



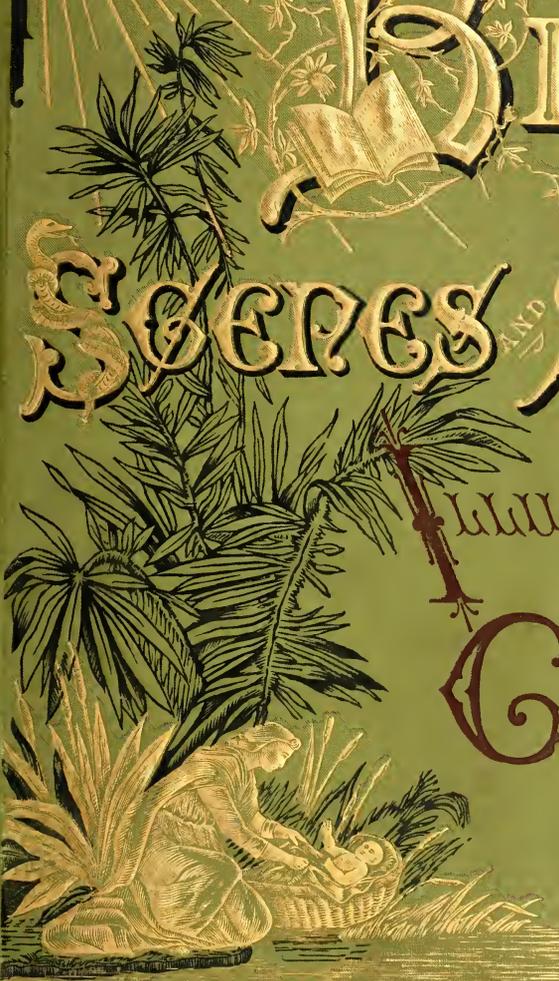
BIBLE

SCENES AND STORIES

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JESUS BLESSING CHILDREN.

BIBLE
STORIES *AND* SCENES

FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

BY

F. MCCREADY HARRIS

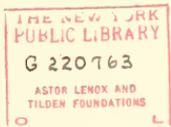
(*HOPE LEDYARD*)

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INTRODUCTION.

THESE scenes from Bible story do not claim to be original. I have only taken from different good authorities such facts and illustrations as young people are not likely to dig out of the larger works for themselves; but I trust that many of my readers will be interested enough in the extracts given to read such books as Canon Farrar's "Early Days of Christianity," "Life of Christ," and "Life and Works of St. Paul;" also Geikie's "Hours with the Bible," and his "Life of Christ." Another book which throws much light on the manners and customs of Bible times is Kitto's "Daily Bible Illustrations." Such books make the Bible more real to us, and if you cultivate a taste for something a little deeper than mere easy reading, so much the better for your mental digestion.

The stories are written purposely in very different styles, for some young people like to have things told in a dramatic way, while others prefer to read the facts and clothe those facts by the help of their own imagination; still the only imaginary character introduced is that of Simon in the last two stories, every other name given is that of a true historical person.

I would like to be sure that each story will teach its own beautiful lesson to everyone who reads it; but I have not tried to point out the lesson. I know by my own children how much young people dislike "preaching." But will you not reward me for not lecturing by trying to find the lesson of each story?

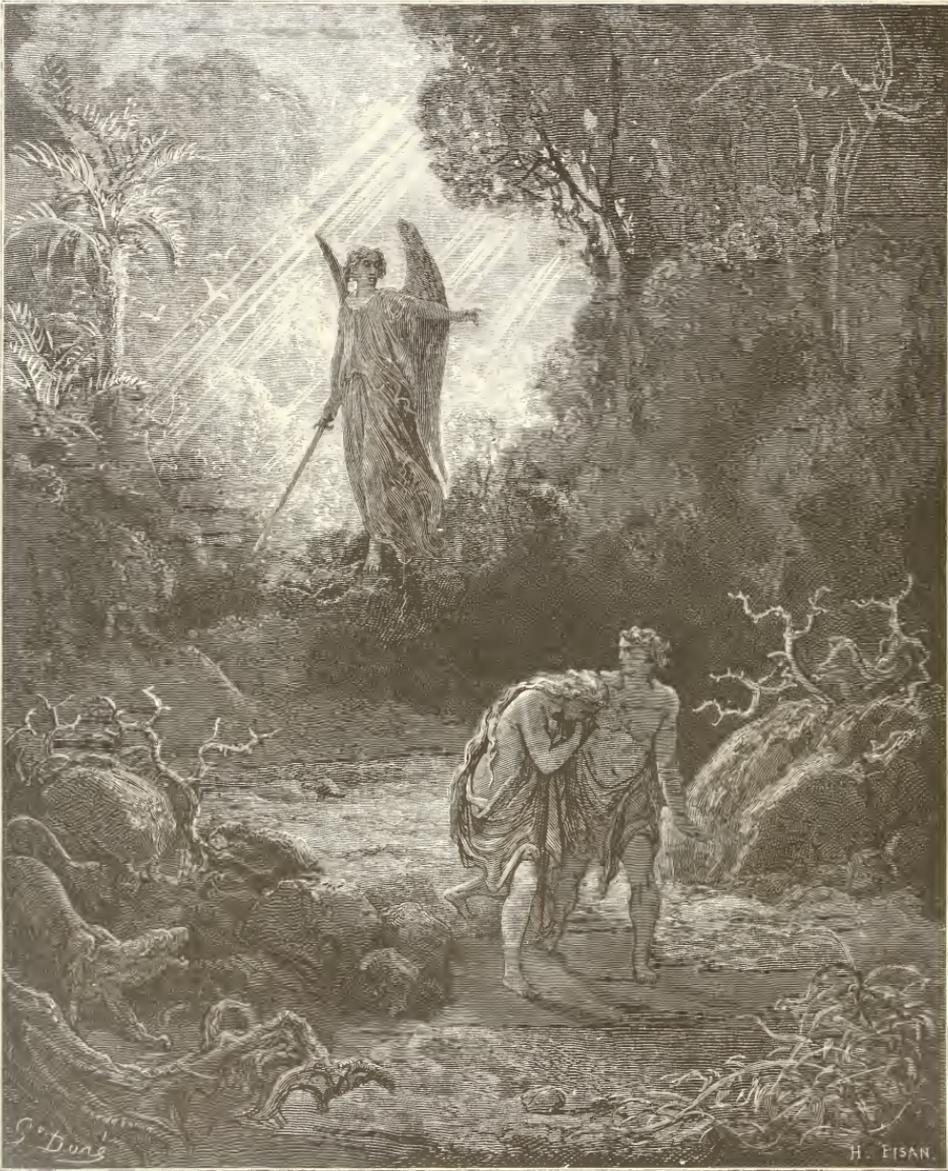
You will hear the Bible, especially the Old Testament, lightly spoken of by men of considerable ability and learning; but before you let their doubts and insinuations influence you, look and see how Jesus regarded the Scriptures. He said: "The Scripture cannot be broken;" again and again He strengthened Himself by remembering what God had written in the Old Testament. He obeyed

the Scriptures, and when we doubt any portion of the Bible we *doubt Christ*. If you cannot understand certain parts, remember that God's Word can only be *fully* understood by God. We shall have all eternity in which to study that Word and His Providence.

I hope you will use these stories to amuse younger children. Let them see the pictures and then tell them the stories in simpler language. There is no better way of finding out what one knows than to try to tell it to another. Besides, a book of Bible stories should not be treated like any common book, but used carefully, remembering that for the using—as for the writing—we must give an account at the last.

HOPE LEDYARD.





THE EXPULSION FROM THE GARDEN.

THE EXPULSION FROM THE GARDEN.

GENESIS III.

DID you ever think how many centuries passed while God was preparing the earth for Adam? We read in the first chapter of Genesis that light was created on the first day; the firmament on the second; the seas, and grass, and trees on the third, and so on; but the study of geology proves that each of these "days" means a division of time, not a day in the sense we use the word. The records of the rocks are traced by the finger of the Almighty just as truly as were the two Tables of the Law, given to Moses on Mount Sinai, and these records prove that thousands of years went by from that moment, "in the beginning," when God created the heaven and the earth, and the hour when God the Father said, "Let Us make man in Our Image."

It was just before the creation of man, no doubt, that the garden was prepared for him. And the rocks tell us a wonderful thing about this. We learn, by the fossil remains of the trees and ferns before the existence of man, that it was not till man appeared that God clothed the earth with fields of grain, sweet-smelling herbs and flowers, or luscious fruits. There were pine trees and ferns, but the lovelier flowers and fruits were called into being for Adam's delight and nourishment.

Try to imagine this first man and woman in their beautiful home; learning from God how to dress and keep their garden, warned by Him of the dreadful punishment that would follow disobedience. But remember that, until they were tried and had resisted, Adam and Eve were *innocent* but not *good*. True goodness is choosing the right and refusing the wrong; it is resisting evil and accepting good. So Satan was allowed to tempt them, and—they chose the evil!

"The woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden. But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die."

Caedmon, an English poet of the seventh century, in a poetical account of the story of Adam's fall, makes Satan say to Eve:

“Tell Adam,” said he, “God has sent me as his vassal
To tell him he should eat this fruit,
To increase his understanding, power and strength;
To make his body shine like that of angels, and
His form more beauteous. He will need no treasure else
In the whole world.”

At first (I am telling you the story in Caedmon's way, not the short account in the Bible) Adam will not believe that Satan is sent by God. Satan, who is in the form of a serpent, is not like an angel and brings no proof that God has sent him. But the serpent talks with Eve alone and tells her God will be angry if He hears that Adam has slandered him (Satan), and that if she eat she will grow wise; her “eyes will be so clear they will see even to His throne.” So, at last, she takes the fruit and tastes it before Adam, who then eats.

Then, when Satan leaves them, Adam and Eve feel what they have done—the air grows chill and cold as it has never been before.

“And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day; and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden. And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?”

Coming out before an angry God! We, who have heard of a Saviour to bear that anger for us, cannot guess what they suffered. It must have been almost a relief to hear what their punishment was to be.

They were to leave the beautiful garden, and the care of the ground, which had been a delight, was to be a labor. “Cursed is the ground, for thy sake . . . thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee;” while Eve was told that her children should be a sorrow and care to her from their very birth. But they are not left without hope. The Saviour is promised, and God Himself clothes them in the skins of wild beasts.

Then they are driven forth; God setting at the gate of the garden “cherubim and a flaming sword which turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life.” A very thoughtful writer says: “Was not the brightness darting its sword-like rays on every side the symbol of the presence of God? Perhaps in the light of

that flaming sword Adam and Eve often knelt to ask forgiveness, guidance, and protection."

Look carefully at the picture and you will see how horrible everything seems about the two sinners. Wild beasts growling at them—the very branches of the trees seem to take hideous shapes as Adam and his wife pass by.

What an awful thing sin must be in God's eyes to make such a punishment necessary. So awful that only the sacrifice of His own Beloved Son could atone for it. But since there is a way provided to get back the good that has been lost, we need not mourn the fall. The New Paradise of God shall be far beyond that Paradise He prepared for our first parents.

No one supposes that fire was used or needed in the Garden of Eden, but surely when turned out into the bleak world Adam would learn of fire. One poet pictures Adam seeing two trees, which had been driven by the wind against each other, ignite. He runs from the fire till he reaches a plain; then turns to watch it and enjoys the pleasant heat, finding his muddy dress dry quickly by it. Again and again he tries to kindle a fire.

"While (elsewhere musing) one day he sat down
 Upon a steep rock's craggy, forkéd crown,
 A foaming beast come toward him he espies,
 Within whose head stood beaming coals for eyes;
 Then suddenly with boisterous arms he throws
 A knotty flint that hummeth as it goes;
 Hence flies the beast, th' ill-aimed flint-shaft grounding
 Against the rock, and on it oft rebounding,
 Shivers to cinders, whence there issued
 Small sparks of fire, no sooner born than dead.
 This happy chance made Adam leap for glee,
 And quickly calling his cold company,
 In his left hand a shining flint he locks,
 Which with another in his right he knocks,
 So up and down, that from the coldest stone
 At every stroke small fiery sparkles shone.
 Then with the dry leaves of a withered bay,
 The which together handsomely they lay,
 They take the falling fire, which, like a sun
 Shines clear and smokeless in the leaf begun."

We know that Adam lived to be nine hundred and thirty years old, seeing his children and grandchildren to the time of Lamech. Adam had a wonderful vitality, but gradually, as his descendants yielded to sin more and more, that vitality grew weaker and the term of life shorter. James Montgomery gives a beautiful picture of Adam's death. Enoch, he who "walked with God," is supposed to be speaking. The night was one of awful storm "as if the world would perish with our Sire."

"Closed his eyelids with a tranquil smile,
 And seemed to rest in silent prayer awhile:
 Around his couch in filial awe we kneeled,
 When suddenly a light from heaven revealed
 A SPIRIT, that stood within the unopened door;
 The sword of God in His right hand he bore;
 His countenance was lightning, and his vest
 Like snow at sunrise on the mountain's crest;
 Yet so benignly beautiful His form,
 His presence stilled the fury of the storm;
 At once the winds retire, the waters cease;
 His look was love, His salutation, Peace!

Our Mother first beheld him, sore amazed,
 But terror grew to transport as she gazed:
 'Tis He, the Prince of Seraphim, who drove
 Our banished feet from Eden's happy grove;
 'Adam, my life, my spouse, awake!' she cried,
 'Return to Paradise, behold thy Guide.
 Oh, let me follow in this dear embrace!'
 She sank, and on his bosom hid her face.
 Adam looked up, his visage changed its hue,
 Transformed into an angel's at the view;
 'I come,' he cried, 'with faith's full triumph fired,
 And in a sigh of ecstasy expired."



THE MURDER OF ABEL.

TWO BROTHERS.

GENESIS IV.

WHAT a wonderful gift from God is a little baby! How helpless it is and how helpless we are to keep it, if God sees fit to take back His gift! Think, for a moment, what the first baby that ever was born must have been to his mother. Eve, broken-hearted with thinking how she had been the first to disobey; left alone for long hours at a time, while Adam tilled the ground that, under the curse, required such care—Eve had at last some one to watch and fondle and care for. "I have gotten a man from the Lord," she cries in her delight, and named the baby "Cain," which means a possession; but the name also means "a spear," and Eve was to feel through this boy who was her delight, that curse of sin of which God had told her. What a surprise it must have been to the first mother to find her baby was helpless for so long. She saw the young of animals able to care for themselves after a very little time; but month after month went by and still her baby could not stand or walk!

Probably Eve spoiled her first boy, letting him have his own way, for he grew up self-willed and haughty. But later on came another son, a brother to the boy that was being so spoiled. He was named Abel, which means "vanity." Perhaps the poor mother as she looked at her wilful boy dreaded what the baby might become. I have no doubt Cain, from the first, lorded it over Abel; while he, a gentle, obedient boy, gradually won the first place in his parents' hearts, and God looked on the boy with favor. Cain became a tiller of the ground, while Abel tended the flocks, an occupation which suited his gentle contemplative nature. But Cain was not studying to please the Lord, while Abel was—the short account given in the Bible proves this plainly. It always angers a boy who is not doing right to see his companion grow better and stronger in goodness. Sin *hates* goodness, and as Cain harbored sin he grew to dislike Abel.

At last, on some special day—"after days" the original says—the brothers

brought their offerings to the Lord. Each brought the best that he had—Abel, “a firstling of his flock;” Cain, “of the fruit of the ground.” But, though each seemed to bring his offering in the same manner, the Lord, “who seeth not as man seeth”—the Lord “who looketh on the heart”—“had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect.” We do not know how this respect was shown; perhaps by fire shooting from the flaming sword and devouring the lamb, or it may be only by a feeling in each brother’s heart. At any rate, instead of this leading Cain to question himself so that he might find out what was wrong, he grew sullen and angry. Then the “Lord said unto Cain”—it may be by actual words, it may be by the voice of conscience, in the way He still speaks to his stubborn, jealous children:

“Why art thou wroth, and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well is not gladness (of countenance) thine? If with heart and deed thou seekest what is good, thou wilt have joy; but if thou doest evil—not only hast thou sadness; sin lies crouching like a wild beast at the door, to spring on thee and master thee, who should’st master it.”

Ah, if Cain had but taken that kindly, Fatherly warning! If he had but *mastered* the sin of jealous anger that lay crouching at the door of his heart! But he would not listen. He brooded over what he proudly thought was injustice; he blamed Abel—anybody but himself! So, suddenly, the awful sin sprang upon and overwhelmed him. He was talking with his brother and “rose up against Abel his brother and slew him.”

The first death! “Whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause”—ah, what may he not do! Remember that many little fits of anger, many vexed feelings, must have been cherished before Cain was so far mastered by passion as to kill his brother.

Montgomery, the poet, quoted before, supposes that Adam placed the altar of Abel as a monument to his memory, and that it was a sacred spot until the Deluge.

Not even the sight of his brother lying dead awakened Cain’s repentance; not even the voice of God calling: “Where is Abel, thy brother?” led him to confess his crime; for he sullenly answered, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” But the punishment that God inflicts breaks down Cain’s sullen pride: “Now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother’s blood

from thy hand. When thou tillest the ground it shall not henceforth yield thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth." Cain fears that since God is so angry with him, others will feel they do God service by killing him.

To understand this, we must remember that no doubt many sons and daughters had been born and grown up. We know that Cain was then a married man; probably others were settled in families, and it is from some of these that he dreads vengeance.

"And the Lord set a mark upon Cain lest any finding him should kill him." What this sign was we cannot tell. Tradition says that his tongue turned white, or that a bright red star shone on his forehead.

A band of men and women, from the family of Adam, went out with Cain, "from the presence of the Lord to the land of Nod, where they built a city." It may be that Cain did repent, for he named a son "Enoch" or "Hanoch," which means to consecrate. Let us hope Cain consecrated this son to God. The descendants of Cain, dwelling in a city, naturally became inventors; and in the sixth generation we read of Tubal-Cain, "the smith," who was a "sharpener or hammerer out of all cutting instruments of copper and iron;" perhaps he made the coulter of the plough; but, alas! he also made the sword! In this generation, one thousand years from the creation, we first read of the people living in tents. No doubt this arose from the increase of the flocks and herds.

Jubal, one of Cain's descendants, taught the people to use the lyre and the pipe. There is a legend that Cain became subject to attacks of madness, shunning, and being shunned by all men. Jubal, wandering one day with his lyre, saw—

"An awful form, that through the gloom appeared
Half brute, half human, whose terrific beard
And hoary flakes of long, dishevelled hair,
Like eagle's plumage ruffled by the air,
Veiled a sad wreck of grandeur and of grace.

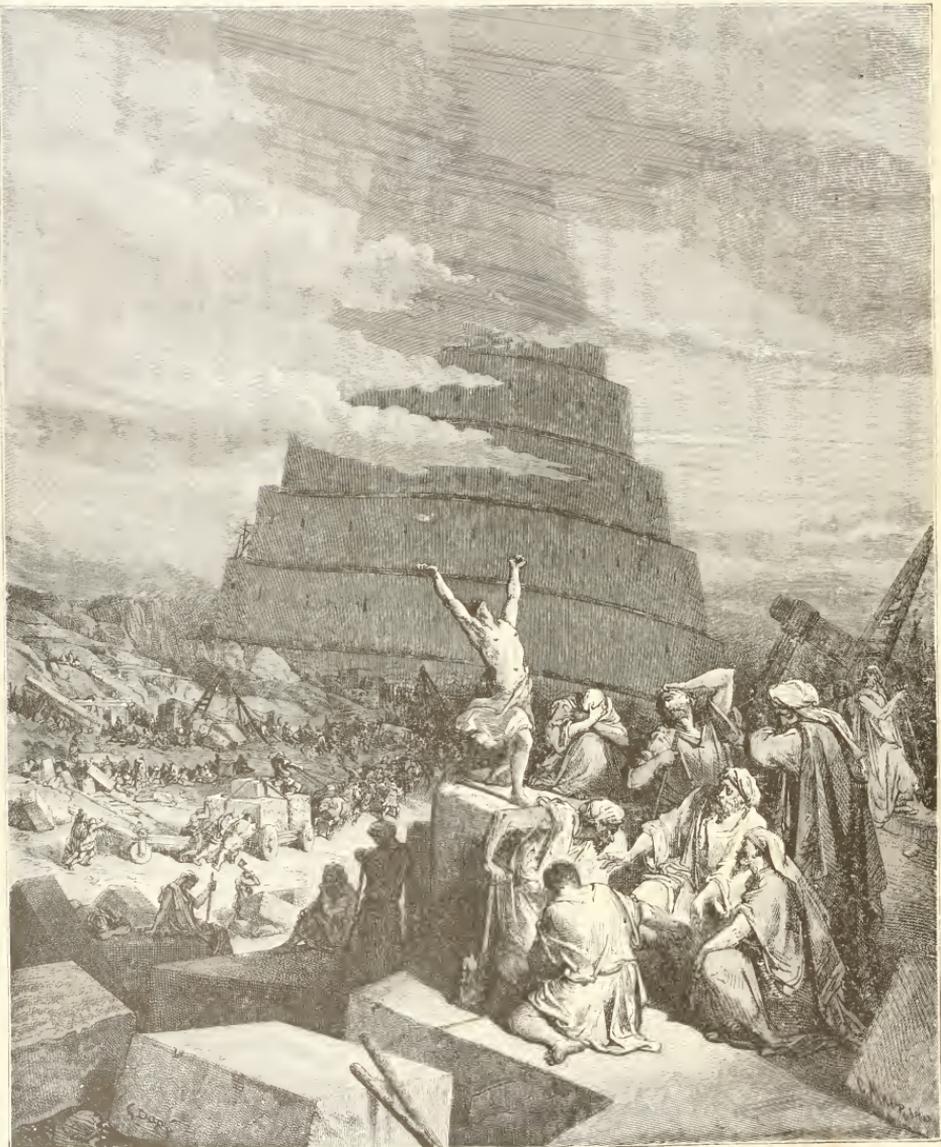
Jubal knew

His kindred looks, and tremblingly withdrew;
He, darting like the blaze of sudden fire,
Leapt o'er the space between, and grasped the lyre.
Sooner with life the struggling bard would part;
And ere the fiend could tear it from his heart

He hurled his hand with one tremendous stroke
 O'er all the strings; whence in a whirlwind broke
 Such tones of terror, dissonance, despair,
 As till that hour had never jarred in air.
 Astonished into marble by the shock,
 Backward stood Cain, unconscious as a rock,
 Cold, breathless, motionless through all his frame.
 But soon his visage quickened into flame,
 When Jubal's hand the crashing jargon changed
 To melting harmony, and nimbly ranged
 From chord to chord, ascending sweet and clear,
 Then rolling down in thunder on the ear;
 With power the pulse of anguish to restrain,
 And charm the evil spirit from the brain."

The poet tells us that Cain showed signs of returning consciousness:

"Jubal with eager hope beheld the chase
 Of strange emotions hurrying o'er his face,
 And waked his noblest numbers to control
 The tide and tempest of the maniac's soul:
 Through many a maze of melody they flew,
 They rose like incense, they distilled like dew.
 Poured through the sufferer's breast delicious balm,
 And soothed remembrance till remorse grew calm;
 Till Cain forsook the solitary wild,
 Led by the minstrel like a wearied child.
 Oh, had you seen him to his home restored,
 How young and old ran forth to meet their lord;
 How friends and kindred on his neck did fall,
 Weeping aloud, while Cain outwept them all.
 But hush!—thenceforward when recoiling care
 Lowered on his brow and saddened to despair,
 The lyre of Jubal, with divinest art,
 Repelled the demon and revived his heart.
 Thus music's empire in the soul began:
 The first-born poet ruled the first-born man."



THE TOWER OF BABEL.

NIMROD AND ABRAHAM.

GENESIS X. TO XV.

MANY very ancient ruins testify that early in the world's history men delighted in building high towers "whose top may reach unto heaven." One such ruin has from the most ancient times been known as Birs Nimrud, or the Tower of Nimrod. This is a bare hill, one hundred and ninety-eight feet high, of yellow sand and brick, near the left bank of the Euphrates. On this hill there is a ruined tower forty feet high, said to have been repaired by Nebuchadnezzar.

Herodotus describes a tower of Babylon which may give us some idea of the Tower of Babel. It stood in an enclosure twelve hundred feet square and was over six hundred feet square at its base, rising to a height of nine hundred feet. Seven square towers rose one above the other, like gigantic steps, each smaller than the one below and colored, successively, black, white, orange, blue, scarlet, silver, and gold. The ascent was made by a winding path on the outside, with a landing-place and seats for resting about the middle of the way up. In the topmost tower was a spacious temple, but the golden image of the god was in the lowest tower, on a golden throne, before a golden table, set on a golden floor. You may form some idea of the size of this tower by the fact that Alexander the Great employed ten thousand men, for two months, in removing the rubbish which had fallen from it in his day.

Jewish tradition says that Nimrod, worshipped as a god by the people, wished to build a town for his own glory. "Come," he is supposed to say, "let us build a great city, and establish ourselves in it, that we may not be scattered over the whole earth, and drowned in a flood, as happened to our forefathers. Let us raise in the midst of the city a tower so high that no flood could rise above it, so strong that no fire, should one break out, could destroy it. Yes, let us do still more, let us build it up into the heavens, and stay it in them, on all its four sides, that it be steady, and that the waters in the sky may not fall on us."

Though all were not so foolish as to think of conquering heaven, and driving God from His throne, yet they complied with Nimrod's wishes. Many saw in the tower a real safeguard against men being scattered, or drowned by a flood. Others believed the scheme would advance the idolatry they loved. Therefore, six hundred thousand men, among whom were six thousand princes, set to work to build the tower and raised it till its top was seventy miles high. . . . When the builders ran short of anything it was a year before they could get the material to the top.

And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the Lord scattered them abroad.

In striking contrast to this proud and boastful Nimrod, is Abraham, the Friend of God. He was born in Ur of the Chaldees, so let us look for a moment at that city. Its ruins form a vast mound in a plain so flat and low that when the Euphrates rises it can only be approached in a boat. But very different was the scene, four thousand years ago. The city was then flourishing; arts and sciences were cultivated; astronomers watched the heavens; poets composed hymns and epics, and patient scribes stamped, on soft clay tablets, the books which have, in part, come down to our day. For the ancient race which lived in those lands were, beyond most, given to writing and reading. The waters of the Euphrates did not then flood the country, but spread in a network of sparkling canals and rivulets which carried fertility to the whole landscape. The houses, with fanciful designs painted outside, like the temple towers, stood on platforms. To shut out the heat, the walls of the better class were very thick. The windows were high up and small; the rooms long, narrow, and gloomy, and all opened into one another, while a central arch formed the entry from without. Trees planted all round served to protect the inmates from the overpowering rays of the sun. Handsome pottery of many kinds abounded, for many-shaped jars, lamps, and vessels are found in the old Chaldean graves. Clay tablets stamped with figures and groups of men and animals displayed artistic skill, and the stone-engraver carved designs of human or divine forms on cylinders of jasper and other stones; to be used for impressing the device on soft tablets by rolling it over them.

Sun-dials marked the hours of the day, which had already been divided as we now have them; and the smith and jeweller furnished the field, the camp, the house and the person with a long list of implements, weapons, and ornaments in various metals. Chaldea produced neither figs, olives, nor grapes, but the palm made up for the lack of these. The fruit of this tree, hanging in clusters of amber or gold, is at once pleasant to the eye, delicious and nourishing—the very kernels, when broken up, feed the goats. An incision in the stem yields a drink which takes the place of wine. The crown, which grows from the top, and the inner fibres and pith, are boiled for food. Mats and baskets are made from the leaves, while the stem furnishes pillars, roofing, and furniture. In Abraham's day it grew almost in forests in Chaldea. The whole district, indeed, was amazingly fertile and highly cultivated. Shady with palms, tamarisks, and acacias, it was also rich in pomegranates, and golden with fields of the finest wheat. Millet grew to a fabulous height, and all kinds of corn-plants produced two and even three hundred fold. Think of this city and country as you read:

“By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.” (Heb. xi., 8.)

And now as to the religious teaching in Chaldea. Strange to say, some of the hymns that Abraham may have heard chanted by the priests in Ur, remain to this day. One is addressed to the moon; here are a few lines from it:

Father mine, of life the giver, cherishing, beholding all!
 Lord, whose power benign extends over all in heaven and earth!
 Thou drawest forth from heaven the seasons and the rains;
 Thou watchest life and yieldest showers!
 Who in heaven is high exalted? Thou, sublime is thy reign!

Magic had great power in Chaldea. Magicians claimed to avert by spells and incantations the malignity of countless genii and evil spirits which filled the air, the earth, and the abyss below it.

And, amidst all this idolatry and superstition Abraham grew up! His own father, Terah, “served other gods” (Josh. xxiv., 2), but he, in spite of example, and (so says tradition) of persecution, worshipped Jehovah. Yet, in the midst of all the idolatry, the traditions of Creation, the Flood, and the Confusion of Tongues

were preserved; and in Ur of the Chaldees, the boy Abram would hear the seventh day spoken of as "the day of rest for the heart," on which even the king dared not ride out in his chariot, or eat forbidden meats.

We know from the Bible (Acts vii., 2) that it was while still in Ur that Abraham received the call from God; but it was Terah, his father, who took the tribe out from Chaldea to the land of Harran—"six hundred miles northwest of Ur as the crow flies and much more by the winding road." It was a journey of months from Ur to Harran. "It was a land that might please Terah and Nahor for its pastures, and its temples would offer them the idol sanctuaries in which they chose to worship," but Abraham was not satisfied. After his father's death he, with his nephew Lot, set forth for Canaan—the Land of Promise. Though Abraham never called himself a king we must not think of him as travelling in less than kingly state. Dean Stanley gives this picture of the journey: "All their substance that they had gotten is heaped high on the backs of their kneeling camels. 'The slaves that they had bought in Harran' run along by their sides. Round them are their flocks of sheep and goats, and the asses, moving beneath the towering forms of the camels. The chief is there, amidst the stir of movement, or resting at noon within his black tent, marked out from the rest by his cloak of brilliant scarlet, by the fillet of rope which binds the loose handkerchief round his head, by the spear which he holds in his hand to guide the march and to fix the encampment. The chief's wife, the princess of the tribe, is there in her own tent (Gen. xxiv., 67) to make the cakes and to prepare the usual meal of milk and butter; the slave or the child is ready to bring in the red lentil soup for the weary hunter, or to kill the calf for the unexpected guest."

Abraham, after crossing the great river, passed on to Damascus, where tradition says he reigned as a king, and so on to Canaan, where the promise was given, "Unto thy seed will I give this land," a promise made when Abraham was childless. "And he believed in the Lord and he counted it to him for righteousness." And then by a solemn covenant the promise was renewed and by a vision God showed Abraham the future of his nation. "Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them, and they shall afflict them four hundred years; and also that nation whom they shall serve will I judge; and afterward they shall come out with great substance."



THE TRIAL OF THE FAITH OF ABRAHAM.

EL KHALIL-ALLAH.

GENESIS XIII., 1-13; XIV., XVI., XXI., 1-13; and XXII.

It is as El Khalil-Allah, "The Friend of God," the name by which he is still called among his Arab children, that I would write of Abraham in this chapter.

He had left the heathen city of Ur and lived as a "stranger and sojourner" among the people of Canaan. He had, because of a severe drought and famine, gone down into Egypt and seen the wonderful palaces and cities of the Pharaohs, living for some years, tradition says, in the sacred city of On "where his descendants lived afterward as slaves." He then returned to the mountain east of Bethel, "unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the Lord."

And here it is that we see him as "The friend of God." There is a quarrel in the great camp; the herdsmen of Lot (who, though Abraham's nephew, was not very much younger than he) dispute with Abraham's herdsmen, for the pasturage grows scarce. But the man who has God for his Friend cannot quarrel: "Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee," says Abraham, though he was the chief of the tribe and could have asserted his rights, "for we be brethren; . . . if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left."

As they stood on the mountain they looked down upon a beautiful and fertile plain, where cattle could find abundant pasturage, and, close at hand, were the cities of the plain, where one could be sure of a market for the produce of his flocks. Lot's choice was made at once; he pitched his tent outside Sodom (chief among the cities of the plain), and Abraham moved south to Hebron, where "he built an altar to the Lord." Here, at last, he could rest, almost at home in this upland vale, with its mingled town and country life, its wells and its clumps of oak-trees, amidst the cool and delightful climate of an elevation of nearly three thousand feet above the sea.

The next recorded event in Abraham's life clearly shows that he cherished no vexed feeling toward Lot. A messenger comes to tell him Lot has been taken prisoner by an invading army. Abraham gathers his fighting men together (three hundred and eighteen trained soldiers), asks the help of the Amorite chiefs who live near—Mamre, "the manly," Eschol, "the brave," and Aner, "the branch," and, with less than a thousand men, went in pursuit of the enemy. The little army surprised the great host at night, rushed upon them on three sides, and caused a perfect rout and panic. Lot was rescued, besides many others, with much booty. Two kings came to meet Abraham on his homeward march—the king of Sodom, and Melchizedek the king of Salem—"and he," says the Scripture, "was the priest of the most high God."

From the king of Sodom, who offered him all the booty, Abraham would take nothing—the Friend of God needed not to be enriched by a heathen king; but he gratefully received Melchizedek's blessing. No one knows who this Melchizedek was. Professor Geikie says: "It is quite possible that, like Abraham, he may have been one of the early Pilgrim Fathers, who had left Chaldea to escape the growing bitterness and intensity of idol worship, which were making fidelity to the faith of purer ages impossible."

Ten years Abraham had lived in Canaan, and then, since Sarah had no child, she gave Hagar, her "bondwoman," to Abraham as a wife, and Ishmael, "God hears," was born. The boy grew up, the darling and pride, no doubt, of the whole camp. He was Abraham's son—for twelve years the heir. But when the boy was just growing into manhood God gave Sarah a child, whom in her delight she named Isaac, "laughter." Ishmael, no longer the heir, but "the son of the bondwoman," did not give up his place willingly to the laughing boy. At a birthday feast Sarah saw him mocking her child, and went at once to Abraham, saying: "Cast out this bondwoman and her son; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac."

"And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight, because of his son. And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight, because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman: in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called. And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed. And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took bread and a bottle of water, and gave it unto Hagar (putting it on her shoulder), and the child, and sent her away."

To understand the trial that the Friend of God was next called to endure, we must not forget what has been written in regard to Ur of the Chaldees. There Abraham had seen not only bulls and rams offered in sacrifice, but had looked upon human victims. Men had there given "their first-born for their transgressions." Now, when he had separated himself from the heathen, when he had for years looked on the offering of human sacrifice as *wrong*, now he was told: "Take now thy son, thine only son, Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of."

Abraham rose up early in the morning, and, taking two of his young men, and Isaac his son, went to the place of which God had told him. "Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off. And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you. And Abraham took the wood of the burnt-offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife: and they went both of them together. And Isaac . . . said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?"

Our picture represents Isaac as a boy, but he was twenty years of age—"a lad" to his father, just as many a young man of twenty and over is a "boy" to his parents nowadays, yet a full-grown man, able to resist and therefore a willing sacrifice, allowing his father to bind him to the altar.

"And Abraham stretched forth his hand and took the knife to slay his son."

After twenty-five years of patient waiting for him! After twenty years, during which he had watched the God-given child grow from babyhood to boyhood, from boyhood to manly beauty and strength—after all, it had come to this! St. Paul tells us what it was that nerved the loving father's arm: "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; . . . accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead." Surely such a man may well be called the Father of the Faithful, the Friend of God.

But as the knife held so unfalteringly was about to fall, "the angel of the Lord called to him out of heaven, and said, . . . Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing that thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me. And Abraham

lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt-offering in the stead of his son."

"Henceforth," says Professor Geikie, "it was proved, that the lonely follower of Jehovah was not behind the servants of Baal in self-surrender to his God. But it was also taught that, while the God of Abraham had a right to demand even such a sacrifice as that of an only son, a limit was fixed to the impulse in man to offer his best, and a sacredness stamped on human life."

