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THE NEW BIBLICAL GUIDE.

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THE NEW
BIBLICAL GUIDE.

VOL. VI.

BY THE

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Author of

"What are we to Believe?" "Modern Discoveries and the Bible:"

"The Inspiration and Accuracy of the Holy Scriptures;" &c.

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ERRATA.

Page 4, line 10 from bottom, for *Salz* read *Satz*.

Page 175, line 8 from top, for David's read Saul's.

Page 283, line 14 from top, for Guerrin read Guerin.

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THE NEW BIBLICAL GUIDE

THE BOOK OF JUDGES.

CHAPTER I.

THE CRITIC AND THE ARCHÆOLOGIST.

WE are met at our entrance upon this volume with a fresh and surprising display of that marvellous Providence which has kept unfailing watch over the Bible. Ever since Osburn and Ebers published their gleanings among the monuments of Egypt, and Layard unearthed Sennacherib's long-lost palace at Nineveh, it was evident that the avenger was on the track of rationalism. These new sciences had, as their one and only object, to recall to life the times and the deeds of which, in a great measure, the Bible alone had retained any record. It was felt that these sciences and the critical theories were bound to meet, and that in the crash of that inevitable conflict, the Bible which had been so determinedly attacked would be amply avenged. That anticipation

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has been fully justified. Every advance in our knowledge of Bible times, which has been furnished by the Egyptologist and by the Assyriologist, has gratified the believer in the Scriptures, and has brought perplexity to those who have denied its truth and scouted its claims; and we are now to witness fresh confirmations, the bearing and full importance of which were not suspected, even by the best informed, less than half-a-dozen years ago.

The critics were meanwhile dealing ever more hardly with the Book of Judges. The elder rationalists were inclined to admit the historical character of a large portion of its contents. But the latest critical opinion sets small store indeed by them. De Wette was concerned only to maintain that the Book consisted of traditions, and not of contemporaneous, or even authoritative, history. This was all that was required to escape from the atmosphere of the miraculous. His judgment is, accordingly, comparatively mild. "Although distinguished," he says, "by miraculous and mythological features, the narrative not only bears the mark of a genuine, inartificial, popular legend, but, in part, of a true, historical tradition, and gives a lively picture of the condition and morals of the people at that time."* Bleek's attitude is even more favourable. He speaks of it as certain "that the author of the history of the Judges has, in some instances, met with written records, and made use of them in his work. This is the case with the history of Deborah

* *Introduction.*

. . . . the history of Gideon. . . . also the history of Samson, and perhaps other things." Of the last five chapters his opinion is still higher. "The great distinctness and unmistakeable precision of the narratives," he writes, "show that they were derived from faithful tradition, and make it probable that the written record of them was not long subsequent to the events."*

But matters have changed since then. The doctrine of evolution had not yet been applied to the worship of Israel. It had not occurred even to those daring of the older critics to maintain that the worship was only a form of idolatry which happened to become gradually purified. But to this depth the higher criticism has now definitely descended. It has cut the last ties which bound it to the faith of the Christian Church. There has never been, it declares, any supernatural revelation. All that has seemed to be such was only the slow result of natural processes. The doctrine of the one living and true God, the Creator of the heavens and of the earth, the infinitely Holy, who is Light and Love, is the outcome of man's thought and not a Divine unvailing. God has not at any time, it is now contended, burst through the darkness that covered the nations. He never, say these latter-day critics, supernaturally revealed Himself to Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob. He gave no law to Israel through Moses at Sinai or elsewhere. And, as a consequence, they are compelled to deny that the Israelites, in the earlier period of their history, possessed any of the institutions

* *Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp. 382, 383.

which the Pentateuch—according to them a late fabrication—describes. Nothing, they contend, was known, or could have been known, in the period of the Judges of the one central altar for Israel's sacrifices, or of the Aaronic priesthood. These, they maintain, were late inventions; and consequently any reference to them as existing in this early period must be a late and fraudulent concoction.

Quite in accord with this are Kuenen's references to the Book. "The compiler of the Book of Judges," he says, "considers Israel's fortunes during that period from one fixed point of view. . . . In this framework the writer sets the various traditions concerning this epoch which were at his disposal. But this does not mean that those traditions fit into this framework." He contends that the author mistook merely local incidents for general history, and he concludes: "Therefore, in order to form a correct idea of the history of this period, we must free ourselves as much as possible from the views of the author." Wellhausen is scornful. "One is reminded," he says, "of the *Salz, Gegensatz, and Vermittelung* of the Hegelian philosophy, when one's ear has been caught by the monotonous beat with which the history here advances, or rather moves in a circle. Rebellion, affliction, conversion, peace; rebellion, affliction, conversion, peace. The sole subjects of all that is said are Jehovah and Israel; their mutual relation alone it is that keeps the course of things in motion, and that, too, in opposite directions, so that in the end matters always return

to their original position. . . . That all this is no part of the original contents of the tradition, but is merely a uniform in which it is clothed, is admitted. . . . It is usual to call this later revision Deuteronomistic." * "Ordinarily he is content," he says further on, "with 'Baals,' or 'Astartes,' or 'Asherahs,' where the plural number is enough to show how little of what is individual or positive underlies the idea, *not to mention that Asherahs are no divinities at all, but only sacred trees or poles.*" † He sums up by affirming that we have here not history, but a "pedantic supernaturalism."

It is, of course, to be expected that all who are sensitive as to being behind the times will make haste to bring themselves into line with such authoritative utterances. Hastings' Bible Dictionary, which is supposed by some strangely undiscerning men to be on the side of orthodoxy, must needs include the following in its notice of the Book of Judges: "Many details have been referred, with more or less probability, to myth or misunderstanding, and not to history. Cushan Rishathaim of Mesopotamia is a shadowy and uncertain figure." After speaking in a still more depreciatory way of other incidents, the paragraph concludes: "Samson wavers between myth, saga, and history, belonging altogether to no one of them, but in part to each." And yet, while those words were being printed, archæological discoveries were being perfected, and the batteries, so to speak, were being raised which will pound this part of

* *History of Israel*, p. 231.

† *History of Israel*, p. 234, 235.

the critical edifice into dust. These discoveries will come before us immediately, and it will be shown how specially unhappy Wellhausen has been in his particular proof of the ignorance of the author of the Book of Judges. Meanwhile let me close this chapter with an illustration of how slender are the foundations upon which the huge superstructures of the higher criticism are reared. Bleek (who is followed in this by later critics) attributes the first chapter and the first five verses of chapter ii. to one writer, and chapter ii. 6-23 to another. "We cannot well imagine," he says, "that the same author could have written, in a perfectly independent way, the two introductions to the history of the Judges, chapter i. 1—ii. 5, and chapter ii. 6-23, and have placed them in the connection and sequence in which we now find them. It is not in the least probable that if an author had just written chapter i. 1—ii. 5, where, quite at the beginning, it is stated that after Joshua's death Judah was marked out as the leader, and other circumstances after this are summarily handled, he would have gone on as in chapter ii. 6, 'And Joshua let the people go,' &c., and in verse 8, 'And Joshua died,' &c."*

This is not a question, it will be seen, which only a critic may determine. The critics appeal to the ordinary reader and ask him to say whether there are not here two separate commencements of the Book, and commencements, which are so entirely independent of each other, that they could not have proceeded from the same author. Let us now, then,

* *Introduction*, p. 380.

as ordinary readers, turn to the Scripture and see how the matter stands. We mark, to begin with, that this first section (chap. i. 1—chap. ii. 5) deals with Israel's failure to obey the Divine command to drive out the inhabitants of the land. This is made abundantly plain in the closing verses of the first chapter: "Neither did Manasseh drive out the inhabitants of Beth-shean and her towns." There might have been an excuse for the men of Manasseh in the day of their weakness. But it was afterwards shown that Israel lacked the will to obey: "And it came to pass, when Israel was strong, that they put the Canaanites to tribute, and did not utterly drive them out." The failure of others of the tribes are also specially noted, and the section ends with the declaration of God's displeasure at Bochim (ii. 1-5): "Ye have not obeyed my voice. Why have ye done this?"

That was a sin of *omission*. The thing which Israel ought to have done it had left undone. The land which they ought to have cleansed for themselves and for their children they left full of Canaanitish abominations. When we turn to ii. 6, we find no "second commencement;" that is, no saying again what has been said already. We find instead a *second part* of the one masterly and pathetic introduction to the Book. It is a record of failure; and the failure was not confined to the disobedience already dealt with. There were sins of *commission* as well as sins of omission. "Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim: and they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, who brought them out of the land of

Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the peoples that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the Lord to anger. And they forsook the Lord, and served Baal and Ashtaroth" (ii. 11-13). It is with this idolatry that the second part of the introduction deals; and dealing with it, the writer had necessarily to mention the breaking up of the host and the departure of each tribe and each family, to its own locality. It was equally natural and necessary to mention the death of Joshua; for he is pointing out that during the great Captain's life-time Israel kept faithful to Jehovah. And yet this summary of the Book, so eloquent of the large comprehensive grasp, and clearly conceived purpose, of the author, is broken up and given to two writers simply because it deals with two things! A theory, condemned to shifts of that kind, is near its fall.

CHAPTER II.

THE POLITICAL CONDITION OF THE ISRAELITES FROM THE DEATH OF JOSHUA TO THE ACCESSION OF SAUL.

THE Book of Judges carries us over a period of nearly four centuries, and records the commencement of what is really the national history of Israel. The children of Abraham are now for the first time in a land of their own. There they plant

their own institutions and develop their national characteristics.

Before we look at the confirmations which modern discovery has brought to this part of the Scripture narrative, it may be well to remove a common, but mistaken, impression. It is usual to regard this as the barbaric period of Israelitish history. There was no central government, and, therefore, no provision, it is supposed, for the development of national unity. Each tribe settled down in such part of its allotted portion as it was then able to wrest from its former possessors, lived an isolated life, and sank, it is supposed into deepening barbarism and mis-rule. From this condition the nation was rescued by the institution of kingly government. That is the usual picture; and it is not to be wondered at if the period is looked upon as a dreary waste. Israel (it is supposed) was, indeed, led into Canaan; but that was all. There was no further Divine provision. Not only was nothing done to make the people a nation, but no attempt was made to bring about this consummation for the long period of four hundred years.

With this impression, writers have spoken of Joshua's failing to appoint a successor as "a grave mistake." In their judgment he failed to make the plainly necessary provision for the government of the people, and for the prevention of the anarchy, which anyone could have foreseen. But if a mistake was, indeed, committed, it would have to be attributed, not to Joshua, but to the Master whom Joshua served. Joshua made no provision for a successor, for the

simple reason that he had received no commandment to do so. If the omission was a defect, the defect lay in the Divine arrangements. In this view of the matter it is natural to ask whether, after all, there was any defect, and whether this very lack of any provision for a central government does not reveal a wiser and better plan for Israel.

And, when we consider this matter, we are astonished to mark a like absence of central government even in the days of Joshua himself. The city of Timnath-serah was allotted to him, and he appears to have retired to it as soon as the special service was ended, for which he had been appointed. Joshua had crushed the opposition of the Canaanites and of their allies. He had allotted the country among the tribes, and apportioned the cities of the Levites and the six cities of Refuge. When all this was done, he dismissed the two-and-a-half tribes, which had so long been fighting the battles of their brethren, and sent them back to their homes on the East of the Jordan. Their retirement seems to have been immediately followed by his own; for an incident occurs in connection with that very return of the two-and-a-half tribes which excites the whole nation. The returning tribes had built an altar on the West bank of the Jordan. It was an imposing structure, not meant for sacrifice, but for a memorial, which should excite observation and awaken curiosity. In this way these tribes imagined that the story of their service would be handed down to posterity, and that the rights of their children to the privileges of Israel,

would be safeguarded, notwithstanding their residence outside the land of Canaan. Should these rights ever be questioned in after times, here, they imagined, was an effectual reply. Their fathers had built that great altar on the Canaanitish side of Jordan. They had made it an exact copy of the one altar at which Israel was to worship, and had set it at the very place where Israel had entered into their possession; and they had done this that their children might claim their rights, should these rights ever be challenged by their brethren.

But an alarming account of their action had reached the ten and a-half tribes. The report made it appear as if this were a deliberate attempt to trample upon the Divine regulations, and to break the unity of the nation's worship. We need not now follow the story further. It is enough to notice that in the investigation and the settlement of this most important matter, which happens immediately after Joshua's dismissal of these tribes, the great leader of Israel actually takes no part whatever! We are told (Joshua xxii. 12), that "when the children of Israel heard of it, the whole congregation of the children of Israel gathered themselves together at Shiloh, to go up to war against them." But there had been no summons from Joshua, and Joshua does not appear to be among them. We read (verse 21) of "the heads of the thousands of Israel," and (verse 30) of "Phinehas the priest, and the princes of the congregation," but not of Joshua. He appears once more, indeed, in the end of the book;

but it is to give parting counsels, and to induce the Israelites to renew, in the last moments of his earthly life, their covenant with God. Nothing, therefore, can be plainer than this, that a central government, with its many officials, and its multitudinous arrangements, was not provided even in the time of Joshua's leadership.

It is clear, however, from the incidents just referred to that Israel was not left a prey to anarchy. Order was preserved among the tribes by "the princes of the congregation," and "the heads of the thousands of Israel." Arrangements had also been made in the wilderness, by Moses, for the appointment of inferior officers among the tribes, and these arrangements would no doubt be continued. But, after all is said, it must be confessed that there was nothing of a *political nature* to bind the tribes together, and to give them a national unity. This is shown by the very raising up of judges whenever even a few tribes had to be banded together to expel a common foe. There was no central authority which could act in such a crisis, and it had to be specially provided for each emergency. And after the special occasion had passed away, the Judge appeared to have retired to a private station, just as Joshua did when his special commission had been fulfilled. The judge was, indeed, the greatest personage of the time; and those who desired to have a decision pronounced in any case of special legal difficulty would, no doubt, seek the presence of this leading personage of the time, who had been so specially honoured of God in

working deliverance for Israel. But even here his authority rested upon the agreement of the parties to respect his decision, and not upon any inherent and acknowledged right of his to interfere. This absence of any provision for a central authority is equally clear also from the desire of the tribes to have a king which was more than once expressed, and which was finally insisted upon in the days when Samuel was judge. They were willing to sacrifice their tribal and individual freedom in order to weld the tribes together, and to turn their united force upon any foe who might threaten any of the tribes.

This, then, was the position in which Israel was left by the law. Everything else had been cared for but the selection of a monarch and the arrangements for royal administration. But let us now inquire whether there was any gracious design in this seeming neglect. The statement has sometimes been ventured that Israel was left to itself during those three hundred and ninety years. The raising up of the judges from time to time contradicts that. Is there also a contradiction of it in this very lack of provision for central government? There was one danger at least which it removed. Had a king been provided, or had a political constitution been given which would have been kingly in all but the name, the entire people would have been subjected to the will of one man. How that would have operated we see when kings are appointed. The downward plunge into idolatry, even in Judah, is the most marked feature in that sad kingly history. It may be said

that this was the tendency of the nation itself even during the period of the judges. That is true; but the conditions, nevertheless, differed greatly. Under the monarchy, power, and fashion surrounded and imitated the king; and the change, instead of slowly spreading as it did among separated tribes, at once acquired a fatal momentum, and became a religious revolution. The flood of change swept over the land and overthrew all resistance. And, in addition to this, in the period of the judges, the general lapse into idolatry did not immediately and necessarily alter the tabernacle services, and change the attitude of the priests and of the Levites towards the law. But under the kings, on the contrary, the temple services and the position of the priesthood were at once affected, and these great centres of influence were no longer permitted to bind the people to a purer and better past.

In view of the use, therefore, to which a centralised and powerful government would inevitably have been put, there was very evident wisdom in its postponement. One word more will now indicate the fulness of the Divine care and of the perfect wisdom manifested in the arrangements that were made. The tribes were not left without provision for the full development of the sentiment of national unity. The tribes met around the central altar. Three times a year the law required every male to appear before Jehovah in that place which He had chosen for Himself, and where the tabernacle was reared. There, at Shiloh, they met their brethren from East and

West, and North and South ; and the joy of brotherhood was hallowed by the recognition of their common relationship to God. Everything that would have interfered with this consciousness of their brotherhood in God was cleared away. Political organisation was sacrificed that the religious organisation might be permitted to do its work, and that the sense of their being the selected people of God might sink down into the hearts of the people. We can now see how their education for their momentous world-mission was being cared for with unslumbering watchfulness, and how the national character was being shaped throughout the whole of this period of seeming neglect. And all the arrangements that *were* made had this great purpose constantly in view. It was for this end that the tribe of Levi was broken up, and was scattered throughout the entire land. Forty-eight cities were set apart for the priests and the Levites (Joshua xxi). Thirteen of these were apportioned to Judah, Simeon, and Benjamin ; ten to Ephraim, Dan, and the half-tribe of Manasseh situated on the West of the Jordan ; thirteen were given to Issachar, Asher, Naphtali, and the other half-tribe to Manasseh on the East of the Jordan, in Bashan ; and twelve to Reuben, Gad, and Zebulun. Each tribe had thus either three or four of these cities according to the size of its territory ; and the religious education of the people was in this way fully provided for. With our present experience of the revolution which this small and comparatively unimportant people has worked in the thought and life

of the nations, we can see how wisely all this was adapted to prepare them for the service which by-and-bye they were to render to humanity. But must we not also confess that *the arrangements have this plainly in view?* Is not this service—a service which no nation, save this of Israel, has ever rendered to the world—the end towards which both the absence of political organisation, and the presence of these religious arrangements are alike tending? And when this has been admitted, another question confronts us. What mind was then able to foresee this result, or even to conceive the idea of such a mission? There is but one answer possible. The silence and the speech arrangements, and the seeming absence of these arrangements, alike reveal the hand of God.

CHAPTER III.

THE GODS OF CANAAN.

IN the incidents in the Book of Judges to which our attention is about to be called, constant reference is made to the idolatry which is the besetting sin of Israel during this period of its history. It may be well, therefore, for us to have some clear idea as to what this idolatry was.

The great divinity of the land was Baal. The word means “lord,” or “master,” and was no doubt one of the names applied originally to the Creator. It is

never applied to the true God, however, in the Scriptures. *Adon*, or *Adonai*, "Master," being used instead. The word *Baalim* is also met with, as in Judges ii. 11: "And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim." This word is the plural form of Baal, and indicates gods who were supposed to be later in origin than "the Baal," the supreme Lord. But, although in this separation of Baal from the later divinities we may trace a lingering ray of that primitive revelation which God had given of Himself, there was little besides. The spirituality of God was entirely lost sight of, and Baal was identified with nature, and specially with the Sun. He was represented sometimes as a human head sending forth rays of light; sometimes as a man seated; at other times the representation was a stone, or a conical piece of wood. Moloch, another form of Baal worshipped by the Moabites and the Ammonites, was represented as a human figure with a bull's head.

But the slender remnant of the primeval teaching, which we find in the supremacy of Baal, was hopelessly marred by a hideous conception. By the side of the god Baal there was placed a goddess—Asherah, or Ashtoreth. This conjunction is characteristic of every form of idolatry. It is found in



BAAL—A HEAD WITH
 RAYS PROCEEDING
 FROM IT.

Egypt, in Babylon, in Greece, and in Rome. It is absent in the Bible alone. And here the critical theory of Wellhausen, of Prof. George Adam Smith, and of others, that the worship of Jehovah was simply one of the many idolatries which was gradually purified by the labours, and by the clearing conceptions, of the prophets, goes to pieces. There is not the faintest trace of the worship of a female divinity in connection with the altar of Jehovah. But, if the

Israelitish religion *had* been a form of idolatry, the female divinity must have been there. Its absence is explained, at once, when it is admitted that the religion of Israel was a revelation. No other explanation is possible.



MOLOCH.

This double representation gave to the Canaanitish religion its fatal attraction and its power. The terrors of

Baal's wrath appealed to the fears of erring men, and Ashtoreth to their thirst for sensual pleasure. This has always been the two-fold appeal of every false worship, and we need not pursue our inquiries further as to the other gods worshipped by the various nationalities who dwelt in the land. It is enough that we notice this substitution of sensual indulgence, and of mere terror for the pure worship and ennobling fellowship of the true God. There was, however, a peculiar circumstance which forced this

idolatry into the thought and life of the people. Each town and district had its own Baal and Ashtoreth. Those who dwelt in these places, and partook of their abundance, and yet refused to acknowledge the divine lord and lady of the district, had something to dare. In the eyes of the idolators they were doomed men; and it required a very real faith in the only living and true God to rise above these superstitious fears.

A quotation was made in a previous chapter from Wellhausen which we are now in a position to examine. He challenges the accuracy of the writer of this Book of Judges, and specifies one feature in the narrative, the choice of which proves to be singularly unfortunate for Wellhausen and his theory. He singles out the use of the plural forms *Baalim* and *Ashtaroth* as hiding in their indefiniteness the author's ignorance. We now know that the multiplicity of these divinities was a special feature of the time, and that no terms could possibly be so appropriate. Another equally unhappy challenge is that regarding the use of the word *Asherah*, a post, or a tree, which, Wellhausen suggests, the writer confounds in his ignorance with *Ashtoreth*, or Astarte, or Aphrodite, the Eastern Venus. The following from the pen of Professor Sayce throws some welcome light on this matter. "Cyprus, in fact," he writes, "was the first of Phœnician colonies; Phœnician traders sailed from its harbours, and the most famous of the shrines of the great Phœnician goddess rose upon its coast. This was the temple of Astarte, or Ashtoreth, the

Phœnician Aphrodite, at Paphos, the fame of which lasted down to the days of the Roman Empire. Coins and gems tell us what it was like. In the centre of the temple was a nave, on either side of which ran an aisle of lesser height. In front stood the chief altar, on which the rain was said never to fall. No sacrifices were ever offered upon it; incense alone was burnt in honour of the goddess within.



TWO FIGURES OF BAAL
SEATED.

But the goddess was represented by no image, no idol of stone, or metal, or wood. A stone column of cone-like shape was the only symbol that stood inside the shrine, like the stone symbol that still exists inside the old Phœnician temple, now called the Giants' Tower in the island of Gozo. Legend declared that it had fallen from heaven, as had the aerolite, before which sacrifices were offered in the great temple of the Asiatic Artemis at Ephesus.*

The Phœnicians were none other than Israel's ancient foes. "The title which they themselves gave to their mother-country," adds Professor Sayce, "was Canaan . . . The Canaanites of Palestine and the Canaanites of Phœnicia were one and the same people."† The Temple at Paphos, then, was an imitation of the Temples of Ashtoreth in Palestine. In these, as in this, there were no idols of the goddess. What the Israelites, therefore, really worshipped were

**The Contemporary Review* (1883), p. 385. †*The Contemporary Review* (1883), p. 386.

the *Asherah*, the pillar; and here again no term could, by any possibility, have been more aptly chosen to describe the very worship with which the people of God defiled themselves. Could the futility of the higher criticism and the unfailing and minute accuracy of the Scripture have a more effective illustration than is supplied by this challenge and its answer?

But Israel plunged into still deeper depths of abomination. Speaking of the character of the Canaanitish worship, Maspero says: "The worship of these gods involved the performance of ceremonies more bloody and licentious even than those practiced by other races. The Baalim thirsted after



THE BABYLONIAN GODDESS ISTAR, THE
CANAANITE ASHTORETH.

blood, nor would they be satisfied with any common blood such as generally contented their brethren in Chaldea or Egypt; they imperatively demanded human as well as animal sacrifices. Among several of the Syrian nations they had a prescriptive right to the first-born male of each family; this right was

generally commuted, either by a money payment, or by subjecting the infant to circumcision. At important junctures, however, this pretence of bloodshed would fail to appease them, and the death of the child alone availed. Indeed, in times of national danger, the king and nobles would furnish, not merely a single victim, but as many as the priests chose to demand. While they were being burnt alive on the knees of the statue, or before the sacred emblem, their cries of pain were drowned by the piping of flutes or the blare of trumpets, the parents standing



ASTARTE.

near the altar, without a sign of pity, and dressed as for a festival; the ruler of the world could refuse nothing to prayers backed by so precious an offering, and by a purpose so determined to move him. Such sacrifices were, however, the exception, and the shedding of their own blood by the priests sufficed, as a rule, for the daily wants of the god. Seizing their knives, they would slash their arms and breasts with the view of compelling, by this offering of their own persons, the goodwill of the Baalim. The Astartés of all degrees and kinds were hardly less cruel; they imposed frequent flagellations, self-mutilation, and sometimes even emasculation, on their devotees. Around the majority of these goddesses was gathered an infamous troop of profligates (*kedeshim*), dogs of love (*kelabim*), and courtesans (*kedeshot*). A numerous staff, consisting of priests, male and female singers, porters, butchers, slaves,

and artisans, was assigned to each of these temples : here the god was accustomed to give forth his oracles, either by the voice of his prophets, or by the movement of his statues. The greater number of the festivals celebrated in them were closely connected with the pastoral and agricultural life of the country ; they inaugurated, or brought to a close, the principal operations of the year—the sowing of seed, the harvest, the vintage, the shearing of the sheep. At Shechem, when the grapes were ripe, the people flocked out of the town into the vineyards, returning to the temple for religious observances and sacred banquets when the fruit had been trodden in the winepress. In times of extraordinary distress, such as a prolonged drought or a famine, the priests were



ASTARTE, WITH A COW'S HEAD.

went to ascend in solemn procession to the high places in order to implore the pity of their divine masters, from whom they strove to extort help, or to obtain the wished-for rain, by their dances, their lamentations, and the shedding of their blood.”*

A host of degrading superstitions sprang from this idolatry, which tyrannised over the mind and effectually shut out from this religion all moral progress. We can now see how the urgency of the command to abstain from any participation in idolatry reflects

* *The Struggle of the Nations*, pp. 160-162.

the danger of the time. The Pentateuch rings with such cries as these: "He that sacrificeth unto any god save unto the Lord only, he shall be utterly destroyed" (Exodus xxii. 20); "Thou shalt not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do after their works: but thou shalt utterly overthrow them, and quite break down their images" (xxiii. 24). "When the Lord thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou; and when the Lord thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them: neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly. But thus shall ye deal with them; ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their Asherahs, and burn their graven images with fire. For thou art a holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto Himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth" (Deuteronomy vii. 1-6). There we have the very note of the time. It is a note also

that vibrates with the consciousness of Israel's mission to the nations. We have more here, therefore, than a proof of the historical character of the Pentateuch, of Joshua, and of Judges. That is, indeed, here. The evil which Israel is so strenuously warned against, is the outstanding peril of that very time. But the conviction that Israel has to fight the idolatry of the nations more than the nations themselves; and that, though it may gain the land, everything is lost unless it slays its idolatries and buries them in a grave from which there shall be no resurrection—that conviction takes us further. It betrays a clear, and what I may call an overpowering, consciousness of Israel's mission to humanity. Who could then have foreseen the work which the world was not to witness for fifteen centuries? Who was then able even to understand it? That it is here understood, foreseen, and persistently worked for, no one can fail to see. But, when we have noted that, we have marked the finger of God!

CHAPTER IV.

THE TEL-EL-AMARNA TABLETS.

REFERENCE has frequently been made in these pages to the startling discovery made about thirteen years ago of part of the State Records of ancient Egypt. Amenhotep IV., one of the last kings of the 18th dynasty, was bent upon introducing a new religion; and, quarrelling with the powerful

Egyptian priesthood, he quitted Thebes, his capital. He built a new city at El Amarna, and conveyed thither some of the State documents belonging to his own time and to that of his father, Amenhotep III. In 1888 a number of crumbling wooden chests were found in the ruins. These were filled with clay tablets of various sizes, and covered closely on both sides with writing. That writing was not in the ordinary Egyptian hieroglyphs, but in the Assyrian, or Babylonian, character. When the tablets were placed before those who were able to read them, they were found to consist mainly of letters written from princes and governors in Palestine to those two Egyptian kings some ages before (as was then believed) the times of the Exodus.

The discovery created in learned circles one of the deepest sensations which they have ever experienced. Indications had, indeed, been previously met with of an early connection between Babylonia and Palestine. But here was proof that the connection had been ancient, close, and long-continued. It had been so close and so long-continued that the writing and the language used by the princes of Palestine in their intercourse with foreign countries was the Babylonian. It was in Babylonian that they corresponded even with Egypt. Then scholars had despaired of obtaining any certain information concerning the condition of ancient Palestine. These scholars had almost all accepted the assurances of the critics, and the Scripture history was supposed to be of late origin, to be filled with myth and pure invention, and consequently

to be quite unreliable. And now the curtain was suddenly lifted. The Palestine of that very time lay before them. They saw its struggling cities. They passed into the cabinets of its princes, and looked over their shoulder as they penned the story of their desires and their ambitions, of their triumphs and their sufferings.

We have already seen that the Palestine thus suddenly displayed was the very Palestine set before us in the Scripture. It now remains to question these letters more closely, and to see what light they cast upon the period of the Judges. *That they deal with this very time* is now admitted by a large and increasing number of leading archæologists. A people, named the Habiri, is frequently mentioned in the letters. It was suggested at the very first that these were none other than the Hebrews. But the notion was discouraged by several leading writers, and was for the time dismissed. But the study of the letters has led one after another to come back to the earlier opinion. Carl Niebuhr, for example, says, in his little book on *The Tel-el-Amarna Period*:—"By the Habiri we must here understand no other than the Hebrews, who were therefore already to be found in the 'Promised Land,' but had not yet firmly established themselves there. They swarmed in the Lebanon, where Namyauza had formerly enlisted one of their hordes; and yet it seems as if they already held Shechem and Mount Ephraim as free tribal property. At any rate, no letter thence to the king has been discovered, although there is one mention of the City

Shakmi (Shechem). The genuinely ancient passage in the Scriptural accounts of the conquest in the Book of Joshua, and still more the valuable fragments in the first chapter of Judges, are fairly in accordance with what we here learn from the tablets.*

It will be seen that the writer belongs to the critical school. For him Joshua and Judges contain something besides a "genuinely ancient passage" and "valuable fragments." But it will also be noted that here again confession is wrung from critical lips. As hitherto, so now, the moment discovery discloses the things touched upon by the Scripture, rationalism has to revise its decisions. Before we ask what has compelled revision in this case, it will be necessary to say a word upon the chronology of the letters and of the Bible.

Hitherto our difficulty has been to get a fixed point in the more ancient Egyptian chronology from which to reckon. Such a point seems to be supplied in the reign of Mineptah (whom the majority of Egyptologists had fixed upon as the Pharaoh of the Exodus). In his reign a new era of Sothis (the dog-star) began. The Egyptians reckoned 365 days in the year; but did not take any account of the hours which were over and above that period. We correct this reckoning by adding a day to the year in every fourth year, which we call leap year. But even this is not a perfect adjustment. We have, at certain intervals, to omit the addition of the day in what would, in ordinary circumstances, have been leap

* Page 46.

year, as we have just done in the year 1900. The Egyptian astronomers knew that in 1460 years of 365 days each the reckoning came into exact agreement with the motions of the heavenly bodies. At the beginning of that long period the dog-star first appeared in the morning sky on the 20th of July (when the rise of the Nile begins); and only at the close of it do the date and the position of the dog-star coincide again. This was called the period of Sothis. Now this appearance of the dog-star occurred at Mineptah's accession. The date is therefore an astronomically fixed point, and is given by Ebers as 1325 B.C., and by Erman as 1322 B.C.

The reader will remember that the Biblical date of the Exodus (including the 93 years omitted for symbolical reasons) is 1584 B.C. Let us now take the date given by Ebers and add to it the reigns of the predecessors of Mineptah till the death of Thotmes II.,

Accession of Mineptah	...	...	...	...	1325 B.C.
Rameses II., his predecessor,					
had reigned	...	...	...	...	67 years.
Seti I.	...	..	...	...	9 „
Rameses I.	...	...	...	...	2 „
Giving as the date of the ac- |					
cession of the 19th dynasty |					1403 B.C.

Prof. Flinders Petrie (*History of Egypt*, vol. II.) gives 175 years as the duration of the 18th dynasty after the death of Thotmes II., whom we have identified with the Pharaoh of the Exodus, and who perished in the Red Sea when the Israelites crossed over into Asia and ended the Egyptian sojourn. But there are

several kings who are said to have reigned in the troublous days which closed the 18th dynasty. Let us add, say, six years for these, and we have the following result :—

The 19th dynasty began (as we have just seen) in	... ..	..	1403 B.C.
The closing days of the 18th dynasty			6 years
From then to the death of Thotmes II.			175 „
Thotmes II. dies, and the Exodus	}	1584 B.C.	
takes place in	... ..	}

The startling agreement of these dates speaks for itself.

Let us now see what points in Israelitish history are touched upon by the letters. The documents belong to the closing years of Amenhotep III. and to the reign of Amenhotep IV. Now, if we can determine the interval which elapsed between the Exodus (or the death of Thotmes II.) and the times of these monarchs, we shall have the important information we require.

Thotmes III. counts his reign from the 13th year of the reign of Hatshepsut, or Hatasu, his sister.* We shall then have

Hatshepsut	... ..	13 years
Thotmes III.	... ..	54 „
Amenhotep II.	... ..	26 „
Thotmes IV.	... ..	9 „
		102 years
Then Amenhotep III. reigned nearly		31 „
Amenhotep IV.	... ..	18 „
		151 years

* Flinders Petrie, *History of Egypt*, vol. ii., p. 32.

This means that Amenhotep III. began to reign 102 years after the Exodus; or (seeing that 40 years elapsed between the Exodus and the entry into Canaan) 62 years after the wars of Joshua had begun. Long before these 62 years had ended, the preliminary conquest of the land had been accomplished, the allotment to the tribes had been made, and Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh had passed over to their homes in Gilead and Bashan. The tribes had then, apparently, settled themselves down in the lands which they had captured; they engaged in the manifold labours of colonisation; and they left the enlarging of their borders and the further subjugation of the country to a future time. The letters, which are of special interest to us, belong to the time of Amenophis IV. His father, Amenophis III., reigned, as we have just seen, 31 years, and he himself 18 years, 49 years in all. Adding these to the 62 gives us 111 years. In other words, the death of Amenophis IV. brings us down 111 years after the entry of the Israelites into Canaan. The Canaan shown in the letters is, therefore, Canaan as it was from 70 to 110 years after Joshua began his great work of leading the people of God into the long-promised inheritance.

That this identification of the period leads to important results will be manifest immediately. Meanwhile, let me ask the reader to mark that there are certain parts of the critical case against the Bible which the discovery made at Tel-el-Amarna has utterly swept away. The chronology of the Bible was regarded with contempt. It was impossible

that the critics, with their pre-conceived opinions, should have treated it seriously. What dependence could be placed upon dates of events which, in the critics' judgment, had been handed down by traditions so unreliable that the events which they recorded were magnified and distorted almost beyond recognition? Egyptologists and others accordingly felt no compunction in setting the careful reckoning of the Scriptures entirely aside, and giving us a Pharaoh of the Oppression, and a Pharaoh of the Exodus, who lived some centuries after these events had taken place. When we mentioned the fact that, if Rameses II., and Mineptah were the Pharaohs referred to in the Bible, the Scripture chronology would be wrong to the extent of nearly 300 years, the answer was a look of pained surprise, and the suggestion that we ought to be supremely thankful to have such a couple of Pharaohs at any price. These letters have now made an end of this learned nonsense; for they show that the Hebrews were out of Egypt and were settled in Palestine before Rameses II. was born. The current theory had already received some serious blows. We have noted Mineptah's own mention of Israel in the inscription discovered by Prof. Flinders Petrie in Egypt. This proves that Israel was already settled in Palestine during Mineptah's life-time. And there are still earlier notices. The tribe of Asher is named both by Rameses II., and by Seti I., the father and the grandfather of Mineptah. The mention of this tribe is in full agreement with its geographical

position ; and there is no doubt that the name, as it appears in the inscriptions, is that of the Israelitish tribe. "The agreement," says Prof. Max Müller, "is phonetically perfect ;" and he adds that "we must take some trouble" not to see in this land named "Aser," the territory inhabited by the Hebrew tribe.*

Another question, and one which affects the very foundation of the higher criticism, has been settled here beyond the possibility of appeal. The names for God employed in the Pentateuch (and specially in Genesis) were supposed to indicate the work of different writers. "The Elohist" was said to use the name *Elohim* or *El* for God, because he knew no other. "The Jehovist" lay under a like necessity of using the name *Jehovah*. He, too, supposed that there was no other name for the Divine Being. There were discussions as to the respective ages of these mysterious personages ; then an agreement was arrived at which filled the little critical world with astonishment and admiration ; then their conclusion was reversed, and the writers were turned upside down, the Elohist, who had been on the top, now finding himself at the bottom. He has ever since been kept there with the same marvellous "agreement"! But the Tel-el-Amarna correspondence proves that the idea that either *Jehovah* or *Elohim* was a comparatively late name for God is a vain imagination. *Both names are older than Moses, were in use among various nationalities at the time of the*

* *Asien und Europa*, p. 226.

Exodus, and had been in use so long that they had entered into the names borne by political personages of the time. "The word Elohim," says Conder, "occurs frequently in the Tel-el-Amarna letters;"* that is it was used in the daily speech of the Canaanitish people in the time of Moses. It appears in such names as Jabn-ilu and Milki-el. The lists of Thotmes III. (contemporary with Moses) mention a town named "Bet Jah," that is "the house of Jehovah!" And this name enters also into the composition of the names of quite a number of notables mentioned in the letters. Among these we find Lapa-ja, Baia-ja, Arsa-ja, Ada-ja, Buchi-ja, Birid-ja, and others. These facts are quite in line with others which long ago taught scholars caution regarding this theory. A king of Hamath, in the North of Syria, who flourished in 720 B.C., is designated by two names on Assyrian monuments belonging to that period. He is called at one time Jau-bidi ("the servant of Jehovah,") and at another time Ilu-bidi ("the servant of Elohim.") Here then, in the eighth century B.C., both the words *Jehovah* and *Elohim* are being used as names for God; they are accepted also as interchangeable names, so that "the servant of Elohim" really means "the servant of Jehovah."

* *The Tel-el-Amarna Tablets*, p. 4.

CHAPTER V.

THE HEBREWS IN PALESTINE.

A WORD or two may now be said as to how there should have been any correspondence at this time between the court of Egypt and the princes of Palestine. It was previously known from the Egyptian inscriptions that the Pharaohs of the 18th dynasty, who had expelled the Hyksos, had followed them as these retired towards the East. The Egyptian kings had opened a pathway for themselves to the North of Syria and the Euphrates, along the sea-coast of Palestine. This Thotmes III., at the very time apparently when the Israelites were wandering in the wilderness, had re-opened. But the revelation of the reality and extent of this conquest was one of the many surprises which these Tel-el-Amarna letters brought us. It was not only the fortresses of the coast line which had been captured. The whole country East of the Jordan had been subjected. The native princes held their cities and their territory for Egypt, and over a certain number of cities Egyptian governors had been appointed. In the times of the two kings, to whom the letters were sent, the Egyptian power had seriously declined. Their conquering armies no longer swept along the coast to renew their triumphs in the North and East. They were even unable to send sufficient forces to save their

subjects from oppression. And yet, so thoroughly had Egypt subjected the country, that the very name of the Pharaoh seemed sufficient to bow the rebellious to his will.

Azirú, an ambitious prince in the North of Palestine, who subjected one adjoining principality after another, in the evident hope of founding a kingdom, and who displayed extraordinary address in placing these aggressions in a favourable light before the Egyptian Court, was put down without the use of any external force. He was merely requested to come to Egypt: and he had eventually to obey. Once there, he was not suffered to return to the scene of his former achievements. The firm hold of Egypt upon the country was also shown in the exaction of the tribute. "The king," says Carl Niebuhr, "was not to be trifled with when tribute was overdue. The most valid excuses—loss of territory, war, failure of the harvest—were received with a suspicion doubtless justified in general, but which must have caused much hardship in individual cases. The ordinary tribute was fixed, as well as the regular subsidy for royal troops which had to be raised in emergencies. But the gifts—such as female slaves—which must needs be sent, not only to the courtiers, but even to the king himself, added enormously to the burden; so much so, that, to the poorer chiefs, a summons from Egypt to appear in person meant little less than ruin. Resistance to it was so surely to be counted on, that such a summons was often kept in the background more as a threat than anything else. Now and then,

petty chiefs in Palestine and Syria withheld their bushels of corn, their three oxen, or their twenty sheep; or perhaps they were so sparing of bakshish that the tribute itself was swallowed up, and vanished entirely from the accounts. It was scarcely possible to take costly measures to punish such delinquents, so the business was turned over to some kind neighbour of the recalcitrant chief, and a little war was soon fairly ablaze. But when direct commands of royal ambassadors were treated as of doubtful authenticity, it was hardly possible that the authority placed in the hands of an equal would meet with much respect. Both leaders received reinforcements; a third intervened at a moment favourable to himself; many, and often very remote, quarrels broke out, and when at length the royal commissioners hurried upon the scene, it was hard for them to say whether or not the original sentence had been executed. Certainly most of the property of the original offenders had been largely lost or destroyed, but the plunder had crumbled away in passing through countless hands, and the royal official might seek it from Dan to Beersheba, or further, but in vain. Out of the first difficulty a dozen others had arisen, till the suzerain seized upon his dues by force, yet without leaving peace behind him. The tablets are full of references to these complicated struggles, which it is not always possible to follow in detail."*

It seems also that some, at least, of the princes were trained in Egypt, and then sent to Palestine. One

* *The Tel-el-Amarna Period* pp. 19-21.

writes to the Pharaoh: "To the king my lord, my gods, my sun; Yabitiri is thy servant, the dust of thy feet, &c. And a faithful servant of the king am I. I look hither and I look thither, but it is not light; then I look to the king my lord, then there is light. A brick may be removed from its firm bed, but I move not away from the king's feet. Let my lord the king ask Yanhamu, his *rabisu* (viceroys of Lower Egypt). While I was still young he brought me to Egypt, and I served my lord the king and stood at the gate of the palace (as page). And to-day, let my lord the king ask his *rabisu*. I guard the gates of Gaza and of Joppa. I am also attached to the Pidati (soldiers) of my lord, the king; whither they go, thither do I go with them, as even now. On my neck rests the yoke of my lord the king, and I bear it."

But in this somewhat extensive correspondence there is a significant blank. *There is no communication from the Hebrews.* They are neither allies nor tributaries. And yet they are everywhere in the land. I have already quoted the words of Carl Niebuhr, who points out that they were in the extreme North of Palestine. He says: "They swarmed in the Lebanon." They were also in the heart of the country. "It seems," he says, "as if they already held Shechem and Mount Ephraim as free tribal property." They are in the Phœnician coast. Letter 69 (in Winckler's collection) is addressed to Amenophis III. There the writer says: "Since thy father returned from Sidon, since that time the lands have fallen into the hands of the Habiri." The father of this king

was Thotmes IV., the last king of the 18th dynasty who invaded Syria. Thus, within 30 years from the crossing of the Jordan by Israel, they have come down into the rich low lying lands of the Canaanites. The prince of Khazi (near Tyre) writes to Pharaoh that the Hebrews have taken cities, which he names, and have burnt them.* They have apparently been still more triumphant on the East of the Jordan. There does not seem to be a single letter from, or reference to, the territory of Gilead and its adjacent districts. The same silence reigns, as we have seen, in regard to Shechem and Mount Ephraim. This evidently means that the Egyptian conquests had been wiped out in these districts, along with the native populations, as we know was the case in the conquests of territory under Moses and Joshua. The Hebrews are also in the South. Joshua had captured the king of Jerusalem and taken his city. It seems, however, to have been occupied again, and held for Egypt. Abdkhiba, its king, is, however, in great trouble. He is in perpetual terror because of the Hebrews. I take the following quotations from Professor Flinders Petrie's summary of the letters. "A. (Abdkhiba) continually tells the officers that all the dependent princes will be lost. Let troops be sent, for the king has no longer any territory, the Khabiri" (Hebrews) "have wasted all." This, in all likelihood, refers to the campaign entered upon by the tribes of Judah and Simeon after the death of Joshua (Judges i.): "And Judah said unto Simeon his brother, Come up with

* Flinders Petrie, *Syria and Palestine*, p. 28.

me into my lot, that we may fight against the Canaanites; and I likewise will go with thee into thy lot. So Simeon went with him. And Judah went up: and the Lord delivered the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hand; and they slew of them in Bezek ten thousand men" (verses 3, 4).

The king of Jerusalem is evidently in great terror. He adds to his letter this postscript: "To the scribe of my lord the king—Abd Khiba your servant. Bring aloud before my lord the king the words, 'The whole territory of my lord the king is going to ruin.'" "This last injunction to the scribe, to impress the facts on the king," says Prof. Petrie, "is curious; it bears such a stamp of sincerity that it seems alive in its earnestness even now."* In a subsequent letter he writes, "Now the Khabiri occupy the cities. Not one prince remains, all are ruined. Turbatsu was slain at the gate of Zilu. . . . Yapti-Addi was slain at the gate of Zilu. Asks for troops to Urusalim (Jerusalem), or all will be lost. If not, desires to be fetched away with his brothers to the king." His last letter ends with the cry that "if no troops are sent, the land will belong to the Khabiri." That his alarm was not groundless, is shown in the words of Scripture which describe the calamity which he feared: "Now the children of Judah had fought against Jerusalem and had taken it, and smitten it with the edge of the sword, and set the city on fire" (verse 8).

