our ordinary manner of dating places it.

At this time Herod was about seventy years of age, and had reigned nearly thirty-seven years. He was even now in the relentless grasp of his last illness. Disease, like death, shows no respect for the palaces of kings, and Herod was the prey of a terrible form of suffering, which the Almighty seems to have appointed as the especial scourge of peculiarly vicious sovereigns.

His horrible physical sufferings were aggravated by great mental anguish. For this there were various causes; he had all his life devoted his first thoughts to securing and retaining the friendship of the Romans; this he now seemed to have lost; Augustus was imposing restrictions and taxations which had not previously been laid upon the nation.

His eldest son Antipater, the child of Doris, had been for some time regarded as Herod's heir; this prince had been active in

procuring the death of his half brothers by Mariamne, and had ever filled his parent's ear with calumnies concerning his whole family and court; these whispers had often excited Herod to cruel rage, and had compassed the death of many prominent people: thus the king had brought on himself the intense hate of his family and subjects, and felt himself now without a friend. To crown all his domestic troubles, he found that Antipater himself was conspiring against him, and therefore cast the prince into prison.

The certainty that the nation would at his death break into a tumult of joy, so wrought upon the distracted king that he gave Salome the famous order to collect at Jericho the heads of the loftiest families of the Jewish nation, and put them to death as soon as he had breathed his last, that his expiring sigh might be accompanied by a wail of agony from all the land, and that Herod might ever be remembered by the Jews with tears.

Salome collected the chiefs of Israel as desired, but released them as soon as her brother died, having no interest in performing his last request, and being afraid of exasperating the nation.

Another cause of Herod's mental anguish was the earnest expectation of the immediate advent of Messiah, the King, for whom the Jews had waited so long, and who had become the "Desire of all nations."

Herod, sharing the popular idea of those among whom he had been reared, expected a temporal Prince, of Universal sway. Though he had little family affection, and had murdered three of his own children, Herod had a proud wish to be the founder of a royal line, and was terrified at the thought of a Prince who should wrest the sceptre from the Idumean family; he was prepared to contest the sovereignty with any claimant, rashly ignoring the belief, that the Coming One was to wield in his human arm the strength of Almighty God.

Gentile nations, free from the national interests and prejudices of the Jews, clung with less tenacity to the dream of a temporal dominion and an earthly monarch, and were more ready than the seed of Jacob to acquiesce in a first advent of humiliation and vicarious suffering.

Here we have called especially to mind the *expectancy of the nations;* they stood watching for the foretold appearance of the Wonderful, the Counsellor, David's Son, on whose shoulders the government should be laid.

The dispersion of Israel, and the long captivity of Judah, were God's appointed means for scattering abroad the knowledge of Messiah, and making Him, as foretold, the "Desire of all nations."

While Daniel had been in Babylon, the Lord had especially made known to him the date of the Bethlehem Advent, "*Seventy weeks,*" that is, prophetic weeks.

This was not a divine secret, and there can be no doubt that Daniel made it known to those magians, or astrologers, of whom he was Rab-Mag, *i. e.*, governor. These Magi must be particularly distinguished from sorcerers or wizards; the Persian Magi were a learned body, first of astronomers. These receiving Daniel's instructions, looked forward to the Coming One, and in their sacred writings called him Sosiosh, whose mission would be to bring in "Life everlasting, forever existing, forever vigorous; at the time when the dead shall return to life."

The Persians preserved such hope from Noah; they had learned Baalam's prophecy of the "Star out of Jacob;" and were yet further taught by Daniel. The hour prophesied had come; their souls trembled with hope; they beheld in *Pisces*, the chief constellation of the Judean quarter of the celestial map, that wonderful astronomical phenomenon of which Kepler tells us, when three successive conjunctions of Jupiter and Saturn pointed to the birth of a new star in Heaven, the Star of the King of the Jews.

In the year of Rome, 747, these celestial tokens held the breathless attention of the Babylonian Magi: "that golden circle of auspicious fire" was the homage of the skies to the New Star, which suddenly blazed forth, and the long watching and expecting Magi accepted the sign, being men of devout faith and simplicity, believed the Lord, and set out to seek a king. Thus the Magi, whose emblem of office was the subtle serpent, fulfilled the word of the Lord to our first parents, and came to fall beneath the feet of the "Seed of the Woman."

But not alone in Chaldea, in the far East, did they expect the Jehovah-Christ—though by his name they knew him not. Tacitus tells us, that at this time it had been understood from the Oracles that now Syria should prevail over the world; and one going out of Palestine should obtain the Empire—"*profectique* Judæa rerum potirentur." (Tac. Hist. v. 13.)

Suetonius (in Vita Vespas. iv.) says: "Fate had decreed that one going from Judea should rule the world," using exactly similar words to Tacitus, and referring them to Vespasian and Titus.

This expectation took deep root in the hearts of poets, and blossomed into song.

Virgil, writing forty years before Christ, seems to rise to the dignity of a prophet, and uses language almost identical with that of inspired Hebrews. Expecting a Deliverer, he beholds him in Pollio's baby son, and sings his future. The noble Roman's heir lived but nine days; but almost half a century later, the reputed son of Joseph came to accomplish the predictions of the Latin Master of the Art of Song. "Now also justice returns, and the Saturnian kingdoms; now a new race is sent down from heaven; under whose sword the golden age shall rise over all the world. Thou being leader, if any traces of our sins remain, having been effaced they shall free the earth from a perpetual fear. He

shall receive the life of the gods, and shall see heroes mingled with gods, and shall be seen by them. *The serpent shall die,* and every poisonous herb."

The poet further tells that in this child's early days, peace and plenty shall begin; they shall spread and increase as he grows in years, until at his maturity he shall stand a pure and glorious Potentate, with a thrice blessed world under his feet.

The whole beautiful and wonderful passage is to be found in the fourth Eclogue of the Bucolics.

In his poesy the Latin only expressed the general expectation of the world, Roman, Greek and Parthian. The Jews' Scriptures had been much spread abroad; the mystic words of prophets had been cherished, and the strange Sibylline oracles had uttered vague hints coinciding with them. Iran, Attica and Latium stood waiting hand in hand.

Thus a universal expectancy preceded the birth of Jesus, the Son of God, and in its breathless waiting hush he came, fitly companied by a glorious New Star in heaven, and the hymning of the angelic host.

The Eastern Magi, knowing that the expected Messiah had been looked for as an earthly ruler, very naturally sought him first in the capital of the nation, and in the palace and family of the king; not knowing that the home of the dissolute Herod was the most unlikely place to find the "Only Begotten of God."

While Herod was imprisoning his eldest son; multiplying embassies at Rome to set him right in the eyes of Augustus, and perplexing himself with schemes for a division of his realm among his heirs; while he continually groaned in the tortures of his disease, which daily rendered him loathsome even to his meanest slaves; while his wakeful night hours, and the labyrinths of his dreams, were vexed with spectres of murdered Mariamne and her sons, "there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,

saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews, for we have seen his star in the east, and have come to worship him?"

They were a notable delegation of very reverend men; such men as had taught the Greeks astronomy; as had stood on the tower of Belus, instructing young Daniel in the evolutions of the stars; as had pored for centuries over the garnered wisdom of the philosophic east. From the arid noon of Chaldean plains, they travelled to the land of the Morning, where the Sun of Righteousness was to rise with healing in his golden rays; they brought the tribute of the sultry tropics to lay at the feet of the Master of Worlds; gold burnished by the fires, and wrought in graceful filagree; pressed into such solid wedges as had tempted Achan, gleaming in cups and bowls and vases of rare device; they brought myrrh from the fragrance-dropping forests of Araby, the blest; and frankincense precious as gems, and sacred to divine worship.

Thus laden with kingly gifts, and clad in costly raiment, fit for the presence of royalty, they traversed the streets of the Holy City, seeking a liege before whom to bend the knee, a shrine for the homage of the Gentiles as the prophet had sung, "And Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising."

Such envoys were not to be passed over in silence; camels and slaves, and precious gifts, and learned ambassadors, made no small stir in Jerusalem, while the magic question ran from lip to lip, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews, for we have seen his star in the east and have come to worship him?" Zion then, as ever since, knew not her King!

The inquiry sped to the palace of that jealous, malicious, bloodthirsty sufferer, Herod. He woke to new energy; craft must now precede bloodshed, and Idumean craft he used toward those devout and guileless worshippers of the Zend religion, on whom the Babe

of Bethlehem was presently to smile new wisdom and everlasting life.

Herod, cloaking his hate in zeal; covering his crafty curiosity with the appearance of honest truth-seeking; garbing murder in homage, is a lesson to the world.

Machiavelli of ancient times, Herod stands in evil contrast to the holy simplicity of the Magi. Herod the hypocrite is set beside the faithful Wise Men. Hypocrisy is ever the shadow of faith; it accompanies its march through time as the shadow dogs the substance, and it proves the existence of faith as the shadow proves the existence of a substance. When the reality comes, the shadow flies; thus hypocrisy flees affrighted before the majestic entrance of truth.

With the statements of the Magi, and the answers of the Sanhedrim, the murderous purpose of Esau awoke in the soul of his latest representative. "I will slay my brother," said Esau; but divine grace conquered the cruel intention. Esau had outlived hatred in his own person, but bequeathed it with his blood to his posterity.

Now all the noble traits of their sire seem eliminated from Edom; the purpose which the great ancestor had relinquished is born anew in Herod, and he resolves to kill his rival, the potent Infant of the House of David.

All the old enmity is up in arms: light and darkness close in bloody duel; now again the prophecy of Isaac was fulfilled, and the foot of the red brother pressed on the neck of the prince of prayer.

The enormity of the crime of Herod is expressed in his designation of the Child, as King of the Jews, and expressing a desire to "worship him also;" this shows his knowledge of the higher spiritual character and office of the new-born Prince; and a consciousness that he was fighting with the real Messiah.

Around this child of Mary, Heaven and earth were moving: the centre of the universe lay on the knee of the carpenter's wife; and Herod, impersonating all the powers and aims of hell and darkness, lifted against the Sacred Babe an assassin's knife.

An angel from heaven interposed between the Child and danger a human shield, the royally descended carpenter of Nazareth. This holy man, obeying the voice of his angel Monitor, foiled the evil genius of Edom at every move.

But now that the Beloved of the Father had fled from the wrath of the king, and in his helpless infancy taken refuge, as erst the race of Jacob, in the domains of Egypt, the life of his crowned persecutor was darkening to its close.

The antagonism of the Maccabees and the Herodians, of Edom and Jacob, was ending now, because the field of strife was covered with the dead bodies of all the combatants but one. In this tragic contest Idumeans and Asmoneans had fallen until the shining line of Asmonias was extinct; and Herod, having exterminated the hated race, found his own life ebbing to its close, while his sons were too weak and vicious to succeed to his power.

It has been objected by some that the slaughter of the children at Bethlehem must be a fiction, because while Josephus heaps upon the head of Herod a thousand crimes, he does not mention this. We must consider that the massacre of these babes was overshadowed by other incidents then occurring: Herod had collected at Jericho the nobles of the people, and was whetting his sword to take off their heads at a blow; and five days before his own death ordered the execution of his eldest born, Antipater. Horrible as was the edict which destroyed these little ones, *flores martyrum*, as old Prudentius calls them in his poem, the number of the slain must have been small. Bethlehem was a very insignificant village; the children murdered were from two years old and under, therefore but a small portion of the young children of the place.

Thus the public attention, filled by so many tremendous scenes of bloodshed, was not especially attracted to this, over which the Bethlehem mothers wailed in sore anguish, and the sacred historian pictures Rachel coming from her lowly grave, and weeping inconsolably for the slaughter of her latest born descendants.

Even as the babes were murdered they were avenged, for the monster who doomed them lay rent by exquisite tortures; his body disintegrating before he died; racked by the power of an Infinite vengeance, the prey of the furies of remorse and despair, shrieking for a death which would only come when disease had torn him piecemeal; keeping him conscious of his agonies until the last instant of his terrible existence.

Type of sinners for all the ages, like Judas, chief among the enemies of Christ, his death is the picture of their unblessed end:

> "Me miserable! Which way shall I fly,
> Infinite wrath, and infinite despair?
> Which way I fly is hell. Myself am hell;
> And in the lowest deep, a lower deep,
> Still threatening to devour me, opens wide,
> To which the hell I suffer seems a heaven."

XXVII.

PETER.

THE EARTHLY AND THE HEAVENLY IMPULSE.

FOR the accomplishment of a great work, men demand great instruments. God magnifies his own power by the use of very humble means for mighty ends. The Lord of the Universe, when he would conquer the world to himself, when he set his battle in array against legions of devils, and their human agents, began the tremendous undertaking—by calling as his co-workers four fishers!

Jonas, a Galilean fisherman, dwelling on the fair shores of Lake Tiberias, had two sons, whom he had trained in the practices of the Jewish faith, in a careful obedience to the Law, and in a devout expectation of the Messiah.

We speak of these men often as "poor and ignorant fishermen," but they were probably persons of some means and of reputable positions; and while not learned after the fashion of the Scribes, the word "ignorant," applied to them in Acts, means merely *laymen*—not doctors of the Law; for it is evident that they were men of sound mind, wide experience, and the usual education and refinement of the middle classes of their day.

The sons of Jonas having grown to manhood, entered into a business partnership with two brothers, like minded with themselves, the children of Zebedee. The four owned several boats, and employed servants; while Simon, the elder son of Jonas, was

married, and lived with his family in his own house in the city of Capernaum.

That this dwelling was no mean hovel, we learn from the fact that he was able to receive into it Jesus, and his attendant disciples; while the open court in its centre accommodated many who thronged to hear and see the Great Master.

When John came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and news of the man and his mission flew abroad, the four fishermen of Galilee were at once attracted toward him.

It was characteristic of these men, and indicates the parental training which they had enjoyed, that they ever set the heavenly above the earthly interest.

They heard of the Voice sounding an alarm in the desert, and at once sped to listen to the call to repentance; to share the new baptism; and do the works indicated by the prophet.

They were enrolled among the most ardent followers of John, and their souls were fired with the announcement of the swift coming of Him for whom kings and seers had long waited. Expectation brightened in their eyes; they eagerly scanned each strange face with breathless interest, and watched the opening glades, and the purple shadows of the Jordan hills, to see coming out of them that Man of Divine majesty, who should send the rod of his strength out of Zion.

Andrew, the son of Jonas, and John, the son of Zebedee, perhaps as being younger than their brothers, and having less family cares, remained with the Preacher at the Jordan, and eagerly received his instructions. Here we see the tender family spirit, the community of interest among those men; for the elder brothers returned to carry on the business needful for the support of the households, while the younger suffered nothing by remaining to learn at the feet of John.

After a time, we find them all engaged at Tiberias on equal terms.

Jesus, immediately after his baptism, was "led up into the wilderness," where he remained for forty days, enduring that sore temptation laid upon him for our sakes.

The day after his return, he appeared in the Jordan region near John, and the Baptist looking upon him, as in stately simplicity he pursued his solitary way, turned to a group of neophytes about him, saying: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world!"

The words came with divine force to two listeners; the hearts of Andrew and John leaped up to greet Him, who should amply supply all their need. The great crying want of their nature, which had never been appeased, could be met alone in One, who was potent to carry away the sins of the world.

They sprang up, urged by the same impulse; they stayed not to take farewells of him who had pointed out the way, they "followed on to know the Lord."

As reverently they walked in his steps—and here is suggested how the following now entered upon continued through life, through the pains of death, and within the blissful walls of paradise—Jesus, knowing in his sympathetic soul the footfall of every seeker for his truth, turned, and radiant with benevolence, asked them: "What seek ye?"

The two made answer meekly, "Rabbi, where dwellest thou?"

He dwelt in every heart like theirs, contrite and desiring; but he would show them his earthly abiding place. Prince at his birth of outcast and homeless babes; Prince in his youth, of all who daily grow in grace; Prince in the wilderness, of all sore tempted souls, he is now the goodly Prince of hospitality, and bids them to his home.

The Syrian day was stooping to its close; fresher came the breeze; the languid flowers revived again; wandering birds on weary wing were sweeping homeward; longer lay the mountain

shadows; the toiler cheered at the approach of rest, and through the evening peace, the dropping dews, the fold-bound flocks, Andrew and John went to the home of Jesus.

Who can fully comprehend the glorious revelations, the deep *soul satisfying* of that sojourn in the dwelling of the Christ? It quickened all the soul of each of these earliest disciples of the Redeemer. The heaven-love enlarged and purified the earth-love. Listening to the voice of Him who spake as never man spake, fraternal affection tugged at the heart of Andrew; his joy could not be complete unless his elder brother, whose ardent spirit had protected and inspirited his childhood, could with him listen, learn and love.

When these guests were dismissed from the home of Jesus, to pursue the duties of the hour, Andrew had but one thought, he must bring Peter to Christ.