The next scene in Abraham's life is when, mourning for his beloved wife, he meets the "children of Heth," to buy a cave to bury Sarah in. We can picture the group, who, in Eastern fashion, met Abraham outside the town-gate, dressed in loose gowns, like those of the Assyrians, reaching the ankles, their beards long and their hair curled. Compliments pass in oriental style. Abraham is made welcome, as a great man, to choose any of their sepulchres, though perhaps then, as now, the gift was only a form. An Arab gives his house, field, or horse to-day, as in Abraham's time, to the purchaser; but it is well known that this is only a form to help him raise the price in the end. "What is that between me and thee?" says the seller, just as Ephron said to Abraham. In the end Abraham buys the cave of Machpelah (a double cave, as the name signifies) and the field in which it stood, weighing the money before the witnesses. This cave, where undoubtedly rest the remains of the three patriarchs and their wives, lies on the east edge of Hebron. A Christian church was built over it, but has been converted into a mosque. An outside stair leads up to a floor above the level of the cave, and on this are raised empty tombs, as monuments to the dead below. Each is enclosed in a separate shrine, closed with gates or railings; those of the tombs of Abraham and Sarah, of silver. The shrine of Abraham is encased in marble, and contains a so-called tomb, raised about six feet high and hung with three carpets embroidered with gold. The "tombs" of Isaac, Rebecca, Jacob, and Leah are also shown, but are much like Abraham's, only not so rich. But the real tombs no one is allowed to enter: only one European, an Italian architect, has ever seen more than this upper floor, and he only caught sight of white sarcophagi in the cave below.



ELIEZER AND REBEKAH.

THE BRIDE FROM HARRAN.

GENESIS XXIV.

ISAAC, Sarah's gentle, obedient son, did not marry till three years after his mother's death. He was then a man of forty years, but he was still "the lad" to his father, and it is Abraham who sets to work to find a wife for Isaac. The father is very anxious his one son, in whom the nations are to be blessed, should have a wife from among his own people; so he calls Eliezer, his chief servant, and asks him to swear by a solemn oath that he will go "to the city of Nahor"—the Harran where Abraham himself had lived—to find a wife for Isaac. He seems afraid that, unless the man solemnly swears to go to the distant city, he may bring a woman from some nearer tribe. Eliezer hesitates: "Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me into this land: must I needs bring thy son again unto the land from whence thou camest?"

But Abraham will not let Isaac leave the land of promise; nor does he tell Eliezer to persuade the girl by any account of Isaac's position as the only son of a great chief. The simple faith that has won him the name of El Khalil, relies on God alone: "The Lord God of heaven which took me from my father's house . . . shall send his angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence."

Eliezer then gives the required oath and starts on his journey, taking "ten camels of the camels of his master."

It is a remarkable fact that, though other less useful animals are praised in the Bible, the camel has not one word of commendation given it. The fact is the camel is unloving and unloved. He is quarrelsome, revengeful, and utterly stupid, except in the matter of paying back one whom he considers his enemy. Yet he is wonderfully adapted for desert life; his feet are fitted for the shifting sand; he can close his nostrils at will, so that not a grain of sand can enter them; the hump on his back is a lump of fat which supports life for him, when he would starve but for that reserved fund, while he has sacs or pouches connected with

his stomach, in which he carries a supply of water. A camel can go easily three days without drinking, and longer if necessary. As to food, he likes good living as well as the horse or ox, but he can make a comfortable meal off bare branches and dried leaves. "About as nutritious," says a traveller, "as if he were to eat a green cotton umbrella and a copy of the *Times*." Some years ago a number of camels were imported to New York, but all died except one pair, which were taken to Nevada, and there flourished, so that there are now a considerable number of them in the West. But we must return to Eliezer on the way to Harran.

He carried with him jewels of silver and of gold, and no doubt one camel was provided with a bridal throne, as is still the fashion in the East. At last the city of Nahor was reached. Bethuel, Nahor's son, was a well-known man, for he had shepherds and flocks scattered far outside the city: but Eliezer remembered what his master had said as to "the angel" going before, and so asked God for a sign to guide him. He halted by the well outside the city gate, and asked that the girl whom he should choose might give him water in answer to his request, and offer also to water his camels.

In the East, to this day, the daughters of an Arab chief go to the wells for water, and the meeting each other at the common well is a pleasant event in the day. Eliezer saw a beautiful young girl go down the steps of the well, fill her pitcher, and, lifting it on her shoulder, walk up again. He ran to meet her, and said, "Let me sip, I pray thee, a little water out of thy pitcher." But she said, promptly and kindly, "drink (not sip), my lord," and she hastened to let down her pitcher upon her hand, that he might quench his thirst. "I will draw for thy camels also, until they are done drinking," she added. It was no slight trouble to go up and down those steps, bearing each time a pitcher of water, which she emptied into the trough (frequently still found near such wells), until the camels had received enough.

Here was the very sign! But still Eliezer "held his peace," watching the graceful girl. When the camels were satisfied, he took a golden ornament for the forehead (still worn in the East), and two armlets, and putting them on the girl, as a thank-offering for her kindness, asked who was her father, and whether he could find lodging at his house.

"I am the daughter of Bethuel," she answered; "we have both straw and provender enough, and room to lodge in."

Eliezer was eagerly welcomed, especially by Laban, Rebekah's brother, who was greedy for gain, and therefore attracted by the wealth of the caravan. The description of Laban's hospitality is as true of Arabian life now as then. Dr. Robinson, when travelling in Palestine, says that his Arab host proposed that a servant should wash his feet; "a female Arabian slave accordingly brought water which she poured upon our feet, over a large shallow basin of tinned copper, kneeling before us, and rubbing our feet with her hands, and wiping them with a napkin."

"And there was set meat before him to eat." Even when the host is a man of rank, he brings in some particular dish himself, and remains standing during the meal, directing the servants.

But Eliezer cannot eat till he has told them his errand. "I am Abraham's servant," he begins—not so humbly as it sounds to us, for to be the confidential servant of such a chief was an honor. He tells how God has guided him to Rebekah, and finishes by asking for her, as a wife for Isaac. Rebekah herself is not consulted; for, in the East, the consent of the maiden is never sought; her marriage is settled by others for her. The father and mother must agree as to the betrothal; but it is also necessary that Laban should consent to it, for daughters cannot be married among Arab tribes, even now, without the approval of their brothers. The answer is favorable, and the next morning Eliezer is eager to start back. But Laban and the mother say the young girl should tarry at least a few days—the thing is so sudden! Eliezer pleads to go, and they leave it to Rebekah to decide. She, caring more for jewels and honor as a chief's bride than for brother or mother, says at once, "I will go." The scene of her departure is often repeated in the East. A missionary writes: "The mother comes to take leave. She weeps, and tenderly embraces her, saying, 'My daughter, I shall see you no more; remember your mother.' The brother enfolds his sister in his arms and promises soon to come and see her. The father is absorbed in thought, and is only aroused by the sobs of the party. He then affectionately embraces his daughter, and tells her not to fear." As Rebekah had her nurse to accompany her, so, at this day, the *aya* who has from infancy brought up the bride, goes with her to the new scene. She is her adviser, her assistant, and friend, and to her she will tell all her hopes and all her fears.

When, after many days, they approached the end of their journey, they saw a man walking alone. Rebekah, as the custom still is in the East, gets down

from her camel before the stranger, and when Eliezer tells her "It is my master," she veils herself, for the husband must not see his bride for the first time before others.

"And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife, and he loved her; and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death."

Isaac's life was very different from either his father's or that of his sons. He never left the Promised Land. Once, when there was a famine in Canaan, he seems to have thought of going down to Egypt, as his father had done, but the Lord appeared unto him, and said: "Go not down into Egypt," and he obeyed. He was fond of farming and very successful in it, the Bible recording that he reaped "an hundred fold." He was patient and gentle; for, when the Philistines filled up the wells which Abraham had dug, Isaac did not make the matter a cause for quarrelling, but dug them again. Rather than have any contention, he gave up a living spring to the Philistines and moved to another place. He seems never to have had the trials that tested his father and his son Jacob, but to have led a peaceful life, quietly and faithfully serving the God of his father Abraham. He was so obedient that he put his life in his father's hands; so unsuspecting that Rebekah, deceitful and partial, found it easy to mislead him; so devout that even those whom he thought were his enemies came to beg him to enter into a covenant with them, because, they said, "we see certainly that the Lord is with thee."





ISAAC BLESSING JACOB.

JACOB, THE SUPPLANTER; ISRAEL, THE PRINCE.

GENESIS XXV., 19, TO CHAP. XXXVI.

ABRAHAM had his wish—Isaac was married to “a daughter of his people;” Sarah’s tent was occupied again, her place filled. But again was Abraham’s faith tried. He was assured that in his seed the nations should be blessed, and yet, for twenty years, Isaac had no children. What rejoicing there must have been when, at last, their prayers were heard, and God gave Rebekah two boys.

Twin babies! we always think of such as loving each other, and never quarrelling; yet, in real life, it is often far different. These twins were not at all alike in appearance or character. Esau, the first-born, was the rougher and stronger of the two; his red hair grew low on his neck and chest, and the hair on his hands and arms was unusually thick, so that a sensitive touch could feel it. Jacob had smoother skin. As boys, Esau seemed the more promising of the two. He was frank and generous; Jacob was crafty and mean. Jacob was Rebekah’s darling; but Isaac, quiet and delicate himself, delighted in his strong, manly Esau, the shaggy, daring hunter. Both, for sixteen years, had the privilege of having their grandfather Abraham with them; but Jacob alone seems to have profited by this, for he it was that longed for “the blessing”—that mysterious blessing that was to extend to all nations.

Every boy growing into manhood may well study these two characters. Esau, free, easy, frank, and good-natured; Jacob, crafty, deceitful, timid. “Yet, fickleness, unsteadiness, weakness, want of faith, and want of principle ruin and make useless Esau’s noble qualities; whilst steadfast purpose, resolute sacrifice of the present to the future, and fixed principle, purify, elevate, and turn to lasting good even the bad qualities of the younger brother.”

One day when the two brothers were young men, Esau came home late, after the evening meal. Now, in the East, even to this day, no food is kept

from one day to another, owing to the heat; even bread is baked fresh for each meal, and luxuries are seldom used. It chanced that Jacob was preparing a dish of red lentils. Esau, faint from long fasting, did not feel able to prepare food for himself, or even to wait till it was made ready. In his impulsive way, he declared he was dying of hunger. Jacob, watching his chance, as boys say, asked him to sell his birthright for the pottage, and Esau consented.

Years went by. Esau married, at forty, a daughter of Heth; a thing which was a sore grief to Isaac and Rebekah. Isaac, grown old and blind and feeble, thought his death was drawing near; and, wishing to give Esau his blessing, told him to kill venison, make a dish of savory meat for him, and bring it to him. For years he had delighted in Esau's venison, and perhaps it was to please his son that he expressed a wish for it. Esau goes off, but Rebekah has heard, and now she calls Jacob to her. Her dearest boy must have the blessing, at any cost. She tells Jacob to bring her two kids, and she will so cook them that Isaac, whose taste is not keen, will never know them from venison.

Jacob hesitates: "My father peradventure will feel me, and I shall seem to him as a deceiver, and I shall bring a curse upon me, and not a blessing." But Rebekah, ruling her son as she has ruled her husband, says: "Upon me be thy curse, my son: only obey my voice."

The meat prepared, Rebekah makes Jacob put on Esau's raiment. Clothed in Esau's garments, with the soft hair of the kids laid on his neck and hands, Jacob takes in the savory food to his father. How Rebekah's heart must have beat when the gentle old man said, "Come near, I pray thee, that I may feel thee, my son, whether thou be my very son Esau, or not," and how she rejoiced when, having felt the hairy hands, he gave her Jacob the longed-for blessing. Ah! foolish woman! she was to be punished for her deceit. Esau coming in with his venison tells of the cheat, exclaiming, "Is he not rightly named Jacob, the Supplanter?"

But the great blessing has been given, and Isaac can only promise Esau, "Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above."

Soon Rebekah begins to reap the fruit of her wrong-doing; Esau looks with hatred on his brother, and plans to kill him. The mother, hearing of this, tells Jacob he must go and stay at Haran with her brother Laban until she sends him word—a word that never came, for Rebekah died without seeing her boy

again. The reason given to Isaac for this journey is, that Jacob is to go to Haran to find a wife, so he gives him again "the blessing of Abraham."

How Rebekah must have thought of Eliezer and his company as she saw her son go off. Jacob went alone on foot, with only his staff. He walked on till, at Luz, the night coming on, he lay down to rest. No doubt he felt unhappy enough; no doubt he longed for forgiveness, and that the blessing so wrongly won might truly be his; for there God gave him a wonderful dream, showing him that the angels are ministering spirits, sent down to earth on errands of mercy; and there he heard God's voice, telling him, "I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed. And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land."

When Jacob waked in the morning he set up the stone on which he had rested as a pillar, calling the place Bethel, the house of God; and from that day he began to serve God. He made many mistakes—committed many sins after that, but he was never again "the Supplanter," and, after years of trial, earned his glorious name of Israel, a Prince of God.

After many days, Jacob saw, far off, the city of Nahor; and, coming to a well, sat down to rest. This was not the well outside the city, for that had steps, down which Rebekah descended with the pitcher on her shoulder, but one at some distance in the fields, where the flocks were feeding. Doré has given us a good picture of such a well in the one representing Eliezer meeting Rebekah. These wells were always covered by a great stone, to keep the water cool, and, until all who had a right to use it were gathered near, the stone was not taken away. Some of the first-comers told Jacob that Rachel, Laban's daughter, was coming to water her father's sheep. Jacob saw her, rolled the heavy stone away, watered her flock for her, and then, telling her he was Rebekah's son, kissed her.

From that moment Jacob loved Rachel; loved her so dearly, that, though Laban made him work seven years before he could marry her, the time seemed short, since he could see her, and talk with her. Laban's crafty, selfish conduct was a good lesson to Jacob—no doubt he often thought of how he had bargained with Esau. But, after the seven years, Laban veiled Leah, and married her to Jacob. When Jacob angrily upbraids him, Laban tells him that the custom of the country is that the eldest sister must marry first, but says Jacob may have Rachel

too as a wife, if he will promise to work seven years more in payment. Jacob consents, and both sisters are given to him. Leah is described as bleary-eyed, but she was gentle and good, and God blessed her, giving her children to love her.

At last, after twenty years, the Lord said unto Jacob, "Return unto the land of thy fathers, and to thy kindred, and I will be with thee." "Then Jacob rose up, and set his sons and his wives upon camels. And he carried away all his cattle, and all the goods which he had gotten, . . . — for to go to Isaac his father in the land of Canaan." Even after twenty years Jacob feared to meet his brother, and sent messengers before him. An Eastern missionary writes: "I almost think I hear Jacob telling his servants what they were to say to Esau. He would repeat it many times over, and then ask, 'What did I say?' until he had completely schooled them into the story. They would be most attentive, and, at every interval, some of the most officious would be repeating the tale. The head servant, however, would be specially charged with the delivery of the message. When they went into the presence of Esau they would make much of Jacob's saying, 'The present is sent unto my lord.' He, feeling himself thus acknowledged as *lord*, seeing the servants of his brother before him, and knowing that all of his people had witnessed the scene, would consider himself greatly honored."

The servants returned, saying that Esau was coming to meet his brother with four hundred men. Jacob was greatly troubled; but he had learned where to look for help, and turned to the God whom he had promised to serve so many years before. He acknowledged his unworthiness, but claimed the promised blessing. The next day he sent large presents of camels and sheep and oxen, that Esau might receive the gifts before they should meet, a custom still kept up in the East; and that night he prayed again. We are told that One wrestled with him, whom Jacob refused to let go till he gave Him a blessing. The stranger asked his name, and said, "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a Prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed." The worldly Jacob had at last become the saintly Israel. He who had power with God need not fear his brother. Esau met him lovingly, exchanging presents with him. As the elder brother did not care to till the fields that Isaac had planted, there was no strife between them. After Jacob had been settled in the vale of Shechem for some years, Rachel, his dearly loved wife, died, leaving a baby boy (his twelfth son), whom he called Benjamin, and loved only less than his darling Joseph.



G. Doré

JOSEPH SOLD INTO EGYPT.

SOLD INTO SLAVERY.

GENESIS XXXVII. and XXXIX.

JOSEPH was Jacob's eleventh son, and for fifteen years the youngest child; so it is not surprising that he was his father's favorite. What is rather surprising is that he was not spoiled by the petting. It did not do him any good, though, for we read of his telling tales about his older brothers, which could not have been any more right then than now. But, though perhaps a little spoiled by unwise partiality, Joseph was a manly, God-fearing, obedient boy. God sent him wonderful dreams, which he seemed to understand, or at least, value, even when a boy. Two of these dreams he repeated to his brothers, and they were not at all pleased with them.

Jacob's sons were shepherds and farmers, and Joseph was trained by the older brothers in the care of the flocks, and taught to reap and bind the grain. Though Jacob showed partiality in dressing Joseph in a coat with sleeves and reaching to the feet, while the other sons wore short, sleeveless coats, he was not so foolish as to let the boy grow up in idleness. One of the dreams which Joseph told his brothers refers to his daily life. "Behold," he said, "we were binding sheaves in the field; and lo! my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and behold, your sheaves stood round about and made obeisance to my sheaf"

It was easy to interpret such a dream,—the mere fact of the boy telling it gave it value—so the brothers, already envious of Joseph's coat, and the special favor shown to him, sneeringly replied, "Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou have dominion over us?" And they hated him yet the more for his dreams and for his words.

He was a willing, obedient lad; for when his father proposed to send him to Shechem to see how matters were going with the elder brothers, though he must have often experienced unkindness from them, he answered promptly, "Here am I." How little the boy or the old man foresaw, as they kissed each other good bye,

that nearly fifteen years were to go by before they should meet again. How good it was that they did not know! for Joseph needed to go through those years of trouble, to save his people and to learn to trust only in God.

So the boy started out, wearing his sleeved and embroidered coat; which, perhaps, was a sign that he was to be the heir; to have peculiarly, "the blessing of Abraham." It was no small journey for a boy of seventeen, for Shechem was sixty miles from Hebron, but no doubt Joseph knew the road well, and had friendly intercourse with some of the people living by the way. He saw no sign of his brothers and their flocks at Shechem, and heard that they had gone about ten miles farther north, to Dothan. He followed on at once, catching sight of them in the far distance; while one of the brothers, happening to look toward the south, saw the familiar figure in the coat which distinguished him from other shepherd lads.

"Behold the Dreamer!" he exclaims. Oh, how lightly brothers fall into the habit of sneering and calling each other names! How the words lead to actions; till, now and again, we are startled to hear that a man has betrayed or murdered his own brother! As Joseph walked toward them, no doubt he knew that teasing and sneering, perhaps even blows, awaited him; but little did he suspect the truth. Even when the wicked brothers had bound him, and lowered him into one of the dry wells or cisterns that were so frequent in that country, he probably thought it was only a little rougher treatment than usual. He hears them talking at their meal—eating the very food he has brought them, and giving him none. Then he hears a distant sound. Ah, some one is coming—a company—for, far down in the earth as he is, Joseph can hear the murmur of the approaching caravan. He prays to God for help, and listens. God has heard. They are coming to get him out. But what is his horror to find that he is only drawn up to be sold as a slave. Poor boy! he feels as if God has deserted him. He begs and prays, but it is of no use. The money is counted out, and he is hurried away. "Now see what will become of your dreams!" the brothers cry, tauntingly; but the cry is a reminder. He tries to pray to Him who has sent him those "Visions in the night," and grows calmer

It was a company of Ishmaelites who had bought Joseph. They were going down into Egypt with spices, which always commanded a ready sale, as great quantities were used in embalming and for incense. The merchants paid about fifteen dollars for the lad, the usual price for a slave of Joseph's age. Syrian, or

white slaves, were particularly valued in Egypt in Joseph's time, and he was probably treated very kindly by the Ishmaelites, as he would be more valuable if bright and well.

The first sight of an Egyptian city must have interested Joseph, in spite of his homesickness and anxiety. Here is a description of Memphis, the city where Joseph lived as a slave:

"Memphis, the capital of the Empire in the time of Joseph, lay on the west side of the Nile, about twelve miles south of the present Cairo. Its area, like that of all Eastern cities, was large in proportion to its population, embracing a circuit of at least fifteen miles; but in this was included much open ground, laid out as gardens, besides space for public buildings, temples, and palaces, and the barracks of the garrison, in the quarter known as the 'White Castle.' Within the walls stood the old palace of the kings, a stately structure of brick, with courts, corridors, chambers, and halls without number, verandah-like out-buildings of gaily painted wood, and a magnificent pillared banqueting hall. Beautiful gardens surrounded it, and a whole host of laborers tended the flower-beds and shady alleys, the shrubs and the trees, or kept the tanks clean, and fed the fishes. The climate was wonderfully healthy, and the soil fertile, while the views from the walls were famous among both the Greeks and the Romans. Bright green meadows stretched round the city, threaded everywhere by canals, thick with beds of the lotus flower. Trees of such girth that three men could not encircle them with outstretched arms rose in clumps; the wide gardens supplied Rome with roses even in winter, and the gay vineyards yielded wine of which even the poets sang."

It was in this beautiful city that Joseph was sold to Potiphar, who was the "Captain of the Guard"—that is, the head officer over all the police of the city. Every wealthy family in Egypt had a confidential slave who was put in charge of the house-servants. Paintings show us that wherever grain is being measured or metal weighed, or building or agricultural work is going forward, the head overseer of the household is found with a short rod, or a writing-tablet in his hand and a pen behind his ear, to take down the number of sheaves, or of casks, or of the cattle or flocks, and, like Joseph, he is expressly described as "the overseer."

We know, from the inscriptions and pictures on their tombs, just how Egyptians lived in the time of Joseph. The following is a description of such a house as Potiphar's: "The mansions of noble Egyptians stood within high walls, deco-

rated with paintings; the entrance being by a huge gate, flanked at each side by lofty poles from which floated long streamers. The gate opened on a wide, paved court-yard, along the sides of which ran covered walks, supported on slender, painted, wooden columns. A second high doorway at the back of this court led into the vast gardens of the mansion, with rows of fruit trees and trellised vines, clumps of shrubs, beds of flowers and of vegetables. Palms, sycamores, and acacia trees, figs, pomegranates, and jasmine grew in luxuriance; a large tank in the middle of the ground supplying abundant water for the roots of the trees and for the plants, and numerous gardeners seeing that all were duly cared for, and that the canals which led the water from the Nile were kept full by the labors of oxen, turning water-wheels into them day and night.

"At one side of this paradise rose the mansion, sometimes of vast extent, but generally but one story high. Almost all the rooms on the ground floor had separate doors, opening into a verandah supported by colored wooden columns, and running the whole length of the garden side of the house. A long row of store-rooms, running at a right angle to this, closed the view behind, and hid away the garden produce, the wine jars, and the larder of the establishment. The outside of the mansion, like the enclosing wall, was decorated with paintings or ornamental designs.

"The furniture was in keeping with the building. Couches, sofas, and lounges, often of precious woods encrusted with ebony or ivory and set off with gilding, were beautifully carved into the shapes of lions, sphinxes, horses, and other animals, and there was a profusion of tables of all sizes and designs, and elegantly carved chairs. On the sideboard, tables, and consoles stood artistically worked drinking vessels of many forms; beautiful vases of gold, bronze, rock-crystal, or other precious material, filled with flowers, were everywhere. The foot sank in the thick carpets that covered the floors, or trod on the skins of lions and other beasts. Troops of slaves and officials waited upon their lord; a band of priests took charge of the religious rites of the household, and crowds of servants, male and female, fulfilled the different duties of their stations."

In such a house as this we leave Joseph as confidential slave.



JOSEPH INTERPRETING PHARAOH'S DREAM.

FROM A PRISON TO A PALACE.

GENESIS XXXIX., XL., AND XLI.

JOSEPH did not long enjoy the honors and privileges of his position as overseer of Potiphar's household. A false charge was brought against him. He could not prove himself innocent of abusing the trust which his master had confided to him, and was thrown into prison in a great citadel, called the White Castle. But even here his good conduct won him friends: and soon the jailor, finding he could trust him, let Joseph have many privileges. He seems to have helped attend on other prisoners: for, noticing one day that two men, who were confined together, were particularly sad, Joseph asked them what was their trouble. When you read of these men as the chief butler and baker, you must understand that they were cultivated Egyptian gentlemen.

Mohammedans have a tradition as to the imprisonment of these two officials which is worth repeating. "A foreign king, then at war with Egypt, sent an ambassador, seemingly for the purpose of negotiating a peace, but in reality to seek the means of killing the Egyptian sovereign. A woman of his own country, living in Egypt, whom he consulted, told him that the best course of proceeding was to bribe either the chief cook or the chief butler to poison his master. The ambassador therefore made the acquaintance of both; but, finding the chief cook the more tractable, he at last succeeded by a bribe in gaining him over to his purpose. He then prepared for his departure, and called on his countrywoman, intending to tell her of the chief cook's promise. She was not alone, and he could only say that he had every reason to be gratified by his success. These words of the ambassador soon reached the ears of the king; and as they could not be referred to his mission, since the negotiation for peace had come to nothing, a secret of some kind was suspected. The woman was tortured until she confessed all she knew; but, as she could not say which of the two was guilty, the king commanded that both the chief cook and the chief butler should

be cast into prison until it could be found out which had accepted the bribe." The prisoners had each had a dream, and were feeling particularly sad because they could not obtain their interpretations from a priest. Egyptians attached great importance to dreams, and their priests professed to interpret them by consulting holy books, and performing magical rites. How strangely to the superstitious Egyptians must have sounded the young prisoner's answer to their craving for an interpreter: "Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell me them, I pray you."

The butler dreamed that he plucked grapes from three branches, pressed the juice into Pharaoh's cup, and gave the drink to the king. Joseph, on hearing the butler's dream, told its meaning: "Yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thine head and restore thee unto thy place, and thou shalt deliver Pharaoh's cup into his hand after the former manner when thou wast his butler;" adding an earnest appeal to the officer to remember him (Joseph) when he is restored. The way in which he refers to his past life is a lesson to us; he tells the facts, but mentions no names—he was cured of tale bearing! "For, indeed, I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews, and here also have I done nothing that they should put me into the dungeon." How well it was that he did not complain of his brothers, for then Pharaoh would have disliked them and would have refused to see them.

The baker's dream was next interpreted. How hard it must have been to tell the poor man that in three days he was to be killed, and his body exposed to the vultures. Death itself was really nothing to an Egyptian, compared to refusing to embalm his body; for they believed that the existence of the soul depended upon the preservation of the body.

In three days the great national holiday of the birthday of the king occurred. The king was worshipped as divine, and so his birthday was most sacred. On that day many prisoners were released, and all happened as Joseph had foretold. We can imagine how he hoped and longed to hear from the butler. "He is too busy yet, I won't expect it to-day," he would say to himself, to keep up hope. But, as months went by, as a year passed on, and then became two, Joseph despaired, and knew that he was forgotten.

Yes, by the chief butler; but "God had him in remembrance," and he grew to depend entirely upon the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob.

Suddenly there is a great stir and commotion in the prison of the White Castle. Messengers from Pharaoh are enquiring for Joseph. He is given to a

company of priests, who, to his surprise, begin to purify or "cleanse" him, as if he himself were a priest! What does it mean?

"The king has had a strange dream; no one can divine it, and his chief butler declares that you are a wonderful interpreter. But beware! a slave who pretends to priestly knowledge, must prove that knowledge good, or is punished by instant death." Does Joseph tremble? No; he has begun to see that the "hand of the Lord bringeth mighty things to pass," and has learned, by long experience, that it is good that "a man should hope, and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord."

The purification that Joseph had to undergo, was the shaving of every hair from his head and person; and being bathed and clothed in spotless linen. The hair and beards of Egyptians were always false, as no one could approach Pharaoh unless perfectly shaved.

At last all is ready; the young man stands before Pharaoh, who says, "I have heard say of thee that thou canst understand a dream, to interpret it."

How calmly Joseph turns aside any claim to merit or sanctity. "It is not in me; GOD shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace." Then he listens, as Pharaoh tells him of the seven fat kine who were devoured by the seven lean kine, and of the seven full ears consumed by the seven blasted ears. Without a moment's hesitation Joseph tells the meaning of the dream: "Behold, there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt; and there shall arise after them seven years of famine; and all the plenty shall be forgotten in the land of Egypt, and the famine shall consume the land."

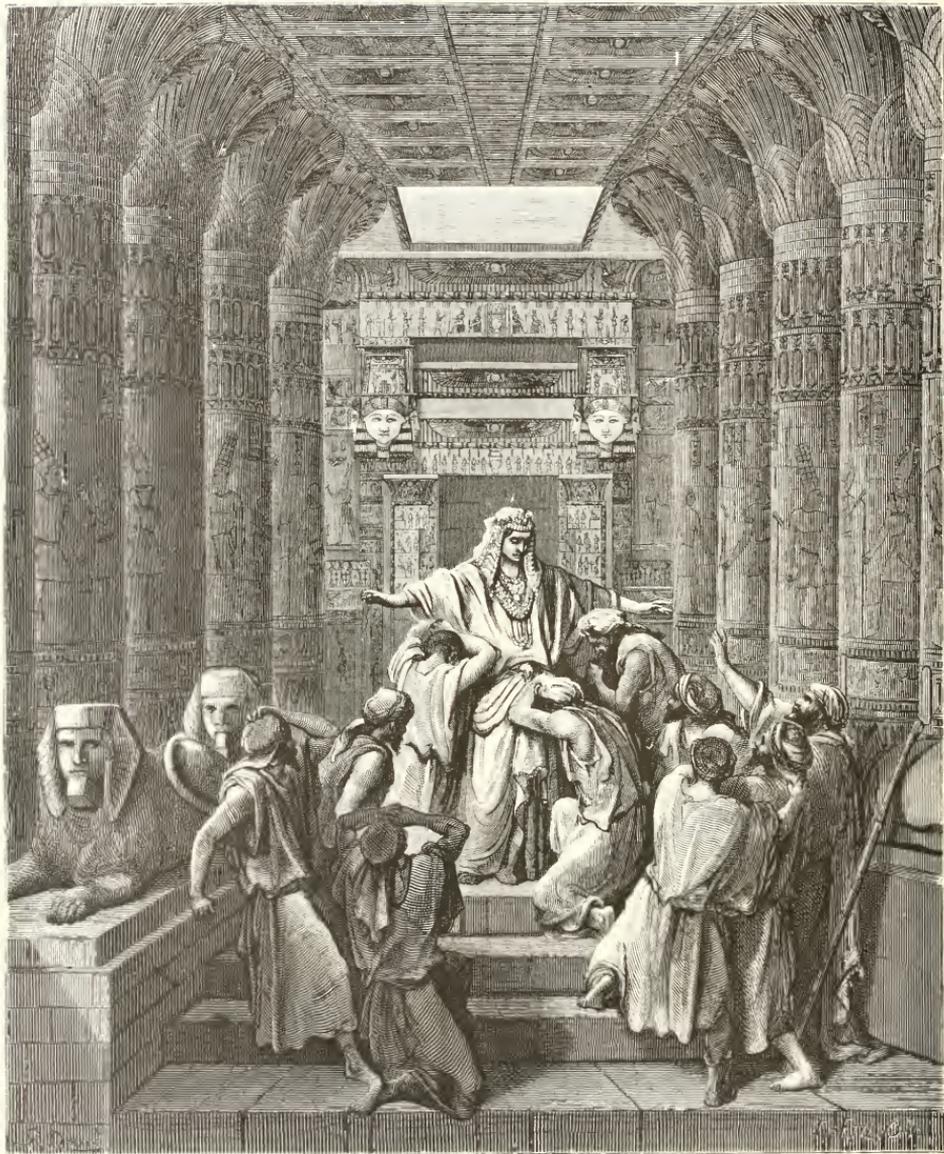
It was, no doubt, because the interpretation was so terrible that the priests had not dared to give it, even if they had some suspicion of it. It was not easy to tell the king that his kingdom was to suffer from a terrible famine. Here is an account of such a famine as Joseph foretold, which will help us to realize what an awful prophecy it must have been to Pharaoh. "The famine began. Large numbers emigrated. The poor ate carrion, corpses, and dogs. They went further, devouring even little children. The eating of human flesh became so common as to excite no surprise; the people spoke and heard of it as an indifferent thing. As for the number of the poor that perished from hunger and exhaustion, God alone knows what it was. A traveler often passed through a large village without seeing a single living inhabitant. In one village we saw the dwellers of each house extended dead;—the husband, the wife, and the children. The road between Egypt

and Syria was like a vast field, sown with human bodies; or, rather, like a plain which has just been swept by the scythe of the mower. It had become as a banquet hall for the birds, wild beasts, and dogs, which gorged on their flesh."

If Joseph had had no relief to offer, his interpretation would have been terrible; but he adds, "Now, therefore, let Pharaoh look out a man, discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt . . . and take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven plenteous years."

Pharaoh at once replies: "Forasmuch as God hath showed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art. Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled. Only in the throne will I be greater than thou." So, in one short hour, the imprisoned slave is made next in rank to the king. He receives Pharaoh's signet ring; is admitted to the order of the priests; and, placed in the second royal chariot, is driven through the streets of Memphis, that all may know they are to be ruled by him. He is given an Egyptian name: Zaphnath Paaneah, "the man to whom secrets are revealed." And, as a crowning honor, he is married to Asenath, the daughter of the high priest of On. This was the time of temptation to Joseph, for he was young—not yet thirty—and raised suddenly to power and glory. But, through all, he never forgot that he was the servant of God. "God did send me," seems the motto of his life. When his first-born is laid in his arms, he cries out, "God hath made me forget my sorrow;" and when another son is given, he still thanks God who has so blessed him.

His was a busy, happy life. He travelled "throughout all the land. . . . and gathered up all the food of the seven years," and then stood ready to preserve life, by the help of God. A life that is full of thought for others, of high aims and lofty purposes, whether it be spent on a throne or in a garret, is a happy life. Look through the record of history. Those kings and rich men are happy who are employed in doing good, in helping those to right who suffer wrong, or in learning something of the great secrets of Nature; while, from Bible times to this day, kings and common men, who have lived simply to enjoy themselves—to heap up riches, and to oppress the poor—have lived feverish, unsatisfactory lives, and generally ended miserably. Which would you choose? Like Joseph, feeling that God has sent you before, to save life, and living for others; or, like Herod, craving riches and distinction, till he hears the shout of "a God—a God!" and, taking the glory to himself, perishes miserably?



JOSEPH MAKING HIMSELF KNOWN TO HIS BRETHREN.

TESTED AND FORGIVEN.

GENESIS XLII., XLIII., XLIV., XLV.

WE must now turn back to the old man waiting for the return of his favorite boy. It may be Jacob feels uneasy after the lad has passed out of sight, and summons a servant to recall him. Then he shakes his head, and says to himself, "Let him go—the boy must do a man's work. Rachel would not have me spoil him if she were here;" and he tries to forget his uneasiness in playing with little Benjamin. But at last a servant tells him, "Master, thy sons approach;" and the father hurries out to see them coming up the hill. What a goodly sight they are. How proud he feels of his twelve sons. He looks for Joseph's boyish figure—so different from the bearded men—but cannot find it. No matter—a moment more, and Rachel's boy will be by his side.

"Father, this have we found," says Simeon, holding up a torn, bloody garment; "know now whether it be thy son's coat or no." With beating heart Jacob holds the tattered cloth. Ah, he knows too well whose it is. "It is my son's coat," he cries, "an evil beast hath devoured him. Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces!" and he mourns, refusing comfort.

How much more than Joseph are the guilty brothers to be pitied! An unconfessed sin, how heavy a burden it is! But yet, as years go by, life goes on, and sometimes they have almost forgotten the awful sin. At last comes a time of famine. Strangers, passing, tell how, in Egypt alone, there is corn; and the brothers look guiltily at each other, blushing at the mere name of Egypt. But when things grow very desperate, Jacob himself insists on their going down into Egypt to buy corn. He sends all but Benjamin. He, ever since that dreadful day when, a child of two years old, he was told "Joseph is not," has never gone far from home, but is cherished tenderly, the one child of Jacob's old age.

Twelve years have made some changes on each of those ten faces, but their costume easily distinguishes them. The simple shepherds feel awkward and coun-

trified in the great city of Memphis, and would gladly buy corn of some merchant; but they are told that no one but the great Zaphnath-paaneah has corn to sell. So, tremblingly, shamefacedly, they enter the king's palace, and bow down before this great man. "And Joseph knew his brethren." How their shepherd's dress, their staves, their beautiful long beards, recall the old home scenes. There is Reuben,—he almost calls him by name,—but he remembers in time. As they bow down, his heart swells with love and pity;—how, in spite of themselves, they are fulfilling his dream! With a beating heart, he sees that no boy is among them; and, speaking through an interpreter, accuses them of being spies, knowing that at that word they will give their full history. At once comes the longed-for answer. "Thy servants are twelve brethren, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan, and behold, the youngest is this day with our father, and one is not."