This wide distribution of the Hebrew people—

* *Syria and Egypt*, p. 119.

especially their being met with so very far North—has troubled the critics and their friends. Dr. Paul Haupt, the editor of that critical *reductio ad absurdum*, “The Polychrome Bible,” proposes to depart here from the usual rendering of the word found in the tablets. But that is a vain suggestion. Dr. Flinders Petrie, who is equally disturbed by the fact, still represents the writers of the letters as referring to “the Khabiri.” Before marking the perfect accord between the Scripture and these ancient letters, let us briefly note what these references are. Itakama complains that Namyawaza “has delivered all the cities in the land of Gidshi, and in Ubi (Upper Orontes and Damascus Plain), to the Khabiri.”* Namyawaza sends his own version of the matter to Pharaoh and “reports his readiness for service with his soldiers, chariots, brothers, his Khabiri, and his Suti.”† The same writer accuses another governor of treasonable practices. “Biridashya,” he says, “has made the city of Yinuama rebel, and brought chariots to the city of Ashtari, and delivered it to the Khabiri.”‡ Galilee and the whole of the North of Palestine appears to be in trouble. A prince named Shubandu, writes to the Egyptian king that “the Khabiri are strong.”§ Another pressing for the despatch of troops, exclaims that “the governors are destroyed; all the land falls away to the Khabiri.”|| One striking feature of those troublous times is the selfish intriguing of the princes and the governors. No one seems to have faith in another, or to attach the

*Flinders Petrie, *Syria and Egypt*, p. 63. † P. 64. ‡ P. 65. § P. 72. || P. 73.

slightest weight to anything but self-interest. Ribaddi, the Governor of Northern Phœnicia, writes to Pharaoh "for troops that he may defend the king's land from Abdashirta and the Khabiri." Here the Hebrews may be in league with the Abdashirta, or they may be named as attacking Ribaddi independently. In another letter he describes himself as hemmed in by the Hebrews. Zimridi, the prince of Sidon, says that Sidon "is safe, but that all his other cities have fallen to the Khabiri, and he asks for troops and succour."* From Ribaddi again the complaint comes that "if troops are not sent the land will fall to the Khabiri," and still later he writes that "the Khabiri take possession of all the lands."† Subsequent communications repeat the same cry, for there is evidently no possibility of repulsing or arresting the advance of this warlike people. He "fears that Gubla will fall into the hands of the Khabiri." Then the city of Tsumara awakens his apprehensions in like manner. He has to buy a passage from the Khabiri for a message to the city from the Egyptian king. The price he pays is "thirteen of silver and garments."‡ The story of the city ends with the announcement "Tsumura, your fortress is now in the power of the Khabiri."§ In his last letter there is still more frequent mention of the Khabiri. One expression indicates the apprehensions which this powerful people inspired. "If the king do not send troops," he declares, "all the king's lands as far as Mitsri (Egypt) will fall into the hands of the Khabiri."||

*Flinders Petrie, *Syria and Egypt*, p. 74. †Pp. 78, 79. ‡P. 86. §P. 90. || *Ibid.*, p. 114.

From this last reference it would appear that Ribaddi was aware that the Khabiri *were operating in other districts as well as in the North of Palestine*. They were rapidly subjecting the entire country. Let us now inquire what the position of the Hebrews was at this very period according to the Scripture account. The two and a-half tribes had returned to Gilead and Bashan on the East of the Jordan. The territory had been divided among the tribes. These had broken up the camp at Gilgal, had departed each to its inheritance, and were engaged in the work of driving out its former possessors. The activity at once in the North of Palestine, and in the South, as shown in the letters, is quite in accord with this. As to the impossibility of the Hebrews being so far North, a glance at the map will show that they are in the very positions which the Scripture assigns to them. The half-tribe of Manasseh occupies the land of Bashan, whose Northern border lay to the South of the plains of Damascus. Naphtali spreads upward into the valleys of the Lebanon, and Asher possesses the sea-coast Northward to Tyre. These are the very districts to which the letters we have just looked into refer.

What we learn of their alliances with various princes is also just what the Scripture has described as part of the disobedience of Israel and the fruitful seed of future trouble and degradation. But let their faith also be marked. Here is a people in the midst of active, warlike, and powerful foes. Is it not a necessity of their position—and might we not say

the essential condition of their existence—that they should *not* separate? “Divide and conquer” might well have been the policy of their enemies; and here they, themselves, are voluntarily and systematically putting themselves in this strategically fatal position! Instead of remaining a strong compact body and presenting an unbroken front, they are breaking up their array and plunging, in comparatively small detachments, into the very heart of territories swarming with deadly foes. But such was the command of God. It was the Divine plan for Israel as it is to-day the Divine plan for the Church. Each tribe of Israel, like each section of the Church, is to know how fully God is with it and for it. And the letters, as well as the Bible, assure us *that this command was obeyed*. They followed a plan from which the plainest dictates of human wisdom would have dissuaded them. And they did this because they feared God and trusted in Him. Let us acknowledge this with humility as well as with thankfulness. We have some things to learn even from ancient Israel.

And when we turn to the first chapter of Judges we read there the story of the alliances, and we understand the terror which the advancing Israelites inspire everywhere. Here we have the very picture presented to us by Ribaddi, Zimrida, and others, writing from the North of Palestine:—“Neither did Manasseh drive out the inhabitants of Beth-shean and her towns, nor Taanach and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Dor and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Ibleam and her towns, nor the inhabitants of

Migiddo and her towns: but the Canaanites would dwell in that land. And it came to pass, when Israel was strong, that they put the Canaanites to tribute, and did not utterly drive them out" (Judges i. 27, 28). Here the exceptions to universal subjugation are minutely rehearsed. But these *were* exceptions. The rest of the land was dealt with according to the commandment. The other Northern tribes acted in the same way, warring, yet making the very alliances indicated in the correspondence. But the land was, nevertheless, being swept with fire and sword. The Negeb, in the extreme South, was invaded and captured. "And Judah went with Simeon his brother, and they slew the Canaanites that inhabited Zephath, and utterly destroyed it. And the name of the city was called Hormah" (verse 17). They then swept down to the coast-lands of the Philistines. "Also Judah took Askelon with the coast thereof, and Ekron with the coast thereof" (verse 18).

Further study will disclose how marvellously these scattered notices in the Tel-el-Amarna letters agree with the Scripture account. For one thing, these Habiri *have no central organisation, or king. Their leaders are not once named.* There are no conferences with, or deputations or ambassadors from, or to, their princes. *It is the people that fixes the attention of the Canaanite and the Amorite chiefs.* The constant talk is of the Habiri. It is they who besiege, and conquer, and possess. A second feature is the terror which the advancing Israelites inspire. "Let the king," writes Abdkhiba, from Jerusalem, "have a

regard to his land. The whole domain of the king is lost: it has set itself in array against me. So long as there were ships on the sea, the mighty arm of the king possessed Nachrima and Kasch (Babylonia), but now the Hebrews possess the king's towns. Not one prince is left to my lord the king. They are all undone. Behold! Turbasa was slain in the valley of Silu, and the king remains idle! Behold, Zimrida, of Lachish, his servants seek to lay hands on him to put him to death." * "Japhti-Addi," he continues, "is smitten in the valley of Silu, and the king remains idle! Let the king have a regard to his land! If no troops come in this year, then is the whole domain of my lord the king lost. If it is not told my lord the king that the land of my lord the king is undone, then are all the principedoms undone. If there are no troops in this year, let the king send his officer that he may fetch me with my kinsfolk, that we may die with my lord the king."

Another significant statement in the letters should be noted and remembered. The critics assert that the Hebrews were at this period idolators like the rest of mankind. Monotheism at this early period would have been a miracle—that is, it would be due to a special revelation from above—a Divine intervention; and such things, say the critics, "do not happen." Consequently belief in the one living and true God is not earlier, say they, than the Exile. But the letters show that the Israelites *were Monotheists in the 15th century B.C.!* Ribaddi, the governor of the

* Winckler, p. 181.

Northern Phœnicia, bewails: "The hostility of the Hebrews waxes mighty against the land, and *against the gods,*"* This is the very cry raised against the Christians as they pushed their conquering career (though not with carnal weapons) over the Roman world. They were "the enemies of the gods," because in no measure, and in no form, would they adopt or sanction the manifold idolatries of their day. It was *their* monotheism that made that impression. If Israel is hailed with that very cry—if it also is seen to be warring with the gods, is it not on the same account? Are not these also monotheists, worshippers of the one only living and true God, immortal, and invisible? It needed this feature in the record to show us quite clearly the conquering Hebrews, who served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and of the elders who outlived Joshua; and it is a part of the record which, in the good Providence of God, is not lacking. The archæologist brings his exhumed tablets and shows us the past as it then existed: and lo! this early monotheism is a fact, and the miracle of revelation takes its place among the things that *have* happened!

* *Winckler*, . 54.

CHAPTER VI.

OTHNIEL AND CHUSHAN-RISHATHAIM.

AFTER narrating the death and burial of Joshua, and the passing away of that generation, the Scripture continues: "And there arose another generation after them that knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel." This need not have been the beginning of a story of shame and disaster. Every generation in the freshness and fulness of its young strength dreams of progress. It is quick to mark defects, and to shake off unreality and prejudice. This new generation, casting away the things that were unworthy, might have done better than their fathers. But youth, with its self-confidence and self-will, seldom chooses wisely. The sensuous and sensual idolatries that surrounded them had attractions not possessed by the spiritual worship of their fathers. "And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim: and they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods of the gods of the peoples that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the Lord to anger. And they forsook the Lord, and served Baal and Ashtaroth. And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands

of spoilers that spoiled them, and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies. Whithersoever they went out, the hand of the Lord was against them for evil, as the Lord had said, and as the Lord had sworn unto them: and they were greatly distressed" (Judges ii. 11-15).

That is the story with which we have now to deal. The first of their oppressors was Chushan-Rishathaim (iii. 8). He is described as "king of Mesopotamia." The word in the original is "Aram-Naharaim." This was formerly a part of sacred history upon which the discoveries shed no light whatever. But, though the name of this monarch has not yet been met with, light has begun to fall upon this dark place. Did this country of Aram-Naharaim, to mention one thing, occupy a place among the kingdoms of the period? Was it in a position to throw its yoke upon Palestine, and were there any circumstances which made it likely to do this? These are questions to which we are now able to give a somewhat full reply. Aram-Naharaim—"Aram of the two rivers"—is very frequently mentioned in the Egyptian inscriptions under the name of Naharina. It was situated in the North of Syria, and embraced the country between the rivers Orontes on the West and the Balikh on the East. The territory was divided by the great river Euphrates. To the North-east of Naharina lay the equally important, and at this time more important, kingdom of Mitanni. These kingdoms were not tributary to Egypt, but cultivated friendly relations

with the great power of the time. Between the court of Mitanni and that of the Pharaohs of the 18th dynasty the relations were specially close, daughters of the king of Mitanni being given in marriage to the Egyptian king. This Syrian kingdom was plainly, therefore, of considerable importance, and just at this time its importance had increased. It acquired in some way the supremacy of Naharina. "The Mitanni," writes Maspero, "exercised a sort of hegemony over the whole of Naharaim."*

It was a rich, populous, and powerful territory. "Towns had grown up here thickly," says Maspero, "on the sides of the torrents from the Amanos, along the banks of rivers, near springs or wells—wherever, in fact, the presence of water made culture possible. The fragments of the Egyptian chronicles, which have come down to us, number these towns by the hundred, and yet of how many more must the records have perished with the crumbling Theban walls upon which the Pharaohs had their names incised!" He adds in a note: "Two hundred and thirty names belonging to the Naharaim are still legible on the lists of Thútmosis III., and a hundred others have been effaced from the monument."†

Aram-Naharaim was, therefore, a kingdom of the time, and one possessed of very considerable power. Was there any likelihood of its becoming an aggressor upon the Egyptian conquests in Syria, and extending its sway over the Hebrew tribes? The Tel-el-Amarna letters give us some light upon this matter.

* *The Struggle of the Nations*, p. 265. † P. 142.

Tushratta, the king of Mitanni, who is named on the Egyptian Monuments as king of Naharina, and whose "dominion was wide, extending from South-eastern Cappadocia to beyond the later Assyrian capital, Nineveh,"* was on specially friendly terms with Amenophis III. But on the accession of Amenophis IV., relations with Egypt became strained. The young king treated this old ally of his throne with coldness and contempt. Presents were withheld, or reduced in value. The result was expostulation and appeal, which appear to have been treated with mortifying neglect. Tushratta's "last letter (more than two hundred lines in length) is something in the nature of an ultimatum. On both sides fresh complaints are brought forward, and the settlement of each one of them was made dependent on the settlement of the principal question. Naphkuria (Amenophis IV.) threatened to close his land against all subjects of Mitanni; and, as no later document has been found, it is probable that at this point all intercourse ceased. A much mutilated letter from Gebal to Egypt announces the departure of the king of Mitanni with an armed force; but it is doubtful whether this can be quoted in the present connection." †

From these ruptured ties this invasion sprang possibly under Tushratta's successor. It was no doubt encouraged by the rapidly declining power of Egypt, and the troubles which darkened the closing days of Amenophis IV. Israel was crushed under

* Carl Niebhur, *The Tel-el-Amarna Period*, p. 27. † *Ibid*, p. 38.

the heel of the king of Naharaim. The custom of the time, which is frequently represented upon the monuments, was to pay the tribute in kind, the various productions of the country being carried by specially appointed messengers to the court of the Suzerain. The Tel-el-Amarna letters show with what rigour the impost was exacted. A certain governor writes to the Egyptian king that the plague has ravaged his country, and that the customary tribute cannot be sent at that time. The reply is a satirical inquiry as to whether the sheep have had the plague, and a demand to forward the sheep of the king. When the tribute was withheld, nothing more was needed to proclaim that the land had revolted, and the results, unless the rebels were prepared to defend themselves effectively, were frightful. "A rising of this sort," says Maspero, speaking of the Egyptian dominion, "usually brought about the most disastrous results. The native prince, or the town itself, could keep back the tribute, and own allegiance to no one during the few months required to convince Pharaoh of their defection, and to allow him to prepare the necessary means for vengeance, the advent of the Egyptians followed, and the work of repression was systematically set in hand. They destroyed the harvests, whether green or ready for the sickle, they cut down the palms and olive trees, they tore up the vines, seized on the flocks, dismantled strongholds, and took the inhabitants prisoners. The rebellious prince had to deliver up his silver and gold, the contents of his palace, even his children; and

when he had finally obtained peace by means of endless sacrifices, he found himself a vassal as before, but with an empty treasury, a wasted country, and a decimated people.”*

All this was braved by the repentant Israelites. For “when the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer to the children of Israel, who delivered them, even Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb’s younger brother. And the spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he judged Israel and went out to war : and the Lord delivered Chushan-rishathaim king of Aram-Naharaim into his hand ; and his hand prevailed against Chushan-rishathaim. And the land had rest forty years.” The forces of Aram-Naharaim were swept from the land, and the surrounding nations once more trembled at the mention of the Hebrew name.

CHAPTER VII.

EHUD AND MOAB.

THE third chapter of Judges contains the record of another deliverance. Israel had once more exchanged the simplicity of God’s service for the sensuous idolatries of Canaan, and the Divine protection was withdrawn. After the forty years’ peace secured by Othniel’s defeat of the king of Aram-Naharaim, Moab realised its dream of smiting Israel.

* *Struggle of the Nations*, pp. 272, 273.

Just before the arrival of the Hebrews upon its borders, it had been deprived (as we have already seen) of a large portion of its territory by the Amorites. This was now recovered from the Israelites, who were driven Northward into Gilead. Moab had called to its aid the Ammonites and the Amalekites; and the whole of the East of Jordan was subjugated. Then, following the steps of Israel, Moab and her allies crossed the Jordan. She smote the tribes on the West, and subjected the land to tribute. To enable her to hold the land with firmer grip, she fixed her capital at "the city of palm-trees;" that is, at Jericho.

Those Eastern invasions have never been light afflictions. Deeds were done that struck terror to the heart of Israel, and an annual tribute was imposed sufficient to defeat any hope Israel might have of gathering strength enough to throw off the hated yoke. Following the long-established custom of the East, a detailed list of the tribute demanded was given to the princes, who in their turn determined how much each town and district required to provide. When the whole was gathered at some convenient depôt, a representative of the people was appointed to superintend the long and imposing train of tribute-bearers, and solemnly to hand over the present to the king. On this occasion the representative chosen was Ehud the son of Gera, a Benjamite.

That appointment apparently came to Ehud with a call of which no one in Israel knew save himself. How it dawned upon him that he was to deliver

Israel we are not informed. That Ehud's mission was of God we are distinctly told: "the Lord raised them up a deliverer, Ehud the son of Gera" (iii. 15). But there was in this case no direct communication and detailed commission such as were given to Gideon. Probably, Ehud was led to his great decision in what would appear to us quite a natural way. He had been a spectator of the people's oppression for eighteen years. He had, no doubt, wondered that no man was found to appeal to the people and rouse them to cast off the yoke of Moab. But that with any truly noble soul is always the stepping-stone to another thought. He wondered that others made no attempt to deliver; but if it was *their* duty, was it not also his?

When the choice of the princes fell upon him, it appears to have come to him as a Divine call. Here, it seemed to him, his opportunity was come. Preparations were at once made. He prepared a weapon—a short sword about two feet long and double-edged. This, being a left-handed man, he bound upon his right thigh. It was thus doubly concealed. It was hid under his loose flowing robe; and, if Eglon's guard and courtiers had scrutinized the bearers of the tribute to mark whether they carried concealed weapons with them, their gaze would naturally have been fixed upon the left side and not upon the right. The rest of the description of Ehud's deed reveals the ability of the man and shows how deeply he must have pondered this plot, and how carefully he had thought out its details.

Though he has entered armed into the king's presence, he makes no attempt to carry out his design then. To have done so would have ensured the immediate massacre of his companions and himself, and would also have inevitably subjected the whole land to fresh atrocities.

That is not Ehud's plan. He has seen that his position as the representative of the Israelitish princes, bringing with him the accustomed tribute, will secure unquestioned admission to the monarch's presence when he returns. Meanwhile, he must place his companions in safety. He goes back with them, therefore, through the hill passes leading from Jericho into the interior, and leaves them only when they have reached Gilgal, situated near to Bethel. He then returns, arrives at the palace in the afternoon, and is at once ushered into Eglon's presence. When he asks a private interview under the plea that he is the bearer of a secret message, it is at once granted. The king is slain : precious time is gained, while the courtiers wait for hours for the king's summons. When the truth is known, there is universal consternation. Ehud has time to lead the Ephraimites down through the Jordan valley. The fords of the Jordan are taken, and Moab is lost. Ten thousand of its choicest troops are slaughtered, and the day of its dominion over Israel closed in blood and terror.

There are two matters in connection with this episode in Israel's history on which modern research has had something to say. But there is a moral question involved, on which perhaps a word or two

are needful. Was not this a case of assassination? And can God be held to approve of murder? If we are told not to do evil that good may come, is it possible that God can have inspired such an act as this? The obvious reply to this is that the Scripture does not say that God inspired the act, or even approved of it. God has indeed raised him up to deliver, as He raised up Samson to work a like deliverance in after times; and Ehud takes his own way, as Samson so often took his. But I am not inclined to wholly abandon this part of the field to the opponents of the Bible. Are they exacting here what they never think of exacting elsewhere? And are they condemning (just because it is in the Bible) an act which they would not condemn if it was recorded elsewhere? William Tell, who delivered his fellow-countrymen from the Austrian yoke in the fourteenth century, has not been overwhelmed with condemnation because his first act was the assassination of Gessler, the Austrian governor. Who has ever thought of ranking him among the murderers of history? And would it not be universally recognised as an outrage upon everything that is true and noble were anyone to attempt to affix such a stigma to one of the noblest names in popular tradition? We must do the objectors the justice to admit that the idea of so aspersing the memory of Tell would never occur to them. But why do they honour Tell, and denounce Ehud? It may be said in reply that in Bible characters we demand a perfectness which we do not look for in those of ordinary history. But this

is no answer. If Tell's deed is honourable, Ehud's stands in exactly the same category. There is as little of self-seeking and as utter an absence of moral baseness in the one act as in the other. And if national gratitude could, unforbidden, ascribe to God the deliverance wrought by Tell, who may justly challenge the statement that "when the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, the Lord raised them up a deliverer, Ehud the son of Gera, a Benjamite?"

Such acts have been embalmed in all ancient history. Porsena was besieging Rome, and preventing supplies from entering the apparently doomed city. "In the midst of the distress," says one of the most recent of Roman histories, "when Porsena was sending in his demands as though to a people unable to resist, another devoted act of daring once more turned the tide. A young man named Caius Mucius, with the assent of the Senate, made his way into the Etruscan camp, in the garb of peace, but with a dagger concealed in the folds of his dress. Seeing a man transacting business on a high tribunal, and clad in purple, he supposed him to be Porsena, and drawing his dagger, stabbed him to the heart. The man thus slain was not, however, the king, but his secretary. Mucius was at once arrested and hurried before Porsena. There he boldly avowed that his intention had been to kill the king himself; but he promised, on condition of being spared the tortures with which he was threatened, to give the king important information. The assurance being given, he told Porsena that 300 youths in Rome, equally bold, and

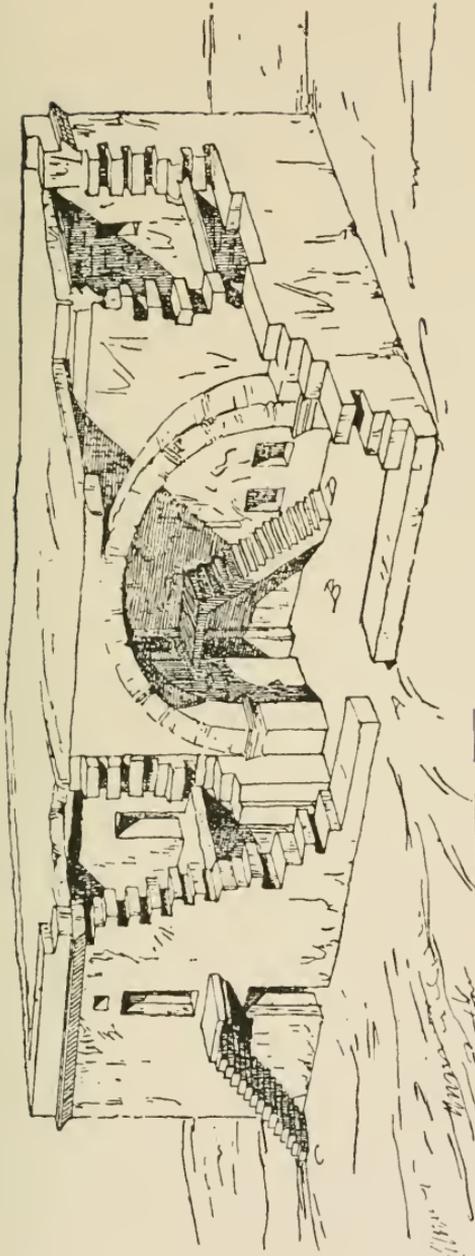
equally careless of their lives as himself, had sworn to slay him; that the lot had fallen to him first, but that the king must lay his account with a similar danger day and night."*

Here we have an extensive conspiracy. Three hundred are engaged in it. The Roman Senate are aware of the plot, and give their consent to its execution. And yet the modern historian records it all without one word of condemnation! We listen in vain even for an accent that will hint disapproval. I am quite sensible of the devotion of Caius Mucius to his country, which he will rescue at the cost of his life. But Ehud's concern for his companion's safety, his locking up his resolve within his own breast, the fearless perilling of his life, the genius displayed in his plan, and the completeness with which every detail is foreseen and worked out, might surely in the same way command a historian's admiration. It is quite true that the moral question is still there—is assassination in such cases legitimate? Into this I do not enter. I only ask that the perfect fairness with which we meet such incidents in other ancient history be not cast aside when we come to the narratives of Scripture. Let it be remembered, too, that there may have been a reason why Israel was permitted to be freed in this way. The Moabite oppression of God's people had to be judged; and the ignominious death of Eglon, and the sweeping away of Moab's strength, not in battle, but in unmanly panic and universal slaughter, left their impress.

* Schuckburgh, *A History of Rome to the Battle of Actium*, p. 65.

A fuller knowledge of Eastern customs has shown us why Ehud waited, and how he found his opportunity. The *aliyah*, "the summer parlour" (iii. 20), in which Ehud was seated, and "which he had for himself alone," was a chamber in the top of the building, and which belonged to the private apartments of the palace. These private apartments (as will be seen in our illustration) have an outside stair which gives them an independent communication with the courtyard, or with the street. The public reception rooms were on the ground floor, but in the afternoon the king retired to breathe the freer air and to enjoy the quietness and seclusion of the chamber on the roof. When Ehud returned, the servants made no scruple of allowing him access to the king in his retirement. His intimation that he had a message for the king's own ear cleared the *aliyah* of all but Eglon and himself. To lock the door leading down into the interior of the house, and to secure that also from which he passed out into the street below, was the work of a moment after the deed was done.

It will be noticed that Gilgal is mentioned. This cannot be the place where Israel encamped after crossing the Jordan; for that lay on the East of Jericho. For Ehud to convey his companions to a place situated between Jericho and Moab would have put them in the power of the foe and not have set them in safety. There are references to other Gilgals in the Scripture. One of these was evidently in the neighbourhood of Bethel; for we are told that Elijah



ANCIENT HOUSE IN THE HAURAN. B. THE CHIEF APARTMENT ON THE GROUND FLOOR FOR THE RECEPTION OF VISITORS. D. THE STAIRCASE LEADING UP TO THE ALIYEH. C. THE EXIT FROM THE ALIYEH ON THE OUTSIDE OF THE HOUSE.

and Elisha "went down to Bethel" from Gilgal. This cannot, by any possibility, have been the Gilgal near Jericho, for that lies many hundred feet lower than Bethel, so that the prophets could not have gone down to Bethel from the Gilgal of the Jordan valley. Ehud seems also to have gone to the Gilgal in the Bethel district, as this was in the neighbourhood of Seirath in the territory of Ephraim. The difficulty is now explained by a recent identification. There is a village of 200 inhabitants to the North-west of Bethel, called *jiljilia*, a name which exactly answers to the Gilgal of Scripture. It is situated on a high hill, from which one has to descend on setting out to Bethel; and although it is really lower than that ancient site, yet one has to cross on the way the heights of the Wady el-*jib*, and from there the traveller feels distinctly that he has to descend to Bethel. To this Gilgal Ehud returned again, after the slaughter of Eglon; and, passing on to Seirath, he summoned the men of Ephraim to strike the final blow for freedom.

CHAPTER VIII.

BARAK AND SISERA.

NOTWITHSTANDING the victory over Moab, the old supremacy of Israel was far from being restored. The galling yoke had indeed been broken, but the poverty and the weakness which it had created remained. This is very evident from the

story of the days that followed, and specially from Deborah's song. Shamgar, who succeeded Ehud, won his victory over the Philistines with no better weapon than an ox-goad. It will be remembered also that Ehud *had to make* his weapon. The Moabites had evidently disarmed the people, and the Caananites had followed the same policy. Deborah asks: "Was there a shield or a spear seen among forty thousand in Israel" (v. 8)? Owing also to the unrestrained attacks from one side and from another, the population was driven into the towns, and the general cultivation of the land ceased. Commerce was interrupted, for it became unsafe to travel. "In the days of Shamgar the son of Anath, in the days of Jael, the highways were unoccupied, and the travellers walked through byways. The inhabitants of the villages ceased, they ceased in Israel, until that I Deborah arose, that I arose a mother in Israel" (6, 7). And, as if Israel had not sinned and suffered enough, they had turned in their desolation to them that were no gods, and once again provoked the Lord with their abominations. If God was not to suffer the knowledge of Himself, which is life, to perish in Israel, chastisement was inevitable. It fell. "And the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord, when Ehud was dead. And the Lord sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, that reigned in Hazor; the captain of whose host was Sisera, which dwelt in Harosheth of the Gentiles" (iv. 1, 2).

But chastisement is the beginning, and not the end, of the story. There was no help in the idols to whose

altars they had gone in crowds; and under the manifested displeasure of God conscience awoke. "And the children of Israel cried unto the Lord: for he (Sisera) had nine hundred chariots of iron; and twenty-years he mightily oppressed the children of Israel." Then Deborah, the prophetess, received the command to summon Barak. Research in Palestine has done much to help us to understand the story of this deliverance. But before we note what has been done in the discovery of the towns which are mentioned, let us mark what is said about Sisera and his 900 iron chariots. Colonel Conder has pointed out that Sisera's name may indicate an Egyptian origin. Before quoting his words, let me explain that the phrase in verse 2—"the *captain* of whose host"—is in the Hebrew "the *sar* ('prince') of his host." "The famous Rameses II.," writes Colonel Conder, "commenced his conquests by the capture of Ascalon about 1325 B.C., or later. He entered Galilee, and besieged Tabor and towns in the mountains near Kadesh Naphtali. According to the Bible chronology, Jabin II., king of Hazor, lived in this same age, and was supported by a *sar* of the army, with a chariot force stationed at Harosheth, North of Carmel. The word *sar*, which is uncommon in the early books (of the Bible), is often found in the Tel-el-Amarna texts as meaning a 'chief.' The name of Sisera does not appear to be Semitic, but is easily explained as Egyptian—Ses-Ra being 'the child of Ra,' the Sun-god. The coincidence seems to show that the old conditions of the fifteenth century B.C. were re-established by

Rameses II. after his conquest of Upper Galilee, and that an Egyptian general with a force of chariots was left to secure the fealty of the king of Hazor. This would explain why Sisera, in the song of Deborah, appears as leader of several 'kings' of Canaan, not merely as the native general subject to Jabin of Hazor." *

The Hittites had at this time become the masters of Northern Syria, and it was only after fifteen campaigns that Rameses II. had succeeded in humbling them so far that they sued for peace. A treaty was drawn out between the two kings. The power of Egypt in the North of Palestine was recognised by the Hittites, and the independence and peace of the Hittites was assured by the Pharaoh. The fact that the chronology brings us down to this very time will be recognised as striking. The probably Egyptian character of Sisera's name; his being entitled *Sar*, or "prince;" his strong chariot force, an arm so largely employed by ancient Egypt; his apparent independence of Jabin, whose army he commands; his dwelling in a different city, with a palace and a court of his own—are all in harmony with Jabin's subjection to Egypt. It was Egypt's policy to guard its conquests by the appointment of residents, captains, or governors, who kept the subject princes to their duty. Sisera's presence in the North of Palestine was also necessary to keep the highway open for the Egyptian armies.

It will be observed that certain cities are named.

* *The Bible and the East*, p. 119.

Are these localities such as would be of special importance in the condition of things which has just been indicated? There is no definite decision yet arrived at as to the identification of Hazor and Harosheth; but explorers are unanimous as to the districts in which these two cities were. Harosheth is in all probability El Harathiyeh, a miserable mud hamlet, situated on high ground, and affording shelter for about two hundred inhabitants. The place was, however, of great strategical importance. "At the entrance of Esdraelon, where it joins the Acre plain," writes Dr. Harper, "is a large mound, near the base of Carmel, the Kishon flowing by. The word Harosheth means forests, and there still are the densely-wooded slopes. This position, so strong, would command both plains, on which the nine hundred chariots of iron could act."* So vivid a light does the situation of this place cast on the hold which the enemy had at this time upon the country that even Prof. George Adam Smith finds the narrative alive with truth. He speaks of the plain of Esdraelon as "scoured by the Canaanite chariots;" and adds: "This meant not only that the entrances to the hill-country of Israel were in Canaanite hands, but that the Northern tribes, Zebulun and Naphtali, were wholly cut off from the Southern." †

Hazor was equally strong, though not so strategically important. It is, most probably, now represented by Hadireh, an Arabic form of the name

* *The Bible and Modern Discoveries*, p. 230.

† *The Historical Geography of Palestine*, p. 392.

which answers exactly to the old Hebrew name of Hazor. It is a ruin near Kades in Upper Galilee. It is described as “‘a dark, bare, rocky hillock, near the flat, fertile plain of Kadesh Naphtali, above the steep slopes which run eastward to Jordan.’ Hazor has the most rugged ascent in Palestine—a veritable stronghold for a Canaanitish king.”* The land was



A SYRIAN CHARIOT.

in this way gripped with a strong hand, while from the sea and along the sea-coast reinforcements could be poured in from Egypt. In accordance with the Divine command given through Deborah, Barak gathered ten thousand men from the northern tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali, and took up a position

* Dr. Harper, p. 230.

upon Mount Tabor. This is situated near the watershed of the country. There is a steady rise towards the mountain, the base being about four hundred feet above sea-level. The mount itself rises to a further height of nearly 1,500 feet. Its southern face is almost wholly naked limestone rock. But the northern side, by which Barak and his army ascended, "is clothed to the top," says Dr. Thomson, "with a forest of oak and terebinth, mingled with the beautiful mock orange (*Syringa*). The road (if road it may be called) winds up through them, and, notwithstanding the experience of other travellers, I have always found it difficult, and in certain parts actually dangerous."* At the top is a "singular oblong platform, strewn with ruins, in the midst of which stands the new convent, erected in accordance with the ecclesiastical tradition which has erroneously fixed on this as the site of the transfiguration. Here Barak marshalled his 10,000 men, and looked down upon that vast plain which he was soon to wrest from the iron oppression of Jabin, king of Canaan."†

I shall now let Colonel Conder (whose close and prolonged study of the district qualifies him to speak with an almost unique authority) tell the story of the battle. He says, in his *Twenty-one Years' Work in the Holy Land* (pp. 82-85): "The subject which naturally concludes the account of the plain, is, therefore, the great battle, in which the host of Sisera was drowned in the swollen waters of this river.

* *The Land and the Book*, p. 432.

† Tristram, *The Land of Israel*, pp. 502, 503.

“The amount of light which can now be thrown upon the episode is very great. The topography has hitherto been obscure, but the survey does much to explain it. To suppose that Sisera fled from the Great Plain to the neighbourhood of Kedes in Upper Galilee (a distance of over thirty miles) has always appeared to me to be contrary to what we know of the general character of the Biblical stories, the scenes of which are always laid in a very confined area; nor has the name Bitzaanaim, near Kedesh, been recovered in this direction. . . . The Kedesh of the narrative where Barak assembled his troops is, therefore, probably Kedish on the shore of the sea of Galilee, only twelve miles from Tabor. There is thus, from a military point of view, a consistency in the advance to Tabor (a strong position in the line by which the enemy was approaching), which is lacking if we suppose a descent from the stronger hills of Upper Galilee. The kings of Canaan assembled in Taanach and by the waters of Megiddo, but it was not at either of these places that the battle was fought. Sisera was drawn to the river Kishon (Judges iv. 7), and the host perished near Endor, ‘at the brook Kishon’ (Psalm lxxxiii. 10). The battle field, indeed, was identical with that which Napoleon named ‘The battle of Mount Tabor, when the French drove the Turks into that same treacherous quagmire of the Kishon springs.

“There are few episodes in the Old Testament more picturesque than this of the defeat of the Canaanites. Tabor, the central position, a mountain

whose summit is 1,500 feet above the plain, is bare and shapeless on the south, but to the north it is steep, and wooded with oaks and thickets in which the fallow-deer finds a home. About three miles West are the springs from which the Kishon first rises, and from this point a chain of pools and springs, fringed with reeds and rushes, marks, even in the dry season, the course of the river. Along this line, at the base of the northern hills, the chariots and horse-men of Sisera fled. The sudden storm had swollen the stream, 'the river Kishon swept them away, that river of battles, the river Kishon.' The remainder fled to Harosheth, now only a miserable village (el Harathîyeh), named from the beautiful woods above the Kishon at the point where, through a narrow gorge, the stream, hidden among oleander bushes, enters the plain of Acre.

"The flight of Sisera himself was in an opposite direction, under the slopes of Tabor and across the great lava plateau on which stood, near Bessûm, the black tent of Heber the Kenite. The two incidents in the tragedy of his murder by Jael, which most require illustration, are the 'milk' and 'butter' with which she regaled her victim, and the reasons, which, in her eyes, justified the deed.

"The Bedaween have a delicious preparation of curdled milk called Leben, which is offered to guests, but generally considered a delicacy; from personal experience I know that it is most refreshing to a traveller when tired and hot, but it has also a strange soporific effect, which was so sudden in its action on

one English clergyman, after a long ride, that he thought he had been poisoned. It was, perhaps, not without a knowledge of its probable effects that Jael gave to her exhausted guest a tempting beverage which would make his sleep sound and long.

“The murder of a fugitive, and a guest, is so contrary to the morality of the Semitic nomads, that we must seek for a very strong justification. It could not have been national enthusiasm which actuated Jael, for she was a Kenite, not a Jewess, one of a nation hostile to Israel, and there was peace between Jabin, King of Hazor (Sisera’s master), and the house of Heber, the Kenite. The true reason is probably to be sought in Sisera’s entering the tent at all. There are instances in later history in which a defeated Arab has sheltered himself in the women’s apartments, but such an infringement of Eastern etiquette has always been punished by death; and it is not improbable that, in revenge for such an insult, Jael seized the iron tent-peg and drove it with the mallet, used to fix the tents to the ground, through Sisera’s brain.”

For long it has been customary to reverse the decision of the Scripture, and to denounce the deed of Jael as one of the most infamous of crimes. Its usual description, even with the mildest of her censors, is “the murder of Sisera.” Some have gone much further, and have experienced difficulty in finding terms sufficiently condemnatory of her act. “Dr. Kitto,” writes Dr. Thomson, “after presenting the whole transaction, and the supposed motives of

the actor in the most unfavourable light, sums up the whole thus: 'It was a most treacherous and cruel murder, wanting all the extenuations which were applicable to the assassination of King Eglon by Ehud.' I feel unwilling to accept this explanation," adds Dr. Thomson, "It shocks my ideas altogether to suppose that an inspired prophetess should foretell the deed, and then celebrate it and its author in the highest strains of congratulation and eulogy, if it was a mere treacherous, cold-blooded murder."* He then points out various possibilities which may have amply justified the deed.

These are evident enough. If we are to be guided at all by the Scripture, however, we must dismiss every suggestion that Jael was avenging some private wrong. She is set before us not even as avenging Israel. *She is delivering God's people.* This is strangely lost sight of by her judges. Sisera is regarded as an ordinary wayfarer, or as a poor fugitive seeking the shelter of a friendly roof. They shut out of sight those twenty years during which "he MIGHTILY oppressed the children of Israel" (Judges iv. 3). The atrocities at which these words plainly hint are all known to Jael. Again and again she has been appalled by the tale. And here is the one man from whose planning brain and fearful will the whole have sprung. *He is on the way to Hazor,* Jabin's capital, where fresh forces await him. He will inevitably renew the conflict. He may even prevail over the brave but undisciplined tribesmen. Will her judges

* *The Land and the Book*, p. 438.

try to see the vision that appalled her? Will they contemplate those frightful reprisals which will outdo the horrors of the past? And can they then marvel that, weak woman as she was, she resolved to make these reprisals impossible? We do not need to be Israelites—we require only a human imagination and a human heart—to feel and share the fervent gratitude that glows in the words: “Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be, blessed shall she be above women in the tent.”

CHAPTER IX.

GIDEON AND THE MIDIANITES.

ISRAEL, after the overthrow of the Canaanite power, had rest for 40 years; and, as before, temporal prosperity resulted in spiritual decay. This, it may be remarked, is by no means a tendency confined to Israel. Wellhausen, as we have seen, has made this repeated burden of Judges the subject of mockery. But experience has shown that uninterrupted temporal prosperity generally means spiritual blight for individuals, churches, and nations. When we look around us, or scan the page of history, we marvel less to read: “And the land had rest forty years. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord: and the Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years” (Judges v. 31; vi. 1).

While we have, as yet, no direct confirmations of this part of Israelitish history from either the Egyptian or the Assyrian monuments, yet the condition of Palestine, as revealed in Judges vi. and vii., is in striking accord with that of Egypt. We have already seen that Sisera's name and position point strongly to his being the Egyptian resident at the court of Jabin, and one to whom the Canaanite king had practically to hand over the control of the country. That seems to point to the revival of the Egyptian influence in Syria under Rameses II., who reigned about this very time. Under him the Egyptian armies had once more crossed the Eastern borders, subjected Syria, and again filled the East with the fame and the terror of Egypt. His son Minephtah apparently maintained his hold, though with diminished power. An inscription of his, found not long ago by Professor Flinders Petrie, contains the first known mention of Israel on the Egyptian monuments. It runs: "Khâti (the land of the Hittites) is at peace; Canaan is a prisoner as far as the disaffected are concerned; the inhabitant of Ascalon is led away; Gazer is carried into captivity; Ianuânîm is brought to nothing; the Israîlû are destroyed and have no longer seed; Kharu is like a widow of the land of Egypt."*

It is possible that this fierce chastisement of the Israelites may have been accomplished by Sisera, and may have been the beginning of his long oppression. But after Minephtah's reign, the power of Egypt suffered a rapid decline. "Egypt was proceeding,"

* Maspero, *The Struggle of the Nations*, p. 436.

says Maspero, "at a quick pace towards its downfall. No sooner had this monarch disappeared than it began to break up. There were, no doubt, many claimants for the crown, but none of them succeeded in disposing of the claims of his rivals, and anarchy reigned supreme from one end of the Nile valley to the other."* "Neither the triumphs of Rameses II., nor the victory of Mineptah had been able to restore her prestige, or the lands of which her rivals had robbed her beyond her ancient frontier. Now her own territory itself was threatened, and her own well-being was in question; she was compelled to consider, not how to rule other tribes, great or small, but how to keep her own possessions intact and independent: in short, her very existence was at stake."†

The oppression of the land by Midian, with its confederates—the Amalekites, and "the children of the East," fits in exactly with what we now know of the condition of Egypt at that time. The hand of superior power is withdrawn; and the tribes of the South and East find their opportunity. There is some doubt as to the locality of the Midianites. But, though there were Midianites on the East of Palestine, "the land of Midian" was in the North of Arabia, and on the eastern shore of the Gulf of Akaba. The Amalekites were on their northern border, and roamed over the desert of Sinai. They seem not to have entered the land "by the way of the Philistines," or by the Negeb, but to have followed

* P. 440. † P. 450.

the path taken by the Israelites themselves after the Exodus. They marched along by Edom and Moab, joined their confederates from the East, passed into the land from the North, covered the fertile plain of Esdraelon, and ravaged the land down to its Southern border at Gaza. Their mode of warfare, though peculiar, was not without parallel in ancient times. Herodotus tells how Alyattes, the king of Sardis, and the father of Cræsus, followed on one occasion, at least, the same plan. "Inheriting," he says, "from his father a war with the Milesians, he pressed the siege against the city by attacking it in the following manner. When the harvest was ripe on the ground, he marched his army into Milesia to the sounds of pipes, and harps, and flutes, masculine and feminine. The buildings that were scattered over the country he neither pulled down nor burned, nor did he even tear away the doors, but left them standing as they were. He cut down, however, and utterly destroyed all the trees, and all the corn throughout the land, and then returned to his own dominions. It was idle for his army to sit down before the place, as the Milesians were masters of the sea. The reason that he did not demolish their buildings was, that the inhabitants might be tempted to use them as homesteads from which to go forth to sow and till their lands; and so each time that he invaded the country he might find something to plunder.

"In this way he carried on the war with the Milesians for eleven years, in the course of which he inflicted on them two terrible blows: one in their

own country in the district of Limeneium, the other in the plain of the Meander." * In the case of the Midianites, however, the intention was not to weaken the Israelites, but to provide themselves with an abundance for which they had neither toiled nor paid. Deeds of violence were committed (such as the slaughter of Gideon's brethren); but these were meant to terrify Israel and to prevent resistance. They did not hunt after the people, who upon the arrival of their oppressors rushed to their hiding places in the mountains. The Midianites were content to leave them there unmolested; for in this way the Israelites were made their husbandmen and their vine-dressers. These poor toilers filled the land every summer with abundance, and, retiring on the approach of Midian, left it all to their foes. "In precisely the same manner," says Dr. Thomson, "do the Bedawin Arabs, these modern Midianities, come up to this Wady of Jezreel and Wady Sherrar, 'after the people have sown,' and destroy the increase of the earth; and not only destroy the increase of the field, but commit wholesale murder, as those did upon the brethren of Gideon at Tabor." †

For the eighth time the Midianites had entered the land. But Israel's cry was now heard, and Jehovah was to reveal Himself again as the living God. Gideon, filled with sad and bitter thoughts like the rest of his people, was threshing wheat by the wine-press at Ophrah, "to hide it from the Midianites."