Homeward he sped with eager feet, and the toilsome way seemed nothing, so great was his earnestness; he entered the house of Simon, and seizing on his brother with oriental passion, cried: "We have found the Christ!"

It had been the dream of their early years, to see the coming of Messias. Often, as they toiled through the long night watches, they had talked of Him who should rend heaven and come down; often resting on the low green slopes that were mirrored in Gennesaret, they had pursued the favorite theme of welcoming the King of Jewry.

No sooner did the ardent Andrew cry out that now at last Messias was found, than Simon, the man of impulse, had girt his cloak about him, and buckled on sandals for the journey. His hot haste outstripped his brother; Andrew then as ever, had much ado to keep pace with Peter.

Happy in the fulfilment of his dearest hopes, Andrew brought his brother to Jesus; then Simon received his new name. He had

justified his first appellation, Simon, *the hearer;* he had heard John Baptist and Andrew right willingly, now he hears Christ, and his whole glowing soul casts itself at the feet of his Beloved. "Thou shalt be called Cephas—Peter, a rock," said Christ.

It was long ere Simon made his new name good; but the hour came when he was unflinching as a rock, and all the dashing storms of heathen rage, and spiritual conflict, could not shake his steadfast spirit.

The succeeding day Jesus called to him one Philip, a man of Bethsaida, a townsman of Peter and Andrew, who was doubtless won into the circle of the new Teacher's influence by seeing his early friends hanging on every word the Master spoke. Nathanael was the fifth recruit, and on the next day Christ and these his companions and students were invited to that forever famous wedding feast in Cana, than which never feast had guests more noble. Here the human tenderness of Jesus, his sympathy with human joys as well as griefs, shone forth most gloriously; and in the manifestation of his supernatural power, the God stood confessed, and the new-fledged faith of his disciples mounted up suddenly as borne on eagle's wings into the heights of divine mysteries.

The principal home of Jesus during the brief period of his ministry was in Capernaum, and thither he went accompanied by his mother, probably now widowed, his brethren—whom in spite of Romish commentators, and even orthodox German *savants,* we must consider absolutely brethren according to the flesh—and his disciples.

Here the four fishermen were at home, and for a time resumed their ordinary avocations, and dwelt in their own households.

We pause to note that Peter had three calls from Christ. First, led by Andrew, he was called as a simple catechumen; a follower or adherent in the most general sense. Second: his call from the nets to be a companion and constant attendant of the

Lord; and, third, Peter was with eleven others formally chosen and commissioned to be a co-worker, a teacher of Christ's doctrines, his witness even unto a bloody death.

Of all the disciples, none loved so much as this hot tempered, impulsive, elder son of Jonas; his affection for his Master was an enthusiastic passion, and his rash natural disposition led him in the earlier part of his history to show forth his devotion by ill-judged methods. When trial and failure, and suffering had tutored him, the earthly impulse was overcome by the heavenly, and Peter's whole being was absorbed in the desire to bring the world to know and own his Lord.

The family of Peter claims our attention for a moment. At the time of his introduction to Christ he was living in Capernaum, with his wife and her mother. The tradition is that his wife was named Perpetua; that she had one daughter, and perhaps other children, and that she with her daughter suffered martyrdom. We know, from the writings of Paul, that Peter's wife was one of the heroines of the faith; that with pious zeal she accompanied her husband on his Apostolic mission; and she probably, like the holy Priscilla, gave herself to instructing inquiring souls, and aiding in building up the Church.

In age, Peter was probably but little in advance of his Master; he is said to have died an old man, in the year sixty-four; it is not likely that he was more than forty at the time of his call to follow Jesus.

The Lord, having attended the Passover feast in Jerusalem, taught in Judea and Galilee, performed many miracles, and been rejected at Nazareth, came again to Capernaum, and walking forth on the sea shore saw the fishing boats of the sons of Jonas and Zebedee. Peter's boat was nighest him, and its owners at once recognized Him whom they had accepted as their Master.

"Follow me," said Jesus, looking kindly on the tired, bronzed

faces of the toilers, "and I will make you fishers of men." The brothers at once brought their boat to the shore to obey, but the Lord was pressed by a multitude who had followed him out of the city, burning with curiosity to witness his miracles, and to hear his wonderful teachings. Stepping into the boat, Jesus bade Peter push out from the shore, that he might be relieved from the pressure of the crowd as he taught. The discourse having ended, and the multitude returning to their homes, Jesus was not unmindful of the occupation of the sons of Jonas, and said to them: "Launch out now into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught."

"Master," replied Peter, "we have toiled all night and have taken nothing. Nevertheless at thy command I will let down the net."

Peter expressed his unbelief; he would obey as a duty, as a token of respect, but he believed that it would be useless, and felt secretly that he knew best about fishing on Tiberias. Therefore when a miraculous draught of fishes burdened the nets, so that they broke with the treasure, Simon was overcome with a sense of his own unbelief, of his unworthiness to receive such favors, and of the great benevolence of Jesus towards him. Thus often does the bounty of the Lord rebuke our lack of faith.

Beckoning to their partners, James and John, in the other ship, the fishers proceeded to lade their vessels with the treasure; the wonderful store filled both craft to the brim, and they were ready to sink. The impulsive Peter cast himself at the feet of Jesus, with the amazing prayer: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

Peter had seen the miracle at Cana, and had believed, but had not been impressed as by this miracle, which he could thoroughly appreciate as being with his own nets in his own calling and boat, following his own fruitless efforts. He remembers how though he has seen Christ's glory manifested, he has yet left him and re-

tured to his own labors, and here is this amazing bounty poured out for *him!* He cries "depart" because the presence of Christ so reproves the sinfulness in his own soul, and he feels unworthy of his friendship. "I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof," is his heart cry. But here is shown how men do not choose Christ, but he chooses them. While Peter with trembling hand waved the Lord away, that Lord answering the yearning of the man's spirit drew nearer. "Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men." His merciful words fell like oil on the troubled tossing waters of Peter's soul, and his brother and friends, who have shared his awed, excited feelings, now share his devotion, and at once they follow Jesus to the city, leaving parents, property and servants; forsaking all to follow Jesus.

Peter now received his Master to his dwelling, and for some little time the Lord remained in Capernaum; while here he exercised his power in behalf of Peter's mother-in-law, who lay ill of a fever; upon her he laid such potent and life-bestowing touch, that she rose up well, and following the instincts of the renewed soul, devoted her first strength to laboring for her Benefactor.

Not long after this, Peter received his third call, this time to the Apostolic office. Here, for whatever reason, he was set *primus inter pares*; he became first of the Apostles, not having been first called, and probably not being eldest of all; but from this time Peter is set first on each list of the Apostles; is named first of the favored trio called to share most notable experiences, and is at all times regarded as mouthpiece and representative of the rest. Paul, on several occasions, mentions Peter as chief or exponent among his brethren; and Jesus frequently addresses him personally, while directing his speech to all the twelve. At the same time, Peter evidently holds no peculiar office; receives no special honors from his brethren; has no grand privileges, and the rule of his Master is: "He that is chief let him serve, and he that would be greatest, let him be the servant of all."

Among his Apostles, Jesus chose three whom he brought into most tender relations to himself: Peter, the most loving; John, the best beloved, and James, the critical and careful, the keeper of the law, and the calm reasoner, who could balance the impulsive Peter and the fiery John.

These were with the Lord in three grand scenes of his life: the raising of Jairus' daughter; the Transfiguration, and the Agony in Gethsemane.

To appreciate more fully his ardent nature, it may be well first to group his sayings, and then his recorded doings, until the night when our Lord was betrayed.

When Peter sees Jesus walking on the sea, he cries out: "Lord, if it be thou, bid me to come to thee on the water!"

He gives his Master a test, and with eager love would go to meet him on that watery way. Having leaped from the ship, he suddenly realizes his position, remembers that man cannot walk on tossing waves, and seeing the wind boisterous, his mercurial spirits sink, and he sinks with them. He forgets the power of Christ, and considers only his own incapacity. He is afraid.

As he fears, he falls; his doubts are as a millstone about his neck; yet fearing, doubting, he does not lose the consciousness that in his Lord is his only hope; he may have been a strong swimmer, brought up from infancy by the shining sea, but he trusts the hand of Jesus, rather than stout strokes from his own sinewy arm, and shouts, "Lord! save me!"

We have Peter in his happiest phase of character, when Christ asks his disciples: "Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?"

The Apostles reply promptly, giving the different rumors and opinions current among the Jews.

"But whom say ye that I am?" demands the Master.

Peter, ever the spokesman of the twelve, ardently declares:

"Thou art the Christ: the Son of the living God." Here Peter affirms that Jesus is Messiah, and being enlightened by the Spirit recognizes him not in any narrow and carnal sense of Jewish tradition, but in his true mission and person. His reply is solemn, heartfelt, and rich with a knowledge of the divine mystery of the God incarnate.

In this declaration Peter lays the foundation of the Christian's confession of faith; here is the beginning of the Apostles' Creed. He confesses Jesus as True Man, Eternal Son of God, and Almighty Redeemer of a lost world. In his simply worded answer is held that spiritual reliance which is the Christian life of the Church.

"Blessed art thou, Simon, son of Jonas," saith the Master; "for flesh and blood have not revealed it unto thee; but my Father which is in heaven."

It is to this faithful confession, made by Peter, that Christ refers, when he says: "On this rock I will build my Church." The bold, unlimited allegiance expressed by Peter, was to be the foundation of the Church. Christian faithfulness is that whereon the Church rests, and may abide the shock of onset from her foes.

It is a peculiarity of Peter, the impulsive, that when he has reached some lofty height he speedily plunges to some awful depth, as if made giddy by the elevation he has attained. Now having been the crowning type of holy confession and devotion; expressing, in acceptable speech, the noblest feelings of his brother Apostles, Simon Peter strangely yields to carnal ambition, and Jewish traditionalism, and would rob his Lord of his chiefest glory, that for which he came into the world.

Christ began to prepare the minds of his disciples for that decease which he must accomplish at Jerusalem; showing them that he would be obedient even unto a bloody death.

Only by this death could Peter gain admission to the gates of

everlasting life. This the sanguine Apostle cannot see; his human love overcomes him; he seizes on his Lord, and rebukes him. "Be it far from thee, Lord! This shall not be unto thee!"

Satan is ever ready to seduce those who have been most highly exalted. Here he prompts Peter to put himself forward to forfeit, if possible, the world's Salvation. He would have Peter hinder that wonderful expiatory offering, whereby a man may be just with God.

Jesus rebukes the rash man, and the Satanic element at work in his soul. "Get thee behind me, Satan. Thou art an offence unto me; for thou savorest not the things which be of God, but those that be of men."

The earthly impulse had suddenly gained the ascendant; the heavenly principle drooped and fainted on the ungenial soil of this half-regenerated heart.

Peter seems inclined to play the mentor to his Lord; for on the way to the house of Jairus, when Jesus demands: "Who touched me?" Peter says, bluntly, "Master, the multitude throng thee and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?"

With Christ and the sons of Zebedee, Peter stood in the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and saw the banished life recalled to his young daughter; saw the blood flush the cheek lately frozen into marble; saw the eyes unclose with a new love light; saw the parents, breathless at this miracle of transformation, receive their child strangely aroused from the sleep of death.

Favored again to behold mysteries, Peter was one of those who "saw His glory being with him on the holy mount."

There he beheld the celestial radiance of the only begotten Son of God; there he saw Moses, the hero of his nation's history, and Elijah, the mysterious prophet, who broke upon his people like light out of chaos, and left them being swept up toward highest heaven in a whirlwind and chariots of fire.

It was Peter's misfortune to be heavy with sleep on occasions when he needed to be all alert. How long that glorious interview had been going on, he knew not; celestial light aroused him, and his dull eyes beheld the Church on earth in the persons of himself and the two brothers, met by the Church of the Redeemed in heaven, Jesus fitly standing in the midst, but now all glowing with supernal sheen, covered with His glory who dwelleth in the light inaccessible. The law; the prophets; the gospel, the Church of the last dispensation, met on that unnamed mountain.

At once Peter fires with enthusiasm; he forgets his nine brother apostles, less favored; he even forgets Andrew, who brought him to Jesus; and all the struggling nation of the Jews, and a world trembling on the brink of ruin. All he desires is to dwell forever on that mount of bliss; to see his Lord so unspeakably fair; to behold those glorified faces, whose lineaments tradition had well preserved, to hear those sounds of melody, to be by that divine nimbus, shut apart from the sins and troubles of the world. "Lord," he cries, speaking unchallenged his opinion, "let us make three tabernacles—one for thee, one for Moses, one for Elias!" And alas, even as he speaks, the splendid vision melts away. A shining cloud, like the pillar of fire which guarded the hosts of Israel, or the Shekinah which descended upon the mercy seat, hid from the anxious eyes of the disciples those three glorious forms. Chill fear fell on them; they seemed to have lost their Lord; his earthly appearance had been so clothed upon with celestial beauty, that, perhaps, it was a token of his withdrawal, that he would no more "walk the rough ways of the world by their side." Falling prostrate, their souls cried out for light,

"And had no language but a cry."

Suddenly, how soon they could not tell, Jesus touched them, saying: "Fear not." They rose; the celestial guests were gone; their Master, in his dusty sandals and seamless robe, and grave

majestic face, alone was there; the world went on, as before that amazing hour. They had "Jesus only," but Jesus was enough, and they went down from the mountain carrying blessing to the world.

The months of sanctifying intercourse and training in the earthly school of Christ rolled on, and brought the warm-hearted, impetuous Peter to the great agony, the great sin, the great repentance of his life.

Peter and John were the two disciples sent to make ready for that last solemn passover, when Christ was to institute the new memorial of his dying love for his Church in all the ages to come.

Even their long association with the Prince of the meek had not humbled the aspiring, haughty natures of the twelve; they frequently contended for preëminence, and only the great distress and soul-rending of their loss of their Master chastened and purified those rebellious spirits.

Tribulation means threshing; and it takes great tribulation often to divide the chaff from the corn in many a strong soul. In taking their places at the feast the apostles contended for chief seats, perhaps jealous of John who sat next the Master. Jesus began, as often before, to teach them the beauty of humility, the need of entire harmony, showing that they would be in the world a little band of brothers, against whom earth and hell would wage bitter warfare. Let them then find solace in each other's love, and in the Master's service. To enforce this lesson, Christ arose from his place at the board, and girded himself to perform for his disciples the office of the meanest slave. "If I, then, your Lord and Master, wash your feet, so ought ye also to wash one another's feet," was the moral of the act.

Peter's loving soul revolted from the thought of such humiliation for his Lord: "Dost thou wash my feet?" he cries.

"What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter," replied Jesus.

Looking at the matter with his merely human vision Peter could not be reconciled to it, and returned: "Lord, thou shalt never wash my feet!"

"If I wash thee not, thou hast no part in me," said Jesus. No part in Christ! Peter could not endure that imputation; and so dashing to another extreme, he runs beyond the intention of Jesus, exclaiming: "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head."

The little band sat down to supper.

"One of you shall betray me," said the sorrowful Christ. On every lip trembled the question: "Lord, is it I?"

But Peter could not be content, he must know the traitor's name; perhaps he intended to run him through with his sword. Simon therefore beckoned to his friend John to ask who should betray so good a Master; Jesus gave the sign, and said: "He to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it."

The food before them was the roasted paschal lamb, the cakes of unleavened bread, the wine, and the *harosheth*, a gravy made of bitter herbs pounded together, as a token of Israel's bitter bondage, and brickyard toil in Egypt. According to Oriental custom, each person at the table dipped his piece of bread into the dish, and Judas doubtless stretched forth his false hand to the harosheth at the same moment that the Lord did so.

In the East it is courteous in the master of a feast to give a fragment of food which he himself has dipped in or from the dish to one of his guests. Jesus, ever gracious, even on this night terrible with the culmination of the world's long agony, dipped a sop of the paschal bread and gave it to Judas.

The traitor looked up, and met the steady soul-searching gaze of the Master.

"What thou doest, do quickly," said our Saviour.

One not entirely possessed of the devil would have cast himself at Jesus' feet, imploring for himself pardon and protection; but Judas rose and left the spot hallowed by the presence of the Saviour. The departure of Judas concluded the Passover supper, and now came the hour when Peter thrice protested his undeviating allegiance to Him whom he was thrice to deny. While Jesus spoke as one departing, Peter demanded: "Lord, whither goest thou?"

"Whither I go thou canst not follow me now," was the reply.

"Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake!" cried the man of impulse.

"Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake?" said Jesus sadly. "Verily, verily I say unto thee, the cock shall not crow before thou hast denied me thrice."

Then Peter spoke the more vehemently: "Although all men should be offended, yet will not I; if I should die with thee, I would not deny thee in any wise."

To this agreed the other apostles, who were listening eagerly to Peter's reclamation. They none of them believed that ardent Peter, their leading spirit, their spokesman, could deny a Lord whom he assuredly loved; neither did Peter believe that such falsehood was in him. But Christ repeated his words: "Verily, I say unto thee, that this day, even on this night, before the cock crow twice thou shalt deny me thrice. Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have thee that he may sift thee as wheat; but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."