Then Joseph, impatient for a sight of Benjamin, pretends to still think them spies, and insists that one shall return and bring the youngest brother. On their refusing this, they are thrown in prison for three days. Then he calls them again, and tells them that they can return if they consent to leave one brother as a hostage in his hands. How his heart swells and the tears rise as he hears them, in real penitence, say: "We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us."

At last Simeon is left, and the others return to bring Benjamin. Joseph commands that each man's money shall be put in his sack, and there, to their dismay, they find it on their arrival. Jacob refuses to give up Benjamin, till, at last, death from starvation is so near, that he is driven to let his darling go. The old father himself sends a little present to the great man; (think how Joseph must have treasured that "little balm and a little honey, spices, myrrh, nuts, and almonds,") and once more they reach Egypt, talking sadly of the sin that has weighed so heavily of late on their hearts.

To their astonishment and bewilderment, instead of being received in the public reception room of the palace, they are told that the great man wishes to meet them at his own house, at dinner! They stare in dismay; and indeed it is no wonder, for a state dinner, in the days of Egypt's greatness, was a very grand and formal affair. "The dining chamber was a decorated hall, resplendent with color and gilding, and furnished with regal magnificence. Slaves laid gar-

lands of roses round the shoulders of the guests, and put wreaths of lotus blossoms on their heads, while others handed them wine and food from side-boards, loaded with every delicacy, and decked with flowers. Choirs of musicians entered the chamber during the dessert, and played on harps, lutes, small drums, and flutes, the conductor beating time with his hands, and the company joining with measured clappings."

The brothers are so troubled about the money which they had found in their sacks, that they go to the entrance of Joseph's house and assure his overseer of their honesty. The steward, or overseer, quiets their fears, assuring them that their God must have returned the money, as he had received the payments himself. So, somewhat relieved, they come to the dinner, bringing with them their father's present.

Joseph controls himself, asking after his father: "The old man of whom ye spake, is he yet alive?" but when he catches sight of the boy of fourteen, whom he had last fondled as a baby of two, he has to hurry from the room to hide his tears.

At last they are all seated—each one according to his age, as the brothers notice with surprise. Joseph, being high in rank, eats alone, and the Egyptian guests have a separate table, for an Egyptian could not eat with a foreigner. But Joseph sends portions from his table to each of the strangers, only heaping the most upon Benjamin. The feast was, after all, a very pleasant one, and, having bought their corn, the eleven sons start on their homeward way. But hardly had they gone a half day's journey when they hear shouts and cries, and, looking back, see Joseph's overseer hurrying after them, with a number of men and officers. They wait for him, and, to their surprise, he breaks out into a torrent of reproach. "After the kindness our lord showed you, how dared you steal his cup?"

"His cup?" they exclaim. "What do you mean? Come, search us, and whoever has done this, let him die, and the rest of us will be your lord's bondsmen."

The overseer begins with Reuben's sack, and, searching each in turn, finds nothing in ten of them. The brothers exclaiming, at each failure, "Did not we tell you? What a shame to suspect us of such wickedness!" But their faces grow white, and their eyes fixed, as the boy Benjamin's sack is opened, and the cup lifted out.

You see, Joseph wants to find out if the brothers, who had treated him so wickedly, would desert his little brother in any trouble. But they stand the test well. When they are brought again to Joseph, Judah speaks, for it is he who had taken special charge of the lad. Read his speech (Genesis xlv. 18), and you will not wonder that Joseph "could not refrain himself;" but, making all his courtiers and officers leave the hall, made himself known to his brethren.

"I am Joseph!" he cries, and in his excitement asks again, "Does my father live?" But there is no answer. The guilty men start back in fear, while Benjamin cannot believe that Joseph has risen from the dead. But, after a little, the lad gains courage, and comes near. The wonderful story draws him to the kindly, beautiful man; "and then Joseph fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, and Benjamin wept upon his neck," and soon afterwards all were weeping and talking together.

Pharaoh was soon told that Joseph had found his own people, and, princely in his gifts and hospitality, he invited the whole tribe to live in Egypt in the "land of Goshen." They started once more, with wagons, and asses, and camels, "laden with good things;" and when Israel saw the wagon which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived; and Israel said: "It is enough—Joseph my son is yet alive; I will go and see him before I die."



FROM A PALACE TO A WILDERNESS.

EXODUS I., II., III., AND IV.

FOR four hundred years the descendants of Israel—the Hebrews, as they called themselves—lived in Goshen, which is in the north-east corner of Egypt; that part which lies nearest to Palestine. They gradually gave up their tent life, and the care of flocks, learning agriculture and the various trades and arts of Egypt. For we find them skilled in weaving, engraving on precious stones, reading, writing, etc., and only the tribes of Reuben, Manasseh, and Gad were shepherds after their return to Palestine.

The Pharaoh that invited the Hebrews to live in Egypt was one of those shepherd kings who conquered the Egyptians, and reigned over them for five hundred years. Every king in Egypt was called Pharaoh (Child of the Sun); but the different dynasties were called by different names, just as in England we speak of the reign of the Plantagenets, the Stuarts, etc. The shepherd kings of Egypt were called the Hyksos. They would naturally have friendly feelings toward a tribe of shepherds such as the Hebrews; and, as long as the Hyksos remained on the throne, the Hebrews were probably treated as well as the Egyptians. But the common people in Egypt led a miserable, hard life. Indeed, there were really no "people" in Egypt—only slaves.

At length the Egyptians rebelled against the Hyksos, and restored the native line of Pharaohs. It may be the Hebrews had fought for the Hyksos; at any rate they were oppressed and enslaved by the new kings. These kings were great warriors, and probably many of the fighting men of the Hebrews served in their armies; but after a time a Pharaoh—Ramses II.—was seated on the throne, who cared more for raising great buildings, and wonderful statues of himself sixty-five feet high, than for foreign conquest. He founded towns, dug canals, and filled the land with colossi (large statues), sphinxes, and other wonders. Thirty thousand men died in this very century in digging out the Mahmoudieh Canal with their hands,

without picks or spades or wheelbarrows—falling, worn out with the toil exacted from them, by the blows of the taskmasters. Saddest of all, through these four hundred years, the Israelites had almost forgotten the name of the true God. Many of them had learned to worship the gods of the Egyptians, under the different forms of the bull, the goat, the cat, the crocodile, etc. But the very hardships of their life led them at last to turn and cry out unto the God of Abraham.

Ramses II. was but a boy when his father, Seti I., alarmed at the way the Hebrews were increasing, made a law that every boy baby of that race should be drowned. It is not likely that that law was very rigidly enforced after Seti moved away from Tanis, the capital of Goshen; but, while it was in full power, Amram, the "kindred of the lofty one," and Jochebed, "she whose glory is Jehovah," had a little son born. These people were of the tribe of Levi, which from the first learned all they could of the arts and sciences of the Egyptians. They had already two children, Miriam, a girl of twelve, and Aaron, who was three years old. The mother hid her baby from the Egyptians for three months; but then, as their enemies had learned of the birth of the little one, she had either to let him be put to death by the police, or trust him to the God to whom she prayed. So she took a large basket, and, lining and covering it with pitch to make it waterproof, laid her baby in the little ark and carried it down to one of the broad canals of Tanis, where it floated among the papyrus reeds. She dared not linger near; but Miriam would not be suspected, so she was left to watch. Thermouthis, a sister of Seti I. (daughter of the last Pharaoh), coming to the stream with her maids, to bathe, noticed the little ark, and, touched by the baby's beauty, determined to adopt him. She looked round for a nurse, and quick-witted little Miriam brought her mother to care for the boy, whom the princess named Moses, from *Mo* (water) and *Uses* (the saved one).

Up to forty years of age Moses lived in the palace, or in one of the great temple-schools where the boys of the wealthy were educated by the priests. Professor Geikie thus describes the palace where Moses lived so long. "The palace was more like a little town than a house. It stood near the Nile, amidst surrounding gardens. On each side of a large structure which contained the state rooms and banqueting hall, were three rows of pavilions of different sizes. These were connected with each other by colonnades, or by little bridges, under which flowed canals that watered the garden, and made the palace look like a town upon islands. The

principal part of the palace was built of light, Nile-mud bricks, and elegantly carved woodwork. The walls and pillars, the galleries and colonnades, and even the roofs, blazed with many colors, and at every gate rose tall masts, from which red and blue flags streamed when the king was 'in residence.' The rooms were high and airy, and the furniture consisted of costly but simple necessaries." The gardens below the windows were as wonderful as all else; they formed a carpet on which the palace seemed to stand.

How early in Moses' life he knew of his true birth we are not told. The Bible only says, "And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel;" but probably, for many years, he had been watching his own people, and felt that he ought to join them. At last, one day, seeing a Hebrew suffering from the cruelty of an Egyptian, he interfered, and killed the oppressor. No one saw the deed except the Hebrew whom Moses had befriended, and he "supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them; but they understood not." Moses, thinking the Hebrews regarded him as their friend, tried on the next day to make peace between two who were quarrelling. But, to his astonishment, one of them turned on him and said, "Wilt thou kill me, as thou didst the Egyptian yesterday?"

Try to realize what a disappointment Moses suffered. He had given up all the treasures of Egypt, "choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God," and now these people turned him off, and he had to run away to escape being imprisoned or executed! He escaped to the peninsula of Sinai. In the southern part of this peninsula the Kenites lived, a tribe descended from Abraham through Keturah, his second wife. It was a long and painful journey from Egypt to the well to which the daughters of Jethro-Raguel had brought his flocks to drink. But, though tired, Moses was too courteous to stand by and see the rough shepherds pushing the girls aside. He helped water Jethro's flocks, and the father, when he heard of his kindness, invited him into his tent. The daughters thought Moses an Egyptian, but no doubt he told Jethro his story; and together they talked of that promise which had been given to Abraham and handed down by a few faithful ones through all the generations. "For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever."

But Jethro, like Abraham, lived in a tent, and his riches were flocks and herds. Moses, to live with him, kept the flock. He married Jethro's daughter, Zipporah,

and lived for forty years in the wilderness. He had been trained for forty years in worldly wisdom, and then he was sent out to live a rough, hard life among simple folk. Do not you think he must often have felt discouraged, and as if his life were "all a mistake?" But we, who know the whole story, can see how this life in the wilderness prepared him to be the leader of his people. He was up among the mountains, and that always leads an earnest mind to "feel after God." His wanderings with his flocks would make him acquainted with every valley, plain, and mountain of the whole region; with every spring and well, and with all the resources of the wilderness. This education would fit him to guide his race to the safe shelter where they were to wander so long.

The Bible tells us the story of the deliverance of the Hebrews, as God knew it—not as man saw it. So, though we know from the Word of God that he was thinking of his people, and preparing Moses for the work; at the time, the people, no doubt, realized very little of all this. We know that several times they tried to recover their independence; they had leading men among themselves, who kept them all alert and watchful. Aaron was one of these men, and no doubt he had often sent word to his exiled brother as to the state of things in Egypt. Then suddenly God revealed himself to Moses. The Voice, that had not been heard for four hundred years, spoke, as Moses, seeing a bush all aflame, yet not burned, came closer to examine it. "I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And then Moses was instructed for his great work. He was not told to prepare his people for war; all was to be done by God. His shepherd's rod, turned by God into a fiery serpent, and then restored to him as a rod, was his emblem of office. The Power that had withered and then restored his hand, that could burn and yet not destroy the dry bush, that power could conquer even Pharaoh.

"And Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel: and Aaron spake all the words which the Lord had spoken unto Moses, and did the signs in the sight of the people. And the people believed: and when they heard that the Lord had visited the children of Israel, and that he had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshipped."



THE RETURN OF THE ARK.

W. H. R. 1851

DELIVERED FROM BONDAGE.

EXODUS XIII. AND XIV.

RAMSES II. was dead, and Menephtah I., one of his sons, had succeeded him. The Hebrews, longing once more to worship the God of their fathers, desired to offer sacrifices to him. This, if done in Goshen, would have roused the utmost fury of the Egyptians, for bullocks and rams were sacred with them, and worshipped as gods. If such sacrifices were to be offered at all, the Hebrews must be allowed to go outside the kingdom—"three days' journey into the desert." But this moderate request, which Moses made for his people, was refused.

The story of the plagues which God sent upon the Egyptians by the hand of Moses can be read in the Book of Exodus, beginning at the seventh chapter. Remember, as you read of these plagues, that the Nile was not like any ordinary river; it was the only river of that great country, and was worshipped as a god; guided into canals and tanks, it nourished the land, making the "desert blossom as the rose." The frog, too, was embalmed and honored by the Egyptians. The third plague was a kind of "tick," which lives in hot sand and dust, and buries itself in the flesh of men and animals, feeding on their blood. The plague of flies included the beetle, which was a most sacred symbol of the Egyptian religion. The fifth plague—a disease which attacked the cattle—was almost as bad as the tenth, for the Egyptians worshipped the sacred bull, and the calf. The plague of boils, some have thought, was leprosy.

It seems as if Pharaoh could not have resisted, when visited by such plagues; but we must remember that *we* see the hand of God more plainly than he did. It was so easy to say: "This is, after all, only a natural event—it may never happen again," for each plague was one of the ordinary troubles of the country, *increased*. Then, again, the Hebrews were a great nation of slaves, and to have to part with them would be a terrible loss—Pharaoh would not give up. So hail followed, and locusts, then the sun—the god of all gods in Egypt—was hidden;

everywhere but in the land of the Hebrews a darkness settled down for three days. And Pharaoh said: "Go ye, serve the Lord; only let your flocks and your herds be stayed: let your little ones also go with you. And Moses said, Our cattle also shall go with us; there shall not an hoof be left behind."

This was more than Pharaoh would grant; and he said angrily, that if Moses dared show himself again, he should die. "And Moses said, Thou hast spoken well, I will see thy face again no more."

Then there was great preparation among the Hebrews. The elders told them that God's angel was to pass through the land of Egypt that night, to smite all the first-born; but wherever he saw the mark of a lamb's blood on the lintel and side-posts of the door, he would not enter to kill. How anxiously the eldest child must have watched the killing of the Passover lamb. He did not rest, you may be sure, till he saw the marks clearly made upon the door; then, instead of lying down to sleep, all were prepared for a long journey. Some were rich, but the most were very poor. But God gave them favor with their neighbors, and when they asked for dresses and ornaments the Egyptians gave them all they needed. Then, when at midnight a great cry arose from the Egyptians, begging the Israelites to leave the land in haste, as in every Egyptian house one child lay dead, each Hebrew father hurried, by the light of the full April moon, with his wife and children to the appointed meeting-place; his little ones and the sick in the panniers of asses; his cattle driven before him; the unbaked bread, in the family kneading-trough, wrapped up in his sheepskin on his shoulder.

Gathering in different cities and villages throughout Egypt, they all met at Tanis, where Moses led them out. The crowd was not all Hebrew; among them were prisoners of war, shepherd tribes of Goshen, and multitudes of slaves. "And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night." At first all went well. The very sight of their own numbers gave them courage. They had still fresh water, and plenty of fodder for their cattle. But soon murmurs were heard; they dreaded a battle with the soldiers stationed on the frontier, and Moses, to escape any dangers of battle, led them to the shores of the Red Sea.

As soon as the seventy days of mourning for the dead were over, Pharaoh began to regret having let the children of Israel go. He saw that they meant to stay, for they had taken their sick, and all their possessions; and, hearing that

they were "lost in the wilderness," he ordered out his army of chariots and soldiers, and started in hot pursuit. What had been a slow and toilsome march for the Hebrews, was a short journey for the chariots and their drivers. The Hebrews, who had just broken camp, and were marching toward the sea, saw by the cloud of dust that they were pursued. In their terror, the Hebrews taunted Moses with bringing them out to die. But he answered so calmly that even the children hushed their cries: "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will show to you to-day: for the Egyptians, whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more forever. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace."

And most gloriously, as you know, did God fight for his people. Read the song that Moses and the great multitude sang, as they stood on the other side—saved from their enemies.

We cannot follow the Israelites through all their wanderings; but would notice particularly the mountain before which they assembled to receive the law from God himself. Here, on a deep, wide, yellow plain, the people, in their fear and awe, "removed and stood afar off." The mountain, rising like a great altar, in front of the whole congregation, and visible against the sky in lonely grandeur, from end to end of the whole plain, is the very image of the "mount that might be touched," and from which the voice of God might be heard, far and wide over the stillness of the plain below. Here it was that God spoke the Commandments which he afterward wrote on two tables of stone. The people answered with one voice, "All the words which the Lord hath said, we will do."

Moses then disappeared from the people. They saw him go up into the mount of the Lord; but, day after day, he did not return. Helpless, and lost, without a leader, they demanded that Aaron should make a god for them like those they had known in Egypt; to be, in their eyes, the God who had brought them out from that land, and to go before them instead of Moses. Aaron yielded, and announced a "feast to the Lord"—with the calf, made of their jewels, to worship! Moses, taught of God as to the making of the tabernacle, knew nothing of the sin his people were committing, until God said: "Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves."

Moses, as he saw the people worshipping the calf, threw the tables of the law down, and ordered the idol to be ground to powder, and thrown into the

water. Then, calling for all who were on the side of Jehovah, he was joined by the tribe of Levi, who were told to gird on their swords, and, passing through the host, put down the rebellion at any cost. Before night all were penitent, but three thousand men lay dead. Another punishment followed, for Moses' tent was removed outside the camp, where the cloudy, fiery pillar was seen above it. The people, penitent and humbled, worshipped, standing in the doors of their tents.

Again, for forty days, Moses stayed in the mount; but the people stood the test this time, and he brought back two new tables of the law. Then they set about making the tabernacle, which God had showed Moses in the mount. This was a beautiful movable tent-temple, divided into two rooms by a curtain. In the outer room, or the Holy Place, was the Table of Shewbread, the Altar of Incense, and the Golden Candlestick; while in the Holy of Holies was the Sacred Ark. This ark was made of acacia wood, overlaid within and without with pure gold. Over it was a golden covering, known as the Mercy-seat, with two golden cherubim with outspread wings bending toward the centre. The movement of the mysterious cloud which rested on the tabernacle was the signal for striking or pitching the camp. When it was "taken up from off it," the advance was sounded on silver trumpets by the Levites, Moses repeating the words: "Rise up, O Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee," the whole host re-echoing them far and near. In the same way the descent of the cloud was the sign to halt; and then, as the ark was once more solemnly laid down, the prayer, caught up from the lips of Moses, and intoned by the whole camp, rose up to heaven: "Return, O Lord, unto the many thousands of Israel."

The illustration given with this chapter refers to an event that happened three or four hundred years later than the time of the Exodus. The children of Israel had been defeated in battle by the Philistines, and though they had been forbidden to take the ark out of the tabernacle, they carried it into the next battle, where it was captured by the Philistines. Great was the mourning among the Israelites, and great the joy among their enemies. But the Philistines found that the ark was no blessing to them;—wherever they took it, sickness broke out. At last, to see if it really was the ark that was the cause of their trouble, they put it on a new cart, and yoked two cows to it, whose calves had just been taken from them, letting them go where they would. Instead of turning toward their calves, the cows "went along the highway, lowing as they went, to Beth-she-mesh."



THE WAR AGAINST GIBION.

A WONDERFUL DAY.

JOSHUA X.

WE are told very little as to thirty-eight of the forty years during which the Israelites encamped in the wilderness. You must not think of this place as a desert. Even now, at the end of four thousand years, and after the destruction of the trees, it is, during the rainy season, covered with scanty vegetation; then it had many luxuriant tracts. As to its extent, it covers over fifteen thousand square miles, giving room enough for the Israelites to move from place to place with their flocks and herds.

At last the time drew near when, all those who had left the land of Egypt having died except Moses, Caleb, and Joshua, the little ones, grown into well disciplined men and women, were to go in and possess the land. But Moses, their beloved leader, was not to enter Canaan. He spake unadvisedly with his lips, and God declared that, though he might look upon the land, he should not enter it. His only request then was that God himself would appoint his successor, so "that the congregation of the Lord be not as sheep which have no shepherd."

Joshua, the man who, from his youth, had been Moses' friend and companion, was chosen for the office, and ordained as such before all the people. Then, after rehearsing all God's dealings with them, writing his last songs of praise (Deut. xxxii. and Psalm xc.), and giving each tribe a special blessing, Moses ascended Mount Pisgah and died, "and no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day." Tradition says, "he withdrew among the tears of the people, the women beating their breasts, and the children giving way to uncontrollable wailing. At a certain point in his ascent he made a sign to the weeping multitude to advance no further, taking with him only the elders, the high-priest Eleazar, and Joshua. At the top of the mountain he dismissed the elders, and then, as he was embracing Eleazar and Joshua, and still speaking to them, a cloud suddenly stood over him, and he vanished in a deep valley."

And now, a new and very different leader stood at the head of the people. His name, Hoshea, "Salvation," was changed to Jehoshua, or Joshua, "God's Salvation," and in later times became Jason, or Jesus; and so the Saviour of the Israelites had the same name as the Saviour of the world.

The great multitude of the Israelites were encamped on the eastern side of Jordan. They had already conquered large territories on that side, and the people across the Jordan waited anxiously to see what they would do. The Jordan is a narrow, swift river, running through a valley, between mountains which rise fully five thousand feet above the river-bed on the eastern, and three thousand feet on the western side. The plain is six miles wide at the northern end, and twelve miles wide at Jericho. The river averages forty yards in breadth, has a very rapid current, and, though not deep, the fords are very few, and difficult at the best season. In April, the time when the Israelites crossed, the river was full, and could not possibly be forded.

The morning of that great day when the people passed over Jordan rose bright and clear. Joshua commanded the priests to carry the ark into the river; while, a mile in the rear, was the army, with the host of women and children. Suddenly, as with firm faith, the priests' feet touched the river's edge, the bed of the Jordan was dried, and, "far, far away, thirty miles away, the waters stood, and rose up as if in a heap;" the whole bed of the river left dry from north to south; the huge stones lying bare, here and there, embedded in the soft bottom. The ark stood in the centre of the stream, above; the army passed below; the women and children, according to Jewish tradition, were placed in the centre, from fear lest they should be swept away by the violence of the current. The host, at different points probably, rushed across. Carried aloft before the priests, as they left the river-bed, were twelve stones, selected by the twelve chiefs of the tribes, which were set up at Gilgal as an altar to the Lord.

Think of the camp at Gilgal—that was where the great multitude first settled. Think of the first corn which they tasted, of the first day when the manna ceased to fall, and when, for the first time since the giving of the law on Sinai, the Passover Feast was kept. Only Caleb and Joshua could remember the first time that feast was eaten, in the low Egyptian huts, when they, as the eldest sons, went again and again to make sure the blood was sprinkled.

But, the feast over, the people longed to go forth, conquering and to conquer.

From the camp they saw a grove of majestic palms, three miles wide and nearly eight miles long, broken here and there by fields of ripening corn. Behind rose the gray mountains, and at their base were the temples and palaces of Jericho, a city famous for its strength against invaders, its wealth, and luxury; but a cursed city, for it was full of foul idolatry. God's command was, that nothing was to be saved from it but what could be purified by fire, such as the metals. This walled city was "shut up because of the children of Israel: none went out, and none came in;" and what must have been the terror of the people of the city when they saw the Israelites, in orderly ranks, with the priests bearing the ark in front, advancing toward them. But no doubt they began to mock and jeer, when, hurling no spears, not even making a sound, the Israelites walked silently round the walls of the city and retired. Again and again, for six days, this strange march was repeated, and then, on the seventh, they marched round and round seven times; but then "it came to pass when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city."

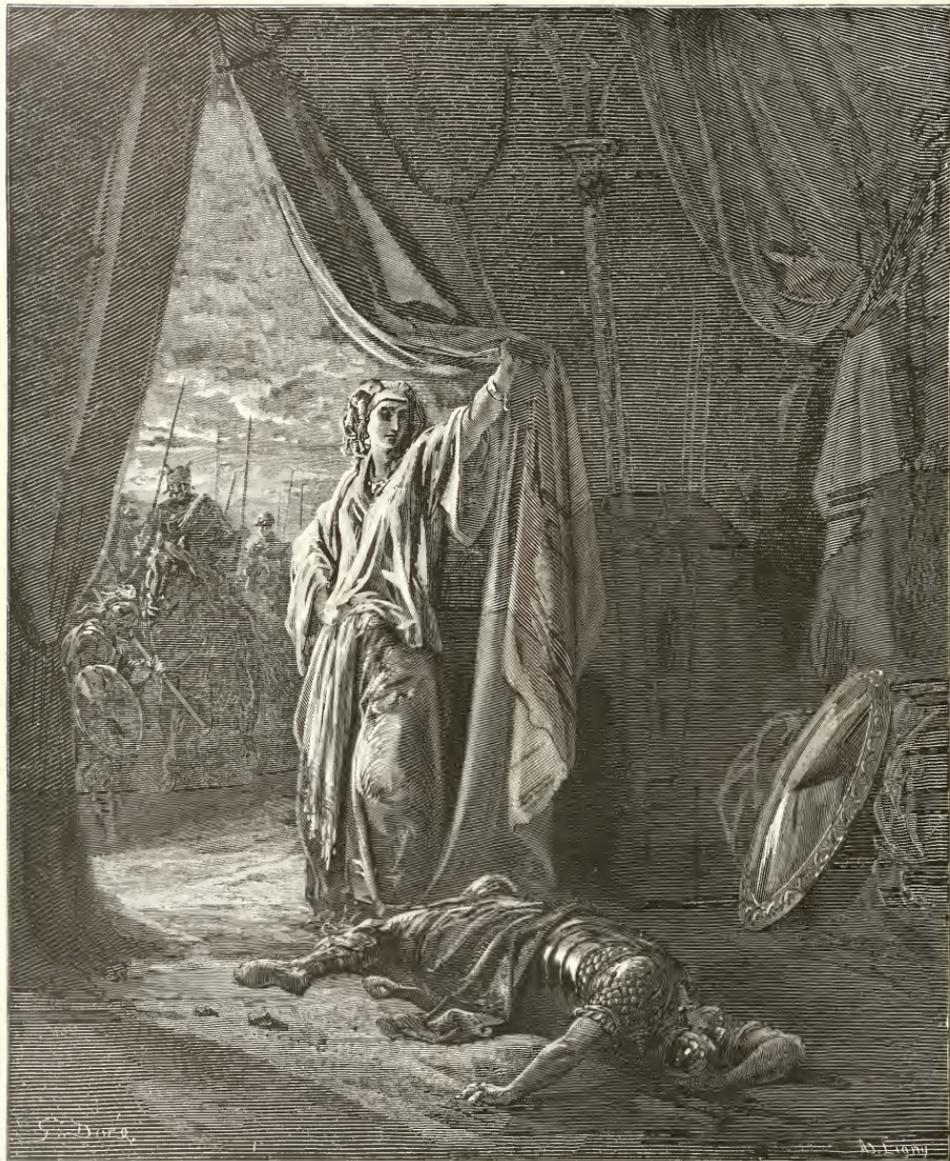
But our picture is not of the fall of Jericho, but of the battle of Beth-horon, or Gibeon. After Jericho was taken, the people of Palestine were in great fear of the Israelites, and the inhabitants of one large city, Gibeon, and three smaller ones, managed, by deceit, to save themselves from destruction. You must remember that God had ordered the destruction of the Canaanites;—it was the only way to keep the Israelites from idolatry; and besides, "their iniquity was full." But one day a strange company asked to see Joshua and the elders of Israel. They looked travel-worn and exhausted. Their bread was mouldy, their water-skins worn out, and their asses jaded looking. "We want to make a league with you," they said. When the elders of Israel said they could not make friends of any of the neighbors, they said, "This our bread we took hot for our provision out of our houses on the day we came forth to go unto you; but now, behold, it is dry, and it is mouldy." Then, not asking counsel of the Lord, peace was made with the men of Gibeon, and a solemn oath given that they and their people should live. It was only three days after that Joshua found out how they had deceived him; then the people of Israel wanted to break their word; but the princes acted as true princes should, saying they could not lie—the promise had been made and must be kept; but the Gibeonites were made servants to the Israelites.

When the kings of five cities heard what the Gibeonites had done, they were very angry, and determined to kill the Gibeonites. "And the men of Gibeon sent word unto Joshua to the camp at Gilgal, saying, Slack not thy hand from thy servants; come up to us quickly, and save us, and help us: for all the kings of the Amorites that dwell in the mountains are gathered together against us."

Joshua set off at once, and before sunrise had reached the open ground, at the foot of the hill, on which the kings were encamped. At the sight of the foes that had so terrible a God on their side, the armies of the five kings were panic-stricken, and rushed headlong up the long rocky ascent that was their only way of escape. They got away from Joshua and his army a little, reaching the top of the mountain, and hurrying down from Beth-Horon the Upper to Beth-Horon the Nether. It is a rough, rocky road, and as they were stumbling along, a terrible tempest, thunder, lightning, and deluge of hail broke upon the frightened army. "They were more which died with hailstones than they whom the children of Israel slew with the sword."

Now it was on the very top of the mountain that Joshua stood and watched the battle. He saw his foes flying, pursued by the Israelites, but the day was passing all too quickly; darkness would soon settle down upon them, and they could not follow up their victory. "Then spake Joshua to the Lord, . . . and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, moon, in the valley of Ajalon. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies. And there was no day like that before it or after it, that the Lord hearkened unto the voice of a man: for the Lord fought for Israel."





SISERA SLAIN BY JAEI.

JAEL, THE WIFE OF HEBER.

JUDGES IV. AND V.

ONE hundred and sixty years had passed since Joshua had been buried in Tibneh. No one had succeeded to his office; but from time to time God raised up some one man above his people to win the victory over Israel's foes. But now it was a woman who judged in Israel; a woman who, seated beneath her palm-tree among the hills of Ephraim, near Bethel, wrote songs that were chanted from one end of the land to the other. She heard of the oppression of her people in the north; that Jabin, king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor, had for years kept the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali in such fear that men were glad to hurry on any necessary errands by secret mountain paths, and the open roads were deserted. The heathen king had possession of all the fortresses, and among forty thousand Israelites there was hardly one spear or shield to be found. But this noble woman knew, by her people's history, that man's necessity was God's opportunity. Again and again her songs rekindled the flame of true faith in the hearts of her countrymen; and at last, feeling that the time had come to strike for freedom, Deborah sent for Barak, "the thunderbolt," a man living in the very heart of the oppressed country. She told him to gather ten thousand men from Naphtali and Zebulun, who should meet at Mount Tabor, promising that God would draw to him Sisera, Jabin's commander, with his chariots and his hosts, and deliver them into his hand.

Barak was ready to go, but wished Deborah to go with the army, or he could not feel sure of victory. She said at once, "I will go, but my going will take away your glory, for the Lord shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman."

The people responded eagerly to the call. Ephraimites, and crowds from the tribe of Benjamin, who were skilled in the use of the bow and the sling, joined the army, which was already secretly organized in Zebulun and Naphtali. Tabor, the meeting-place, is a mountain rising one thousand five hundred feet above

the north-east end of the plain of Esdraelon. No better spot could have been chosen, for the chariots of the Canaanites could not attack it, and its bare summit was a natural watch-tower, where Deborah and Barak could see all the movements of the enemy.

Sisera, the commander of king Jabin's forces, being warned of the rising of the Jews, had collected a great army, with hundreds of the dreaded iron chariots, on the plain, about sixteen miles from Deborah's camp. The whole surface of this plain is seamed with dry water-courses, the beds of torrents, after heavy storms, and these smaller streams all flow into the Kishon, which, when swelled by them, is deep and dangerous. This Kishon rises close to Mount Tabor, in a number of springs, pools, and brooks, which are quickly transformed into a swamp by wet weather.

At last the signal of attack is given by Deborah, "Up; this, this and no other is the day." And so, with hardly any arms, and on foot, the Israelites rush down bravely on the foe. As they meet, a terrible storm of sleet and hail, beating on the faces of the Canaanites, but on the backs of the Israelites, bursts upon the armies.

"The stars in their courses
Fought against Sisera;
The river of Kishon swept them away,
That ancient river, the river Kishon."

Jabin's great army fled far and wide; so terrible was the carnage that, centuries after, a psalmist speaks of the dead as enriching the ground. None of the enemy escaped; even news of the disaster was long delayed, and the mother of Sisera watched for days for his return.

But where was the great Sisera? His face was not found among the fallen. Barak looked for him in vain among the slain.

Leaving his chariot, Sisera fled on foot over the northern mountains toward Hazor. Between Hazor, Jabin's capital, and Kedesh-Naphtali, the birthplace of Barak, which are only a day's journey apart, lies a green plain, studded with beautiful oak-trees. Underneath one of these dwelt a number of Kenites, who lived like all Arabs, in tents. These Kenites were at peace with Jabin, so Sisera felt sure of finding refuge among them. He went, for safe hiding, straight to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber, the chief of the tribe; for here no one could

enter without permission. The long, low tent was spread under the tree, and from beneath its cover Jael advanced to meet him, with the accustomed reverence. "Turn in, my lord; turn in, and fear not." She covered him with a rough wrapper, or rug, on the slightly raised earthen divan, inside of the tent, and he, exhausted with his flight, lay down; and then, lifting up his head, begged for a drop of water to cool his parched lips. The Arabs have a delicious preparation of curdled milk, called "lebben," which is offered to guests as a delicacy. But, whilst most refreshing to a traveller who is tired and hot, he who drinks is sure to fall into a deep and long sleep. This lebben Jael eagerly brought to Sisera, in a special dish, the pride of her tent, and the weary man, secure in Jael's friendship, drank and fell into a deep sleep.

But Sisera had forgotten, or perhaps he did not know, that though the Kenites were at peace with Jabin and his mighty force, they were of the same blood as Israel; that Moses had married a Kenite, and that the great Abraham was their ancestor. Jael, as she looked at the sleeping warrior, felt her heart stir with sympathy for the oppressed people. What a service she had it in her power to do them! Taking up one of the tent pegs and the mallet used to drive it, she crept up silently to her victim, sunk in the sleep of the weary, and with a terrible blow drove the bolt crashing through his temples, with such force that it entered the ground on which he had been lying. One convulsive bound, one contortion of agony, and he was a lifeless corpse.

Three days had gone by since the first day of battle. Barak, seeking still for Sisera, passed the Kenite camp, when Jael's tall figure appeared in her tent door, and with grave triumph she bade him enter, saying, "Come, and I will show thee the man whom thou seekest."

"So God subdued on that day Jabin, the king of Canaan, before the children of Israel."

Deborah, an inspired prophetess, as well as judge in Israel, sang a song of triumph after this battle, which is one of the most beautiful songs in the Bible. We will give a few verses of it:

"Praise ye the Lord for the avenging of Israel, when the people willingly offered themselves. Hear, O ye kings; give ear, O ye princes: I, even I, will sing unto the Lord; I will sing praise to the Lord God of Israel. My heart is toward the governors of Israel, that offered themselves willingly

among the people. Bless ye the Lord. Awake, awake, Deborah; awake, awake: utter a song: arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam.

"The kings came and fought, then fought the kings of Canaan in Taanach by the waters of Megiddo: they took no gain of money. They fought from heaven; the stars in their courses fought against Sisera.

"The river of Kishon swept them away, that ancient river, the river Kishon. O my soul, thou hast trodden down strength. Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord against the mighty.

"Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be: blessed shall she be above women in the tent. He asked water, and she gave him milk; she brought forth butter in a lordly dish. She put her hand to the nail, and her right hand to the workman's hammer; and with the hammer she smote Sisera; she smote off his head, when she had pierced and stricken through his temples. At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down; at her feet he bowed, he fell; where he bowed, there he fell down dead.

"The mother of Sisera looked out at a window, and cried through the lattice, Why is his chariot so long in coming? why tarry the wheels of his chariots? Her wise ladies answered her, yea, she returned answer to herself, Have they not sped? have they not divided the prey; to every man a damsel or two? to Sisera a prey of divers colors, a prey of divers colors of needle-work, of divers colors of needle-work on both sides, meet for the necks of them that take the spoil.

"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."





DEATH OF SAUL

THE FIRST KING OF ISRAEL.

I. SAMUEL XXXI.

FOR nearly five hundred years the children of Israel lived a careless, idolatrous life. There were, here and there, through all those years, God-fearing men and women; but the nation, as a whole, had sunk into idolatry, and were almost extinguished as a separate people. The Philistines had gained such power over them that many of the Israelites were forced to fight in the Philistian armies; and even their ploughs and ox goads had to be sharpened by their masters, no Israelite being allowed to have a forge for fear he should make swords to use against their oppressors. But, in this darkest time, God raised up a prophet to teach his people—the first since the days of Moses. This prophet, Samuel, was in many ways such a reformer as Martin Luther. He taught his people that God looketh on the heart. He preached of true repentance from city to city, and founded "schools of the prophets," where those who wished to restore and establish the ancient faith were instructed.