* Rawlinson's *Herodotus*, vol. i, pp. 132, 133.

† *The Land and the Book*, pp. 447, 448.

The ordinary place for this labour was the threshing-floor, placed on an elevated spot where the winds of heaven would aid the work of separating the chaff from the wheat. But there, the roving bands of Midian would soon have detected and seized the daring Israelites. "The vineyards are hid away in the wadies and out on the wooded hills, and thus adapted for concealment. Indeed, I myself," writes Dr. Thomson, "have seen grain thus concealed in this same country, during the lawless days of civil war."*

Here God spake with him, and the man, whose greatest aim had been to snatch up the hurriedly beaten wheat and to hide it from the Midianites, became the deliverer of his country and enrolled his name among the few whose record will never perish. Realising the tremendous character of the struggle, we cannot wonder that he hesitated and asked for signs. But though faith came slowly, it stood firm. His thirty-two thousand were but a handful compared with the hosts of Midian, yet he had to see them melt away till less than a hundredth part remained. It is the picture of many a struggle. The deliverance was to stand forth as the Lord's doing, and men had to disappear that God might be revealed. First of all those who were fearful and afraid were weeded out. Permission was given to them to go, and twenty-two thousand left. Such men disappear in every advance. But even the ten thousand that were left were not to enter the battle-field. A division is made between

* P. 448.

the men who bowed down to quench their thirst and those for whom a more hurried refreshment was enough. Dr. A. Moody-Stuart, in a contribution to *The Quarterly Statement of the Palestine Exploration Fund*, says: "May I draw attention to a misconception of the 'lapping' by Gideon's three hundred at the 'Well of Trembling,' which is usually taken by Biblical critics (with the single exception of Kitto in the *Pictorial Bible*) to mean drinking the water out of the palm of the hand? The 'lapping' is never seen amongst us, and probably not in Europe, but I had an unexpected opportunity of observing it fifty years ago, in the island of Madeira. One afternoon, in riding leisurely out of Funchal, there came toward the town a man in the light garb of a courier from the mountains, running at the top of his speed; as he approached me he stopped to quench his thirst at a fountain in a way that at once suggested the lapping of Gideon's men, and I drew up my pony to observe his action more exactly, but he was already away, as on the wings of the wind, leaving me to wonder and admire. With one knee bent before him, and the other limb stretched behind him in the same attitude as he ran, and with his face upward toward heaven, he threw the water apparently with his fingers in a continuous stream through his open lips, without bringing his hand nearer to his mouth than, perhaps, a foot and-a-half, and so satisfied his thirst in a few moments."* The difference between the 300 that "lapped," and the 9,700 that bowed down to drink,

* 1895, p. 345.

seems thus to have been that the latter cast away everything, stooped down, and drank till their thirst was thoroughly quenched; and that the 300, intent upon the coming struggle, nerved for the fight, grasped with one hand the weapon which they would not relinquish even for a moment, and with their disengaged hand hurriedly supplied what sufficed. They were for the time "men of one idea." This obedience to God's command—this delivering of God's people—was not merely one of many things to them. It was the one thing for which they then existed. Through such men, and through such alone, have God's deliverances been always worked.

It should be remarked that the battle-cry, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon" has no element of irreverence or of boastfulness in it. The phrase was given to Gideon by the reader of the Midianite soldier's dream. Gideon and Phurah, his servant, have crept down to the host and are listening outside a tent. Within, a soldier is telling a comrade the dream that has just disturbed his slumbers. He saw a cake of barley-bread—a bit of common food which would make but a mouthful or two for a hungry man. It came "brandishing itself" into the camp, smote a tent, and immediately the tent lay along the ground. "And his fellow answered, and said, This is nothing else save *the sword of Gideon* the son of Joash" (vii. 14). It was there that Gideon found his battle-cry. Gideon's sword is now Midian's dread; but that sword will smite only as the Lord owns it and speeds it, and so the cry runs: "The

sword of the Lord and of Gideon." It was to "the sword of Gideon" that some at least among the Midianites were looking for judgment. That cry had to be lifted, then, to proclaim that the expected judgment had come. But faith must also express its dependence upon God, and proclaim that the judgment was from Him.

But why were the trumpets made part of the equipment of Gideon's band? Were they used merely to alarm, and to strike the Midianitish host with panic? Heugstenberg has pointed out that the trumpets were used for a quite different purpose. He reminds us of the command in Num. x. 9: "And when ye go to war in your land against the enemy that oppresseth you, then ye shall blow an alarm with the trumpets; and ye shall be remembered before the Lord your God, and ye shall be saved from your enemies." "Accordingly," he adds, "blowing with the trumpet was a signal by which the people of the Lord signified to Him their need of aid, and invoked him to bestow it. As he himself had ordered the signal, and had annexed a promise to its use, they might confidently believe that the Lord would assist them."* It was the appeal of Gideon and of his men to Jehovah. The critics tell us that Numbers was not written, and the very earliest "strata" of its earliest portion had not then come into existence. This special commandment, Professor J. A. Paterson, of the United Free Church College, Edinburgh, the Editor of *Numbers* in the Critics'

* *The Genuineness of the Pentateuch*, vol. ii., p. 76.

Polychrome Bible, colours yellow. The colour means that this was a patch put on about 570 B.C. But Professor Paterson will have to dip his brush in another colour; for here Gideon and his men are already acquainted with this commandment. So well known is it, indeed, that when the Book of Judges was written it was not considered necessary to explain why the trumpets were blown. Everyone was supposed to know! When this and a hundred like things can be explained by the critics, they may hope to find acceptance for their carefully coloured patchwork.

Lane mentions a fact in his *Modern Egyptians* which illustrates another part of the history. Gideon's men carried with them "empty pitchers, and lamps within the pitchers" (verse 16). Speaking of Cairo, Lane says: "The Zábít, or A'gha, of the police, used frequently to go about the metropolis by night, often accompanied only by the executioner and the 'shealeg'ee,' or bearer of a kind of torch called 'shealeh,' which is still in use. This torch burns, soon after it is lighted, without a flame, excepting when it is waved through the air, when it suddenly blazes forth; it, therefore, answers the same purpose as our dark lantern. The burning end is sometimes concealed in a small pot or jar, or covered with something else, when not required to give light."* They seem to have been torches of this sort with which the 300 were provided. The "pitchers" prevented even the dull glow from revealing their approach,

* Vol. i., chapter iv.

and when the waving torches suddenly flashed forth the surprise was complete. It is worthy of remark also that one of the names of the Hercules worshipped at Tyre was "Jerubbaal."* It is possible that this feat of Gideon's may have been worked up into the fictitious history of the god, and that we may have here a testimony both to the fact of Israel's deliverance by the hand of Gideon, and to the deep impression which the victory made upon the surrounding peoples.

CHAPTER X.

GIDEON'S EPHOD.

THERE is one note of blame for the great Israelitish hero in the words which conclude the story of his heroic service. The tribes, having returned from the pursuit of the Midianites, offered him and his descendants the throne of Israel. "Then the men of Israel said unto Gideon, Rule thou over us, both thou, and thy son, and thy son's son also: for thou hast deliverèd us from the hand of Midian" (Judges viii. 22). Gideon refused for himself, and for his posterity, the offered dignity; but he, at the same time, asked a favour in the granting of which the gratitude of the Israelites might be able to find some expression for itself. "And Gideon said unto them, I would desire a request of you, that ye would give me every man the earrings of his prey. (For they

* Mover's *Die Phönizier*, vol. i., p. 434.

had golden earrings, because they were Ishmaelites). And they answered, We will willingly give them. And they spread a garment, and did cast therein every man the earrings of his prey. And the weight of the golden earrings that he requested were a thousand and seven hundred shekels of gold" (verses 24-26). It was soon made evident that the request was as unselfish as the refusal. Gideon had no intention of enriching his house by soliciting this portion of the Midianite spoils. He made an ephod with the gold and placed it in his city, Ophrah. But the act bore bitter fruit. "All Israel went thither a whoring after it: which thing became a snare unto Gideon and to his house" (verse 27).

Why did Gideon apply the gold to this use? And in what consisted the sin, which, as the Scripture evidently implies, lay at Gideon's door? To answer the former question we have to mark the connection in which the request was made. In refusing the offered crown Gideon said: "I will not rule over you: the Lord shall rule over you" (verse 23). He then immediately makes this request for the gold, and uses the 1,700 shekels weight of the precious metal, which is immediately and willingly given, in making the ephod. There was plainly, then, a connection between the two things. Was it that the ephod was intended in some way to remind Israel that the Lord was their Deliverer and King?

That this was Gideon's purpose—a purpose in every way worthy of the man—seems quite plain. The ephod was the elaborately adorned garment

thrown over the shoulders of the high priest when he entered the Tabernacle to enquire of God as to what Israel ought to do. In selecting this as a trophy commemorative of the victory, Gideon, no doubt, sought to emphasize the fact that God had manifested Himself afresh as Israel's Counsellor and Deliverer. It was from Him that the very attempt to deliver had sprung. Gideon would never have lifted a finger to remove Israel's burden had not God sought him out, and encouraged, and counselled him, and scattered the foe before him. The ephod reminded them not only that Jehovah could counsel and deliver, but that He had also pledged Himself to counsel and deliver them. His door stood open for them! God's appointed servant—the anointed High Priest—was come forth and stood waiting to hear their request and to make it known before Him. To depend on man's counsel and help was to forget this better portion; and Gideon's purpose was worthy of the man. It was cast in the same heroic mould. This aspect of the matter also clears away a difficulty. Astonishment has been expressed at the weight of the gold used in the formation of this priestly garment. Seventeen hundred shekels make a weight of over 94 pounds troy; and there were in addition ornaments and collars. Who could wear a load like that? It has been said that all this gold was not put into the ephod; that some of it was exchanged for the precious stones in the shoulder clasps, and in the breast-plate. But all this supposes that Gideon's ephod was substituted for that used by the High

Priest in the Tabernacle at Shiloh—a supposition which is entirely opposed to the account before us. This ephod was not meant for the high priest's use, and was not sent to Shiloh. It was kept in Gideon's city of Ophrah, and was plainly intended as a symbolic memorial that God was the Counsellor, the Guide, and the Saviour of His people. The gold could therefore be well lavished upon what was not to be worn, but to be preserved as a monument which would challenge Israel's attention, and impress a salutary lesson.

It is part of the critical case against Old Testament revelation that the Law of Moses had no existence in the times of the Judges. There were (according to them) neither priestly arrangements nor Tabernacle in the days of Gideon. But where, then, did Gideon get this idea of the ephod? How did it happen that, when he desired to fashion out of the spoils of Midian a reminder to Israel that the Lord was their Counsellor and their Deliverer, the emblem took a form which spoke of that open access to the Divine mercy-seat? How could *that* tell its message to the people if no High Priest existed, and if there had been no appointed use of an ephod in his approach to God? Gideon's ephod is a plain indication of a thorough and widespread acquaintance with the ceremonies of the Law, and, consequently, a proof that the Law was then, and had long been, in existence.

The existence of the Mosaic Law is also plainly implied in the few words which tell the after-story of the ephod of Ophrah. "All Israel," we are told,

“went thither a whoring after it ; which thing became a snare unto Gideon and to his house ” (verse 27). Gideon’s city became a place of pilgrimage to Israel ; for what was more natural than that they should come—and that Gideon should wish them to come—to look upon that which had been fashioned for their instruction ? But it was equally natural that the place of pilgrimage should become a place of prayer, and by-and-bye a place of sacrifice and of idolatrous worship. The superstitious would flock to this sacred shrine, and the ephod would soon be credited with miracle-working efficacy. Gideon was, indeed, blameless of any such intention. The ephod originated in a pure desire to bind the people’s trust to the only living and true God. The sin of Gideon and his house was not in the construction of the ephod, but in their suffering it to continue in existence when they saw the place it began to assume in the confidence of the people. Hezekiah destroyed the brazen serpent which Moses had made in the wilderness, when he found that Israel put it in the place of God, and sought from a mere emblem what God alone could bestow. But this concourse from all parts to Ophrah brought prosperity to the place and importance to Gideon and his house. To destroy the ephod would have ended the pilgrimages and swept away profit and prestige. Apparently this was too great a sacrifice for Gideon and his house to make, and so the ephod was suffered to continue, and God had to punish where before He had blessed. There came a day when profit and prestige were

swept away, and when Gideon's house went down to blood.

CHAPTER XI.

JOTHAM'S PARABLE.

ABIMELECH'S crime was one of those which are possible only in a time of national demoralisation. It was the fruit and the punishment of Israel's unfaithfulness. Jotham alone escaped from the slaughter of Gideon's household. He displays something of the capability and the boldness of his father. He succeeded in concealing himself from the murderers of his brethren; and, before seeking a distant asylum, he will leave a word with the men of Shechem. "A lofty rock," says Dean Stanley, "protrudes from the North-eastern flank of Gerizim, immediately overhanging what must have been the site of the ancient city. From thence Jotham might easily make himself heard, and readily escape down the mountain side. The *dramatis personæ* of his parable were all before him. First, there was the olive, the special tree of Nablús, clearly marked out as the rightful sovereign; next to this would follow the rarer, but still commanding fig-tree, and the trailing festoons of the vine; last of all the briar or bramble, whose worthless branches are still used for the fire-wood of the sacrificial oven, and whose

unsightly bareness contrasts on the hill side with the rich verdure of its nobler brethren."*

Jotham speaks still to the men of Shechem. There are two phrases in his parable which have a distinct bearing upon the question to which I have just referred in the preceding chapter. Did the Law exist in Jotham's time? In other words, did Moses write it, and was it God's Testimony, delivered through him to Israel, as it claims to be? The critics answer with united voice, "No! The Law came *not* by Moses, and Israel knew nothing of it for many centuries after his day." Well, then, what does Jotham mean when he represents the olive tree as replying: "Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honour God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?" (Judges ix. 9). We might ask why he should speak of the oil of the olive tree as used for *honouring* men. It was applied to several important uses which would have occurred to one more readily, we imagine, than this, as a reason why the olive tree should attend to its own concerns, and seek to fulfil the purpose for which it was created. But if our curiosity is aroused by that reference, it is still more excited by what goes before it. In what sense could the oil be spoken of *as used for honouring God*? It is possible that the customs of the time might account for the statement that it was used in honouring men. Our Lord says to Simon: "My head with oil thou didst not anoint" (Luke vi. 46). The oil may have been used in this way as a welcome

* *Syria and Palestine*, pp. 239, 240.

and an adornment for an honoured guest. But in what way was the oil used for honouring God?

There is a full answer to that question, and also to the other. But these answers are met with only in the Law, which the critics assure us could not have been in existence at that time, for the potent reason that if it had existed, it must have been a direct revelation, and, therefore, a miracle. In that Law, this oil was appointed to be used for the lamp, which was the light of the Holy Place: "Thou shalt command the children of Israel, that they bring thee pure oil olive beaten for the light, to cause the lamp to burn always. In the tabernacle of the congregation without the vail, which is before the testimony, Aaron and his sons shall order it from evening to morning before the Lord: it shall be a statute for ever unto their generations on the behalf of the children of Israel" (Exodus xxvii. 20, 21). It was also an important part of the meat-offering—the second great sacrifice of the Law: "And when any will offer a meat offering unto the Lord, his offering shall be of fine flour; AND HE SHALL POUR OIL UPON IT, and put frankincense thereon" (Leviticus ii. 1). Here, then, was a use for the oil in which God was continually "honoured;" but this reference could only have been natural to Jotham and intelligible to the men of Shechem if the Law were then in existence, and the Tabernacle with its lamp, and the altar with its sacrifices, were among the best known institutions in Israel. With that in view, we can see how the expression about the oil's being used for

“honouring God” struck home at once to the Shechemites. The Law had also an equally satisfactory explanation of the reference to the honouring of man. The highest in Israel, their mediator with God, was taken out from the midst of the people, and was solemnly set apart for this unique service by an anointing. “Take unto thee,” said God to Moses, “principal spices . . . and of olive oil an hin : And thou shalt make it an oil of holy ointment after the art of the apothecary : it shall be an holy anointing oil. . . . And thou shalt anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate them that they may minister unto Me in the priest’s office. And thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel, saying, This shall be an holy anointing oil unto Me throughout your generations” (Exodus xxx. 23-31). We can now understand why the olive tree is made to pass by all the other uses to which its oil was put, and to speak only of it as that “wherewith by me they honour God and man.”

Now, even if that stood alone, it would make a powerful appeal to that “common-sense” which Professor Cheyne speaks of with such contempt, and yet regards with so much scarce concealed dread.* But there is another striking phrase which only an acquaintance with the Law of Moses can fully account for. The vine replies : “Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees ?” (verse 13). The reference to man is readily comprehended ; but whence came the notion, and one, too, which could evidently be expressed

* See *Founders of Old Testament Criticism*, p. 263.

without irreverence—that wine cheered God? To us the expression may seem peculiarly bold, and to be, indeed, little removed from blasphemy. But is there anything to show that to Jotham and the men of Shechem the suggestion was entirely unobjectionable? We turn to Numbers xv. 4-10, and read: “Then shall he that offereth his offering unto the Lord bring a meat offering of a tenth deal of flour mingled with the fourth part of an hin of oil. And the fourth part of an hin of wine for a drink offering shalt thou prepare with the burnt offering . . . for a sweet savour unto the Lord.” It ought always to be remembered that this phrase, “a sweet savour unto the Lord,” is, literally, “a savour of rest unto the Lord.” The sacrifice, and the oil, and the wine did not bring *rest*. They only brought “*a savour*” of it; for they were but emblems and prophecies of the sacrifice of Christ and its fruits. But that promise of His full atonement for man, of the Spirit’s anointing, and of holy joy in God’s salvation—that promise “cheered” God. And the prophecy of coming blessing was not complete, therefore, without the drink offering. But once more this unexplained reference to the wine cheering God as well as man is intelligible only when we recognise that the drink offering had long before taken its place among the institutions of Israel.

CHAPTER XII.

JEPHTHAH'S VOW.

RATIONALISM has had various shifts whereby it has hoped to be able, with perfect consistency, to accept the Scriptures—and yet to reject miracles. The latest of these is the theory of De Wette, which is now universally accepted by the higher critics. This accounts for the miraculous element in the Bible by supposing that its history is a collection of late legends put into writing by men, who in their pious simplicity accepted the stories which had grown up around certain great names. They themselves fully believed the stories, and they have handed them on, expecting to find a like faith in their readers! The character of the writers is thus saved, but at the expense of the Scripture history. This we are now asked to surrender, like a mass of debased metal, to the critical analysts, and to wait (as ignorance always waits upon science—without impatience and without questioning) till the critics disentangle the few grains of truth from the mass of fable!

This theory is confidently applied to the Book of Judges; but the five verses (chapter x. 1-5), through which we pass from the history of Abimelech to that of Jephthah enable us to put it to the test. There were two judges between Abimelech and Jephthah, and all that the Spirit of God has deemed it needful

to tell us of them is contained in this commencement of the tenth chapter. The first of these was Tola. We are told that he was the son of Puah, who was the son of Dodo; that he was "a man of Issachar;" that "he dwelt in Shamir in Mount Ephraim;" that "he judged Israel twenty and three years;" and that he "died and was buried in Shamir." All this is embraced in two verses, nearly the whole of which I have now quoted. The record of Jair, the next Judge, is similar. We learn that he was "a Gileadite, and judged Israel twenty and two years. And he had thirty sons that rode on thirty ass-colts, and they had thirty cities, which are called Havoth-jair unto this day, which are in the land of Gilead. And Jair died, and was buried in Camon."

Now, let us suppose for a moment that the critical account of this Book is correct, and that it is a comparatively late collection of popular legends; in other words, that round about certain names, tales of Israel's trials and marvellous deliverances had grown up; that these were collected by some industrious and credulous literateur; and that his book was subsequently enlarged by a fresh gleaner in the same field of Israelitish folk-lore. But, when we have for the moment agreed to accept this view of the origin of *Judges*, and have placed ourselves at the view-point of "advanced" scholarship, we discover that, whatever may be the case with the old belief, this new theory is not without its difficulties. What about Tola and Jair? *Where* are the legends? The purpose of the original writer was to collect the

popular tales. The writers who followed added other embellishments. Where, then, are the tales, and where are the embellishments? We search in vain for the slightest trace of either. There is nothing whatever said of Tola's history or that of his family, and as for the record of Jair, there is nothing miraculous about the thirty sons, the thirty ass-colts, or of the thirty cities; for that region, throughout all the time of its prosperity, was crowded with towns and villages. It is no reply to say that darkness rested upon some portions of the tale, and that on this account we find here names only. *For there is no darkness here.* So far as the record goes it is perfectly clear and distinct. No one can read these five verses without confessing that they leave the impression that the writer is possessed of full information regarding Tola and Jair. There is not the faintest note of uncertainty; there is no trace of hesitation as if he were groping in the dark, or searching for probabilities among conflicting accounts. There is, on the contrary, absolute precision. Tola's descent for two generations is given. The darkness of centuries had not blotted out that. The tribe to which he belonged is equally well-known: he was "a man of Issachar." The writer is as fully acquainted with the place of Tola's residence, and of his burial, and with the duration of his supremacy, as if the judge had died only a day or two before the record was penned. The truth, that the real Author of the Book is the Spirit of God, and that the narrative is expanded or condensed according

as the period did, or did not, supply materials for our instruction, is perfectly in keeping with the contents. But the critical theory is in hopeless conflict with them.

The narrative passes lightly over the times of Tola, and of Jair, to speak of Israel's renewed folly. The people, untaught by former chastisements, had sunk lower than ever. They "served Baalim, and Ashtaroth, and the gods of Syria, and the gods of Zidon, and the gods of Moab, and the gods of the Children of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines." Previously they seem to have combined the worship of Jehovah with that of the false gods; but now we read that they "forsook the Lord, and served not Him" (verse 6). The revolt was complete; and, if this nation had been as little to God as, apparently, God was to them, the revolt might have been final. Jehovah might have left them to their choice and let them mingle with, and lose themselves among, the nations. But God's love follows and saves. The nations to whom Israel turns are used to drive them back again to God. It is to be noted that we have now the first mention of the Philistines as active foes. This implies that the expeditions of the Egyptians to the East had ceased for a time. The Philistine cities lay on the highway of the Egyptian armies, and had for a long time been firmly held by the Pharaohs who chastised sternly every attempt at independence. But Egypt had now entered upon a long period of discord, weakness, and decline. Philistia was therefore able to extend its borders,

and to do to others as the Egyptians had done to themselves.

These were as yet, however, still too weak to make any extensive or abiding conquest; and so upon this western side Israel was exposed only to vexing raids. But a more dangerous foe was raised on the East. The children of Ammon subjected the two and a-half tribes on the East of the Jordan. These had borne the oppression and the slavery for eighteen years; and emboldened by their success, the Ammonites were now bent upon subjecting the entire Israelitish people. "Moreover, the children of Ammon passed over Jordan to fight also against Judah, and against Benjamin, and against the house of Ephraim; so that Israel was sore distressed" (verse 9). Counsellors were not wanting to remind Israel of its better past, and it would seem that their words were not unheeded; for, we read: "The children of Israel cried unto the Lord, saying, We have sinned against Thee, both because we have forsaken our God, and also served Baalim" (ver. 10).

There is one incident in this story of Israel's deliverance which has dwarfed every other. But it is not only Jephthah's vow and his supposed offering of a human sacrifice which the critic seizes upon to help him in his attack upon the Scripture. We are asked to note that, in what he says to the King of Ammon about Chemosh, Jephthah admits the existence and power of the Ammonite god, and is plainly no believer in the doctrine that there is no God but Jehovah. A belief in many gods, we are assured, is

plainly the religion of Israel. After recounting how God gave the territory of Sihon and Og to His people, Jephthah asks: "Wilt not thou possess that which Chemosh thy god giveth thee to possess?" (xi. 24). Here, it is said, that Chemosh is represented as endowing the Ammonites with their territory as really as Jehovah endowed the Israelites with theirs. This passage is consequently regarded as a capital bit of evidence in favour of the critical theory (that Israel received its notions concerning the existence and character of the one only God by development, and not by Revelation), that it is accepted at once as ancient and as thoroughly historical. We fully admit that it is both, but we fail to see that it helps the critic's case. Jephthah is speaking to a man who believes that Chemosh gave him his land, and also that Jehovah is the God of Israel. Jephthah is, therefore, labouring to show him the impiety of his attempt. He is appealing to the king's own convictions, and reminding him that he is throwing dishonour upon his idol's supposed arrangement, as well as attempting to interfere with the arrangement made by Jehovah. It is an instance of what logicians have called the *argumentum ad hominem*. When Elijah called upon the priests of Baal to awake their god, the prophet of Jehovah did not necessarily believe that Baal shared the throne of the Almighty. If I remind the critics that a certain portion of the Scripture, which they assign to J, has all the characteristic marks of P, I do not thereby depart from my utter disbelief in

these phantoms of the critical imagination. I am merely meeting the critics on their own ground. And Jephthah's reference to Chemosh was nothing more than an attempt to turn a man from wrongdoing by an appeal to his own convictions.

The like antiquity is cheerfully accorded by the critics to Jephthah's supposed sacrifice of his daughter. Their belief is, as I have just indicated, that there never was any supernatural Revelation of God, and that all we possess in the Old Testament is a record of natural development—a gradual evolution of thought regarding the Great Essential Existence. How this incident is being used the following quotations will show. It is from a series of Lectures to Sunday School Teachers: "The sacrifice of children to the gods was a common heathen practice. It was not unknown in Israel. The story of Jephthah and his daughter reminds us of it (Judges xi. 29-40). Mark this: it is said that *the spirit of the Lord* came upon Jephthah to vow a *human* sacrifice, and when he found, to his sorrow, that his own daughter was the victim, he could not go back—Jephthah and his daughter thought it right she should be sacrificed."* The italics are the Lecturer's own. But the reader will search the Scripture in vain for the statement that the Spirit of the Lord inspired the vow, or had anything to do with it.

This illustrates the frequent unreliableness of

* *Shall we Understand the Bible?* by Rev. T. Rhonda Williams (Percy, Lund, Humphries, and Co., Bradford). See also Reply by Rev. John Urquhart, (Marshall Bros., London).

critical references to the Scriptures. But let us pass on to the main point. Did Jephthah intend to offer a *human* sacrifice to God, and did he really slay and present his own child as a burnt offering? It is quite true that heathen rites had everywhere made the world familiar with such atrocities; and it is not to be wondered at that for the first eleven centuries of the Christian era both Jews and Christians should rush to the conclusion that Jephthah had considered himself bound by his oath to commit such an abomination. The Targum of Jonathan says, for example: "A man may not offer son or daughter for a burnt offering, as did Jephthah the Gileadite, and did not consult Phinehas the priest; and if he had consulted Phinehas the priest, he would have redeemed her." Similar references are found in early Christian writers. But the question is not how the Scripture has been interpreted, but rather how it ought to be interpreted, and when we read this passage with due care, we shall find it impossible, I think, to approve of the older interpretation.

Let us recall the facts. Israel had gone deeply into idolatry, but, taught by bitter experience, "they put away the strange gods from among them, and served the Lord" (ix. 16). Now let it be remembered that the Law had emphatically expressed God's utter abhorrence of human sacrifices. "Thou shalt not do so unto the Lord thy God: for every abomination to the Lord, which He hateth, have they done unto their gods; for even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fires to their gods. What

thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it" (Deut. xii. 31, 32). Is it credible, then, that at a time when Israel had returned in penitent grief, and with eager cleansing of the land from heathen pollutions, Jephthah would have perpetrated such a crime? His daughter and her companions bewailed her virginity for the space of two months. During that time the tidings of the national hero's intention must have gone over all the land. Let me ask again, is it conceivable that, even though Jephthah, under some mistaken notion as to the sacredness of his vow, had resolved to present his daughter as a burnt offering, Israel would have looked on in silence? Would a people eager to please God have suffered the deed to be done? The longer the matter is looked at in this light, the more impossible will it be to believe that such a sacrifice was offered.

But one passage, which has received too little attention, sweeps this notion entirely away. We read: "And it was a custom in Israel that the daughters of Israel went yearly to lament the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite four days in a year" (verses 39, 40). The word rendered "lament" does not bear that meaning. It means, on the contrary, "to praise," "to celebrate" (which is the translation in the Revised Version), or "commemorate." Four days a year the Israelitish maidens celebrated this incident in their nation's history. Is it credible that such a place would have been given to the praise and the celebration of one of the darkest

deeds which man had ever perpetrated? Let us for the moment say with the critics that the people's thought was being only gradually purged from such terrible conceptions of what was pleasing to God; can we even then conceive that *after* ages would have laboured to keep alive the recollection of such a fearful deed? Where, in that case, would be the onward development which critics would substitute for the Law and the Gospel? On the face of it, this annual celebration can only mean that Israel saw nothing wrong in Jephthah's offering, but found in it rather matter for high, and sacred, and long-continued national approval.

It is quite in keeping with this that there is not a trace of blood in the narrative. So much is this the case that writers speak of the Scripture "drawing a veil" over the transaction. But why should it draw a veil over this, when it tells the story so unreservedly? It is surely more natural to conclude that there was no veil to draw, and that there is not a trace of blood in the narrative for the simple reason that there was none in the transaction. But wherein, then, lay Jephthah's surrender and his daughter's self-sacrifice? To answer that question, a word or two will suffice. The Law had provided for a case like this. In Leviticus xxvii. 1-8, we read: "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When a man shall make a singular vow, the persons shall be for the Lord by thy estimation. And thy estimation shall be of the male from twenty years old even unto sixty years old, even

thy estimation shall be fifty shekels of silver, after the shekel of the sanctuary; and if it be a female, then thy estimation shall be thirty shekels," etc. But there were, no doubt, cases in which redemption was not to be thought of, and this was one of them? Was there, then, any place for the devoted one in God's service? It will be remembered that Samuel was devoted before his birth; and, when Hannah came with the child to Eli, the high priest, she was apparently doing a quite customary thing. There was no question in her mind as to the child's being received for the service of the Tabernacle. The offering of women for the same service was also a custom in Israel from the time the Tabernacle was made till Israel's last Temple was destroyed. In Exodus xxxviii. 8, we are told that Bezaleel "made the laver of brass, and the foot of it of brass, of the looking-glasses of the women assembling, which assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation." The word translated "assembling" means "serving." It is applied in Numbers iv. 23, and elsewhere, *to the service of the priests in the Tabernacle*. The giving up of the mirrors by these women was an expression of their consecration. These were things they had no further use for. The elaborate dressing of the hair, and the adornment of the person, were for them things of a past to which they were not to return. That their service was spiritual, and not menial, we may gather from the reference to Anna in Luke ii. 37: She "departed not from the temple, but served *with fastings and prayers*, night and day." Here also the word used refers to

sacred service, and is the New Testament equivalent for the word used in *Numbers*.

But, it may be asked, if this was all that Jephthah's vow brought down upon his daughter, how can we explain his grief? It will be observed that Jephthah's judgeship has several very peculiar features. There is no direct Divine commission to deliver Israel. Jephthah is ambitious, and his ambition has all the intensity of a fire that has been damped down for a time, and then suddenly stirred. Wronged before his birth by others' sin, he suffers additional injury from his brethren. They refuse him any share in the family possessions, and drive him from his home. And now the elders of Gilead come and beg him to take the supreme command of the Israelitish forces. Jephthah does what no previous judge had done save Abimelech: he makes a bargain with his afflicted brethren. "And Jephthah said unto the elders of Gilead, If ye bring me home again to fight against the children of Ammon, and the Lord deliver them before me, shall I be your head? And the elders of Gilead said unto Jephthah, The Lord be witness between us, if we do not so according to thy words. Then Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, and the people made him head and captain over them: and Jephthah uttered all his words before the Lord in Mizpeh" (xi. 9-11).

This was plainly an attempt to found a royal house in Israel; and *the attempt was frustrated by the unforeseen result of his vow*. "And Jephthah came to Mizpeh unto his house, and, behold, his daughter

came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances: and *she was his only child*: beside her he had neither son nor daughter. And it came to pass when he saw her, that he rent his clothes, and said, Alas, my daughter! thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me: for I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back" (verses 34, 35). The reader will note where the emphasis is put by the Scripture. "She was his only child: beside her he had neither son nor daughter." With her consecration to the Tabernacle service, the hope with which Jephthah had been so busy in these last days, was suddenly cut down to the ground. The hope of establishing a royal house, that should put to shame the houses of the men who had wronged him, was now a vain dream. His honours would perish with him. If anything further were needed to show that this is the right reading of this incident, it would be found in the burden of his daughter's sorrow. She asks to be left alone for a couple of months—not that she may bid farewell to life and to all that makes it dear—but to bewail her "virginity." She sorrows over the extinction of her father's house, and his hope of a posterity that would wear his newly-acquired glory.

A circumstance referred to in the closing words of Jephthah's story finds a surprising comment in a recent discovery. The arrogant Ephraimites desire to trample upon the rising glory of Gilead and of Jephthah, and they threaten to burn the judge's house upon him with fire (xii. 1). The result is a conflict in

which the Ephraimites (who had crossed the Jordan to attack the men of Gilead) are overthrown. The scattered fugitives flee to the fords of the Jordan, to return to their brethren and to their strongholds. But Jephthah's generalship has cut off their retreat. The fords are held by his troops; and as the fugitives come up, the men of Gilead make use of a test to determine whether these are fugitives or no. This was to pronounce the word "Shibboleth," "a flowing water," such as ran before their eyes. This the Ephraimite was unable to do: "he said 'Sibboleth,' for he could not frame to pronounce it right" (xii.6). Now we know that the Ephraimites dwelt in an Amorite district; for, in order to chastise the Gibeonites, who had made peace with Israel, Adonizedec, king of Jerusalem, summoned the Amorite kings (Joshua x. 1-5). The entire district had, therefore, been Amorite territory. But the discovery of the Tel-el-Amarna letters has shown that the substitution of the *s*, for the *sh* sound, was an Amorite peculiarity. One consequence of this is the present name for Shiloh, which the natives of the land pronounce *Seilún*. "This," says Conder,* "has always presented the difficulty that the *s* is not the proper representative of the Hebrew *sh*;" and, he adds: "Perhaps, as in other cases, the peasant pronunciation represents the Amorite rather than the Hebrew sound." The Tel-el-Amarna letters have shown that this was a characteristic of the Amorite tongue. Shiloh appears in the letters as *Zilu*. The

* *The Tel-el-Amarna Tablets*, p. 146.

Ephraimites thus settling down among a numerous Amorite population—a population whose services would be in frequent request in the household, and on the farm—their children acquired the peculiarity of the district; and so the *sh* sound dropped out of the Ephraimitish speech.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BURIALS OF THE JUDGES.

IN a note on the record of Jephthah's burial, one of our English commentaries, which has done special service, says: "It is the way of the author to mention the burial-places of the Judges. . . . The burial-places of Othniel, Ehud, and Barak, were probably not known, as they are not mentioned." One asks with amazement—not known to whom? Is it so that we are limited in Scripture to what the writers were enabled by ordinary diligence to pick up, and have we only the record of *their* impressions? Is Inspiration a fiction; or is the Spirit of God a nonentity? Yet that is how believing men prepared the way for the avalanche of infidelity which now threatens to engulf us! Afraid to commit themselves to a definite and full acceptance of the Scripture claim to be the very Word of God, they yielded the position which they ought to have held unflinchingly. He who hesitates is lost; and orthodoxy, like every-

thing else that means to rest on truth and to hold its ground, must be logical.

A closer study of the notices of the Judges' burials discovers the wisdom which here, as everywhere, lies behind the hints of Scripture. They follow, with one eloquent exception, a distinct and significant law. Of the first four Judges, without exception, there is no such notice. We are told of the death of Othniel, of Ehud, of Shamgar, and of Barak, but there is no record of the place of their burial. With Gideon there is a change. We read: "And Gideon the son of Joash died in a good old age, and was buried in the sepulchre of Joash his father, in Ophrah of the Abi-ezrites" (viii. 32). We have to go back to the records of Eleazar the high priest, and of Joshua, to find a similar notice: "Eleazar the son of Aaron died; and they buried him in a hill that pertained to Phinehas his son, which was given him in Mount Ephraim" (Joshua xxiv. 33); "And it came to pass after these things, that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being an hundred and ten years old. And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Tim-nath-serah, which is in Mount Ephraim, on the North side of the hill of Gaash" (verses 29, 30; also Judges ii. 8, 9). We have apparently in these notices the hint of a *great national mourning*, and of a public, or *State, funeral*. Neither Joshua nor Eleazar could pass away and Israel be without concern. The tidings would bow the hearts of all Israel in a great and common grief, and up from every tribe the princes

would go to pay the last honours to the illustrious dead. The first Judges, who were raised up after Joshua's death, were men to whom was committed a special mission. They did the work appointed and retired to their former place and position, in which they were pleased to render what service they could when their counsel was desired. But when they died the deliverance which they had worked had become an old story. With Gideon, however, a change comes in. His ephod had attracted multitudes to Ophrah, the city where he dwelt. He apparently assumed a princely state; for we now meet a notice which becomes familiar as we proceed with the after history: "And Jerubbaal the son of Joash went and dwelt in his own house"—that is, he set up a separate establishment—"And Gideon had threescore and ten sons of his body begotten: for he had many wives" (Judges viii. 29, 30). Without the kingly title a kingly state was gradually assumed, and the vices of the neighbouring potentates were imitated. The old simplicity was disappearing, and the way for the monarchy was being prepared.

This grows plainer the more the Book is studied. There is no notice of Abimelech's burial. He was a murderer and a usurper, and his end was too plainly marked by the manifest judgment of God to admit of either a national mourning or a State funeral. But to all that followed this national recognition was accorded. Even of Tola, of Jair, of Ibzan of Bethlehem, and of Elon, a Zebulonite, of whom we know little besides, this is recorded. It is a

remarkable fact that among the Carthaginians (who came from Palestine and who confessed themselves to be Canaanites), the chief magistrates, who held a similar position to that of the Roman Consuls, bore this same name of *Shophet*, or Judge. Israel was fast learning the ways of the heathen. The old fear of God, from which sprang manly worth and brotherhood, was being forgotten. The Judge assumed, and was willingly accorded, the state of a king, and the way was being prepared for a royalty after the manner of the tyrannies of the East.

CHAPTER XIV.

SAMSON AND THE PHILISTINES.

THE few notices in the Book of Judges regarding the Philistines, help us to recover, in some measure, the story of that warlike people. Early in the history we have an intimation of their presence in the neighbourhood at least of the Israelitish people. We are told that Shamgar smote 600 Philistines with an ox-goad. They had evidently made an inroad upon Israel, which was repelled. In the time of Jephthah they are named as attacking Israel from the South and West, while the Ammonites invaded the land from the East. When the Ammonites are defeated, however, and their power is effectually broken, we do not read of Jephthah's undertaking any expedition against the Philistines.

Plainly it is only the fact that Israel is distressed by the Ammonite attack from the East which gives the Philistines their opportunity. When the Israelites are delivered from that oppressor, and are able to give to the western foe an undivided attention, the Philistines retire. Their power was growing, but they were yet too weak to have any hope of conquest. In the times of Samson, Eli, Samuel, Saul, and David matters are changed. The Philistine power is the dominant one in Palestine. They are the masters of the land, and the humiliation of Israel is deep and long.

Going back to the earlier Books of Scripture we find the completion of the story. While the Philistines are not mentioned among the foes whom the tribes have to cast out, they were, nevertheless, already in the near neighbourhood of the allotted territory. The reader will remember the reason given in Exodus xiii. 17, 18, for Israel's not being led by the ordinary and direct route to Canaan. That route passed, we are told, by "the way of the Philistines." It is evident, therefore, that the Philistines were not in Canaan, but were on the way to it. Their territory had to be passed through; and the people were certain to give the Israelites a hostile reception. A still earlier notice enables us to understand this matter fully. Abraham and Isaac come into touch with the Philistines in the neighbourhood of Beersheba. Abimelech, the Philistine king, dwells at Gerar.* If the reader will turn to a map of Canaan and will note where the shore line,

* Genesis xx. ii.; xxvi. i.

instead of going as before, almost direct South, sweeps round to the West, he will find there the location of this ancient race in the patriarchal times. They were a maritime power, but had also, apparently, extended inward, and so lay across the approach to Canaan from the West. Thotmes I. and his predecessors had made this their pathway into Syria, and had effectually averted or crushed opposition along the entire route. The Philistines were dependent upon, and, no doubt, in active correspondence with, their Egyptian over-lord. Every man who could bear arms would have been summoned to chastise the Israelites, hated of Pharaoh's soul. And so "it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near: for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt."

All this has been viewed by archæologists generally with the gravest doubt. That the introduction of the Philistines to Syria had been a comparatively recent event was one of their most settled convictions. The English translator of Lenormant's *History of the East*, for example, says in a note: "The first arrival of the Philistines on the coast of Palestine is conclusively proved to have occurred in the reign of the Egyptian king, Rameses III." The note of impatience, with the idea that these statements of the Scripture are historical, has been painfully evident; and in the face of this unanimity of archæological authorities, what did Bible exposi-

tors do? They surrendered at discretion. They described this description of the Western approach to Canaan as "the way of the Philistines" as an adaptation to later times, and explained its presence there either as betraying the hand of an "editor," or as a proof of the late origin of the Book of Exodus. And now these accommodating custodians of "The Oracles of God" have to learn that their surrender of this high trust was due to a blunder. The Philistines are said in the later Scriptures to have come from Caphtor. "Have not I," asks the Lord, "brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtor?" (Amos ix.7). This statement was accepted because it was supposed to fall in with some ascertained facts in Egyptian history. Caphtor was identified with either Cyprus or Crete. In the reign of Rameses III., Egypt was invaded—as we shall immediately see—by the Philistines, in combination with the Sardinians, Sicilians, and others. What more natural than to suppose that these were close neighbours? But it is now placed beyond a doubt that Caphtor was situated in quite another region. The word is found upon the Egyptian monuments in this very form, *Keft-ur*; and it is the name given to *the Delta of Egypt*—to those extensive plains, watered by the streams of the Nile, and lying between Cairo and the Mediterranean.

The Egyptians called the Phœnicians by the name of *Keft*; and *Keft-ur* is supposed by archæologists to mean "Great Phœnicia." Their opinion is that there were large settlements made by the Phœnicians

in very early times upon the Northern coast of Egypt, so large indeed that there were more Phœnicians there than in the mother cities of the coast of Palestine. This theory may be doubted; but, meanwhile, it is quite enough for us that the locality of Caphtor has at last been definitely ascertained. Let us now turn to Genesis x. 13, 14, which will enable us to complete our history of the Philistines, and will also indicate another confirmation of the absolute reliability of these Scripture notices. The verses run: "And Mizraim begat Ludim, and Anamim, and Lehabim, and Naphtuhim, and Pathrusim, and Casluhim (out of whom came Philistim), and Caphtorim." These names are all in the plural, and they consequently indicate peoples. The "Mizraim" are the Egyptians, who are constantly referred to by this name throughout the whole of the Old Testament. From the Egyptians, therefore, all these peoples have sprung. The Philistines came out from the Casluhim, who seem to have occupied the Western portion of the Delta. The Philistines appear to have settled then in the Eastern part. There calamity seems to have overtaken them, possibly on the overthrow of the Shepherd dynasty by Ahmes and the native Egyptians. In Jeremiah xlvi. 4, the Philistines are described as "the *remnant* of the country of Caphtor." The population of Caphtor had been overwhelmed, and these Philistines had been saved. We have another hint in Amos ix. 7: "Have not I brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt? and the Philistines from Caphtor, and the

Syrians from Kir?" The evident inference from these words is that God had delivered the Philistines in a time of peril, and as He had delivered Israel, and had brought them up from Caphtor, as He had brought up His own people from the heart of Egypt. The Philistines had gone up along the Mediterranean coast and had settled where Abraham and Isaac afterwards encountered them, on the Southern boundaries of Canaan between Beersheba and the Mediterranean.