Here is predicted to Peter an outward and visible change; the burgeon of an inward renewal of his soul; through what flood-tides of spiritual agony he was to struggle to this safety, Christ wisely hides from him; on this very night the mighty process is to

begin; for three days of anguish, which would have destroyed a weaker nature, Peter is to battle with his soul's enemy; for long days of temptation, and almost failure, he is to strive, until on Olives he reaches his height of spiritual strength, becomes in his earth-life the strengthener of his brethren, and by his epistles the strengthener of the faithful in all the years to come.

Now he says resolutely, knowing so little of his weakness: "Lord, I am ready to go with thee to prison, and to death."

"I tell thee, Peter," replies Christ earnestly, "the cock shall not crow this day before thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me."

Thrice warned, thrice protesting, with full confidence in his own strength, Peter was thrice to fail.

And now the Memorial supper was given, the Lord's last legacy to his Church, established in deep tribulation, and ever to maintain herself amid warfare and woe, indeed to need these to make her graces thrive, and her expectation to be eager for her King's return.

Next followed that closing and comforting discourse given in John; the prayer of the departing Saviour; and that solemn hymn of praise that woke the night echoes of the Holy City.

Out then into the starlight; across the brook Kidron, up into beloved and ever-sorrowful Gethsemane. Having entered the garden, Jesus left eight of the apostles, and taking the favored three, Peter, James and John, went farther into the recesses of the shade; here He was indeed to be the Burden Bearer of the world, to carry on his breaking heart that load of sins which had shut men out from their heavenly Father.

Here Christ faces the whole traitorous despairing world, in the person of Judas; behind it the infernal powers lie waiting to aid it, an abyss of wickedness, before which the spotless Son of the Father "is sore amazed and very heavy." Around him the poor,

lost, despairing impotent human race, finds its representatives in those three chosen companions, who, in Christ's hour of agony, are asleep!

Rising from his struggle of prayer, Christ seeks his friends; all, even the boastful elder born of Jonas, slumber. He speaks to Peter: "Simon! sleepest thou? couldst thou not watch one hour? Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." Thrice warned, Simon is again shown the way of escape. And now how pitifully his Master regards his weariness: "The spirit truly is willing, but the flesh is weak."

A second time he comes to them, and still they sleep, and rubbing drowsy eyes know not what to answer his gentle upbraiding.

The third time he comes; the Peter who could go to prison is slumbering still. "Sleep on now, and take your rest. Behold the hour is come, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners."

There is a sudden sound of trampling feet, of clashing swords, and shouts of armed men. The moon has risen, and lights up the scene as with a new day; the Apostles, who have been left, are flying from the shadows towards their Master.

Peter, the impulsive, is up and alert now; he snuffs the battle like a war horse; he can endure a fair fight; slow legal processes and legitimate crucifixions are what Peter cannot brave.

The armed bands come nearer. Judas at their head. The arch-traitor, with ostentatious homage, says: "Hail, Master, Master," and gives to Christ a treacherous kiss.

At this, some of the band pushing forward, laid violent hands on Jesus.

Peter being girt with a sword, flamed into defence of his Lord. He lifted his bright blade to hew off the head of the offender, but missing his mark in his haste, only succeeded in cutting off his

adversary's ear. The man was a servant of the High Priest, and Jesus saying, calmly: "Suffer ye thus far," touched his ear, and healed him.

The Lord then said to Peter: "Put up thy sword into its place: for all they that take the sword, shall perish with the sword."

Peter, thus forbidden his weapon, began to tremble.

"Whom seek ye?" asked Jesus of the armed men.

"Jesus of Nazareth," was the reply.

"I am he."

At these words, smitten by an invisible hand, the battalion went backwards, and fell to the ground.

When Christ had refused Peter's chivalrous defence, and had intimated that he should not ask of his Father legions of angels, Peter's heart had sunk; now he revives, thinking the Master about to exercise his divine power. On the contrary, the Saviour offers himself to his foes as a lamb led to the slaughter; and they begin to bind him. He speaks: "If ye seek me, let these go their way." "Then all the disciples forsook him and fled."

They were not the last followers who should forsake their Lord!

Peter and John followed Christ afar off, until he was taken into the High Priest's palace. Being known to the household, John went in with his Master and the accompanying crowd, while Peter remained shivering without, his fears rapidly gaining ascendancy over him.

John, the thoughtful and brotherly, presently missed his old friend, and speaking to the portress gained him admission.

Now a frivolous servant maid turned the lately valorous Peter into a miserable catiff. As he stood near the door, the damsel said, inquisitively, "Art thou not one of this man's disciples?"

"I am not," retorted Peter, the earthly impulse swaying all his soul.

He then went out to the porch; but young damsels seemed combined to torture him, and show him at his worst; for a maid servant, seeing him in the crowd, said officiously to the bystanders, "This is one of them," meaning the comrades of the Prisoner.

Then Peter denied again; and in despair took refuge among a circle of men, standing about a brazier of coals.

As he tried to converse on indifferent matters, one of his companions said, roughly: "Surely, thou art one of them. For thou art a Galilean, and thy speech betrayeth thee."

Roused to all his early unregenerate passions, Peter began loudly to curse and to swear, crying: "I know not this man of whom ye speak."

Oh, cruel forsaking and denial in the hour of extremity!

Peter's traitorous eyes wandered into the adjacent hall, and there he saw his loving, long forgiving Master, at the mercy of his enemies.

At that moment Jesus turned and gave his recreant friend one long look of love, of pity, of upbraiding, and forgiving.

Suddenly came the sign, the crowing of the cock.

All the scenes of vehement protestation, of warning, of stupid slumber, of betrayal, swept before the fisherman of Galilee. False, false, false! brother to Judas! his Lord knew that he had forsaken One who had ever been true to him.

An agony of remorse and shame, such as weaker men may never know, shook the Apostle's soul. He fled from the scene of his treachery, and going forth into the cold gray morning wept passionately.

The tardy day broke over Olivet; its first red beams beheld the world's great penitent, the Christian who had denied his Christ; a culprit convulsed with self-accusation, flying to some lonely hiding-place, where he might give way to his anguish.

Here we lose sight of Peter for three days. While Christ

suffers and is buried, this representative man is buried from our sight; while Jesus is crucified, Peter is crucified to the world and to his fears, and when Christ appears from his grave, Peter walks forth in newness of life.

He hears in his retirement the shouts of the frantic multitude; he hears the tumult of the mob sweeping toward Calvary; his face blanches in the sudden darkness of that doleful noon; he trembles with the trembling of the shaken earth.

Night closes in, and now it is likely that a comfortable guest finds the frantic Peter; for we know that John and Peter were together on the morning of the first day of the week; that John had a house at Jerusalem, where he took Mary, the very hour that a sword had pierced through her soul in the dying agonies of her Son.

Perchance then, John, mindful of his beloved friend; pitying him with something of the Saviour's compassion, sought him to share his woe.

He tells him that Judas has "gone to his own place;" that torn with despair, he flung the price of his soul in the face of the Sanhedrim, and going out hanged himself.

The breathless Peter hears of the converted thief and centurion; and that out of their graves had walked the bodies of many dead saints, and had paced with soundless feet their accustomed haunts in the Holy City.

Thus for two nights, and a still Sabbath day, Peter and John and Mary, and, perhaps, other friends of Jesus, linger together, filled with but one theme—discoursed with floods of tears—the death of Jesus, and his burial rites, that precious treasure hidden in the sepulchre in a garden.

On that glorious Easter morning, Christ, ever most tender to bruised and repenting souls, sends by the angels an especial message to Peter: "Go tell his disciples and Peter, that he goeth before you into Galilee."

But meantime Mary Magdalene, finding the tomb untenanted, has run to Peter and John with the news: the two make speed to see if the sacred depository has been rifled; and Peter, ever more daring than John, pushes by him, who merely stoops down and looks in, and boldly enters the tomb.

That same day, as we learn from Paul, Jesus appeared to Peter, to receive him again into favor, binding up his broken heart.

At once Peter re-assumes the leadership. In the excess of his joy, he is able to brave anything; that look in the judgment hall no longer haunts him like an accusing angel; it is remembered rather as rich in compassion, and pardon.

As appearances of his Lord are multiplied, Peter rises to an ecstasy; but now comes a period of silence: the apostles are not at once met in Galilee by their Master; the Jews declare him dead; Mary Magdalene has seen him; two disciples at Emmaus have held long converse with him; he has visited Peter; he has stood twice among the twelve; but days have grown into weeks, and the Lord has not been heard from.

Delay becomes an agony; Peter can so ill endure idleness; his active soul, like that of John, his earliest master, pines and chafes when there is nothing to be done. He has gone up to the sea of Tiberias, and with him are Thomas; his old partners, James and John; Nathanael, their early friend, and two other of the twelve.

Old associations revive old impulses; the placid lake is day after day dotted with the sails of the fishing boats: these men are poor, and their families may need their labor. True, they have been called to forsake all, and catch men; but he, their Master, is gone, and there is no one to lead them in the new work.

Here Peter is besieged by a fresh temptation, more insidious than the one which overcame him in the judgment hall.

This temptation also overtook him, as temptations often overtake men, because he was in the wrong place.

What business had Peter to be in his old-time haunts, in sight of the nets and the fish, and in hearing of the old choruses of the sea-toilers?

True, he had been told to go into Galilee, but not to Gennesaret; the appointment had been distinctly made by Christ to meet his Apostles on a *mountain*.

As soon as Passover rites were ended, their duty was plain: to confer with no man, but to hasten unto that nameless Galilean mountain, there to keep their tryst with their risen Lord.

With that stupidity which so eminently characterized the twelve, until after the descent of the Holy Ghost, they seem to have quite forgotten that a time and a place of meeting had been mentioned. Not time as to a day perhaps, but some near occasion had been expressed in the words of Jesus on the Passover evening, "After I am risen I will go before you into Galilee," and the repetition of this phrase by the angels, "Behold he goeth before you into Galilee;" and the message the risen Lord, on the Sabbath morning, dispatched by the women, "Go tell my brethren, that they go into Galilee; there shall they see me." In their surprise, sorrow and confusion, all this was lost.

Worn with grief, fatigue, waiting, disappointment, poor Peter, in the wrong place by his own act, but ignorant of his error, doubts his Master, where he should blame himself. No very great poverty presses him to labor; for three years his Master has supplied his need. It is unrest, rather than want; lack of faith above everything which causes him to utter the phrase John deems so important, "I go a fishing." He might nearly as well say, "I give up all."

Suppose Christ should never return, or should not come for years; there will be no harm in filling up the interval with the old business: at all events, Peter is sure he will die of this enforced quiet.

He starts up: "I go a fishing." He has run before his Lord's stately progress again; poor, hasty Simon! Dangerously influential, he causes his brethren to err.

His word is the signal for the rest: "We also go with thee."

They push the boats from shore, and set the sails to catch the evening breeze, and toiling until break of day they catch nothing; and now as the east grows red, they have drifted nearer shore, and see a lonely figure pacing on the sand.

Clearly comes to them the challenge, "Children, have ye any meat?"

Alas! no; they have fished in wrong waters, as many men have done since.

"Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find."

When we work by the Lord's direction, we work successfully. Now "the net was laden with fishes many and great."

The miracle proclaimed the Master. "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it."

"It is the Lord," cried John.

Peter, grasping his fisher's coat, forthwith in headlong haste forsakes his comrades, and his Master's new gift, and flings himself into the sea, hating every instant, and buffeting every wave, that keeps him from the feet of his soul's beloved.

When the boat is at shore, and Jesus bids them bring of the newly caught fish, Peter flies to obey. Then the seven sat down to eat the food their Master had prepared.

Now there is to be a formal remembrance of Peter's sin, and an evident forgiveness. "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?"

"Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee," said Peter.

"Feed my lambs," said the Great Shepherd of the flock.

Again the question: "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?"

"Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee," said Peter,

appealing to Christ's omniscience to believe him in spite of his false act.

But when the third time the question came, Peter's heart broke at the remembrance of that bitter denial, and grief overflowed his soul.

"Lord, thou knowest that I love thee."

"Verily, verily, I say unto thee," said Jesus, "When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldst: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thine hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not."

This prophecy of his martyrdom the Apostle received without terror; but true to his own impulsive nature, he turned to John, who, with the others, followed the steps of the Master, and demanded: "Lord what shall this man do?"

Then Jesus cautioned this Peter, and all the other unduly anxious Peters of the Church, "What is that to thee? Follow thou me."

Here closes the first part of Peter's history.

When the volume of his life opens again, we find him standing forth the chief of the Apostles on the Great Day of Pentecost. Since the ascension of Christ, Peter had taken the lead, had gathered the brethren together to wait in prayer and supplication the Promise of the Father; had led them in choosing a new Apostle to take the place of lost Judas.

On the Pentecostal day, Peter stands bravely forth preaching a crucified Jesus; exalting him who had suffered as a malefactor without the gate.

From this hour, we find the Apostle indeed strengthening his brethren; being a man full of the Holy Ghost.

With John he performs that notable miracle at the Gate Beautiful, and the ring of his voice before the Sanhedrim, "Whether it

be right in the sight of God, to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye: for we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard," has very little of the tone of him who faltered: "I know not the man."

Twice is Peter released from prison by an angel's hand: he cries to the chiding rulers, "We ought to obey God rather than men."

So many signs and wonders was he enabled to perform, that the people carried their sick and deformed into the streets, that his shadow, as he passed along, might fall on them with healing power.

Being thus as a ministering angel to the needy and the believing, he was as a scorching flame of wrath to the hypocritical and unbelieving. His shadow passing over the sick is full of refreshing, like that of a great rock in a weary land; but from his lips leap consuming fires to smite Ananias and Sapphira.

Peter stands among the Samaritan disciples, the harvest of his Lord's sowing, and with tender recollections flooding his soul prays for them that they may receive the Holy Ghost; but when Simon, the sorcerer, offers him money for powers like his own, he darts upon him the withering curse, "Thy money perish with thee! I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and the bond of iniquity."

Eneas, healed of his palsy, which, for eight years, had held him in strong chains, arose to bless the son of Jonas. Endowed with a power like that of Christ and the greatest prophets, Peter calls back dead Dorcas from the "undiscovered bourne."

To enfranchise his spirit, bound up in Judaism, God sends him a vision, and makes him his missionary to Cornelius.

When Paul is converted, he seeks Peter on his first visit to Jerusalem, this being three years after he had confessed Christ. On this occasion Barnabas, probably a former friend,

introduced him to Peter, with whom the new Apostle abode fifteen days.

Having lost his beloved friend James by the sword of Herod, we find Peter shut up in prison, whence he is miraculously delivered.

After this event, we have no continuous history of this Apostle. Six years after his release from the power of Herod, Peter was in Jerusalem at an assemblage of apostles and elders, who were met to discuss matters important to the widely extending Church.

Very many critics believe that the dispute between Peter and Paul, when the latter Apostle reproved his elder brother for dissimulation in his dealings between Jews and Gentiles, took place at this time.

And in this fact which Paul states, we see Peter, the real man, showing forth in all his individuality. At one time he walked freely and brotherly with the Gentile disciples at Antioch; but when Judaizers came, he was carried away by their influence, and withdrew himself from his former friends.

Paul admits that to Peter was committed "the Gospel of the circumcision," and calls him, with James and John, "pillars of the Church."

Concerning Peter's life, after the Bible record of him ceases, we have only tradition and conjecture. He was certainly for a long while at Antioch, and for another unnamed period at Babylon—not the spiritual Babylon of Rome, but the olden Babylon, still a flourishing seat of intellectual culture, and much frequented by Jews; many Jewish families having remained there since the Captivity.

Early tradition associates Peter's name with the foundation of the Church at Corinth; and suggests that he, in a long tour, spread the Gospel through the countries of Asia.

We come now to a long vexed question, the residence of Peter

at Rome. Out of this supposititious residence, error has made much capital. It has been the misfortune of the fiery-hearted Apostle, that his name and memory have been used as Standards for the Hosts of Sin.

For a time a boldly asserted falsehood was taken for fact; an immense religious fabric was built on the statement that Peter was at Rome; the time of his stay was particularly stated at twenty-five years; and his pontifical chair was exhibited as a proof like Joseph's bloody coat, and was, like that coat, a proof of something which had never occurred.

Even to-day, when noble Italian reformers dispute this question in the seven-hilled city, and rout the upholders of the idea of Peter's abode there, learned Biblical writers among Protestants, such as Kitto, in his "History of the Bible," and Smith, in his "Bible Dictionary," assert the fable for truth.

If we give up the idea that Peter was at Rome, we must also give up many very charming legends. We must forego the notion, that Peter and his daughter were whirled to the world's capital in a fiery chariot, there to battle Simon Magus; and all the other pretty fancies of the "Golden Legend." We can no longer think that Peter, flying in fear of martyrdom along the Appian way, met his Lord "going to Rome, there to be crucified again."