At last, representatives from all the tribes met Samuel at Mizpeh, a hill about five miles north of Jerusalem, and with prayers and tears humbled themselves before God. The Philistines, alarmed at such a gathering, sent an army to disperse the people; but the Israelites, strong in their renewed consecration, charged down the hill with a fury that spread panic through the ranks of the Philistines; God, too, fought for his people, sending a storm of thunder and rain. This victory led to a long peace, though the people were still oppressed.

It was at this time that all felt the need of a king—all but Samuel; he could not see that the people needed any king but God. Yet, when told by God that they were to be allowed a king, he did all he could to help them choose aright. Saul, the one pointed out by God, and chosen by the people, was a man of about forty years of age, with a grown son, who was like a brother to him; for "there was nothing great or small that Saul did not tell Jonathan." We must

try to realize that, though chosen king by the shouts of the people at Mizpeh, and anointed by Samuel, Saul had no court, and had to win his kingdom. He went back at once, after his election, to his home at Gibeah, attending to his daily duties. The first appeal to the king came from the tribe of Gad, across the Jordan. Nahash, the king of the Ammonites, had laid siege to the city of Jabesh-Gilead, and threatened to put out the right eye of every inhabitant, if succor did not come within seven days. The call proved Saul a true king. He killed two of the cattle he was driving, and sent a piece of their flesh to each one of the tribes, commanding them to come to the relief of Jabesh-Gilead, on peril of death if they refused. A great multitude answered to the call, and passing at once over Jordan, they assailed the Ammonites on three sides and drove them off in a wild panic.

The great enemies of the Israelites, however, were not the Ammonites, but the Philistines; and when, in the second year of his reign, Saul enrolled two thousand men as a standing army (though only Saul and Jonathan had a spear or shield), the Philistines collected a great force to overwhelm them: three thousand chariots, six thousand cavalry, and a great force of infantry came up from the lowlands on the Mediterranean shore and crowded the passes of the land of Benjamin. The Israelites were assembled at Gilgal, the town farthest from the foe, and each day numbers of them crossed the Jordan or hid in the caves of the hills. Samuel had directed Saul to wait for him seven days at Gilgal—never did seven days pass more slowly. The great army of the Philistines advanced to Michmash, on a hill where the cliffs on the side nearest the Israelites were thought to be unscalable. Saul's army was melting away—every hour of waiting seemed dangerous; at last, on the seventh day, Saul resolved to offer a sacrifice himself to God, and while he was beside the altar Samuel appeared! The test the King of Kings had put to try Saul's loyalty had been disregarded. He had shown that he had no real faith in God—the first requirement in a king of Israel—and so Samuel turned and left him with a rebuke.

Saul, deserted by the prophet, left Gilgal with the six hundred men who stayed by him, and went to Gibeah. While his father and the army waited in uncertainty, Jonathan and his armor-bearer stole on the enemy, and, climbing up the sides of the precipice, where one false step would have hurled them to instant death, they reached a point where the outposts of the enemy could see them. The

sentinel cried out, mockingly, "Come up, won't you, we should like to make your acquaintance." Jonathan had decided that such a word would be a sign that God meant him to advance; and, in a little time, he and his armor-bearer had killed twenty men with their arrows and slings. The advance post yielding, Jonathan and his friend pressed on, keeping up a fire of stones. The Philistines, thinking that more men were following the invaders, fell into a panic; and at last the whole host were in flight. The very earth seemed to tremble as the great multitude swayed here and there. Saul, from the height of Gibeah, seeing the confusion, hastened to Michmash and completed the defeat. The Israelites who had been drafted into the Philistian army fought on the side of their own people, and those who had hidden in the caves joined in the battle, so that Saul's army swelled to ten thousand men. This great victory gave the people arms and courage, and great were the songs of triumph and the praises of their king.

A regular standing army was now established, and Abner, Saul's cousin, was given command of the whole force.

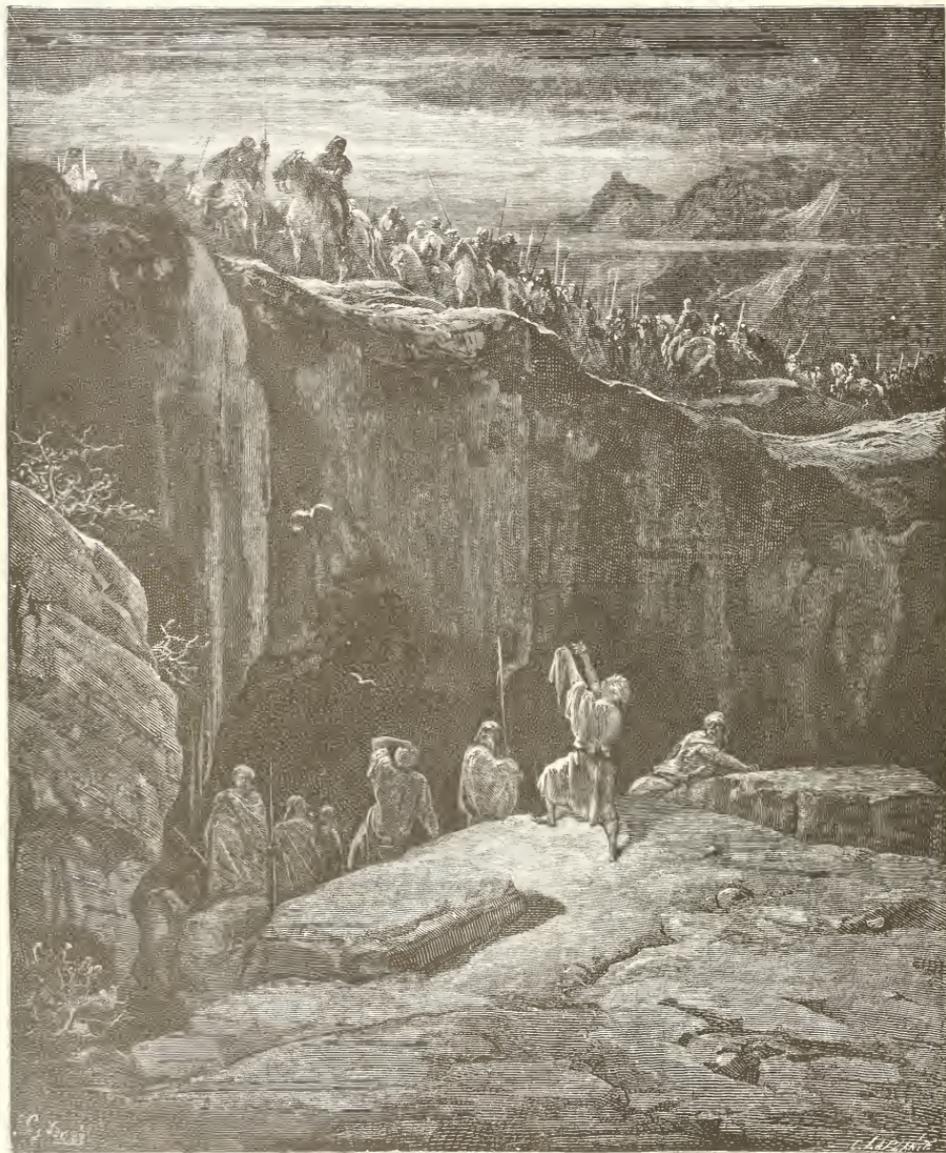
And now a new opportunity was given Saul—God tested him once more, it may be in answer to Samuel's prayer; for Samuel loved Saul all his life. The Amalekites, an Arab tribe who, with Agag their chief, plundered and harassed the tribes of Judah and Simeon, were to be utterly destroyed. Samuel warned Saul that nothing was to be kept—the destruction was to be total. Saul surprised Agag and his tribe, took his city, and slew or made prisoners all but a few who escaped by flight. Agag, the chief who, by his cruelty had made many an Israelite woman childless, was taken, and great flocks of sheep and oxen fell into the hands of the Israelites. The Hebrews, only too glad to enrich themselves, drove the herds before them on their homeward march, and Saul, afraid to interfere, did not insist on their destruction.

Samuel, warned by God of Saul's disobedience, was told to cast him off; and, after praying all night for the king, he met Saul, proud of his victory and unconscious of his sin. But when Samuel asked him what the bleating and lowing that he heard meant, and Saul tried to excuse himself by saying that the people had spared the best of the sheep and oxen for sacrifice, the prophet answered sternly: "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the blood of rams." And then came the terrible sentence: "Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, the Lord has rejected thee from being king over Israel."

After that day the prophet and Saul never met again. The king would not have dared to injure Samuel, even if he had desired to do so, for that would have roused all the people against him. He was constantly watching for that "neighbor" to whom the Lord had given his kingdom. A brooding melancholy took possession of him; and after a time he had attacks of insanity, that only music could cure. A young boy of the tribe of Judah, who was noted as a sweet singer, as well as for his wonderful courage and prowess—David, the son of Jesse—was called to the court and commanded to sing and play for the king. The beautiful, auburn haired boy won the king's heart, and his music so quieted the strange attacks, that after a time they seemed to be cured, and the boy was allowed to return home.

We will reserve other particulars of Saul's reign for the next chapter, and go on at once to his sad death. The king threw himself with all his heart into the war with his enemies, to gain credit with his people. At last, after twenty years of constant skirmishes, the Philistine army offered battle to the Israelites on the eastern part of the plain of Esdraelon. Saul at once marched to the north side of the hills near Endor. He was no longer strong and courageous, but unstrung by disease and forsaken by God. Heaven seemed shut to him, and the sight of the great multitude of horse and foot, in full armor, filled him with dismay. He tried to bring on dreams that might seem some revelation, and, that failing, in his agony he disguised himself and sought out a witch at Endor. He begged her to invoke the spirit of Samuel, who had died not long since. The witch began her mutterings and conjurations; but what she never could have done of herself, to her dismay, God allowed. An apparition suddenly rose before them, which Saul and the witch both knew by its mantle to be Samuel. The doom spoken years before at Gilgal was repeated, and Saul was told that on the morrow he and his three sons should be with the dead.

The attack began next morning, and the Israelites fought bravely all day, but they could not resist the chariots and cavalry of the Philistines. Driven back to Gilboa, they were pursued up the hill and utterly routed. Three sons of Saul—Jonathan, Abinadab, and Malchishua—were slain in the field; and at last Saul was alone with his armor-bearer. As this man refused to kill him, the king fell on his own sword just as the Philistines closed in on him.



DAVID SPARING SAUL.

DAVID, THE OUTLAW.

I SAMUEL XXI.

“AND Saul was afraid of David; but all Israel and Judah loved David.”

David's life at Saul's court was not a happy one. Though he knew that he was, in time, to be king, he revered Saul as the “Lord's Anointed,” and never once had a disloyal thought; so it was hard to be suspected—to find, again and again, that the king was trying to kill him. Jonathan, who loved both his father and David so dearly, tried to reason away Saul's jealousy, and seemed for a time to succeed. But again the evil spirit possessed Saul, and he once more threw his javelin at David, who barely escaped. Then Saul sent messengers to David's house to kill him; but Michal, Saul's daughter and David's wife, let her husband down by a window, so that he escaped. He went to Samuel, and lived with the sons of the prophets. Even there Saul tried to kill him, but the messengers he sent were so overcome by the songs and holy words of the prophets that they joined in the worship, the spirit of God being upon them. At last Saul himself went to Ramah; but he too fell into a sort of frenzy, throwing aside his outer cloak, and lying in a stupor all day and night.

Soon after this Jonathan, to his great sorrow, found that his father was determined to hunt David to the death, and the two friends parted, with vows of mutual love, for Jonathan could not forsake his father. David went at first to Achish, the Philistine king. It seems strange that he should have gone to his enemies, but it may be that he trusted to a feigned name as a disguise. But as soon as the Philistines found out who he was they would have killed him; when, to save his life, he pretended to be crazy or idiotic. Insanity was considered a mark of divine possession, and no one would injure an idiot; so David was not molested, and escaped to his own land of Judah.

Here he hid in the cave of Adullam; and there, as they heard of his retreat, friends, and those who were discontented under the rule of Saul, gathered under

his standard. His aged parents came to him; but he took them to the king of Moab, who, being a relative through Ruth, the grandmother of Jesse, protected them during the time of danger.

Many of David's wonderful psalms are known to have been written during these anxious times. The sixth, seventh, and eleventh were probably written at Ramah, when he was with Samuel; the fifty-ninth, when Saul sent soldiers to watch David's house, to kill him; the thirty-fourth, at the time he pretended madness before Achish; and the fifty-seventh and one hundred and forty-second, when he fled to the cave of Adullam. So, though leading forays against the Philistines, and surrounded by rough, lawless men, David's heart was full of thoughts of God, and he "waited on the Lord."

Kcilah, a town near the cave of Adullam, was assailed by the Philistines, and David, with his force of six hundred men, rescued it. The walled town seemed a safe place for him and his men, but spies soon brought him word that Saul was coming to take him; then God revealed to David that the men of the place would surely betray him to Saul. So, again, he went back to his wandering life, going about fourteen miles off to the wilderness of Ziph, a rocky, hilly place, full of caves and hiding-places. Here a large force, led by Saul in person, was almost upon him, when news came that the Philistines had invaded Gibeah, and Saul had to turn back for a time. At last, David, driven from place to place, retreated to the cliffs of Engedi, "the spring of the goats," on the edge of the Dead Sea. The scenery here is utterly savage. Precipices on three sides, bounded by tremendous gorges, run down to the shore beneath; a winding track, cut in the perpendicular rocks, is the only means of descent; a single false step is death, for it would hurl one to the bottom, two thousand feet below. Six hundred feet below a small oasis is reached; to this wild spot, well called the "rocks of the wild goats," since only they and the gazelle could find footing on the narrow edges of the cliffs, David had to flee, hiding in the caverns, with which the whole of the mountains are full.

But even here Saul followed him, and came so near that one day the king himself actually entered a large cave where David and some of his men were hiding. His tall figure was easily recognized as he stood in the opening. He lay down to rest, and then one and another urged David to kill his enemy, telling him that the Lord had delivered him into his hand. But the "Anointed of

Jehovah" was holy in David's eyes. Stepping gently to Saul's side, he cut off a piece of his mantle; and Saul, refreshed by his rest, rejoined his army with no idea of the risk he had run. But by and by David saw Saul and his company riding far above on the cliffs; and calling to him, he held up the piece of the mantle, to show how truly loyal he was. Saul's better nature was touched by David's generosity, and he wept aloud, saying: "Thou art more righteous than I, for thou has rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil."

But Saul's repentance was short lived. It may be that Samuel's death, which occurred about this time, roused once more his fears lest the kingdom would be taken from him; at any rate, he again went against David; and from the top of some hill David and his nephew Abishai see, in the clear moonlight, Saul's host lying asleep. The two, waiting for the moon to set, steal down the hillside in the darkness, and creep through the host to the very pillow of the king. His long spear, the badge of his rank, is stuck in the ground at his head, and a cruse of water—bound to the saddle of his ass by day—lies near. Abishai wishes to kill the king, but David forbids violence, and, seizing the spear and cruse, leads the way to his own people.

In the early morning light, standing far above the enemy, yet where his voice could be plainly heard, David holds out the spear and cruse, and taunts Abner, the general of Saul's army, for his want of care of the king. Then again he pleads his loyalty, and again, for a time, Saul is penitent; and "David went on his way, and Saul returned to his own place."

Achish, the king of the Philistines, being convinced that David would not help Saul, sent word to the outlawed chief that he might find a refuge with him, and gave David the Philistian town of Ziklag to live in. Many more joined David here, "till he had a great host like the host of God." This host was ordered by Achish to join the Philistian army on the march to the far north, where, on the plain of Esdraelon, they were to give battle to Saul. But, fortunately, though Achish had ordered David to accompany them, the chiefs of the Philistines refused to go into battle till David was sent away, and so he was not forced to fight against his people. Marching back to Ziklag he found the town burned, and the women and children gone—carried away by the Amalekites. After prayer to God David and his host pursued their enemies, and finding an Egyptian servant who had been left to die because too ill to keep up with the Amalekites, they were

guided to the camp of the enemy, and, surprising them at a feast, the Amalekites were all cut down except four hundred young men who rode on swift camels; and the women and children, with vast spoil, were recaptured.

Two days after this a runner arrived from the camp of Saul. He came, expecting to be rewarded for bringing good news—Saul was dead. The runner boasted that he himself had killed him, and showed the king's turban and bracelet as proofs of the truth of his story. But David's grief for Saul and Jonathan was deep and sincere, and his anger against one who had, as he said, laid violent hands on the Anointed of Jehovah was so great that the Amalekite was instantly put to death. During the days of mourning for Saul and Jonathan, David composed the "Song of the Bow," a few stanzas of which are here given:

"Thy glory, O Israel,
Lies slain on thy heights.
Ah! how are the heroes fallen!
Whisper it not in Gath,
Tell it not in the streets of Askelon;
Lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice,
Lest the daughters of the uncircumcised exult!

"Saul and Jonathan
Loved and loving in their lives,
Even in death were not divided.
They were swifter than eagles,
Braver than lions!

"Ye daughters of Israel
Weep for Saul!
Who clothed you in purple, to your delight;
Who hung your apparel with golden adornments.
Ah! how are the heroes fallen in battle!
On thy high places (Gilboa) is Jonathan slain!

"Woe is me for thee, my brother Jonathan;
Dear wast thou to me beyond words;
Wonderful was thy love to me—
More than man's love of woman.

"How have the heroes fallen!
How have the mighty men of war perished!"



SAUL AND DAVID.

THE SHEPHERD HERO.

I SAMUEL XVI., XVII., AND XVIII.

“There's but one secret in the fight—
The trusting to Another's might;
For, strange as it may seem,
Whoe'er shall to the lists descend,
Though armed in proof, without this Friend,
Will find his strength a dream.”

It is the eve of a feast-day at Bethlehem, about the year 1050 B.C., and great is the excitement when word goes from mouth to mouth, “Samuel, our great prophet, is coming up the hillside.” The elders of the village go forth to meet the seer with blanched faces—has he come to punish, or in peace? But Samuel quiets their fears at once. “I am come to sacrifice unto the Lord,” he says, and invites all of them to join him at the feast on the next day. He goes himself to the house of Jesse, one of the chief men of the village, and, asking to see his sons, the young men are called, and, one by one, pass before Samuel. The prophet knows that God has chosen the next king of Israel from among these sons; and as Eliab, the eldest born, stands before him, like Saul beautiful and tall even among tall men, Samuel thinks surely the Lord's anointed is before him. But Eliab is not the chosen one, nor the next, nor any of the seven sons. Then Samuel said unto Jesse, “Are here all thy children?” and he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Send and fetch him: for we will not sit down till he come.”

So David is sent for and comes in, his beautiful eyes opened wide in astonishment at the summons; his fair skin glowing with health. The prophet takes him aside, and in whispered tones tells of the future that awaits him, pouring the sacred oil upon his head. That moment changes the youth to a man, “and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward.” He had always

loved poetry and music, and now, as he tended his sheep, his thoughts, guided by the Spirit, formed themselves into songs of praise and prayer. As he watched his flock by night he sang:

"The heavens declare the glory of God,
The firmament showeth his handiwork."

Hard beset by a bear, and then by a lion, he kills both; and, knowing it was the Lord who delivered him, sings:

"I will say of the Lord, he is my refuge and my fortress!
My God, in him will I trust."

Saul, deserted by the prophet, falls into fits of frenzy, and at last some one proposes trying the effect of music to quiet him. David, the sweet singer, is spoken of, and a summons from the king is sent to Jesse. Jesse sends the boy at once; and so wonderful is the charm of his music that, after a while, Saul seems quite cured, and David is allowed to return to his home. He stays quietly at Bethlehem, tending his father's sheep, even when the Philistines have gathered an army against the Israelites, and most young Hebrews have left for the war. But at last his patience is rewarded; his father sends him to the camp of the Israelites—only fourteen miles west of Bethlehem—to take food to his brothers. To his surprise he finds the camp all in disorder. A great man, looking even more gigantic than he really is, because of his helmet, with its nodding plume, stands in front of the Philistine army, and calls out for some Israelite to test his strength. "If he be able to fight with me, and to kill me," he cries, "then will we be your servants: but if I prevail against him, and kill him, then shall ye be our servants, and serve us."

David listens, and turns to see at least a dozen of his countrymen press forward. But no one answers! They seem even afraid to look at the giant! And then the young man learns that for forty days this heathen has defied the army of the living God! His surprise, his perfect inability to see why they—they who have Jehovah on their side—can be afraid, is talked of on all sides. Eliab, his brother, is vexed at David's being noticed, and tries to taunt him with references to "those few sheep." But the lad is thinking of God and his people, and hardly notices the unkind words.

At last Saul is told that there is one man—a young fellow—who knows no fear of Goliath the Philistine, and he bids them bring the youth to him. It may be that Saul's illness has unnerved him. He never offered to fight the giant, and when he sees the youth, who, with no armor or weapon save a sling, is ready to fight for Israel, he tries to dissuade him; and David said unto Saul: "Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock; and I went out after him, and smote him, and slew him. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God. The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and the Lord be with thee."

David must have changed since the time when, a mere boy, he played on the harp for Saul. He was now about twenty years of age, and large enough to put on Saul's armor; but he quickly took it off, saying he had not proved it. "Out there he passes, to the open hill slope, in his shepherd tunic; his rude wallet by his side, a shepherd's staff, and a goat's-hair sling in his hand. Rash as he seemed, it was only in appearance. Like a Benjamite, he could hurl a stone to a hair-breadth, and never miss. Long practice on the hills, where his sling was constantly required in driving or guiding his flocks, had made him perfect in its use."

The Philistine champion had turned back, thinking none would fight him, when he stops, for the shout of the Israelites is one of triumph, not of fear. He looks about, and at first does not notice the slight youth; but when he sees that that boy—that unarmed boy—is advancing toward him, he flies into a perfect rage. "Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves!" he cries. "Come to me, and I will give thy flesh to the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field!" David stands for one moment, and speaks in clear tones, that can be heard far over the hillside: "Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied." Then he runs forward, that he may sling a stone with the greater force, full at the giant. Striking the forehead with terrible force, it stuns the Philistine instantly, so that he falls to the ground; and in another moment David is standing on the huge body, and, using the giant's own sword, cuts off his head.

The Philistines take the death of their champion as an omen of defeat, and fly in dismay; while the Israelites, their faith and courage rekindled, follow their enemy with fierce slaughter for nearly twenty-five miles.

Saul seems delighted with David's courage, and insists on his living with him, allowing him a place at his table. It is now that David first meets Jonathan, Saul's eldest son, and the two young men love each other from the first with a love that knows no jealousy or change. They both trust in God, and are serving him, and that knits their hearts to each other. Very soon Jonathan shows his love in true Eastern fashion by taking off his own war cloak, and putting it on David, arming him with his own sword and bow, and clasping round him his beautiful girdle. Saul was pleased at first with the friendship between the two young men, and set David over the men of war. But when others began to praise the youthful champion of the Israelites, and even to put his name before the king's in their songs, Saul was angry, and his old fits of brooding and distrust came back. "And he said, They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands: and what can he have more but the kingdom? And Saul eyed David from that day and forward."

The old sickness threatening to return, David once more played for Saul; but the music, instead of quieting him, seemed to work him into a frenzy, for he suddenly threw his javelin at the player, and, but for his moving quickly aside, would have killed him.





DAVID MOURNING OVER ABSALOM.

THE HOLY CITY.

I CHRONICLES XVI.

“ Jerusalem, Jerusalem,
Chief in thy Prince’s diadem !
Famous in story, and in song,
While countless ages rolled along ;
Of mighty name, of lofty line,
Prophets and priests and kings were thine ;
In dust thou long hast cradled them ;
Their boast, their home, Jerusalem.”—H. W. J.

DAVID did not succeed Saul at once as king of Israel; for seven years and a half he reigned over the tribe of Judah only, and Ishbosheth, Saul’s only living son, reigned as king over the other tribes. But Ishbosheth was a very weak, incapable king, and had not been appointed by God. The people were gradually learning to wish for David; and at last, Ishbosheth having been assassinated by two of his enemies, David was chosen king by all Israel, and anointed again amidst great rejoicings. He was thirty-eight years old when, after years of trial, he became ruler of the nation. His first act was to try to buy Jebus from the band of Canaanites who had held it for centuries. But the Jebusites refused to sell the city, and boasted that the place was so strong—built on twin hills, and cut off by deep valleys from the country round—that the lame and blind could keep the Israelites out. David immediately issued a proclamation, promising a great reward to the general who conquered the city; and a storming party, under Joab, clambered up the precipices and gained possession. The Jebusites were allowed to remain on the eastern hill, Mount Moriah; while Zion, the western hill, became the city of David, Jerusalem—“the Place of Peace.” The whole nation learned to love this city; and even now, in every synagogue over the world, prayers still go up to God, asking that Jehovah will in mercy return to Jerusalem.

A beautiful palace, worthy of a king, was begun at once on Mount Zion, Hiram, king of Tyre, sending workmen and cedars for the building. The Philistines soon attacked the king; but, shutting himself within his fortified city, he waited till his enemies were under its very walls, in the "Valley of Giants," and then attacked them so furiously that they fled to the sea-plains in confusion, leaving their idols on the field.

Again the Philistines made a second attempt, by the same pass, but the Israelites crept around them and stole upon them, through a wood of mulberry trees. David and his host firmly believed that the murmur of the leaves was the footfall of Jehovah marching before them, to smite their enemies; with such faith the victory was easy, and the Philistines were, before long, so far subdued that David exacted tribute from them.

But the king's principal desire in choosing Jerusalem as his city was to make it a Holy City; and, to do this, he longed to bring the ark—that ark which had been neglected all through Saul's reign—to Jerusalem. Having prepared a beautiful tabernacle (the old tabernacle still remained at Gibeon), he summoned all the tribes to attend the removal of the ark from Kirjath-jearim. All Israel talked of the great event: "We heard men say at Ephrath," in the south of the land, "and we found them repeat it in the woody Lebanon: Let us go into His tabernacle, let us worship at His footstool." The king could not rest till he had found a habitation for the God of Jacob. Men came to the festival from even two hundred and fifty miles away.

The ark was placed on a new cart, drawn by oxen, which showed how the people had forgotten the law of Moses: that law required that the ark should be carried by its poles, by consecrated Levites. The ark left the house of Abinadab, on the hill of Kirjath-jearim, one of his sons, Uzzah, going beside it, and the other, Ahio, going in front. As it moved down the hill the great multitude joined in the procession; bands of singers sang David's psalms, with musicians playing on large and small harps, tambourines, castanets, clarions, and cymbals, David, the king, leading them all. But, passing a spot known as the threshing-floor of Nachon, the oxen stumbled, and Uzzah, afraid the ark would fall, took hold of it. He sank dead at its side—struck, it is thought, by lightning. David and the people were so dismayed at this that the ark was left in the house of a Levite, Obed-edom.

Three months passed by; and again David resolved to bring the ark to Jerusalem. But this time every rule was observed; the ark was carried on its staves by Levites, and none but they were permitted to come near it. The chief men of all Israel were summoned, and nearly one thousand of the most eminent priests and Levites, with the flower of the army and its most famous leaders, were appointed to take part in the procession. The sacred relic, borne on the shoulders of chosen men, at last moved forward, amidst the shouts of assembled thousands repeating the chants of the wilderness life—nearly five hundred years before—"Let God arise, and let his enemies be scattered." "Arise, O Lord, into thy rest: thou, and the ark of thy strength." After advancing six paces, a pause was made while bullocks and rams were sacrificed. Then the vast procession once more moved on, amidst loud flourishes of trumpets, blown by mighty warriors, and the anthems of the choirs. The two high-priests—Zadok from Gibeon, and Abiathar from the palace of David—followed in their gorgeous robes; and behind them came long companies of turbaned priests and Levites in spotless white; next came the great captains; next the dignitaries of the land, the princes of Judah and Benjamin, and those of Zebulon and Naphtali.

The ark advanced like the chariot of a great conqueror, ascending the sacred hill in triumph to Jerusalem. The long-drawn peal of the trumpets echoed among the hills around; the shout, as of a victorious host, rang through the valleys; the entrance of the ark into the gates appeared almost like the entrance of Jehovah himself. The procession approached the ramparts amidst chants of priests and Levites, proclaiming the glory of Him who was drawing nigh, and the purity required from all who ascend into his holy hill; then, as if addressing the warders on the walls, a chorus demanded that the gates be thrown open:

"Lift up your heads, O ye gates;
Be ye lift up, ye ancient doors;
That the King of Glory may enter in."

But the warders, hesitating, answered with responding chant:

"Who is this King of Glory?"

Then came, in triumphant chords, the reply:

"Jehovah, strong and mighty;
Jehovah, mighty in battle."

Then, as the gates were thrown wide, both choirs united in a grand chorus, singing as the procession swept through:

“Lift up your heads, O ye gates,
Lift them up, ye ancient doors:
And the King of Glory shall come in.
Who is this King of Glory?
Jehovah of Hosts;
He is the King of Glory.”

Renewed sacrifices were offered as the ark entered the tent prepared for it, and a magnificent psalm sung (1 Chron. xvi. 8-36), composed by David for the occasion. David then dismissed the multitude with his benediction, and the day closed with great festivities.

Many wars took place with the enemies of Israel during David's reign, but the saddest of all was the civil war, brought about by his son Absalom. The story of this war will be given in the next chapter. The picture here given represents David as he wept for Absalom. He forgot his son's disobedience and deceit the moment he was dead, and could only sob: "O my son Absalom! my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!"





THE DEATH OF ABSALOM.

A REBELLIOUS SON.

2 SAMUEL XVIII.

WE must not forget, in reading the Bible, that the Old Testament heroes lived in very different times from ours. What we regard as wicked and coarse, was then thought necessary and right. For instance, David, a man after God's own heart, was still so much a man after the pattern of his age that he showed no mercy to prisoners of war. "He sawed them with saws; cut them with iron cutting-instruments," etc. It was not till Christ came that even believers in God learned to be merciful to their enemies. So, too, David had many wives, and did not see any wrong in it; but these marriages brought him much trouble, for the children of the different wives were constantly quarrelling. Absalom, the second son, killed his elder brother, Amnon; and, though David punished him by exile, he was at last forgiven and allowed to return to Jerusalem.

Absalom was not at all like his father, except in his beauty; he was mean and selfish; but "in all Israel there was none to be praised for his beauty like him." His hair was so admired that what was cut each year was weighed.

Shortly after Absalom had been allowed to return to Jerusalem, David ordered a census to be taken of the people, to see how many he could call to arms. This was known to be an act that God did not approve, and was hateful to all the nation; but David insisted on it, and, after ten months, the census was nearly complete, when the Lord sent Gad, a prophet, to tell David that he might choose one of three punishments for his sin: three years of famine, three months' flight before invaders, or three days of pestilence—which would he choose? David penitently gave answer: "Let us now fall into the hands of Jehovah, for his mercies are great, and let us not fall into the hands of man." So the plague followed. In three days seventy thousand persons died, and an angel was seen on the top of Mount Moriah, the hill just outside of Jerusalem, his hand stretched out to destroy the city. In answer to David's prayer, before Jerusalem was struck the

plague was stayed, and in memory of this mercy the spot on Mount Moriah was consecrated, and there, in Solomon's time, the temple was erected.

But the nation was estranged from David by the census, and Absalom made the most of the feeling. Whispers sprang up here and there about a new and younger king. They had done well in taking David for Saul—why not now take Absalom for David? The tribe of Judah had never liked David removing the capital from Hebron to Jerusalem. The great tribe of Ephraim, too, did not feel content since the king was of Judah. Absalom dazzled the people by his beauty and royal state. David had been content to ride on a mule; but Absalom had horses and chariots, with running footmen. On the other hand, all bowed low to the king; but Absalom pretended to be more friendly, and would embrace and kiss the people. It was the custom of the king to sit in the gate on certain days, and hear all appeals that were made to him; but it was natural that some were overlooked or delayed, and those who were decided against were vexed. Absalom met all such with hints that if *he* were judge—if *he* had power, things would be different! And so he gradually won the hearts of the people, till, under the pretence of having made a vow to offer sacrifices on Hebron, he went with a train of two hundred of the best citizens of Jerusalem to Hebron. Ahitophel, who had been David's friend and best counsellor, was won over, and went with Absalom. Messengers were sent all over the country with the word that, at the sound of signal trumpets, Absalom was to be proclaimed king; and at last, at the feast in Hebron, the signal trumpets were sounded, and the air rang with shouts of, "God save king Absalom."

Word was soon brought to David of the rebellion, and that numbers from all the tribes were hastening to Hebron to do homage to Absalom. That his dearly loved son, and his people, even his own people of Judah, should seek his life, almost broke the king's heart; but in all his sorrow he thought of his beloved city, and, unwilling to risk its destruction, he left it at once. Followed by all his household, David set out, walking barefoot, as a sign of humiliation and mourning. Crowds of the citizens went with him; and his faithful six hundred followers, the Gihonites, as his old companions in the cave were called, marched as his escort. The whole population were moved to see a king who had made his people so illustrious—one who had been a hero from his youth—now, at sixty years of age, driven from his throne by his son. Zadok and Abiathar, the two high-

priests, had hurried from Jerusalem with the ark, but David, who soon regained his firm trust in God, sent them back with the ark to the tabernacle. The priests, too, could send him word of how matters went if they remained in the city. A little further on Hushai, an old friend and companion of David's, joined him, but he was sent back to Jerusalem to defeat, if possible, the counsel of Ahitophel.

So, slowly and sadly, David and his company went on to the open plain at the fords of Jordan, where they waited to hear from Hushai.

Absalom entered Jerusalem in triumph very soon after David had left it. Ahitophel rode by his side, ready with wise counsel; and among the first to greet the new king was Hushai—even Absalom was shocked at his supposed treachery. A council was held at the palace, and Ahitophel urged Absalom to let him lead twelve thousand men at once against David, who, weak and disheartened, would be easily conquered; the people with him would run away, and only the king's blood need be shed. All approved of this—all but Hushai. He said that David and his Gibborim were fierce as a bear robbed of her cubs, and that the king was too good a warrior to be surprised. He advised Absalom to call out all Israel from Dan to Beersheba, and that he (Absalom) should head them in person. Absalom thought Hushai's counsel the best, and agreed to it, and two sons of the priests, quick runners, were at once sent to carry the good news to David. For, if Absalom took time to raise an army, David could raise one too!

Before night David and his people had crossed the Jordan, where the Eastern tribes rallied round him. Absalom lost his real counsellor; for Ahitophel, angry at Hushai's advice being taken, and sure that the rebellion would not succeed, went to his house at Gilo and hanged himself.

Three months went by; David was at Mahanaim, where Saul's son, Ishbosheth, had reigned for seven years. It was during this time of waiting that David wrote the forty-first, fifty-fifth, sixty-fifth, and one hundred and ninth psalms, referring to Ahitophel, his "own familiar friend, whom he had trusted, and who ate of his bread," but had now "lifted up his heel" against him; and to this time are attributed the third, fourth, and twenty-third psalms.

At last the battle that was to crush the rebellion was fought in the Wood of Ephraim. "The Light of Israel," as David was fondly called by his people, could not be risked in the battle, and he waited within the city walls with a reserve corps, to succor the rest if necessary. As the troops marched to battle,

one command was repeated again and again—"Absalom was to be spared and treated gently if he should fall into their hands."

Absalom's army was much the larger of the two, and the hand-to-hand struggle was very bloody. But the victory was with the king. Twenty thousand of the prince's forces lay dead, and the rest fled in panic. The pursuit through the thickets and marshes of the woods was terrible for the fugitives. Absalom himself, hurrying through the tangled paths of the forest, was caught by his long hair in a branch of a great oak tree and held fast, while his mule went on, leaving him hanging in the air. Joab, hearing of his plight, hastened to the spot, and caring nothing for David's command—for he knew it was a weak and foolish one—he thrust three javelins in the prince and killed him. A trumpet-call to stop pursuing the fugitives then sounded; Absalom's dead body was flung into a hole in the ground, and every one passing flung stones on it as a sign of bitter anger at so undutiful a son. Absalom had raised a pillar in his own honor in the "King's Vale," about a quarter of a mile from Jerusalem; but his wickedness left him a grave marked only by the heap of stones, to which passers-by added for a long time afterward.