These notices, it will be seen, tell a consecutive and consistent story, and I may add that the Egyptian origin of the Philistines is quite in keeping with their appearance as depicted on the Egyptian monuments. Ram-



PHILISTINE INFANTRY.

ses III. covered the walls of his palace at Medinet Habou, in Western Thebes, with vast battle-pieces. In the twelfth year of that monarch's reign, Egypt was invaded by the Philistines, in conjunction with the Lybians, Sardinians, and others. The Philistines had brought their families with them, evidently imagining that the time had come for their return to their old home in the fruitful lands of the

Egyptian Delta. Landing upon the coast out of their ships, they moved slowly Southward in bullock-carts, and were encountered by the Egyptian troops which Rameses III. had gathered together. The Philistines were defeated, and multitudes of them slain. The rest surrendered. Something had to be done with the people, and Rameses settled them in the coast towns of Palestine between their old abode and Joppa. It was this notice of their final settlement in Gaza, Askalon, Ekron, and the other cities,



A PHILISTINE SHIP IN BATTLE. *From the Egyptian Monuments.*

which misled the archæologists. They concluded that this was the first time the Philistines had entered Palestine, whereas they were merely planted in a district which was only a little further removed from Egypt than their former habitation, but which had the advantage of being more fruitful. It was, consequently, more likely to satisfy the desires of this restless and warlike people, and lessen the danger of another invasion of the Egyptian territory from that

quarter. Rameses' victory occurred in the twelfth year of his reign. On the monuments at Medinet Habou he has engraved a calendar of religious festivals. The position of the dogstar at dawn on a certain day in this twelfth year of his reign is given; and, working from this, Biot, the celebrated French astronomer, has fixed that year as about 1300 B.C. This presents us with another confirmation of the historical accuracy of the Book of Judges. According to the Scripture chronology, the Philistines begin to oppress Israel about 1200 B.C., a century afterwards. During that century the Philistines had had time to repair their losses, and were once more conscious of their power. But it also indicates that they were no longer under the control of Egypt, and were their



PHILISTINE WARRIORS.

own masters. This is in perfect accord with what we now know of Egyptian history. For with these victories of Rameses III. commences the long decline of Egypt. They were the last efforts of Egypt's fast-failing strength. "Depressed now," writes Lenormant, "in direct proportion to her former exaltation, she was to see her territory again trodden down by foreigners; and after having ruled over the Cushites, Lybians, and Asiatics, to be compelled to

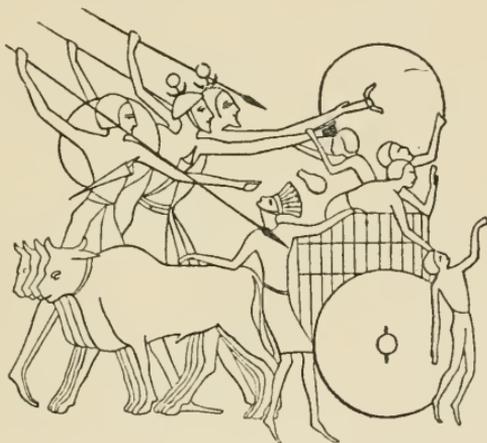
serve the kings of these nations. As M. Mariette so well says, 'It was because she would not remain on the territory really her own, the Nile valley, as far South as it extends—it was because she endeavoured to impose her authority (in Asia) where a thousand questions of race and climate tended to compromise it, that her too vast empire was dismembered.' Here ends the most brilliant period of the history of Egypt. Powerless to face so many dangers, the empire of Menes, after Rameses III., entered on the miserable road to ruin. In the North, as in the South, her conquests were one by one torn from her; and at the time when, under the last king of the twentieth dynasty, the high priests assumed the power of the Pharaohs, we see Egypt reduced to the smallest possible frontier, and surrounded by enemies henceforth more powerful than himself."*

This coincidence of the decline of Egypt, and the rise of the Philistine power, has also a very distinct bearing upon critical contentions regarding the Scripture account of Samson. It forms one of those marks of genuine history which every scholar appreciates. But at a time when the veil still lay heavily upon the history of Egypt, the wildest theories were adopted to explain away the exploits of the great Israelitish hero. The name Samson bears some resemblance in sound to the Hebrew word *Shemesh*, "the sun." This was quite enough to suggest to Dr. Steinthal, that the story of Samson was nothing more or less than a Hebrew solar myth.

* *Ancient History of the East*, vol. i., p. 270.

Samson was the sun-god, the Hebrew Hercules. He was "the solar-god," according to M. Tiele, who, with many others, fully adopted Steinthal's theory, represented as "combating and dying." In Samson's hair, we must see, said Steinthal, simply the sun's rays. The hair is thus "the image of force, and of the fulness of life." In Winter the rays decrease, and nature dies. In Spring they grow, and nature revives. The incidents in Samson's career were subjected to similar torture.

But there is little use in reviving an absurdity which is now as dead as its author and as the men who hailed his so-called discovery with



A CAPTURED PHILISTINE CHARIOT.

so much enthusiasm. Ewald's study of the Scripture convinced him, notwithstanding his rationalism, that Steinthal's explanation was impossible. "The history of Samson," he says, "is, at first sight, so surprising, that scholars of an earlier time had already believed that they found there something resembling the history of the pagan Hercules. Many modern authors, relying upon reasons, in part, wholly without foundation, have wished to see there still more

extraordinary things. To call him (Samson) the Hebrew Hercules is quite inadmissible. . . Nothing can be more certain," he adds, "than that Jephthah and Samson were veritable Israelitish heroes, belonging to this epoch."*

How far the Scripture narrative is from lending itself to this misrepresentation will be seen by any thoughtful reader. A glance at the map will show us that the territory of Dan, to which tribe Samson belonged, lay on the Philistine border. The tyranny of these new masters would consequently press more heavily upon the Danites than upon any other portion of the Israelitish people. It is here, therefore, that a deliverer is raised up. The Philistine terror is met by a manifestly Divine interposition, which sows the seed of hope in the hearts of the oppressed, and fills the oppressors with alarm. It was the commencement of that long struggle which went on through the times of Eli, of Samuel, and of Saul, and which ended only in the crushing defeats inflicted by David. It will also be observed by the reader, that a commencement only was promised by the angel, whose words to Manoah's wife were: "He shall *begin* to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines" (Judges xiii. 5). It was merely the opening of the war; but it opened in a way which ensured its continuance and its ultimate success. Samson is single-handed. He is but one man against myriads. He has no army. Never, in any instance, has he even a single helper. Could anything have been better

* *Geschichte des Volkes Israels*, vol. ii., p. 558.

devised to win Israel from its idols, and to teach it faith in God? When David went forth to meet the gigantic champion of the Philistines we may well believe that thoughts of Samson fired the hero's breast; and all through the intervening generations the record of this man's deeds flamed out like a

beacon, and made plain the only way by which deliverance could be reached. Emphasis was laid on this, too, by

Samson's Nazarite consecration. When that was violated, his strength was gone and the Philistines triumphed.

When repentance came, and

when both the inward consecration and its outward sign were renewed, then his captivity was glorified. The lessons that were written there made men of David and his "mighties."

There is so deep and so God-like a purpose in all this, that to recognise it is to feel it impossible to regard even those stupendous miracles of valour as



A CAPTIVE PHILISTINE.

other than veritable facts. Legend and myth do not rest on truth like that. This impression is deepened as the history is more closely studied. The incidents of Samson's career might easily be shown to have a symbolic import; but into this I do not now enter. The presence, however, of deep, all-controlling wisdom is manifested, for example, in what we are told as to where his strength lay. It may, no doubt, seem sufficiently ridiculous that it should lie in his hair. Milton, in his *Samson Agonistes*, suggests a reason for this:

What is strength without a double share
Of wisdom? Vast, unwieldy, burdensome. . .
God, when He gave me strength, to show withal
How slight the gift was, hung it in my hair.

But we require only to read the Scripture to find a more satisfactory explanation. His unshaven hair was the outward sign of his consecration. When that sign was removed, the consecration was renounced. "And it came to pass, when she pressed him daily with her words, and urged him, so that his soul was vexed unto death; that he told her all his heart, and said unto her, There hath not come a razor upon mine head; for I have been a Nazarite unto God from my mother's womb: if I be shaven, then my strength will go from me, and I shall become weak, and be like any other man" (xvi. 16, 17). This was his own profound conviction, that, if the vow were broken, the strength would pass away which God had promised in view of his consecration. This is even more clearly shown in verse 20: "And

he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not *that the Lord was departed from him.*" His strength lay not in the possession of greater physical powers than were enjoyed by other men, but in the immediate presence and help of God. Legends and solar myths are not written in that way.

When the traveller in Palestine visits the district which was the scene of Samson's eventful history, the Scripture narrative finds fresh and striking illustration. Like a mirror, it reflects, in its apparently insignificant phrases, the character of the land with almost startling faithfulness. The reader will notice that, when Samson goes to Timnath from his native town of Zorah, he is said to go *down* to it: "Then went Samson down, and his father and mother, to Timnath, and came to the vineyards of Timnath; and behold a young lion roared against him" (xiv. 5). Dr. Cunningham Geikie says: "On the airy hill of Surah, or Zorah, the border village, a spot now so bleak and uninviting, young Samson grew up, amidst plentiful discourse about border forays, and constant sight and sound of danger from the hated foe: a fit school for such a lad. Many a time must he have gone, as a little child, with his mother to the spring, and walked back up the steep half-mile beside her, as she carried her water-jar on her head, to supply the household. . . . It speaks of troublous times that a village should have been perched so high, instead of nestling in the broad, flat valley below." After referring to the populousness of the place in ancient

times, as shown by the fact that the remains of ancient towns or villages crown every hill-top, and that over thirty "have been found within a circle of three miles from Zorah," he proceeds: "Three miles off to the South-west, on the South side of the great valley, 800 feet above the sea, and thus 400 feet below Zorah, young Samson had before him the village of Timnah—then Timnath—which was for a time all the world to him, for the maiden who had won his heart lived there. Ruined walls, caves, wine-presses, and rock-cut cisterns are all that remain of it, unless we count the spring, North of the site, to and from which Samson's betrothed must often have borne her water-jar in those old days."* "Timnath still exists on the plain," writes Dr. Thomson, "and to reach it from Zorah you must descend through wild rocky gorges—just where one would expect to find a lion in those days, when wild beasts were far more common than at present. . . . There were then vineyards belonging to Timnath, as there now are in all these hamlets along the base of the hills, and upon the mountain sides. These vineyards are very often far out from the villages, climbing up the rough wadies and wild cliffs, in one of which Samson encountered the young lion."†

"The incident of the swarm of bees in the dried-up skeleton of the lion," adds Dr. Cunningham Geikie, "is also true to local experience. A dead camel is often found so dried up by the summer heat, before

* *The Holy Land and the Bible*, vol. ii., pp. 99, 100.

† *The Land and the Book*, p. 566.

putrefaction has begun, that the mummy remains permanently unaltered, without any corrupt smell. Such a withered and dry shell of a dead beast would offer to wild bees a very fit place for storing their honey, accustomed as they are to use hollow trees, or clefts in the rocks, for hives. Even in England, wrens and sparrows have been known to make their nest in the dried body of a cow, or hawk nailed up on a barn-door, and instances are recorded of hornets using the skull of a dead camel for a hive."* Upon whatever point we light upon in Samson's story we find the same local colour. He takes vengeance upon the Philistines by seizing 300 jackals (not foxes, as in our version), with which the district abounded; turned them "tail to tail, and put a firebrand in the midst between two tails, and when he had set the brands on fire, he let them go into the standing corn of the Philistines, and burnt up both the shocks, and also the standing corn, with the vineyards and olives" (xv. 4, 5). This was one of the heaviest possible blows. It annihilated the chief treasure, and broke the highest hopes, of his foes. "The most striking and characteristic feature of Philistia," says Dean Stanley, "is its immense plain of cornfields, stretching from the edge of the sandy tract right up to the very wall of the hills of Judah, which look down its whole length from North to South. These rich fields must have been the great source at once of the power and the value of Philistia." †

* *The Holy Land and the Bible*, vol. ii., pp. 100, 101.

† *Sinai and Palestine*, p. 258.

The Philistines pour out their vengeance upon Samson's former bride and his father-in-law. They burn them with fire. The hero's anger is once more roused, and he smites them with a great slaughter. He then takes refuge in the rock Etam. The name is preserved in a slightly altered form. Dr. Harper writes: "The rock is well represented by 'Atab ('eagle's nest'). It is pre-eminently a rock—a knoll of hard limestone, without a handful of arable soil, standing above deep ravines by three small springs. It has long been a hiding place, and the word rendered 'top of the rock Etam' is, really 'clift' or 'chasm;' and such a chasm exists here—a long, narrow cavern, such as Samson will have 'gone down' into, and which bears the suggestive name *Hasûta*, meaning 'refuge' in Hebrew. This remarkable 'cave of refuge' is two hundred and fifty feet long, eighteen feet wide, and five to eight feet high. Its South-west end is under the centre of the modern village. At its North-east extremity there is a rock shaft ten feet deep. Samson could hide here in safety, unless anyone found the entrance to the tunnel. It is a conspicuous rock, and not far from Zorah."*

* *The Bible and Modern Discoveries*, pp. 247, 248.

CHAPTER XV.

THE CLOSE OF SAMSON'S HISTORY.

THE Philistines resolved to end this trouble. They compelled their vassals, the men of Judah, to hunt for Samson, and to deliver him into their hands. His refuge was discovered, and, on their pledging themselves not to slay him, he consented to their binding him and handing him over to his enemies. The Philistines had encamped in a place, which took its name from the incident of which it was now to become the scene. "And when he came unto Lehi, the Philistines shouted against him: and the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, and the cords that were upon his arms became as flax that was burnt with fire, and his bands loosed from off his hands. And he found a new jawbone of an ass, and put forth his hand and took it, and slew a thousand men therewith. And Samson said, With the jawbone of an ass, heaps upon heaps (an heap, two heaps), with the jaw of an ass have I slain a thousand men. And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking, that he cast away the jawbone out of his hand, and called the place Ramath-lehi" (verses 14-17). The name means "the lifting up of a jawbone."

Difficulties have been found in the instrument which Samson used, and in the number of the

enemies whom he slew. It is said that no bone could have endured this long continued use ; but the careful reader will note that the Scripture has anticipated this objection by telling us that the jawbone was "new" (verse 15). The animal had apparently been the recent prey of some wild beast, and the birds of the air had consumed what was left of the flesh. The jawbone, fresh and firm, with the teeth unloosed by decay was, in such hands, a formidable weapon. But it would be a mistake to attempt to explain either the preservation of the weapon, or the number of the slain, on natural grounds. Both were due to the intervention of God, who desired to teach cowardly Judah (from which God's heroes were yet to spring), and all Israel, what one weak arm, and one poor weapon can do, if the Lord be helper. There is many a modern miracle which may be discredited in the same way. If we sum up the numbers and the resources of the early Church, we might refuse to believe that it ever overthrew the strongholds of paganism, and that it came out of its long struggle victorious over that Rome which had proved itself invincible everywhere besides.

There is one difficulty, however, which has been caused by an unfortunate mistranslation. We read : "And he was sore athirst, and called on the Lord and said, Thou hast given this great deliverance into the hand of Thy servant : and now shall I die for thirst, and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised ? But God clave an hollow place that was in the jaw, and there came water thereout ; and when he had

drunk, his spirit came again, and he revived: wherefore he called the name thereof En-hakkore (the well of the crier), which is in Lehi unto this day" (verses 18, 19). The word Lehi, indeed, means a jawbone; but the Scripture has just told us that Samson gave that name to the place. When we read, therefore, that God clave a hollow place that was in *Lehi*, it is evident that we are to apply the words to the newly-named locality and not to the jawbone. "Near Zoreah," says Colonel Conder, "there is a low hill, on the slopes of which are some springs called Ayûn Abu Mehârib ('the fountains of the place of battles'). Near is a ruin called Ism Allah ('the name of God.')

These springs are sometimes called 'Ayûn Kara, in which name we recognise easily the Enhakkore, or 'Fountain of the Crier.' " *

Samson's weakness and sin form no attractive picture, though the record of it is there, like the rest, for our learning. The Divine displeasure is seen in Samson's captivity and shame. The use of the handmill is still a special feature of life in Gaza. "It is one of those pleasant coincidences, that here at Gaza, where we read so incidentally of the 'grinding at the mill' in that ancient story, we still have the same operation ringing in our ears. The reason is, that this city has no mill-stream near it; there is neither wind nor steam mill, and hence the primitive apparatus is found in every house, and heard in every street." † Sampson, deprived of sight and imprisoned in Gaza, is made to take his part in

* *Tent Work in Palestine*, p. 273. † *The Land and the Book*, pp. 551, 552.

this common toil. But for him it is degradation that has a perpetual sting in it. It was *women's* work. "I cannot recall an instance," writes Dr. Thomson in another place, "in which men were at the mill. It is tedious, fatiguing work, and slaves, or lowest servants, are set at it. From the king to the maid-servant behind the mill, therefore, embraced all, from the very highest to the very lowest inhabitants of Egypt."*

The day came, however, when the Philistines carried their triumph too far. The lords of the five cities, which formed the Philistine commonwealth, summoned the people to Gaza to celebrate their victory, and to offer sacrifice to Dagon, their god, to whom they ascribed it. The crowds had visited the prison and gazed upon the blind and fettered Samson; "And when the people saw him they praised their god: for they said, Our god hath delivered into our hands our enemy, and the destroyer of our country, which slew many of us" (chap. xvi. 24). As the feast proceeded, the cry arose, "Call for Samson, that he may make us sport. And they called for Samson out of the prison-house; and he made them sport: and they set him between the pillars. And Samson said unto the lad that held him by the hand, Suffer me that I may feel the pillars whereupon the house standeth, that I may lean upon them. Now the house was full of men and women; and all the lords of the Philistines were there; and there were upon the roof about three thousand men and women, that

* Page 527.

beheld while Samson made sport." His request was complied with; and, after a fervent appeal to God for strength, he bowed with all his might, and bore down the two pillars, with the result that the roof, with the thousands crowded upon it, crashed down upon Samson and the revellers beneath.

This part of the history has presented special difficulties. For one thing, how could the three thousand on the roof have been able to witness the sports, if these were being carried on within the temple building? A German writer has made a special study of this part of the history, with the result that this, and other difficulties, have been cleared away.* The Philistine, like the Egyptian, temples embraced a large area, which we would speak of as the temple court. The temple itself—the abode of the god—was a small building in the centre. The roof of this could not have accommodated 3,000 people. But there was, in all probability, an erection stretching along one of the sides of the outer court wall, a piazza, or porch, open to the front, and with an ascending stage, or stand, on the top. From this a large number of people might witness the sports, which were being carried on in the open court below. There were similar porches, open to the front, that ran along the outer walls of the Temple at Jerusalem. We have, therefore, to think of Samson performing in the open air, Dagon's dwelling-place behind him, and in front the lords of the Philistines and the wealthier classes assembled in

* Stark, *Gaza und die philistäische Küste*, Jena, 1852.

the portico, and the common people on the stand above. The sports having come to an end, Samson was brought into the portico, possibly for rest and refreshment, possibly that the lords of the Philistines, their ladies, families, and friends might have a nearer view of the fallen hero who had so long been the scourge and the dread of their nation. He was set between the pillars. The roof would be supported on beams, which may not have run across the whole length, and the ends of which may have met on the tops of the central pillars. Through the overthrow of these, and the immense weight of the multitude above, the building collapsed, and the oppressors of Israel were once more appalled by unlooked-for disaster, which covered the land with gloom, and which revealed once more what even one arm, nerved by the power of the God of Israel, could accomplish.

There was no attempt on the part of the Philistines to avenge themselves on the hero's remains; and, when his brethren came to remove them, they were suffered to do their melancholy office in peace. Samson was buried "between Zorah and Eshtaol, in the burying-place of Manoah his father" (Judges xvi. 31). Zorah, as we have already seen, has been identified with the modern Sorek. Victor Guerin, in his elaborate work on Palestine, expresses his belief that Eshtaol is to be found in the village of Ashoua'. Between these two places is another called Khirbet A'selin. There, he says, some of the inhabitants of a neighbouring village "had informed me there is a Sanctuary commonly called Wady

Sheik Gherib, but which (said they) we venerate equally under the name of Kabr Shamshoum (the tomb of Samson). This indication was a ray of light for me. . . The same inhabitants had added that the village of Ashoua' is sometimes called Achoua'l, or Ashtoua'l, a name in which we may recognise that of Ashtaol. This second piece of information had decided me to visit anew the Wady es-Serar (Zorah), and, in particular, the Khirbet A'selin, in the hope of finding there (thanks to the wholly unexpected indications which I had just collected) the tomb of the extraordinary man who had so long caused the Philistines to tremble.

“Immediately on arrival, then, at this last *Khirbet*, where one sees the rubbish of about forty small houses, I hastened to penetrate into the *Wady Sheik Gherib*; but I found there only a Mussulman sanctuary, of rectangular form externally, and vaulted within. Some old fig-trees shaded it without. Within, one observed a long sarcophagus of stone in one of the corners.”* This was comparatively modern, and seemed to contain the body of a Mahommedan saint. This appears, however, to have been an appropriation of a more ancient tomb, which a persistent tradition has asserted to be that of Samson. A Jewish Rabbi, who visited the country in 1333, has the following entry in his book entitled, *The Roads of Jerusalem*: “From Jerusalem to Sarea, the country of Samson. It is now called Sarah, and the tomb of Samson is shown there. It is a very ancient monument,

* *Description de la Palestine*, vol. iii., pp. 324-326.

adorned with the jaw-bone of an ass, with which he slew the Philistines."

I have already referred to the attempt to discredit this part of the Scripture history by speaking of Samson as "the Hebrew Hercules." Almost every nation, we are reminded, has had its strong man, whom it has enshrined among its ancient heroes, or placed among its gods; and, it is added, that the story of Samson shows that the Hebrews are no exception. But a glance at those traditions is quite enough to prove that between them and the Scripture account of the son of Manoah there is a wide gulf which no sophistry can bridge. In the Greek legends concerning Hercules, it is perfectly true that he also has a contest with a lion, which, after he has in vain attacked it with his weapons, he smothers in his arms. But this lion was not an ordinary monarch of the forest. It was the offspring of Typhon, a monster with a hundred heads, fearful eyes, and terrible voices, and of Echidna, another monster, the upper part of whose body was that of a beautiful maiden, the lower part that of a serpent of enormous size. Another of the offspring of this worthy pair was the Lernean Hydra. This was also attacked and slain by Hercules. It had nine heads; but as soon as Hercules had beaten one off with his club, two new heads sprang up in its place. He then tried fire, and burned off all the heads save one, which was immortal, and which he buried beneath a huge rock.

The third of his labours was the capture of the Arcadian stag. This had golden antlers and feet of

brass; and it was captured only after a chase which lasted a whole twelve months. There were also some marvellous birds with claws, wings, and beaks of brass, which used their feathers as arrows, and devoured human flesh. From these he delivered the land by shooting them with poisoned arrows. He next slew a human monster with three bodies, after a surprising series of adventures. I need only mention, in addition to these feats, his going down into Hades, and there delivering two individuals from their torments, and his bringing up from the unseen world the monster Cerberus, which he obligingly conveyed again to its former abode. These tales will show the boldness of which a man must be possessed who would talk of Samson as "the Hebrew Hercules." There we are, undoubtedly, dealing with myth and legend. Those grotesque exaggerations and unbridled fancies wholly banish the notion that we are dealing with history. But here, in the Scripture, we have incidents that assume fresh significance the moment we get into contact with the places, the peoples, and the times. And even where the numbers slain, and the task accomplished astonish us, we discern the Divine purpose to make known to Israel, and to us, how much one man may do who puts his trust in the living God. It is a lesson which led to wondrous deeds in Israel, and it has begotten service and triumphs which take their place among the marvels of to-day. When a like inspiration can be traced to

the Grecian myths, it may be time to suggest a parallel between Samson and Hercules. But, until then, to speak of "the Hebrew Hercules" is to cast away that regard for truth which is vital to all true science.

THE BOOKS OF SAMUEL.

CHAPTER I.

WHAT MAY LIE IN A NAME.

THE theory of the higher criticism is that it is only in the Books of Samuel that we first encounter veritable history. And even here, they tell us, the history is of a very qualified kind. It is largely intermingled, say they, with legend and with deliberate falsification. Such forgeries as those which were intended to support the claims of the Popes to temporal sovereignty are said, by these so-called critics, to have entered almost everywhere into the Old Testament. The *Encyclopedia Biblica* indicates that the names of Eli's sons are highly suspicious, and seem to show the hand of a somewhat clumsy inventor. "Eli's sons," says the writer, "do not appear to have entered into the original tradition; they are only introduced in the interests of later theory." Hastings' *Bible Dictionary*, which is supposed to be so much more orthodox than its contemporary, is not willing, however, to be considered behind the times; and so it also adds the following to prove that it is quite abreast of the latest "scholarship": Eli "is stated to have judged Israel 40 years; but this chronological notice, as also the statement of his age, is probably due to a later Deuteronomic redactor."

But when a reader inquires what ground there is for these statements, he discovers that there is absolutely none. They rest solely upon the opinions of

certain men, the supposed "authorities" of the moment; but who, thirty years hence, will be utterly forgotten. There is not the slightest trace of any interference with the Books of the Old Testament. Nothing, indeed, could have been more opposed to the deep reverence with which the Jews have ever regarded the letter of the Scripture. We know that in the time of our Lord that reverence was most pronounced. The recovered Hebrew text of *Ben Sirah* (the apocryphal book of Ecclesiasticus) shows that this was also the spirit of the Jews in the second and third centuries before the beginning of the Christian era. The Samaritan Pentateuch, preserved by a hostile people, takes us back another 300 or 400 years. In its complete agreement with the Law, as we have it now, it shows conclusively that neither forger nor editor has been at work upon the Books of the Old Testament. There is nothing which a theoriser loves so little as opposing facts, and it need not astonish us that these facts are steadily ignored. But they are nevertheless destined to crush and to kill the critical theories; for they place it beyond the reach of doubt that no books in the world have been so carefully and so reverently handed down as those of the Old Testament Scriptures.

I hope to deal, in a subsequent volume, with this Book, and to show that its arrangement and plan point distinctly to a Divine origin. But let us, meanwhile, note how it begins. The Book, it will be observed, does not commence with Eli, but with Samuel. Eli and his sons are mentioned, indeed,

only in connection with the child-prophet's history. The Book opens with the record of Samuel's birth and of his consecration; and here, strange to say, we meet a proof, both of the high antiquity of the narrative, and of its inspiration. The meaning of the name Samuel has long been one of the perplexities of Hebrew scholarship. Various explanations were given, none of which were satisfactory. Indeed, so sensible were scholars of this fact, that these were put forth as suggestions, rather than as explanations. The last part of the name—*El*—was undoubtedly the Hebrew word for "God." That was recognised by everyone. The difficulties began only when the first two syllables of the name—*Shīmu*, or (according to the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament made some centuries before the Christian era) *Samu*—were dealt with. Some said "Samuel" was really *Shem-El*, that is, "the name of God;" but how, then, did the letter *u* get into the name? Another unhappy guess was that it meant, "asked of God" (*Shaul-El*): but where, in this case, would the *m* have come from? The almost universally accepted explanation was that the word meant "heard of God;" and we were told, by what seemed high authority, that this was the best explanation we were ever likely to get. This, too, however, was an explanation with which no Hebrew scholar could be quite satisfied; for an important Hebrew letter, which belongs to the verb "to hear," is absent from the prophet's name.

So stood the matter till 1899, when the XIIth Congress of Orientalists held its meeting at Rome.

Professor Jastrow, of Philadelphia, read a paper on the name of Samuel, towards the close of which he mentioned a fact which sweeps away the darkness which has rested so long upon this matter. In the Assyrian (which is so closely allied to the Hebrew tongue) the word *sumu* means son, and is used in this very way in the formation of names. It appears, for example, in the Assyrian names *Nabu-sum-iddin*, *Samas-sum-ukin*, etc. Professor Jastrow consequently translates "Samuel" as "son (or offspring) of God."* This throws a sudden and striking light upon the sincerity and depth of Hannah's surrender of her first-born. She gave him up utterly, and signified this by the name with which she named him. He was "God's son" from the moment of his birth, and not hers. "Therefore also," said she to Eli, "I have given (not 'lent,' as in the Authorised Version) him to the Lord: as long as he liveth he shall be given to the Lord."

Now, this name, so unexpectedly and so satisfactorily explained, becomes a witness to the antiquity of this Book, and to the reality of the incident which it here relates. In his analysis of the Books of Samuel, Canon Cheyne assigns the first chapter of I. Samuel to a writer who lived quite 500 years after the prophet's time, and who put together some stray traditions regarding him. Hannah's song of praise, in the second chapter, he assigns to some unknown writer who wrote nobody knows when.† That is the

* *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology*, vol. xxi., p. 262.

† *Aids to the Devout Study of Criticism*, p. 7.

critical position ; the distinct statement of Scripture is, on the contrary, that these are not collected traditions ; that they are not the outcome of human imagination, or of human industry ; but that they are the Word of God written for our learning. The reader can now judge on which side this slight, but significant, discovery arrays itself. Here is a word, common to the Babylonian and Hebrew tongues *before their separation*—a word which lived on in Assyria under the form *sumu*, and apparently under the form *shīmu*, or *shamu*, among the Israelites. It disappeared from the language of the Israelites so completely that no Jewish student of the Bible, ancient or modern, was able to explain it. It is quite evident also that when the name was bestowed, the word was in common use ; for when Hannah called him “God’s son,” she meant that *every one* should know that he was altogether the Lord’s own ; and she must have chosen a word, therefore, which every one could understand. It was also fully understood *when the narrative was penned* ; for there is no translation of it given or hinted at. Hannah, indeed, tells how she came to give the name (“because I have asked him of the Lord,” i. 20) ; but no hint is let fall that the word meant “God’s son ;” and we can only conclude that no hint was given, for the simple reason that no hint was needed. When 1 Samuel was given to the people of God, the word *shīmu* still held its place in the Hebrew tongue ; and a fact like that warns us that the date ordinarily assigned to the Book cannot be disputed with safety.

But this incident takes us farther. Expositors of Scripture have always remarked the striking resemblance between the song of Hannah and that of Mary, the mother of Jesus. The resemblance is the more strange that Mary's song is not a repetition of Hannah's; and does not, indeed, contain a single quotation from it. And yet they deal with the same things, the phrases of the one answering in quite an extraordinary way to the phrases of the other. They see the same vision. It is a vision of the earth's full salvation, and of the Lord's Christ. "The adversaries of the Lord," sings Hannah, "shall be broken in pieces; out of heaven shall He thunder upon them: the Lord shall judge the ends of the earth; and He shall give strength unto His king, and exalt the horn of His anointed"—that is, of His Messiah (1. Samuel ii. 10). "He hath shewed strength with His arm," responds Mary; "He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. . . He hath holpen His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy; as He spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever" (Luke i. 51, 54, 55).

What fashioned this link between these two predictions, sundered as they are by more than eleven centuries? What led them to answer each other in those marvellous responses, and to join their voices in this prophetic anthem? We can understand why Mary, the mother of Christ, is there. But what of Hannah? How is it that she, of all the women of the Old Testament time, should stand thus by the side of the mother of Jesus? The critic has no reply;

for this is a kind of problem for which his so-called "science" makes no provision. But an old-fashioned believer can readily solve the difficulty. I hope to show more fully, when dealing with the plan of this Book, that Samuel is the type of Jesus in His prophetic ministry. One feature in his special work may now be named as indicating this. It is the founding of "the schools of the prophets" which, when priest and Levite forgot their mission, kept the knowledge and the worship of God alive among the people. It was the type of the Lord's prophet-service in pouring out His Spirit upon apostles and evangelists, upon preachers, and teachers, and pastors of the primitive Church; and upon the evangelists, preachers, teachers, and pastors of all subsequent times. Samuel's was the type and the prophecy of Christ's multiplied ministry. This is only one indication, which may meanwhile be taken for what it is worth. With this key, however, the mystery is solved. We understand how Hannah stands by Mary's side. The prophetic work lays the foundation for the kingly throne. It calls out a people that shall yet be glorified. It sheds God's light upon sin and righteousness, and prepares the earth for judgment. Hence it is, that these two women, illumined by the Spirit of God, look on to the consummation, and paint it in words that cheered the lonely worker of old, and that put fresh heart in us to-day. But when all this has been seen and said, we have come upon a truth which lies behind this. These things could have been spoken only by the inspiration of the Almighty;

and the same Divine hand has preserved them for our comfort and instruction.

CHAPTER II.

SHILOH AND ITS TABERNACLE.

THE story of Samuel's childhood takes us back into the long, vanished life of the most ancient of the religious centres of the Israelites in Palestine. As soon as the children of Ephraim, then the leading tribe, had conquered its territory, a place was found for the Tabernacle and the altar at Shiloh, which lay "on the east side of the highway that goeth up from Bethel to Shechem" (Judges xxi. 19). The word "Shiloh" means "tranquility," or "rest;" and it was tempting to imagine (as was done till recently) that the name was given to the place when the many removals of the tabernacle were ended, and when it and the Ark of God, which it enshrined, entered into what was fondly believed to be their rest.

A closer study of the Scripture might have indicated, however, that the name was earlier. In Joshua xviii. 1 we read: "And the whole congregation of the children of Israel assembled together at Shiloh, and set up the tabernacle of the congregation there." There is nothing said here about the name being newly given. The presumption, on the contrary, clearly is that the place had long been called by this

name. The people had been summoned to gather at a place whose name they already recognised. A recent discovery has shown that here we once more encounter the stamp of historical truth. Shiloh appears in the Tel-el-Amarna letters as *Zilu*. It was already an important place before the Israelites crossed the Jordan, and the name was not invented by the new possessors of the country. They simply continued a name which had long been associated with the place. The name occurs in an alarming letter despatched by Ebed-Tob, the priest-king of Jerusalem, to the Pharaoh of the time. He speaks of the ravages which attend the onward march of the Hebrews, and beseeches the Egyptian king to send a fleet with the needed succour. "Thou shalt march," he writes, "against the chieftains of the Hebrew. There is not a single ruler for the King my Lord. They have destroyed all. Lo, Twurbazu (is slaughtered? . . .): in the great pass of the city of Zilua they have bowed down."* Colonel Conder appends a note to this letter, in which he says: "Shiloh is remarkable for the great pass it commands."

Sin, which lost paradise, and that has once and again laid Jerusalem in ashes, desolated Shiloh. Jerome, writing in the fourth century of our era, indicates plainly enough that the site of the ancient city was then well known. But for long centuries afterwards Shiloh was lost sight of. Dr. Robinson, travelling past Bethel in 1838, on his way from Jerusalem to Shechem, was advised by his peasant

* Conder, *The Tell-el-Amarna Tablets*, pp. 145, 146.

guide to leave the beaten track, and to visit some ancient ruins at Seilun. He remarked to him that there was a saying among the people that, if the Franks were to visit the place, "They would deem it of such importance, that they would not go away in less than a day."* Robinson visited the place, and thus became the modern discoverer of Shiloh, for *Seilun* is none other than Eli's ancient city. It lies upon a low hill, which is surrounded by higher hills. It is thus in a situation which admitted of a strong defence in case of attack. The approach to it is by a valley leading up from the South. "An ancient causeway leads up the slope of a chalky hill from the open plain of Turmus 'Ayya. Gaining the saddle, the traveller sees in front of him a grey ruin of tumble-down stone huts, clustering round the side of a kind of knoll. . . . Immediately behind the knoll of the ruined village is a deep valley. Several tombs are cut in the rock on either side of the town; and a fine spring, with some rock-cut sepulchres, exists about three-quarters of a mile to the East, near the valley-head. The site, remote from the main road, and hidden in the bosom of the hills, is so secluded that it might easily escape the notice of even a careful explorer; and it is not surprising that for so many centuries it remained altogether unknown, though still preserving its ancient name among the villagers who, until quite of late years, inhabited the place."† Sir Charles Wilson believes he has come upon the site of the Tabernacle. To the North of

* *Researches in Palestine*, vol. ii., p. 267. † *Picturesque Palestine*, vol. i., p. 229.

the ruined village there is "a terrace with rocky sides. It is 77 ft. wide, and 412 ft. long. There are several small cisterns close by, and Sir Charles Wilson proposes to identify this as the place where the Tabernacle stood. According to Rabbinical traditions, it would be 'a structure of low stone walls, with the tent drawn over the top.' Near the knoll is a fine oak tree. The ruins," continues Mr. Harper, "are of several periods. The more massive wall seemed to me to be possibly Jewish. A spring, not far away, runs through an underground channel to a rock-cut well or tank. Ancient roadways, ten feet wide, and some old tombs, are now all that mark the place. When the writer halted here, the plain was rich in corn cultivation: and, just as we are told in Judges, three miles away stands the imposing village of Lebonah, now called Lubban."*

Such is now the place which was once the scene of Israel's solemnities, and to which Hannah went up with sacrifice and thanksgiving. There is a number of things, incidentally mentioned, which have an important bearing upon the theories of the higher criticism. Wellhausen and his school mention that the Tabernacle, the Ark, and the elaborate arrangements made through Moses for the Divine service, are simply elaborate fictions. But to re-construct in this fashion a nation's history, and to explain away the references of its ancient records, is quite impossible. Here, for example, there is no attempt whatever to impress the reader with the magnificence

* *The Bible and Modern Discoveries*, p. 261.

of the Sanctuary at Shiloh. There is no description of great assemblies of the tribes, or of imposing ceremonies. It is, on the contrary, an evident reflection of a time of comparative neglect of the central Sanctuary and of the solemnities of the national religion. This is quite in harmony with the fact mentioned in the narrative that "men abhorred the offering of the Lord" (1. Sam. ii. 17) on account of the tyrannical and licentious conduct of the sons of Eli.

But, while there is no attempt to describe the Tabernacle, the priestly office, or the solemnities of ancient Israelitish worship, we have in the narrative, as has just been indicated, a clear reflection of the time. Let us now mark what a patient scrutiny of this reflection will reveal. First of all, the Tabernacle is a reality. It is for Israel the meeting place with God. It is called (1 Samuel i. 7) "The house of the Lord;" and it also bears the ancient name, "The tabernacle of the congregation" (ii. 22). It is frequented, too, not by the tribe of Ephraim merely, in whose territory it was situated, nor only by the Southern tribes. It is the resort of the entire people. This is plain from the description of the masterful conduct of Hophni and Phinehas, who, we are told, acted in that fashion "unto all the Israelites that came thither" (ii. 14). The duty of attendance at Shiloh is also plainly recognised. The Law had said: "Unto the place which the Lord your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put His name there, even unto His habitation shall ye seek, and thither

thou shalt come: And thither ye shall bring your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, and your tithes, and heave offerings of your hand, and your vows, and your freewill offerings, and the firstlings of your herds and of your flocks: And there ye shall eat before the Lord your God, and ye shall rejoice in all that ye put your hand unto, ye and your households, wherein the Lord thy God hath blessed thee" (Deut. xii. 5-7). It need hardly be pointed out how thoroughly in accord with this are the following statements regarding Elkanah: "And this man went up out of his city yearly to worship and to sacrifice unto the Lord of hosts in Shiloh. . . . And when the time was that Elkanah offered, he gave to Peninah his wife, and to all her sons and her daughters, portions: But unto Hannah he gave a worthy portion" (i. 3-5). It was, as the Law had declared it should be, a time not only of worship, but also of joyous festivity. What can be plainer than that the Law (which the critics would have us believe was not then in existence, being forged, according to them, nearly six hundred years after the days of Elkanah) was already known to all Israel?

We mark further that Shiloh is the only earthly dwelling-place of Jehovah. Twice does God, in His message to Eli, speak of it as "My habitation" (ii. 29, 32). There is also only one altar for Israel. God speaks of the altar at Shiloh as "Mine altar" (ii. 28, 33), and of the offerings presented there as "all the offerings of Israel my people" (ii. 29). Once more let me ask whether it is not clear that the

Law of Deuteronomy (which I have just quoted) was already known and recognised as God's injunction to His people? The Ark of the Covenant is also there; and, as we shall immediately see, is specially treasured and revered. The Israel of Elkanah's time possesses, in addition, the Aaronic high-priesthood. How firmly it is established, and with what reverence it is surrounded, is seen in the submission of the people to the exactions of Eli's sons, and in their endurance of their profanity and licentiousness. Their scandalous life is universally condemned, and their exactions are bitterly resented; but no man thinks of resistance, or dreams of punishing them for their offences. There is no possibility of understanding the sacredness with which these men are invested, unless we admit that the Law had long been the inheritance of Israel. There are other traces of its existence which show that, in small things as in great, the Law was known and obeyed. In Exodus xxvii. 20, 21 we read: "Thou shalt command the children of Israel, that they bring thee pure oil olive beaten for the light, to cause the lamp to burn always. In the tabernacle of the congregation without the vail, which is before the testimony, Aaron and his sons shall order it from evening to morning before the Lord: it shall be a statute for ever unto their generations on the behalf of the children of Israel." That nightly lamp burns in the Tabernacle in which the child Samuel ministers. "And it came to pass at that time . . . ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was," etc. (iii. 2, 3). The priest's

ephod and other garments, for his ministering before the Lord, were made of "fine linen" (Exodus xxviii. 4, 5, 29, etc.); and we are told here that "Samuel ministered before the Lord, being a child, girded with a linen ephod" (I. Samuel ii. 18). To convince us that Israel had as yet no Divine Law is, in the face of these things, an impossible task. Its arrangements were already known in the days of Samuel's childhood; and it was even then a light to the feet, and a lamp to the path of the people of God.

CHAPTER III.

THE ARK AND THE PHILISTINES.

THE predicted judgment on Eli's sons seemed to linger. But there came a day when they passed out over their thresholds, and through the gates of Shiloh, for the last time. Where the Aphek was, which is mentioned in I. Samuel iv. 1, is not definitely known. It is supposed to have occupied the site of the village *Belled el Foka*, near Gath. If this identification is correct, it would appear that the Philistines had suffered some reverses, and were in danger of exchanging places with their former servants, the Israelites. This seems to be indicated in verse 9, where the Philistines say: "Be strong, and quit yourselves like men, O ye Philistines, that ye be not

servants unto the Hebrews, as they have been to you ; quit yourselves like men, and fight." It is also in keeping with what we are told in verse 1, " That Israel went out against the Philistines to battle." The initiative had apparently been taken by Israel.

But Israel had this time challenged the Philistines to their own loss. Defeated in a first engagement, the elders of the Israelites took counsel. " Wherefore hath the Lord smitten us to-day before the Philistines ?" they asked. " Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of Shiloh unto us, that, when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies " (verse 3). Messengers were sent in hot haste to Shiloh, and Hophni and Phinehas went forth with the Ark to the camp. The battle was joined, " And Israel was smitten, and they fled every man into his tent : and there was a very great slaughter ; for there fell of Israel thirty thousand footmen. And the ark of God was taken ; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were slain " (verse 10, 11).

The Philistines looked upon the capture of the Ark as their greatest achievement, and brought it " into the house of Dagon, and set it by Dagon " (v. 2). We touch here, once more, Eastern archæology tells us, upon the life and the customs of the time. The ancients invariably attributed their success in battle to the gods whom they worshipped ; and to them, when they returned in triumph, they brought their trophies, which were placed before their altars, or hung up upon the temple walls. Tiglath Pileser I.,

king of Assyria, who reigned about this time, says in one of his inscriptions :—

“ The country of the Sugi in all its extent I have conquered.
Twenty-five of its gods, its prisoners,
Its possessions and its goods I have carried away.

* * * *

“ Then the twenty-five gods of those countries
My booty
Which I had carried away with me, as an offering to the temple
of Belit,
The lofty spouse, the beloved of Assur, my lord
(To the temple) of Anu, of Hammân, of Istar, of Assur,
The gods of my city of Assur,
And the goddesses of my country,
I have offered.”

In a similar spirit the Philistines take the Ark of the God of Israel “into the house of Dagon, and set it by Dagon.” This god and his wife Derceto were the chief divinities worshipped by the Philistines. He is represented upon a coin of Askelon as having a body, the upper part of which was human, and the lower part the tail of a dolphin. There was an Assyrian Dagon, as well as the Philistine one, a representation of which is given on next page, and this enables us to understand, in some measure, how Dagon came to occupy the chief place among the Philistine gods. In Assyrian sculptures we see Dagon swimming through the sea in front of the Assyrian warships. He is evidently cleaving a way for them, and leading them to victory. Dagon was, in fact, as he has been named, “the Baal of the sea,” the Neptune of the ancient East. When we remember that the Philistines were a maritime people, going

“down into the sea in ships,” and invading foreign lands with their fleets, we can understand how the worship of Dagon had won the chief place among the Philistine idolatries.

The Ark was, accordingly, placed before Dagon as a confession of his superiority to Jehovah. But Israelite and Philistine were now to learn the terrible-ness of the Divine indignation. The chastisement fell first of all upon their idolatry. Dagon was found,



when his priests entered the temple in the early morning, lying on his face before the Ark of Jehovah. Explaining this, no doubt, as an unfortunate accident, they set Dagon up again in his place.