Peter's imprisonment with Paul; the marks of his chain, the print of his hand and head worn in his cell's wall, all must be relinquished as myths, if Peter was not at Rome; but having ascertained, by unflinching chronology, that he could not possibly have spent twenty-five years in the Eternal City; and his treasured chair being proven a Roman consular relic of a later day, wrought with pictures of the labors of Hercules, we also find that the story of his ever being at Rome, or dying there, is pure fabrication. Smith thinks it "a settled point, that he did not visit Rome

until the last year of his life;" but that he then went there and was martyred.

It is a much more fully settled point, that he never was at Rome at all.

It is time that careful historical research was substituted for ornate tradition. We live in the resurrection time of the ages; the world is giving up its dead; it is not the hour to keep truth buried, and for each new writer to cast stones on its grave, raising a mighty cairn. If our fathers slew the truth, it is not needful that we should build its sepulchres. Rather let it come forth clad in white robes, singing praises.

The arguments against the statement that Peter was at Rome are not recondite dissertations, but are open to all; here it is not needful to discuss them. One very pertinent objection is the utter silence of all the Epistles concerning any visitation of Peter to the city of the Cæsars. Paul, the courteous, writing from Rome, carefully saluting and remembering every one, says nothing of his great brother soul, his pioneer work-fellow, to whom was committed the gospel to the Jews, while he himself labored among the Gentiles. Paul states particularly that "no man stood by him," that only Luke "is with him."

Peter does not come to meet him at the "three taverns." Peter, in his General Epistles, makes no mention of the Roman Church, which he is imagined to have founded; while he particularly speaks of the Asian churches. He mentions Babylon, not Rome; Sylvanus and Mark, never Paul.

There are many strong proofs and arguments to be drawn, outside of Scripture, against the assertion that Peter was at Rome. Dealing here merely with the internal Scriptural evidence, we find it all against those legends which have been the cloak of so much iniquity.

The date and place of Peter's death are unknown. Tradition

is united in declaring that he was crucified under the Neronian persecution. Origen says, with his head downward on the cross, at his own request. But we have a stronger evidence than patristic tradition for the manner of Peter's death. Christ had especially foretold that his ardent adherent should follow him in the bitter road of martyrdom. "Thou canst not follow me now, but thou shalt follow me afterwards." "Thou shalt stretch forth thine hands and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not. This he spake signifying by what death he should glorify God."

The Neronian persecution swept its bloody way through all parts of the Empire; the servants of Jesus fell before it like ripe grain before the reapers; this persecution, beginning in the month of November, in the sixty-fourth year of the Christian era, raged for four years, and was only ended by the violent death of the most accursed tyrant that ever wore a crown.

Peter was probably nearing his seventieth year; he was worn by hard labors; from his earliest childhood he had been one of the earth's toilers: many journeys, watchings, fastings, imprisonments, distresses had exhausted him; but now his soul renewed its youth like a Phœnix. The time of his release was nigh at hand; he should soon see the face of his Beloved, and hear the voice which for three blessed years had filled his soul with comfort. Earth cares, and strifes, and threatenings were drifting unheeded by him; songs of the new creation fell upon his enraptured ear; visions of glory filled his eyes; hopes blossomed in his breast, hopes that had been buried these many years.

He in his place, and Paul in his, the Great Twin Brethren, the Castor and Pollux of the Church, led valorously the vanguard of the Sacramental Host. The carnage raged hotter; the armies of hell contended in innumerable battalions; the great cloud of witnesses looked down from heaven on the fight, and welcomed every victor home with palms and crowns.

In these four years of blood, Paul and Peter fell upon the field of the faith, fighting their way, and striking valiant blows for Christ until the last.

"Brief life is here our portion,
Brief sorrow, short-lived care;
The life that knows no ending—
The tearless life is there.
And martyrdom hath roses
Upon that hallowed ground,
And white and virgin lilies
For virgin souls abound.
And Jesus to his true ones
Brings trophies fair to see,
And Jesus shall be loved, as
Beheld in Galilee."

XXVIII.

PILATE AND GALLIO,

TWO POLITICAL TIME-SERVERS.

TWO characters, drawn with a few salient touches by the New Testament artist-writers, hold clearly up to view a class of men unfortunately numerous at the present day—men who trim the sails of their religious life as best shall suit their political advantage. Every man who does this is a moral suicide.

Pilate and Gallio had many things in common as well as the age in which they lived; the offices they occupied; the nation to which they belonged; the question presented to them, and the death they died, were the same.

The natural dispositions of the pair were widely diverse; one was arrogant, bitter, hasty, *durus Pontius;* the other was generous, genial, delightful, as the poet Statius calls him in his ode, *dulcem Gallionem.* Yet they had one leading motive—political ambition; and in devoting themselves to the gratification of this master-passion, they alike fell into the abyss of infinite ruin and despair.

Pontius Pilate, Roman governor of Judea and Samaria, during the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, was, by descent or adoption, a member of the family of the Pontii, whose head was C. Pontius Telesinus, the Samnite general of renown.

Pilate was the sixth Roman procurator of Judea, and went to

his seat of government accompanied by his wife, Claudia Procula. Unfortunately, like most of the Latins, he experienced for the Jews a lofty scorn, a violent aversion, which led him in every way in his power to trample on their prejudices, and to press more cruelly on their prostrate necks the bitter yoke of Roman servitude.

He began his administration by marching into the Holy City, his legions bearing the ensigns, images of Cæsar. Such an indignity had never before been offered; it clashed with every idea of the Jewish heart; their beloved Temple was desecrated by the flaunting of the Roman standard at its gates.

The heads of the nation sped to Cæsarea to remonstrate. Pilate roughly derided them. They then, as Josephus tells us, fell on their faces, and remained persistently prostrate for five days. At the end of this time, Pilate surrounded them with his armed troops, and threatened them with instant death if they did not assent to the presence of the ensigns in Jerusalem. They immediately offered their necks to the sword, declaring that they would die, rather than see the defilement of Zion. Unwilling to reign over a depopulated territory, Pilate yielded, and commanded the removal of the obnoxious standards.

Some time after, Pilate took the *Corban*, the consecrated money of the Temple, to build a long aqueduct to bring water into the Holy City. This interference with the sacred treasury was angrily resented by the Jews.

On the occasion of one of the feasts, the people made a tumult concerning the rifled treasury, and the Galileans, who had come out of Herod's jurisdictions to worship, were particularly vehement in their demonstrations. As the mob grew more furious, the haughty ruler sent his minions among the unarmed people, and butchered very many of them. This was during the minis-

try of Christ, and his disciples brought him word concerning "Those Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices."

Herod was greatly angered by the murder of his subjects, and a quarrel ensued between the king and Pilate, which was only healed during the last hours before Christ's crucifixion.

Before this violent and obdurate governor, the Jewish Sanhedrim hurried Christ in the cold grey morning of the day preceding the Passover Sabbath. The cries of the mob brought the governor to the seat of judgment three hours before his ordinary time of opening his court.

Filled with fury, the rulers begrudged every moment of life to the unoffending Son of Man. They were also mindful of the sanctity of the coming day, and wished their victim to be dead and buried before it should dawn.

The Roman governors ever lived in trepidation during the periods of the great feasts; at these times Jerusalem was crowded with the sons of Jacob, in whose souls burned hostility to their Gentile rulers. These smothered flames were likely to burst forth, when the people were crowded together, and each man's angry breath fanned the fires of passion in his neighbor's soul. Mobs often ensued; and for all riots the government at Rome held its delegate in Jewry responsible.

If the Procurator could not by force or fraud restrain the turbulent Jews, he was likely to be considered incompetent to fill his office, and his successor would speedily arrive.

Therefore, when, before day, Pilate heard infuriate shoutings; when messengers beat at his doors, crying to him to come and condemn a man, who ought, by Jewish law, to die, he made haste and went forth to inquire into the disturbance.

We here note three good things concerning Pilate. First, mindful of his duties as Procurator, he refused the instant capital

sentence demanded of him, and proceeded to investigate the case. Having done this he clearly and fully pronounced the innocence of the prisoner. Now, as the priests yet more loudly demanded vengeance, Pilate proceeded to his third just act, he sought further information on the case; which sustaining his former assertions, he again pronounced the prisoner "not guilty."

Here he should have taken a step farther in an honest course, and have set the innocent free. All equity demanded this of him; but having upheld justice thus far, he falters: three times he lifts a feeble voice to save the Victim; three times his hand, with an uncertain clasp, would hold Christ from the infuriate mob of his foes, who are lashed on to vengeance by priestly tongues. Too weak and unrighteous to pronounce a righteous sentence, he ceases to battle with the rising tide of wrath, it sweeps his honor and his compassion away, and he gives up Christ to the will of the Jews.

Philo says of Pilate, that "his disposition was unyielding, nor was he moved to leniency towards malefactors." His relinquishing his natural habits of feeling on this tremendous occasion demands a thought. He was led to favor Jesus because of the wrath of the Jews. Pilate felt a detestation for the people whom he ruled, and was ready to befriend one whom they hated. We know, also, that the majesty and the gracious presence of the Divine Man before him, stirred his soul, and brought him to a personal interest in him; this feeling, in the event, only made Pilate's guilt more great, his punishment more heavy.

To rescue the prisoner, Pilate made three several efforts, each showing the deep cunning of his nature; he was overmatched, however, by the devil-inspired craft of the rulers of the Jews.

It occurred to Pilate to shift the responsibility of this judicial murder upon the shoulders of Herod, who was then at Jerusalem. He therefore sent Jesus to the Tetrarch, to be dealt with as his

subject, putting the case in his hands. Mollified toward Pilate by this act, and resolved not to be outdone, Herod returned the prisoner to the Governor, trusting all the affair to his judgment. These civilities settled the old quarrel, and made the two rulers friends. This interchange of compliments when the salvation of the world is being consummated, when all heaven stands astonished and the earth shakes to its centre with the high import of the deeds that are transpiring at Jerusalem, chills the devout soul.

Having been foiled in his attempt to escape from his dilemma, Pilate is yet more disturbed by a message from his wife.

Claudia Procula is said to have been a proselyte of the gate, and to have lived in sympathy with the Jewish religion. She had doubtless often heard of Christ, and perhaps had listened to his teachings. Here a heathen woman appears as the sole advocate of Jesus in his hour of deepest humiliation: she forever gives the heathen woman a tender place in our sympathies, and a claim upon the good offices of every Christian woman's heart. In this hour of tribulation, Claudia, the Roman, vindicated the devotion of woman to her Lord and Master. No ordinary dream would have moved a Roman wife to interfere with the tribunal of justice; but Claudia has a vision of bitter agony; the wife of Pilate suffers inexpressible anguish on account of "that just man."

In her message to Pilate, she fortuitously accords with the wonderful description by Plato (Politia, vol. iv.) of a perfect man, who, "without doing any evil, shall assume the appearance of the grossest injustice; shall be scourged, tortured, fettered, deprived of his eyes; and after having endured all possible sufferings, fastened to post, must restore again the beginning and the prototype of righteousness."

Aristotle says that a perfectly just man would be so high above the imperfection of human law, that he must needs break it.

In the message of Claudia to her husband, the Greek philosopher and the Roman jurist meet, testifying to the innocence of Jesus of Nazareth. By the side of Pilate, the political time-server, we behold his wife, hovering like a guardian angel, yet unable to save him from himself, or to avert his fate.

Pilate now uses his guile a second time. He has in his hands a notorious offender; one whom justice suffereth not to live; one whose name is a household word of terror—Barabbas. By some, it has been supposed, that this man set himself up as a Messiah, and that, in this character, he had led a bloody insurrection. Knowing that the Sanhedrim were "moved by envy," Pilate argued within himself, that they feared Christ's popularity with the common people; therefore he judged that, were the case left to the acclamation of the people, they would cry out for the safety of their favorite. More than this, Pilate did not imagine it possible that the Sanhedrim would dare ask pardon for a vile traitor and public profligate, instead of sparing a man whose virtue was so extraordinary that his worst enemies could find no accusation against him.

Having cunningly permitted the populace to gather in great numbers, Pilate presented to them an alternative—they might have Jesus or Barabbas freed to them—which would they save? To his horror and amazement, they lifted that astounding cry, "Not this man, but Barabbas!"

Thus the fallen and degenerate priests of Israel deny the Son of God, rescue the spurious Messiah, whose iniquities had been so fully laid bare, and crucify Him for whom their nation had longed and prayed!

Deeper and deeper sinks Pilate with each passing moment, until in his yielding to the cry of the people he has fallen forever from manhood and truth, and is lost.

His third endeavor to change the temper of the mob is most

iniquitous; he delivered his Victim to be scourged, hoping by this horrible infliction to glut the rage of the rulers, and wake the sympathy of the people. But his experiment is like giving blood to a tiger; it but whets the appetite for more. Louder comes the cry: "Crucify him! crucify him."

"Take ye him and crucify him," said Pilate, shrinking from pronouncing so abominable a sentence; and willing rather to risk an illegal act. But the priests were too crafty for this.

"It is not lawful for us to put any man to death."

"And then another uproar: "If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend."

Pilate knew if he let the tumult continue the report of it would reach Rome, and he would be held guilty; of all things he desired favor with Cæsar, and feared the imputation of disloyalty. He might now by acquiescing in the demand of the Sanhedrim gain a popularity which he had ever lacked; a popularity which might be worth something. He could not risk his own position for the sake of this stranger; he could not hazard all future promotion for justice sake. His resistance ended, and he gave up Jesus to the mob, who led him away with wild shouts of triumph and derision.

Here we see the State becoming the tool of an apostate and blood-thirsty Church—as has since often happened.

During this scene Pilate has behaved like a vile coward; he is without excuse. He dares brave the Jews when it suits his convenience; and he murders by wholesale Jews and Galileans and Samaritans. When he would have his own way, he defies the wrath of Herod; but for Christ's sake, for the truth's sake, for honor's sake, he will venture nothing. As to truth, he demands captiously what it is; to him it is a myth; a fiction of the poets, a figment of the golden age. For the sake of that petty State, the government of Judea, he becomes a party to the most tremendous crime ever consummated; the crowning victory of the Satanic

powers. When he stands before the Jews ostentatiously washing his hands; taking a symbol from the religion he despises, to testify that he is free from the blood of the Holy One, he merely testifies to the purity of Jesus, and to his own eternal condemnation.

In little matters he can be obstinate enough; he writes an inscription for the cross, and in it hides his intense scorn for the whole nation of the Jews; this inscription nothing will move him to change.

In some things he can be liberal, for when the wealthy Joseph brings him his petition, he readily accords his favor, asking no bribe, but apparently glad that his Victim shall be humanely interred. Moreover in this he can gratify his spite against the hated Sanhedrim, whose wrath follows Jesus after he is dead.

Here closes the chief scene in the great drama of Pilate's life; one more act, and a black curtain hides him forever.

In the ninth year of his rule, the Samaritans, lured by promises of some religious pretender, gathered for worship on Mount Gerizim. They congregated in great numbers, and Pilate was pleased to consider their intent rebellious. He attacked them with bands of soldiers, and slew very many. The Samaritans appealed against his tyranny to Vitellius, governor-general of Syria. Vitellius put a temporary governor over Judea, and ordered Pilate to repair to Rome to answer before Tiberius Cæsar the charges made against him. After a ten years' possession of authority, Pilate left Palestine in disgrace.

When he arrived at Rome Tiberius was dead. The proud governor found himself without partizans, and during the reign of Caius Caligula, unable to endure the misfortunes of his life, he destroyed himself. Thus he joined the black list of suicides, writing his name with Saul, Ahithophel, Judas, and many more who have abandoned hope forever.

From this dark picture we turn our eyes, at first well pleased,

to Gallio, richly dowered by nature, as says his brother, with every grace; blessed with more virtues than art could simulate.

Gallio was brother to the famous philosopher Seneca. The two belonged to the School of the Stoics, more congenial to the bold Latin race than the softer philosopy of the Epicureans.

Gallio was the second son of I. M. Annæus, a philosopher of equestrian family in Spain. The name of Gallio was Marcus Annæus Novatus, but having been adopted by Junius Gallio the rhetorician, he received a part of his name, and was known as Junius Annæus Gallio. Gallio and his elder brother, Seneca, were born in Cordova during the first decade of the Christian era. Their mother's name was Helvia; she was famous for wit and beauty and graciousness of disposition; gifts largely shared by her sons.

Early in life these brothers were taken by their parents to the world's Capital, and there trained in all the wisdom of the day; they well repaid the culture lavished upon them. The devotion of Seneca and Gallio to each other was a most beautiful example of fraternal tenderness. Seneca showers upon his junior the most ardent praises, and the two shared the same vicissitudes of fortune. Elegant accomplishments; taste for art; almost unrivalled powers of oratory, and a subtle genius for pleasing, made Seneca the friend of kings, and the inhabitant of palaces; and we find him using his high position in behalf of his brother.