The news of the death of his son made David for a time forget all else; but, roused at last by Joab's remonstrances, he took his seat in the gate and rewarded his soldiers by words of praise.

David, the hearts of the nation once more his, returned to Jerusalem, where he busied himself in making every preparation that he could for the great temple which Solomon, his young son, was to build. Before his death, to make sure of Solomon's succession, that prince was solemnly anointed and proclaimed king, and even a second time, when the tribes had sent their elders and chiefs to Jerusalem, Solomon was again anointed, and warned that all his glory and safety depended on his living a godly life. At last, at seventy years of age, having reigned nearly forty years, David died, and was buried in the "City of David." Only the kings were allowed burial within the city walls; and probably beneath the heap of ruins that bury the ancient Jerusalem the ashes of David still rest in their rock-hewn sepulchre.



THE JUDGMENT OF SOLOMON.

SOLOMON THE MAGNIFICENT.

I KINGS VIII.

“ Seated upon a throne, superb and high,
Of ivory, with finest gold inlaid,
Crowned with a blaze of jewels, and arrayed
In robes magnificent of Tyrian dye,
The king, ‘ in all his glory,’ strikes the eye
With wonder, from amidst luxuriant shade
Of purple canopy, and proud parade
Of couchant lions keeping watch hard by.
But all that royal pomp the palm must yield
To roses wild and lilies of the field,
In texture rare and beauty of array
Which bloom and perish in a single day.
Lord, if the flowers are decked in robes so fair,
What clothing shall thy saints in glory wear ? ”

How different Solomon’s boyhood and early youth had been from his father’s. He knew nothing of tending sheep, or facing lions and bears! He was reared in a palace, and was used to royal state and luxury from his cradle. He was a boy of great talent; one who enjoyed study and delighted in learning. His father’s earnest piety had its effect upon him too; for certainly, his desires and aims, when he first became king, were pure and high.

Soon after David’s death Solomon made a kind of pilgrimage, or royal progress, to Gibcon, where the old tabernacle still stood. His chief officers and heads of the different tribes were summoned to accompany him, and a feast, which lasted many days, as thousands of sacrifices were offered, took place. There, in the night, God appeared to Solomon and asked him what he should give him. The young king’s answer—he was but twenty years of age—showed right desires and pleased the Almighty: “ For Thou hast made me king over a people like the

dust of the earth in multitude. Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people."

Since Solomon did not ask for riches and a long life, God promised them in addition to such wisdom as had never been before, nor should be again.

The first test of his wisdom shows what despotic power the young king exercised. Two women came before him, both claiming the same child. No one could decide as to the truth; but the king said: "Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one, and half to the other." The king was so unquestionably obeyed that both women expected to see the child divided at once. The true mother, in an agony of horror that her baby should suffer so, flung herself before the officer, declaring that she would give up the child, while the false woman stood quietly by awaiting the execution of the sentence. Then the king, pointing to the true mother, said: "Give her the living child, and in no wise slay it; for she is the mother thereof."

One of Solomon's first acts was to set about the building of that temple so dear to his father's heart. Hiram, king of Tyre, gave the cedars and cypress wood for the building, only asking that the barley, wheat, oil, and wine which were needed for the army of laborers should be provided by Solomon. The king drafted thirty thousand men from among the Canaanites and Gibeonites to work with Hiram's men. They served in turn, ten thousand men working for one month, and then staying at home for two months. The stones for the temple were quarried out of the great hills of Mount Zion and Mount Moriah. Great blocks were cut and bevelled ready for use before they were brought to the temple site. The large excavations are still to be seen in the hills, some of them seven hundred feet long, and in some places quite as broad. One large monolith, which split as it was being removed, still lies where it was left in Solomon's day. The great wall, which was necessary to make the hill level enough, referred to in the chapter headed "The First Visit to His Father's House," was built by Solomon, and within this wall were long rows of arches and lofty rooms. There was no spring in the hill, and so great cisterns or reservoirs had to be hewn out. These cisterns held in all over ten million gallons of water; one alone, called the "Great Sea," held three million gallons.

Three years were spent in preparation, and then, in strange quietness (for

every stone and plank was fitted to its place), the temple rose. The plan of Solomon's temple was the same as that of Herod's, but the interior was even more beautiful. It was lined with cedar, on which was carved figures of palm-trees, flowers, and cherubim, and these were overlaid with gold and studded with precious stones. The vestibule, in front of the Holy Place, rested on two great pillars of brass. The capitals of these pillars had one hundred bronze pomegranates hanging about them, which swayed in the breeze. Along the two sides and back of the temple three-storied buildings for the Levites and priests were built, but they did not touch the walls of the Holy of Holies. The courts were not so large as in the time of Herod the Great, indeed there was no Court of the Gentiles, but trees grew in the open spaces—the dark cedar, palm, and olive.

The building of this temple occupied just eight and a half years; but, as the Feast of Tabernacles was past, Solomon waited nearly a year till it should occur again before dedicating the house of the Lord. The first part of the programme was the bringing of the old tabernacle of the wilderness from Gibeon; and the tabernacle which David had raised on Mount Zion was also taken down, and all were stored away in the store-chambers of the temple building. The ark only entered the new temple; and as a new covering, with larger and more beautiful cherubim, had been made for it, the old cover was lifted off and the inside seen for the first, and perhaps the last, time since the days of Moses. The pot of manna, Aaron's rod, and his golden censer, which had all been placed within, were gone—perhaps lost when the ark was with the Philistines; only the two tables on which God had written the commandments remained. Then, the new cover placed upon it, the ark was set up on a rough piece of the rock of Mount Moriah which had been left in the Holy of Holies, and where it remained until the destruction of the temple. The old altar of incense and table of shewbread were placed in the Holy Place. Solomon had his own private entrance from his palace to the temple by a magnificent staircase of sandal-wood, and on the day of consecration he stood on a platform of polished brass, five hundred of his guards attending him. Every space was crowded on the great day of consecration. A great choir, with one hundred and twenty priests bearing sacred trumpets, were at the east side of the great altar, in the court of the priests. The court officers, in the richest robes, stood near the king, and then as the choir chanted and the

people joined in the refrain, "for he is good, for his mercy endureth forever," all saw a thick darkness settle down upon and fill the temple. This darkness was so intense that the priests could not minister, and many, no doubt, were terrified. But Solomon, turning to the people, said: "The Lord said that he would dwell in the thick darkness," and solemnly blessed the people. After the blessing the king knelt beside the great altar and poured out his heart in one of the most beautiful prayers of which we have record, asking that God would hear either the nation or single persons who at any time or in any place prayed toward the temple. Open your Bible at the eighth chapter of the First Book of Kings and read this beautiful prayer.

But Solomon's love of grandeur and pomp led him into great extravagance and despotism. To imitate the heathen kings he married numberless wives, many of them heathen princesses, who brought their idolatrous customs to the very gates of the sacred temple.

As soon as the temple was finished, thirteen years were spent in building a series of beautiful palaces for Solomon and his wives. In one of these, "The Tower of the House of David," one thousand golden bucklers hung. In the great judgment-hall stood the famous throne, made of ivory, inlaid with pure gold. On each of its six steps were carved two lions, and a lion stood also on each arm of the throne. Added to these palaces and towers, beautiful gardens were made to blossom on the bare Judean hills. One was just under the walls of the city, but the largest was nearly seven miles south of Jerusalem. Here his court could wander among beds of spices, and gather lilies, or sit under great trees.





SOLOMON.

SOLOMON, THE WISE.

I KINGS XI.

ONE need only read what Josephus, the great historian of the Jews, tells us about Solomon to see that the common people must have grown rather tired of such a magnificent king. Magnificence always costs the poor people of a nation a great deal more than it does the rich.

The cost of merely feeding Solomon's household—fourteen thousand people were fed at his tables!—was so great that the whole country was very heavily taxed for this alone. The land was divided into twelve districts, each under an officer, and each officer provided for the royal household for one month of the year. The people gave their labor gladly when building the "House of the Lord," but when the poor were forced to work as hard as slaves to build the king's palaces, and when, to pay a debt he owed to Hiram, king of Tyre, Solomon gave away twenty towns in Galilee, the people murmured loudly and the prophets spoke warning words.

But before we go into the story of Solomon's later days, let us try to picture him in his prime as he rode out in the afternoon to his beautiful gardens outside Jerusalem. "The king—always clothed in pure white—with garments smelling of myrrh, aloes, and cassia, rode in a magnificent chariot drawn by horses of matchless speed and beauty, and attended by an escort of mounted archers, all young men of royal stature and beautiful features, who were dressed in robes of Tyrian purple, with glittering arms. Their long black hair, shining with gold-dust sprinkled in it each day, floated in the wind as they swept on."

Solomon's love for study and his delight in wisdom was of the greatest benefit to his people. A number of men, called "The Wise," gathered about him, who wrote songs and proverbs, and learning spread very generally among the people. The Book of Proverbs is a sample of the kind of sayings the people delighted in. This book was not written by Solomon alone, and, as we know he

wrote three thousand proverbs and one thousand and five songs, while only two of the psalms bear his name, a great deal of the writings both of the king and The Wise are lost. In Solomon's reign the Books of Samuel were finished and put in their present form. A life of David, which is lost, was written by the prophets Nathan and Gad, and from this king's reign we find regular chronicles made of the affairs of the kingdom by a State officer.

But, though so prosperous and magnificent, the kingdom was, as I began to tell you, discontented. Solomon's extravagance and despotism bore hard on the people, and his worship of idols angered God. Either by a prophet or a dream, Solomon was told that the kingdom would be taken from his son and given to one of his servants. Judah only would be left—not for his sake, but because of David, his father. Before long Solomon saw a man, one whom he had himself advanced and honored, assuming royal state, and the king suspected who was to succeed him. "Solomon sought therefore to kill Jeroboam, and Jeroboam arose and fled into Egypt, . . . and was in Egypt until the death of Solomon."

This Jeroboam was the son of a widow. He was a bright, active young man; and, as he worked very well in making the new fortifications around Jerusalem, Solomon made him superintendent of the new men from the northern tribes who were working on the walls. He was a very kind master, and very proud of his own tribe of Ephraim. You must always remember that the tribe of Ephraim never forgave the choosing of a city in the tribe of Benjamin for the capital. As Jeroboam was travelling from Jerusalem to Ephraim, the prophet Ahijah of Shiloh suddenly stopped him. They were quite alone, and, to his surprise, the prophet seized Jeroboam's new mantle and tore it into twelve pieces. "And he said to Jeroboam, Take thee ten pieces; for thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee." The prophet warned the future king that God would only bless him if he served Him. But Jeroboam thought little of Who it was that promised him the kingdom—the royal power and greatness was all he cared for. He at once began to assume great state, which, as we have seen, got him into trouble. But, while in Egypt, you may be sure Jeroboam did not let his people forget him. No doubt many knew of the prophet's words, and when Solomon died Jeroboam was soon back among the Israelites.

Rehoboam, who was forty-one years of age at the time of Solomon's death,

seems to have succeeded very quietly to the kingdom. He took the crown as a matter of course; not calling together the elders of Israel, as David had done both when crowned himself and when he anointed Solomon. But, after a year of undisputed reign, Rehoboam was summoned to Shechem to meet the elders of the ten northern tribes. "Thy father," said the elders, "oppressed us with his exactions, and with the huge cost of his royal establishments. Make this grievous service and heavy yoke lighter, and we will serve thee."

"We *will* serve thee"—when he never dreamed that they dared refuse! Rehoboam in his surprise knew not what to say, but demanded three days to decide as to his answer. He consulted first the old men who had been his father's counsellors, and they advised him to yield to the people in a degree, at least, and so win their hearts. But, like a great many people, Rehoboam kept on asking advice till he heard the kind that suited him! So he asked the young men, and they treated the whole thing as a case of naughty children. How dared the people oppose the king? Just tell them that he would make the burdens heavier instead of lighter; that, instead of the taskmasters using common whips, they should use knotted scourges.

No sooner was Rehoboam's answer given than the great war-cry was raised, "To thy tents, O Israel!" while added to it, like ominous thunder, the words came: "Now, David, see to thine own house."

Rehoboam, frightened at the insurrection, sent a messenger with offers of reprieve; but, unfortunately, the messenger, Adoniram, was hated as one of the chief taskmasters. A shower of stones greeted him, and, in a few moments, he lay dying. The king, afraid of his own life, mounted his chariot and fled to Jerusalem; and at once, there at Shechem, the ten tribes elected Jeroboam as their king.

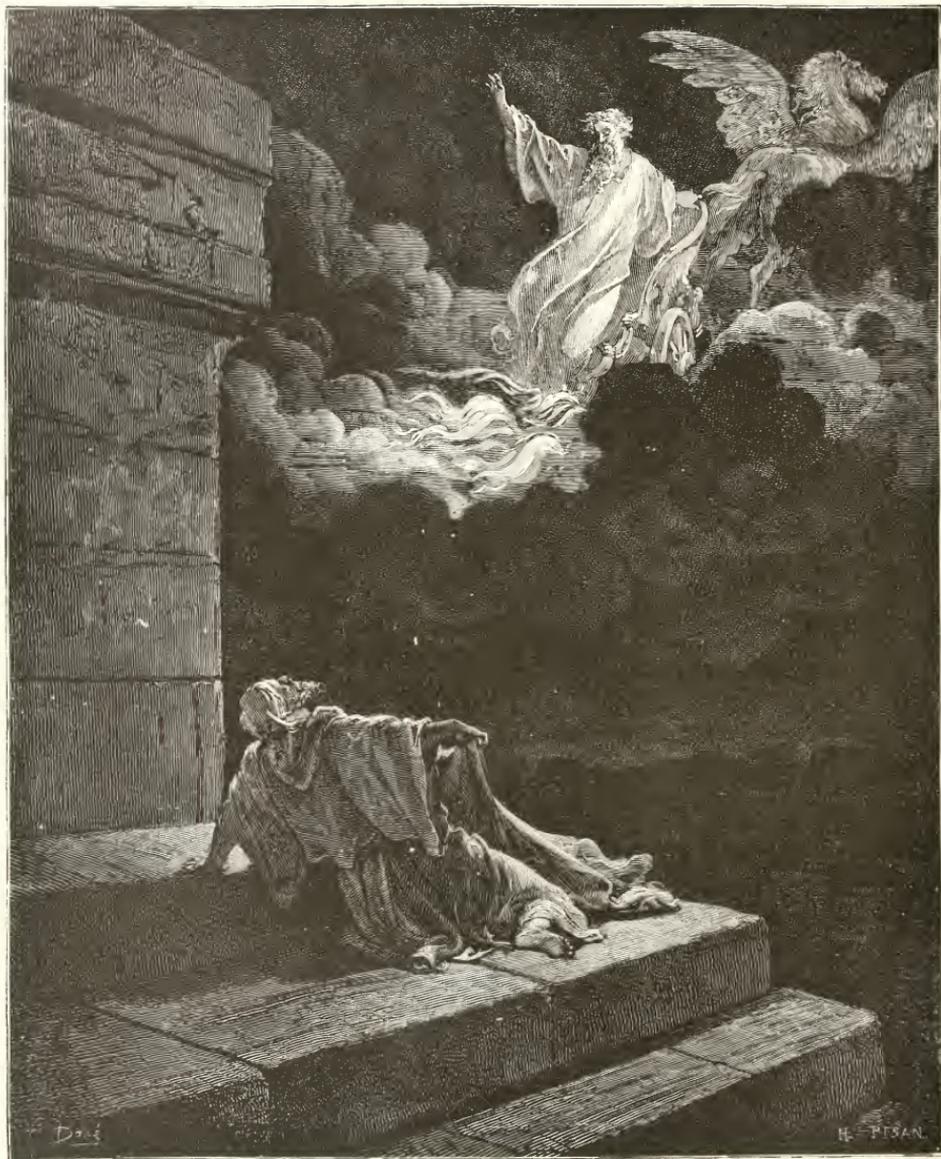
Yet, though left with only the tribe of Judah and a part of Simeon and Benjamin, so that the larger tribes formed the kingdom of Israel, while Rehoboam was only king of Judah, the kingdom of Judah had the greatest advantages. They were more shut in from idolatrous nations. They had the sacred temple standing in the holy city—a constant reminder of the worship of God. The Levites and priests soon left Israel and flocked to Judah, and the Levites were the *teachers* of the people. Besides, and above all, they had the royal line of David. One king might be, as was Rehoboam, bad and idolatrous, but soon

would come an Asa or a Jehoshaphat to lead the people back to the right way. The kingdom of Israel, on the other hand, was ruled by first one family and then another—though prophets struggled all along to lead the different kings to do rightly. If a prophet denounced a king in Israel, it was his doom—another king was chosen by the people, or some strong officer seized the kingdom for himself. Different dynasties reigned. Very few kings inherited the throne from any further back than their father. Jeroboam, in his fear lest his people, by going to Jerusalem to worship, would be won back to Rehoboam, made two golden calves, and built two temples, one at Dan in the north, and the other at Bethel in the south. They were still to worship God, he said, but the calves were to *represent* Him. This opened the land to all idolatrous customs, till, at last, after different prophets remonstrating against the sin through centuries, Hosea cried out in despair: "Ephraim is joined to his idols—let him alone."

Jeroboam's name is never once mentioned in the Bible without adding the awful sentence, "who made Israel to sin." His son reigned but two years, and then was murdered by his general, Baasha, who was proclaimed king.

When the ten tribes revolted, they first made Shechem their capital; but, the Shechemites turning against Jeroboam, he removed to Penuel for a short time, and then decided on Tirzah—about six miles east of Samaria—for his capital. This beautiful situation, among rich green hills, was strongly fortified by the king. A city was built here, with a royal palace and other buildings and mansions, which made it a worthy rival to Jerusalem. It remained the chief city of the kingdom of Israel till the fifth king after Jeroboam, Omri, built Samaria and made it the capital.





ELIJAH'S ASCENT IN A CHARIOT OF FIRE.

THE PROPHET OF THE LORD.

2 KINGS II.

“IF THE LORD BE GOD, SERVE HIM.”

EIGHTY-FIVE years passed by—Ahab, the son of Omri, reigned in Israel. Never, since the time of Solomon, had the country been more prosperous. Omri, the father of Ahab, was a wise man, as worldly people say; a fool in the eyes of God, who seeth not as man seeth. Omri saw that Phœnicia, the country lying on the west, with its capital, Tyre, was a country with which it was “wise” to be friends. No matter that the Phœnicians were the most debased idolaters the world has ever known—sacrificing their children, and learning impurity and vileness from their religion. Had any harm come to Tyre from its religion? Was not its population the richest in the world? If only he could make his people rich and prosperous, that was all he cared for. So Omri made friends with Ethbaal, the king of Phœnicia, and even married his son Ahab to Jezebel, the king’s daughter, a princess of Tyre. To be sure, Solomon had married heathen wives; but Solomon was not so ruled by any wife as Ahab—who was a weak, pleasure-loving king—was ruled by Jezebel. Then, to please his new friend, Omri introduced idolatry by special statutes into the kingdom. The prophets were treated as public enemies; even the calf-worship was no longer upheld by the king. The worship of Jehovah had kept Israel and Tyre apart, *and it was to be given up.*

And, as I said, what the king wished for he obtained. Ahab, who began to reign about B.C. 900, succeeded to a rich and luxurious kingdom. Samaria, with its beautiful palaces, was too crowded with houses to suit Ahab, and so he built a new palace at Jezreel, in the plain of Esdraclon, where, among rich gardens, he could dwell in splendor and magnificent ease. Solomon had a throne of ivory, but Ahab had a palace almost made of ivory, and all the nobles had houses lavishly decorated with ivory, and with ivory chairs and couches. Influenced by

his wife's strong will, who was a perfect fanatic for the religion of her country, Phœnician idolatry was the only tolerated religion in all Israel. A vast temple was built in Samaria, where four hundred and fifty priests ministered. In Jezreel four hundred priests ministered in a temple to Asherah, a female deity, in whose worship horrible and disgusting ceremonies were performed. The altars of God were everywhere overthrown, and in all Israel only seven thousand of the people were left who had not bowed the knee to Baal. Jezebel is the first religious persecutor known in history. Those who refused to worship her gods were driven into the deserts or the mountains, with no covering but the skins of goats, no shelter but the dark caverns.

For this band of faithful ones some strong leader was needed, so Elijah appeared. We know nothing of him except that he was from Gilead, where the people were very like Arabs—half-civilized, fierce shepherds. Tradition says he was tall and thin; his hair hung long and thick down his back, for he was a Nazarite. His dress was a simple tunic, held round him by a belt of hide, which he tightened when he wished to run a long distance. Over this he wore a mantle or cape of sheepskin or camel's-hair, which, from his time, became one of the marks of a prophet.

The first thing we know of this man is his stopping Ahab's chariot in some lonely spot, and saying to the wicked king: "As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew or rain these years, but according to my word."

But Jezebel's influence soon made Ahab forget the warning, and the persecution of the worshippers of Jehovah went on. Presently people began to wonder why it did not rain. The seed died in the ground; the heavens became brass, and the ground iron. Elijah was fed, first by ravens at the brook Cherith, and afterward hid from Jezebel in her own father's dominions. A widow of Jezebel's own religion, but a very different kind of woman, kept him for two years in her own house. During this time the widow's son died and was restored to life by Elijah. He was—tradition says, first the prophet's servant, and afterward a prophet himself—Jonah, the son of Amittai.

The drought kept on, till at last even the horses and mules in the royal stables were starving. In despair Ahab starts off on one road, and Obadiah, the chamberlain of the palace, on another, to see if a little grass could not be found.

Suddenly a tall figure stands before Obadiah, who falls on his face in fear. He is told to go to the king with a message of but two words; but they are awful words for him to take—"Behold—Elijah." Ahab would expect Obadiah to kill the prophet at once; and then, too, who dare summon the king. What if Elijah disappear as suddenly as he came—Ahab will certainly kill Obadiah. But Elijah assures him that he will be found just where he leaves him; and at last Ahab is summoned, and comes.

The king says, angrily, "Art thou there, O troubler of Israel?" But he soon trembles before Elijah's stern reproof, and, king as he is, obeys the prophet. He is commanded to summon the prophets of Baal and Asherah to a great meeting at Mount Carmel. This was a special resting-place of Elijah's, and already a holy place, for an altar of the Lord was there, which Jezebel had overthrown. The long drought had dried even this beautiful mountain; but in fruitful years the "excellency of Carmel" was a type of perfect beauty.

"On the appointed day the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal assembled at the spot named. Close beneath the rocks, under the shade of ancient olive-trees, is a well which is said never to fail; and this, even after the long drought, still held sufficient water to supply Elijah with as much as he required. Round this were ranged on one side the king and the people, with the prophets of Baal in their white robes and peaked turbans; on the other, with his single attendant, stood the solitary prophet. It was early morning, when Baal was worshipped as the rising sun. Calling to the people, Elijah said, 'How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.'

The prophet then proposed that each religion should be tested. Let each one build an altar, lay wood upon it, but put no fire under—the God that answers by fire is the true God. This seemed very fair, for Baal was particularly the god of fire. All day long the prophets of Baal cry out, "Ha, Baal, anenu!" (O Baal, hear us), and in their frenzy gash their flesh. After mid-day Elijah mocks them, saying, "Cry aloud; for he is a god: either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked." At last, just as the sun is setting, and the time of the evening sacrifice draws near, Elijah repairs the altar of the Lord, making a large trench about it, and bids the people pour water over the wood and altar till the trench is

filled. Then, advancing with calm dignity, he cries aloud in the evening air, "Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that *Thou* art God in Israel, and I thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O Jehovah, hear me; that this people may know that thou, Jehovah, art God, and that what happens has been appointed by thee, to turn their hearts back again to thyself."

"Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt-sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces, and they said, The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God."

There is not space to tell you the rest of the story of the prophet's life. No part of it was more wonderful than its close. Elijah, like Enoch, never tasted of death. Having chosen Elisha as his successor, they went together to the eastern side of the Jordan, and there Elijah asked his friend what parting gift he desired. Elisha eagerly answered, "I pray thee let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me."

Elijah told him he had asked a hard thing, but if he saw him as they were parted, he might know he was to have his wish. Then, suddenly, as they were talking, a chariot of fire and horses of fire parted them, and Elijah was caught up in a whirlwind to heaven.

Elisha saw it, and cried, "My father, my father! the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!"





ESTHER CONFOUNDING HAMAN.

THE COURAGEOUS QUEEN.

BOOK OF ESTHER.

ONE of the favorite books of the Bible is the Book of Esther. Its heroine was an orphan Jewess, who had been adopted by her childless uncle, Mordecai. She was a very beautiful girl, and probably not particularly Jewish-looking, as the king did not know she belonged to that people till some years after he had chosen her for his queen. Ahasuerus is thought to have been the Persian king Xerxes. The kings in his time had given up residing at Babylon, except in the very coldest seasons, and spent most of the year at Susa or Shushan. Here a beautiful palace had been built; and in this palace, at a great feast which Ahasuerus gave to his nobles, the queen, Vashti, was commanded to unveil her face, that all might see her beauty. It seems a little thing to us for the king to ask; but in Vashti's eyes it was a most insulting command, lowering her as we should feel lowered if we were commanded to appear in public without any outer dress on. The queen, very properly, refused, and the anxiety of the king and counselors that other women should not learn from Vashti to refuse obedience to their husbands is quite amusing. "For if this deed," they said, "shall come abroad, we'll all be having trouble with our wives! we must request you to rule the queen, that we may rule our lesser queens!" So poor Vashti was dismissed, very thankful, no doubt, that her head was spared.

It was then proposed to get together all the beautiful girls that could be found, so that the king might choose a queen. Esther, by her quiet, modest ways, won the friendship of Hegai, the chamberlain in charge of these young girls, and, indeed, the good-will of all in the palace, so there was general rejoicing when the king chose her as his queen. Mordecai had forbidden her to mention her kindred or people; and, though her uncle was employed in the palace, the people did not know that the beautiful young queen was his niece.

Going in and out of the palace, summoned to the king's councils, honored

as his friend, was a man named Haman. Every one bowed down before him—every one tried to win his favor—for he had many opportunities to advance their interests. But there was just one man that did not flatter him or fawn upon him; one man who refused to bow down before him. Mordecai, the Jew, showed by his manner that he saw through this Haman, whom all were honoring. The more firmly Mordecai refused to honor Haman, the more important did the matter become in the eyes of the king's favorite.

Mordecai discovered a plot to assassinate the king, and, giving timely warning of it, the king's life was saved. How Haman trembled lest notice should be taken of the Jew's loyalty! But the days went by, and the only notice taken of Mordecai's service was a register of what he had done in the chronicles of the realm. Haman grew more and more prosperous, and more and more angry at the one man who refused to do him honor. He hated Mordecai so that he at last resolved to kill, not him alone, but all the Jews throughout the kingdom. These Jews were comparatively little known to Ahasuerus; so, when Haman described them as "a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of thy kingdom; and their laws are diverse from all people; neither keep they the king's laws; therefore it is not for the king's profit to suffer them," and offered to pay two million dollars himself to hire soldiers to destroy them, the king thought Haman a very loyal subject, and even gave him the royal signet ring to sign a decree for the wholesale massacre of the Jews throughout the kingdom. Haman, who was superstitious, like all heathen, had cast lots to see what month would be propitious for this massacre, and the lot fell on the next to the last month of the year; so there were seven months in which some way of escape might be found.

Great was the dismay among the Jews on hearing of the decree, which was published at once in Shushan, while "posts"—men on horses over the plains, on mules in the hilly countries, and on camels or dromedaries on the hot, arid uplands—carried the decree to the farthest part of the realm. Mordecai no longer sat in the king's gate; for he laid aside his court-dress, and, clad in sackcloth, cried out to God. Esther, hearing that her uncle sat in sackcloth, sent presents of clothing to him, begging him to be cheerful, for at first the young queen did not know of the decree; but Mordecai sent a copy of it to his niece, charging her that she should go in unto the king and intercede in behalf of her people.

Esther, queen as she is, does not question that she should still obey the good, kind man who has been as a father to her; but she thinks Mordecai cannot realize what a risk she will run, and how little she actually sees of the king. "All the king's servants," she sends word to Mordecai, "and the people of the king's provinces, do know, that whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto the king into the inner court, who is not called, there is one law of his to put him to death, except such to whom the king shall hold out the golden sceptre, that he may live: but I have not been called to come in unto the king these thirty days."

But Mordecai cannot see his whole nation perish without risking something to save them; even his darling Esther had better die than not try to save her people; and he sends this message to Esther: "Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews. For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Upon this the queen, sending a request that all her people in Shushan may fast for her, declares: "I also and my maidens will fast likewise: and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law; and if I perish, I perish."

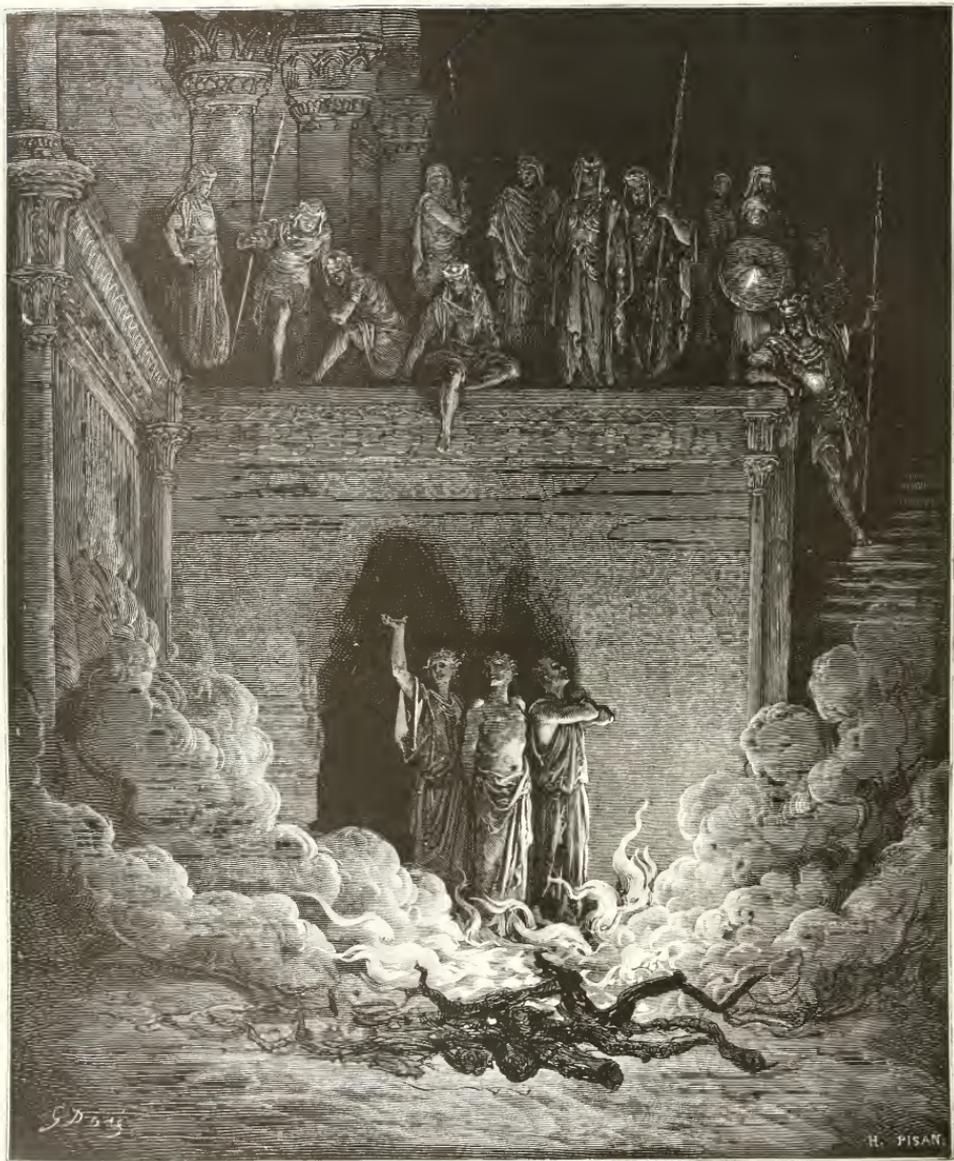
It is not an easy thing to face death. Life, no doubt, was very sweet to beautiful Esther; but, strengthened by prayer, on the third day she put on her royal apparel and went into the king's presence unbidden. Her fasting and prayer had made her face even lovelier than before. Her eyes, filled with holy resolves, looked more wondrously beautiful than on the day when the king first loved her; and so the golden sceptre is held out, and Esther is safe. With wonderful tact she invites the king and his friend Haman to a banquet, where the king again asks what favor she desires, assuring her that he will grant it, even to the half of his kingdom; but she begs that he will come again with Haman to a banquet which she will prepare on the next day, when she will make known her request.

That night the king could not sleep, and ordered the record or book of chronicles to be brought and read to him. By God's providence they read of Mordecai's discovery of the plot against the king's life. Ahasuerus asked what

honor or reward had been given to Mordecai. To his surprise he found nothing had been done. Early the next morning, as he was planning what he could do for this loyal servant, he heard Haman was in the outer court (who had come to ask permission to hang Mordecai!), and sent for him, asking him abruptly what he thought should be done for a man whom the king delighted to honor. Haman, quite sure he was the man, said: "Let the royal apparel be brought which the king useth to wear, and the horse that the king rideth upon, and the crown royal which is set upon his head: and let this apparel and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that they may array the man withal whom the king delighteth to honor, and bring him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaim before him, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honor."

Oh, how he could have bitten his own tongue out when Ahasuerus bade him do all that for *Mordecai*! He dared not refuse; and, after swallowing the bitter pill of honoring Mordecai, who had refused to honor him, he had to hurry to the queen's banquet. There, before his face, Esther told the king of his horrible cruelty; and that the Jews, whom Haman wished to kill, were her people. In vain the wretched man begged for pity; his face was covered—as to this day in Persia they cover the face of one who is to be executed—and he was hanged on the very gallows he had prepared for Mordecai. But, as we know, Persian decrees were unchangeable; so all that Ahasuerus could do for his queen's people was to send by his swiftest posts another decree that the Jews, on that thirteenth day of Adar, might "stand for their life, to destroy, to slay, and to cause to perish, all the power that would assault them." Mordecai, too, was raised to great power, and issued a decree that all Jews should keep the feast of Purim on the fourteenth and fifteenth of the month Adar in commemoration of this great deliverance.





THE FIERY FURNACE.

PASSING THROUGH FIRE.

DANIEL III.

It was not, after all, the king of Assyria who conquered the people of Judah. For one hundred years, through the reigns of bad kings like Manasseh, and good ones like Josiah, God saved them from their enemies; but at last, as they would not hearken to the prophets, he allowed Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, to conquer them. Twice this king besieged Jerusalem. The first time he carried back with him some of the nobles and princes as hostages; some years after, all but the shepherds and farmers were taken captives. These first hostages were probably well treated, and the young princes were placed in one of the royal palaces and carefully educated in all the learning of the Babylonians. Four of these boys were earnest, religious Jews, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, who resolved to serve God in the heathen palace. One of the first temptations that they had to meet was a hard one for boys. They felt it their duty to refuse the dainties and pleasant food offered them. For a Jew, meat which had been killed by any but the Levites was "unclean," and he was also forbidden to eat many kinds of food—such as pork or hares, or meat cooked in butter. So, good as the meals were, these four boys felt they must not eat them; and, to make as little trouble as possible, they ate only pulse—a kind of vegetable—and drank only water. But the steward, who was put in charge of the boys, was afraid he would be blamed if they looked poor and neglected, and so he told Daniel that he dared not let them refuse the king's meat. Daniel asked him to test them ten days, and then, if they did not improve on the plain fare, they would eat the food provided. "And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat."