But on the following morning that explanation was swept to the winds. Dagon again lay prone before the Ark of the Lord, but not as before. He was judged, and cast out. His head and his hands had been cut—not broken—off, and they lay upon the threshold of the temple. The fishy stump was alone left to him. And the hand of the Lord was laid upon the men of Ashdod, as well as upon their idol. A plague, painful and deadly, raged in the city, filling the breasts of the mightiest with fear: “The hand of the Lord was

heavy upon them of Ashdod, and He destroyed them, and smote them with emerods, even Ashdod and the coasts thereof. And when the men of Ashdod saw that it was so, they said, The ark of the God of Israel shall not abide with us: for His hand is sore upon us, and upon Dagon our God" (verses 6, 7). The lords of the five associated cities were summoned to a council. They acted warily. Whether or not the plague was due to the retention of the Ark, it was worth a trial to remove the Ark from Ashdod. But it would be the height of folly, they apparently argued, to surrender their trophy and to send the Ark away. They decided to remove it to Gath. They had not long to wait before a second sign was given. "The hand of the Lord was against the city with a very great destruction: and He smote the men of the city, both small and great" (verse 9). But even now the surrender of the Ark was not dreamt of. They removed it from Gath, but sent it to Ekron. The men of Ekron received the fatal gift with dismay and horror. The lords of the five cities were again convened in haste; meanwhile, the fears of the Ekronites proved not to be groundless: "For there was a deadly destruction throughout all the city; the hand of God was very heavy there" (ver. 11).

It was now clear to all that only one thing could be done. Philistia must yield up her spoil; the Ark must be sent away, and the God of Israel must be appeased. It is upon this that the lords of the Philistines now concentrate their attention, for the need is urgent. They summon the priests and the

diviners, "Saying, What shall we do to the ark of the Lord? tell us wherewith shall we send it to his place?" (vi. 2). The counsel of these men shows that they were not devoid of wisdom. Another miracle must be worked before they will conclude that this terrible visitation has been due to the God of Israel. But, though this demand is made, nothing is left undone that may show honour to Jehovah. A trespass offering is presented, and a new cart is prepared on which the Ark is to be put. But it is not to be drawn by oxen, the beasts of burden ordinarily used; nor is it to have a driver. Milch cows entirely untrained for the yoke are to be employed. Their calves are to be kept at home, and the cows themselves are to be left to their own devices. Everything is against their leaving Philistia, and ascending the heights to the land of Israel. Their instincts will make them turn back to their calves that have been taken from them. But should they, notwithstanding all this, go right on to the Israelitish borders, it will be plain, said the priests and the diviners, that the constraint of an unseen power is resting upon them. If the Ark, said they, "Goeth up by the way of his own coast to Beth-shemesh, then He hath done us this great evil: but if not, then we shall know that it is not His hand that smote us; it was a chance that happened to us" (vi. 9.)

The sign was given. "The kine took the straight way to the way of Beth-shemesh, and went along the highway, lowing as they went, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left" (ver. 12). Extraordi-

nary as these miraculous interventions may appear, everyone who reads the narrative is conscious that he is in touch with reality. Not only is that accent of unreality which meets us here and there in all fiction, and the grotesqueness and exaggeration which are never absent from legend and myth, utterly wanting here; but there is also a naturalness and a vividness which convince us—we may not be able to say how or why—that the narrative enshrines the truthful reflection of actual occurrences. But, in addition to this, we are able to test the narrative, and to demonstrate, in some respects at least, its historical character. The Philistines are represented as doing certain things, and presenting certain gifts. Are these the things and the gifts which (now that we know this people through archæological discovery) we would expect them to do and to make?

They send the Ark back, for example, in “a new cart.” That is a distinct Philistine characteristic. It may have been the comparatively level ground on the coast, and on the great corn country—the Shephelah, the gem of Philistia—which led to the use and multiplication of these vehicles. But, whatever the explanation may be, it is certain that these vehicles were largely used. The Philistines used them in their warlike expeditions, where others would have employed the ordinary beasts of burden. The Egyptian monuments have enabled us not only to learn this fact, but also to see the carts, and the use to which they were put. It was natural, therefore, that when the question arose as to the transport of

the Ark, the cart should have been regarded as the only means of conveyance, instead of its being borne by the hands of the priests, as was the custom among the Israelites. It is also worthy of note that the Philistine carts were even in war drawn by *oxen*.

There is considerable uncertainty as to the nature of the plague which fell upon the Philistines. The word used in the original means a swelling. The reference in Psalm lxxviii. 66 clearly implies that the infliction was of a specially humiliating kind. God "put them," says the Scripture, "to a perpetual reproach." It is a striking fact that, when Herodotus visited this region in the fifth century before our era, he found a tradition in existence which seems to have some connection with this ancient calamity. In relating the story of the Scythian invasion of the East, before the fall of Nineveh, he says: "The Scythians . . . were opposed by the Medes, who gave them battle; but, being defeated, lost their Empire. The Scythians became masters of Asia. After this, they marched forward with the design of invading Egypt. When they had reached Palestine, however, Psammetichus, the Egyptian king, met them with gifts and prayers, and prevailed on them to advance no further. On their return, passing through Askelon, a city of Syria, the greater part of them went their way without doing any damage; but some few, who lagged behind, pillaged the temple of celestial Venus. I have enquired, and find that the temple at Askelon is the most ancient of all the temples to this goddess; for the one in Cyprus, as the Cyprians

themselves admit, was built in imitation of it; and that in Cythêra was erected by the Phœnicians, who belong to this part of Syria. The Scythians who plundered the temple were punished by the goddess with the female sickness, which still attaches to their posterity. They themselves confess that they are afflicted with the disease for this reason, and travellers who visit Scythia can see what sort of a disease it is. Those who suffer from it are called Enarees.*

The "Celestial Venus," mentioned here by Herodotus, was Derceto, the female Dagon, represented on ancient coins as a mermaid, half woman and half fish. The transforming power of legend is well known. It is impossible, indeed, to find two accounts that agree. In the seven centuries which intervened between the chastisement and the journey of Herodotus, the tradition must have been seriously altered. That the plague is assigned to the Scythians, and not to the Philistines, need not surprise us. National vanity might easily account for that. But beneath the variations there are significant agreements. There was in that region (1) a plague which was universally recognised as a Divine infliction. (2) This plague was of a shameful character. And (3) it was inflicted because of the violation of what was sacred to a divinity. It will be felt to be singular, indeed, that in this special region a tradition of that sort should linger; and one, too, that is in such substantial agreement with the Scripture history.

Another plague appears, from the reported state-

* Rawlinson's *Herodotus*, vol. i., pp. 197, 198.

ments of the Philistines, to have been associated with the *ipholim*, or "emerods." While that plague desolated the homes, another plague of mice had destroyed the harvests. "Of all the smaller rodentia," says Prof. Bell, "which are injurious both in the fields and in the woods, there is not one which produces such extensive destruction as this little animal when its increase, as is sometimes the case, becomes multitudinous." It is supposed, however, by some, that the animal referred to is the short-tailed field rat, which is very common in the whole of Western Asia, and is especially abundant in the Philistine country. Van Lennep says: "A friend, perfectly worthy of credit, informed me that, being on the property of one of his acquaintances in Asia Minor, he saw one day, about noon, the depredations committed by an incalculable number of these rats, which passed along the ground like an army of young locusts. Entire fields of barley and of wheat disappeared in a very short space of time. As for the vines and the mulberry trees, they were gnawed at the root and promptly overthrown. The whole annual harvest of a farm of about 150 acres, which promised to be extremely abundant, was thus totally lost. The neighbouring farms suffered in the same way. Such, in all probability, were the rats who ravaged the land of the Philistines."*

Believing that this affliction, too, came from Jehovah, the Philistines embraced it also in their confession and entreaty. They put in the cart, along

* *Bible Lands*, vol. i., pp. 285, 286.

with the Ark, five gold mice, and five gold emerods. These were their trespass offering. Placed in a coffer beside the Ark, they were the Philistine confession that they acknowledged the chastisements to be from the hand of the God of Israel; and they were a mute entreaty for pardon and healing. The presenting of such offerings was a wide-spread and long-continued custom. "The ancient heathens," says Burder, "used to consecrate to their gods such monuments of their deliverances as represented the evils from which they were rescued. They dedicated to Isis and Neptune a table, containing the express image of the shipwreck which they had escaped. Slaves and captives, when they had escaped, offered their chains." On a Phœnician, or Carthaginian monument now in the Bibliotheque Nationale, mice or rats are figured along with a hand. In Baron Ustinof's museum, at Jaffa, there are also some votive rats, of Philistine origin. Both the representation and the offerings indicate that this was a custom of the Philistines and of their neighbours.

Beth-shemesh is now identified with 'Ain Shems, in the valley of Sorek, on the slopes of the Mount of Judah. It is about seven miles from Ekron. On the West of the village of 'Ain Shems, there are ancient ruins, which show that the place was once of considerable importance, and in the immediate neighbourhood there are fruitful plains, still yielding their wheat harvests, as they did when the Ark of God drew near. This is, indeed, another of those quiet touches which reveal how close the Scripture keeps to reality. There

is no description of the situation of Beth-shemesh, but here is an allusion which shows us the place, and helps us to recognise in 'Ain Shems the Beth-shemesh of the Bible: "And they of Beth-shemesh were reaping their wheat harvest in the valley: and they lifted up their eyes, and saw the ark, and rejoiced to see it" (vi. 13). There is a similar note of reality in the reference to Kirjath-jearim, or "city of the woods." It is implied that the position of this place is higher than that of Beth-shemesh; for when the men of the latter place send to the inhabitants of Kirjath-jearim, and ask them to take away the Ark, they say, "Come ye down, and fetch it up to you" (vi. 21). There was also in the city a still loftier place: for we read, too, that "The men of Kirjath-jearim came, and fetched up the ark of the Lord, and brought it into the house of Abinadab *in the hill*" (vii. 1). The Ark abode there twenty years, and David describes the place in Psalm cxxxii. 6, when he says: "We found it (the ark) in the field of the wood." The officers engaged in the survey of Western Palestine have identified 'Erma with Kirjath-jearim. "'Erma," says Mr. Harper, "is four miles East from Beth-shemesh; an ancient road leads direct to that place. 'Erma is in the mountains proper, 1,000 feet higher than Beth-shemesh; the site is surrounded by thickets of lentisk, oak, hawthorn, and other shrubs, which properly represent the Hebrew 'tangled,' or confused. The slopes of the hills are clothed with dense brushwood, arbutus karûb, and others besides those just mentioned: while there is a thick undergrowth of thyme, sage, and other

plants. On a bold spur, or platform of rock, there is a knoll covered with fallen masonry, above a group of olives. This site is undoubtedly ancient; the rock scarps and old masonry of vineyard towers date back to a very early period; a fine rock-cut wine-press, a great cistern covered by a huge hollowed stone, an evidently ancient cave, occurs, and the ground is strewn with fragments of ancient pottery. But the most curious feature of the site is the rock platform, the area of which is fifty feet North and South, by thirty feet East and West; the surface, artificially levelled, is ten feet above the ground outside. . . The view from the ruins is extensive: the valley is seen winding 600 feet beneath. . . the platform may be the Gibeah ('high hill') where the Ark was kept. To conclude, the name, the character of the ruin, the view, the surrounding thickets, the situation, all appear to indicate 'Erma as the site where the Ark was kept twenty years.' *

Two "Bible difficulties" here demand a brief notice. In verse 4, the number of mice which the diviners and priests counsel the Philistines to send is five. But in verse 18, we read of "the golden mice, according to the number of all the cities belonging to the five lords, both of fenced cities, and of country villages, even unto the great stone of Abel." This has led some to infer that there must have been a very large number of these votive offerings. But it will be noted that the number five is here repeated. The cities and villages are in five divisions, ranged into the

five lordships according to which the country was divided. The explanation appears to be that the names of all the cities and the villages in each division, up to the very borders of the land, were inscribed upon the offering made on behalf of that division. In any case, it was the confession and the cry of the entire district. Verse 18 emphasizes this fact, while verse 4 mentions merely the number of the offerings.

The other difficulty has been regarded as much more serious. Verse 19 reads: "And He smote the men of Beth-shemesh, because they had looked into the ark of the Lord, even He smote of the people fifty thousand and three score and ten men: and the people lamented, because the Lord had smitten many of the people with a great slaughter." This has been felt as a huge difficulty from very early times. The Greek translators of the Septuagint Version attempted to get out of it by introducing certain words. The Jewish Chaldee translation explains that the seventy men spoken of were elders, and the 50,000 common people. Our modern commentators, despairing of untying this Gordian knot, have cut it. The *Speaker's Commentary* says: "Read *threescore and ten*, omitting *fifty thousand*." In another note it says: "Most Christian, as well as Jewish expositors, feel the extreme improbability on every account of a slaughter of 50,000 men on such an occasion, and in such a place, a mere village." The reader is then asked to observe that the sentence in the Hebrew "bears manifest marks of corruption: (a) In placing the 70 men before the 50,000, contrary to Hebrew usage. . . (b) In repeating the word *men* ;

(c) in the omission of the conjunction *and*; (d) In speaking of the *people* as still existing after 50,070 were slain." Keil and others are equally unsatisfactory; and the remedy recommended is to cut out the 50,000, because Josephus, in reference to this event, does not mention the larger number, and because two (?) Hebrew manuscripts omit it! But it has always been held to be a safe rule in the criticism of manuscripts, that the more difficult reading is to be preferred to the more simple; for it is plain that there is greater temptation to substitute a simpler reading for a difficult one, than to insert one that is difficult for another, the meaning of which is perfectly clear.

The reader will not regret the perusal of these details if they lead him to see that we must not pin our faith even to orthodox commentators. The Hebrew text has here, at least, no need of correction; and the entire difficulty has arisen from not attending to the words and to their careful arrangement. They run as follows: "And He (Jehovah) smote the men of Beth-shemesh, because they looked into the ark of Jehovah, and He smote the people; seventy men, fifty thousand men; and the people mourned, because Jehovah had smitten the people with a great smiting" (vi. 19). Now, if we should follow the recommendation of the *Speaker's Commentary*, and should strike out the 50,000 out of our Bibles, what could we say about this "*great smiting?*" That phrase (which plainly implies a knowledge of the slaying of the 50,000) would have to be thrown out as well. There is no need, however, to strike out either. *There are*

two smitings recorded; and, corresponding to these, two distinct numbers are given. Arrange the verse as below, and the whole is clear.

And He smote the men	}	seventy men.
of Beth-shemesh		
And He smote the	}	fifty thousand men.
people		

The repetition of the word "men," objected to as a corruption of the text, is the Spirit's intimation that the numbers are to be taken separately. They are two distinct enumerations corresponding to the two-fold chastisement, first, upon the men of Beth-shemesh; and then, upon the people—not of Beth-shemesh or of the immediate district—but upon the people of Israel generally. The men of Beth-shemesh were punished "because they looked into the ark." But their irreverence was symptomatic. It spoke of the low level to which the entire people of Israel had now come. The men of Beth-shemesh revealed it, because of the ark coming to *them*. If it had gone to any other part of Israel, would the result have been different? Shall we find fault with God, then, because He deals justly? and, because that, when He chastises the men of Beth-shemesh, He also visits with a like chastisement the entire people? The ark had been for seven months in the hands of Israel's enemies. Shiloh was desolate, and the solemnities of the Israelitish worship could no longer be observed. Yet we read of no national humiliation. There is no confession of sin. There is no entreaty that the Lord may forgive His people, and graciously return

to dwell among them. Is it to be marvelled at that, when God Himself seeks them, there should be a startling revelation of the awfulness of Him who is "a consuming fire?" It was the very revelation that Israel needed. It is one, too, with which we cannot afford to dispense to-day; and it is our wisdom to let this un mutilated text still proclaim it.

CHAPTER IV.

SAUL'S REIGN; AND HIS IGNORANCE OF DAVID.

THE survey of Western Palestine, as well as earlier and later researches in that district, has thrown much welcome light upon the historical books of the Bible. Both my purpose, and the limits of this work, however, compel me to confine myself as strictly as possible to contemporary proofs of their historical character. One of these, of a striking kind, awaits us; but, before speaking of it, a few words are necessary upon one or two points which require explanation, and which have been the subjects of deplorable misunderstanding and misrepresentation.

There is a significant division in the history of Saul. Up to the beginning of chapter xiii., Saul has done nothing but what is praiseworthy. He is silent under the neglect, and the openly-expressed contempt, of the sons of Belial—the sons of worthlessness. He passes through that trial without one imprudent act, and without the slightest sacrifice of dignity. When

the men of Jabesh-Gilead send to him in their distress, "the Spirit of God came upon Saul." Swift in counsel, and prompt and strong in action, he gathered the hosts of Israel about him, swooped down upon the Ammonites, and delivered the beleaguered city. The people were roused to enthusiasm; and they solemnly re-crowned Saul at Gilgal. So runs the history up to the beginning of the thirteenth chapter; but, from that point, all is changed. Saul there enters upon the downward way, and plunges deeper and deeper into the darkness. Another thing has also to be marked. The reader will observe that there is a blank in the history. When Saul is introduced to us, he is quite a young man. His election to the kingdom follows immediately, so that he must have been still young at the point where chapter xii. leaves him. But, in chapter xiii., we find him with a son, who is evidently quite as old as Saul himself was when he first met Samuel in Ramah. Plainly, therefore, some twenty or more years of Saul's reign have been allowed to pass without a record. They are treated as if they had never been.

To note these facts will help us to solve the difficulty presented in the opening verse of chap. xiii.: "Saul reigned one year; and when he had reigned two years over Israel, Saul chose him," &c. These words cannot fail to strike the observant reader as peculiar. Why should the statement be made that Saul reigned one year? When the following words tell us that when he had reigned *two* years he chose out 3,000 Israelites as a permanent army, they surely

include the information that he had reigned *one* year. But, when the reader observes, in the margin, that the Hebrew runs: "Saul (was) the son of one year in his reigning," it becomes plain that our translators are endeavouring to help us to the meaning of the Hebrew text rather than giving us a literal rendering. The same is true of their rendering of the latter part of the verse: "And when he had reigned two years over Israel." There is no "when" in the original. The Hebrew consists of two simple and clearly expressed statements:

"A son of a year (was) Saul at his reigning;
And two years he reigned over Israel."

The next verse is a quite independent sentence, and begins: "And Saul chose for himself three thousand from Israel," &c.

Now, scholars are aware that this is the form of statement used in summing up the reigns of the kings. David's reign, for instance, is thus summed up in II. Samuel v. 4, 5:

"A son of thirty years (was) David at his reigning;
Forty years he reigned."

Our passage, therefore, must mean that Saul was *one year old* when he began to reign, and that his reign lasted only two years! There can be no doubt that this is the form employed, and that the words can only have this meaning. But what are we to make of the statement? The usual conclusion is, that the writer could *not* have made a statement of the kind, and that the manuscripts must have suffered. Indeed, this is one of the passages which critics have

had in view when they said that the text of Samuel is "in a very corrupt state." It is imagined that here "figures must have dropped out," and that we should conclude that originally the words ran that Saul was—say thirty—years old when he began to reign, and that he reigned twenty-two years, and not two only. But the MSS. have had this reading for twenty-two centuries at least. It was the reading which the authors of the Septuagint translation found in their copies in 300 B.C., and it has continued to be the reading of the manuscripts from that time to the present.

Now, if we really believe that this is *God's Book*, and that the Spirit often teaches by hints which sometimes present themselves in the form of difficulties, we shall hesitate to rush to the conclusion that the text is corrupt, or that numbers have "dropped out." When our Lord spoke of the necessity of our eating His flesh, and drinking His blood, His words formed a huge difficulty for many; and it was so when He said to His enemies: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." Genuine disciples neither concluded that these were mistakes, nor dropped the problems which they presented. They clung to them till light broke through the darkness, and they then discovered that the Lord had hidden in that darkness gems for their lasting enrichment. We may surely expect, then, to find the same characteristics in the written, as in the Incarnate, Word. But can we lay our hands upon such hidden wisdom here? The reader has already noted the

position which the words occupy. *They stand between the bright and the dark portions of Saul's story.* Their significance is increased, too, by the suppression of so large a part of Saul's record. Let us now recall another fact. When Saul was anointed, Samuel told him that certain signs would be given him that day ; and that they would reach their climax in the spiritual change which would come to him. "And the Spirit of the Lord will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophecy with them, *and shalt be turned into another man*" (I. Samuel x. 6). We read further : "And it was so, that when he had turned his back to go from Samuel, *God gave him another heart*" (verse 9). The wise, resolute, and successful career, recorded in the 10th and 11th chapters, were the result of that unction from on high. Saul was a new man. The words with which the 13th chapter opens have now a meaning which all can see. This change had endured one year when the victory over Nahash the Ammonite was won. It endured two years more—and then it ended. The Spirit of the Lord was in some way grieved, and even quenched. A veil is drawn over many of these sad after years ; and, when it is lifted, we see Israel brought low, and the Philistines ravaging the land. The glorious morning promise has been swallowed up in darkness ; and in what remains of Saul's career we see him passing from rebellion against God to persecution of the Lord's Anointed, the man after God's own heart. And now, when we find here the lesson that only the new heart, the birth from on high, and the abiding

presence of God's Spirit in the soul can avail for the discharge of duty, and the occupying of opportunity, we can understand David's cry in the day of his penitent grief: "Cast me not away from Thy presence; and *take not Thy Holy Spirit from me*" (Psalm li. 11); and we may also learn the secret of spiritual power and Christ-like service. "Without Me ye can do nothing" (John xv. 5).

The reader has long ago been impressed by the fact that, while we are told in chapter xvi. 14-23 of David's being selected to play before Saul, and his coming into high favour with the king and being made his armour-bearer, we nevertheless find Saul inquiring in chapter xvii. 55 whose son David is. The first impression is, that till that moment, Saul has known nothing of David. This difficulty also was an ancient one; and the Septuagint, in one, at least, of the ancient copies (*The Codex Vaticanus*) cuts out the passages which appear to be in conflict. Much less than this would have sufficed to stimulate those who would in similar fashion rend the text in modern days. In chapters xvi. to xviii., says Dr. Driver: "There are *two* accounts of David's introduction to the history. According to one account, xvi. 14-23, he is of mature age, 'a man of war, and clever in speech (or in business)', on account of his skill with the harp brought into Saul's service at the time of the king's mental distress, and quickly appointed his armour-bearer. According to the other account, xvii. 1-xviii. 5, he is a shepherd lad, inexperienced in warfare, who first attracts the king's

attention by an act of heroism against the Philistine ; in this account, moreover, the inquiry, xvii. 55-58, comes strangely from one who, according to xvi. 14-23, had not merely been told who his father was, but had manifested a marked affection for David, and had repeatedly been waited upon by him."*

But a careful study of these passages fails to support this critical conclusion. When David's servants (*Ebed*, the well-known and responsible officers of his court) recommend that a skilful musician should be got, they are unable to name any one, and David is quite unknown to them. There is here no representation whatever, therefore, that David has done exploits that have challenged the nation's attention and made him famous in the land. When Saul commands that a player be procured, it is one of the younger and inferior court attendants that recommends David. "Then answered one of the young men (*Ne'arim*), and said, Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, that is cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man," etc. (xvi. 18). Let it be remembered that this is a *young* man's speech, and the foundation of the critical case at once disappears. All that is meant is, that in this lad's eyes, David is already a hero. The encounters with the lion and the bear have impressed the district, and have drawn attention to Jesse's youngest son ; and there was much besides to mark, no doubt, that was quite in keeping with those heroic deeds. Let it be remembered, too, that when David was anointed he was

* *Introduction*, etc., p. 169.

old enough to be entrusted with Jesse's flock; and that when he goes to meet the Philistine he is man enough to encase himself in Saul's armour. And as to his being appointed Saul's armour-bearer, Dr. Driver ought not to have suffered his readers to remain in ignorance of Keil's note on that subject. We learn in II. Samuel xviii. 15 that Joab had at least *ten* armour-bearers: "And ten young men that bare Joab's armour compassed about and smote Absalom, and slew him." Saul may very well have had as many, and the position may simply have been that of one of Saul's pages, and one, therefore, which was quite in keeping with, and one that indeed implied, David's youth. For it will be noticed that Joab's armour-bearers are distinctly described as "young men"—*Ne'arim*—the very term that is applied by Saul to David, when he says to him: "Thou art but a youth" (xvii. 33).

But how are we to understand Saul's ignorance of David? This, it is hardly needful to remark, is cited by Dr. Driver in his attempted proof that we have here two different accounts of David's introduction to Saul. He says Saul's "inquiry (xvii. 55-58) comes strangely from one who, according to xvi. 14-23, had not merely been told who his father was, but had manifested a marked affection for David, and repeatedly been waited upon by him (verses 21, 23)." But there is one thing that has here escaped the notice of Dr. Driver and of others. The intimation of Saul's ignorance of David does not occur at the point where, if David was really a

stranger to Saul, we should naturally have expected it to occur. When David's words are reported to Saul, the king sends for him. But, in the conversation that follows, there is not a word that indicates that they are strangers to each other. Saul does not ask David whence he has come, or to what tribe or family he belongs. There is nothing whatever in that interview that is at variance with the preceding account. On the contrary, we need that account of their previous intimacy to understand the utter absence of any personal inquiries, and also the affectionate care which Saul displays in arraying David in his own armour. That was a mark of favour, and a proof of confidence, which it is hard indeed to believe would have been given to an unknown adventurer ; but which are entirely natural, in view of Saul's previous acquaintance with David, and with the love in which he held him.

The last shred of foundation, then, for the rending of the Scripture narrative into two contradictory accounts is the inquiry which Saul addressed to Abner. Immediately after the account of the combat between David and Goliath, we read : " And when Saul saw David go forth against the Philistine, he said unto Abner, the captain of the host, Abner, whose son is this youth ? And Abner said, As thy soul liveth, O king, I cannot tell. And the king said, Enquire thou whose son the stripling (literally, the young man) is." And when Abner ushers David into the king's presence, with Goliath's head in his hand, Saul meets him with the same inquiry, " Whose son

art thou, young man?" And this is evidently the prelude to a long interview in which David gives full particulars about himself and his kindred. For the opening verse of chapter xviii. runs: "And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul." Plainly, then, there has been a prolonged conversation. David has fully answered the king's inquiry. He has shown him the connections, and the condition, of Jesse and his family. He has possibly pictured the home and the daily life at Bethlehem. He has no greatness to boast of, and he will not hide, disappointing though the revelation may be, his lowliness and poverty. Does not the love of Jonathan, which springs into being during that interview, tell us that there *must* have been a noble and fearless frankness in David's avowals that moved the king's son to admiration and compassion? The gift, too, which is that love's first offering, leaves the same impression. David has no means of arraying himself so as to be in keeping with his newly-won greatness. His father's house are unable to help him; and so love, sharp-eyed to mark the need, supplies it instantly, and in a way that saves the recipient from even the shadow of humiliation. To have supplied him with a new outfit would have been a reflection upon his poverty which David might have keenly felt. But Jonathan makes a covenant with him. They enter into a solemn and mutual bond of brotherhood; and, as a memento of

their vows, "Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle" (xviii. 3, 4).

Evidently, therefore, Saul's inquiry was not as to *the name* of David's father, but as to the position which his father occupied. There had been no occasion whatever to make such an inquiry before; but now there is an urgent call for this very information. It may have been, as Keil suggests, that Saul desired to attach Jesse to his court; and that he desired to know whether such a step would be in keeping with his circumstances. We know that Saul was capable of generous impulses, and the sight of the young man's faith and courageous daring might well have stirred colder blood than his. But the matter had another side. The king had bound himself before all Israel to make Goliath's conqueror his son-in-law. There is enough in David's bearing, as he goes to meet the Philistine, to inspire the thought that Israel's long-desired champion has at last been found. With whom is the king, then, going to ally himself so closely? It is clear that Saul has long since cast away his early simplicity, and that he has surrounded himself with kingly state. Will this connection with the house of Jesse compromise the royal dignity, and blight the budding honours of the house of Saul?

That is the reading to which this so-called difficulty has long ago led expositors, and a careful study of the narrative amply justifies it. The notice of David,

introduced in xvii. 12: "Now David was the son of that Ephrathite of Bethlehem-Judah, whose name was Jesse," &c., has contributed to the idea of two different accounts. But it has only done this because it has been misunderstood. The recapitulation marks, in accordance with the invariable Scripture custom, *a new section of the narrative*. It is the beginning of the history of David. The Scripture is now to tell *his* story, and it calls the reader's attention to this fact in its usual way. The careful reader will also encounter other things, which show how desperate is the attempt of the critics to break up the history into two independent and contradictory documents. The supposed "second" account stubbornly asserts itself to be a mere continuation of the first; for it tells us (xvii. 15) that "David went, and returned from Saul to feed his father's sheep at Bethlehem." This "second" account clearly knows, therefore, that David has already been with Saul. It is also (in xviii. 2) as much in line with the "first" account as any mere continuation of it could possibly be; for it tells us that "Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father's house." That surely means that on some previous occasion Saul *had* let David return to Bethlehem. A criticism, that is forced to cut and carve a narrative, and to throw parts of it away in this fashion, can hardly say that it *finds* two accounts: it *makes* them.

CHAPTER V.

THE YEARS OF FAMINE, AND THE PRICE OF THE
TEMPLE SITE.

THE two "Scripture difficulties," with which this chapter will deal, have been adduced by the present Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Horton, and others, as reasons why we should cease to believe in the full inspiration of the Scriptures. We are told that it is quite impossible that these, and other instances of disagreement, can be reconciled with a belief that the Spirit of God is responsible for the words, or even for each individual statement, of the Bible. We are assured that the limitations of human capacity are here only too painfully evident; and we are accordingly urged to end this long battle with unbelief, and manfully, though sorrowfully, to throw open the gates to the foe.

But, although the case were quite as bad as those advocates of the new ideas imagine, it would hardly be wise to give up even a difficult position for one that is still less tenable. For, though we should surrender to scepticism, we have still the Bible to deal with. And, if (on the strength of a score or two of such passages) we should conclude that "the human element" had been left to stumble along in its native darkness, what of the myriads of passages which

show that same human element walking confidently and surely in that light in which there is no darkness at all? How could this human instrumentality have escaped the hideous blunders in natural science, in ethics, and in theology, which mar every other ancient book? Would it be possible to explain, from that standpoint, the completeness of the Scripture history, the shaping of each part for its place in the structure, and the placing of each in its position as by the hand of some great Master-Builder, working all through the ages? And what of the clearly-conceived and persistent purpose that lives and breathes in the Bible, from first to last? How could the Old Testament have so served a gospel that was not to be revealed for long centuries after its last word was written? No; these things may be ignored, but they cannot be explained, by unbelief.

The first difficulty is met with in the two accounts of the choice that was left to David, when God dealt with him for his sin in numbering the people. In II. Sam. xxiv. 12, we read: "So Gad came to David, and told him, and said unto him, Shall seven years of famine come unto thee in thy land? or wilt thou flee three months before thine enemies? . . . or that there be three days' pestilence in thy land? now advise, and see what answer I shall return to him that sent me." In I Chronicles xxi. 12, on the other hand, the choice runs: "Either three years' famine; or three months before thy foes, while that the sword of thine enemies overtaketh thee; or else three days the sword of the Lord, even the pestilence in the land,

and the angel of the Lord destroying throughout all the coasts of Israel.”

The “contradiction” certainly appears to be quite distinct and irreconcilable. In the one case, the years of famine are more than twice as many as in the other. So hopeless, indeed, did the inconsistency seem to be, that many concluded that there must have been a corruption of the text; and commentators set themselves to determine into which account the error had entered. Some said a scribe had erred in writing out the Book of Chronicles; and that, misled by the recurring number “three” in the two plagues that follow, he put down three also in this. Of course, it was equally possible to suggest that the form in Chronicles was the correct one; that the number “three” had appeared in all the inflictions; and that, by a slip of the pen, a copyist of the Books of Samuel had written “seven” instead of the first “three.” Kennicott, in his *Dissertation*, published in 1753, says: “Can there be any doubt of a mistake here? Did the prophet Gad deliver this message *twice*? If only *once*, did he propose both seven and three years of famine? If three years, the number seven is wrong; and if seven years, the number three is wrong. Common sense seems fully sufficient to determine such a point as this is. And yet we find some men, and even Archbishop Usher, in his *Annals*, pleading for the truth of these different readings! And this, notwithstanding that great man has expressed himself so strongly as to the fallibility of Jewish transcribers. . . . If, then, one of the numbers

be corrupted, the uniformity of the number three, still observed in two instances in Samuel, and in all three in Chronicles, will induce us to presume the three corrupted into seven : especially as the Greek Version has *tria eté* also in Samuel." It was a fine point, and the evidence for the one opinion seemed to be equally balanced with that for the other ; for the translation of the Septuagint is merely a confession of the difficulty. It was also a fact that both suppositions were equally gratuitous, for in neither case did the manuscript evidence suggest a correction. The critics, on the other hand, assume that the difference belonged to the original documents ; and say that it must be confessed that one at least of the writers was left to the guidance of his own judgment, and that he erred, as we all sometimes do.

Now, the strange thing in all this is, that neither the critics nor the most of the commentators have troubled themselves to consult the context and to inquire what light *that* may cast upon the difficulty. In Samuel and in Chronicles we have the Holy Spirit's report of this incident ; and a report may vary without inaccuracy. If a man has already lost £3,000, and is heedlessly incurring a risk of another £4,000, I might report that merely as a probable loss of £4,000 ; while, with equal truth, I might also, in full view of the man's financial position, speak of it as a loss of £7,000. Liberty is accorded to me to make either statement, according to my point of view at the moment ; and anyone, who might challenge my statements, and represent them as totally irrecon-

cilable, would simply be proving his own incapacity to act as a critic. But it may be urged, as Kennicott contends, that Gad could not have used *both* numbers, and must have said either seven or three. But we are not to suppose that the prophet was confined to the form of words in which his mission is recounted. Much more may have passed, and doubtless did pass, between David and the Seer; and no one will imagine that the Spirit of God was under any necessity to keep to a *verbatim* report of the interview. Our newspapers supply us daily with such condensed accounts, and our historians have invariably followed the same plan. Their work could not possibly be done in any other way. And is it any proof of fitness to pose as a critic to insist that the Scripture shall not summarise? But, if a summary is not only allowable but also necessary, then it may possibly vary without contradiction or inconsistency.

Is there, however, anything in the context that does explain this striking variation? The reader may be surprised to learn that there is a notice in 2 Samuel which ought never to have been omitted in the discussion of this matter. In xxi. 1, we are told that "There was a famine in the days of David, three years, year after year." It was only *when the third year's famine had occurred* that David inquired of the Lord why this visitation was sent. He was told that it was because of Saul's slaughter of the Gibeonites. What Saul was capable of in this way is shown in his slaughter of the priests. For some reason, there had been a similar massacre of those

defenceless bondsmen. This gigantic wrong had never been avenged or atoned for in any way; and now the God of the stranger will safeguard those for whose interests it would seem that no man in Israel cared. Before the vengeance fell, another year had passed. Seven of Saul's sons "were put to death *in the days of harvest*, in the first days, in the beginning of barley harvest" (verse 9). They hung sometime, exposed to the elements, and were eventually taken down and buried by David's orders. Then David removed from Jabesh-gilead the bones of Saul and Jonathan, and all were consigned to a common tomb. We then read (verse 14) that the men entrusted with this commission "performed all that the king commanded. *And after that God was intreated for the land.*" That is, *another* year had passed in which this terrible infliction had been continued. There had thus been *four years of famine* already in the land.

Now, it is in *this Book of 2 Samuel* that we find the number seven. Is not the explanation evident? We here understand how terrible was that alternative of a three years' famine. Were the famine to come upon a country that had long enjoyed abundance, whose barns were full, and whose people had abundant reserves to face it in riches and in bodily strength, the three years might well have been encountered. But the barns were empty. Means were spent, and the strength of the common people was undermined. Who could endure the thought of another three years' starvation for the people? These facts stood fully before Gad and David when the prophet's

message was being told. They may even have been referred to; and now, in this summary presented before us, we are reminded of what has been told us already. In Chronicles, *where these preceding years of famine are not referred to*, the number three is used. We required both statements to enable us to grasp the facts with accuracy, and both statements have been given. It is quite true that he who runs may read the great truth regarding the way of salvation—but the Bible is meant for students: and study is stimulated by the very reticence of the Bible, and it is rewarded by discoveries of truth that God sometimes plants behind a difficulty.

The second alleged contradiction occurs in connection with the account of David's punishment, and God's relenting mercy. Gad was sent a second time to David: "And Gad came that day to David, and said unto him, Go up, rear an altar unto the Lord in the threshingfloor of Araunah the Jebusite" (II. Samuel xxiv. 18). Araunah offers the threshing-floor as a gift to David; but the king insists upon purchasing it at its full value. "And the king said unto Araunah, Nay; but I will surely buy it of thee at a price: neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing. So David bought the threshingfloor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver" (verse 24).

In I Chronicles xxi. 22-24, we are told that "David said to Ornan, Grant me the place of this threshing-floor, that I may build an altar therein unto the Lord So David gave to Ornan for the place six

hundred shekels of gold by weight." Some of those who oppose the doctrine of the full inspiration of Scripture—a doctrine which is taught by the Scripture itself—simply gloat over this passage. The writer of the Chronicles is accused of systematic exaggeration; and is here caught, they say, in the very act. The passage is made to do duty in almost every attack upon the orthodox position, and its use is so universal and constant because of the belief that the seeming contradiction cannot by any possibility be explained away. And here, as usual, these critics have not made themselves acquainted with the Book which they venture to criticise. The context has never been looked at in connection with the passage! Let the reader turn to 1 Chron. xxii. 1—that is, to the words which immediately follow the 21st chapter—and he will read that David exclaimed: "This is the house of the Lord God, and this is the altar of burnt offering for Israel." That is, it was revealed to David that this place where sacrifice had been accepted, and where Israel had been rescued from destruction, was to be the place where God, according to His promise, put His name, and should be found of His people. Let the reader now look along the 22nd chapter, the 23rd, the 24th, the 25th, the 26th, the 27th, the 28th, and the 29th—that is, along the whole of the rest of the Book—and he will find all taken up with one thing. It is David's manifold preparation for the building of the Temple, and for the orderly and perpetual performance of its services. Not a word of this is contained in 2 Samuel. That Book ends with the offering of the

sacrifice, and with God's mercy. It did not enter into its purpose to say anything about the building of the Temple. But to give this information is part of the special service of 1 Chronicles.

Now, let us turn again to the passages in this latter Book, which speak of the purchase that David made, and we shall be struck with a peculiarity in the expression which is used. 1 Chronicles speaks of the threshingfloor as the place to which David came (verses 18, 21); but it is *not* the threshingfloor that is the subject of bargain between David and Ornan. It is "*the place.*" "And David said to Ornan, Grant me *the place* of this threshingfloor" (verse 22); and again: "So David gave to Ornan for *the place* six hundred shekels of gold by weight" (verse 25). The word *Mekōm*, translated "place," is used in the sense of "landed possession," and is occasionally applied to very extensive areas. We read, in Genesis i. 9, that God gathered "the waters into one place." *Mekōm* means there, the whole seabed, which is three times the earth's surface. And there is another fact which the critics have failed to notice. The same word occurs in 2 Chronicles iii. 1: "Then Solomon began to build the house of the Lord at Jerusalem in mount Moriah . . . IN THE PLACE that David had prepared in (or at) the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite." Here *the whole Temple area* is described as "the place." The same word *Mekōm* is used, which appears in 1 Chronicles xxi. 25. What David purchased for the fifty shekels of silver was, as the Scripture describes it, the mere

threshing-floor, a circular spot round which the tethered oxen were driven when they were treading out the corn. It was, in all likelihood, a place devoid of soil, and presenting a surface of bare rock. The fifty silver shekels was an ample price for that. But there were two transactions, and not one only. When it was revealed to David that this was to be the Temple site, and that he was graciously permitted to prepare it, and to make it his offering to the Lord, he bought *the whole hill-top*, "*the place of the threshing-floor*," Araunah's hill-farm. It fell to 2 Samuel to record the one transaction: it fell to 1 Chronicles to record the other. We find the larger price where we find the larger transaction; and that is told us in its right place—where we read of the other preparations made by David for the erection of the Temple. These are examples which the critics have themselves chosen. They desired that their case should be judged by them. I do not, therefore, exceed due bounds, when I ask the reader to judge by these, the pretentiousness, the inaccuracy, and the neglect of reverential Scripture study, which characterise the attack which is now being made upon the Word of God.

CHAPTER VI.

THE EMPIRE OF DAVID.

THE recent explorations in Palestine have had the result to which all exact knowledge regarding Bible sites and events has now long accustomed us. After referring to many of the places connected with the wanderings of David, and the rest of the history in the Books of Samuel, Colonel Conder says: "The exactitude of this topography shows the intimate acquaintance of the author of the Book of Samuel with all parts of Palestine, from Gath to Rabbath Ammon, and Ziklag to Kadesh on the Orontes; and the wanderings of David on the Philistine border, and in the extreme South of Saul's dominions, can now be traced by aid of the new discoveries of places like Adullam, Hareth, &c., not previously known."*

This verdict is in striking contrast with the findings of the critics. Speaking generally of the historical Books of the Old Testament, Kuenen says: "Our faith in Israel's own accounts of her career is at once severely shaken by the discovery that by far the greater number of those accounts did not proceed from contemporaries, but were written very long after the events of which they treat. We know, with sufficient certainty, a few of the principal acts, and

* *The Bible and the East*, p. 142.

the dates of the reigns of nearly all the Israelitish kings. The more complete narratives relating to them are no longer sufficiently guaranteed. . . . We find by experience, every day, that accounts which have been current, but for a short period, have admitted very strange elements, and, in some cases, have become unrecognisable. Without a perpetual miracle the oral tradition of Israel cannot have remained free from this influence. Even before we have made acquaintance with the contents of the narratives, we take it for granted that they only give us half the truth, if even so much as that.”*

That is the natural consequence of breaking down belief in the Spirit of God as the author of Scripture, and of putting “oral tradition” in His stead. It explains, too, the eager efforts of the critics to bring down the origin of the Books to a late date. They, in this way, deprive them of historical authority, and obtain the requisite freedom for developing their theories, and “re-constructing the history.” Prof. Cheyne has given us, in his *Aids to the Devout Study of Criticism* (an ominous substitute for the older phrase, “the Devout Study of Scripture”), some eloquent examples as to what this is to mean for the new school and its disciples. The original sources for the history of David are merely “early story-tellers.”* “It is almost needless,” he writes, “to add that the life of David, like the Book of Samuel, in which it is contained, is of composite origin, and not of equal historical value throughout. At first, as

* *Religion of Israel*, pp. 17, 18.

might be expected, the facts of historical or semi-historical tradition and the fictions of a reverent imagination are commingled."* Referring to the account of Saul's death, and that of David's wanderings, he says: "We cannot, therefore, be surprised if some earnest men, desirous to edify their own age, in perfect good faith, allowed a still larger scope to this potent influence" (namely, "the spirit of the times.") "They were the predecessors of the author of Chronicles, and of the early Midrash-writers."† For an explanation of the term "Midrash-writers," he refers the reader, in a note, to Driver's *Introduction*. Here, then, is Dr. Driver's explanation of what these supposed Midrash-writings—for there is not the remotest trace of them before the later Jewish times—are imagined to have been. "The Midrash may be defined," he writes, "as an imaginative development of a thought or theme suggested by Scripture, especially a didactic, or homiletic exposition, or an edifying religious story (Tobit and Susannah are thus 'Midrashim.')."‡

Now, though comparatively little light has been cast upon the reign of David by Assyrian research, we are, fortunately, enabled to test the value of these statements. The eighth chapter of 2 Samuel is placed by the critics among the very latest additions to the Book. We at once understand this critical decision when we glance at the contents of the chapter. These are, indeed, surprising, though they are narrated in the briefest fashion. David had pushed his conquests

* Page 4.

† Page 13.

‡ Page 497.

on every side. He subdues the Philistines (verse 1). He smites Moab, "and so the Moabites became David's servants, and brought gifts" (verse 2). "He smote Hadadezer, the son of Rehob, king of Zobah, as he went to recover his border at the river Euphrates. And David took from him a thousand chariots, and seven hundred horsemen, and twenty thousand footmen: and David houghed all the chariot horses, but reserved of them for an hundred chariots. And when the Syrians of Damascus came to succour Hadadezer king of Zobah, David slew of the Syrians two and twenty thousand men. Then David put garrisons in Syria of Damascus: and the Syrians became servants to David, and brought gifts. And the Lord preserved David whithersoever he went. And David took the shields of gold that were on the servants of Hadadezer, and brought them to Jerusalem" (vers. 3-7). "When Toi king of Hamath heard that David had smitten all the host of Hadadezer, then Toi sent Joram his son unto king David, to salute him, and to bless him, because he had fought against Hadadezer, and smitten him: for Hadadezer had wars with Toi. And Joram brought with him vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and vessels of brass" (verses 9, 10).

Now, thanks to the discoveries of the Egyptologist on one hand, and to those of the Assyriologist on the other, we know that we are here in contact with historic times. The two great powers of Egypt and Assyria had made even Palestine itself the scene of their conquests, and they were by-and-bye to appear again in it with their victorious armies. With either of

these powers in the field, such an extensive dominion as this of David and of Solomon, extending from the Red Sea to the Euphrates, would have had its armies to reckon with. But the reader will observe that there is not a word in the Scriptures about any conflict with either Egypt or Assyria during the days of David and of Solomon. Egypt, indeed, seems to have sought a friendly alliance with Solomon, for the Pharaoh gives to the Israelitish king his daughter to wife; and, in David's time, neither Egypt nor Assyria is mentioned. Is this, then, in accord with recent discoveries? Is it the fact that both these kingdoms were just at this very time under a temporary eclipse?