We must read much of Gallio's character in the light cast upon it by the more fully preserved history of Seneca. The philosopher was a time-server in the widest sense of the word. Loving wealth and learning, cultivating easy indifference to all which did not especially concern himself, Seneca could pander to humanity's worst passions. He illy deserves Jerome's epithet of Saint Seneca.

Caligula endeavored to kill Seneca; Claudius promoted him;

Messalina slandered him and banished him to Corsica, where he spent eight years. Agrippina recalled him from banishment, and made him tutor of her son Nero. Over the mind of this iniquitous monster Seneca obtained a wonderful mastery. The philosopher was not too honest to feed his pupil's vices, that he might retain his own power; nor was he too generous to betray the interests of his patroness Agrippina, and compass her murder.

But to his own family Seneca was true; one early use of his influence over Nero was the procuring of the proconsulate of Achaia for his beloved Gallio. The seat of Gallio's government was Corinth. He was proconsul between the years forty-nine—in which Seneca returned from exile—and sixty-five, when he died. The date of his consulship, according to the chronology of Luke, is the year of our Lord fifty-two or four, and this singularly agrees with the items of information to be culled from the heathen writings of the period.

The geniality of Gallio's disposition led him to desire popularity. He was too gentle to use a severe measure that might, by any possibility, be avoided; and he had no sooner arrived in Achaia than he won the warm regards of the populace, by his generosity and easy compliance with their wishes. The sun of his prosperity shone brightly; happy days lay gleaming before him; his brother's will ruled the court of Rome; every day added to the family wealth and magnificence. Alas, these splendors were fatal. Nero was a sovereign who could not brook a rival in riches or in genius.

And now came Paul to Corinth preaching Christ crucified. In this famous city of Greece, the Lord had reserved to himself "much people," and in a vision informed the apostle that he might pursue his calling fearlessly, for no man should harm him. The human means of his defence was the amiable and erudite Stoic, Gallio.

Through this rich and ornate city, the chief jewel of the Gre-

cian states, famous for its works of art, for its navies and its learning, went Paul of Tarsus with the Gospel of Jesus. The Greeks of Corinth bowed at the altars of Venus, which crowned Acrocorinthus; at the shrine of this goddess ministered one thousand beautiful female slaves; while the luxurious Greeks poured costliest gifts into the treasury of their favorite divinity.

The busy Jews, who swarmed the metropolis, loathed the vicious rites of the olden Astarte, who had lured their fathers to many a fall. Between Jews and Greeks burned slow fires of hate, only waiting opportunity to break forth into tempests of flame. High above the lewd homage of the Greek and the ceremonious devotion of the Hebrew, sat Gallio the Stoic, and it behooves us to consider the doctrines which in so great a degree satisfied many a cultured mind. The tenets of the Stoics approached Christianity in a most remarkable manner. Many Stoics, like many Christians, did not live up to the requirements of their creed, but that doctrine was one of ascetic purity. Zeno, the founder of the sect, taught a strict system of morality, and pleasingly exemplified it in his life. They believed in a resurrection of the body, and in a divine Providence, though in a very different sense from Christian faith on those points; wisdom they named the power to decide between good and evil; there is no true good but virtue; virtue is highest happiness: pain which does not affect the mind is unworthy of consideration; in virtue is entire sufficiency to happiness. The religion of Stoicism was quiet submission to fate; its notions of nature and men held much falsehood; its doctrines were refined to an impracticable extravagance, but it moulded some mighty minds, and held some lofty souls pure amid a world-wide stream of vice.

The Greeks and Jews were amazed by the preaching of Paul; many believed and were baptized, but very many more were roused to a furious opposition.

The Jews, knowing the complaisant and praise-loving character of their new governor, trusted that he would readily accede to a loudly-urged demand for Paul's punishment. They rested in the strength of their numbers, their political influence, and the vehemence of their petition, to secure the destruction of a poor, almost unfriended man, who came preaching new doctrines.

If Gallio had been like Festus, Felix, or Pilate, he would have fulfilled the desire of the mob, who surrounded his judgment seat.

The turbulent Jews, loud-mouthed, preferred their charges. "This fellow persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law!" they cried and explained how and why he offended.

The Greeks stood looking on, drawn to the tribunal by the uproar, and considering this rage against one slender, scholarly-looking man, as a legitimate outbreak of the hated Jewish fanaticism.

Paul, at the first lull in the tempest of accusation, essayed to speak, but, before he could open his mouth, Gallio turned upon the Jewish rulers. The acute jurist had easily discerned the insufficiency of the plea, the injustice of the whole proceeding. Here was a question outside of his province as governor; the Romans allowed the Jews freedom of religious opinion. He states a good point in equity, that religious questions are not to be brought before the civil tribunal. Acts of injustice, violations of private rights, constitute the grounds of legal processes, reasons Gallio: this case concerns neither; it is one of religious faith and practice, and he has no desire to act as judge in such matters. The learned Stoic sneers a little withal; it is a matter of *words* and *names*. Now, while it is wise for magistrates, as such, to refrain from meddling with questions of religion; as men, it behooves them personally to inquire into the rights and wrongs of beliefs. As a pagan Judge, Gallio behaves well; but it was to his everlasting disadvantage that he set the religion of Jesus aside as a

mere affair of words and names, unworthy of his devout investigation.

The pagan Gallio is not a suitable model for a Christian judge; he does not deserve the extravagant praise that has for ages been lavished upon him. He was not an oppressor of Paul; he dismissed the Apostle's foes; but justice should uphold and vindicate the right while it restrains the evil. Gallio did nothing in Paul's behalf, he merely dismissed the mob, refusing to punish the prisoner at their request, and throwing all future responsibility of dealing with Paul upon their own shoulders.

The Jews, probably, were obstinate and refused to leave the tribunal, for the expression is "he drave them from the judgment seat."

The praiseworthy act of refusing to interfere or condemn in matters of conscience, is at once followed by a very censurable course. The Greeks, seeing the detested Jews at a disadvantage, discovering that the new governor was quite out of sympathy with their bigotry and intolerance, concluded it would be an admirable time to vent their own spleen upon the Hebrew synagogue. These Greeks, therefore, flew upon the sullenly retiring crowd of Jews, seized Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, who had probably acted as prosecuting attorney in Paul's case, and dragging him before the very seat of the calm Gallio, beat him with cruel violence.

Gallio was bound to distinguish between what was *above* law, and what was *contrary* to law; he failed to do so however. Paul's case belonged to the jurisdiction of the skies; the Greeks were violating the personal and civil rights of Sosthenes their townsman, and all justice demanded that Gallio should interfere, rescue the sufferer, and chastise the aggressors.

Indifference was the eminent characteristic of Gallio; indifference to religion too frequently breeds indifference and negligence in civil justice. A ruler who fears not God is usually a ruler who

regards not men; the indifference of Gallio, while it sets Paul free, permits a sore wrong to Sosthenes.

The behaviour of the people shows that they deliberately traded in the self-contained, amiable indifference of the proconsul.

The promise of God to Paul, that he should be safe was wonderfully fulfilled. Blows were rained on his enemies, while he escaped unharmed.

The stoical indifference of Gallio to the woes of Sosthenes may have been owing as much to policy as to the tenet held by his sect, that purely physical pain is not to be regarded.

Corinth was the metropolis of Greece. The Greeks were here in a vast majority; the Jews were aliens living on sufferance; the Greeks had the money, the numbers, the political power to greatly make or mar the future of their proconsul. The opinion of the Corinthians concerning Gallio would be shared by all the Peninsula; the easy-tempered governor could not endure popular odium; it was decidedly better for him to let his powerful subjects beat that sanctimonious Jew to their souls' content, than to risk his own popularity by interfering. Paul went about his Master's business; Gallio cared nothing for that—let him go.

The Jews, sullen and defeated, slunk homewards. Gallio cared nothing for that. They were a minority; they would feel better to-morrow perhaps; moreover they had been decidedly in the wrong to begin with.

Sosthenes, poor wretch, was beaten, and Gallio still cared nothing; he had his own position, friends, flatterers, money, intellectual pleasures; and the wounds and bruises of Sosthenes, the Jew, were of little moment to the proconsul.

By this decision for Paul, Gallio obtained the gratitude of the new sect of Christians; by his further indifference, he gained great popularity with the Greeks.

At the close of his consulship in Achaia, Gallio was attacked

with a severe illness, for which Pliny tells us that he tried a sea voyage; Seneca also mentions this, stating that he suffered with fever.

He left Corinth followed by the good wishes and regrets of the people, whose fortunes were very greatly in the hands of their governor, and who seldom were fortunate enough to find a ruler as amiable as Gallio.

Having returned to Rome, Gallio for a time shared the broad sunshine of his brother Seneca's prosperity; but thunder gusts sweep over the hottest noons, and the very raptures of applause which greeted Seneca, and the rewards of eloquence and learning heaped upon him, became the means of his destruction. His magnificent villas outshone the palaces of kings; his gardens were each fair as Hesperides; art lavished her treasures at his feet.

Perceiving himself to be in danger; suddenly aware that Nero had become his enemy, Seneca retired to his villas and lived in seclusion, expecting death. All his wealth he offered to Nero, but the tyrant refused the gift, desiring to have the riches only with their owner's life.

Nero soon took advantage of Piso's conspiracy to prefer charges against his old friend and tutor, and condemn him to death. Sylvanus the tribune was sent to the home of Seneca, bidding him put himself to death. Seneca prepared to obey; his wife and Statius the poet remained with him, and doubtless Gallio.

It has been suggested that later in this year, sixty-five, Nero put Gallio also to death, but the more reliable account is that, distracted by loss of friends, office, wealth, and brother well beloved, Gallio committed suicide, a short time after Seneca's death.

The Stoic had his hour of grace when Paul stood before his judgment seat, ready to preach Jesus crucified; he let the golden opportunity slip from his careless grasp—it came no more. Slowly after that hour of careless scorning, the shadows gathered over his life; night and cloud were about him, and, lost in the blackness, Gallio Annæus passes out of sight.

XXIX.

PAUL,

THE MODEL OF THE MINISTRY.

JOHN, thrilled with the splendid wonders of that mighty vision which crowns and closes God's written revelation, notes amid the terrors of opening seals, of clashing thunders, of rending skies and a shaken universe, sudden silence in heaven, for the space of half an hour.

Such a pause came also in the world's history, in the glorious reign of Augustus. The earth, long shaken by Titanic struggles, found a breathing time; the weary giant rested; his bleeding limbs relaxed in strange slumber. The beautiful arts of peace throve in the interim of the great art of war. The Roman power widely overshadowed the globe; where Celts and Parthians had set barriers to its progress, and resisted its sway, they were yet unable and unwilling to challenge a new battle, when the eagles folded their wings. The doors of the Temple of Janus were shut. The pirates of the Levant had been dispersed like birds and bats of the night before the mild morning. The earth's great heart, the seven hilled city, beat restfully; the distant provinces shared its unwonted calms.

Cilicia, on the Mediterranean Sea, and Tarsus the jewel of her ring of cities, prospered in the peace; the Jewish citizens who had suffered much and were to suffer more, shared in the general benediction. In this sweet repose of history, the family of a

prominent Hebrew in Tarsus—a man who had been made a Roman citizen, probably for services rendered to the State—was gladdened by the birth of a son.

This Hebrew was of the tribe of Benjamin, but, if we may judge from the family names of Paulus, Lucius and Junia, had strong Roman connections. When a son was born to this household, in which Roman citizenship was an heirloom, they called him, from the crowning beauty of the tribe of Benjamin, that high-hearted and hapless warrior-king who first swayed the sceptre over Israel, Saul.

The young Jew, albeit an exile from the Holy City, was trained in the strictest practices of the Mosaic law; moreover in his unfolding soul were instilled those ardent hopes, that burning zeal for the One God, that earnest expectation for the future, which were the very life of the law. A pious family was this of Tarsus, intelligently studying the Scriptures and the import of the times wherein they lived, so that some of them, as Andronicus and Junia, were Saul's elder brethren in the faith of the Crucified.

As the lad, growing out of childhood, left his mother's side, his father, mindful of the Rabbinical precept concerning a son, "to circumcise him; teach him the law, and teach him a trade," set the boy to learn tent making; thus fortifying his future life against idleness and poverty.

The country of Saul's birth was indeed

"Fit nurse for a poetic child."

Cold and clear from the snows of Taurus swept the strong river Cydnus, rolling through the city an impetuous torrent two hundred feet broad. The great river which was the marvel of Paul's infant days, has dwindled into a narrow and sluggish stream; while the fame and influence of that nursling who played upon its banks has broadened into a great tide, encircling and blessing all the world.

Hot and dusty noons hushed the city Tarsus as to the silence of death; blessed evenings when the pinnacles of the mountains glowed in the departing sunshine, and when cool breezes whispered the loves of the land and the sea, called forth the thronging citizens to business and pleasure. Flowers, unnumbered and unrivalled, lit up the cool depths of adjacent ravines, as jewels light up mines; the city gardens glowed in beauty, and fig and palm, pomegranate and orange, hung forth their luscious fruits. Over all the corn-bearing plains were scattered the black goats' hair tents of busy harvesters.

Wandering through this gorgeous landscape, beholding the miracles of changing "fruitful seasons," and meditating on the unspeakable glory of Him, who made heaven, earth and sea, the large-brained boy ripened into a youth wise beyond his years, eloquent, earnest, fiery, flashing into indignant rage, melting into tender love of mother, sister, nation; filled with Jewish pride and prejudice and poetry, in every drop of his hot young blood.

Far be it from those Hebrew parents to send their child of promise to a Gentile school, to be tutored in the intrigues and follies and vices of the divinities on Olympus; it was not for him to see the deft fingers of Flora in the fashioning of leaf and blossom, to read the wrath of Demeter in drooping corn, to hear how Atlas trembled with the added weight when Hercules ascended into heaven. Rather, led by a careful slave, the boy went daily to some synagogue school, and at the feet of a long-bearded Rabbi conned with greedy eyes the characters of the venerable language of his race, while his sympathetic nature responded to the sweet music of David; the passions of tenderness in Jeremiah; the raptures of Isaiah; the grandeur of Ezekiel and Habakkuk.

But family intercourse and happiness were to be sacrificed at the altars of national religion and pride; the young Jew must go to Jerusalem, to learn at the feet of Gamaliel, the most excellent ornament of the Rabbinical school of Hillel.

Gamaliel is supposed to have been the son of that grand old man, Simeon, who, holding the infant Saviour in his arms, lifted the noble strains of the *nunc dimittis*, the swan-song of a believing host. With Gamaliel, say the Talmudic writers, the "glory of the law perished;" it perished, but the world lost nothing; for, rising resplendent from the dead ashes of these schools of traditions, Gamaliel's most glorious pupil was the Gospel's inspired teacher, carrying the splendors of the cross over the world.

An eager student, filled with ambition, puffed up with spiritual pride in his own observances and attainments, avaricious of praise, notably strict and self-restrained in life, Saul of Tarsus proposed to himself to become a shining light in his nation; to revive an ancient type of piety; to confirm the wavering Hebrew mind in the exclusiveness of its most palmy and haughty period. His high culture was not unknown or disregarded; the Jews pointed him out as a marvellous young man; Gamaliel set his hopes upon him.

The voice of John, crying in the wilderness, fell unheeded on the ear of this proud moralist; the Teacher from Nazareth walked the land, raised the dead, healed the sick, delivered the Sermon on the Mount, the compendium of Christianity; "his mysterious human life advanced to its consummation;" he was crucified, died and buried, and Saul of Tarsus, hard as a rock held his own proud place, scorning the followers of Christ as heretics condemned already; and clinging closer and closer to his Judaism with every hour.

He heard of the resurrection of the dead, the resurrection of Him whom he called Golgotha's criminal, and he mocked.

Jerusalem trembled at the wonders of that Pentecostal Sabbath, but Saul was all unmoved. Peter's fervid eloquence drew crowds of hearers, but over rolls of precious parchments and in assemblies of learned Doctors, lingered Saul the Pharisee.

Gamaliel, in the Sanhedrim, became the champion of justice, and plead the cause of Peter and other Apostles. Saul, gradually becoming in spirit a fierce persecutor, is, perhaps, indignant at this mildness. Strange that the day shall come, when Gamaliel shall wring his hands because his favorite pupil has gone over to the cause of Christ, and is foremost of these very Apostles, while he, the learned Rabbi now so kind, lifts daily up the prayer against all apostates!

It is not probable that Paul had, during all these years, been continuously at Jerusalem. During part at least of our Lord's ministry, he must have been absent from the Holy City. Perhaps he had extended his travels to meet other wise men and students, or he may have returned for a time to Tarsus.

He had nourished a deep hostility to the new doctrines, he had vowed vengeance upon their advocates.

When men have fully made up their minds to do good or evil, they need not wait long for an opportunity; the world is sown thick with opportunities, as the skies with stars.