What sort of a place was this Babylon, in which these boys were trying to serve God? How did it look in their eyes, used as they were to Jerusalem,

the city set on a hill, with its narrow streets and deep valleys? As they came within sight of the city, which was built on the banks of the Euphrates, with a great flat plain all about it, except on the south, where an arm of the Persian Gulf spread out like a small sea, the boys thought they saw great high hills, but, to their astonishment, they were told those were the city walls. These walls, from forty to sixty miles in circumference, were three hundred feet high, with a carriage-road on the top eighty feet wide. They were built of sun-dried bricks, and probably covered with paintings which recorded the triumphs of Chaldea. Great moats, like rivers, surrounded the walls. The boys saw the tower described in the chapter headed "Nimrod and Abraham." Perhaps they stood on its top-most story and looked down on the beautiful city, with forests and parks laid out in it, with its many-colored buildings, which were three and four stories high, and painted so brightly that they looked as if made of porcelain, with bright flowers everywhere; and, over the plain outside the walls, a great sea of cultivated fields. Perhaps they were conducted at once to the palace of the kings, which was itself a city within the city, being seven miles round. They wandered through its gardens, which, they were told, had been laid out to please a foreign princess whom the king had married, who longed to see hills instead of the flat country: so these gardens rose one above another to a height of more than seventy feet, and on these hills great forest-trees grew side by side with tender flowering shrubs. The boys wondered, no doubt, that they could have thought their sacred temple so vast, and saw how little reason they had to boast of the palaces of their kings, which had seemed so magnificent before. The brilliant costumes of the numberless court officers—the satraps, captains, chief judges, treasurers, councillors, and rulers of the different provinces—dazzled the young Jews as they saw them dashing through the wide streets in golden chariots drawn by magnificent horses. Delightful music on many instruments that they had never seen before was heard in the streets and palaces.

It was no easy thing to keep simple and pure in the midst of all this. It was only by daily prayer—a habit of prayer—that these youths kept faithful to the God of their fathers, in the midst of an idolatrous court. The king, testing them in various ways, found them "ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in his realm." This shows that they studied faithfully, as well as prayed earnestly. We will follow first the three young men whose heathen

names were Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, and reserve Daniel's story for another time. It was Daniel, though, that advanced his companions, for it was at his request that they were given positions of trust. But their very advancement was dangerous to them.

Nebuchadnezzar, who had conquered the great Assyrian kingdom, as well as Phœnicia and smaller kingdoms, determined that he would bind together all these different peoples in the worship of one god; then, too, he felt that the god Bel, or Belus, should be honored by all the world. So he had an enormous image erected on the great plain of Dura. The image was covered with gold, and could be seen from a long distance. All the rulers of every province, from near and far, were ordered to attend at the dedication of this image, and when the instruments sounded all were to bow and adore. Warning was given that if any did *not* bow down and worship the image they should be cast into the furnace. Herodotus tells us that a few centuries before the Christian era there was at Babylon an idol image made of gold, eighteen feet high, and that every stranger was obliged to worship it before he entered the city.

We do not know where Daniel was at this time. It may be that Nebuchadnezzar purposely kept him in some other part of the kingdom to save him. But his three friends, as "rulers of the province," had to attend the meeting. Were they troubled and anxious? It may be that very morning they strengthened each other with the word they had heard from the prophet: "When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." At any rate, when Nebuchadnezzar, astonished at their daring, remonstrated with them, and warned them of the penalty which must follow disobedience, they answered calmly: "O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."

In a fury at their calmness, the king commanded the furnace to be heated seven times as hot as usual; and so fierce were its fires that the mighty men who thrust the three Jews into it were burned to death in obeying the king. Gazing, no doubt, from a safe distance, the king himself looks to see the fire consume the daring adventurers. He starts back in amazement. Eagerly his

courtiers press about him. "Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?" he asks, with blanched face and trembling lips.

"True, O King," answer the counsellors.

"Lo," says the king, in a hushed, awed voice, "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 one of the sons of the gods." Then, going as near as he dared to the furnace, the king himself called loudly, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, come forth of the midst of the fire."

It may be no one else saw the angel walking with the three men, but all saw that they were unhurt; that there was not so much as the smell of fire about them. Nebuchadnezzar broke forth at once in praise of the God who delivereth his servants that trust in him and announced a decree, "That every people, nation, and language, which speak anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill; because there is no other god that can deliver after this sort."

We know nothing more of the three faithful Jews; they have long ago gone to their reward; but, surely, one of the joys of heaven will be to hear the story from their own lips, as those may who, like them, are faithful through all temptation.





BELSHAZZAR'S FEAST.

WEIGHED IN THE BALANCE.

DANIEL V.

You have read something of the wonders of Babylon, and when I tell you that almost all of the great walls and palaces were built by Nebuchadnezzar, and that, besides all this, he built about one hundred smaller towns, you will not be surprised to hear that he was proud of what he had accomplished. We know Nebuchadnezzar did do all this, because they used to stamp the name of the royal builder on every brick; and we find his name on all these buildings. But he was warned that his pride was wrong, and that he was only able to do these deeds by God's help. The way this warning came was through a dream. As you know, the people in those days valued their dreams and tried to interpret them. Daniel, like Joseph at the court of Pharaoh, was not only able to interpret a dream for Nebuchadnezzar, but told the vision itself, which the king could not recall. From that time Daniel held high positions at the court. Some years after the king had another remarkable dream. At first the regular seers and magicians of the court were called; but they failed to satisfy the king, and Daniel was sent for. When he heard the dream, for an hour he stood lost in wonder, and showed so plainly that he dreaded telling the king—whom he truly loved—the interpretation, that Nebuchadnezzar told him to have no fear, but to speak out. So Daniel told the king that his dream meant that for seven years he—the great king of Babylon—would be driven out from among men, and would eat grass with the beasts "till thou knowest that the Most High ruleth in the kingdoms of men." Then Daniel begged the king to break off from sin and oppression, and to show mercy to the poor, "if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity."

But the king did not heed the warning. About a year after that, as he walked in his palace, he said aloud, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and the honor of my majesty?"

"While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; Thy kingdom is departed from thee: and they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and 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," and that same day the king was afflicted with a strange madness, and for seven years wandered about, eating the grass, fancying he was an ox. No doubt, at times, he was less wild, but for seven years his son Evil-Merodach reigned in his place. At the end of that time, Nebuchadnezzar lifted up his eyes to heaven, and, as he himself tells us, "Mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honored him that liveth forever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation. And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou? At the same time my reason returned unto me: and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honor and brightness returned unto me; and my counsellors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me. Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those who walk in pride he is able to abase."

Now, as each king was apt to raise his own friends to the offices of trust, we hear no more of Daniel's being consulted at court after the death of Nebuchadnezzar till the reign of his grandson Belshazzar. It is believed that Nabonadius was king, but that on the Persians declaring war with him he left the city of Babylon in charge of his brother Belshazzar, and led his army out to battle on the plains, where he was defeated and slain, after which the city of Babylon was besieged. The people of the city felt very secure, for there were large tracts within it which they could cultivate, and immense stores of provisions were laid up; enough, it is said, for twenty years. They considered their immense wall impregnable, as indeed it was. It is true the river Euphrates flowed through the city; but heavy gates closed down at each end on the water, so that nothing but the river could pass under. There were other gates all along the river's banks, but these the citizens, in their security, often left open.

In spite of the siege, feasting and revelry went on, and one night Belshazzar gave a particularly superb feast to the lords and ladies of the court. The mightiest nobles and the fairest women were assembled in the banqueting-hall. They drank and feasted, pouring out wine to the gods. Suddenly Belshazzar thinks of a new way of honoring his guests. "Bring," he cries, "the golden vessels that the great king brought from Jerusalem; the Hebrews call them sacred. We will consecrate them now by using them." And they drink, with many a jest, from the golden cups. But look! the king's face grows white; he lifts his arm and points far up on the wall opposite his throne. Oh! awful mystery! a shadowy hand is writing, in flaming characters, far above their heads! They look on in awed silence till the writing is finished, and the hand disappears. Then the king rouses himself, and promises rich rewards to any who can interpret the meaning of the strange characters. One and another try, but all are unnerved and bewildered. The queen-mother, hearing of the strange occurrence, comes to her son and tells him that Daniel, who was his grandfather's interpreter, can surely solve the mystery. So Daniel is summoned, and stands before the king, who tells him of the promised rewards. The old man answers with quiet dignity: "Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another; yet I will read the writing unto the king, and make known to him the interpretation."

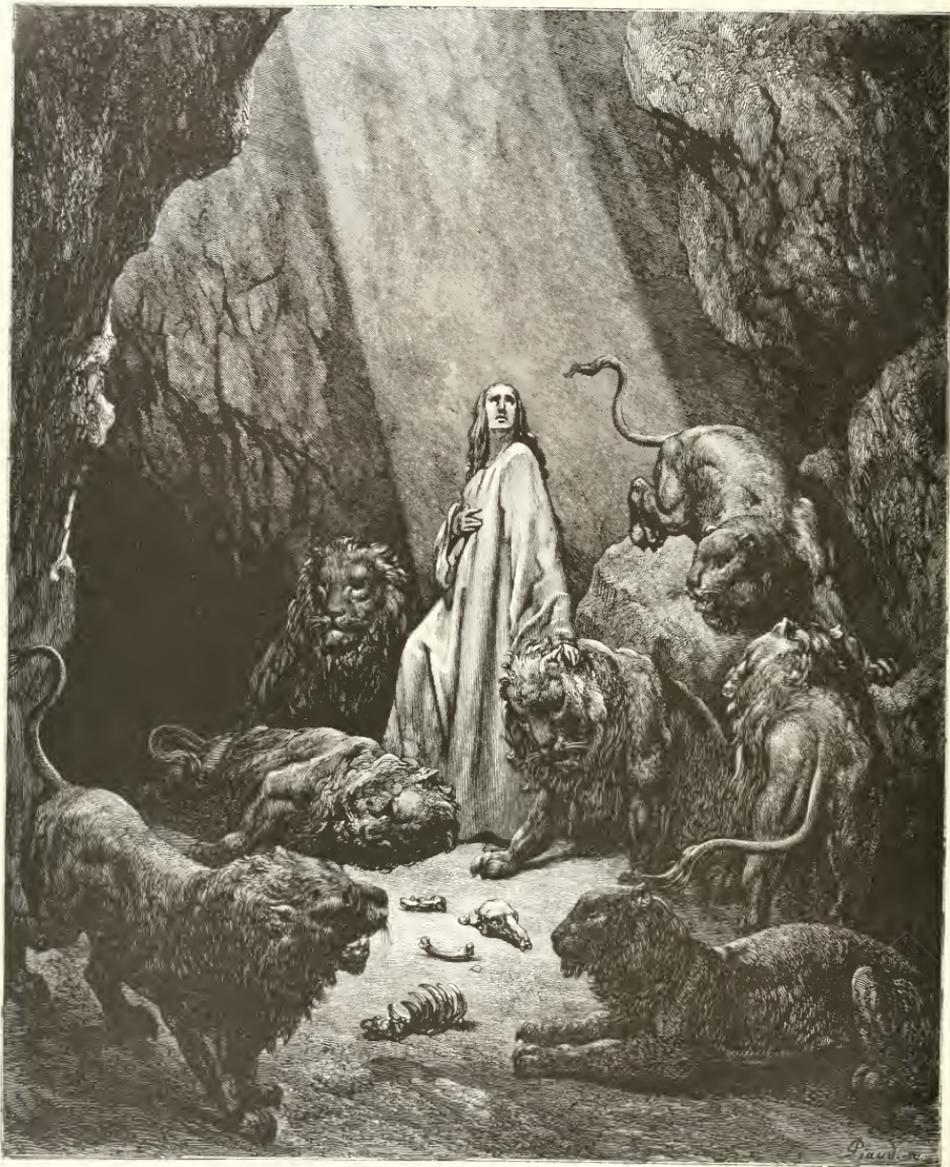
The prophet then recalls God's dealings with Nebuchadnezzar, and reminds Belshazzar how little he has heeded the lesson of his grandfather's insanity. "Thou hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this; but hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee, and thou, and thy lords, and thy wives have drunk wine in them; and thou hast praised the gods which see not, nor hear, nor know; and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified." Then he reads the Hebrew characters, and interprets them. *Mene, mene*, tells that the kingdom is *numbered* and *ended*; *Tekel*, it is *weighed* and found *light*; *Peres*, it is divided and given to the Persians (Pharsin).

And now, while they sit in fear and trembling, let us see what is going on in the Persian camp. Cyrus, the Persian general, has noticed that there is a great dam at the northern end of the city, and, on inquiry, finds that a vast basin has been formed outside the walls to receive the overflow caused by the spring freshets. This overflow was so great that it made a lake of fifty miles in

extent. He waits till the night of Belshazzar's feast. The great gates which spanned the river being securely closed, the Babylonians have left open the gates on the river banks. An army of workmen are sent by Cyrus to the dam, and, breaking it down, the river rushes through and fills the immense basin, running so low that the Persian soldiers can creep under the gates and walk along its bed, the water only reaching to their knees. They enter the city, killing all who oppose them. "Meet at the palace" was the order given, and hardly had the prophet's words died on the air before the enemy appears. "The Persians! the Persians!" passes from lip to lip. The king, sword in hand, faces the enemy; but all is in vain, his doom has been pronounced, and "that same night was Belshazzar king of the Chaldeans slain."

"Belshazzar's grave is made,
His kingdom passed away;
He, in the balance weighed,
Is light and worthless clay.
The shroud his robe of state,
His canopy the stone:
The Mede is at his gate!
The Persian on his throne!"





DANIEL IN THE LIONS' DEN.

A GOD-FEARING STATESMAN.

DANIEL VI.

THOUGH Cyrus had gained possession of the city, it was Astyages, or, as he is called in the Bible, Darius, who reigned in Babylon, Cyrus not becoming king until his death. Daniel was honored and beloved by Darius, who seems to have been a rather easy but hot-tempered monarch. The Persians must have been much more congenial than the Babylonians to such a faithful Jew as Daniel, for they were not idolaters; they were fire-worshippers, but only regarded fire as the symbol of the Creator. Since they regarded fire as sacred, though, it was natural that they would not use it, as the Babylonians had, for executions. Persian criminals were thrown into the den of lions to be devoured.

Darius divided the kingdom he had conquered into one hundred and twenty parts, over which he placed princes; then over these princes were placed three presidents, Daniel being chief of the three. So faithfully did Daniel serve Darius that the king thought to set him over the whole realm—to give him, no doubt, regal power. The boy who could deny himself delicacies for conscience sake would naturally develop into the man who could not be bribed. The man who cared nothing for gifts or rewards, but only for the honor of God, and that his truth might be known, was naturally disliked by the politicians and office-seekers of his age. He could not be persuaded to make any “rings;” he took no hints, and was influenced by no private likings or dislikings. Such a man was worthy of a king’s friendship—the fear of losing him might well drive sleep from the couch of Darius.

“We must get that Daniel out of the way,” said the different presidents and princes. “Oh, that’s easily done,” said one of them, judging the chief-president by himself; “just keep your eye upon him, and report the first slip you catch him in to the king. The laws of the Medes and Persians can’t be altered; let us prove he has broken ever so slight a one, and we have him!”

So they watched him. Whether Daniel knew of the test he was undergoing or not, we cannot tell. We learn by what follows that it would have made no difference in his behavior. Day by day he did his duties. They tried him with bribes; they tempted him to deceit; they (knowing nothing of his boyhood) tried to make the old man drink—anything to get him in the wrong. But they could not put him in the wrong!

Again the presidents and princes met together and eagerly asked if any one had caught the chief president slipping. "We shall not," said one of the princes, "find any occasion against this Daniel," and the rest looked vexed and baffled. Then one—the most evil-looking of them all—muttered, "Except we find it against him concerning the law of his God." Then there was a silence; all were not as bad as the speaker. Some of them called themselves honorable, and respected every man's religion. But "If you don't join us, there's a rather unpleasant secret I can mention to the king," whispered the evil-faced prince to one and another; and, though they "don't quite like it," and "would rather not," they "can't help it!" That is what comes of doing one secret, unlawful thing. You can be a statesman, you can serve your king or your president, and be true and honorable.

So, then, a plan is proposed and carried out, a plan which has on the face of it so much loyalty and patriotism that the king suspects nothing. It was an almost universal custom to regard the king as divine. In Egypt, the Pharaoh was considered to be a god, and worshipped as such. So when these princes and counsellors came to the king asking him to sign a decree that no one should ask a petition of any god or man save the king, I suppose Darius thought he was being very kind and beneficent to sign it. He would be kind and gracious to the people:—he would for thirty days "listen to their cry"—and this would knit the people to him. Why, it was a beautiful idea! Ah! how little he thought whose life might be sacrificed by this same lofty and benevolent decree.

Perhaps the king thought that the punishment that was to follow disobedience of the new law rather excessive, but perhaps not. Persian monarchs were *despots*; and Darius, being hot-tempered and used to exact obedience, might not have hesitated at all at the penalty his courtiers proposed. But if he had, there were such good reasons shown why he had better sign! "The people need to see that thou

art as firm as thou art merciful, O king." And just because Darius *was not firm*, he liked to think he was, and signed the decree at once.

And Daniel knew of the new law. Perhaps, as the time came for his evening prayer, he went to his room and stood by the window, which looked toward Jerusalem, thinking of years long past. He remembered coming to that very room one evening to pray, with his three friends Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, and how he had begged them to "ask mercies of the God of heaven," that some of them might be able to recall Nebuchadnezzar's dream. He remembered how God had answered that prayer, enabling Daniel to recall the dream and give the interpretation. Then, later on, he had hurried home from a distant place where Nebuchadnezzar had sent him, just in time to hear that his three friends had been thrown into the fiery furnace, and, rushing in agony to the king, he had caught sight of the fourth one walking in the furnace with his friends. As the old man remembered *that* form—as he recalled the words of his three friends when they talked together of the fiery trial—he quietly opened the window, and, in his usual tones, repeated his evening prayers. "If it be so, my God whom I serve is able to deliver me," we can fancy we hear the old man whisper gently, as, with thoughts of the three friends of his youth, he returns to his duties in the palace.

His enemies were careful to make sure of Daniel's disobedience. Three times did they see him kneel in prayer, and then they stood before the king and repeated the decree, asking him if he had not signed it, and if it was true that any one who disobeyed was to be cast into the den of lions. The king answered carelessly, little thinking what misery the next words would bring him, "The thing is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, that altereth not."

You wonder, perhaps, that the king had not thought of Daniel? I fancy Daniel acted his religion more than he spoke it. We know that he saw many wonderful visions, and no doubt the writing of these visions, besides his duties as president, gave him little time for talking; and so, perhaps, the king did not realize how Daniel served his God, though he knew very well that he was a godly man. When he heard that Daniel was the culprit—that the man he valued so highly was to be killed—he did his best to escape from the results of his foolishness. But the very men who were so flattering and smooth-spoken when

asking for the decree, are not at all afraid to threaten now. The king himself *cannot* break the law. At last he is driven to the very refuge his old friend has been hiding in all along. As Daniel is brought to the mouth of the den of lions the king cries out, "Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee." Cannot you fancy the kindly look the old prophet gives the miserable king as he walks by?

All night the king refuses comfort, and early in the morning he hastens to the lions' den. Oh, if the lions have only spared Daniel, how he will care for him hereafter!

And how do you think the night passed with Daniel? Do you think he did not suffer? I think he must have. He was but a man. I believe it was a night of prayer; and that his faith kept the angel by his side, just as faith will help us to bear pain or sorrow, but does not take it quite away. Though their mouths were shut, the lions were there. "And the king spake and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?" At once comes the answer—with what horror those guilty counsellors and princes standing by must have heard the words—"O king, live forever. My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt. Then was the king exceeding glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God. And the king commanded, and they brought those men who had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions, them, their children, and their wives; and the lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces or ever they came at the bottom of the den."





JONAH CALLING NINEVEH TO REPENTANCE.

AN UNWILLING PROPHET.

JONAH I.

THE Israelites were very proud of being the people of God—his “chosen people”—taken out by God from among the nations of the world. They seemed, even the best of them, to think that God cared only for them—indeed that he hated the heathen. You can very well understand that a man who had grown up with such opinions did not feel very much rejoiced when, either by a vision, the voice of conscience, or by direct communication, he was told to go to Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, and preach to the people. This man, the prophet Jonah, is said in Jewish tradition to have been the widow's son whom Elijah restored to life; but, from the date of his prophecy, it is more probable that he was a pupil of Elisha.

The Assyrians had begun to oppress the Israelites in Jonah's time; his people paid heavy tribute to the heathen; and, worst of all in the prophet's eyes, learned idolatrous customs from the Assyrians. So, when he received word to preach to them, he left the place where this order had been given him and took passage in a ship bound for Tarsus. It may be he intended to do great things for God—anything but what he was commanded! A great storm came up—the Bible distinctly tells us that the Lord sent the storm—and the sailors expected to see the ship sink. But there was one on board whom the howling wind and beating waves did not disturb. Jonah, while the others were crying out to their gods, slept quietly. Probably he was tired out with his hurried journey to the coast, and with the long night in which he had lain awake and tried to make up his mind what to do. Roughly awakened, he found that the men thought—as sailors do even to this day—that they must have some “unlucky” person among them, and wanted him to join them in drawing lots to find out who was the disturber. “And the lot fell upon Jonah.” The prophet sees that God has used the ignorant sailors' lots to show him his sin, and he confesses that he is flying

from the "presence of the Lord." He advises the men to throw him overboard, and all will go well; but the rough sailors shrink from such murder, and try again to save the ship, but in vain. "So they took up Jonah, and cast him into the sea; and the sea ceased from her raging."

Then a wonderful thing happened—"the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights."

Strangely enough, we have a record in the inscriptions of Nineveh of Jonah's visit. I take it for granted that you know that as soon as the whale threw him on the shore, he went to Nineveh. There is very distinctly painted on Assyrian tablets the figure of a *man in a fish*, who, we are told, saved Nineveh. This man's head appears out of the fish's mouth, his hands are coming out of the gills, and he stands on his feet, which appear just under the fish's tail. So, if you need help to your faith, here it is.

But we must go back to Jonah, and fancy him, in his rough prophet's mantle, entering the gates of Nineveh, the great city of the world at that time. "The stern soldiers upon the battlements, armed with swords and shields, helmets and spears; the colossal images of winged animals that guarded the gates; the gorgeous chariots and horsemen that rattled and bounded through the streets; the pomp and state of the royal palaces; the signs of trade and commerce, of wealth and luxury, of pleasure and wickedness, on every hand, must have amazed and perplexed the prophet, conscious of his utter loneliness amidst a mighty population; of his despicable poverty amidst abounding riches; of his rough and foreign aspect amidst a proud and polished community. There was enough to shake his faith and to cowardize his bold, haughty, and scornful spirit: yet he dared not a second time abandon his mission. He therefore pressed along the broad ways and great places of concourse, crying in solemn tones: "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!"

The people gathered about him as he walked. They could understand his words, for the Assyrian language was not unlike that spoken by the Israelites; and he repeated the same words again and again. They saw the man was deeply in earnest; and, as the words were again and again repeated, as they heard how he had shrunk from his task, and how God had preserved him by a miracle, they felt that it was indeed the truth that he proclaimed. The king in his palace was

told of the strange man and his message, and Jonah was summoned to court. We know from sculptures that the king of Assyria was approached with great signs of reverence, every one prostrating themselves before him. Imagine Jonah as he entered the palace; on the walls he beheld the sculptured figures of priests, kings, heroes, and ministers of state; of genii, of idol-gods, of battles, and hunting-scenes, all elaborately and gorgeously colored; while great winged bulls stood at the entrances, like the guardian spirits of the place. But the prophet had felt, when hidden by God, while in the fish, a power greater than all this earthly splendor, and fearlessly he proclaimed his message to the king. And the king "arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh, by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing; let them not feed, nor drink water. But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not? And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not."

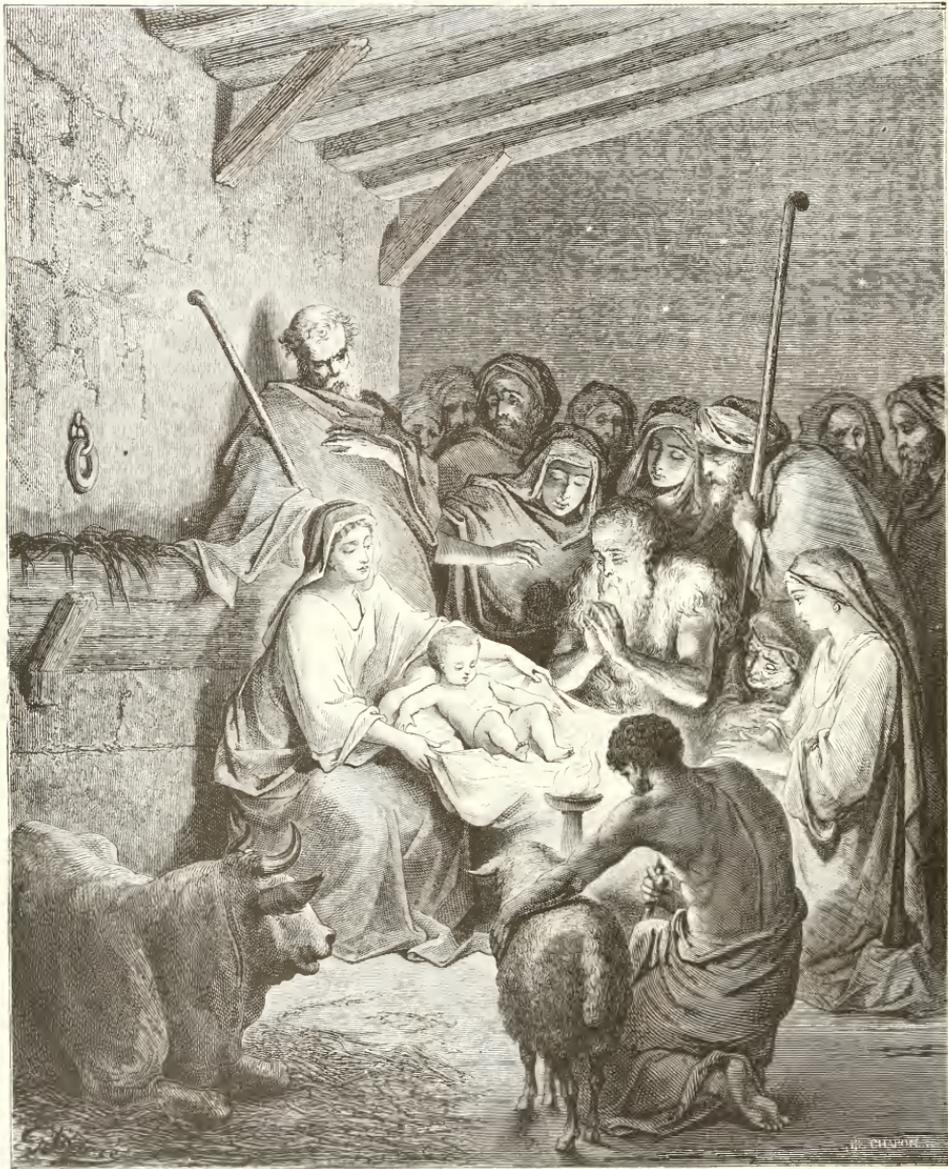
And now we are told a strange thing. God tells us the sins and weaknesses of his chosen ones, in order that we may not grow discouraged. So we hear that Jonah was displeased that God did not allow his prophecy to be fulfilled! Well, the feeling certainly was not what we should have expected from a prophet, but was it not very natural? He was there alone, and he knew very well that after it was all over there would be plenty to scoff at him and to say he was an impostor. Then the Assyrians were the enemies of his countrymen, and had done them great harm, and Jonah had not the advantage of Christ's example and teaching as we have. Yet, even with our advantages, I know there are plenty of people who would rather be *proved right* than save others from suffering.

But God was as patient with tired, discouraged Jonah as with the heathen. Jonah thought he would stay near and wait—may be, after all, God would destroy the city. So he made a booth for himself outside the city, and stayed there. But the green branches soon dried, and the hot Syrian sun beat on the

prophet; then God prepared a gourd. This was probably a castor-oil plant, which in hot countries grows very fast; but the Lord no doubt made it grow miraculously, and the next day Jonah rested comfortably under its broad leaves. But that very night God prepared a worm which eat the root of the plant, and as soon as the sun was strong the leaves withered. If you have ever set out some beautiful tomato-plants, and rejoiced in them for three or four days, and then, on going out some pleasant morning, found your treasures all limp and dead, you know what a worm can do in one night.

Then—Jonah's shelter being gone—"God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live." The power of the sun in the tropics is something we can hardly understand. One traveller tells how he closed his umbrella while climbing from a row-boat into a ship, so letting the sun's rays strike him, and he was so overcome by the heat that he was obliged to lie for hours with iced cloths on his head. Poor, discouraged Jonah! he had not wanted to come, and he could not see what great good his coming had done. But the gracious and merciful God still condescended to explain himself and reason with Jonah. "Thou," he said, "hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not labored, neither madest it grow: which came up in a night, and perished in a night: and should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?"





THE NATIVITY.

JESUS! NAME OF WONDROUS LOVE.

MATTHEW I. 21.

FAR up in Galilee, one hundred miles from the holy city, lived a young girl named Mary, who was betrothed to a man named Joseph; that is, they had promised to marry each other before long. They were both humble people, but God-fearing and truly religious. Mary, we are told by an old tradition, "spoke little, and only what was to the purpose. She was very gentle, and showed respect and honor to all. She was of middle height, some say rather above it; she spoke to all with a prudent frankness, soberly, without confusion, and always pleasantly; she had a fair complexion, blond hair, and bright hazel eyes; her eyebrows were arched and dark; her lips ruddy and full of kindness when she spoke; she had no pride, but was simple, and free from deceit." Joseph, we know, from his kindness to his betrothed, was a true, upright man. God told him that she whom he was to marry would soon give birth to a child, and that that child was the Son of God. So, keeping the wonderful secret to himself, he took her, as his wife, to Bethlehem, where he was obliged to go to be taxed. Perhaps Mary did not want to be left without the kind friend who alone knew what the angel had told her. Probably Mary rode on an ass—the animal so much thought of in Judea—and Joseph walked by her side. Passing down the little valley of Nazareth, they crossed the rich plain of Esdraelon, which was covered with cities and villages, with orchards, vineyards, gardens, and fields. They passed the mountains of Gilboa, talking, perhaps, of Saul and of their mighty ancestor David, the second King of Israel. Dothan, where Joseph met his brethren, would come in sight on their right, and then the city of Samaria, just rebuilt by Herod, and named by him Sebaste, crowded with heathen temples. They probably rested at Sychar on the second day, not going into the town, for the Jews never mixed with the Samaritans, but resting at Jacob's Well, eating the food they had brought with them; then passing as quickly as possible through Samaria, they entered Judea—bleaker

and barer, but far more dear to all loyal Jews. Shiloh was passed; then Gilgal—the scene of the first passover in the Promised Land—and, at last, their feet would stand within the gates of Jerusalem; but they did not linger long there, for six miles beyond was Bethlehem, where they were to be taxed. This little village covered the upper slope and part of the top of a narrow hill. There were no inns at all at that time. “Kahns,” a sort of rude shelter for travellers, were erected in barren and unfrequented spots; but in every village any passing wayfarer was sure to be made some one’s guest, for the rabbis taught the people that hospitality to strangers would be rewarded by an entrance into Paradise. So we may be sure that it was not at an inn that Joseph and Mary found shelter. The same word that is translated *inn* (Luke ii. 7), in the only other places it is used refers to a guest-chamber in a friendly house. But, as strangers were pouring into Bethlehem for the taxation, the guest-chamber of their friend’s house was full, and the only empty space was the place, half kitchen, half stable—just a natural cave in the hillside—against which the house had been built.

We are not told how long they stayed in Bethlehem; Eastern people are never in a hurry. At any rate, here in the hollow of the hills Mary was given the God-sent child; he who was to “save his people from their sins.” She laid her little one in a manger, but we must not think this was not a comfortable resting-place for the child. Dr. Thompson writes: “The mangers are built of small stones and mortar, in the shape of a kneading-trough; and, when cleaned up and whitewashed, as they often are in summer, they do very well to lay little babies in; and though this was in the month of December, it was not cold or bleak as with us.”

On the very night when the child was born “there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling-clothes, lying in a manger. . . . And the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.”

For forty days Mary stayed at Bethlehem, never appearing outside the cave; for, as a Jewess, her first visit was to be made to the synagogue or the temple. At last, riding on an ass, probably, as Jewish mothers did who were going to the temple to offer thanks, she offered two doves, and gave thanks to God for the gift of a child. Think for a moment what her thanks must have been! "The Son of the Highest," the angel had told her he should be called. And, probably, as she bowed herself in prayer, she whispered softly, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour." But another ceremony had still to be performed. Jesus, as the first-born son, was to be "redeemed" by the payment of a certain amount of money into the hands of the priest, and prayers were then offered up for the child.

How soon after this came the visit of the Magi, and the hasty flight into Egypt, we cannot tell; certainly the family were back in Nazareth before the child was three years old. Nazareth lies among the hills and overlooks one of the little corners of the plain of Esdraelon. In March, a traveller climbing up the steep road that leads to the village, would be charmed by the bright green of the plains and the beauty of the flowers; the red anemone and the pink phlox are the commonest; rock-roses, white and yellow, are plentiful, with a few pink ones. There is the pink convolvulus, marigold, wild geranium, and mignonette, with salvia and pimpernel. The village itself may have altered, but we can be quite sure that the same birds visited it then as now: larks, sparrows, nightingales, black-caps, wrens, swallows, and robin-redbreasts were as familiar to Him as to many boys nowadays. Great butterflies flitted on the hillsides, and flocks of sheep and goats dotted the plain below.

Stand in fancy where the boy Jesus must many times have stood—at the top of the hill behind the village. Galilee spreads out like a map at one's feet, Mount Tabor rises near at hand, and beyond it is Little Hermon. Turn to the west, and Carmel, "Elijah's Mountain" to every boy, is only twenty miles off. Looking from northwest to north, the cottages of Cana of Galilee can be seen, where Jesus was to first use his miraculous power. Mountains rise above mountains to the north, till, more than sixty miles off, Hermon stands ten thousand feet above the sea.

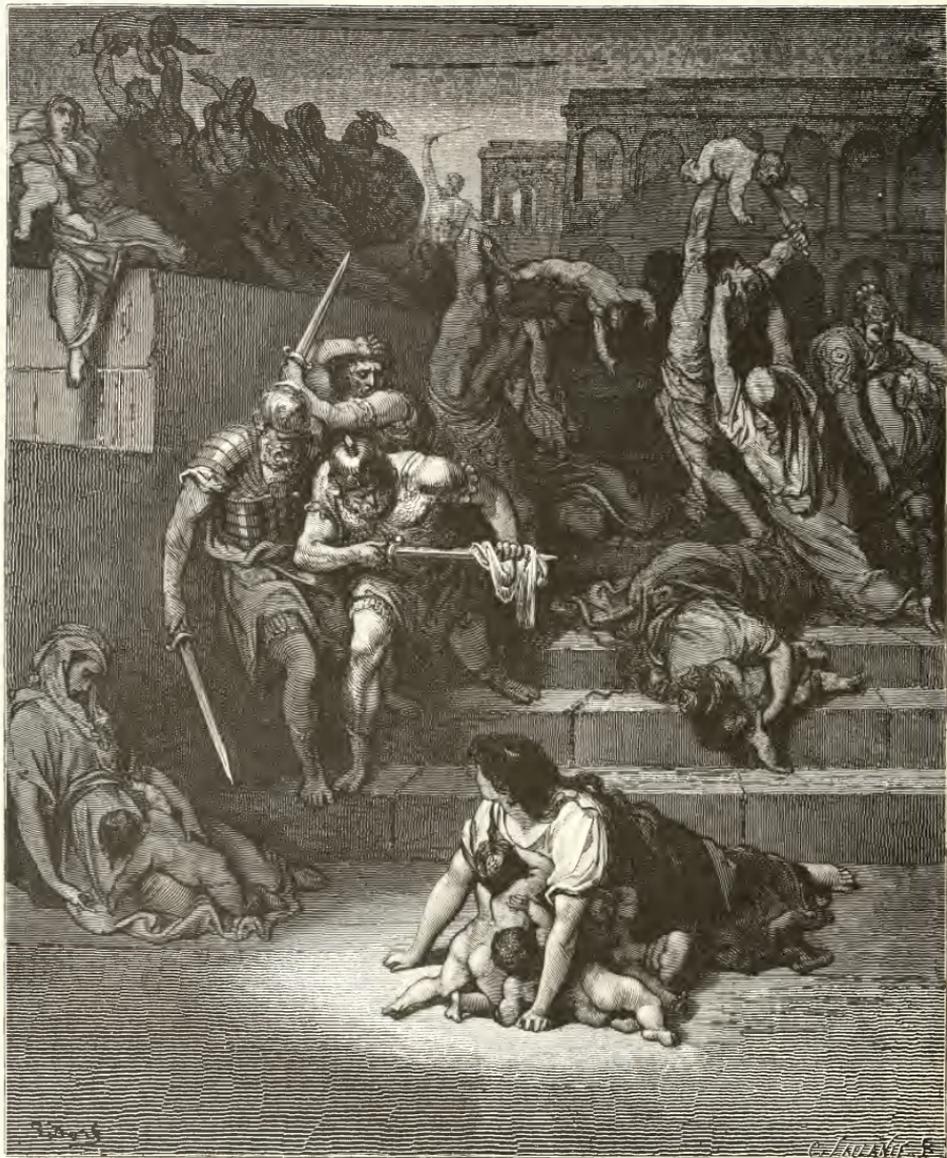
Here, in their mountain home, lived Mary and Joseph, with Jesus and the brothers and sisters who were given later. The white, flat-roofed houses in Naza-

reth to-day are doubtless much the same as those among which He played as a child. Vines shaded the walls, doves sunned themselves on the roofs. Inside the house, a few mats on the floor, a built seat, running along the wall, spread with cushions and the bright quilts on which the inmates sleep at night; a painted chest in the corner; some large clay water-jars, their mouths filled, perhaps, with sweet herbs to keep the water cool and fresh; a low, round, painted wooden stool, brought at meals into the middle of the room to hold the tray and dish, round which the household sat, with crossed knees, on mats; this was all the furniture in such a home as Mary's.