The question places a finger on one of the marvels of Eastern history. For both these great powers lay under eclipse at this very time. About a hundred and fifty years before, Tiglath-Pileser I. had pushed his conquests to the Mediterranean; and it is recorded of Assurirba, a little before the time of David's victories, that "he marched to the Mediterranean." "About a century and a-half after Tiglath-Pileser," writes Maspero, "a certain Assurirba seems to have crossed Northern Syria; and, following in the footsteps of his great ancestor, to have penetrated as far as the Mediterranean: on the rocks of Mount Amanus, facing the sea, he left a triumphal inscription, in which he set forth the mighty deeds he had accomplished. This is merely a gleam out of the murky night which envelops his history, and the testimony of one of his descendants informs us that his good fortune soon forsook him: Aramæans wrested from

him the fortresses of Pitru and Mutkînu, which commanded both banks of the Euphrates, near Carchemish. Nor did the retrograde movement slacken after his time: Assyria slowly wasted away down to the end of the tenth century (B.C.); and, but for the simultaneous decadence of the Chaldæans, its downfall would have been complete.”*

On the east, then, the two great powers, Babylon and Assyria, which had laid, in turn, their yoke upon Palestine in ancient times, and which, in turn, were again to be its masters, were now both nursing their maimed strength within their own territories. And what of Egypt? Was the great power of the west equally quiescent? Rameses III., one of the earliest kings of the 20th dynasty, had carried his arms into Syria; but he was the last of the great Egyptian conquerors. Under his successors, the strength of Egypt wasted away. The priesthood of Thebes usurped one part of the royal prerogative after another, till the royal title alone was wanting to them. Civil wars broke out; and the authority of the descendants of the Pharaohs was confined to the south of Egypt. A new dynasty arose in the north, and the resources of the country were consumed in the attempts which each made to extend, or to preserve, its territory. “There was an almost constant struggle” (I quote again from Maspero) “between these two divisions of the empire, at times breaking out into an open rupture, to end as often in a temporary re-establishment of unity. At one time Ethiopia

* *The Struggles of the Nations*, pp. 664, 665.

would succeed in annexing Egypt, and again Egypt would seize some part of Ethiopia ; but the settlement of affairs was never final, and the conflicting elements, brought with difficulty into harmony, relapsed into their usual condition at the end of a few years. A kingdom thus divided against itself could never succeed in maintaining its authority over those provinces which, even in the heyday of its power, had proved impatient of its yoke. Asia was associated henceforward in the minds of the Egyptians with painful memories of thwarted ambitions rather than as offering a field for present conquest. They were pursued by the memories of their former triumphs, and the very monuments of their cities recalled what they were anxious to forget. Wherever they looked within their towns they encountered the representation of some Asiatic scene ; they read the names of the cities of Syria on the walls of their temples ; they saw depicted on them its princes and its armies, whose defeat was recorded by the inscriptions, as well as the tribute which they had been forced to pay. The sense of their own weakness prevented the Egyptians from passing from useless regrets to action ; when, however, one or other of the Pharaohs felt sufficiently secure on the throne to carry his troops far afield, he was always attracted to Syria, and crossed her frontiers, often, alas ! merely to encounter defeat.”*

It will be seen, therefore, that the position of Egypt, and of Assyria, and of Babylon, is exactly that which we would infer from the statements and the silence

* *Ibid.*, p. 566.

of the Scripture history; and what we behold in the mirror of that clearest of narratives is thus the actual political condition of the times. And this is true of its positive, as well as of its negative, testimony. It is clearly implied in 2 Samuel viii. that Zobah had formerly taken the lead in Syria, and had imposed its yoke upon the neighbouring territories. It is this dominion which David disturbs when he pushes his conquests Eastward to the Euphrates. "David smote also Hadadezer, the son of Rehob, king of Zobah, as he went to recover his border at the river Euphrates" (verse 3). But the same monarch was acknowledged as superior by Damascus; for we also read that "When the Syrians of Damascus came to succour Hadadezer king of Zobah, David slew of the Syrians two and twenty thousand men" (verse 6). Hadadezer, it is plain also from Toi's embassy to David, had pushed his victorious career even to Hamath on the west (verse 10). Is there any trace, then, of Zobah as a power of the time, or any indication that a native conqueror had picked up the sceptre which had fallen from the hands of Assyria and of Egypt?

The Assyrian inscriptions name Zobah as a city and kingdom of Syria; and, that the empire held by Assyria *was occupied at this very time by a native Syrian power*, will be evident from the following: "The Greek legends tell us vaguely," says Maspero, "of some sort of Cilician empire which is said to have brought the eastern and central provinces of Asia Minor into subjection about ten centuries before our era"—the very time of David. "Is there any serious foundation,"

he asks, "for such a belief? and must we assume that there existed at this time, and in this part of the world, a kingdom similar to that of Sapalulu? Assyria was recruiting its forces, Chaldea was kept inactive by its helplessness, Egypt slumbered by the banks of its river, there was no actor of the first rank to fill the stage; now was the opportunity for a second-rate performer to come on the scene and play such a part as his abilities permitted. The Cilician conquest, if this be indeed the date at which it took place, had the boards to itself for a hundred years after the defeat of Assurirba."* There are monuments, too, which some dominion of the kind has left, such as the colossal lion at Marash, covered with an inscription which has not yet been deciphered. That dominion was neither Assyrian nor Egyptian. These, and the tradition to which Maspero refers, form a united testimony which no scholar will disregard; and here again we have to note another indication of the thoroughly historical character of the Scripture narrative.

CHAPTER VII.

DAVID AND THE LAW.

THE memory of David is bound up with his love for God's house, and his reverence for God's Law. Every one knows how fully this is expressed and dwelt upon in Samuel, in Chronicles, and in the

* *The Struggle of the Nations*, p. 668.

Psalms. One of his very first acts, when he became king of all Israel, was to bring up the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem, the newly-acquired capital of the country. He desired that his city should be God's city. And this was not due merely to a moment of gratitude for peace and greatness; for, when the city had been built and beautified, and David sat in his own magnificent palace, his heart smote him. He had been mindful of his own things, but unmindful of the things of God. "The king said unto Nathan the prophet, See now, I dwell in an house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains" (II. Sam. vii. 2). And, though his service was not accepted in this matter, yet he kept the building of God's house in perpetual remembrance. All things that could be required for the Temple, which was to be erected by his successor, were gladly surrendered and carefully stored; and one of his last acts was to assemble the people and, by his own princely example, to incite them to a large liberality. The Temple was to be a monument of a nation's gratitude: for, said he, "The work is great: for the palace is not for man, but for the Lord God" (I. Chronicles xxix. 1). He also applied his great gifts of organization to the elaborate arrangement of the Levitical and priestly service. The descendants of Aaron were apportioned to the four-and-twenty "courses," into which they were ever afterwards divided. "The Levites were numbered from the age of thirty years and upward: and their number by their polls, man by man, was thirty and eight thousand. Of which, twenty and four thousand

were to set forward the work of the house of the Lord ; and six thousand were officers and judges : Moreover four thousand were porters ; and four thousand praised the Lord with the instruments which I made, said David, to praise therewith " (1. Chronicles xxiii. 3-5).

All this, however, implies that the Law of Moses was then in existence ; that David and his Israelitish contemporaries walked in a light which no other nation then enjoyed ; and that, in short, God had actually revealed Himself to this people. It need not surprise us, therefore, that the higher critics set nearly the whole of this account aside. Believing, as they do, that there has been no Divine intervention—that God never did miraculously make "known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel," and that belief in the one living and true God was the very late result of a long and slow evolutionary process, they are compelled to look upon the Law, and upon the history of Israel, as we now have it, as elaborate "pious frauds." A parallel to these imaginary forgeries would be found if some one were to attempt to put down ritualism in the Church of England by re-writing the history of the Reformation, painting Henry the Eighth as a blend of John Knox and the late Bishop Ryle, and forging an elaborate set of Royal Edicts and Acts of Parliament abolishing all Popish practices, and instituting a pure Protestant worship. And much has to go besides the Pentateuch and the subsequent Israelitish history. So pure and high is the morality of the Psalms, and so clear and full is their acknowledgment

of the one only living and true God, that it has been found equally necessary to deny that David had anything to do with their authorship. "But what," asks Canon Cheyne, "of the tradition assigning many of the Psalms to David?" He replies: "It sprang up under the influence of that idealization of the poet-king, to which I have already referred, and *what it asserts is unthinkable*;" and he adds in a note: "That David may have written Psalms, is, of course, not denied; only that such Psalms as he wrote can have been like our Psalms."* To save their theory of the non-miraculous origin of the Israelitish religion, they proceed, therefore, to break up the Scripture history. "It is almost needless to add," says Canon Cheyne, "that the life of David, like the Book of Samuel in which it is contained, is of composite origin, and not of equal historical value throughout. At first, as might be expected, the facts of historical, or semi-historical tradition, and the fictions of a reverent imagination, are commingled."† The result of this suppression of the evidence is marvellously gratifying to the critics. Having set aside everything of a higher order as "fictions of a reverent imagination," and having plucked out what they call the rude kernel from the rest, they are amazed to find that this David of reality is just the man they said he must be! That is, they make up their minds as to what David was; and then, having re-written his history with that conception as their guide, they are well-nigh overwhelmed with delight at finding that this is a man

* *Aids to the Devout Study of Criticism*, p. 133. † Page 4.

who could never have written psalms! "We admit," says the Canon, "that there are virtually two Davids: more easily could Karl the Great have written St. Bernard's hymn than the David of the Books of Samuel the fifty-first Psalm. We break away from our fathers on this point absolutely and entirely."*

One is tempted to ask what would be thought of the criticism that maintained, on the ground of the invectives in Milton's controversial writings, that he could not have been the author of *Paradise Lost*? But this criticism of David may safely be left with its own crushing burden. Kuenen finds still greater offence in the Books of Chronicles. "The author of 2 Samuel," he says, "makes no mention of Levites as bearers of the Ark; he does not disapprove of the removal of the Ark on a cart; he does not speak of Levitical musicians and singers at all. His narrative is modified or completed on all these points by the Chronicler, not because he had consulted other more exact accounts, but because he considered it certain that David would not have acted in opposition to the stipulations of the Law. Conversely, *we find in these particulars a fresh proof that the Law did not yet exist at that time, and that in David's days no one thought of either the descendants of Aaron or the Levites being the only persons competent to discharge the functions of priests.*"† And not only was there no particle in existence, say they, of the priestly organization of the Law; but the pure light which the Law sheds upon the nature and character of God was also wanting. David,

* Pages 28, 29. † *The Religion of Israel*, vol. i., pp. 324, 325.

we are told, was an idolater. He did not know that there was only one God! "The removal of the Ark to Jerusalem," says Kuenen, "with the particulars which we are told about it, is conclusive proof that we may not form too high an opinion of the purity of the religious ideas of David and his contemporaries. Nothing is clearer than that David believes that with the Ark he is bringing Jahveh to his capital."* "If the moral idea be low," he says in another place, "the conception of the character of the Deity cannot but be defective also; man makes his god in his own image, and after his own likeness. David's ideas of Jahveh are in harmony with the spirit of his still barbarous age, and with his own moral standpoint." †

The daring blasphemy of this gainsaying will be felt by everyone who has anything of reverence left; but it serves one good purpose. It shows us how little the higher criticism would leave us, and into what a frightful desert of unbelief it leads its adherents. But its unreasonableness is, fortunately, quite as manifest as its irreverence. Kuenen says that David's removal of the Ark to Jerusalem "was equal to an official recognition of Jahvism as the religion of the nation, and must so far have advanced the national worship in the estimation of the people." ‡ But if the *removal* of the Ark to the capital had this effect, must not something have been done also when the Ark was made and was first received by Israel? Was there not a national recognition of Jehovah

* Page 326.

† Page 328.

‡ Page 328.

then? And why should not the Ark itself be considered? For there is surely some light shed by it on Israel's conception of the Deity. There is no picture or image of God; nor is the Ark fashioned after any supposed likeness. There is surely something here that is unlike the surrounding idolatries! This impression is deepened as we recall the name and the contents of the Ark. It is "the Ark of the Covenant," and "the Ark of the Testimony." It contains the two tables of stone, on which are written, with God's own finger, a summary of Israel's duty to God and man; the pot of manna, the memorial of unfailing Providence; and the rod that budded, the symbol and seal of Divinely-appointed and all-availing priesthood. These contents are scouted, of course, as a late invention; but the names remain. What was the "covenant?" Where was the "testimony?" The Ark is a witness to the existence of a covenant with this special people, and of a Law which has been given to them. These are a covenant with, and a Law received from, the Invisible but All-seeing God.

The statement that David identified Jehovah with the Ark, and that, in bringing it to Jerusalem, he was in reality bringing God there, is ludicrously untrue. When David is seeking refuge in mountains and caves he has no Ark with him, and yet Jehovah is ever there! There is not a word, indeed, that implies that God's presence and the Ark's are identical. When David and Jonathan make their covenant, they make it in the presence of God, and yet there is no Ark near. There is a remarkable expression in Jonathan's

assurance to David: "And Jonathan said unto David, O Lord God of Israel, when I have sounded my father . . . and if there be good toward David, and I send not unto thee, and shew it thee" (1. Samuel xx. 12). Here God is so nigh that He makes a third in this interview. So deeply rooted is the conviction of His livingness and nearness that Jonathan at once places himself and David in God's presence: the promise is made before Him. Professor Cheyne himself admits, what no one acquainted with recent researches in Palestine can deny, that the account of David's outlawry is historical. "Its details," he says, "are so full of primitive naturalness, and so minutely true to the physical features of the scenes of David's wanderings." Well, when David enquires of the Lord whether he should go and deliver Keilah, there is no Ark with him in the wilderness (1. Samuel xxiii. 4). In his interview with Saul, in his perils and his deliverances, God is spoken of as being everywhere, as seeing everything, and as universal Judge between man and man. It is the Lord that has caused Abigail to intervene and save him from shedding blood. In a word, David's conviction is abreast of that most glorious expression of the Divine Omnipresence to be found in all literature—"Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence?" (Psalm cxxxix. 7). The David even of the history which the critics still leave us is the David of the Psalms.

The statements that David and the Books of Samuel know nothing of the Law, or of the Aaronic priest-

hood, are equally devoid of foundation. At Keilah, David inquires of God through Abiathar the son of Abimelech, of the children of Aaron; and we are told that when he fled to take refuge with David, "he came down with an ephod in his hand" (1. Sam. xxiii. 6). When David required counsel, amid the blackened ruins of Ziklag, he "said to Abiathar the priest, Abimelech's son, I pray thee bring me hither the ephod" (1. Samuel xxx. 7). Here is a method of seeking counsel of God which can only be explained when we recognise the existence of the Law, and the special place of the Aaronic priesthood. The slaying of Uzzah, because he touched the Ark, is an equally plain intimation that this was a violation of some existing regulations. And such also is the only possible meaning of the change made on the second attempt to bring the Ark to the city of David. The first time it was placed (just as the uninstructed Philistines had done) upon a cart; now it was "*carried*" in accordance with the directions of the Law. Here, no doubt, as elsewhere, there was a want of adherence to the injunctions of the Law. But it is folly to argue from this that the Law had no existence, or otherwise David would have scrupulously observed its provisions at the first. Who that reads their books in time to come would ever imagine that Professors Cheyne and Kuenen both belonged to Churches of the very strictest orthodoxy, and that both had solemnly professed their full acceptance of the Scriptures as the Word of God? Will it be safe for men, then, to infer that this was not the fact, and

that the Thirty-nine Articles, the Church of England ritual, and the Confessions of the Dutch Church had no existence? Would it be safe to say, in some future age, that the idolatry, the priestly pretensions, and the elaborate services, and the abounding superstitions of the Greek and Roman Churches, proved that the New Testament, with its simplicity and purity, had had no existence; that it was the invention of the Protestants; and that Tyndale and others, who professed to translate it, really forged it? But if nothing could be more rash or more essentially false than such a conclusion, then must it be confessed that the higher criticism has based its theories upon a similar hideous delusion.

Equally hopeless is the attempt to prove that David was an idolater. From the first line to the last line in his history there is not a single trace of David's having swerved from his constant and absolute dependence upon the living God. The only semblance of foundation which the critics are able to adduce is David's statement to Saul: "They have driven me out this day from abiding in the inheritance of the Lord, saying, Go, serve other gods" (1. Sam. xxvi. 19). But this quotation of theirs is only one other proof of their own culpable neglect of sound reasoning; for the quotation tells fatally against them. It proves, for one thing, that David was *not* a polytheist. If he had been already a worshipper of other gods than Jehovah, how could it have been a new terror to him that he was bidden to go and worship other gods? David's horror at that prospect—his laying the guilt of that

suggestion upon the soul of Saul—all tell how utterly he was removed in thought and practice from idolatry. This lies so plainly upon the very surface of the words that it requires a critic's infatuation not to see it. But there is yet more in them. They mean that if David were allowed to remain in the midst of Israel there would be no inducement to serve other gods; that is, that *there was then no openly professed idolatry in Israel.* The description of the land as "the inheritance of Jehovah" is a further proof of the monotheism of the Israelites in the days of Saul and David. The people and the land were the portion of Jehovah. They were His, and His alone. With increased amazement one asks what kind of guides are these who do not know which way their own evidence points, and who cannot read the words they quote? For what do the words mean if not that the Israel of David's time enjoyed institutions which bound it to the worship of the one living and true God? That is, to put it plainly, that *Israel possessed the Law.* If it be asked whether the words do not also mean that David was afraid he might be driven into idolatry if he were expelled from Israel, the reply is evident. He is not dealing with his own intentions. He is translating into words *the intentions of his enemies.* He tells Saul that the only interpretation of his action is that he (David) is to be expelled from the congregation of the Lord's people, and driven back among the heathen. It is to take from him not merely an earthly and temporal, but also a heavenly and eternal, portion. It is to destroy the soul, as well as to slay the body. Here, again, the

critics have strangely missed the tragic force, which is also the plain meaning, of the words. As to David himself, he had no intention of serving other gods; and though he passes into Philistia, he worships neither in the shrines of Ashtoreth, nor at the altars of Dagon. When, sorrow-stricken, he sits at Ziklag, "he encouraged himself in the Lord his God" (1. Samuel xxx. 6). His cry is the same as when in the wilderness he questioned whether he should deliver Keilah—"Bring me hither the ephod. And Abiathar brought thither the ephod to David. And David enquired of the Lord" (verses 7, 8).

In passing from the times of David, a word may be permitted upon his final instructions to Solomon. These, Kuenen stigmatises as "the vindictiveness and cruelty prescribed in his dying hour to Solomon." One is saddened to see how readily writers, from whom better things might well be expected, join in this work of bemiring a great man's memory. "It is painful," says one, "to read his (David's) last messages to Solomon. If Joab and Shimei were such criminals, surely he ought to have been the one to punish them; to advise Solomon to, as it were, lay traps for them, is painful to read."* Now, to uphold the Scripture, it is not necessary to justify David's last counsels to Solomon. These may have been as unworthy of him as the sin for which he was so heavily chastised. But, if we are expected to join in this chorus of condemnation, it may be well to know why we cast our stone at this great servant of God. I

* Harper, *The Bible and Modern Discoveries*, p. 342.

must first of all acknowledge my inability to see "the vindictiveness and cruelty prescribed in his dying hour to Solomon." I find only two men named whom Solomon is asked to punish. To begin with, that is certainly no heavy list. Then, outside of the references to these men, I fail to catch the slightest accent of severity, and there is absolutely nothing of duplicity, or even of worldly wisdom, in the counsels given by this aged monarch to his youthful successor. He entreats him to remember that in all things, though king, *he himself is the servant of God*, and solemnly reminds him that in his hands lie the destinies of his house. "I go," said he, "the way of all the earth: be thou strong therefore, and show thyself a man; and keep the charge of the Lord thy God, to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, and His commandments, and His judgments, and His testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself: that the Lord thy God may continue His word which He spake concerning me, saying, If thy children take heed to their way, to walk before Me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, there shall not fail thee (said he) a man on the throne of Israel" (1. Kings ii. 2-4). That is the whole secret of the kingly art which David has to bequeath! There are no State secrets to reveal; there is no crooked policy to explain. How many royalties have there been that could thus stand unveiled in such an hour before the eye of God?

There are two other considerations which ought

not to be forgotten. If David *had* been vindictive and cruel, he had instruments enough to have done his will with these two men long before. Joab had many enemies, and Shimei was comparatively insignificant. A word from the royal lips, and both would have ceased to be numbered among the living. The fact that that word was not spoken will not fit in with the theory of vindictiveness and cruelty. The second thing is that Solomon did not lay any "traps" for either Joab or Shimei. *He left their fate in their own hands.* Neither of them suffered for deeds which David had condoned or passed over. Joab was not dealt with even for his first treasonable collusion with Adonijah. All this is quite enough to show the sense in which Solomon had understood his father's counsel. He waited for events, and when they happened, he acted firmly, but also justly.

But why, it may be asked, were Joab and Shimei named at all? The evident reply ought to have silenced criticism long ago. Both men had been guilty of crimes, the example of which, if left unpunished, would have endangered the throne which God was now establishing. The reference to Joab reads: "Thou knowest also what Joab, the son of Zeruiah, did to me, *and* what he did to the two captains of the hosts of Israel." Our translators have faithfully put the "and" in italics to show that there is no word answering to it in the original. David indicates that what Joab did to the commanders of the host was an offence against the king. It was open contempt of the royal authority. It was the humbling of

the monarch in the face of all his people. Shimei's was a more direct, unrestrained, and open cursing, and daring affront to the royal authority; and that, too, in a moment of deep embarrassment and of bitter trial. A throne open to such attacks from court and people had necessarily to be rooted afresh in the signal punishment of the offenders. This was called for, let it be remembered, for Israel's sake; for only in the security and sacredness of the throne could Israel's peace and prosperity be assured. The influence of Joab had placed him, for the time, beyond punishment, and the king's pledge had shielded Shimei. These obstacles were soon to be removed, for in those days of peace Joab's star was fast declining, and the day was at hand when another would be Shimei's king. And when, under these changed conditions, fresh offence was given, the long-deferred judgment was to fall. I, for one, see wisdom there, and loyalty to law; and I fail to observe either vindictiveness or cruelty.

THE BOOKS OF KINGS.

CHAPTER I.

SOLOMONIC MYTHS AND THE SCRIPTURE HISTORY.

NONE of the monarchs of the East have made so great an impression upon the minds of their contemporaries, and of posterity, as the son and successor of David. Under him, the glory of Israel flamed out until there was nothing like it in all the eastern sky. From the torrent-stream on the east of Egypt, to the banks of the Euphrates, a host of nationalities acknowledged his sovereign authority. This vast dominion was organized with surpassing skill, and the great officials of the Israelitish empire ruled their provinces with the splendour and pomp of kings. Solomon's fleets were on the seas, and the land was enriched with the profits, and adorned with the products, of an extended commerce. And the central splendour of all this opulence and power was the royal personality. The name of Solomon was on every lip, and his wisdom and greatness were the astonishment of far-off lands.

We have had to notice, with considerable frequency, the current theory that we have in the Old Testament history, not a Divinely-inspired narrative written for our learning, but a mere bundle of traditions, written down at a late period, and touched up and added to by still later hands. Now, we have here one of the most effective tests whereby to try the critical theory. Here is just the kind of theme which

tradition loves to expatiate upon, and round which popular fancies multiply. A name like Solomon's is the vital spark of legend and its daily food. And, accordingly, we find that legends and fictions actually abounded. The Apocrypha contains the so-called "Wisdom of Solomon," and "The Psalter of Solomon," containing Psalms said to have been written by him, and in which we find quotations from Isaiah and Ezekiel! Some ancient Eastern writers ascribe to Solomon the invention of the Syriac and Arabic alphabets; and among the Syrians the story ran that, at the request of Hiram, king of Tyre, Solomon translated the Scriptures from Hebrew into Syriac, inventing the alphabet for this purpose. "The Greeks tell us, says Calmet, "that this prince composed several pieces in physic; on the nature and virtues of stones, of vegetables, and simples. But King Hezekiah, seeing great abuses made of these works, suppressed them all. Yet this has not hindered, but that since his time there have appeared several books of secrets in magic, medicine, and enchantments, under the name of this prince; with other works, as 'The Instruction of Solomon to his son Rehoboam; Solomon's Hygromancy to the same; The Testament of Solomon; The Book of the Throne of Solomon; The Book of Magic, composed by Demons, under the name of Solomon; the Clavicula, or Master-Key of Solomon; The Ring of Solomon; The Contradiction of Solomon;' and others."*

* *Dictionary, Art. Solomon.*

and Illustrator, adds: "Some of which are very abominable and infamous; nevertheless, they have been sold for very great prices; especially those which some great name has called genuine; because whoever possesses one of these works calls all the others impostures; for they do not agree together. However, so far as may be judged, whatever the writers and sellers might be, the possessors and students of them are no Solomons."

Abundant indications of the activity of tradition, in regard to Solomon, are found in the Talmud. That bundle of Jewish legends, superstitions, and ritual tells us that David died on a Sabbath day, as he went into his orchard to ascertain the cause of a noise there which had attracted his attention. "The noise in the orchard," says the Talmud, "had been caused by the barking of the king's dogs, which had not that day received their food. Solomon sent a message to the Rabbinical College, saying: 'My father lies dead in his orchard; is it allowable to remove his body on the Sabbath? The dogs of my father are entreating for their food; is it proper to cut meat for them to-day?' This answer was returned by the College: 'Thy father's body should not be removed to-day, but give meat to the dogs.' Therefore, said Solomon, 'A living dog fareth better than a dead lion.'" We are also told that "all the nations of the earth feared him; all the people of the earth listened anxiously for his words and his wisdom." After minute descriptions of the adornments of Solomon's throne, and of the chandelier

which hung from the palace roof, &c., we read: "On the right hand of the throne two chairs were placed, one for the High Priest, and the other for the Vice-High Priest, and upon the left side, from the top to the ground, seventy-one chairs were stationed as seats for the members of the Sanhedrim. We are also favoured with the correspondence of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, and a new account is furnished of their meeting. Solomon, we are told, prepared to receive his visitor in an apartment, laid and lined with glass, and the queen at first was so deceived by the appearance that she imagined the king to be sitting in water!* We are also told that she appeared before Solomon with two wreaths of flowers, the one natural, the other artificial. So much alike were they that no one could tell which was the natural. The courtiers were cast down, fearing that Solomon's wisdom would not be sufficient to stand this test. The king, seeing a swarm of bees outside, ordered the windows to be opened, when they alighted on the natural flowers, and not one was seen on the artificial.

The treatise, *Shabbath*, says: "It were better to cut the hands off than to touch the eye, or the nose, or the mouth, or the ear, &c., with them, without having first washed them. Unwashed hands may cause blindness, deafness, foulness of breath, or a polypus. It is taught that Rabbi Nathan has said, 'The evil spirit, Bath Chorin, which rests upon the hands at night, is very strict; he will not depart till water is poured upon the hands *three* times over.' Solomon

* Polano, *The Talmud, Selections*, pp. 199-204.

is said to have given to this tradition regarding the washing of hands, and to other ceremonial rites, the form and sanction of a law.”* In *Moed Katon* we read: “When Solomon was desirous of conveying the Ark into the Temple, the doors shut themselves of their own accord against him. He recited twenty-four Psalms, yet they opened not. In vain he cried: ‘Lift up your heads, O ye gates’ (Psalm xxiv. 9). But when he prayed, ‘O Lord God, turn not away Thy face from Thine anointed: remember the mercies of David Thy servant’ (II. Chronicles vi. 42), then the gates flew open at once. Then the enemies of David turned black in the face, for all knew by this that God had pardoned David’s transgression with Bathsheba.”†

Two more selections from this source may suffice to show what sort of Scripture history Jewish legends would have given us. Referring to the statement in 1 Kings vi. 7, that the stones of the Temple were made ready before they were brought to Jerusalem, we are told that “Solomon asked the Rabbis, ‘How shall I accomplish this without using tools of iron?’ and they, remembering of an insect which had existed since the creation of the world, whose powers were such as the hardest substances could not resist, replied, ‘There is the *Shameer*, with which Moses cut the precious stones of the Ephod.’ Solomon asked, ‘And where, pray, is the *Shameer* to be found?’ To which they made answer, ‘Let a male demon and a female come, and do thou coerce them both;

* Hershon, *A Talmudic Miscellany*, p. 44. † *Ibid.*, pp. 178, 179.

mayhap they know and will reveal it to thee.' He then conjured into his presence a male and a female demon, and proceeded to torture them, but in vain: for, said they, 'We know not its whereabouts, and cannot tell; perhaps Ashmedai, the king of the demons, knows.' On being further interrogated, as to where he in turn might be found, they made this answer: 'In yonder mount is his residence; there he has dug a pit, and, after filling it with water, covered it over with a stone, and sealed it with his own seal. Daily he ascends to heaven and studies in the school of wisdom there; then he comes down and studies in the school of wisdom here; upon which he goes and examines the seal, then opens the pit, and after quenching his thirst, covers it up again, re-seals it, and takes his departure.'

"Solomon, thereupon, sent Benaiah, the son of Jehoiada, provided him with a magic chain and ring, upon both of which the name of God was engraved. He also provided him a fleece of wool and sundry skins of wine. Then, Benaiah went and sank a pit below that of Ashmedai, into which he drained off the water, and plugged the duct with the fleece. Then he set to and dug another hole higher up, with a channel leading into the emptied pit of Ashmedai, by means of which the pit was filled with the wine which he had brought." I shall spare the reader further details. Ashmedai, unwilling at first, is compelled by thirst to drink, is captured while in a drunken sleep; and, after several adventures and considerable delay, is led into Solomon's presence.

But the king finds that even now the search for the wonderful Shameer is only begun. "For," says Ash-medai, "the Shameer is not committed in charge to me, but to the Prince of the Sea, and he entrusts it to no one except the great wild cock, and that upon oath that he return it to him again," &c.*

The next, and only other, legend with which I shall trouble the reader, runs as follows: "Solomon having taken Sidon, and slain the king of the city, brought away his daughter Jerâda, who became his favourite; and because she ceased not to lament her father's loss, he ordered the devils to make a counterfeit image of him for her consolation: which, being done, and placed in her chamber, she and her maids worshipped it morning and evening, according to their custom. At length, Solomon being informed of this idolatry which was practised under his roof, by his vizir, Asâf, he broke the image, and having chastised the woman, went out into the desert: where he wept and made supplications to God: who did not think fit, however, to let his negligence pass without some correction. It was Solomon's custom, while he . . . washed himself, to entrust his signet, on which his kingdom depended, with a concubine of his, named Amina: one day, therefore, when she had the ring in her custody, a devil named Sakhar came to her in the shape of Solomon, and received the ring from her; by virtue of which he became possessed of the kingdom, and sat on the throne, in the shape which he had borrowed, making what alterations in the law

* *Ibid.*, pp. 95-98.

he pleased. Solomon, in the meantime, being changed in his outward appearance, and known to none of his subjects, was obliged to wander about and beg alms for his subsistence: till at length, after the space of forty days, which was the time that the image had been worshipped in his house, the devil flew away, and threw the signet into the sea: the signet was immediately swallowed by a fish, which being taken and given to Solomon, he found the ring in its belly, and having by this recovered the kingdom, took Sakhar, and, tying a great stone to his neck, threw him into the Lake of Tiberias."*

The fables of the Talmud are reproduced in the Koran. Mohammed tells that unto Solomon a strong wind was subjected. "It ran at his command to the land whereon we had bestowed our blessing. . . And we also subjected unto his command divers of the devils, who might dive to get pearls for him, and perform other work besides this."† "Solomon was David's heir, and he said, O men, we have been taught the speech of birds, and have had all things bestowed on us. . . And his armies were gathered together unto Solomon, consisting of genii, and men, and birds; and they were led in distinct bands until they came unto the valley of ants. And an ant, seeing the host approaching, said, O ants, enter ye into your habitations, lest Solomon and his army tread you underfoot, and perceive it not. And Solomon smiled, laughing at her words. . . And he viewed the birds, and said, What is the reason that I see not the

* Sale, *The Koran*, chapter xxxviii., note.

† Sale, *The Koran*, chapter xxi.

lapwing? Is she absent? Verily I will chastise her with a severe chastisement, or I will put her to death, unless she bring me a just excuse. And she tarried not long before she presented herself unto Solomon, and said, I have viewed a country which thou hast not viewed; and I come unto thee from Saba with a certain piece of news. I found a woman to reign over them who is provided with everything requisite for a prince, and hath a magnificent throne.”*

This, according to the Koran, the Mohammedan Bible, was Solomon's first intimation of the existence of the queen of Sheba. She and her people were idolaters. He sends the lapwing with a letter, demanding the surrender of herself and her people. She wishes to comply, but her nobles determine to resist. “And Solomon said, O nobles, which of you will bring me her throne before they come and surrender themselves unto me? A terrible genius answered, I will bring it unto thee before thou arise from thy place; for I am able to perform it, and may be trusted;” † and so the fantasia proceeds.

Such were the traditions which had gathered round the memory of this great personality. They were spread over the east, and were really what passed among these peoples as Solomon's history. So thoroughly well known were the most of them that it would have been an impertinence for even Mohammed to have recounted the stories to the men of his day. Everybody knew them. They had been part of the folk-lore of the people, and had been recited at

* *Ibid*, chapter xxvii. † Chapter xxvii.

the camp-fires of the deserts for long centuries. Mohammed merely alludes to them, and has consequently afforded scope to his commentators to retail to the men of a later age what then passed as history among Jews and Moslems. But there is one conclusion which will be written indelibly upon every honest mind which compares these wild romances with the sober narrative of the Scripture. It is that the latter was never culled from among these fruits of the Eastern imagination. Judged by every lineament, it is as far removed from them as truth can possibly be from fiction. They are tradition: this is history.

There is another fact which entirely disposes of the critical assertion that the Scripture narrative is tradition, and not history. Traditions follow a very simple and intelligible law. The greater the impression made by any personality, the more widespread is the desire to know the incidents of his career. The consequent stimulus to speech and imagination results in the greater abundance and permanence of traditions. The traditions that cluster round the name of Solomon far exceed in number and popular attractiveness those that relate to David. A chronicler, therefore, gleaning in this field for the materials which the critics say were incorporated in the Scripture history, would have found his narrative take such large dimensions here as to quite dwarf the record of David and that of Solomon's successors. But when we turn to the Bible, we discover that this is not the case. Names and incidents are reported here which tradition had failed to retain, and the space assigned in the Scripture

to David and to Solomon respectively is exactly the reverse of that assigned to each of these monarchs by tradition. In the Books of Samuel and Kings, forty chapters are devoted to the history of David, and only eleven to that of Solomon. In Chronicles, where the tradition-collector is supposed by the critics to have been most fully at work, nineteen chapters are taken up with David's career, and nine only are occupied with the life and times of Solomon. Neither in the measure, therefore, nor in the matter, of the Scripture narratives, is there the slightest trace of the influence of tradition; and the theory of De Wette and of Dr. Driver, and of the clerical host which follows them, that we have in the Scripture narrative an account, or a summary, of popular traditions, must be set aside by every lover of truth. The facts will, indeed, carry the lover of truth much further than this negative conclusion; but it is enough for our present purpose to note that this critical theory of the source of the Scripture history is an impossibility.

CHAPTER II.

THE BEGINNING OF SOLOMON'S REIGN.

THE narratives of the Scripture abound in local colour. They are so steeped in it, indeed, that its abundance forms one of the characteristics which distinguish Scripture history from all other accounts of men and things. And this extraordinary feature

owes its existence not to any kind of word painting, nor to any attempt to make it a characteristic of the history. It is, in fact, oftener implied than expressed; and when the place is visited, or the surrounding circumstances are recalled (as they so frequently have been) by discoveries which restore to us the very times with their customs and events, words and incidents suddenly assume a new significance; the reasons why certain things were said or done are immediately apparent; and in the light thus shed with unexpected brilliance, we cease to think of ourselves as readers of, or as listeners to, a story. We are spectators of a scene. Our eyes are upon living men. We see the things they see, and we hear the things they hear.

It is this overwhelming sense of reality that has compelled the archæologist to throw aside the incredulity with which he may have travelled so far. Critics may still talk of myths and legends: but the archæologist has applied the touchstone, and he *knows* that this is history. And each reader, in his and her measure, has shared the impression; for this characteristic meets us everywhere in the Divine record. Here we are always spectators, and not merely readers or listeners. When this feature is fully dealt with (as it must sometime be), it will take no mean place among the evidences that the history of the Bible is not of man merely. The reason for the ancient Jewish name for the Old Testament narratives—"The Former Prophets"—will then be seen. The Bible historian is always himself a "seer."

Inspiration did not merely give him the truth to convey it to us. The gift was fuller. He was evidently brought into close, vivid contact with persons, events, and scenes. He saw them as God saw them. And through the words which his inspired pen has written, we have the same real and close access to the men and the events of the past. We, too, see them as God saw them; and here, as elsewhere, it is true that in His light we see light. For this is not history merely: it is revelation.

All this receives one of its manifold illustrations in the account of Solomon's installation. The activity of the great hero-king had come to an end, and his life was slowly ebbing in the seclusion of the palace. The throne had been promised to Solomon. But there were possibly wide-spread prejudices among the nobles and the people; for man seldom comprehends the mercy of God. The story of Bathsheba was known, and there was little in that to endear Solomon to the people. When Adonijah, therefore, the eldest surviving son of David, "exalted himself, saying, I will be king: and prepared him chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him" (1. Kings i. 5), his pretensions were received with evident favour. Joab, the Commander-in-chief of the Army, and Abiathar, the high priest—the two leading men in the kingdom, were among his counsellors. Everything seemed to promise well for the would-be king. And now the time had apparently arrived when a public acknowledgment of Adonijah's claims should be called for. "And Adonijah slew sheep and oxen and fat cattle

by the stone of Zoheleth, which is by En-rogel, and called all his brethren the king's sons, and all the men of Judah the king's servants" (v. 9). But there were some notable exceptions to this wide invitation. "Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah, and the mighty men, and Solomon his brother, he called not" (v. 10).

The omission was significant of antagonism and of danger; but the friends of David and of Solomon were not wanting either in wisdom or in decision. Steps were at once taken to arouse the king to action. He was informed of Adonijah's revolt, and of the danger to Solomon's claim and life. The result was that the command was issued to Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, to call out the royal bodyguard, to place Solomon upon the king's own mule, to proceed down to Gihon and to anoint Solomon king over Israel. David also declared his intention to abdicate in his son's favour. "Let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet," said the king, "anoint him there king over Israel: and blow ye with the trumpet, and say, God save king Solomon. Then ye shall come up after him, that he may come and sit upon my throne; for he shall be king in my stead: and I have appointed him to be ruler over Israel and over Judah" (verses 34, 35). The election was received by the people of Jerusalem with gratifying, and indeed surprising, favour. The old enthusiastic loyalty to David awoke in all its early strength. The people came up after Solomon, when the procession was re-formed, and proceeded from Gihon to Jerusalem. "And the people piped

with pipes, and rejoiced with great joy, so that the earth rent with the sound of them" (verse 40).

These acclamations startled the revellers at Zoheleth. "And Adonijah and all the guests that were with him heard it as they had made an end of eating. And when Joab heard the sound of the trumpet, he said, Wherefore is this noise of the city being in an uproar?" Jonathan the son of Abiathar entered while Joab was speaking, and, on Adonijah's appealing to him for information, told him that Solomon was king. The tidings proved to be the death of the conspiracy; for "all the guests that were with Adonijah were afraid, and rose up, and went every man his way" (verse 49).

Zoheleth was long one of the lost places of Palestine; but Clermont Ganneau found that the remarkable rock on which the village of Silwân, or Siloam, now stands, was called by the Arabs, Zahweilah. The latter name is identical with the Hebrew, Zoheleth. This identification has been universally and gladly accepted. It is on the south-east of the ancient city, and on the further (or eastern) side of the Kedron valley. The cliff is remarkable. "In this village," says Mr. Harper, there "exists a rocky plateau, surrounded by Arab buildings, which mark its true form and extent. The western face, cut perpendicularly, slightly overhangs the valley. Steps rudely cut in the rock enable one to climb it. By this road, dangerous as it really is, the women of Siloam come to fill their water-jars at the so-called Virgin's Fount. This rock and passage, and the ledge of rock are called Zahweilah. The identity of the Arabic and Hebrew

words is complete. The valley is called by the Fellahin, Pharaoh's Valley, meaning, 'the Valley of the King.' It is called 'The King's Garden,' or 'King's Dale' in the Bible. The word Zohelath means 'slippery,' and no truer word could be found to describe this rocky ledge, on which the writer often slipped when trying to ascend to Siloam."*

Another mark of the locality is indicated in the words of Scripture—"which is by En-rogel," "the fuller's fountain." And down there in the valley, confronting Zohelath, is the well called to-day "The Virgin's Fount." The identification is, therefore, one which seems to leave no room for doubt. Here Adonijah seems to have had his country house, and where the Arab houses stand to-day, the stately mansion no doubt stood then. The rocky plateau in the centre, round which the buildings are grouped, enables us to understand the statement that "Adonijah slew sheep and oxen, and fat cattle *by the stone (or rock) Zohelath.*" Doubt still rests, however, upon the situation of Gihon, whither King David bade his servants take Solomon. Colonel Conder and others believe it to be identical with En-rogel. But this is, on the face of it, improbable. The coronation would then have been conducted right opposite to, and only a hundred yards or so distant from, the cliff on which Adonijah and his guests were feasting. That was hardly a likely place to be chosen for the solemn ceremony of the royal anointing. But, whatever may be thought of this, there are two considerations which show that

* *The Bible and Modern Discoveries*, p. 341.

the identification is improbable, if not impossible. If En-rogel was identical with Gihon, why are the *two* names used in the text? Then, also, if the coronation had taken place there, Adonijah and his following must have heard the trumpet and the shouting at the very beginning. But they do not become aware of the commotion *till the procession has returned to the city*, and till the joy has filled the place, and has rolled on, so to say, from the palace to the eastern wall of the city facing Zoheleth. This has been overlooked, though the narrative makes it perfectly clear (see verses 41-48). It was while the words were in Joab's mouth as he asked, "Wherefore is this noise of the city being in an uproar?" that Jonathan the son of Abiathar entered; and in his reply he was able to say that, not only had Zadok and Nathan anointed Solomon in Gihon, but also that "they are come up from thence rejoicing, so that the city rang again. This is the noise that ye have heard." He also adds that Solomon had been enthroned, "and moreover the king's servants came to bless our lord king David, saying, God make the name of Solomon better than thy name, and make his throne greater than thy throne."

The joy in the city, then, was joy over a thing done, and not merely over a thing begun. It was this that made the tidings strike the guests with deadly effect. All this indicates that Gihon was *not* in the neighbourhood of Zoheleth, but that it, in all probability, lay on another side of the city, in some one of Jerusalem's many valleys, which would shut in the sounds that

accompanied the opening ceremony. Where, then was Gihon? There is one indication which appears to be in accord with the conclusions to which we have just been led. In 2 Chronicles xxxii. 30, we are told that "Hezekiah stopped the upper watercourse of Gihon, and brought it straight down to the west side of the city"—literally, "brought it straight underground to the west side." If the waters were led underground into the city on the west side, it is natural to conclude that Gihon, "the spring," from which they flowed, must also have been in that locality. But the *west* side of the city is just the side opposite to that on which Adonijah's feast was held. The sounds would, therefore, not be heard across the ordinary hum and bustle of the city, and would startle him and his friends as the procession moved down to the south-east, and as the people there joined in the rejoicing and in the acclaims that shook the city.

And here, again, the characteristics of the place enable us to understand how the sound of the rejoicing drowned the noise of the festival, and appalled the conspirators. M. Vigouroux writes of a visit he made to the valley of the Kedron, in which Zohemoth is situated. It was a Summer evening, and a crowd of men, women, and children filled the gardens below the village of Siloam, watering the plants, and engaging in other labours. "On all sides," he says, "there were shouts, noise, and animation. What we remarked most of all was the extraordinary sonorousness of this valley, which allowed us to hear words pronounced at

a distance as if they were spoken quite beside us."* Those sounds from the opposite hill of the trumpet-blast, of the musical instruments, and of the shouts of the people, were thus borne along, and made to sweep in undiminished strength and fulness through the halls of Adonijah.

CHAPTER III.

THE BUILDING OF THE TEMPLE.

THE work with which Solomon's name has been most closely connected, is the erection of the building which has made the very name of Jerusalem dear and sacred to Israel ever since. The Scriptures dwell upon the structure of the Temple. They detail its dimensions, minutely describe its decoration and its furniture, and enumerate the surrounding buildings; and all this is, no doubt, done, not because of interest in the mere structure or of national pride lingering over a magnificent past, but to preserve for us the symbolic teaching of God's dwelling-place among His people; for this, too, like the Tabernacle in the wilderness, was built in accordance with the distinct and minute directions of the Spirit of God.