The teaching and arrest of Stephen, the deacon, "full of faith and of the Holy Ghost," was the occasion of Saul's outbreak, from cold scorn, to persecuting fury.

The doctrine of Stephen was a singular anticipation of that of Paul. As the young Pharisee stood "consenting" to the death of this serene disciple, whose face, in the council, had shone like that of Moses on the mount—while this nursling of the Rabbins kept guard over the garments of the witnesses who stoned Christianity's first martyr, how little would a looker-on have dreamed, that the mantle of Stephen's ascending spirit was even now fluttering earthward to fall upon the strong shoulders of Saul of Tarsus.

But even so: Stephen did not die in vain; those paroxysms of persecuting fury, which succeeded in Saul, were the death-throes

of his Judaism. With glowing eyes, like an enraged tiger, he looked exulting upon the woes he scattered through the new-born church. Men and women, dragged by him to cruel prisons, felt that they were in the clutches of a man who knew no mercy. The death of Stephen had not been covered, like that of Christ, by a show of legality, nor enforced by the prestige of the Roman name; it was a foul illegal murder; others, similar, were not wanting, but what blood the Sanhedrim dared spill in Judea on the plea of religious non-conformity, was not enough to sate the thirst of Saul of Cilicia.

The Great Sanhedrim at Jerusalem claimed a religious supremacy over the Jews scattered in foreign cities. One hundred and thirty-six miles northeast from Jerusalem lay the ancient and renowned city of Damascus. The name of Damascus is illustrious not only as that of the oldest, but one of the most beautiful, wealthy, and well-defended cities in the world, during its time of power. To this day it is the head of Syria; it was old when Baalbec and Tyre and Sidon and Palmyra and Heliopolis were young; they, in their graves, have returned to the dust whence they came, and still the hoary capital lives on, renewing from the full veins of younger cities, its fainting life. "See Damascus and die," is the Arab proverb; and it is said that Mahomet refused to visit the enchanting spot, lest he should long no more for the abodes of Paradise.

Thither went Saul: not to meet the learned men who congregated there; not to satisfy his poetic soul with treasures of oriental art; not that heart and eye might be filled with the loveliness of the city enshrined in gardens, whose white homes gleamed through groves of deepest verdure and draperies of vines; where the drip of falling fountains and the low whirr and plash of water-wheels chimed with the clear whistle of birds, and the gay songs that rippled from the inner courts. Indeed, no; this man went fast and furious, armed with power to persecute unto death.

So eager was his rage, that his little caravan might not linger on the way, dreaming out the scorching noons in some cool caravanasary; but on they pressed under the blazing sky, unblessed by any breezes, their goaded beasts fainting under them; on, on, knowing no mercy for man nor brute.

Midday, drought, glare, dust, the air torpid with the great heat; and now suddenly the noon glows with an added splendor, which makes the previous glory of the sun seem like some pale candle beam. All the air quivers with such an excess of light that he on whom that light is especially poured falls blinded, as if he had dared to gaze boldly into the very eye of the day.

The little caravan was thrown into the utmost confusion; all fell prostrate; the attendants saw no one, yet were conscious of a presence; they heard a voice, a supernatural sound, but no distinct words reached them; all was perplexity and terror. One man alone could pierce these mysteries, he for whose soul's sake the magnificence of God's power had been so strangely displayed—Saul of Tarsus.

To him this was then a vision of unspeakable terror, as afterwards it was a source of unspeakable consolation; he saw throned in that great central light the Crucified Nazarene, whom he had so hated and despised; whose name he had held as a synonym for all that is most false and vile. Not an instant was needed to impress forever on his soul the eternal divinity of Jesus of Galilee. To him the mysterious sounds that followed were articulate speech: "Saul! Saul, why persecutest thou me?"

O question of ineffable tenderness! The ardent heart of Saul smote him bitterly; a passionate flood of remorse for past misdoing; of devoted love for Him, so mighty and so kind; a yearning desire to work his will and proclaim his ways overflowed the soul of Saul the Pharisee.

"Who art thou, Lord?" asks the astounded man.

Sweet came the accents of that parent tongue, the Hebrew, wedded to Saul's earliest ideas of purity of prayer, of praise: "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest; it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks."

Saul, like Ephraim, was "as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke."

The Saviour who during his earth-ministry had been wont to teach in parables, still the same Jesus, though now caught up into the glory he enjoyed with the Father before the world was, spoke in a parable to Saul. It was vain for him to struggle and rebel; as the ox resists and pierces himself with his master's goad, so Saul resisting the faith of Christ, wounded and tortured himself at every step of his way. Let him press on in ready obedience, delighting to labor, and comfort should succeed to pain.

"Trembling and astonished," Saul recognized his new Master: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

Paul knew of a certainty that he was speaking with and beholding Jesus, the very man and very God, who had lately walked the streets of Jerusalem and bled on Calvary. Of this he argues afterwards: "Have I not seen Jesus Christ the Lord?" as one who mentions an incontrovertible fact.

He also reasons of the resurrection of the dead because Christ is raised up. Paul himself having seen him, and spoken with him, after the same manner as "Cephas," "James," and "all the Apostles."

This meeting, not in mere ecstatic vision, but in an absolute personal appearance, Barnabas later affirms in Paul's behalf, to the Jerusalem Church, and Ananias also refers to it.

"What wilt thou have me to do?" was Saul's question.

"Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou shalt do."

Saul rose from the ground a new man. In him had been

worked the miracle of transforming mercy; he fell prostrate a persecutor, a bitter enemy of Christ; after that brief interval, he rose a penitent, a devout follower of that very Christ, endowed with grace to live for Him, and to die for Him.

Here he had received his distinct call to the apostleship, "called by the will of God." "An apostle sent not from men, nor by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead."

We would that all modern apostles had as good proof of their ministry.

The ministry of to-day can expect no miraculous call like this man, because they have no miraculous work, as had the great Apostle to the Gentiles; but every preacher of the word should be assured in his own mind, and exemplify in his deeds, that he is called, "Not by man, or the will of men, but by Jesus Christ." Feeling this, the minister of the word will not lightly resign his glorious office for secular occupations.

When Saul had risen from the earth he groped, blinded by the great light he had beheld. His awe-struck attendants, taking his hand, conducted him into the not distant city; and going through the "street which is called Straight," established him at the house of a Hebrew, named Judas.

Three days of darkness and solitude had Saul; days for review of the past; for anguished penitence; for strong desire to work in the name of this Jesus whom he had persecuted. We learn that he spent these three days in prayer.

The word of God then came to a devout believer of good repute, one Ananias, bidding him go to the house of Judas and baptize Saul of Tarsus.

The fame of Saul as a persecutor had gone abroad, carrying terror; Ananias had heard of him; Saul, the bigot, knew nothing of the humble Christian of Damascus. This man enters the in-

spired record, merely to perform his great office for Saul, and is then heard of no more; the most significant work of his life was accomplished when he baptized that "chosen vessel" unto God, to bear the blessed name of Jesus, far and wide among the Gentiles.

Ananias, laying aside his easily-stirred fears, entered the house of Judas and gave the blind mourner good greeting: "Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, who appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost."

Now straightway Saul was not "disobedient to the heavenly vision," but through all the Damascene synagogues his eloquent voice proclaimed the beloved name of Jesus.

The lessons he had conned at the feet of Gamaliel; his Pharisaic lore; his Rabbinical researches, were not valueless now; he turned all his acquisitions to the very best account, using the varied intellectual treasure of years to press home the doctrines of the Scripture. His one grand lesson was that Jesus of Nazareth was very Messiah; the Yaveh-Christ, promised and expected since Eden. With his multiplied proofs, with that logic in which he was so notable a master, Paul confounded the Jews. While he doubtless made many converts, he also made hosts of enemies; men zealous as he had been, when he left Jerusalem, and who had not like himself been called in a vision.

Finding the rage of persecutors waxing hot, he left Damascus for a season, and went into Arabia.

Herod Antipas had aroused an irreconcilable feud with Aretas, king of Arabia, by his unfaithfulness to his first wife, the daughter of Aretas. This sovereign held his court in Petra, the rock-hewn capital of "Stony Arabia."

It is probable that Caligula, who banished and hated Herod Antipas, had treated with kindness his injured father-in-law; and

had confided to his jurisdiction the important city of Damascus. This the Arabian ruled by an Ethnarch, whom Paul mentions as in authority at the time of his escape.

Perhaps after his first retirement from Damascus, the zeal of this Apostle, who had entered into his new life thoroughly armed and equipped, led him to present himself at Petra, and preach there the Jesus who had been rejected on the banks of the shining Chrysorrhoas.

After a short sojourn in Arabia, Paul returned to Damascus, and resumed his preaching. Wherever this man spoke he made converts, the love of God burned within him, the power of God accompanied his words.

The Jews were numerous and powerful in Damascus, and they were high in favor with the Arabian king and his Ethnarch. This friendship was partly the result of the sympathy the Jews had shown for Aretas, at the time of his quarrel with the detested Herod.

Being unable to cope with the converted Pharisee in fair argument, the Jews won the aid of the governor, and requested him to put a watch about the city to apprehend Paul, if he should endeavor to escape; they being resolved to assassinate the too popular preacher. The disciples, in great anxiety, took measures to protect the new Apostle.

Damascus, like other ancient cities of the Orient, was surrounded by a great wall. On this houses were built, often overhanging the outer side of the fortifications. The Jewish disciples made use of an expedient not unknown in their national history. As Rahab had let down the spies from her window, over the wall of Jericho, these friends in Damascus effected the escape of Paul, adding, to ensure safety, a basket to the cord; and in this basket Saul safely reached the ground, and, a fugitive for Christ's sake, sped away into the darkness, seeking new regions where he might unfurl the banner of Jesus.

Paul first turned his pilgrim feet toward Jerusalem. Chief of the Apostles at the capital, was Peter, of whom in former years Saul of Tarsus had heard much. He did not need instruction. As Minerva sprang fully panoplied from the head of Jove, Saul burst into his new life wearing all the gospel armor, and wielding skilfully the sword of the Spirit. But Paul yearned for brotherly recognition; he knew that in Peter was a soul affiniated to his own; he would grasp his hand who had clasped in faith and love so often the hand of the God arrayed in flesh.

Saul, hunted, weary, eager for welcome, overflowing with brother love for those whom once he hated, entered Jerusalem. He found himself a marked man—he was outlawed by all. His old teachers, friends, and fellow students, scorned the apostate; the Christians, made wary by sufferings, doubted his honesty toward them. Those were days when news travelled slowly; each city was to its inhabitants the world, and they knew little of what went on outside. Vague rumors concerning Saul's change of opinion had reached Jerusalem, and they had been just sufficient to stir doubt in every soul.

Here the rich convert Barnabas, loved for his generosity, trusted for his whole-hearted sincerity, revered for a devout life—an old acquaintance of Saul of Tarsus—came forward, and took him by the hand. A true "Son of Consolation," Barnabas first believed in the sad hearted convert; he knew Saul of old, as one who would never stoop to deception; he had heard more fully than others the facts of his wonderful conversion; he, therefore, led the former Pharisee to Peter, and earnestly narrated what the Lord had done for him.

But two of the Apostles were then in Jerusalem: Peter, "and James, the Lord's brother;" these two received Saul on the recommendation of Barnabas; soon loved him for his own sake,

and for what the Lord had done for him; and for fifteen days the three abode together, in blessed communion.

Paul was not the man to tarry; he had an errand to a whole wide world; the most Catholic in spirit of all the Apostles, he burned to proclaim the name of Jesus to all the nations who sat in darkness.

But Saul felt he had a work to perform at Jerusalem; an *amende honorable* to make. Here he had lifted his voice against Stephen; here he had helped to condemn him as a malefactor; therefore here he must do honor to Stephen's holy memory, and declare his adherence to Stephen's faith.

In the synagogues of Jerusalem, Saul lifts up his voice, preaching the very doctrines of the martyred deacon; and so great is the rage of the Jews thereat, that, in fifteen days, they went about to slay him, and Peter and James, Barnabas and the other disciples, unite to get Paul to the seaport of Cæsarea, and set him forth on his way to Tarsus. The free sea is his refuge; the Phœnician ship his ark of safety; his face is toward the home of his childhood.

But Saul had not thus left Jerusalem without an especial order from heaven. He longed to work in that dear Holy City. He had gone into the Temple to pour out his soul in prayer to Him who is the Eternal Temple of the Jerusalem on high, when suddenly he passed into a trance, and lo, standing beside him was his crucified, his risen, his ascended Lord.

"Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem," said Jesus, "for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me."

Reluctant to leave the beloved capital of his nation, Paul pleaded his former evil zeal as an argument with the Jews for his present sincerity.

"Depart," said the Master, "for I will send thee far hence to the Gentiles."

Here was Paul's commission to preach to those who had not Abraham to their father. Eager only to obey, he left Judea, and was presently on his way to Cilicia.

To Antioch and Tarsus, to Syria and Cilicia, Saul was now the messenger of good tidings; beautiful indeed were his feet upon the mountains, for his word was that Messiah, the Hope of the Nations, had indeed come, and accomplished his Redemptive work; had ascended up on high, leading captivity captive, and giving good gifts unto men.

At this period Tarsus is said, by Strabo, to have surpassed both Athens and Alexandria, in the number and wisdom of its philosophers, and in the zeal of its inhabitants for learning.

To these heathen scholars came a man who was able to argue with them on their own ground; whose education had been conducted on the most liberal principles; whose mind was enriched by all the learning of the day; whose natural gifts were set off by all the ornaments of poesy and rhetoric.

Here in the synagogue, where as a boy he had worshipped, Saul sat down to teach and to prove that the Hope of the Jews had been abundantly realized in Jesus of Nazareth.

Among those citizens, who were even then paying divine honors to Athenodorus, the light of the Stoics, went Saul, teaching a more glorious faith than Zeno had set forth; a higher wisdom than earth's most erudite philosophers had attained.

Saul was not long left to labor alone; Barnabas, that "good man full of the Holy Ghost, and of faith," left Jerusalem to join his friend in his mission to the Gentiles. From this hour the great Apostle becomes the centre of a missionary band, who strive to preach the cross where Jesus has not been so much as named, in order that those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death may know the rising of the light, that "new name" whereby their souls might live.

While Paul labored at Antioch the despised sect of the Nazarenes received from their enemies the appellation of *Christians*, from the name ever on the lips of their eloquent preacher.

Here at Antioch Saul received another of those revelations which led him on his appointed way. "Separate me now," said the Spirit, "Barnabas and Paul, for the work whereunto I have called them."

With that simple ceremony of laying on of hands with prayer, began Paul's great mission through the world; his immense journeys; his sore distresses; his terrible afflictions and persecutions; the strange hours when he was swept by the passionate adoration of the mob to the high position of a god, and then because he forever lifted the cross of the Crucified higher than himself was cast down, despised and bleeding and trampled under feet.

His life is a most wonderful panorama; scene after scene of strange diversity sweeps before us; here goes Saul through the streets of a city, the mob following him filling the air with their adulation; in another hour he is beaten uncondemned, and cast into prison. One moment the eager multitude hail him as the god Mercury, and run with oxen and garlands to offer sacrifice to him; the next shifting scene shows us his bleeding, mangled body, dragged for dead out of the city, flung on the cold stony ground, while by the struggling moonlight his weeping friends search his pale face, despairing of finding sign of life, and taking their last fond farewells. But this marred, inanimate form is immortal until a mighty work has been done, and lo, Paul rises, and enters again into the city where he has been stoned.

One while he is the friend and honored companion of men high in power; Sergius Paulus, the learned governor of Paphos, becomes Paul's convert; at the hour when Elymas the sorcerer is struck blind by the Apostle's one great miracle of wrath, the name of Saul of Tarsus is changed to *Paul*. From this point in the

history he is the great central figure in the early Church; he leads the advance of Christianity, and the tent-maker of Tarsus, the pupil of Gamaliel, the persecuting Pharisee, is now the grand picture set before us, until the inspired narrative of the Acts of the Apostles closes.

Paul, who argues eloquently before all the apostles and elders at Jerusalem, is the same Paul who, standing on the river side at Philippi, preaches to the women who assemble there for prayer; Paul who with Silas sits and sings at midnight in a dungeon, is the high-spirited Paul mindful of his birthright of Roman citizenship, who demands from the rulers the honor which is his due.

Model for all preachers of the word, he is instant in season and out of season; he consults not his own ease or pleasure; he is gentle with the inquiring, ready to forgive injuries; bold and constant in his attacks upon sin; conscious of the dignity of his office, respecting it, and demanding that he shall be respected in it.

Looking back to Thessalonica, we behold this Paul calm amid an infuriated mob; at Athens, the beauteous crown of Greece, we see him with his ardent spirit stirred by beholding on every side the altars of the Attic Pantheon; those glorious marbles, triumphs of art, signify to him lost souls, human hearts resting their eternal destiny on a terrible lie.