Joseph worked at his trade of carpentering, but the many festivals of the Church, which made labor unlawful for full two months of the year, gave him time to instruct the children in the sacred history of his nation. A Jewish boy began at five years of age to commit the books of Moses to memory; and, indeed, as soon as a child could speak it learned the morning prayers. At six years old a Jewish boy was sent to school. The children sat on benches or on the ground, according to their ages, the master sitting on a raised seat. The younger children had some simple part of the Bible carefully written out, which they repeated till it was learned by heart.

There are many foolish legends as to the wonders of Christ's childhood, but not one has the stamp of truth. He was a simple child—the one perfect boy—a loving, obedient son. Take the sweetest little one you know, and as that little one is when all goes well, so was the little Jesus at all times. As the best boy is when things are all right and pleasant for him, so was Jesus every day. Day by day he increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.





THE MASSACRE OF THE INNOCENTS.

HEROD AND THE INFANT KING.

MATTHEW II. 1, 2.

At the birth of Christ the civilized world was for the first and only time united under one monarch. Caesar Augustus, as Emperor of Rome, ruled from the mouth of the Euphrates to the Atlantic, from the mouths of the Rhine to the slopes of the Atlas; Palestine had fallen to Rome by appealing to it for help, just as, later, the Britons appealed to the Saxons and were conquered by them. Herod, who was king in Palestine, under Augustus, reigned over a larger kingdom than even that of David; but how different a king, and how different a people! Herod himself was not a Jew by birth, but an Edomite; nor was he a Jew in truth, at all, for he built great temples to heathen gods, and sacrificed to idols. It is true that he replaced the humble Temple of the Exile by the wonderful one of which the Jews were so proud. But he did this, not in a religious spirit, but to gain favor with the people; yet it was in vain for Herod to try to win their hearts. The nation "wrote his virtues on water, and his faults on brass."

It was this man, grown old and near his death, who had murdered his wife, his mother, his best friend, and numbers of the Jews, who sat in his new palace in Jerusalem ruling in Caesar's name, when Christ was born. As he sat alone he must have had bitter thoughts. He knew very well that the Jews were longing for his death; knew, too, that all hearts were on the watch for the Great Prince, "the Messiah" or "Anointed," who was to restore the true Jewish rule. But, old and hated as he was, he still had no desire to yield his kingdom, and wished to make it strong and sure in the hope that Cæsar would permit his sons to rule after him.

The Pharisees, to the number of six thousand, refused to swear loyalty to Herod, and openly declared that God had determined that Herod and his family should be speedily driven from the throne to make room for Messiah. Herod was

troubled indeed then, when three magi requested an audience and calmly asked if he could tell where He who was born king of the Jews could be found? They had seen his star in the east, and had come to worship him!

Jerusalem was at once in great excitement. Herod had to ask where this Christ—this “king of the Jews”—was to be born; but every true Jew knew well enough. Every Jewish boy had learned the text: “But thou Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel.” Quickly the news spread through Jerusalem, “The magi have come!” Crowds flock to the temple. Even the heathen populace enter the Court of the Gentiles, and listen to what the rabbis say.

“They have seen his star in the east, and have come to worship Him. Balaam—himself one of the magi,” says a rabbi to the crowd about him, “Balaam taught of the star of Jacob. He is coming—our great deliverer.” But, alas, the multitudes were looking for an earthly king, for a deliverer from the power of Rome—not the power of sin. The proud Pharisees would not seek the king of Jews in a lowly cave, but in a palace.

Herod, carefully concealing his real feelings, was very kind and hospitable to the wise men. He begged them to return to him as soon as they had done homage to the Child who was to be king, that he too might visit him. The magi, as soon as possible, went on to Bethlehem, where, toiling up the hill, they saw the star rest over a certain cave, where lay an infant child.

Now what was this star? Stars have suddenly appeared, been seen for months, and then disappeared. Such a star was seen by Tycho Brahe, a celebrated Danish astronomer, in 1572. As he came home one November night from studying the heavens at his observatory, he was surprised to see a number of the country people gazing at a star which he knew did not exist half an hour before. It grew brighter and brighter, until it was larger than the planet Jupiter, and could be seen at mid-day. In December this star began to diminish, and in March disappeared. The astronomical tables of the Chinese record the appearance of a new star for seventy days at the time of the birth of Christ. Whether this was the star told of in St. Matthew's gospel we cannot tell. A star was, at any rate, used by God to guide the wise men. An English poet thinks that an angel—Suriel—

“Took of the lamps that ever blaze beside
The altar of celestial frankincense,
Symbols of love enkindling endless praise,
And from that lucid sphere descending sloped
His course to earth, where on the nightly plain
Chaldea's watchers read the starry heavens.”

As to the wise men themselves, early Christian legends speak of them as kings, but Herod did not treat them as such. There may have been more than three of them; but, as three gifts were mentioned, people have always thought there were but three visitors. One legend says that Melchior was an old man, with long white hair and beard, and that he gave the gold as to a king; that Caspar was a beardless youth, with a ruddy face, and that he presented the frankincense as a gift worthy of the God; while Balthasar was a swarthy, strong, bearded man, and gave the myrrh for the burial.

But gentle Mary knew nothing of all the curiosity we should feel about those men. After the angel's visit and the shepherds' humble, adoring love, it did not seem strange to her that men should come from far countries to bring her child gifts. Indeed she soon saw why God had sent the gold and frankincense and myrrh—all things of value—for a warning comes of danger, an angel saying to Joseph: “Arise, and take the young Child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child, to destroy him.”

It is not improbable that the gifts of the wise men gave Joseph the means for this journey. Strangely enough many Jews were then living in Egypt. You would think that they would never have gone back to the land where their forefathers had been slaves; but the kings who had conquered Egypt were particularly liberal and kind to the Jews, so that large colonies had settled there, especially at Alexandria. But, though treated well by the government, the Egyptians themselves hated the Jews, and the Jews the Egyptians. It is no wonder, then, that Joseph and Mary, as soon as they heard that Herod was dead, returned to their own country. They would have gone again to Bethlehem; but as it was so near Jerusalem, where Herod's son reigned, they travelled back to the distant mountain village of Nazareth.

But, though Jesus had escaped from Bethlehem, other little ones suffered in

his place—dying for him as truly as did any older martyrs. Herod had waited anxiously for the return of the wise men, but God warned them to go back by another way, and Herod never saw them again. He grew more and more concerned about this king who was to reign over the Jews. Had they not said he was David's son? Then the son of Herod could never stand against him! He must die—at all risks the Child must die. But what was his name? Herod knew nothing of this baby-king, but that he had been born in Bethlehem sometime within the last two years. Then, sooner than risk his living, every boy of two years old and under should die. So soldiers were despatched, and the children were butchered—Herod cannot breathe freely till every little child is dead!

We must try to realize the children's blessedness—taken at once to heaven—and be thankful that now, at least, each one of those poor, tortured mothers knows that "it is well with the child."

This deed of blood must have been almost the last act of Herod's reign—fit close of such a life; and, after all, the child so feared and hated by that bad man, was shedding peace and love abroad in his happy home at Nazareth.

"Tyrant, what avails their tomb?
He shall 'scape the bloody blade
Which hath many childless made."





JESUS QUESTIONING THE DOCTORS.

THE FIRST VISIT TO HIS FATHER'S HOUSE.

LUKE II. 41-52.

WHEN Jesus was twelve years old he went up to Jerusalem to the feast of the passover, with Joseph and Mary. This feast began about the 15th of April, and lasted seven days. The multitudes flocking to the city must have been almost countless; over two million people worshipped at the temple at the great feast. Every house was crowded and the whole landscape covered with tents or booths of mat and wicker-work. Jerusalem itself was built upon hills. The road from Nazareth entered the new lower town by the Damascus gate, and passed through the business street in the bottom of the Valley of the Cheesemakers, which was a deep, narrow hollow between Mount Zion and Moriah, crowded with houses. The clothes bazaar, braziers' shops, the bazaar of the butchers, and one for the wool-dealers, were in this part of the town; and here, too, was the square where notice was given of the new moon and feasts of each month. The old, or upper city, was on the top of Mount Zion; here were the goldsmiths' shops, and the houses of the priests that lived at Jerusalem; along its north side was a wall over fifty feet high, and outside this wall, towering one hundred and twenty feet above it, stood three castles, which Herod the Great had built, all of white marble. Close at hand was the palace of Herod, shining within with gold and silver, and many of the walls and ceilings crusted with precious stones. The handsomer dwelling-houses were in this upper city.

On Mount Moriah rose the wonderful temple. The foundation on which this was built was as remarkable as the building itself. The hill was steep, and the top not large enough for the great courts; so a solid wall of masonry, six hundred feet long and almost as high as the tallest church spire, was built up from the valley below. On the top of this immense wall was

the royal porch, a building longer and higher than one of the great English cathedrals.

Most of us think of the temple as a very large building, but this is a mistake; the temple itself was not nearly so large as many modern churches; but it was surrounded by courts, each one larger and more beautiful than the other. Let us suppose, then, that we are visiting the temple as it stood in the time of Christ. You remember Solomon's temple had been destroyed long before; then, about five hundred years before Christ, the Temple of the Exile, as it was called, was built, and Herod the Great, eighteen years before the time of Christ, had set about the restoration of the temple, employing constantly eighteen thousand men upon it; but it was not entirely finished till A.D. 65, just five years before its total destruction by the army of Titus!

Still, when Jesus, as a boy of twelve, went up to the temple to keep the feast, the walls were complete and the Sanctuary itself stood in all its wondrous beauty—made of great blocks of white marble, and all its front overlaid with pure gold—on the top of Mount Moriah. The whole temple-grounds were six hundred feet wide on every side. A great high wall, built up from the solid rock, of immense stones, enclosed this space. The front faced the east, but in this outer wall there were four gateways in the back, or on the west, and only one in each of the other sides. Come in at the Royal Gate on the east side; these gates were all marvels of strength and workmanship, from sixty to eighty feet high. Look now at these double rows of great marble columns, each of one solid piece, thirty-seven and one-half feet high, and so large round that three men, with arms extended, could just clasp hands around them. This is Solomon's porch. Look far up above your head; see the solid roof of polished cedar, so strongly built that soldiers can march about on it and look down at the crowds entering at the different gateways. Before going further on let us turn to the left, where is a still wider porch; this, with four rows of those immense columns, is the royal porch, already referred to; you can walk all along it, and on the west and north sides you will still find two rows of the wonderful columns, till you stand again in Solomon's porch. On every side a low stone wall, four and one-half feet high, shuts you out from polluting the Court of Israel, and those small obelisks or pillars that are set in the wall, at equal distances, warn us in Latin and Greek that no Gentile can pass within, under pain of

death. The Jewish boy, passing beyond this fence, on the eastern side, goes up a flight of fifteen steps, where is a high wall again, with beautiful gates opening into the Court of the Women. This court is the usual place of worship for all, but women cannot pass beyond it. Here is the Gate Beautiful spoken of in Acts iii. 2. It was made of Corinthian brass, was sixty feet high, and, when closed each night, twenty men were needed for the work. Here, in the Court of the Women, was another porch, with one single row of columns, each pillar of the size and beauty of those in the Court of the Gentiles. Crossing the court, you go up fifteen steps again to the gate leading into the Court of Israel. Entering, a little further on, you mount twelve more steps, and there stands the great brazen altar, seventy-five feet square and twenty-two and one-half feet high, with steps leading up it on the south side. Beyond the altar is the temple; its vestibule, which is never closed, for it has no doors, is seventy-five feet long, thirty feet wide, and one hundred and thirty-five feet high. It is all plated with gold, with vines and grapes of solid gold clustering up over the entrance. At the end of the vestibule hangs the first veil, and behind that are doors, leading into the Sanctuary or Holy Place, where stands the candlestick, table of shewbread, and altar of incense. This Sanctuary is sixty feet long, thirty feet wide, and ninety feet high. At the further end hangs the second veil, which hides the Holy of Holies—perfectly empty now. The lost ark was never replaced. On each side of the Holy Place are rooms used by the high-priest. It is one of these rooms that is represented in the picture.

At twelve years of age a Jew was treated as a man, so that Jesus, at the time of his first visit to Jerusalem, was free to go and come, not watched as a child, and we may be sure he was often at the temple through all the passover-week. The passover itself was eaten in the different houses; not fewer than ten and as many as twenty were allowed to eat the feast together. Women were not required to eat the passover, but were allowed to do so if they chose. Everything was done in haste, as the lambs had to be killed, roasted, and eaten between three in the afternoon and twelve at night. At midnight the temple gates were opened, and the people, most of whom stayed up all night, thronged the courts in holiday dress, carrying their thank-offering of meat. The priests took a certain share of this and then returned the rest to the givers, who had it cooked for them in the Court of the Women and ate it as a second feast in one of the

temple porches. The 15th was one of the six work-days in the year on which no work could be done, and was taken up with free-will offerings at the temple. On the 16th the first fruits from the Kidem valley were brought to the temple and waved before the Lord. Jesus no doubt saw this ceremony, and noticed, as he left the temple, how quickly the streets were filled with men selling new barley bread, parched ears of the new corn, and early fruits of all kinds. From the 17th to the 20th were only half holidays, and many left the city. The last day, the 21st, was kept as a sabbath, and there was a rehearsal of the passover supper for those who had not been able to reach Jerusalem on the first great day. The passover finished, all prepared to return home, and all was confusion and uproar. The start was always made in the night, by torchlight, so as to avoid the heat of the day. There was real danger in the narrow places that women or children might be trampled on by the animals. Parents were often heard calling for lost children; friends shouted to each other; the drivers beat and scolded the poor animals. But as the roads branched off things grew pleasanter, and by the time the first day's march was ended all was in order. It was at this time that his parents first became alarmed as to Jesus, and returned at once to Jerusalem; but, as they could not reach it until the evening of the second day, nothing could be done till the day after, when—knowing, no doubt, his love for the temple—they found him in one of the schools of the rabbis, held in the temple courts. These schools were open to all, and any one could answer or propose a question. The rabbi sat on a high seat, with his scholars in a half circle at his feet. The one study was the Law (that is, the Books of Moses), and what certain rabbis had written or said of it. Here his parents find him, looking, it may be, like David when summoned before Samuel, "ruddy and of fair countenance," his large eyes bright with thoughts of his Father. Mary takes her boy one side, and says: "Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? Behold, thy father and I have sought thee, sorrowing." The answer must have fallen on Mary's heart as a soft rebuke. "How is it that ye sought me? There was no place where I could so surely be as in my Father's house—there were no matters which could so rightfully fill my thoughts as his." Her son was outgrowing his childhood; the light of a higher world was breaking in on his soul. Yet his "hour had not yet come;" "and he went down to Nazareth, and was subject unto them."



JESUS HEALING THE SICK.

THE MAN CHRIST JESUS.

ACTS X. 38.

FROM the time of His return to Nazareth, after the visit to Jerusalem, till he was about thirty years of age, we know nothing of the Saviour's life but that he worked at Joseph's trade, supporting, it is believed, his widowed mother. He began his work in the world by going to John the Baptist and receiving baptism at his hands. John refused this at first, for he felt unworthy to baptize his Lord; but at Christ's command he obeyed: and while Jesus was being baptized the Spirit descended upon him in the form of a dove. Forty days of trial and temptation in the wilderness followed, and then Jesus came forth and stood before men as a rabbi or teacher. The rabbis each had their chosen disciples, who, if they did not live with them, were always in their company when journeying or teaching. So Jesus chose disciples; twelve men, most of them unlearned, plain, and poor. The first two, Andrew and John, had been with John the Baptist; but followed Jesus when their master pointed him out as the Lamb of God. He, hearing their footsteps, turned and invited them to join him. Andrew then found his brother Simon Peter, and John his brother James, and brought them to the Saviour; so when Jesus returned once more to Cana of Galilee, where his mother was, he had four disciples, and a fifth, Philip, joined them before they reached Cana.

Some intimate friend or relation of Mary's was to be married in Cana, and Jesus, with his disciples, was invited to the feast. A marriage in the East is a great event, the festivities usually lasting some days. A Jewish maiden was always married on a Wednesday, so we know the day on which this feast began. The bride, whose dress and ornaments, with perfumes, ointment, and fruit, were sent by the bridegroom in the early part of the wedding-day, was thickly veiled from head to foot; with a wreath of myrtle-leaves, either natural or of gold, on her head. She waited at her mother's house for her bridegroom, to whom, on that

day, she had sent his shroud, which he wore on each New-Year's-Day and Day of Atonement during his life. The bridegroom came in the evening, with flute-players and singers, groomsmen and friends, while the girl-friends of the bride joined the procession, dancing and singing the bride's praises. All then went together to the house of the bridegroom's father, where the bride sat veiled among the women, and the bridegroom, crowned and decked with ornaments, sat among his friends. Singing, music, dancing, guessing of riddles, and merry jokes amused the guests night after night. The wine used was light, and none drank to excess, for the people were warned against drunkenness. Here is one of the parables by which the rabbis taught the danger that lurked in the vine: "When Noah planted his vineyard, Satan came and asked him what he was doing. 'Planting a vineyard,' was the reply. 'What is it for?' 'Its fruits, green or dry, are sweet and pleasant: we make wine of it, which gladdens the heart.' 'I should like to have a hand in the planting,' said Satan. 'Good,' replied Noah. Satan then brought a lamb, a lion, a sow, and an ape, killed them in the vineyard, and let their blood run into the roots of the vines. From this it comes that a man, before he has taken wine, is simple as a lamb, which knows nothing, and is dumb before its shearers; when he has drunk moderately he grows a lion, and thinks there is not his like; if he drinks still more, he turns a swine, and wallows in the mire; if he drinks still more, he becomes a filthy ape, falling lither and thither, and knowing nothing of what he does."

The feast to which Jesus was invited had lasted some time, when, to the great distress of those in charge, the wine gave out. Mary, who, like every true-hearted woman, liked to help her friends, hoped Jesus might know some way out of the difficulty. She had noticed the change in her son since His visit beyond Jordan; she felt that He had power—would not this be an excellent opportunity to exercise it? So she went to Him and said, "They have no wine. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come." Do not think that Jesus answered her rudely. The term "woman" was then, as it always should be, a term of honor and dignity. That Mary understood the Saviour's words is shown in her telling the servants, "whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." A little later, before the wine had become quite exhausted, Jesus told the servants to fill the large waterpots which stood by with water, and then pour out and give to the ruler of the feast. The ruler, as he tasted the fresh

supply, was relieved from all anxiety, and went at once to the bridegroom to tell him that this last wine was the best of all.

This "beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed in him." From that day He went about doing good. Often such scenes occurred as the one given in the picture; mothers brought their sick children; the lame hobbled to him; the blind crept near, or cried aloud as they heard his passing footsteps.

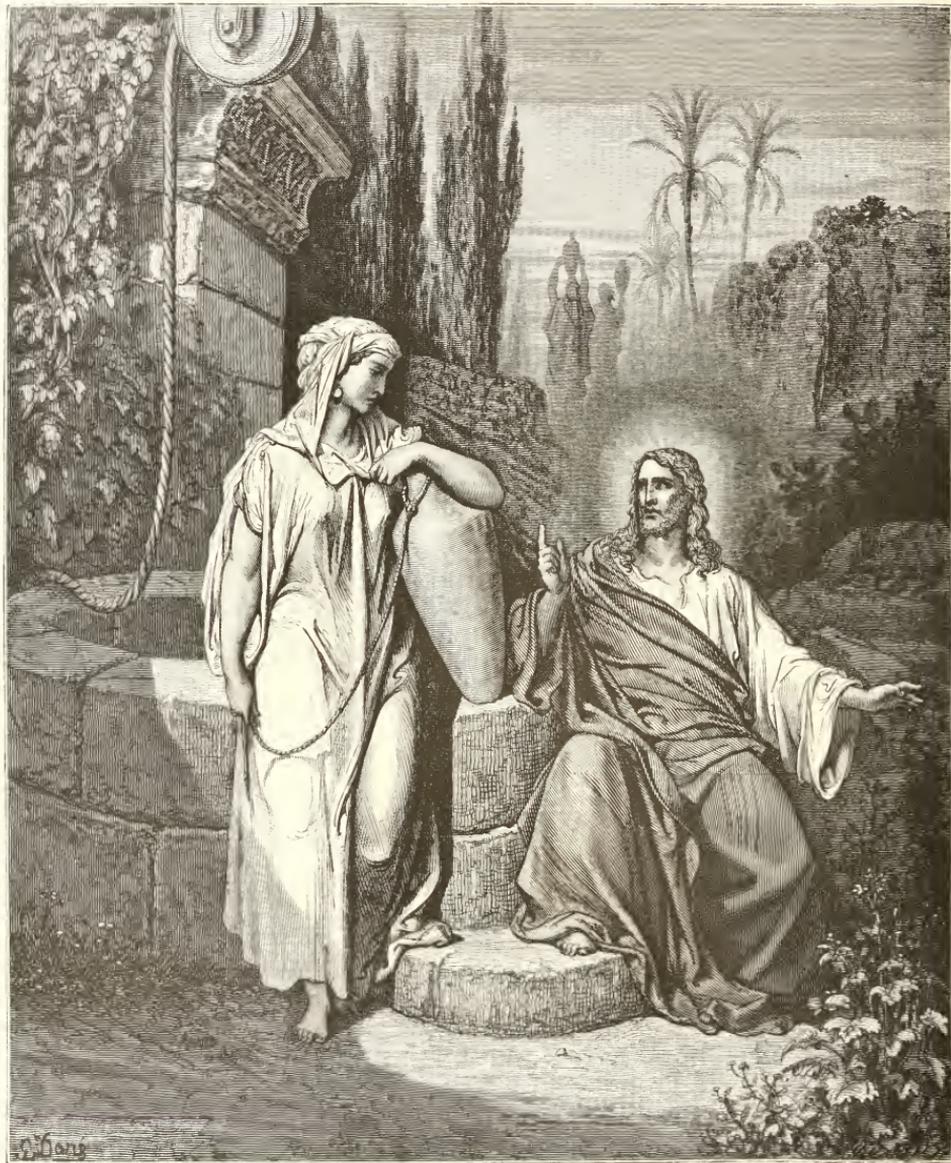
One of the most loathsome diseases of the East is that of leprosy. A leper was believed, in the time of Christ, to be under God's curse. No leper was allowed to live in a walled town, and they were obliged to go with uncovered head, and to continually cry, "Unclean! unclean!" to warn others away. The disease began with little specks on the eyelids and on the palms of the hands; the hair became white and wiry; the skin was covered with shining scales, swellings, and sores; the nails fell off; the eyes, throat, and lungs were affected; and, at last, the sufferer died of consumption or dropsy. Never had a man "full of leprosy" been cured till Christ, with his touch, healed not one, but many. That Christ would touch one who was "unclean" was an awful offence to the strict Pharisees, who would not break the law, even to relieve from suffering.

All day long Christ was using his power, and we must not think it cost him nothing. "This kind," he said to his disciples, speaking of a devil whom he had cast out, "goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." He spent whole nights in prayer, and was often weary. The very sight of all the sin and suffering was a daily pain to him.

Would you like to hear how he looked? We have no likeness of the Saviour, for the Jews thought it was breaking the second commandment to paint any likeness of the human face, or make any statues. The Romish and Greek churches have several legends as to likenesses of Christ, but none of them are to be depended upon. They say, for instance, that the king of Edessa once sent a painter to Jesus to take his portrait, but the Saviour's face was so dazzling the artist could not paint it; then Jesus, willing to reward the king's devotion, impressed his likeness on a cloth, and sent that by the artist. Another legend is that the likeness of the Saviour was left upon the linen cloth in which he was wrapped at the burial. The following description of the Saviour is by one who has studied carefully the legends as to his appearance, and the dress of that period:

“Our eyes were resistlessly attracted to Him, for he was the centre of the group. He was not in soft clothing of byssus and silk, like the courtiers of Tiberias or Jerusalem, nor did he wear long, trailing robes like some of the Pharisees. On his head was a white keffiyeh—a square of linen doubled so that a corner fell down on each shoulder and on the back; a fillet or *agbul* round the head, keeping it in its place. On his body he wore a tunic, which reached to his wrists and to his feet, and over this a blue tallith, with the prescribed tassels of blue and white at the four corners, hung down so that the under-garment, which was gray striped with red, was little seen. His feet, shod with sandals—not shoes—were only visible now and then as he walked or moved. He was a man of middle size, with youthful beauty still in his face and form. The purity and charm of early manhood blended in his countenance with the ripeness of mature years. His complexion was fairer than that of those around him, for they had more of the bronze color of their nation. He seemed, indeed, even pale under the white sudar, for the ruddy glow of health, usual at his years, was wanting. The type of his features was hardly Jewish, but rather as if that and the Greek types blended into a perfect beauty, which, while it awakened reverence, filled the heart still more with love. His eyes looked on you with light which seemed broken and softened, as if by passing through tears. He stooped a little, and seemed as if communing with his own thoughts, and when he moved there was no affectation, as with some of the rabbis, but a natural dignity and grace, like one who feels himself a king though dressed in lowly robes.”





JESUS AND THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA

THE PEOPLE OF SAMARIA.

JOHN IV.

LYING between Galilee on the north, and Judea on the south, you find on any map of Palestine a country marked Samaria. Now, you know very well that the Galileans were Jews, though rather rougher and more countrified than the people of Judea; but perhaps you cannot understand why the Samaritans were not Jews too? If you have read the earlier chapters in this book, you know that Sargon re-peopled Samaria with heathen colonies. These heathen found the ruined towns infested with lions, which increased so rapidly that the heathen thought the God of the country had sent them as a plague. They decided to learn the worship of this God, and sent for one of the exiled priests to instruct them. At first they worshipped their heathen gods, with the true God; but, after a time, their children became very earnest believers in God, obeying the law of Moses most rigidly. They begged to be admitted among the Israelites; but the proud children of Abraham would not hear of it; every Jew was taught to hate and despise a Samaritan, or a "Cuthite"—as they were called—and so, very naturally, the Samaritans, in turn, learned to hate and despise the Jews, and each did the other all the mischief they could.

The Samaritans claimed that Mount Gerizim was holier than Mount Moriah. They believed it to be the site of the Garden of Eden, and that Adam was formed of its dust. Even to this day the few Samaritans still living show the spot where Adam's altar was supposed to stand. They thought Mount Gerizim was the mountain on which the ark rested. Every Samaritan child could point out the places on the mount where Noah came out of the ark, and where he built his altar. Abraham, according to them, offered up Isaac on Gerizim, and in the centre of the summit was the stone which served as a pillow for Jacob when he saw the vision of the angels.

The hatred between the Jews and Samaritans was so strong that neither

ever expected help of the other. When the Saviour was a boy he must have heard how the Samaritans had stolen into the temple the night before the celebration of the passover, and defiled it by strewing human bones in it. All along the border between Judea and Samaria there were constant skirmishes and raids, very much as it was in the last century between Scotland and England. No Israelite could lawfully eat even one mouthful of food that had been touched by a Samaritan. A Jew might be friendly with a heathen, but never with a Samaritan; nor need he keep his word with one. But, as the country of Samaria produced delicious fruits, the rabbis did not pronounce Samaritan fruits unclean if gathered by a Jew.

In passing from Judea to Galilee, the most direct way was through Samaria, but so much was it hated that most Jews preferred the longer route through Perea. Jesus knew no such prejudice; and, starting from Judea in the early morning, he reached Sychar about noon. Near the town was an ancient well, no doubt dug, as claimed, by Jacob's servants; and here Jesus sat down to rest while his disciples went to the village to buy bread. This well is now seventy-five feet deep, but in 1838 it was thirty feet deeper. The custom of throwing stones in the well to hear them rebound has no doubt filled it up at least one-half. While resting on the seat under the alcove of the well, with the pleasant shade of the trees all about him, a woman came to draw water. The Saviour asked her for a drink. This simple request astonished her. "How is it," she asked, "that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria?" The question no doubt was asked as the water was given. Jesus, having received it, tells her of a wondrous living water he can give. The woman listens wonderingly; and, feeling that this stranger is not an ordinary man, she puts to him the great question of the Samaritans, "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, That in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." The way she puts the question—mentioning Jerusalem respectfully—shows that she is humble and teachable.

"Believe me," said the Lord, "an hour comes when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship God without knowing him, ignorantly. We Jews worship that which our having received the Scriptures has taught us to know. The Messiah and his salvation must come from among the Jews; but, though the Jews be right, as against the Samaritans, in so

far as relates to the past, both are on equal footing as to the far more glorious future. An hour comes, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth."

The woman answered simply, not understanding what the Saviour meant, "I know that Messiah comes, that is called Christ. When he shall come, he shall tell us all things." Jesus answered, "I that speak unto thee am he."

The first to hear of the Saviour's birth were humble shepherds; the first person to whom the Saviour declared himself the Messiah, was a despised Samaritan.

It is not the only time that we see that Christ cared for the Samaritans and was accepted by them. The one leper out of the ten whom he healed, that returned to thank him, was a Samaritan; and in his answer to the rabbi's question, "Who is my neighbor?" Jesus holds up a Samaritan as "neighbor" to him who fell among thieves.

The disciples must have been greatly surprised to find their Lord talking with a woman. In Christ's time women were kept very closely, and not allowed to go out unveiled. Rabbis especially would not speak to a woman in public. The rabbis tried to keep women as ignorant as possible. "Let the words of the Law be burned rather than committed to a woman," was one saying; "He who instructs his daughter in the Law instructs her in folly," another. But Jesus came to raise woman, and treated her as the equal of man.

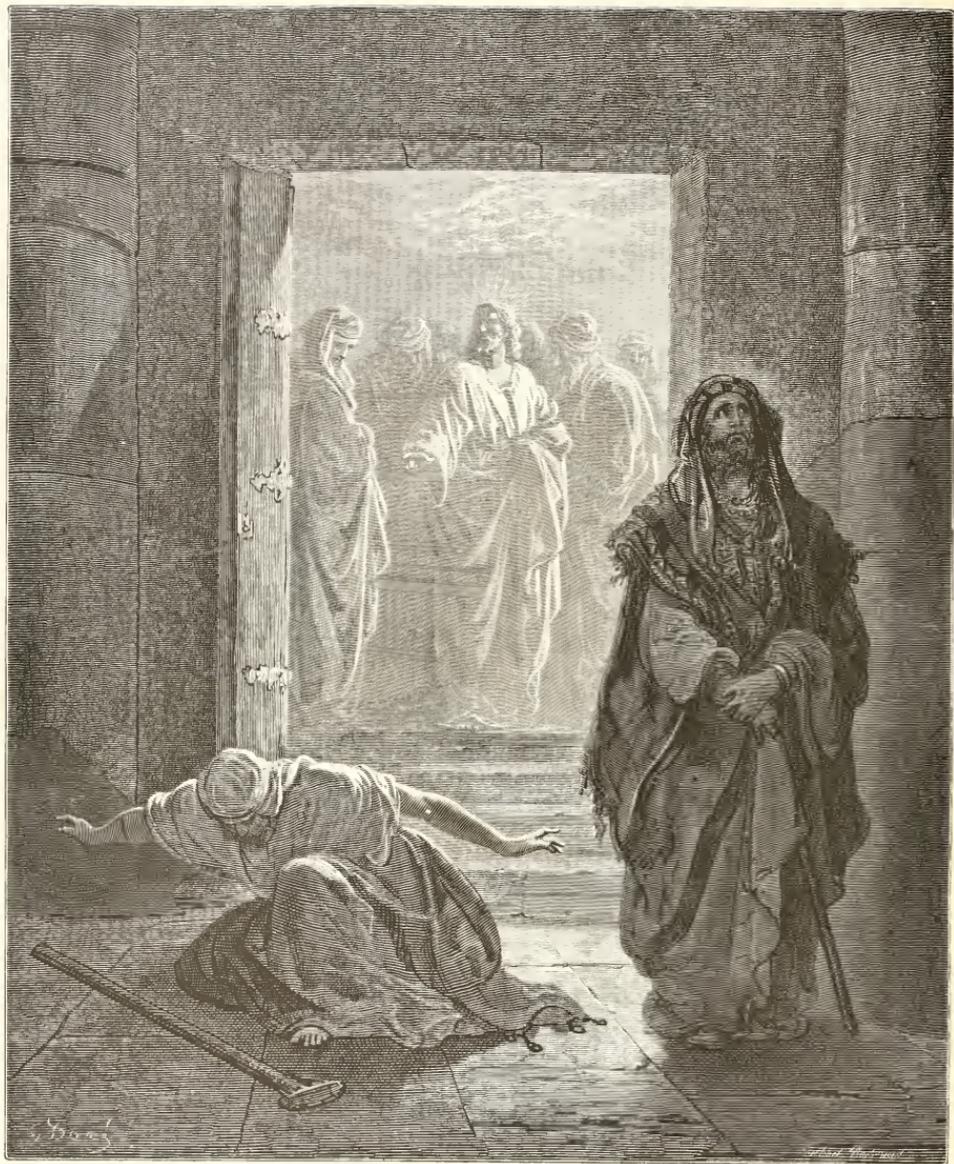
Strange as it must have seemed to the disciples to see the Master talking with a Samaritan woman, they already felt too much reverence for Jesus to question the right of so doing. The woman left her pitcher at the well, and hurried off to bid her friends come and see if this man were not the Christ, and soon a little crowd came toward the Saviour and his disciples. Jesus seeing them, said to his friends, "Ye say after four months will come the harvest; but I say, Look yonder at the throng coming toward us: *they* are the noblest harvest, and their coming shows that you have not to wait to reap it, as they have to reap the seed now sowing, for their souls, like autumn fields, are already white for the sickle, and how rich the reward for you my disciples who will be the reapers." The Samaritans who were brought to the well by the woman heard the Saviour gladly, and at their request he stayed with them two days, teaching them. "We believe," said the Samaritans to the woman, "not because of thy speaking, for we have heard for ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world."

It was at this time that John the Baptist was thrown into prison by Herod Antipas. Jesus, as John's friend and cousin, must have felt sorrowful at the news, and as the Bridegroom whose friend John was, He knew that John's suffering and martyrdom was but a foreshadowing of His. In the Lord's sorrow he turned for a last time to his earthly home. Dismissing his disciples for a time, he went alone to Nazareth, teaching and healing on the way. How long he rested in his mother's house is not known; no miracles marked his stay, but day by day we may be sure he was present in the synagogue, worshipping with his brethren.

The Jewish synagogue in Christ's day was a very plain building, though often built of the purest marble. On one side, as you entered, were seats for the men; on the other, behind a lattice, the women, wrapped in their long veils, sat and worshipped. At the end was the *tebhah*, or ark, of painted wood, which held the rolls of Scripture, and at one side of this was the *bima*, an elevated seat for the reader, who was any one who had a reputation for learning and had been invited by the chief of the synagogue to take that part of the service. In the chief seats sat ten or more "men of leisure," one of them the chief of the synagogue. The *chazzan*, or "angel," was the man who had the care of the scripture rolls, handing them to the reader. After the prayers two lessons were always read, one from the Law, or books of Moses, and one from the Prophets.

On a certain Sabbath Jesus was invited to read the second lesson. He ascended the *bima* and was handed the roll of the prophet Isaiah. How His human heart must have thrilled as He read the lesson for the day: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

Closing the book, he sat down and "began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." Wonderingly they listened as he spake, as never man spake, but gradually one and another murmured, "Is not this Joseph's son?"—He was but a carpenter in their eyes! Soon the murmur rose to a great cry, and with angry words they dragged him to a precipice near by to stone him for blasphemy. But he, by no miracle, but simply by the spell of his genuine goodness and truth, passed through the midst of them and went his way.



THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN.

THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN.

LUKE XVIII. 10.

THE Jews, hating the Romans because they were their masters, hated any of their own people who took any public office under the conquerors. A Jew, for instance, who collected taxes was more despised than a Roman tax-collector. These publicans, as they were called, were often dishonest men; but, to the Jews, it made no difference whether they were honest or not. The publican was, especially to the Pharisee, the same as a thief or a murderer; no strict Jew would eat or talk with a publican. "Bears and lions," said a Jewish proverb, "might be the fiercest wild beasts in the forest, but publicans and informers were the worst in the cities."

But just because these men were cast out by the Jews, Jesus sought them out, and was a Friend to them. Matthew, the sixth disciple that was called, was a publican. In his delight at being chosen as a disciple he made a feast and invited his friends, who must of necessity have been publicans like himself. No doubt there were among them many dishonest men, but Jesus sat down with them.

"This man receiveth sinners," the Jews exclaimed with horror, as we do now with joy.

The Pharisee was the very opposite to the despised publican: he felt sure of heaven, claiming it as his right, for was he not the favorite of heaven? His whole time was given up to studying the traditions of the rabbis, which traditions were considered more important than the Scriptures. The words of the rabbis were held to be worth more than the words of the prophets. There were traditions among the Pharisees of miracles which they claimed to have happened to confirm the sayings of rabbis. One cried out, when his opinion was disputed, "May this tree prove that I am right!" and at once the tree was torn up by the roots and hurled an hundred ells off. But his opponents declared that a tree could prove nothing. "May this stream, then, witness for me!" cried Eliezer, and at once it flowed the opposite way. Still his opponents declared that water could

prove nothing. "Now," said Eliezer, "if truth be on my side may the walls of the school confirm it!" He had scarcely spoken when the walls of the school began to bow inward. The rabbi Joshua threatened them: "What is it to you if the sons of the wise dispute? You shall not fall;" and to honor rabbi Joshua the walls did not fall wholly together, but neither did they go back to their places, that the honor of rabbi Eliezer might not suffer, but remain slanting to this day. At last Eliezer called for the decision of heaven. "If I am right, let heaven witness!" Then came a voice from heaven, and said, "Why dispute ye with rabbi Eliezer? He is always right."

The Pharisee was easily known by the broad fringe to his dress, the great size of the four tassels on his tallith, and the large phylacteries, or little boxes containing scripture texts, which he wore strapped on his forehead and right arm. They prayed aloud, and took care that all should hear of any alms they gave. Some of them were sincere, devoted men—Pharisees from love to God—but, as a class, they were hypocrites, as Jesus called them, making numberless laws for the common people, and secretly breaking them themselves. One can better understand how these Pharisees bound heavy burdens on men's shoulders (as Christ said), by hearing a few of the laws which they made as to the Sabbath. "The day began at sunset on Friday and ended with sunset on Saturday; and, as the disappearance of the sun was the only mark of the time, its commencement was different on a hill-top and in a valley. If it were cloudy, the hens going to roost was the signal. The beginning and the close of the Sabbath was announced by a trumpet. All food must be prepared, all vessels washed, and all lights kindled before sunset. The money-girdle must be taken off, and all tools laid aside. On Friday, before the beginning of the Sabbath, no one must go out of his house with a needle or a pen lest he forget to lay them aside before the Sabbath opens. Every one must also search his pockets at that time to see that there is nothing left in them with which it is forbidden to go out on the Sabbath. To wear one kind of sandals was 'carrying a burden,' while to wear another kind was not. It was unlawful to go out with wooden sandals or shoes which had nails in the soles, or with a shoe and a slipper, unless one foot were hurt. It was unlawful for any one to carry a loaf on the public street; but if two carried it, it was not unlawful. The quantity of food that might be carried on the Sabbath was settled by the rabbis; it must be less in bulk than a dried

fig; if of honey, only as much as would anoint a wound; if water, as much as would make eye-salve; if ink, as much as would form two letters."

To kindle or put out a fire was to break the Sabbath. No one could give an emetic or set a broken bone on the Sabbath, or even, according to some rabbis, put back a bone that had slipped out of joint. If a person were buried under ruins he was to be left there, unless they were quite sure he was alive! The endless rules for washing and cleansing made life a real burden; even the kind of water to be used for sprinkling the hands, for dipping vessels into, and for bathing, was settled by the rabbis. Drawn water was fit for certain things, cistern water for others. Two great Pharisees argued carefully as to whether it was lawful to eat an egg that had been laid on the Sabbath. Both agreed that if the hen was kept for laying, the egg must not be touched, or even looked at; but if the hen was to be cooked and eaten, and happened to lay an egg—what then? Schammai thought a Jew might eat the egg, but Hillel decided against the egg, and he was obeyed.

No wonder the kind and merciful Saviour longed to deliver the people from such slavery. The proud and powerful Pharisees received only warnings and stern reproofs from Jesus, while the despised publicans were treated with tender sympathy.

Professor Geikie, in his "Life of Christ," gives the parable of the publican in these words:

"Two men went up at the same time, the hour of prayer, to the temple, to pray. The one was a Pharisee, the other a publican. The Pharisee, who had seen the publican enter the temple with him, stood apart, his eyes toward the Holy of Holies, and began to pray thus: 'O God, I thank thee that I do not belong to the common multitude of mankind, whom thou hast rejected—to the covetous, the unjust, the adulterous. I thank thee that I am not what so many people are, what this publican here before thee is. He knows nothing of fasting or of tithes, but I fast every Monday and every Thursday, and I give the priests and Levites the tenth, not only of all I have, but of all I may gain, which is more than the Law requires.'

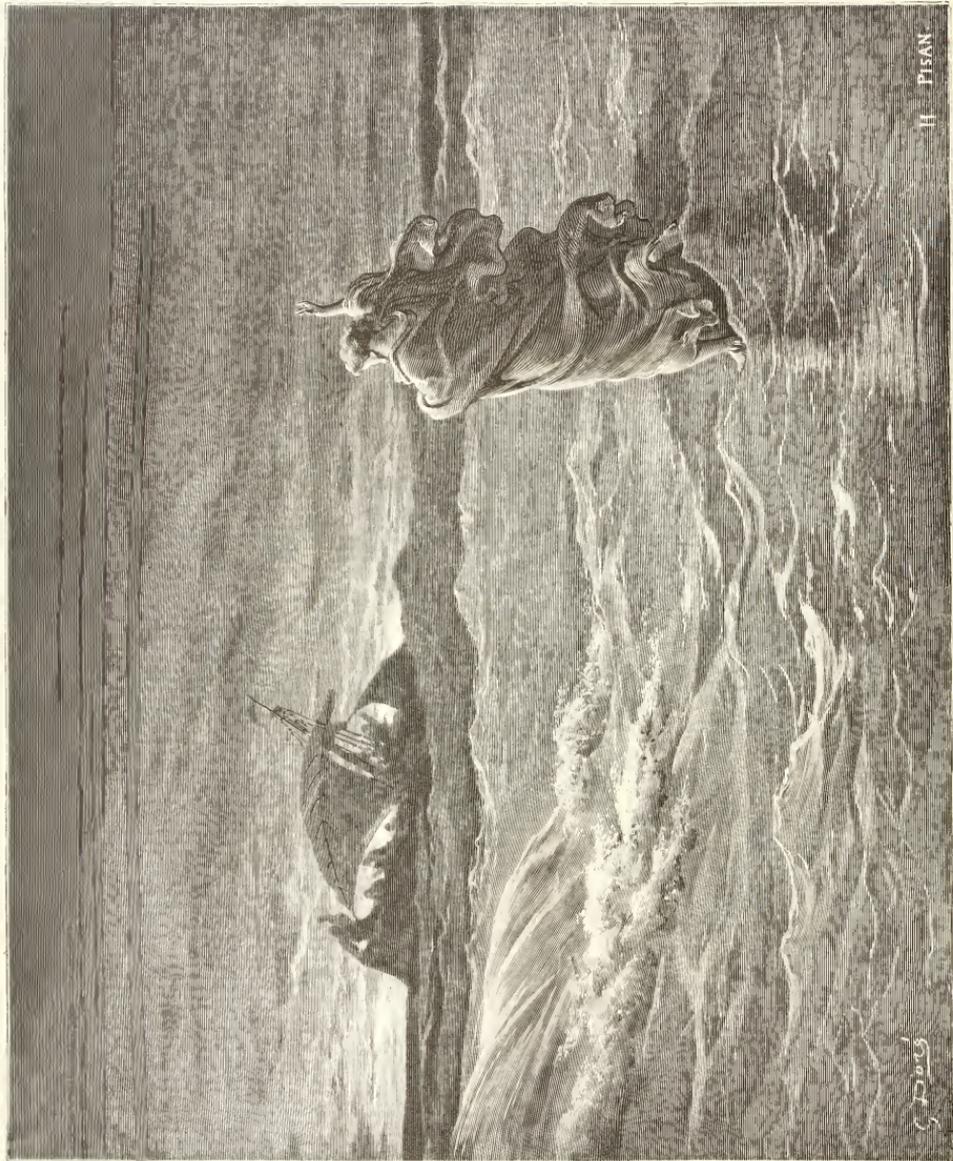
"The publican, meanwhile, feeling that he was a sinner, stopped far behind the Pharisee, coming no further into the sacred court than its very edge, for he shrank from a near approach to God. Nor could he dare, in his lowly penitence,

to lift up so much as his eyes to heaven, far less his head and his hands; but, with bent head, smote on his breast in his sorrow, and said, 'God be merciful to me, the sinner.'

"The Pharisee had offered only a proud, cold thanksgiving for his own merits; the publican an humble cry for mercy. Believe me, this publican, whom the Pharisee gave a place among the unjust and impure, received favor from God, and returned to his home forgiven and accepted; but the Pharisee went away unjustified; for, as I have often said, every one who thinks highly of himself in religious things will be humbled before God, and he who humbles himself will be honored before him."

This seems the fitting place to explain the difference between the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The Pharisees were the party who wished to make and keep the Jews a *nation of priests*; the Sadducees considered the priests as separate from the common people and superior to them. The Pharisees insisted on studying and obeying the Oral Law and the Traditions, but the Sadducees held only to the Written Law, and though they revered and obeyed some of the Traditions, they did not hold them binding. The Sadducees denied the resurrection of the body, but they did not, as some say, deny the immortality of the soul. They were much more friendly to the heathen world about them, believing that one rule of conduct must guide them with Jews, and quite another with outsiders. The Pharisees would not allow any painting or sculpture about their dwellings, but the Sadducees admired beauty in itself and apart from religion, not believing, as did the Pharisees, that the second commandment forbids the painting or modelling of the human form, but only the worship of such painting or sculpture. The Sadducees did not hurt and worry the common people, as did the Pharisees, and indeed had little influence among the Jews; it may be it was for this reason that Jesus never entered into controversy with them. His heaviest reproaches were for the canting, selfish Pharisee.





H. PIRAN.

JESUS WALKING ON THE WATER.

S.P.O.S.

THE SEA OF GALILEE.

JOHN VI.

A LARGE portion of the three last years of the Saviour's life was spent in Galilee, especially about the shores of its beautiful lake, or, as it is sometimes called, the Sea of Gennesareth. A very small sea it was, being only twelve miles long from north to south, and the widest part measuring but six and three-fourth miles. It is a beautiful sheet of water; and, in the Saviour's time, when its western side was crowded with villages, and the beautiful plain of Gennesareth—a spot on the west side covering about three square miles—was carefully cultivated, it must have been still more beautiful. On this plain grew wheat, barley, rice, melons, grapes, date-palms, figs, citrons, and oranges. The climate of the lake-shore is so mild that snow seldom falls in winter. The lake is so full of fish that often their fins, rippling through the water, make it look as though rain were falling. In Christ's time the sea was alive with fishing-boats, for the fish were salted in great quantities at several of the towns. Beautiful cities, like Tiberias, with its splendid palace, great arsenal, and baths that were famous all over the country, were built on the lake-shore; fishing-villages, like Capernaum and Bethsaida, with little, whitewashed stone houses, lay between, while on the east side the hills rose bare and bleak, with only about a quarter of a mile of green sward close to the lake.

Here, in those barren, treeless hills, Jesus spent many a night in prayer; praying, as we know, not only for those that were with him, but for all that should believe in him through their word, and therefore for us. Capernaum, which was just at the northern end of the plain of Gennesareth, was for a time Jesus' home, and so is called, in the Bible, his own city. Seven of his disciples, Peter, John, James, Andrew, Matthew, James the Less, and Jude, lived in Capernaum. Philip belonged to Bethsaida, which was close at hand; Nathanael was from Cana. Thomas, tradition says, was a brother of Jesus. Simon Zelotes

(or The Zealot) was from some part of Galilee, and only Judas Iscariot was from Judea.

Though not large, Capernaum was a garrison town, with a band of soldiers and a centurion in charge. This Roman centurion had learned to believe in the true God, and had built the Jews a beautiful synagogue. It was of white limestone; and though most of the stones have been carried off to build into houses, a row of columns still show what the building was—no mean gift. This centurion must have been a kindly man; for, when his slave was ill, he sent messengers to Jesus, asking that his servant might be healed. Jesus at once began to walk to the centurion's house, but a second set of messengers came to apologize for troubling the Master, and soon after the centurion himself came to Jesus and told Him that, as he himself had servants that obeyed him, he knew that Jesus had but to speak the word and He would be obeyed by those demons who had caused the disease. "When Jesus heard it, He marvelled, and said unto them that followed, Verily, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole that had been sick."

To show how full of work the Saviour's life was, we find him, the day after this, twenty-five miles southwest of Capernaum, in a little village called Nain. Crowds were following him. All along the way we may be sure the sick and lame and blind had been brought to him, and not one was refused help. But as they entered the village, a little crowd was going out that did not join the happy throng—one woman at least took no notice of any one; for her boy, the only comfort of her widowed life, was being carried to the grave. Now, as we read of what Jesus did, we must try to realize that no rabbi before him would touch or go near a dead body. He, first, in his loving pity, spoke to the mother, saying, "Weep not." Then he "touched the bier, and the bearers stood still, and he said: Young man, I say unto thee, arise. And he that was dead sat up and began to speak. And he gave him to his mother." This village was just on the other side of the hill where Shunem stood, where, centuries before, Elisha had given another mother back her boy. No wonder the people exclaimed, when they saw what Jesus had done, "A great prophet is risen among us!"

After Jesus had been for nearly two years preaching and teaching, healing the sick and raising the dead, he sent his twelve disciples out, two by two, to

preach the gospel (good news) of the Kingdom. We do not know how long they left him, but probably not more than a few weeks. At any rate, when he met them again at Capernaum, it was natural that they wished to be alone; but the people crowded to this wonderful Man—just as we would go now in great crowds if we heard that there was one who healed without money and without price. So Jesus and his disciples got into a little boat, and crossed the lake to the plain of Batiba. Ah, the people could not be left! They watched, and when they saw which way the boat was heading, they ran around by the shore. It was six miles by water, and about ten by land; but, when once the people had heard the Saviour talk, and seen what He could do, ten miles seemed but a little way to go to Him. In every village more joined them. They told the sick and the lame where he was. So, when the boat reached the shore, Jesus saw a great multitude gathering to hear him; “and he had compassion on them, and healed their sick.” Then, sitting on the hillside, he spake unto them of the Kingdom of God, and taught them many things.

The whole day went by, and still the people waited. There was no food to be had on the lonely plain, and the Twelve begged Jesus to send the crowd away. You can fancy how surprised they were when Jesus answered: “They have no need to go away; give ye them to eat.” The disciples, no doubt, looked at him in silent astonishment. At last Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said: “There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves and two fishes; but what are these among so many?” Ah, Jesus wanted them to do as much as they could—He would do the rest. He said: “Make the men sit down;” and so they divided the crowd into companies of fifties and hundreds. As we know, there was one happy little lad there, and no doubt there were a number of boys and even girls from the villages nearest to the plain; then, I am quite sure, as the mothers had come, there were babies. As soon as all were quiet, “Jesus took the loaves, and, having given thanks, he distributed to them that were set down; likewise also of the fishes, as much as they would.” How that little lad must have wondered as he saw what Jesus could do with his bread and fishes! I hope he never forgot the lesson. Then, after all were satisfied, Jesus had the fragments taken up (let us remember that when we are tempted to be wasteful), and they filled twelve little baskets!

As soon as they saw this miracle, the crowd began to whisper to each other

that Jesus must indeed be the Messiah. "I care not for the Pharisees," said one, "they themselves say the Messiah will, like Moses, feed Israel in the wilderness, and has not Rabbi Jesus done this?" "He is the Messiah!" "He is the Christ!" was shouted on all sides. "We need only to proclaim him king, and he will conquer our enemies the Romans, and set Israel free!"

But Jesus, telling his disciples to go to the boat and cross the lake, dismissed the crowds and "withdrew into the mountain, and was there alone," praying for those who did not know enough to pray for themselves. The disciples crossed the lake, not daring, perhaps, to wait, as they saw a storm coming. They had not started soon enough, for the storm, as furious as it was sudden, broke upon them. How they reminded each other of the night when Jesus had been asleep on a pillow, and, roused by their cry, had stilled the wind and the waves! Oh, if Jesus were only with them, they think! Then, suddenly, close to the boat, they saw, by a flash of lightning, a human form. They were terribly frightened at first, as any men would have been; but, in a moment, they heard the Master's voice, calling "It is I, be not afraid," and they knew that all would be well. Peter could not wait till Jesus should get into the boat, but called out, "Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee upon the waters." And Jesus said "Come." Peter, looking at the dearly loved Master, walked on the water; but all at once he looked down on the heavy waves and lost courage. He began at once to sink, for it was only his faith that had kept him up. He just had enough faith to call out, "Lord, save me!" and immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand and took hold of him, and said unto him, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? And when they were gone up into the boat, the wind ceased, and they that were in the boat worshipped him saying, Of a truth Thou art the Son of God!"





CHRIST'S ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM.

A LOWLY KING.

MATTHEW XXI.

It was Friday morning, the ninth Nisam, or, as we would say, March 30th, and great was the stir in Jerusalem; for the next day, being the Sabbath before the Passover, was a high day. The fields all about the city had been carefully examined and weeded; the tombs had been fenced in and white-washed, that the travellers might see them from a distance, and avoid them; for if a Jew's dress should touch a tomb he was defiled, and could not eat the passover.

At the Joppa gate the crowd was thickest; donkeys with panier's full of lentils, beans, onions, and cucumbers, brought from Galilee; camels laden with grapes, dates, figs, apples, and pomegranates, stood or knelt; men and women with stone jars and leathern bottles full of "honey of wine" and "strong drink" cried out to the passers by to stop and take a cup of liquor; pedlars of cooking utensils, wearing apparel, ointments, singing-birds, and jewelry jostled one another; while animals of all kinds—donkeys, horses, calves, sheep, kids, and camels, swine only excepted—stood waiting purchasers. Passing through the market were Roman soldiers in shining breastplates and skirts of mail, and gladiators with sleeveless tunics reaching to their knees, who had been brought to the Holy City by Herod, and were hated by the Jews. Suddenly the people made way for a Jewish-looking man; his mantle was of snow-white linen; his robe richly embroidered and belted at the waist by a red sash with heavy gold fringe. The crowd seemed to dread his touch—was he a leper? No, but in the eyes of the Jews as bad, for he was a Samaritan, and his touch was pollution. Next came a figure whom all looked at with reverence; his head was bowed, his eyes fixed on the ground; but every now and then he stopped, crossed his hands upon his breast, and looked up to heaven as if praying. A leathern box (or phylactery) was tied on his forehead and another on his left arm; a deep fringe hung from the borders of his robe,

and enormous tassels at the four corners of his tallith. He was a Pharisee, a Jewish Rabbi, whose word was law with the common people.

But let us hear of what these two are talking: the mother, her veil covering all but her nose and mouth, sells wine; the boy is almost a man, yet he sits idle at her feet. Ah, no wonder, for he is blind! "Mother," says the boy, "what think you, will He come to the feast?" "It is what all are asking, my son; the rabbis, who say the Nazarene has a devil, and does all his great deeds by the devil's aid—" "Say not so," interrupted the boy, passionately, "did not Joachim tell us only last Sabbath that he is the Messiah?" "True, my Simeon, and I said not he was aught else. I did but tell thee what the rabbis say, and we must not forget that our friend Joachim has been cast out of the synagogue." "Ah, mother, he minds not that! the Nazarene—our Messiah—has seen and blessed him; but if Rabbi Jesus should come to the feast, you will bring me to him? You promise?" "Simeon, can you ask me! I have not your strong faith in the Nazarene; but, if he come, you shall reach him, and may the God of our fathers grant your prayer."

Just then the mother was called to serve a customer, and the blind boy sat unnoticed; again and again he went over the story of how his friend had asked sight of Jesus, and over and over he whispered the prayer, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me." How his heart swelled with rapture as he thought that before many days he too might hear the gracious words, "Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole."

Everywhere, in the temple-courts where rich tapestries were being hung in honor of the feast, in the different synagogues, and in the Roman palaces, people questioned, "Will He come to the feast?" The lame, the sick, the blind, longed for His coming. The priests and Pharisees, who hated Him, plotted for His life. His disciples would have kept Him back; but steadily Jesus came toward the Holy City, and on the afternoon of that Friday entered Bethany, which was one of the suburbs of Jerusalem. The Sabbath was spent at Bethany; and, though many of the sick came to be healed, Simeon and his mother did not hear, till late at night, that the Prophet of Nazareth had really come. Simeon wanted to start at once; but his mother told him it would not do to trouble the Master after nightfall. "Let me sell my wine," she said, "for an hour or two in the morning, and then, if he pass not through the gate, we will go to Bethany." So the blind boy waited as patiently as he could.

Early on the next day Simeon and his mother took their stand at the gate now called St. Stephen's, leading into the new part of Jerusalem. Flags and banners floated from the houses, in honor of the Passover. Simeon took no heed of what was going on around him; his ears were strained to catch any word of his coming. At last he hears the chanting of a psalm. Soon others hear it, and Simeon catches such sentences as these: "Such a crowd are coming! They are waving palm-branches!" "Hark! hear what they sing:

"Tell ye the daughter of Zion,
Behold thy King cometh unto thee
Meek, and riding upon an ass,
And upon a colt, the foal of an ass."

"See, see! there sits the One of whom they sing!" And all crowd to see Jesus riding in the midst of His followers. As the crowd pour through the gates, Simeon and his mother are pressed to the wall. "Who is this?" ask the people; and proudly the crowd of Galilean pilgrims shout, "This is Jesus, the Prophet of Nazareth, in Galilee."

The wine bottles are left with a friend, and Simeon and his mother join the crowd which sweeps on even to the temple gates. There Jesus, dismounting, enters; for, having ridden, he needs but to take off his sandals. Simeon and his mother, who are strict in their obedience to the law, cannot follow till they have washed their feet. But, after a time, they too stand in the Court of the Women, and hear, with beating hearts, the very children singing, "Hosanna, hosanna to the Son of David!"

Standing there, his wonderful face beaming with love and pity, Jesus receives all who would ask aught of him. Now it is a mother, who brings her children to be blessed by the Master; his disciples know better than to hinder her, for had not Jesus said, "Suffer the little ones to come unto me?" So each child receives a blessing, and the mother goes away with a light heart. Again, it is a lame man, or a paralytic, or a daughter tormented by evil spirits—each one is granted what he asks, and remains to give thanks.

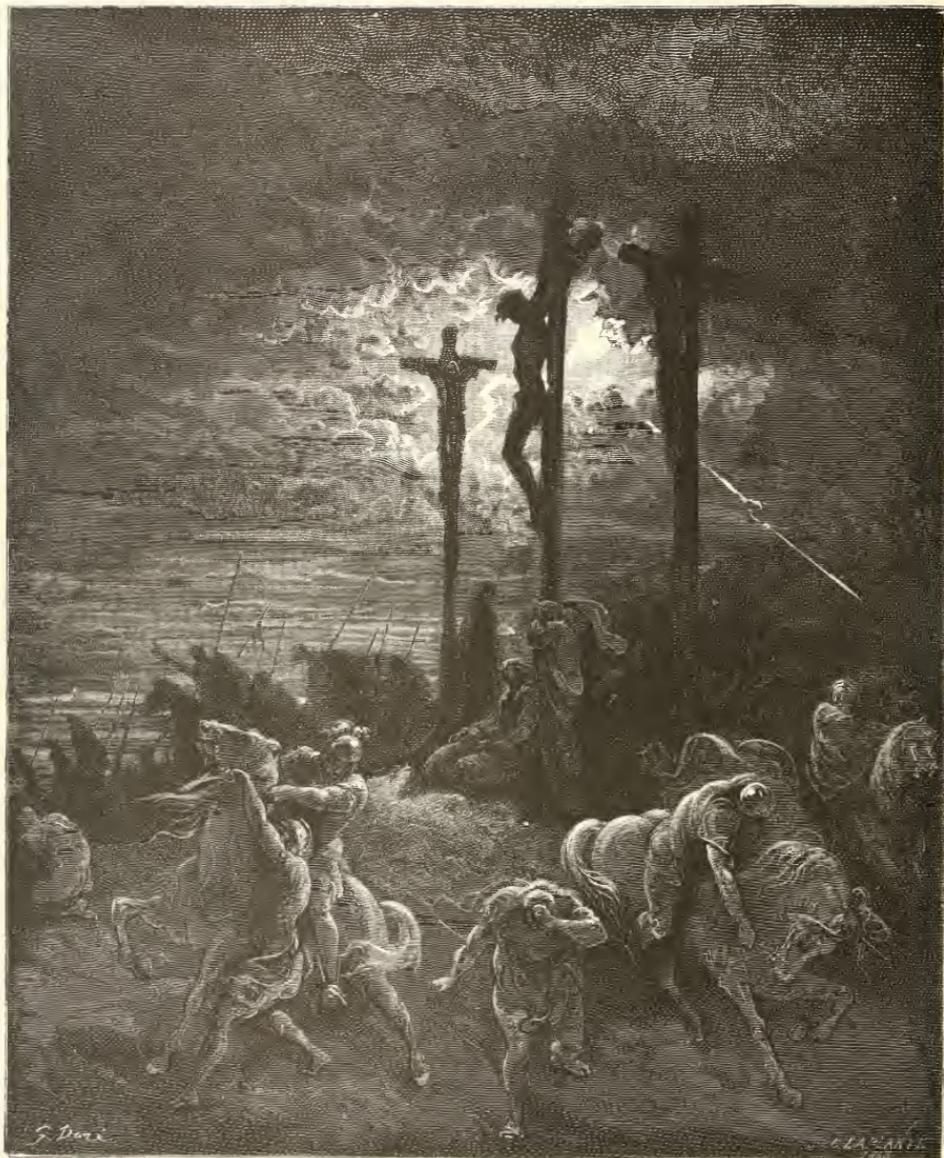
"Jesus, Son of David! Jesus, Son of David!" It is Simeon—his mother has brought him as near as she can; and, in his earnestness, he is crying louder than he need. "What wilt thou?" says a gentle voice at his side, and Simeon forgets

all else in his desire to see the One who speaks. "O that I might see thee!" he cries. And immediately comes the answer, "Be of good courage, behold me." "My Lord and my God!" Simeon exclaims, as he looks up into that face, which is the "chief among ten thousand and altogether lovely."

"Hosanna, hosanna to the Son of David!" sing the children. The chief priests and Pharisees, who have been standing aloof, push the common people aside, and say angrily to Jesus, "Hearest thou what these are saying?" With a smile of love for the little ones, taking one little happy child in his arms as he speaks, the Saviour answered quietly, "Yea, have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?" And the Pharisees dare not answer.

The whole day was spent in works of mercy. "The blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them." In the evening he went back to Bethany, returning on Monday morning to cleanse the temple of the money-changers and of those that sold doves. No doubt that day was passed in acts of mercy; but we have no record. Tuesday morning he again entered the temple courts—for the last time. The chief priests sent to know by what authority he had cleansed the temple the day before, but Jesus only answered by asking them whether the baptism of John was from heaven or of men. The Pharisees would not answer "from heaven;" they dared not answer "of men," for the common people fairly worshipped the memory of the Baptist. "Neither," answered Jesus, "tell I thee by what authority I do these things." But he did not let them go without one more warning. The parable of the two sons, one of whom said, "I go," and went not, and the other, who, having refused, yet afterward obeyed, and the story of the man that let his vineyard out to husbandmen who slew his servants and even his own son, were both addressed to the priests and Pharisees, and they felt the reproof Jesus meant to give. In their anger they tried to arrest him; but the people closed about him, and they could not touch him. But the arrest was only put off—the priests knew well that they would conquer in the end, and Jesus knew (what they did not) which of his own disciples would betray him into their hands.





CLOSE OF THE CRUCIFIXION.

“IT IS FINISHED.”

MATTHEW XXVII.

ALL day Tuesday, Simeon, to whom Jesus had restored his sight, had kept near the Saviour; but on Wednesday Jesus did not enter Jerusalem, as the young man had hoped He would. “After the feast,” he said to himself, “I shall ask Him to let me join Him, and be His disciple.” So Wednesday and Thursday passed. The young man noticed with pain that many who had spoken well of Jesus on Tuesday, on Thursday began to talk against him. “If He were the Messiah, He would show us some great sign,” they said. “It is not safe to go against the chief priests,” said others; while the very ignorant murmured that heaven would be lost if they went against the rabbis, and the rabbis did not like the Nazarene. Still, for all this, Simeon had no idea how few friends were left to Him he loved so well. On Friday morning he happened to be near the wonderful palace of Herod, where Pilate, the Roman procurator, was staying during the Passover. A crowd of priests and Pharisees were standing about. All looked so new and strange to the boy that he gazed curiously, and at last he saw, rising above the crowd, a sort of platform of beautiful marble. An ivory chair of state—Pilate’s seat, but he was not in it then—was on the platform, and among a crowd of angry Romans, Simeon saw Pilate standing beside a bleeding, fainting man. The prisoner had just been scourged—severely scourged, as a bystander, who had seen all, said—his body, which was torn and bleeding from the leaden whips, was covered now, but his face was wounded and bruised; and yet, in spite of all, the eyes were calm, and looked out upon the crowd with a strange love and pity.

“Behold your king!” cried Pilate; and with a cry Simeon recognized in that bleeding, tortured prisoner, the Jesus who had given him his sight. “It is the Messiah! Oh, what can we do? How have the Romans gotten our Messiah?” the boy exclaimed; but a man standing by shook him roughly and said, “Have a care how you call yon Nazarene the Messiah. The priests bid us cry ‘Crucify

him,' and it is better to obey them. By all the prophets, if that man were the Christ, could he not call heaven to help him? Would he stand there dumb and powerless?" Simeon could not answer. It did seem as if he who had done so much for others, might, if he chose, save himself. At any rate, all the boy could do was to watch and be ready if any others would try to save the Nazarene. But on all sides rose the shout, "To the cross! To the cross! Crucify him!"

Then Simeon saw Pilate go back into the judgment-hall, and the suffering Jesus was dragged after him. Many years after, Simeon learned why Pilate had taken him alone. It was to ask him whence he came. Jesus answered nothing, and Pilate, angry at this, said, "Knowest thou not that I have power to release thee?" Calmly the bleeding, tortured man answered: "Thou wouldest have no power against me except it were given thee from above." Pilate came back once more to try to release Jesus, and Simeon heard him speak: "I find no fault in him. He has been scourged; let that be enough," he said. But the chief priests knew how to make Pilate do as they wished; they knew that he would not risk losing his office for the sake of Jesus of Nazareth. "If you let this man go, you are not true to Cæsar," they cried; "any one who makes himself a king, as he has done, declares himself against Cæsar!"

Poor, weak Pilate; he had been too wicked to risk Cæsar looking closely into his affairs, and yet—and yet, if this should be the Messiah! He seated himself once more in his chair of state; and, pointing to Jesus, robed in the scarlet cloak, with the crown of thorns on his head, he cried, "Behold your king." "Let us have him," a few may have cried, with Simeon; but the only shout heard was, "Away with him! away with him! crucify him!" "What," cried Pilate, "shall I crucify your king?" But the priests knew how to answer him, and shouted, as if they really loved the Romans, "We have no king but Cæsar! We want no other king!"

Then came the order for the crucifixion. Simeon, weakened by sorrow, turned so faint as he heard it, that the man by whom he had been standing, who had heard from him why he so loved Jesus, had pity on the suffering youth, and took him to his own home. But the boy could not rest. Like many another who joined the crowd to Calvary, he walked on, hoping, even to the last, that Jesus would "save himself," never knowing till afterward that what the soldiers scoffingly said, was true—that if He would save others, He could not save himself, for He knew He must die for our salvation.

Death by crucifixion was never inflicted on a Roman; and was only used for the worst criminals; it was considered the greatest disgrace that could be given. The cross was made of a strong post, which soldiers carried to the place of execution, and two cross-pieces which were fastened together in the shape of a **V**, which the criminal carried, his arms fastened to the projecting ends. When Simeon joined the crowd, he saw three prisoners carrying the cross-beams, and he easily knew Jesus, even at a distance, for the cruel crown of thorns still rested on his head. Each prisoner had a whitened board hung round his neck, on which his offence was printed in large, black letters. They had not gone more than a third of the way when the guard of Romans stood still—there was some trouble with the prisoners. Oh, how Simeon's heart beat, thinking that at last Jesus was about to free himself. But no! word passed from to another, "The Nazarene has fainted, and they have taken the cross-pieces from him." No Jew or Roman would carry them, but a foreigner whom the soldiers had noticed look pityingly at the sufferer, was jeeringly ordered to carry the cross. He obeyed at once.

At last Calvary was reached—a bare spot, outside the city walls. The cross-pieces were nailed in their places, and the cross set up. Jesus was then lifted and tied to it as it stood upright, his arms stretched along the two cross-beams, his body resting on a projecting pin of rough wood. Then Simeon covered his face with his hands—he could not look as the soldiers drove a great nail into each hand; the feet were then pushed up till the soles lay flat on the upright post of the cross, and, being placed the one over the other, a huge nail was driven through them. "The wine and myrrh! Have they given it?" Simeon heard a woman ask; but another answered sadly, "He refused it." This mixture was prepared by kind-hearted women in Jerusalem. It stupefied the sufferer to some extent; but Jesus "endured the cross, despising the shame," for "the joy set before him"—the joy of our salvation.

When the boy once more uncovered his eyes, his heart seemed to stand still; for a new and awful fear flashed upon him—he could not see as before! All was growing dim and dark! Was Jesus, in dying, taking back the precious sight He had given? But then he heard others speaking of the "thick darkness," and found that no one could see distinctly. The priests quieted the common people by pretending that they expected just such a strange clouding of the sun, and kept on mocking Jesus, calling out, "If thou be the Son of God, come down from the

cross!" Even the thieves mocked him; but, later on, as Simeon, little by little, had drawn near to his friend, he heard one thief tell the other that they suffered justly, while Jesus was innocent, and then he cried out, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom!" Breathlessly Simeon and a few who still hoped that he had a kingdom which was indeed "not of this world," listened for an answer. "To-day," said the sufferer, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." The soldiers were startled at His words; the thick darkness was filling the strongest of them with fear; and now it began to be said that the Nazarene was dying. Dying!—why, he had been in perfect health, and prisoners often lived two days on the cross. To die, after three hours—it could not be! There was a great hush; even the women sobbed quietly, for a cry of agony broke from the Nazarene: "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani!" Simeon, hardly heeding the words, thought only how he must suffer, and, picking up a sponge, fixed it upon a reed, dipped it in a jar of wine and water, which stood by for the soldiers, and, reaching up, held it to the sufferer's lips, for the cross was quite low, the prisoner's feet being nearly to the ground. Whether he took the wine, Simeon did not know, but in a moment those wonderful eyes were opened wide, and Jesus cried in a loud triumphant voice, as if his joy was already begun, "It is finished!" In another instant he gave one sharp cry of agony, and his head fell forward. He was dead!

Then, as all stood gazing in wonder and awe, the ground began to tremble, and the central cross was raised higher and higher, till all, even the farthest off of the great crowd, could see Him who had said: "And I, if I am lifted up, will draw all men unto me." The multitude hurried away; the earth rolled and tossed, flinging them down, priests and Pharisees, as well as the despised rabble, and throwing them all into a terrible fear which few dared name. The centurion of the guard, who, with his soldiers, had to remain on Calvary, was bolder than others, for he said: "Truly this was the Son of God."