Remembering our present aim, however, we inquire whether recent research has come upon any traces of this great structural activity. A striking reply has

* *Revue Biblique*, 1894, p. 441.

been furnished by the Palestine Exploration Fund, which has so largely concentrated its activity upon Jerusalem. The building which Solomon reared was burned down by the Chaldeans, and all that stood above the ground was thrown down with, probably, the exception of that part of one wall which has long been made the wailing place of Israel.

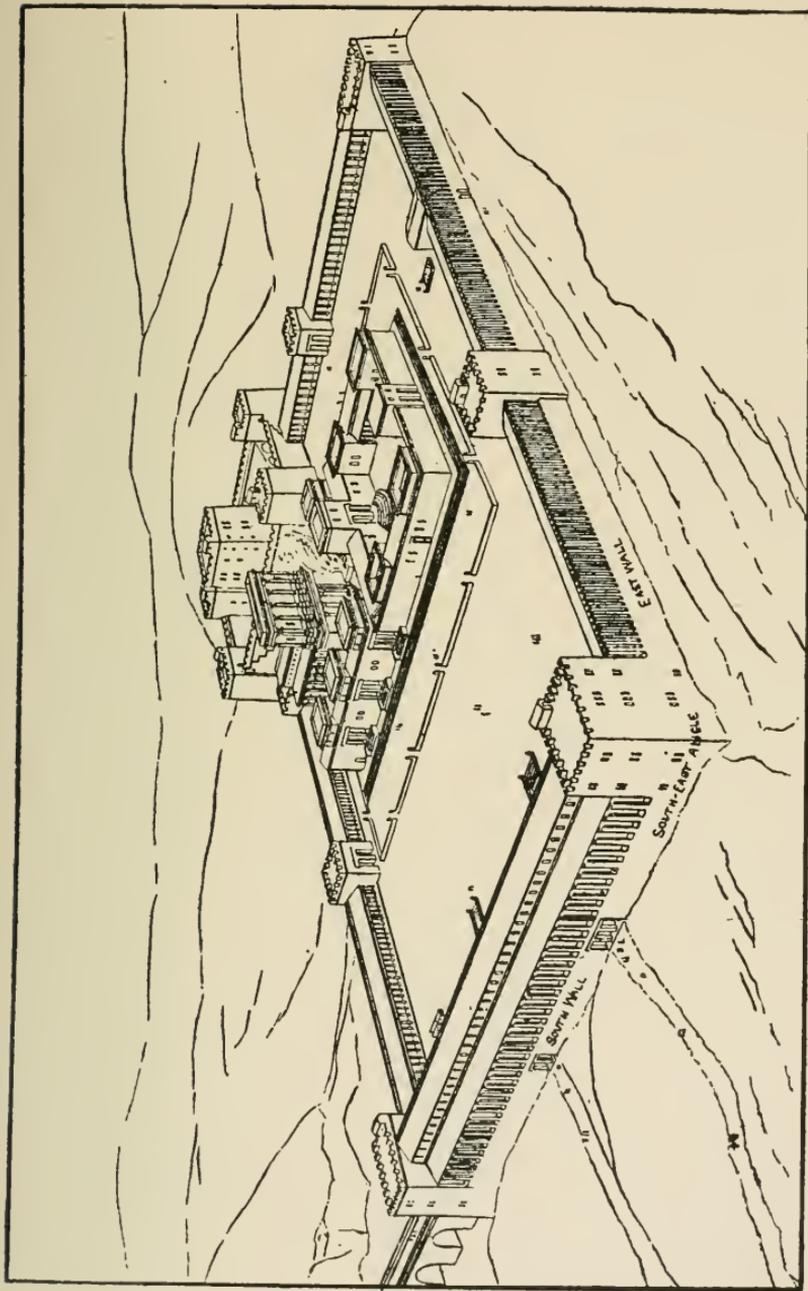
But the foundations may still be reached and explored; and to this work the engineers, who have toiled so persistently and enthusiastically in the face of immense difficulties and of Turkish official obstruction, have successfully addressed themselves. Before detailing the results, it may be well to remind ourselves of what the Scripture has told us regarding the work. We read in 1 Kings v. 17, 18, that "the king (that is, Solomon) commanded, and they brought great stones, costly stones, and hewed stones, to lay the foundation of the house. And Solomon's builders and Hiram's builders did hew them, and the stone-squarers: so they prepared timber and stones to build the house." Here several things are told us. First of all, that the foundation stones were of the finest quality, "costly stones," hewn with the best art of the time; second, that they were stones of great size, "great stones;" and third, that Phœnicians, that is, artificers sent by Hiram king of Tyre, took part in the hewing of the stones. This fact is further emphasized by the mention of "the Gebalites" in verse 18. When the Authorized Version was made it was not known who these were; and, judging from what light other Hebrew words had to throw upon the meaning,

the word was translated "stone-squarers." But this very name frequently occurs in the Assyrian inscriptions, and we now know that the Giblites, or Gebalites, are the inhabitants of the ancient Phœnician city of Gebal, called by the Greeks Byblos. The native name *Jebeil*, corresponds exactly to the ancient Gebal. The town is situated in the northern part of the Palestine coast, and considerably to the north of Beirut. It was an ancient and famous Phœnician settlement, and from it, as well as from Tyre, artisans had been drawn for the service of Solomon. Another detail is given in vi. 7: "And the house, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was building." The stones were made ready in the quarry, and required only to be laid in the place which the architect had planned for them. This must plainly have necessitated the use of marks by which the position for which the stones were intended, when they reached the Temple hill, could be recognised. Strangely enough, as we shall see, every one of these four features of the structure has been verified.

The hill Moriah, which was Divinely selected as the Temple site, lay on the east of Ancient Jerusalem. It was a ridge which has long been concealed, but which is now known, through recent explorations, to have run north-west and south-east. To form what Captain Warren calls "the vast plateau," which was required for the Temple, its courts, and surrounding

enclosure, part of the rock had to be cut down and vast walls had to be raised on the declivities of the rock, or from the adjoining valleys. This space is still preserved as holy ground in the huge quadrilateral called "The Noble Sanctuary." The Temple of Herod, and, consequently, the Temple of Solomon, on the ancient site of which Herod's Temple stood, was situated somewhere about the middle of "The Noble Sanctuary."

Into the much-debated question of its site, we need not enter. Excavations inside the Sanctuary area are, of course, forbidden by the Turks, and the discoveries which have been made lead us elsewhere—to the vast retaining walls which were reared to make the platform. These Captain Warren has explored by means of shafts and galleries, excavated with immense pains and at some risk. The walls were found to be resting on the solid rock, which had been cut into to give a sure foundation. In the record of the explorations we meet, from time to time, a statement like this: "The rock at the south-east angle" (that is, of the great platform, "The Noble Sanctuary") "into which the base course is let very soft. . . . At four feet north of the angle close to the wall, the rock was found to be cut away in the form of a semi-circle, or horseshoe, two feet wide and about two feet eight inches deep; dark mould was found in it; on clearing it out it was found that the base course rests upon very hard rock, the soft rock extending only to a depth of from two to three feet eight inches in height.



RESTORATION OF HEROD'S TEMPLE—SHOWING THE TEMPLE AREA.

“Upon the soft rock there rests an accumulation of from eight feet to ten feet of a fat mould, abounding in potsherds; this mould does not lie close up against the Haram Wall, but is at top about twelve inches from it, and gradually closes in to it; between it and the wall is a wedge of stone chippings; it is quite evident that when the wall was built, this ten feet of mould and pottery was in existence, that it was cut through, and the soft rock also, for the purpose of laying the stones on a solid foundation.”* This is not the character of other and later work in the same neighbourhood. For instance, speaking of the Ophel wall, which is built across the valley at the south of “The Noble Sanctuary,” Captain Warren says: “The Ophel wall appears to have been built upon the layer of rich loam overlying the rock, and not to have been based upon the rock, at any rate at this point, so that we were able to go under it along the rock.”†

Mr. King, in his interesting little volume, *Recent Discoveries on the Temple Hill*, gives an excellent summary of Captain Warren’s larger and more technical books. Speaking of the excavations at the same point—the south-east angle—he says: “The rock was struck at the enormous depth of seventy-nine feet three inches below the present surface, and as the wall visible above ground at this corner is seventy-seven feet six inches high, it follows that there now exists, at the south-east angle, a wall of masonry one hundred and fifty-six feet nine inches in height. In

* *Recovery of Jerusalem*, pp. 141, 142. † Pages 149, 150.

ancient days, surmounting this masonry, was the wall of the Royal Cloister, which could not be less than fifty feet in height, so that at this point in the days of Christ the Temple wall from rock to summit would be considerably over two hundred feet in height . . .

“ A vast deposit of rubbish lies in this part of the valley, and excavations have recently brought to light the fact that the true bed of the Kedron is about forty feet deeper than the present bed, and is situated eighty yards due east of the south-east corner, and about seventy feet nearer the Sanctuary wall than the present bed. The lie of the rock shows that the true bed of the Kedron is one hundred and six feet lower than the rock at the south-east angle.

“ From these interesting discoveries, it appears that a person, in ancient times, standing on the wall of the Royal Cloister, would look down into the bed of the Kedron at the astounding depth of upwards of three hundred feet below. Thus, the recent excavations tend to prove that Josephus’ account of the stupendous height of the south-east wall is not so much exaggerated as was generally supposed. The Jewish historian says:—

“ ‘ The Royal Cloister deserved to be remembered better than any other under the sun ; for, while the valley was very deep, and its bottom could not be seen if you looked from above into the depth, this further vastly high elevation of the Cloister stood upon that height, insomuch that if anyone looked down from the top of the battlements, or down both these altitudes, he would be giddy, while his sight could not reach to

such an immense depth.' Probably on the top of this lofty wall, at the south-east corner, stood the pinnacle of the Temple mentioned in the account of Christ's temptation . . . Josephus states that the roof of the Royal Cloister was one hundred feet above the pavement, and, if the corner pinnacle towered fifty feet above the roof, then from the top of the pinnacle to the bottom of the Kedron valley was three hundred and fifty feet." * Mr. R. Phené Spiers, A.R.I.B.A., speaks of "the results of the excavations down to the foundations of the Haram wall" as "astounding us by the stupendous nature and extent of the masonry." †

The work was, therefore, of a stupendous character, and the excavations have fully justified the references of Scripture, and the melancholy lingering of Jewish tradition around its vanished glories. Let us now take, one by one, the points we have noted in the Bible description of the work, and let us mark whether the eye of the writer had rested upon the things which the excavators have, in these last days, laid bare. In other words, let us judge whether Kings is history, or Jewish legend and romance. First of all, then, we are told that the foundation stones were of the finest quality—"costly stones." The quarries have been discovered from which the stones were taken. They are at Bezetha, in the hill to the north of "The Noble Sanctuary." "The stones for this great work," says Warren, "were brought down from the Royal Quarries under Bezetha, north of the Temple, one entrance to which is still to be seen in the outer wall

* Pages 38, 39, † *Recovery of Jerusalem*, p. 389.

of the modern city. The Temple of Solomon was built of the beautiful white stone of the country, the hard *missae*, which will bear a considerable amount of polish.* But the costliness of the stones would depend not wholly upon their quality, but also upon the labour expended upon them. Now, these stones were not only beautifully dressed, but also adjusted so skilfully that no mortar was required to be used, and the joints can scarcely be seen. "On passing along," writes Captain Warren, in describing a progress through his excavated galleries—"on passing along one notes the marvellous joints of the Sanctuary wall stones." † "The immense wall of underground masonry," says Mr. King, "is a piece of excellent workmanship. The large stones are well fitted together, and the joints are so finely worked that they are scarcely discernible, and so closely laid that "the blade of a knife can scarcely be thrust in between them." ‡

This high quality is emphasized by a contrast presented in the erection itself. It appears that Herod enlarged the Temple platform by carrying the wall of the older erection, at the south-east angle, further north and west. This is shown by the breaks in the masonry; but it is also manifest in the character of the work. Mr. King says: "Above a hundred feet north of the south-east corner, there is a break in the wall, not only in the masonry above ground, but excavations have shown that the break exists also in the buried wall, far below the surface. This break,

* *Underground Jerusalem*, p. 60. † Page 129. ‡ Pages 80, 81.

or straight joint, separates two different kinds of masonry, and indicates two building periods. From Mahomet's Pillar to the break is a distance of seventy feet, and the stones here are large in size, with marginal drafts and rough projecting faces. South of the break in the wall, and from this point to the south-east corner, a distance of above one hundred feet, there is a complete change in the masonry. The stones (in this, the Solomonic portion) are *magnificent blocks, with clean-cut marginal drafts and finely-dressed faces*, and are regarded as vestiges of the most ancient masonry in the Haram walls."*

The stones were, therefore, "costly stones." What now of their size, which was the second point we noted in the Bible description, though it really stands first, as if the Scripture drew special attention to this feature: "And the king commanded, and they brought great stones, costly stones, hewed stones, to lay the foundation of the house" (I. Kings v. 17)? Does this feature also attract the attention of the explorer, and take as prominent a place in *his* description? Captain Warren speaks of them as "great squared stones."† Speaking of what has been called "The Master Course," or "The Great Course," which runs along the upper part of the south-east wall, Mr. King says: "The stones are immense blocks, being about six feet high, while the drafted courses below are little more than three and a-half feet high on an average . . . The corner stone of the Great Course at the south-east angle is a gigantic block, twenty-six

* *Recent Discoveries in the Temple Hill*, pp. 32, 33. † *Recovery*, etc., p. 127.

feet long, over six feet high, and seven feet wide . . . This colossal stone is composed of hard limestone, and weighs over a hundred tons, and is, therefore, the heaviest, though not the longest, stone visible in the Sanctuary wall.”* At the bottom of the south-east angle is the foundation stone, which, says Mr. King, “is the most interesting stone in the world, for it is the chief corner stone of the Temple’s massive wall. Among the ancient Jews, the foundation corner stone of their great Sanctuary on Moriah was regarded as the emblem of moral and spiritual truths. It had two functions to perform; first, like the other foundation stones, it was a support for the masonry above, but it had also to face both ways, and was thus a bond of union between the two walls . . . The engineers, in order to ascertain the dimensions of this foundation stone, worked round it, and report that it is three feet eight inches high, and fourteen feet in length. At the angle it is let down into the rock to a depth of fourteen inches, but, as the rock rises towards the north, the depth at four feet north of the angle is increased to thirty-two inches, while the northern end seems entirely embedded in the rock. The block is further described as squared and polished, with a finely dressed face . . . Fixed in its abiding position three thousand years ago, it still stands sure and steadfast.” †

The other two points have been as strikingly confirmed. For convenience sake we shall take them together. The engineers made a careful inspection of the rubbish at the foot of the walls with the special

* *Recent Discoveries, &c.*, pp. 71, 72. † Page 44.

object of determining whether the stones had been hewn and fully prepared there, or in the quarry. They found a considerable collection of small chips, but these had not been cut off from the stones, but had evidently been brought there for packing behind the stones. "On examining the chippings at the base of the wall," writes Captain Warren, "I find they are, in many cases, rounded and unlike what would result from stone dressing, having more the appearance of the backing used in the walls in the present day in Palestine. Close up against the wall is a small quantity of chips, but nothing to prove that the stones were dressed after they were laid; and the fact of horizontal drafts in adjoining stones being altogether unlike is, of itself, sufficient to lead one to suppose that the stones were finished at the quarries."*

But this, as has just been said, is closely connected with the existence or non-existence of marks upon the stones. If the stones had been prepared at the quarries, and were not hewn at the retaining walls of the great platform or at the Temple itself, it would have been impossible to place the stones in their right positions had not the builders been guided by marks placed upon the stones. While, on the other hand, it is equally plain that if they were prepared at the walls, no marks would have been required or used, and, consequently, none would have been found. Now, marks, the evident purpose of which is to serve as an aid for placing the stones, *is a repeated feature* in these foundation stones. Being placed under-

* *Recovery*, etc., p. 144.

ground, where they were supposed to be shut off from every eye, the marks were, in many instances, left as they were, and were not washed off when the stone was placed, as they must have been, on the upper rows, which were above ground. In Captain Warren's reports we find the following entries: "On arriving at a depth of fifty-three feet, a gallery was driven in to the Sanctuary wall. . . . The gallery reached the east wall of the Sanctuary at about six feet north of the south-east angle, and three letters in red paint were found on one of the stones.

"A gallery was then driven to the south-east angle, and a shaft sunk; another character in red paint was found on the wall while sinking the shaft. . .

"These stones are in the most excellent preservation, as perfect as if they had been cut yesterday. They are very well dressed.

"The letters or characters are in red paint, apparently put on with a brush; the large letters are five inches high. There are a few red splashes here and there, as if the paint had dropped from the brush. The general impression resulting from the examination of these marks is that they are the quarry marks, and were made before the stones were placed *in situ*. If this be the case, then, the stones must have been dressed previously to their having been brought from the quarries. . . . The colour of the paint is, apparently, vermilion; it easily rubs off when touched with the wetted finger."* "On the sixth course there are red paint marks on nearly every stone; on the

* Pages 138, 139.

first none, on the second the O Y Q, which is supposed to be some numeral; on three to nine are single paint characters at left-hand top corner; on the tenth there are a great number of flourishes in red paint." * "At fifty-eight feet we got among dry shingle, and at sixty-two feet six inches came to the course, on one stone of which red painted characters were found; the face of the stone was not dressed, but in the working of it a large piece had split off, leaving a smooth face, and on this the characters were painted. In one case the letter appeared to have been put on before the stone was laid, as the trickling from the paint was on the upper side;" † that is, the stone had been upside down when that mark was made.

But is there any proof that *Phœnician* builders were employed in the work? The following, extracted from the Report of the late Emmanuel Deutsch, of the British Museum, who, at the request of the Committee of the Palestine Exploration Fund, examined the marks, gives the reply. He writes: "I must now speak somewhat fully on a subject which has engaged public attention for some time, and has already given rise to many conjectures, namely, the 'writings,' either painted on or cut into the stones, discovered lately on the bottom rows of the wall, at the south-east corner of the Haram, at a depth of about eighty feet there, where the foundations lie on the live rock itself. I have examined them carefully in their places—by no means an easy task. The ventilation at that depth is unfavourable to free breathing; nor is the pale

* Page 148

† Page 183.

glimmer of the taper, or the sudden glare of the magnesium wire, calculated materially to assist epigraphical studies. . . I have come to the following conclusions :—First : The signs cut, or painted, were on the stones when they were first laid in their present places. Secondly : They do not represent any inscription. Thirdly : *They are Phœnician*. I consider them to be partly letters, partly numerals, and partly special mason's, or quarry, signs. Some of them were recognisable at once as well-known Phœnician characters ; others, hitherto unknown in Phœnician epigraphy, I had the rare satisfaction of being able to identify on absolutely undoubted antique Phœnician structures in Syria, such as the primitive sub-structures of the harbour at Sidon. No less did I observe them on the bevelled stones taken from ancient edifices and built into later work throughout Phœnicia. For a striking and obvious instance of this, the stones of which (old Phœnician stones to wit) immured in their present place at subsequent periods, teem with peculiar marks (*Fantasia*) identical with those at Jerusalem." A tomb of Ashmunazar, king of Sidon, whose date is said to be about 600 B.C., had similar marks. There is great reluctance manifested by archæologists to admit these conclusions ; for they would carry back the age of Phœnician, and, therefore, of Hebrew, writing, to an age much too high for critical theories. They have, accordingly, been contested ; but the time seems at hand when this opposition will be crushed beneath increasing discovery. Meanwhile, the conclusion seems irresistible

that these are marks placed by Phœnician builders, and that the erection at the south-east angle of the great Temple platform is due to Solomon. Each of the four points, which we noted in the Scripture history, have, therefore, been verified by the explorations; and they have become also the leading points in the accounts presented by the explorers.

CHAPTER IV.

SOLOMON AND THE LAW.

DID the Pentateuch exist in the days of Solomon? The theories of the higher criticism rest upon the assumption that it did not. Deuteronomy, it tells us, is really the oldest part of the Pentateuch, although we have hitherto believed it to be the latest. But even this earliest portion was not written or spoken by Moses, though the Book expressly says that it was both. That was a ruse, say they, of some ecclesiastics in Josiah's time, who either forged the Book, or got it forged for them. The rest of the Books of the Pentateuch, they allege, were not put together till after the time of the Exile.

The Book of Kings, they also tell us, was written by some one who lived after Deuteronomy was written, but before the rest of the Pentateuch was elaborated. He knew nothing, therefore, of the elaborate ceremonial laws of Leviticus, or of Exodus,

with its full and minute account of the Tabernacle with its furniture, its altars, the manifold instruments necessary for the Divine service, or with the times and the manner of their use. But how, then, are we to account for the reproduction of all these in the Temple if Solomon and Israel had known nothing of them previously? It is easy to reply that Exodus copied the Book of Kings, and that the Tabernacle was modelled upon the Temple. An answer of that sort is just the reply which a reckless theorist would give. And, just as we might expect, when we confront the theorist with a demand for proof, there is no proof procurable. While the Book of Kings dwells upon the magnificence of the Temple, and deals with *that* from first to last as a new thing, there is utter silence as to its introducing a *new* form of worship. There is, on the contrary, both in it and in 2 Samuel, distinct intimation that it is the continuance of a worship long since established. The idea of the Temple originated, we are told, in the following way. It came to pass when the king (David) "sat in his house, and the Lord had given him rest round about from all his enemies; that the king said unto Nathan the prophet, See now, I dwell in an house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains" (II. Sam. vii. 1, 2). The Ark, recovered from the Philistines, had been brought to Zion, and a tent had been prepared to receive it. The Temple was to form a worthier abode. But the Temple no more originated a worship previously unknown to the Israelite, than that tent had done. Ark and worship had belonged

to the fathers. They were precious heirlooms from an ancient and revered past. This, as facts generally do, explains everything, and is in harmony with everything. The critical theory dislocates everything, and is in conflict with all.

A close inspection of the narrative reveals how broad and deep this agreement is. In 1 Kings viii. 1-6 we read: "Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel, and all the heads of the tribes, the chief of the fathers of the children of Israel, unto King Solomon in Jerusalem, that they might bring up the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of the city of David, which is Zion. And all the men of Israel assembled themselves unto King Solomon at the feast in the month Ethanim, which is the seventh month. And all the elders of Israel came, and the priests took up the ark. And they brought up the ark of the Lord, and the Tabernacle of the congregation, and all the holy vessels that were in the Tabernacle, even those did the priests and the Levites bring up. And King Solomon, and all the congregation of Israel, that were assembled with him, were with him before the ark, sacrificing sheep and oxen, that could not be told nor numbered for multitude. And the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the Lord unto his place, into the oracle of the house, to the most holy place, even under the wings of the cherubims."

Can any reader miss seeing that these—the Ark and the Tabernacle—are *the* sacred things that are to hallow the new Temple, and that they have been already and for long closely associated with Jehovah

and His worship? Not only had there been a Tabernacle and an Ark; it is also plain that these were the Tabernacle and the Ark of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers. The Tabernacle had also instruments of Divine service, for these are brought up in the solemn procession. The division between priests and Levites was then in existence, and was certainly known to the writer of Kings, for he distinguishes between them. The priests carry the Ark (verse 3); and the priests bring in the Ark into the holiest of all, and set it in its place (verse 6). But with regard to the Tabernacle and the holy vessels, "those did the priests and the Levites bring up" (verse 4). All this implies the existence of the Book of Numbers, which carefully distinguishes between the duties which are to be discharged by the two sections of the sacred ministry. The priests were to take down the Tabernacle, and to pack up it, its furniture, and the holy vessels; but the families of the Levites were appointed to carry them. For the ordinary journeys in the wilderness the Levitical family of Kohath had carried the Ark, but on occasions of special solemnity, and when in all men's eyes the Ark was the symbol of the Divine presence, that duty was strictly confined to the priests (Joshua iii. 6; vi. 6, &c.) It was also they only who dare enter into the holiest of all, and set the Ark in its place. It was only when the Ark had been covered by the hands of the priests, that the sons of Kohath, even when they were to bear the Ark, were permitted to touch it. When it was uncovered again, and placed in the oracle, the priests alone could be present. All

this is clearly known already to the writer of 1 Kings when he tells us that “*the priests* brought in the ark of the covenant of the Lord unto its place.”

The critical case breaks down quite as completely elsewhere. We are told in Joshua xxi. 12-18 that in the distribution of the land, the Israelites gave to the children of Aaron, the priest, thirteen cities, and that among them was Anathoth, in Benjamin. It is again plain that these arrangements were in existence in the days of Solomon, and were known to the writer of 1 Kings; for, when Abiathar was dismissed from the office of high priest, the sentence of Solomon ran: “Get thee to Anathoth, unto thine own fields” (1. Kings ii. 26). The confinement to Anathoth had this advantage, that Abiathar would still, though dismissed, be under the eye of the Court. The ancient city was discovered by Robinson. It is to the north of Jerusalem, about three miles distant, and now bears the name of Anâta. It “seems,” he says, “to have been once a walled town, and a place of strength. . . . Portions of the walls remain, built of large stones and apparently ancient; as are also the foundations of some of the houses. . . . The village lies where the broad ridge slopes off gradually towards the south-east.”* It remained a city of the priests till the end of the Jewish Monarchy; for it was the birth-place and the home of Jeremiah.

One or two other indications of the existence of the Law in Solomon’s day may be noted. After his accession to the throne, Solomon performed two

* *Biblical Researches in Palestine*, vol. i., pp. 438, 439.

solemn public acts of worship. "The king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there; for that was the great high place: a thousand burnt offerings did Solomon offer upon that altar" (I. Kings iii. 4). There God met him and blessed him in a dream. Then we read: "And Solomon awoke; and, behold, it was a dream. And he came to Jerusalem, and stood before the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and offered up burnt offerings, and offered peace offerings, and made a feast to all his servants" (v. 15). One naturally asks why Solomon should have worshipped God in *both* these places? Does not this look as if the Law regarding the one altar and the one holy place were quite unknown to Solomon and to the men of his time? The correct reply shows that we have in this seeming ignorance or departure, a proof that the Law was both known and observed. We are told (I. Chron. xvi.) that when the Ark was brought to Jerusalem by David that "they offered burnt sacrifices and peace offerings before God. And when David had made an end of offering the burnt offerings and the peace offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the Lord" (verses 1, 2). But ever since the capture of the Ark by the Philistines, the Ark and the Tabernacle had been separated. For some reason the notion of restoring the Ark to its former place at Shiloh had not been entertained. No doubt Divine direction had been sought and obtained in this matter. The separation of the Ark was providentially made the commencement of that change which was to end its wanderings. It went no more forth from the Temple in Moriah,

but sank amid the ashes of the Holy Place when the Temple was burned by Nebuchadnezzar. Meanwhile, however, the Tabernacle equally claimed Israel's service; and, while David "left there before the ark of the covenant of the Lord Asaph and his brethren, to minister before the ark continually, as every day's work required," "Zadok the priest, and his brethren the priests," were continued "before the tabernacle of the Lord in the high place that was at Gibeon, to offer burnt offerings unto the Lord upon the altar of the burnt offering continually morning and evening, and to do according to all that is written in the law of the Lord, which He commanded Israel" (verses 37, 39, 40).

It is quite true, as the critics are not slow to point out, that we owe this information to the Chronicler. But neither the writers nor the readers of 1 Kings were ignorant of it. We read in 1 Kings ii. 28 that, when Joab heard of Adonijah's execution, he "fled unto the tabernacle of the Lord, and caught hold of the horns of the altar." From this it is clear that the Tabernacle was at some distance from Jerusalem; for, otherwise, Joab would not have required to flee. It is equally clear that the Tabernacle and the altar were together; and the mention in the next chapter of Solomon's proceeding to Gibeon to sacrifice there shows this place must have been the abode of both Tabernacle and altar. If it were not, Solomon must have gone to the altar, the appointed place of sacrifice, as well as to Gibeon. But there is no record of his having gone elsewhere than to Gibeon and

Jerusalem. But there is a phrase which must have caught the reader's attention in 1 Kings iii. 4, and which leaves no room for doubt. I refer to the two words with which the verse concludes—"that altar." The words in the original are strongly emphatic—"that very altar"—and they point to its peculiar sacredness. This is at once explained when we remember that it was the very altar planned by God and made by Moses in obedience to the Divine directions.

Before we pass from this incident, let us notice another indication of minute acquaintance with both the letter and the spirit of the Law. It will be noted that, while Solomon offers only burnt offerings at Gibeon, he offers both burnt offerings *and peace offerings* before the Ark in Jerusalem. The same distinction is also carefully observed in David's case (1 Chron. xvi., compare verses 1 and 40). He, too, arranges for burnt offerings at Gibeon, but for burnt offerings *and peace offerings* at Jerusalem. Why is this distinction so carefully observed? The reply will show how fully the Levitical Law was known, and how clearly its provisions were understood, in the days of David and of Solomon. The peace offering included a meal which the offerer partook of *before God*. He was God's guest. He had been reconciled and accepted, and now he was to be privileged to sit at God's table and to eat bread in the Divine presence. It was the rite in the Old Testament dispensation which answered to the Lord's Supper in the New. But this meal could only be eaten where God had specially arranged to meet His people, and that was before the Ark with the

blood-stained mercy-seat. The only place of meeting between God and His people was (and is) the place of accepted atonement. Hence, the necessity for confining the peace offerings to the place where the Ark was. That fact is, in itself, enough to prove the antiquity of the Levitical Law. This distinction, so carefully observed, clearly shows that the Law had then been so long in existence and that everything was so well understood that there was no uncertainty whatever as to the place, the order, and the nature of the sacrifices; and these things were so fully known, too, among all the people for whom these Books were written, that no man required to have it explained why the peace offerings were withheld at Gibeon and were presented in Jerusalem.

CHAPTER V.

WHERE WAS OPHIR?

THERE are several references in the ninth and tenth chapters of 1 Kings to Solomon's fleet, and to the triennial expedition which it made to Ophir. We are told that he "made a navy of ships in Ezion-geber, which is beside Eloth, on the shore of the Red sea, in the land of Edom. And Hiram sent in the navy his servants, shipmen that had knowledge of the sea, with the servants of Solomon. And they came to Ophir, and fetched from thence gold, four hundred and twenty talents, and brought

it to king Solomon" (ix. 26-28). "And the navy also of Hiram that brought gold from Ophir, brought in from Ophir great plenty of almug trees, and precious stones. And the king made of the almug trees pillars for the house of the Lord, and for the king's house, harps also and psalteries for singers: there came no such almug trees, nor were seen unto this day" (x. 11, 12). "And all king Solomon's drinking vessels were of gold, and all the vessels of the house of the forest of Lebanon were of pure gold; none were of silver: it was nothing accounted of in the days of Solomon. For the king had at sea a navy of Tharshish with the navy of Hiram: once in three years came the navy of Tharshish, bringing gold, and silver, ivory, and apes, and peacocks" (verses 21, 22).

These references have, naturally enough, excited curiosity as to the locality of the emporium from which products, that evidently called forth the astonishment of the Israelites of the time, were brought. Armenia has been suggested. Sir Walter Raleigh, who had large experience as a navigator, believed that Ophir was to be found in the Molucca Islands. The claims of Peru have also been advocated. Among more recent writers a diversity of opinion has prevailed, some deciding that Ophir was in Arabia, others have argued for Africa, and a third section have fixed upon India.

This last identification has, in its favour, the support of those who lived some two thousand years nearer to the times of Solomon than they who have rejected the claims of India. Josephus says that Solomon com-

manded his stewards, who were over the fleet, to sail "to the land that was of old called Ophir, but now the Aurea Chersonesus, which belongs to India, to fetch him gold."* The Arabic translator, again, of the Old Testament has rendered Ophir by "India;" and (what is more significant than all besides) the translators of the Greek Version, who did their work in Egypt from 300 to 200 B.C., render the word Ophir by Sophir. But in the Coptic, the representative of the language of ancient Egypt, *Sofir* is the name for India. Learned men, however, whose names ensure at least a respectful hearing for their opinions, have set aside the ancient tradition. Some of them have supported the claims of Arabia. But against this there is the employment of the fleet. If Ophir lay in the Arabian Peninsula, the caravan service, established from the remotest times, would have brought to the land of Israel whatever was desired; and the employment of ships, which must have been provided and maintained at considerable cost, would have been altogether unnecessary. Others advocate the claims of Africa, which has found favour, not only with sedate commentators and geographers, but also with writers of fiction. The three years, however, occupied in the voyage always seemed to be a difficulty in this identification, notwithstanding the contention of Bruce, the renowned traveller, that the laws which regulate the winds in that region quite accounted for the long delay.

But much has happened since the days of Bruce,

* *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book VIII., chapter vi. 4.

and recent research has amply confirmed the ancient tradition. The science of comparative philology, from which little had been heard in Bruce's time, has now practically settled this long-debated question of the locality of Ophir. The various products of that evidently far-off land are named; but the names are not Hebrew words. They are plainly the names by which the articles were known, and by which they were purchased, in the foreign market. Now, if we could ascertain to what language, or languages, these words belong, the information would, undoubtedly, have an important bearing upon this question. And if we further discovered that each word led us, in its turn, to the same region, and that in this very district a place existed, the name of which closely resembles the word Ophir, we should conclude that the question was at last satisfactorily solved.

All this has now been done. We are told that the ships brought with them gold and precious stones, ivory, Algum wood, apes, and peacocks. The word in the original, which is translated "ape," is *kof*, and it belongs to the Sanscrit, the ancient language of India. It is the word *kapi*, *p* and *f* being virtually the same letter in Hebrew. The term has also a meaning in Sanscrit which describes the animal, and which, in this way, proves that it is not itself a borrowed word. It signifies "nimble," "active." "Peacocks" are also named. This, in the Hebrew, is *Tukkiy-yim*, the word in the singular is *Tukki*. In this instance we are led once more to India, not only by the name, but also by that which it indicates. It is only in India that

the peacock is found in a free state, and its name is also a distinctly Indian word. It is found in the Tamil, and in the language of Malabar, in the form of *Tokei*. To-day, in modern Tamil, *tokei* is the name for the peacock's gorgeous tail; but in ancient and classic Tamil the name is applied to the bird itself.

Research has, in like manner, solved for us the problem of the *Almug* (called in Chronicles *Algum*) trees. Various opinions were entertained regarding these. Some believed them to have been pine, others citron, and so on. The word "*Almug*" was the earlier name given by the Israelites to this precious wood; but this was one of those mispronunciations to which foreign terms are frequently exposed. By the time the Book of Chronicles came to be written, the more correct "*Algum*" had supplanted the older "*Almug*." *Valgu* is the Sanscrit name for sandal, or santal, wood—the odoriferous wood which has long been used in India for ornaments, and with which every traveller in India is well acquainted. The Sanscrit *valgu* becomes, in the pronunciation of the Deccan, *valgum*—whence the "*Algum*" of the Bible.* But the most striking indication of the Indian origin of these products is the name for "*ivory*." This article was long known in Egypt. There is an ivory box in the Louvre which bears upon it the name of Nephhercheres, a king who belonged to one of the earliest Egyptian dynasties. Egyptian chariots were inlaid with ivory, and the working in that material ranks among the early arts of the East. The Phœ-

* Lassen. *Indische Alterkunde.*

nician ships had also carried it to Greece and elsewhere almost in the beginning of their commerce. In Psalm xlv. 8, we read of "ivory palaces," and there "ivory" is designated by the word *shen*, "tooth." In the Song of Solomon v. 14, the same word is used. We read also in 1 Kings x. 18 that "The king made a great throne of ivory;" and in xxii. 39, of "the ivory house" which King Ahab made. In these passages, as well as in Ezekiel xxvii. 6, and in Amos iii. 15, &c., ivory is named *shen*. Ezekiel (xxvii. 15) speaks also of "ivory tusks," *karnoth-shen*. But in the two passages (1 Kings x. 22; 2 Chron. ix. 21) which tell us of the ivory brought from Ophir an addition is made to the word. This ivory is called *Shen-Habbim*. This seems, literally, to be "teeth of the elephants." For the *ha* is the Hebrew article "the," and the rest of the word is the Indian name for the elephant *ibha*, with the Hebrew plural ending *im*. Gold and precious stones are also mentioned among the articles imported by the Ophir fleet. India was famed in antiquity for both of these. Strabo, for example, says: "Valuable mines also, both of gold and silver, are situated, it is said, not far off among other mountains, according to the testimony of Gorgus, the miner (of Alexander). The Indians, unacquainted with mining and smelting, are ignorant of their own wealth; and, therefore, traffic with greater simplicity."* And again: † "All the Indians are frugal in their mode of life. . . . In contrast to their parsimony in other things, they

* XV. i. 30.

† *Ibid.*, 53, 54.

indulge in ornament. They wear dresses, worked with gold and precious stones." Heeren doubts the existence of the mines, but he says: "The great quantity of the precious metals, particularly gold, possessed by India, may well excite our attention and surprise. Though it had neither gold nor silver mines, it has always been celebrated, even in the earliest times, for its riches. The Ramayana frequently mentions gold as in abundant circulation throughout the country. And the nuptial present made to Sita, we are told, consisted of a whole measure of gold pieces, and a vast quantity of the same precious metal in ingots. Golden chariots, golden trappings for elephants and horses, and golden bells are also noticed as objects of luxury and magnificence; and it has been already shown, in the course of our inquiries into the ancient Persians, that the Hindus were the only people subject to that empire who paid their tribute in gold and not in silver."*

His testimony regarding the precious stones is equally distinct. "Precious stones," he says, "and pearls, both of them indigenous productions, may be comprised among the most ancient objects of Hindu luxury and, therefore, of commerce; and they are expressly recommended by Menu, together with coral and woven stuffs, as the most important articles on which the Vaisyas were carefully to inform themselves as to price, &c. It would be superfluous to adduce proofs on this head from native works; for,

* *Historical Researches*, vol. ii., p. 268.

even the oldest specimens of Hindu sculpture, found in the rock temples, sufficiently attest it. According to Periplus, precious stones of every kind were brought from the interior to the port of Nelkynda; among these, diamonds and rubies are particularly mentioned." *

All that is now wanting is the name of the place. Is there any trace of an "Ophir" in India? Indian geographers mention a people called Âbhira, who were settled near the mouth of the Indus, a part of the Indian coast most easily accessible to Solomon's ships. Their descendants are found in the same neighbourhood to-day. All these facts have been strongly contested; but, while influential opposition might make us hesitate if only one proof, or two proofs (such as we have now noticed), had to be confronted, it is powerless in the face of this repeated testimony. Max Müller, one of the very highest authorities on Sanscrit, the ancient language of India, which ceased to be spoken as early as 300 B.C., confidently cites this description of the products of Ophir as a convincing proof of the high antiquity of the Sanscrit tongue. "There is no doubt, in fact," he says, "that the people who spoke Sanskrit came into India from the north, and gradually extended their sway to the south and east. Now, at the time of Solomon, it can be proved that Sanskrit was spoken at least as far south as the mouth of the Indus.

"You remember the fleet of Tharshish, which Solomon had at sea, together with the navy of Hiram,

* Page 270.

and which came once in three years, bringing *gold* and *silver*, *ivory*, *apes*, and *peacocks*. The same navy, which was stationed on the shore of the Red Sea, is said to have fetched gold from *Ophir*, and to have brought, likewise, great plenty of *algum*-trees and precious stones from *Ophir*.

“Well, a great deal has been written to find out where this *Ophir* was ; but there can be no doubt that it was in India. The names for *apes*, *peacocks*, *ivory*, and *algum*-trees are foreign words in Hebrew, as much as *gutta-percha* or *tobacco* are in English. Now, if we wished to know from what part of the world *gutta-percha* was first imported into England, we might safely conclude that it came from that country where the name, *gutta-percha*, formed part of the spoken language. If, therefore, we can find a language in which the names for peacock, apes, ivory, and *algum*-tree, which are foreign in Hebrew, are indigenous, we may be certain that the country in which that language was spoken must have been the *Ophir* of the Bible. That language is no other but Sanskrit.” After referring to the words with which we have just dealt, he continues: “All these articles, ivory, gold, apes, peacocks are indigenous in India, though, of course, they might have been found in other countries likewise. Not so the *algum*-tree, at least, if interpreters are right in taking *algum*, or *almug*, for sandal-wood. Sandal-wood is found indigenous on the coast of Malabar only ; and one of its numerous names there, and in Sanskrit, is *valguka*. This *valgū(ka)* is clearly the name which Jewish and Phœnician merchants

corrupted into *algum*, and which, in Hebrew, was further changed into *almug*.

“ Now, the place where the navy of Solomon and Hiram, coming down the Red Sea, would naturally have landed, was the mouth of the Indus. There *gold* and *precious stones* from the north would have been brought down the Indus; and *sandal-wood*, *peacocks* and *apes*, would have been brought from Central and Southern India. In this very locality, Ptolemy (vii. 1) gives us the name of *Abiria*, above Pattalene. In the same locality, Hindu geographers place the people called *Abhira* or *Ābhira*; and in the same neighbourhood, MacMurdo, in his account of the province of Cutch, still knows a race of *Ahirs*, the descendants, in all probability, of the people who sold to Hiram and Solomon their gold and precious stones, their apes, peacocks, and sandal-wood.” *

CHAPTER VI.

TADMOR IN THE WILDERNESS, TIPSAH, AND BAALATH.

WE are told that, among the other great labours which distinguished his reign, Solomon built “Baalath, and Tadmor, in the wilderness in the land” (1. Kings ix. 18). The phrase “in the land” has led some to conclude that the Tadmor, or *Tamar* as the

* *Lectures on the Science of Language* (Second Edition), vol. i., pp. 201-204.

word is in the text, must refer to some place in the land of Israel; and, as there is a city of the same name mentioned in Ezekiel's prophetic description of the future boundaries of the holy land, they believe that this is the Tamar referred to (Ezekiel xlvii. 19). But the words "in the land" would be quite inappropriate if this identification were correct. For that Tamar is on the border of, and not *in*, the land. It may be difficult to interpret the phrase with certainty; but, in view of the vast extent of Solomon's dominion, described in the Book of Kings, it does not seem impossible to attach a significance to it. The great king of Israel ruled over Syria. His dominion extended far to the north, and was bounded on the east only by the Euphrates. Casting the eye across this vast territory, Tadmor was certainly in the land. The two phrases seem also to be full of the usual significance of Scripture. We are told that the city was "in the wilderness." That was one reason why this oasis should be utilised to the utmost; for a resting-place was needed for the important caravans from the East, and for those which were travelling towards these distant markets. The phrase which immediately follows—"in the land"—seems to give a further reason for the erection of the city. The spot was right in the heart of a very important territory. It was separated, on all sides, by a long journey from the cultivated and populous districts of the country. The wilderness hemmed it in everywhere. That wilderness was the abode of the Arab hordes, who regarded the caravans as their lawful

prey. They advanced unhindered, and retreated with their prey unpursued. This presented a problem which no one, with the commercial interests of the country at heart, could fail to grapple with. Solomon solved it by building this strongly-fortified city right in the heart of the land. It paralysed the action of the tribes; and, by its preparedness to succour the caravans and to punish the marauders, it gave new security and confidence to the traders. Few things in Solomon's recorded acts are so striking proofs of his wisdom as the perception, and the prompt seizure, of the advantages presented by the site of the far-famed Palmyra.

The parallel passage in 2 Chronicles viii. 4, leaves no room for doubt that the Scripture here relates the origin of Palmyra. It is there called *Tadmor*, the name by which the city is known to-day in the East, and by which it was known while Greeks and Romans spoke of it as Palmyra. But this Greek name sheds light upon the older Hebrew name in 1 Kings. *Tamar* means a palm-tree. This was, no doubt, the original name of the city; but the local Syrian pronunciation changed *Tamar* into *Thadmor*. The story of the change is told by the place which these two names hold in the Scripture. In the older Book of Kings we find the older and original name. In this later Book of Chronicles, written after the exile for the returned Israelites, the name is used which was current in that later period.