Athens was a wilderness of beauty; on every hand were wonderful statues raised to gods and men; among its groves were the memorials of philosophers and warriors, Solon, Demosthenes, and Conon; the heroes of the dim age of fable, Hercules and Theseus, were embalmed in marble. There were all the glittering circle of the court on high Olympus, "great Heres" with her angry eyes; Venus the matchless daughter of sun and sea; Diana and her radiant brother; the brawny master of the glowing forge, named Hephæstus by the Greeks.

"And in the Ausonian land
Men called him Mulciber, and how he fell
From heaven, they fabled, thrown by angry Jove,
Sheer o'er the crystal battlements; from morn
To noon he fell, from noon to dewy eve,
A summer's day; and with the setting sun
Dropped from the zenith life a falling star
On Lemnos, the Ægean isle."

Praxiteles and Pericles had lavished their transcendent genius upon Agora, Acropolis and Propylæa; art had found in Athens her true resting place, and brooded over it, her divine presence filling all the air.

But he who from the inception of his ministry was determined to know nothing save Christ crucified, the Hebrew convert, walked sadly through these marble mazes, because He who dwelleth not in temples made with hands had no abiding place in these myriads of human hearts, which lived and loved and died in Attica.

Little was it to Paul that men were carving for themselves deathless names in marble, when their souls were going down to woe.

Those learned men, that glorious circle of philosophers who were moulding the ruling thoughts of nations and of centuries, the mighty teachers of a pagan world, knew nothing of the very beginning and foundation stone of all true wisdom, the fear of the Lord; knew nothing of that Divine Teacher who spake as never man spake; who had gifted his little school of Galilean fishermen with powers which should sway the world, when the schools of Plato and of Aristotle should have perished with the plane-trees and olive groves, under which the great pupils of Socrates discoursed their grand abstractions.

Meeting the learned ones of Greece in open argument, Paul shows himself a wary teacher of men; he seizes on their present surroundings, he points to that altar, the one altar to the Unknown Power, which expressed the unsatisfied yearning of the hungry

Grecian soul, searching for the highest, and used the choice verses of their own poet Aratus to press home the truth, when the inscription of their altar was the text whence he could preach Jesus, and the Resurrection from the dead.

Thus he labored, preaching his Master alike in the Areopagus and in prison cell, in the crowded streets and in humble homes, zealous for the conversion of all men, whether lofty or lowly, Jew or Greek, bond or free. He who gave thus freely to his Lord received good gifts from on High. To Paul, the tireless preacher, Paul, often grieved and desolate in spirit, were accorded most gracious visions. His Lord stood by him, bidding him be of good cheer; again he heard him promising his presence; he beheld the heathen world stretching out imploring hands for help; and when beset by foes without and feebleness within, he was caught up into heaven, and heard such ravishing sounds as man may not utter.

In the riches of revelation vouchsafed to him; in the multitude of his labors; in the abundance of his success; in the sacrifices he made for Jesus, and in the afflictions he endured for Jesus' sake, he was not a whit behind the chiefest of the Apostles.

He stands very clearly before us in the character which he accepts as his especially, "Paul the prisoner."

Many of his sermons were preached, many of his noble epistles were written, many of his good works were wrought in prison. Jerusalem, and Cæsarea, and Rome, held him a captive bound with chains; but no chains were on his free spirit, for the flood-tide of his eloquence amazes Festus, and makes Felix tremble, as mightily he reasons of the truth of God. Nor do his privations and trials check the geniality and tenderness of his natural disposition; Paul the prisoner is the very flower of courtesy.

How gracious his quick reply to his judge: "I would that thou wert not almost, but altogether such as I am—except this chain!"

What a model of generosity and grace and dignity is his epistle to Philemon.

Paul's life epistles, metaphors, companions, orations, have formed the subjects of ponderous tomes by the most recondite scholars of the day; the theme seems still ever fresh, so noble was the man's character, so important his mission, so pregnant was his life with incident. But he whose name is to-day a precious household word throughout the world; whose memory is to the Church as fragrance poured out, was in his life despised, mocked, tortured, condemned, and so indeed have been many, his brethren.

"Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world?" Their day is far off, and for these many centuries they are judged by the world, and sentence is passed upon them.

We mark the great Apostle as a prisoner, tried at the bar of profligate and Pagan judges.

He is brought to the court of Felix.

Born of a servile family, suddenly elevated to power through the influence of his brother, the freedman and favorite of the emperor Claudius, Felix was a man devoid of generosity, wisdom and honor; without grace of manner or personal attractions; bold in war, mean, avaricious, cruel and false, as Tacitus says, "in the practice of all manner of lust and cruelty he used the power of a monarch, with the disposition of a serf."

His present wife, Drusilla, he had beguiled from her husband by means of a sorcerer, probably Simon Magus.

Before this brute in the human form, Paul, the learned, the virtuous, the pious, was brought to plead. Paul's studious and guileless youth had been the admiration of Tarsus; his wise and moral manhood had filled Jerusalem with its good report; his fervent preaching, enforced by holiness of life, had won converts in Athens, and had received the praises of its most honorable men

and women; but here stood Paul, before this base slave, lifted to a throne by the whim of Claudius.

Felix had been of some advantage to the Jews in freeing the country of robbers, and expelling the Egyptian impostor, for whom C. Lysias had mistaken Paul.

Hearing Paul many times; convinced of his entire innocence of any wrong; trembling in his presence with conscious guilt; so far favoring his prisoner as to command some alleviation to his hard lot, and granting permission to his friends to visit him, Felix yet, for two years, denied the simple justice of release; and when the governor was summoned to Rome to answer accusations of maladministration, "he left Paul bound," as a last act to win favor of the Jews, and soften their representations to Cæsar.

Festus succeeded to Felix, and before him Paul was immediately brought for trial. Only three days had the new governor been formally in office, when he went up to Jerusalem and was besieged by the Jewish rulers with entreaties to send Paul to them, to be judged according to their will.

The answer of Festus was just and dignified; he held to the majesty of Roman law; a man was not to be given uncondemned to the mercy of his foes; investigation of criminal cases was one of the duties of a ruler; let the elders of the Jews face Paul at the court in Cæsarea.

Here again we find the Apostle brought like a felon to the bar; he is to plead his own case against the famous orator, Tertullus.

Accusations unnumbered were heaped up against him; power, money, relentless hate were all on the side of his foes.

Yielding to the pressure brought upon him, the new governor asked: "Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me?"

Paul knew the many plots to assassinate him; he was not the

man recklessly to fling his life away. He cast himself upon his hereditary privilege as a Roman citizen.

"I stand at Cæsar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged . . . I appeal unto Cæsar."

He asserted his incontrovertible right; he had out-generalled his would-be murderers. He had, of his lofty Roman prerogative, transferred himself from the jurisdiction of the provincial judge, before whom he stood, to the supreme tribunal of Cæsar, in the seven-hilled city.

Vainly did the representatives of the Sanhedrim gnash their teeth, when Festus, having conferred with his assessors, pronounced his decision: "Hast thou appealed unto Cæsar? To Cæsar shalt thou go."

Feeling bound to specify some charges against the prisoner, and having nothing to say, because Paul had so effectually refuted the falsehoods of the Jews, Festus desired Paul to explain his case before Herod Agrippa II., king of Chalcis, who, with his sister-wife Berenice, was now to make a visit of state ceremony to Cæsarea.

Here sat, self-constituted judges of Paul, three of the most notorious sinners of the time. Festus, the Roman; Herod Agrippa, who had all the vices of his grandfather, Herod the Great, who was even then living with Berenice, his sister, in shocking opposition to the laws of God and man.

"Hunc dedit olim
Barbarus incestæ, dedit hunc Agrippa sorori,"

says a satirist of the day.

While Berenice, the most beautiful and most vicious woman of her period, married first to her uncle, twice to her brother, then to Polemo, king of Cilicia, and, later, the haughty concubine of Vespasian, and of his son Titus, formed the third of the court of inquiry into the life of him, who had been taken up into the third

heaven, and been ravished with the glory of the abodes of the blessed!

He preached before them and they called him mad, mad with much learning, said Festus, who could not deny the prodigious intellectual acquirements of his orator.

To these three high criminals before heaven, Paul that day depicted the life of holiness, and offered salvation through Jesus Christ. Scornfully they put the proffered mercy by, and sent the prisoner on, to answer for his life at Cæsar's bar.

Behold him, next, after long journeys, after months of toil, shipwreck and disaster, advancing toward Rome upon the Appian Way; across rivers, among vine-robed hills, through the rich Campana, past the villas of poets, senators, consular men, and warriors of high degree, over a land lying in wickedness, idolatrous then, as now, above other lands, went Christ's "ambassador, in bonds," until at Appii Forum and the Three Taverns, Paul suddenly was met by his brethren in the Lord, by loving disciples, trophies many of them of his own earnest zeal; and when sweet words of compassion and encouragement fell on his ears, wearied with sounds of strife and blasphemy, "he thanked God," and his soul revived again.

The bar of Cæsar was by no means the bar of justice; from time to time the indolent emperor deferred the hearing of the case, keeping his victim meanwhile in bonds. But these years of neglect and cruelty on the part of the sovereign of the mighty empire were years fruitful to the church of God, for Paul made very many converts in his chains, and wrote epistles wherein he preaches to the centuries.

With this imprisonment at Rome, the Scriptural account of Paul ends. The evidence of the early writers of the church, though not abundant, seems conclusively to prove, that Paul, being at last heard by Cæsar, was acquitted and set free, that he

then made a tour of the churches he had established, and, going so far as Spain, there preached the gospel.

After this the Apostle returned to Rome, either of his own free will, to instruct and strengthen the converts he had made in the imperial city, or, as before, being a prisoner under arrest.

At this time, the persecution under Nero was raging. It was mid-winter of the last year of Nero's life. When Paul was cast into prison his persecuted friends in mad terror forsook him; the little church had been scattered, the Christians were fugitives, hiding in dens and in caves of the earth; they took refuge in the catacombs, and there buried their dead, baptised their children, and celebrated in the Lord's supper the dying love of Him for whom they were to die.

Brought to the bar of that ferocious murderer and adulterer, Nero, Paul, like Christ, found no man to stand by him, and, like Christ, prayed for the forgiveness of his unfaithful friends. Being heard, he was remanded to his cruel dungeon.

With the sword of the executioner ever hanging over his head, he sings the love of Jesus and the peace of the believer. A sublime strain of hope pours from his lips: "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand; I have fought a good fight, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me in that day."

What terrors had dungeon gloom, or bloody sword for such a glorious soul, already lifting its strong pinions poised for its flight into Heaven?

To him, from Asia, came Onesiphorus, unashamed and unafraid, to minister to his wants, and bear the greetings of the church.

Sentenced to death! Saved by his birthright privilege from torture, he was to die nobly by the sword.

Forth from the gate looking to Ostia, comes Paul to die.

Bright is the summer sky of Italy, dusty the much-travelled road stretching toward the harbor; merchants and sailors, beggars and mountebanks, soldiers and scholars, travellers, and culprits in chains, throng the busy way. Amid them, guarded by a blood-thirsty band, preceded by the executioner, marches this Saul of Tarsus, Paul the Christian, Paul, the shining light of the Church, following his Lord without the gate, to meet him by the short and bloody way of martyrdom.

A grim, stony, barren spot upon the plain, a kneeling form, a savage circle of lookers-on, a flash of bright steel in the hot sunshine, a rush of crimson upon the ground, and a lifeless body falling prone, this is the scene below. But if the Lord had opened that executioner's eyes, as he did those of Elisha's servant, lo, he would have seen all the blue dome of the sky full of horses and chariots of fire; shining hosts of angels, singing as they fly, glad escort to this great soul, going home; Jesus standing at the right hand of God; the glorious company of the Apostles who have suffered and been glorified before him; the goodly fellowship of the early martyrs; the mighty army of the prophets; John the Forerunner; the grand old patriarchs, a jubilant host, all waiting to welcome him, Paul their brother, the Apostle of the Gentiles, the herald of salvation; the man most catholic of soul and earnest of life, of any man who ever carried the banner of the cross. This is the scene in heaven, when the Church on earth lost her beloved Paul, and weeping friends took up his gory corpse and buried it in the Labyrinths.

XXX.

JOHN.

THE VISION OF THE PARADISE OF GOD.

HAVING reached the close of his journey; his toilsome days ended; going to the land where the blessed live by sight, Pilgrim Standfast turned to his friends, saying: "I have loved to hear my Lord spoken of; and wherever I have seen the print of his shoe in the earth, there have I coveted to set my foot."

Such an one was that man of dual nature called, in Holy Writ, "son of thunder," and "disciple that Jesus loved." John of Galilee—John, mild, gentle, and peaceful, and loving above other men; John, high-hearted, lofty, hasty, impetuous, a spirit kindred to Simon Peter. His first appearance before us is a prophecy; he is following the Master, and he is following him *home.*

It is the close of day; the tops of these yellow cliffs glow suddenly like molten gold, their long shadows fall athwart the gray sand road beneath them; a faint breeze lifts the streamers of the long dry grass, seared and bleachened by rainless weeks; there is a stir and a whispering among the drooping pods of the Kharub trees, and in the lines of departing light striking through the dells, the dark leaves of the Cistus glisten. Evening draws on early in this deep valley of the Jordan; you can hear the flowing of the famous river of sacred story, as it winds along its deep bed. Yonder by the ford behold the throng of Jews intent



J. John, Del.

Eng. by J. R. Rice.

VISION OF THE PARADISE OF GOD

upon the words of the New Elijah, the Voice crying out of the wilderness.

Apart from this excited throng walks the Son of a long line of earthly kings, a man of majesty above other men; one who makes his poverty and solitude glorious; in whose human form tabernacles eternal memories, and the Divinity which spoke worlds into being. "Behold the Lamb of God!"

Behind him follows, with reverent step, with mingled awe and eagerness, the most goodly and gracious of the children of men—John, the son of Zebedee.

John had been reared amid the most momentous events of the most momentous period of history.

His mother, Salome, marrying early, as was the wont of Jewish women, had been taken to the home of Zebedee, in Bethsaida—no mean abode. More than one vessel belonging to Zebedee, and manned by his servants, fished upon Gennesaret; when he went up to Jerusalem to the feasts, he went to his own house; his family were well known, and in no low position.

But Salome, his wife, was kin to the two most noble and divinely dowered women of all time: she was cousin to the blameless Elizabeth, mother of John Baptist, and she was sister of Mary, the "highly favored," the *Mater Speciosa*.

The events surrounding the birth of John Baptist had been sounded abroad, and filled the land with wonder. Salome must have known them, and, as concerning her family, cherished them with much interest; so that while the lapse of thirty years banished them from the minds of most people, they were to her of the marvellous traditions of the days when she, herself a young wife and mother, sympathized with the consummated hopes of her aged relative.

These events Salome had, perhaps, recounted in some twilight hour to her children; and though James and John had possibly

never met the cousin who, born in distant Juttah, and reared in the wilderness, was hidden from the companionship of men, they went to him as to no stranger, when he baptized at the Jordan.

The circumstances of Mary, the betrothed wife of the royally descended carpenter, had been different. The marvels about her child she had kept, and pondered them in her heart. Public curiosity had not been feasted on the details of the visions sent four times to Joseph; of the incidents of Bethlehem, and the flight into Egypt. Yet for all this, Mary must have unfolded some of these experiences to her true-hearted sister; and though, perhaps, these Jewish women rarely saw each other, Salome knew that a celestial mystery hung about Mary's First-born Son.

These holy marvels of the history of Jesus and of John Baptist, had been sacred influences, lofty themes, to mould the youth of the two brothers, James and John, in their happy early home.

Nurtured among the genial, honest, religious people of Galilee; having for his chosen companions the carefully reared sons of Jonas, and the noble hearted Philip; the youngest darling of his parents; safely shielded from the cares of life, the temptations of vice, the pinching of poverty, the coldness of strangers, this gifted, warm-hearted, genial boy, grew to a manhood, whose beauty and dignity placed him, cherished and best beloved, the nearest friend of Jesus upon earth.

John is generally supposed to have been younger than his Master, and the junior of all the Apostles. Painters have loved to give him a delicate singularly feminine appearance, strangely out of keeping with what we read of him, and with the characteristics he seems to have inherited from his mother.

He was no dainty idler of courts, but with true Jewish industry pursued his father's calling: the battle with wind and wave, the weariness of rowing; the strife with sudden storms; days and nights spent in fishing, would have fashioned rather the bronzed

man of muscle, than the fair, drooping, golden curled youth the artist is prone to set before us. He whose flashing eye blazed its rage against inhospitable Samaritans, and whose ringing voice demanded that fire should be rained on them from Heaven, could have been no fainting girl-faced youth, but one whose hot-headed boyhood had kept pace with Simon Peter's, as hereafter they should keep equal step in the aggressive march of Christianity.

To his mother as the chief influence upon his youth, we first turn our eyes; she comes before us as an ambitious, high-spirited, devoted woman. She desires of Jesus that her two sons shall sit, the one on his right hand and the other on his left, when he enters into his kingdom; she follows her Lord in many an hour of toil, of terror and of pain; she ministers to him of that substance bequeathed to her by her husband; death does not chill the fervor of her friendship; "last at the cross and earliest at the tomb," she is eminent among that goodly band of women, the mothers of the early Church.

Her sons are close copies of herself; they are named Boanerges, for fiery zeal; their love is an unquenchable flame; they give up all for Christ, and do verily follow him to prison and to death.

Nor, in considering this family, must we forget Zebedee. He has trained his household in the fear of God; in a knowledge of the Scriptures; and in a blameless obedience to Mosaic law. With spiritual insight clearer than many of his compeers, he sees behind outward rites the higher intention; his teachings have prepared his sons to receive more readily than other Jews the true Messiah. He has been a prudent man in business, industriously providing a competence for his family; nor does he set the wealth of this world above the heavenly riches, for he is willing that his sons shall leave their daily avocation to listen to the teachings of John, and to share the lot of Jesus. His spirit of self-sacrifice is fully seen, when at the call of Christ he relinquishes both his sons, and thence-

forth cheerfully misses them from his home and from his boats, and is ministered to by servants during the brief remainder of his life.

The history of John is peculiarily mingled with that of Peter, as the two were together in many of their most wonderful experiences.

John was the nearest and most trusted friend of his Lord; he was the first prophet, as his brother was the first martyr of the new dispensation; John was to the Church the type of ideal depth and calmness, of those few favored souls who reach wonderful mysteries of fellowship and apprehension of Christ, and of the eternal world; and who repose in a divine calm amid all the tumults of life. James was the prototype of martyrdom, of that far greater host who have loved not their lives unto death.

These two and Peter were with Jesus at his great miracle in the house of Jairus; they beheld his glory, as Peter writes in his second epistle, when they were with him on the holy mount; and they accompanied him in that hour when his soul was "surrounded with sorrow."

During this period this so loved and loving disciple did not pass unrebuked. "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of," says Christ, when into the dispensation of the gospel of peace the sons of Zebedee would drag the fiery vengeance of Elijah's sterner day, and have their adversaries consumed before their eyes.

Accompanied by their mother, to act as their advocate, these two brothers plead with Christ for pre-eminence in his kingdom, which they still expected as of earth.

"Ye know not what ye ask," said Jesus; "can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?"

"We can," replied the ardent and fearless ones.

"Ye shall indeed," said Christ, and this promise and prophecy

held for one a long, persecuted, patient life; for the other, an early and bloody death.

In their request, devotion had been mingled with ambition; faith with pride. Jesus gently rebuked the one, while he strengthened the other.

The ten fellow-disciples saw only the earthly ambition of the desire, and thence arose among them displeasure against the sons of Zebedee.

We have glimpses opened to us of private instruction and intercourse between the three Apostles, Peter, James and John, and their Master, which show a more constant companionship than was enjoyed by the others.

John is Peter's assistant in preparations for the last Passover. At that mournful meal he reclines next his Lord at the table, and drawn nearer by secret sympathy and yearning tenderness as Christ depicts his own approaching suffering and desolation, John leans his head against his Master's bosom.

In the darkness of that terrible night John follows his captive Lord from Gethsemane to the house of Caiaphas; through the hours of trial he stood near, his heart torn with grief for his Master, with amazement at the restraining of that power which had so lately governed all the forces of nature, and wrought wonders—with holy anger against the raging Jews.

Love stronger than death sustains him through that awful day, when the veil of the Temple is rent asunder with the rent veil of the flesh of Jesus; when the Mosaic ritual ushered in by the flame and thunders of Sinai, passes away amid the earthquake and darkness; and the gospel of grace enters with Christ's expiring sigh.

With his mother, with Mary Magdalene, and with his well beloved aunt, the mother of his Lord, he stands beneath the cross. Amid his overwhelming sorrow his arm sustains her whose soul is pierced with a sword, *Mater dolorosa;* he receives her as his

Master's legacy; and when Joseph's garden holds all that is best and most precious on earth, he takes the most bereaved of mothers to his own home.

On the first day of the week, when the sun had but just risen, John, fleet of foot, ran through the dewy aisles of Joseph's garden, to that new rock-hewn sepulchre, whence he had heard that his Lord had gone. A fair, a peaceful spot, where in the thick trees the birds had hushed their song; where drooping vines, and glorious blossoms pouring fragrance, lilies and roses, almond and acacia, had kept watch and ward with angel guests passing to and fro among them, during a long Jewish Sabbath, and two still Syrian nights, while a weary Saviour slept!

His Lord is risen! No such tide of joy can again overflow the soul of John on earth, as now fills his heart, when first he realizes that his great Master is alive again.

The hope which he had buried not merely grows sweet and blossoms in the dust, but it has struck its roots to the foundations of the earth, has towered beyond the loftiest cedars of Lebanon up into the very heavens, and all the nations of the earth make their refuge under its comforting shadow.

Happy is John during these next days; bright appearances of the Master glorify the lives of the lately despairing disciples.

Then comes the journey into Galilee; a journey perhaps in their ignorance too long delayed, and ending in the wrong place, for here are these men who "have left all" to follow Jesus, casting their nets into the cool blue depths of Lake Tiberias. In the dim twilight of that morning by the sea, John the pure hearted is the first to recognize his Beloved. He is sure of his Lord; that gracious form; the mellow accents of that voice, the miracle, are proof upon proof that the Stranger on the sea sand is the very Christ; therefore, certain of a welcome when he reaches the shore, John, with characteristic calm adherence to the business before

him, remains by ship and nets until all reach the land. He goes in assured peace and joy behind his Lord, in company with his five fellow-disciples; while Peter, lately erring and lately forgiven, cleaves close to his Master's side.

When with that last glorious scene on Olives the Saviour's earth life closes, and he rises into the infinite eternal glory wherein he dwelt from the beginning, John, with the remaining Apostles, returns to Jerusalem. Here we see him hand in hand with Peter, preaching, performing miracles, sharing imprisonment, before councils and rulers, and building up the Church.

His home in Jerusalem is a blessed one: here dwell those long-parted sisters, Salome and Mary; both know the woes of widow-hood; Mary rejoicing and suffering as never woman and mother suffered and joyed, now harvests her reward; her son and her God has ascended up into glory at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Salome has yet to bear her heaviest grief, the murder of her eldest born.

The hour of agony comes. Herod Agrippa stretches forth a cruel hand, and the victim of his sword is James, the son of Zebedee. That princely young man falls, James of the eagle-eye and trumpet-tongue; James, in whose veins the blood of Levi and Judah mingle, a royal and a priestly tide; James, loving son and noblest of brothers; lo, he lies beheaded. Evening falls about that home in Jerusalem; the mangled body is wrapped in a winding sheet for secret burial. Mary, Salome, Peter, Andrew, John, and others of that Apostolic martyr-band weep together.

"And now the sun is set,
The grave is hollowed in the cavern's side,
And a few friends are met
That bleeding form within the tomb to hide.
Scarce thirty summers old,
His sun goes down ere half the day is done,
And, as a tale is told,
So all his work is ended, scarce begun."

In this short, sharp persecution under the doomed Agrippa, John's heart was rent. There is a touching contrast in the fate of these two sons of Zebedee. One falls first on the field of strife, when the battle is just beginning, before ever the name of Christian is heard. The other lives and toils for fifty years after his brother is asleep in his Lord.

Mother and Mary, brother and dearest friends weep over James; John lives until all his kindred and co-workers have passed away, and he like an aged, storm-beaten and lightning-scathed tree, stands alone, reft of his forest compeers, amid the puny saplings of a lesser growth. Unterrified by Saul's bitter persecution, John remained at Jerusalem, while Peter, released from prison, was obliged to flee; when Saul first returned to Jerusalem, John seems to have been absent for a brief space, but he still abides at the Holy City until his filial duties are ended, and with reverent hands he lays Salome and Mary in the grave. This stay in Jerusalem covered at least fifteen years from the first visit of the Apostle Paul to Peter, for when Paul goes up to meet the Apostles and Elders, John is there.

Paul gives us a glimpse of the "beloved disciple" in his epistle to the Galatians. "And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and to Barnabas, the right hand of fellowship." We put this passage beside the fifteenth chapter of Acts, and our picture—the last Bible view of John, before we find him on Patmos—is complete.

Sitting in this Assembly, John is characteristically silent, while his brethren speak; at its close, convinced of the abundant grace of God bestowed on Paul, John, the gracious, gives him the right hand of fellowship, and utters, doubtless, golden words on the side of brotherly sympathy and unity. Some of John's tenderness seems to gleam in the epistle, written in this meeting, to the Gentile churches.

History, taking up the thread which revelation has dropped, shows us John at Ephesus, shepherd there of his Master's flock, in the tumultuous and gorgeous city of Diana. Where he was between Jerusalem and Ephesus is not recorded; perchance travelling among those other Asian churches, to which he afterwards writes reproof and exhortation, at the word of the Angel, the Jehovah, on Patmos.

Paul has planted this Ephesian church; John goes to cultivate the new growth. Here he sees the Christians bearing persecution, having labor and patience, trying all things, holding fast the truth, and full of fervent "first love" for their Saviour. Here he strove with the Nicolaitans; here he preached the gospel of salvation, and converts flocked to learn of him.

The early fathers give us a pleasant picture of John grown very old and reverend, with eyes yet keen, flashing with zeal and softening in gentleness, with snow-white hair about brow and shoulders, sitting to teach his flock, and calling them all "my little children," and bidding them "love one another."

In some of these years he wrote the three Epistles which bear his name. They are full of pastoral watch-care, and the tenderness of personal friendship. The Son of Thunder thunders in all these epistles, whether against evil doers, Diotrephes, or anti-Christ. He sings of love, like a bird in its grove, but between the love-music come thunder-gusts of wrath against the ungodly: he shows his dual nature, hurling his anathemas like the red lightning-bolts, and lifting his love lay in the hushes of the storm.

From the time when John gives at Jerusalem the right hand of fellowship to Paul, he is lost from the New Testament record, until, last of the prophets, and more glorious than any of the seers his predecessors, he reappears, on the "isle which is called Patmos."

About the close of the reign of Domitian, between the years ninety-five and ninety-seven, occurred John's banishment. At this time John was more than ninety years of age; his brother Apostles had fought the good fight unto death, and received the martyr's crown; so, also, had many of their disciples and converts. Jerusalem, the beautiful and unhappy city, had tottered to its fall. John had from afar beheld that terrible desolation over which Jesus had wept: not one stone had been left on another of that glorious Temple; such tribulation as the world had never before seen had filled Zion's cup of trembling; the walls were razed, fire and sword had ravaged its streets; Jerusalem was no more but a memory.

John was sentenced to exile, and Patmos was the place of his banishment.

Thirty miles from Caria, in Asia Minor, a great rugged rock, broken into sharp pinnacles, cleft into rough, verdureless defiles, desolate of all vegetation, abounding in sheltered bays, and fifteen miles in circumference, rises from the Icarian sea.

Here Dædalus, most skilful artificer, as says the fable, saw his beloved Icarus, soaring on waxen wings too near the sun, plunge downward to his fate. Here the cries of the father thrilled through the affrighted air, while Nymphs and Nereids made the grave of the hapless boy.

> "O'er his pale corse their pearly sea-flowers shed,
> And strewed with crimson moss his marble bed;
> Struck in their coral towers the passing bell,
> And wide in ocean tolled his echoing knell."

One small village has from time immemorial nestled on the north-eastern side of Patmos, by a deep gulf, where a few gardens have been made, and some poor straggling fruits and flowers obtain a roothold.

So stern, so barren, so desolate was this starving coast, that

Roman emperors could conceive no greater cruelty than to send men there, famished and unsheltered, to drag out their dreary days.

John, the "brother" of all suffering saints, and "companion in tribulation" of the martyr band, was, "for the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ," sent to this meagre isle. Here, lonely and forsaken of men, on the high cliff, he saw the morning of a calm Sabbath dawn brightly over the sleeping sea.

At the foot of the crag the gleaming waters slipped softly to and fro, dashing with a long swell into the black recesses, and then slowly rolling out into the light. Sea birds wheeled and circled about the peaks, where they had made their nests; dropped with shrill screams into the water for their prey, and then exulting in their vigorous life, spread their broad white wings and sailed steadily away, until they were lost in the distant blue.

On that grand morning, this lone isle of Patmos became the watch-tower of the Church of God; and John, her son of keenest vision, standing on its heights, pierced the farthest clouds, and beheld the glories of the Celestial City, the shining arches, and dazzling foundations, and endlessly beautiful vistas of the New Jerusalem.

Dear to John was the first day of the week which had seen his Lord arise; each Sabbath dawned to his true heart an Easter morning, crowned with the resurrection from the dead. Still near in heart to his adored Master, as when he had leaned on his bosom at supper, John, in blessed soul communings, was "in the Spirit on the Lord's day."

Pacing along the barren ledge of rock, his white head bowed on his bosom, his thoughts intent upon his Lord, was John, the last of the Apostolic band.

Suddenly came a Voice behind him: John was by the sea, and

the Voice he heard was like the voice of the ocean waves. the swelling tones of many waters.

He turned. The mount of Transfiguration, with its glories, seemed to have come to him in his exile. There stood that ever blessed Son of Man, clothed in those garments whiter than mountain snows; girdled with gleaming gold; his face shining as when the three disciples beheld his glory, even as the sun in the mid-day skies.

Overcome with joy and adoration, amazed and speechless at the thought that, after these sixty years, his glorious Master had come to him on earth once more, John "fell at his feet as dead."

Never before, and never since was the veil so lifted from mortal vision, and man permitted to behold the Unseen and the Infinite. To John alone, of all the sons of men, was given to see the "throne set in heaven;" the "emerald rainbow," and the "sea of glass, like unto a crystal."

He who had wept beneath the cross, saw the Lion of the tribe of Judah prevail to loose the seven seals. He who had all his lifetime studied and loved the law of his Lord, saw those cherubim who erst had guarded the gate of Paradise below, who had been set over the mercy seat, which Ezekiel had seen in vision, now bowing before the Lamb, saved Saints, singing, "Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God, kings and priests."

John, who had seen Jerusalem perish from the earth, saw now the end of all things finite. John, who had mourned above his murdered brother, saw now "the souls of those which were beheaded for the witness of Jesus," that brother soul among them.

It is John, the gentle and the ardent; John, the mild and the fiery, who heard the nations of the ungodly cry out of the *wrath of the Lamb;* not of the fury of Judah's Lion, but the wrath of that Lamb, so long despised, so long rejected.

What time the glorious vision lasted who can tell? Out of that ecstatic trance came John for the short remainder of his life, that he might finish the work God had given him to do.

Domitian, the cruel, went to his own place. Nerva succeeded to the empire of the Cæsars. The first act of the new monarch was to revoke all the edicts of his predecessor. Then had the Christians rest for a space, and they of Ephesus made haste to bring from banishment John, their Father in Christ; and place him once more in their midst.

To the nearly completed canon of Scripture, John now added his Apocalyptic vision. He had already composed his Gospel, as supplementary to the narratives of the three earlier written

In this half Greek, half Oriental city of Ephesus, the active centre of Eastern Christendom, after the destruction of Jerusalem, John closed his days. Here was gathered about him a strong and faithful Church. Their pastor, Timothy, had probably suffered martyrdom under Domitian, and many of his people had shared his fate.

In this chief city of Ionia, stood the Temple raised to the huntress daughter of Latona; the shrine of the queen of night was reckoned for its magnificence one of the seven wonders of the world, and its splendor was a proverb throughout the earth.

In the very shadow of this monument of Paganism, John spent his latest days, and drew his last sigh.

His death doubtless occurred about the close of the first century of the Christian era, when he had reached the great age of one hundred years.

The evening splendor of his day of life shone from that glorious vision which had met him on Patmos. From that Apocalyptic hour, earth life had seemed a conscious dreaming, and his actual living had already passed within the veil, and was among the realities of the house not made with hands.

"No more, no more,
The worldly shore
Upbraids me with its loud uproar.
With dreamful eyes
My spirit lies
Under the walls of Paradise."

Perchance as a calm evening fell over Asia, and Ephesus, the stately, was mirrored in a golden and crimson sunset sea, John's longing eyes may have been fixed on some glowing path of light that seemed winding on into heaven, and, or ever his attendant disciples were aware, his soul had been set free, and had sped up into the paradise of God.

"For there the Sole-Begotten
Is Lord in regal state;
He, Judah's mystic Lion,
He, Lamb Immaculate.
O fields that know no sorrow!
O state that fears no strife!
O princely bowers! O land of Flowers
O realm and home of Life!
O mine, my golden Zion,
O lovlier far than gold,
With laurel crowned battalions,
And safe victorious fold!
Exult, O dust and ashes,
The Lord shall be thy part,
His only, his forever,
Thou shalt be, and thou art."

THE END.

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