Palmyra lies to the north-east of Damascus, and is equally distant from that ancient city, from the

Euphrates, and from the Mediterranean. It was, as has been already indicated, a master-stroke of wise policy to found a city in this singularly favoured spot. Nothing was more necessary for the general prosperity of the country, and for securing the wealth which Solomon himself required for the accomplishment of his great designs. "The way in which Palmyra would be useful to Solomon," writes the Hon. Edward Twisleton, "in trade between Babylon and the west, is evident from a glance at a good map. By merely following the road up the stream on the right bank of the Euphrates, the traveller goes in a north-westerly direction, and the width of the desert becomes proportionately less, till, at length, from a point on the Euphrates, there are only about 120 miles across the desert to Palmyra, and thence about the same distance across the desert to Damascus. From Damascus there were ultimately two roads into Palestine, one on each side of the Jordan; and there was an easy communication with Tyre by Paneias, or Cæsarea Philippi, now *Banias*." *

What the nature of the desert was, and the necessity for such a resting-place, the following account by a modern traveller will show:—"The Sheikh informed us that the encampment would shortly break up and retire into the interior of the great desert, where they would find an abundant pasturage during the Winter. It must be recollected that the great Syrian desert and its borders are not a bare wide waste of sand, like the great African desert. The application of the term

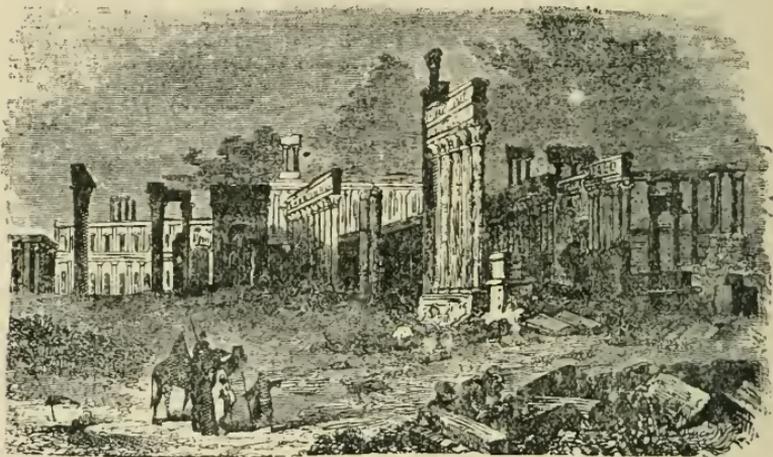
* *Smith's Bible Dictionary*, Art. Tadmor.

desert must be confined to deserted of settled inhabitants, towns, villages, and houses, and peopled only by roving pastoral tribes. Instead of sand, the uninhabited district we have hitherto passed through consists of a fine black soil, covered with long, burnt up, rank grass and herbs, and peopled by antelopes, wild asses, and wild boars, who search out the thinly-scattered spots where water is to be found. The same description of country, we are told, continues the whole way to Palmyra, which is seated on the edge of the great desert, the flat level surface of which is, likewise, covered with vegetation. In the interior, sandy districts are met with; but even there a scanty herbage is to be found. This vegetation is propagated in the following manner:—

“In the Summer the soil is parched and cracked into innumerable fissures by the burning rays of the sun, the herbage and vegetation are all killed; but having previously come to maturity and scattered their seed upon the ground, no sooner do the Winter rains commence than the dry grass is beaten down and rotted, and the seeds, moistened by the abundant and copious wet, sprout up with astonishing luxuriance: and no more striking and delightful contrast can be presented to the eye than the appearance of these vast plains, changed from the dusty, white, arid look which they wore when we saw them in the Autumn, to the verdant carpeting of green, variegated by flowers, which they present in the Spring. In the Summer the Bedouin herds and camels feed upon the dry dead herbage, and are obliged to congregate in the vicinity of pools and

wells; but in the Winter the Bedouin spread themselves over the wide surface of the desert, and make long journeys with their flocks and herds, which no longer require water, the plants being juicy and full of sap. They pack water-skins on their dromedaries, to serve in case of necessity, and themselves subsist sometimes for weeks on milk, which is their only drink, and is abundant and delicious.” *

A greater contrast is seldom found than is met with



RUINS OF PALMYRA.

in Palmyra and this surrounding wilderness. It was described by Pliny, as “remarkable for its situation, its rich soil, and pleasant streams.” The remains which survive do not go farther back than the Greek and Roman periods; but the consistent testimony of antiquity compels us to assign to it a much more ancient origin. It still bears the ancient Scripture

* Charles G. Addison. *Damascus and Palmyra*, vol. ii., pp. 216-218.

name, and tradition still assigns its existence to the great master-builder of Israelitish antiquity.

“It is interesting,” writes the author we have just quoted, “to observe this strong retention of ancient names, as well as of manners and customs among the Arabs at this present day; the whole of this district, covered with ruins, being called Tadmor, and also the little village inclosed in the citadel, formerly occupied by the great Temple of the Sun, and known by them by no other name. It is a prevalent notion, too, among the Arabs, that the wonderful buildings and ruins on this spot, as well as of those at Baalbec, were the work of ‘Soleimaunin, Ibn el Daoud,’—‘Solomon, the son of David,’ the great magician and the great prince. The city,” they add, “was destroyed because of the wickedness of the people. . . The astonishment that takes hold of the mind at the strange position of this magnificent city, at one time the capital of the East, on the edge of the great desert, and surrounded for several days’ journey, on all sides, by naked solitary wilds, is removed by marking well the peculiarity of its geographical position. The great caravans coming to Europe, laden with the rich merchandize of India, would naturally come along the Persian gulf, through the south of Persia, to the Euphrates, the direct line; their object then would be to strike across the great Syrian desert as early as possible to reach the large markets and ports of Syria. With more than 600 miles of desert, without water between the mouth of the Euphrates and Syria, they would, naturally, be obliged to keep along the banks of that river, until the extent

of desert country became diminished. They would then find the copious springs of Tadmor the nearest



and most convenient to make for: and in their direct route from the north of India, along the Euphrates. These springs would then immediately become most

important, and would naturally attract the attention of a wise prince like Solomon, who would 'fence them with strong walls.' Here the caravans would rest and take in water, here would congregate the merchants from adjacent countries and Europe, and from hence the great caravans would be divided into numerous branches, to the north, south, and west. A large mart, for the exchange of commodities, would be established, and an important city would quickly arise."*

To understand the importance of Palmyra to Solomon, we have to recall what we are told in 1 Kings iv. 24. There we read that Solomon "had dominion over all the region on this side the river (that is, the Euphrates), from Tiphseh even to Azzah, over all the kings on this side the river." "Azzah" is Gaza, the border city of Palestine on the Egyptian side. Tiphseh is the ancient Thapsacus, on the Euphrates, the long-lost site of which was recovered by the Euphrates Expedition. The reader will note in the map on the opposite page the position of *Suriyeh* (the modern representative of the ancient city) marked with a cross. It will be found on the 36th parallel of latitude, near the right-hand end of the line. The Euphrates, in this part of its upper course, turns sharply from the southern course which it has hitherto pursued, and runs almost direct east for about 75 miles. Situated about the middle of this bend lies all that remains of the ancient city. "On the evening of May 9th," says Ainsworth, "the steamer dropped down the river, free of the woods,

* *Ibid*, pp. 255-258.

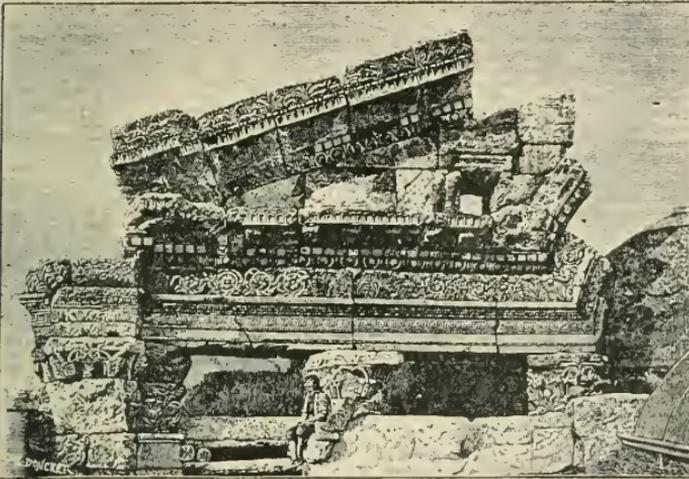
and brought to along gravelly banks, in the holes of which the Nubian geese were, at this season of the year, nestling. At this point some brick ruins were met with, on a projecting headland, and beyond these, long lines of mounds of debris, enclosing hewn stones and kiln-dried bricks, were all that remained of the once renowned city of Thipsach or Thapsacus, from whence Solomon held dominion over all the regions on this side the river, even to Azzah (1. Kings iv. 24). This Thipsach, 'a pass or ford,' of the Hebrews, became the Thapsacus of the Greeks and the Romans."*

The Hebrew word, as Ainsworth here remarks, means "pass or ford." It is connected with the verb *pasach*, "to pass over," from which also comes the well-known *Pesach*, or "Passover." The Euphrates is fordable a little east of the city, and is fordable at no other point throughout its course. The waters, owing to the nature of the river-bed, stretch out till the river becomes like a lake, with a depth of 18 or 20 inches. The river, at the ford, is about 800 yards across. To this point the caravans from east, and south, and west, made their way apparently from the birth of Asiatic commerce. In the course of time, arrangements were made which added to the facilities afforded by nature. A bridge of boats spanned the noble breadth of the river. These were moored, for greater security, to masonry sunk in the bed of the river. Solidly-built causeways also led to and from the crossing. "Landing on the right bank," says Ainsworth, "we soon found traces of an ancient paved causeway, which

* *The Euphrates Expedition*, vol. i., pp. 274, 275.

led from the city to where was the ford, and was continued on the other side. We also found pieces of solid masonry in the bed of the river, so that there had evidently been a bridge of boats here in olden times. The Arabs call them *Rasasah*, because the fastenings of the bridge to the piers were clamped with lead.

“The causeway at Thapsacus,” he continues, “is

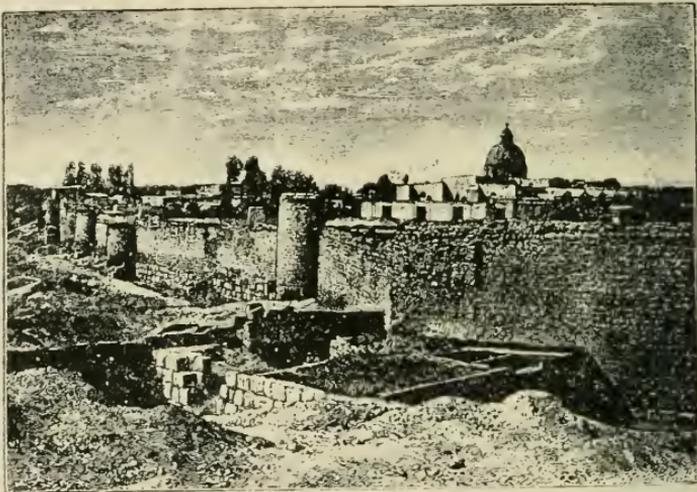


THE TRIUMPHAL ARCH AT DAMASCUS.

of great antiquity. It is marked on the Augustan and Theodosian Tables, and was carried all the way from Auranitis, by Palmyra, Resapha, and Sura (Thapsacus) to Carrhae or Haran, and Edessa. . . Pliny describes this magnificent reach of the Euphrates as one where the wayfarer quitted the Palmyrean solitudes for fertile Mygdonia; and, no doubt, in ancient times the long tract of fertile land now covered with brushwood, and

which stretches from Thapsacus to Nicephorium, 'the city of victory,' of the Macedonians; Callinicus, one day's journey from Danana, of Julian; and the Rakka of Harun al Rashid, was one continuous garden, as, like the 'paradise of Balis,' it might again be under a stable government."

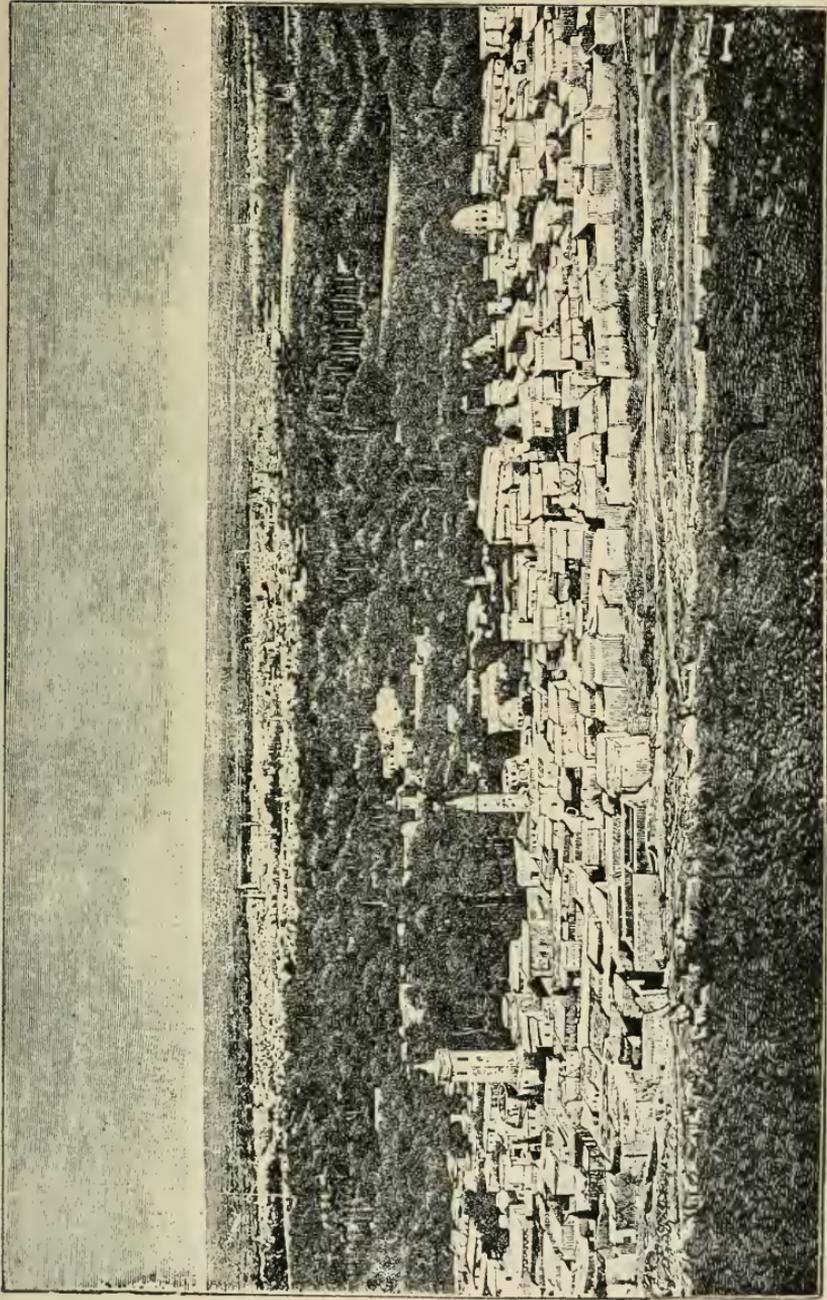
"Solomon appears to have founded," he adds, "or obtained possession of, 'Thipsach,' the ford, in con-



PART OF THE WALL AT DAMASCUS.

nection with the series of operations of which the building or fortification of Tadmor, at a spring in the desert, was one, adopted with the view of drawing the eastern trade from Mesopotamia on the one side, and from Babylonia on the other, to his own dominions, and the Romans brought the same lines of communication to a higher degree of perfection."*

* *Ibid.*, pp. 275-277.



DAMASCUS.

The reader will notice that Palmyra lies south-west from Thapsacus or Tiphseh, and the question may occur to him why a point was not chosen more directly in the route between Tiphseh and the Mediterranean. One evident reply to that is that the great natural advantage of Palmyra, in the possession of water, determined the site of the central city. Another lies in the fact that a most important branch of the trade passed through Damascus, and thence to Palestine, Moab, Edom, and Egypt. But there was a third and most important reason for the choice. The caravans, as has been already remarked, were regarded as the natural prey of the wandering Arabs of the Syrian desert. Thadmor or Palmyra, with its strong garrison of daring and disciplined troops, placed in the very heart of the desert, took the marauders in the rear, cut off their retreat into the depths of the wilderness, and made it no longer profitable or safe to pursue the old career of plunder. The very possession of the place also was a check upon the aggressions of the Arab tribes. The possession of the place had also a further advantage. Dr. Jessup, speaking of the fountain of Palmyra, says:—"It is now resorted to in the Summer by the Bedawin Arabs, of whom no less than twenty thousand are often encamped here at once. It is so necessary to the 'Anâzeh, that the rulers of Syria, in different ages, have found its possession to be a guarantee of subjection on the part of these lords of the desert."*

This connection of Tadmor with Tiphseh sheds a

* *Picturesque Palestine*, vol. ii., p. 204.

still brighter light on the greatness of Solomon's kingdom, and the vast scale of his operations. It also carries with it a heavy rebuke to the concealed, but, nevertheless, mischievously operative, unbelief of even orthodox modern scholarship. The Scripture references to Solomon's greatness have been steadily discounted, and attempts have been made to bring cities and places referred to within the narrow limits proper to a minor Syrian power like Israel. It might be too much to say that this tendency has shown itself in the remarks generally made about Baalath, the city linked with Tadmor in the statement that Solomon built "Baalath and Tadmor in the wilderness in the land" (1. Kings ix. 18). For the identification of Baalath with Baalbek admits, at first sight, of grave doubt. The place is mentioned in Joshua as among the cities assigned to Dan: "And Eltekeh, and Gibbethon, and Baalath" (xix. 44). This is, not unnaturally, supposed to prove that Baalath must be somewhere in the Danite territory in the south-west of Palestine. But may not the note appended to the enumeration of the cities have some bearing upon the matter? We read in verses 47 and 48: "And the coast of the children of Dan went out too little for them: therefore the children of Dan went up to fight against Leshem, and took it, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and possessed it . . . and called Leshem, Dan, after the name of Dan their father. This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Dan according to their families, these cities with their villages." This may be only, indeed, an

explanation of the addition which is made to the list of this supplementary city Dan; but it undoubtedly proves that the northern settlements of the tribe are in the view of this part of the Scripture. All the land had been divided before the Danites realized that they had no room to dwell. There was nothing left for them, then, but to send their surplus population to the extreme north—beyond the other tribal settlements; and it may be that a Baalath in the Lebanon had been taken by them, as well as Dan. Certain it is, that there has been no satisfactory identification of a city of this name with any place in the Danite territory in the south-west of Palestine; and no spot there has been pointed out which is of such strategical or commercial importance as would justify any special effort, on the part of a ruler like Solomon, for its construction or its fortification.

The difference, too, between the names Baalath and Baalbek is no bar to the identification. *Baalath* means Baal's, that is, belonging to Baal; and *Baalbek* means Baal's valley, or plain. *Bek'a*, or *buk'ah*, is in fact, the name applied to the district, and *Baalbek* is simply Baal's valley. It is so joined in 1 Kings ix. 18 with Tadmor, that it seems to be regarded as a companion city; and a glance at the position of the city now known as Baalbek at once strongly suggests that it was needful to the plan which embraced in its scope Tadmor and Tiphseh. "Let anyone ride," says Dr. Thomson, "from Baalbek northward to Lebweh or 'Ain, or, better still, to Kamua Hermel, and look off toward Hamath, and he will be struck with the

propriety of the phrase, 'Entrance into Hamath.' From this standpoint the *valley* of the Buk'ah opens out like a vast fan on to the great plain of Northern Syria, and he is at the gate of the kingdom."* Situated in the valley of the Lebanon, and in the pass between the two Syrias, it was most closely associated with the traffic which Solomon desired to foster. The commerce from Tyre, Palmyra, and the East passed through it; and the returning caravans rested there, displayed their treasures, and bought the provisions and engaged the assistance which they required for the southern and eastern journeys. It could hardly, therefore, have been overlooked by the wise king of Israel. This has weighed with Guerrin, for example, who regards this identification with favour. And if we add to these considerations the constant and universal eastern tradition, the presumption is certainly increased that Baalath is Baalbek. Dr. Jessup, while not deciding for the identification (though admitting that it is "a favourite view"), says: "Yet an Arab would as soon doubt that Noah built the Ark as that Solomon built Ba'albek. The voice of Syrian tradition, among all sects and in every district, is that Solomon built the cyclopean walls of Ba'albek, assisted by the Genii, who were under his control."† Addison, an earlier traveller, was struck, as we have already seen, with the unanimity and the fervour of this native testimony. I have already quoted his words: "It is a prevalent notion, too, among the Arabs that the wonderful buildings and

* *The Land and the Book*, p. 234. † *Picturesque Palestine*, vol. ii., p. 232.

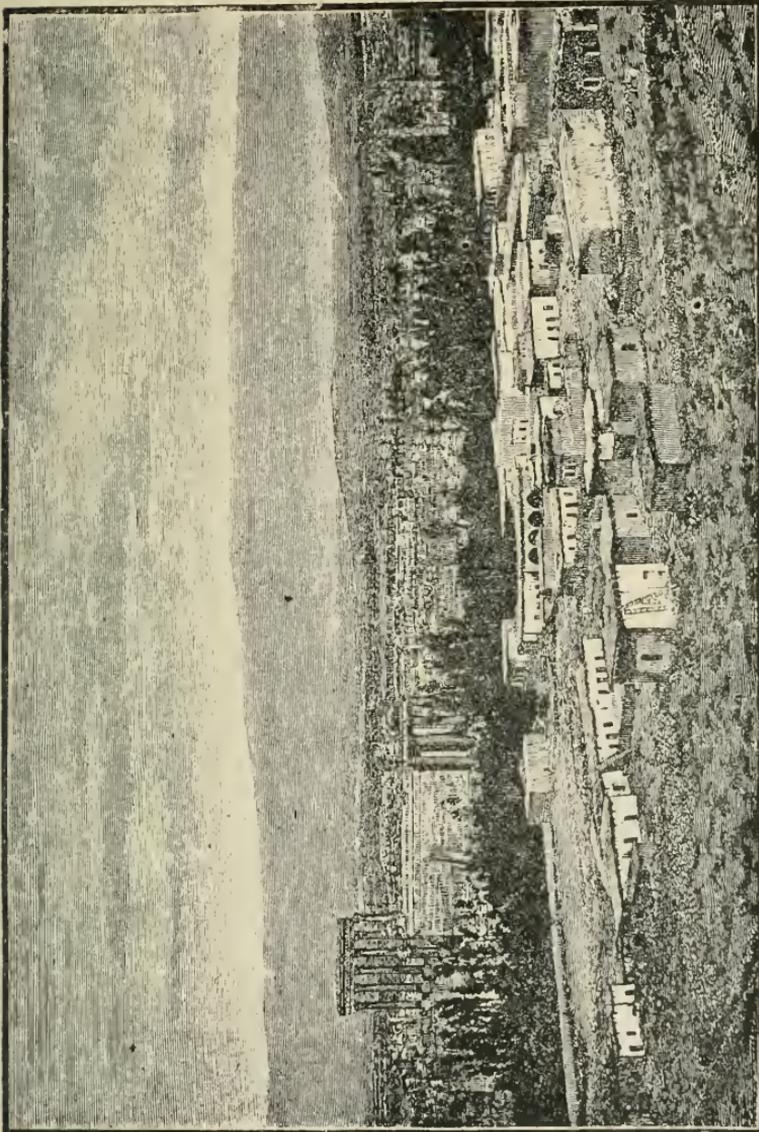
ruins on this spot, *as well as of those at Baalbek*, were the work," of Solomon. The two places, sundered sufficiently far apart, and with apparently nothing else to connect them together, have thus been bound together in the eastern mind. Can anything explain this, or account for this persistent and unanimous ascription to Solomon of the building of Baalbek, if he had nothing to do with the erection of what Gibbon well describes as "the capital" of the Syrian valley?

Baalbek retained its importance down to the eighth century of our era. Oriental writers speak of it "as one of the most splendid of Syrian cities, enriched with stately palaces, adorned with monuments of ancient times, and abounding with trees, fountains, and whatever contributes to luxurious enjoyment. . . . After the capture of Damascus it was regularly invested by the Moslems, and—containing an overflowing population, amply supplied with provisions and military stores—it made a courageous defence, but at length capitulated. Its importance at that period is attested by the ransom exacted by the conquerors, consisting of 2,000 ounces of gold, 4,000 ounces of silver, 2,000 silk vests, and 1,000 swords, together with the arms of the garrison. It afterwards became the mart for the rich pillage of Syria."* In 748 A.D., however, it received a blow, in its capture by the Khalif of Damascus, from which it never recovered. It seems to have steadily declined till it became the wretched village that it is to-day.

Its remains, however, still testify to its ancient

* Dr. Kitto. *Cyclopædia of Biblical Literature*, vol. i., pp. 264, 265.

greatness, and even suggest its Solomonic origin.



RUINS OF BAALBEK

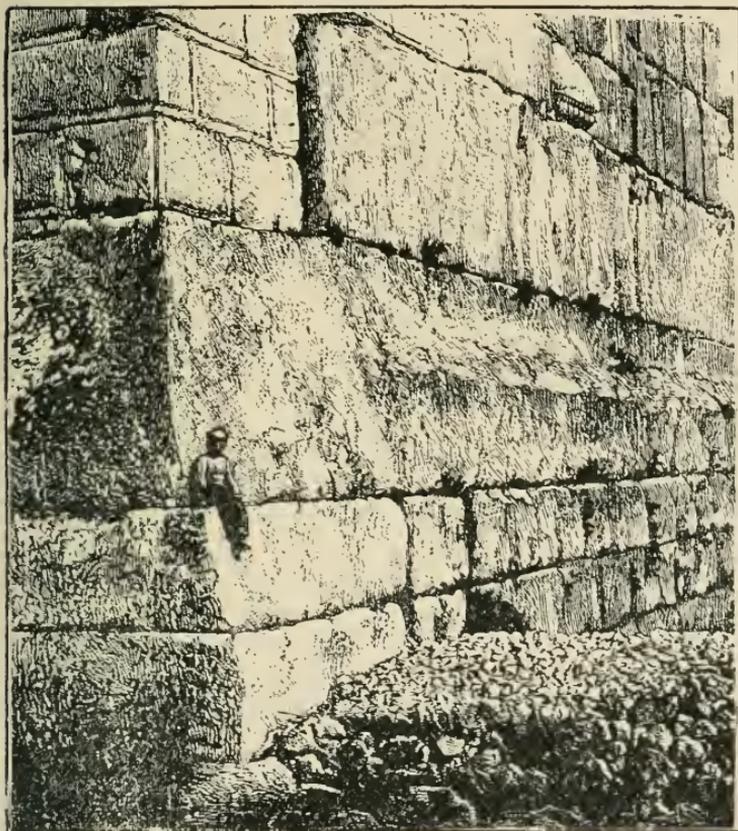
“The ruins at Baalbek in the mass are apparently of

three successive eras: first, the gigantic hewn stones, in the face of the platform or basement on which the Temple stands, and which appear to be remains of older buildings. . . . Among these there are at least twenty standing upon a pavement of rough stones, which would be called enormous anywhere but here. These celebrated blocks, which, in fact, form the great wonder of the place, vary from thirty to forty feet in length; but there are three, forming an upper course twenty feet from the ground, which together measure 190 feet, being severally of the enormous dimensions of sixty-three and sixty-four feet in length, by twelve in breadth and thickness. 'They are,' says Richter, 'the largest stones I have ever seen, and might of themselves have easily given rise to the popular opinion that Baalbek was built by angels at the command of Solomon. The whole wall, indeed, is composed of immense stones, and its resemblance to the remains of the Temple of Solomon, which are still shown in the foundation of the mosque Es-Sak-kara on Mount Moriah, cannot fail to be observed.' *

Whatever may be the ultimate decision with regard to Baalath, we are distinctly told that Solomon built store cities in Hamath (II. Chron. viii. 4)—the very region in which Baalbek is situated, and he could hardly have neglected so important a depôt as this. But that which is thoroughly incontrovertible is quite enough to show that, in laying his hand upon Thapsacus, Palmyra, and the store cities of Hamath, Solomon has left for all after ages a signal proof of

* *Ibid.*, p. 265.

that wisdom which the Scripture has so largely ascribed to him, and also of the wide dominion and the abounding prosperity which it tells us marked his memorable reign. These things speak with as loud a



WALLS OF THE ACROPOLIS AT BAALBEK.

voice, indeed, as the sub-structures of the Temple area. And here, therefore, in this account of Israel's early glory, we are once more assured that the Scripture contains neither legend nor fiction, but veritable

history. It makes a vanished past still live for us; and, seen in this clear mirror of the Word of God, it lays its lessons upon our heart, and serves us as, perhaps, it did not serve the people of the time. We shall yet bless God for the Books which unbelief has so often threatened to destroy; but which, like the rest of the Scriptures, live and abide for ever.

CHAPTER VII.

REHOBAM AND SHISHAK.

THE great kingdom, founded by David, and so splendidly organized by Solomon, was suddenly dissolved. The funeral solemnities of the great king had hardly concluded, when the Israelitish dominion was stabbed to the heart, and when its grasp over that vast extent of territory was instantly relaxed. The tribes had assembled at Shechem to place Rehoboam upon the vacant throne. Israel had never before known such prosperity as had sprung up during the great king's reign. Wealth poured in from every side. But the brightness was not without its shadows. Power had become more and more centralized in Jerusalem. A rigid organization laid its iron hand upon everything. Officials took the place of the chiefs. The old immemorial prestige of the nobles had been eclipsed, and to some extent also the liberties of the people had been infringed. The

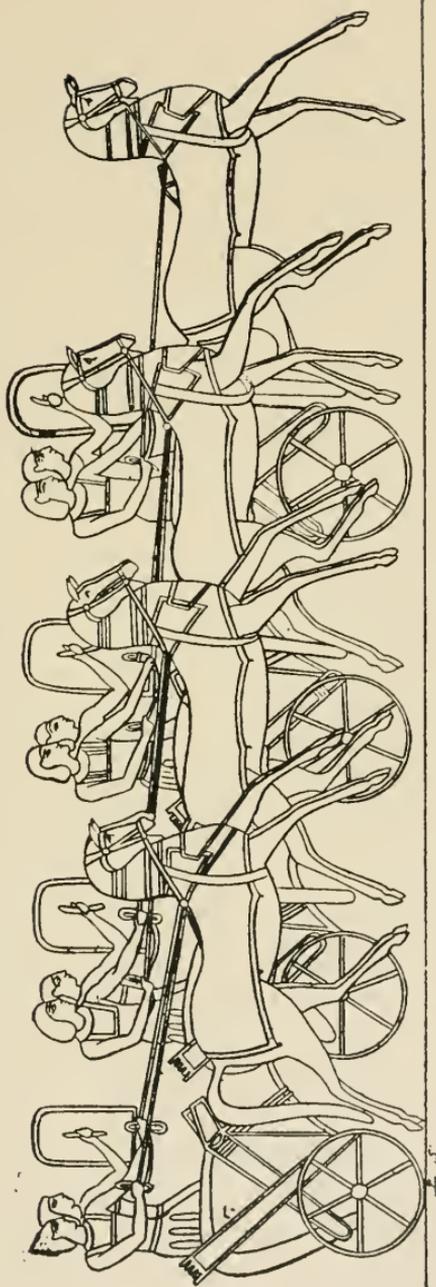
increased wealth did not soothe the irritation: the self-importance, which that wealth fostered, increased it. "Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked."

A movement spread like wildfire among the assembled tribes, and resulted in a unanimous demand for the relaxing of the galling yoke. But the spirit of haughty self-importance was not confined to the people. It was equally rampant at the Court. The younger courtiers, who had tasted of the intoxicating cup of an absolute control, resented hotly these symptoms of rising insubordination. The older statesmen, indeed, had counselled Rehoboam to stoop and conquer. "They spake unto him, saying, If thou wilt be a servant unto this people this day, and wilt serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, they will be thy servants for ever" (1. Kings xii. 7). But to be gracious in the face of that impeachment of his father's reign, suited neither his pride nor his not unnatural indignation. He sought other and more agreeable counsel. He "consulted with the young men that were grown up with him, and who stood before him: And he said unto them, What counsel give ye that we may answer this people, who have spoken to me, saying, Make the yoke which thy father did put upon us lighter? And the young men that were grown up with him spake unto him, saying, Thus shalt thou speak unto this people that spake unto thee, saying, Thy father made our yoke heavy, but make thou it lighter unto us; thus shalt thou say unto them, My little finger shall be thicker than my father's loins. And now whereas my father did lade

you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke: my father hath chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions" (verses 8-11).

This counsel was followed, with the result that Rehoboam became an enduring monument of kingly folly. The flames, which the young men imagined that the new kingdom was so easily able to stamp out, shot up and consumed it. Jeroboam, who headed the revolt, was made king over the ten northern tribes, and Rehoboam was left with Judah and Benjamin. Archæology, which has nothing to say regarding these internal Israelitish politics, has much to tell us regarding some of their immediate consequences. Solomon had allied himself by marriage with one of the last Egyptian kings belonging to the twenty-first dynasty. That dynasty, the seat of which was at Tanis, in the Delta, was short-lived. It had come to an end before the death of Solomon; for in his declining days, Jeroboam, a fugitive from his vengeance, was welcomed at the Court of Sheshonq, or Shishak, of Bubastis, the founder of the twenty-second dynasty. It was to be expected that, when Jeroboam returned to head the revolt of the ten tribes, his former host should take a lively interest in what was transpiring in the great kingdom which lay upon his eastern border. Nor was it surprising that Jeroboam, who it is evident was one of the astutest statesmen of the time, should make the best use he could of the friendship and the inclinations of the Egyptian king. It was of the utmost importance to him that Rehoboam's power should be effectually broken, and that he

should thus be left in peace to organize his new kingdom and to establish his authority. Shishak was accordingly stimulated to attack the southern kingdom. "And it came to pass that, in the fifth year of king Rehoboam, Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem . . . with 1,200 chariots and 60,000 horsemen: and the people were without number that came with him out of Egypt; the Lubims, the Sukkiims, and the Ethiopians. And he took the fenced cities which pertained to Judah, and came to



EGYPTIAN CHARIOTS.

Jerusalem" (II. Chron. xii. 2-4). While the mighty host of the Egyptians lay encamped upon the hills and in the valleys surrounding Jerusalem, Shemaiah the prophet was sent to Rehoboam with the message: "Thus saith the Lord, Ye have forsaken Me, and therefore have I also left you in the hand of Shishak" (verse 5). Happily, recent events had taught king and nobles wisdom. "Whereupon the princes of Israel and the king humbled themselves; and they said, The Lord is righteous. And when the Lord saw that they humbled themselves, the word of the Lord came to Shemaiah, saying, They have humbled themselves; therefore I will not destroy them, but I will grant them some deliverance; and My wrath shall not be poured out upon Jerusalem by the hand of Shishak. Nevertheless they shall be his servants; that they may know My service, and the service of the kingdoms of the countries. So Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem, and took away the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king's house; he took all: he carried away also the shields of gold which Solomon had made" (verses 6-9).

This is the first king of Egypt whose *name* is met with in the Scripture. He is spoken of, not as Pharaoh, the customary title of the Egyptian kings, but as "Shishak." The reason for this may be the recent changes in the government of Egypt, and that Shishak became the founder of a new dynasty. But, very probably, we have here the usual clear and sharp reflection of the times. Shishak of Bubastis had

munication to "The Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archæology," has pointed out that the name "Pharaoh" appears on the monuments as the constant title of the Egyptian kings *only in the records of the 18th dynasty*. It also appears alone; the name of the individual king is not added to this common title. After that time the practice is changed. We have, then, the name of the Pharaoh added to this general title.

This announcement has fallen with startling effect upon current theories. When would a writer use the title Pharaoh for one Egyptian king and another without, in a single instance, adding the name of the particular king? According to this, that would happen only in the 18th dynasty. But, while the later Scriptures give (as here) the name of the kings, the Pentateuch never names them. This feature is accordingly in perfect accord with the Scripture claim that the Pentateuch was written by Moses, a writer who lived under that 18th dynasty, and for a people who also had lived under the same monarchs. But, apart from this explanation, the fact that the Scripture has named Shishak has had most important results, both for Egyptology and for the confirmation of the Bible.

"On the 23rd November, 1828," says Vigouroux, "Champollion the younger, our great French Egyptologist, ascended the Nile. He landed one evening at sunset, to throw a glance for an hour or two on the ruins of Karnak. Towards the southern extremity of the wall of the great temple he stopped before

the image of a Pharaoh who, with uplifted arm, was represented as smiting some prisoners who were kneeling before him. Behind these was arrayed a long procession of a hundred and fifty personages, bearded, and therefore not Egyptians, half hidden by cartouches covered with inscriptions. When our learned fellow-countryman came to the twenty-ninth of these one hundred and fifty personages, he read: *Yutaha Melek*, 'the king of Judah!' One can easily imagine with what emotion he read these simple words. The Egyptian monarch who had inscribed his exploits upon this wall was Shishak. The Jewish king who was represented there under his eyes, must then be Rehoboam, the son of Solomon. Champollion had just discovered, upon the soil of Egypt, the confirmation of the 14th chapter of 1 Kings and of the 12th chapter of 2 Chronicles."*

This was the first direct confirmation of the Scriptures furnished by the new science of Egyptology, which Champollion had founded; and it was long notable as the only place in the Egyptian monuments where the Israelites were referred to by name. It is no longer the only instance, for a recent discovery has shown that Minephtah, the son of Rameses II., had named them at a much earlier period. But the discovery had important consequences for Egyptology, as well as for the evidences of Scripture. It is well known that this science has been greatly hindered by an almost entire absence of chronological *data*. The Egyptologists had, and to

* *La Bible et les Decouvertes Modernes*, vol. iii., p. 410.

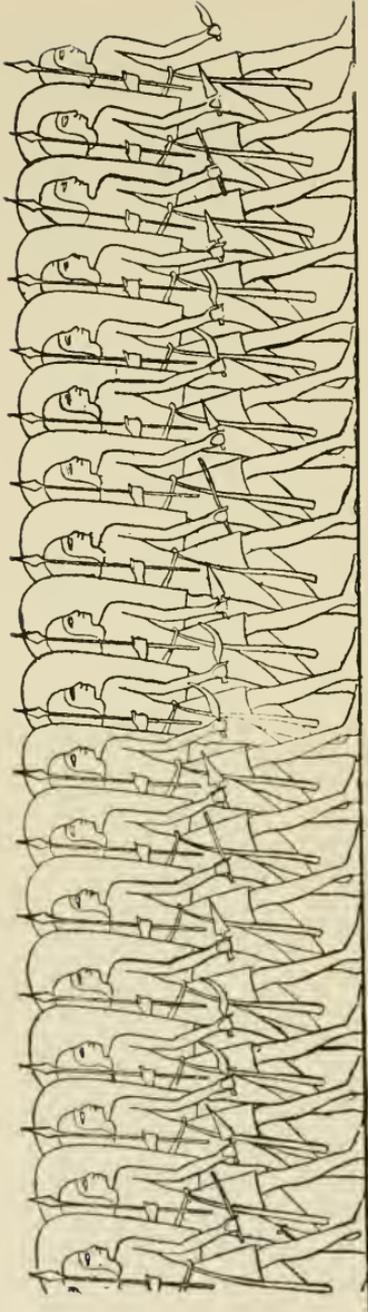
a large extent they still have, no chronology. Here, then, was a fixed point—the fifth year of Rehoboam (B.C. 971)—from which they could work upwards and work downwards in fixing dates for events and reigns in Egyptian history. Its effect also upon really scientific opinion of the value of the Scripture history—that of the Books of Chronicles included—was equally marked. The higher criticism, enamoured of Bible-dishonouring theories, perpetually finds in the Books of Chronicles stones of stumbling and rocks of offence. The real objection is not their alleged unhistorical character, but the utter impossibility of making these Books fall into line with critical hypotheses as to the late origin of the law, of the sacrificial regulations, and of the Aaronic priesthood. But the disciples of genuine science know when their feet rest upon the solid ground of fact, and freely confess its value; and here was a startling proof that Chronicles was history.

Since Champollion's discovery, light has fallen abundantly upon Shishak's history. The kings at Thebes, in the south of Egypt, had been unable to resist the encroachments of the priesthood. One part of the royal authority was snatched away from them after another, till little was left with the descendant of the Pharaohs but the name. He reigned nominally, but all his functions were exercised by the high-priest of Amon. Meanwhile, a new dynasty arose in the north of Egypt, in the upper part of the Delta. Its seat was at Tanis, the ancient capital of the Pharaoh of the Exodus. These northern kings succeeded, after

a long struggle, in establishing their authority over the whole of Egypt. "Their actual domain," says Maspero, "barely extended as far as Siut, but their suzerainty was acknowledged by the Saïd, as well as by all or part of Ethiopia, and the Tanite Pharaohs maintained their authority with such vigour, that they had it in their power on several occasions to expel the high-priests of Amon, and to restore, at least for a time, the unity of the empire" *

A Lybian soldier of fortune founded a family in Bubastis on the confines of the land of Goshen, the ancient abode of Israel. The family gradually grew in importance, its head being appointed to one high office after another. Shishak, who inherited the wealth and the honours of his fathers, seems to have been accorded the title of king even during the life-time of the last of the Pharaohs who ruled at Tanis. He had strengthened himself by marriages with the royal and the priestly houses of the south of Egypt; and, when the Pharaoh died, he seized the throne. It was at his court Jeroboam had found an asylum, and he it was who now responded to Jeroboam's call and seized the opportunity for imposing his yoke upon what remained to Rehoboam of the kingdom of Solomon. We have already noted that 2 Chron. xii. 2-9 gives the number of Shishak's forces. There were "1,200 chariots, 60,000 horsemen, and people without number." These numbers are said to be "obviously exaggerated," why, we can hardly say. 1,200 chariots formed by no means an unusual force for an Egyptian king, nor can there

* *The Struggle of the Nations*, pp. 758, 759.

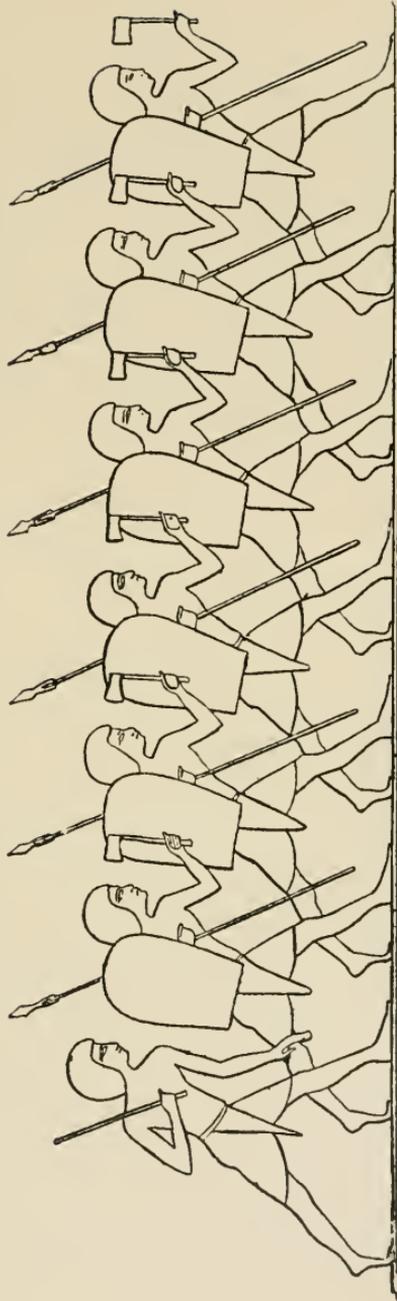


EGYPTIAN INFANTRY, ARMED WITH SPEAR AND DAGGER.

be much room for legendary amplification in the 60,000 horsemen. The only apparent ground for the charge is the statement that he was accompanied by "people without number." But, fortunately, the Book of Chronicles adds a statement as to the composition of this force. It names three nationalities from which it was drawn. These were "the Lubims, the Sukkiims, and the Ethiopians" (v. 3). Were these peoples in actual connection with the Egypt of the time? And were they likely to form part of the Egyptian army?

The *Sukkiyim*, who are mentioned here, are nowhere besides referred to in the

Bible. The Septuagint translation, made by men in the third century before our era, who were acquainted with the Egyptian geographical names, indicates that these were the inhabitants of the western coasts of the Arabian gulf, or the Red Sea. This, we know, was a district certainly under the control of Shishak. As to the Ethiopians, the reader will remember Maspero's statement, just quoted, that the suzerainty of the Tanite kings (to whose power Shishak succeeded, and which he, no doubt, extended) "was acknowledged by all, or part, of



EGYPTIAN INFANTRY CHARGING WITH SPEAR AND HATCHET.

Ethiopia." But the accuracy of the Scripture account is still more amply vindicated in the reference to the *Lubim*. These are the Lybians, a people situated to the west of Lower, or Northern, Egypt. They are named first as the chief and largest part of the invading army. We now know that large numbers of this warlike people had been brought into Egypt by the dynasty which Shishak supplanted. They were the main reliance of the Tanite kings.



EGYPTIAN SOLDIER STABBING AN ENEMY.

Shishak himself belonged to them, and it was by their means that he had climbed into power, and was at length enabled to seize the sovereignty.

Referring to this revolution, Mas-

pero says: "It would perhaps be more correct to say that it (Egypt) *had fallen a prey to the Lybians only*. . . The Lybians had replaced the Shardana in all the offices they had filled, and in all the garrison towns they had occupied. . . Egypt was thus *slowly flooded by Lybians*; it was a gradual invasion which succeeded by pacific means where brute force had failed."* But all this is reflected in this very description of the Egyptian

* *Ibid*, pp. 766, 767

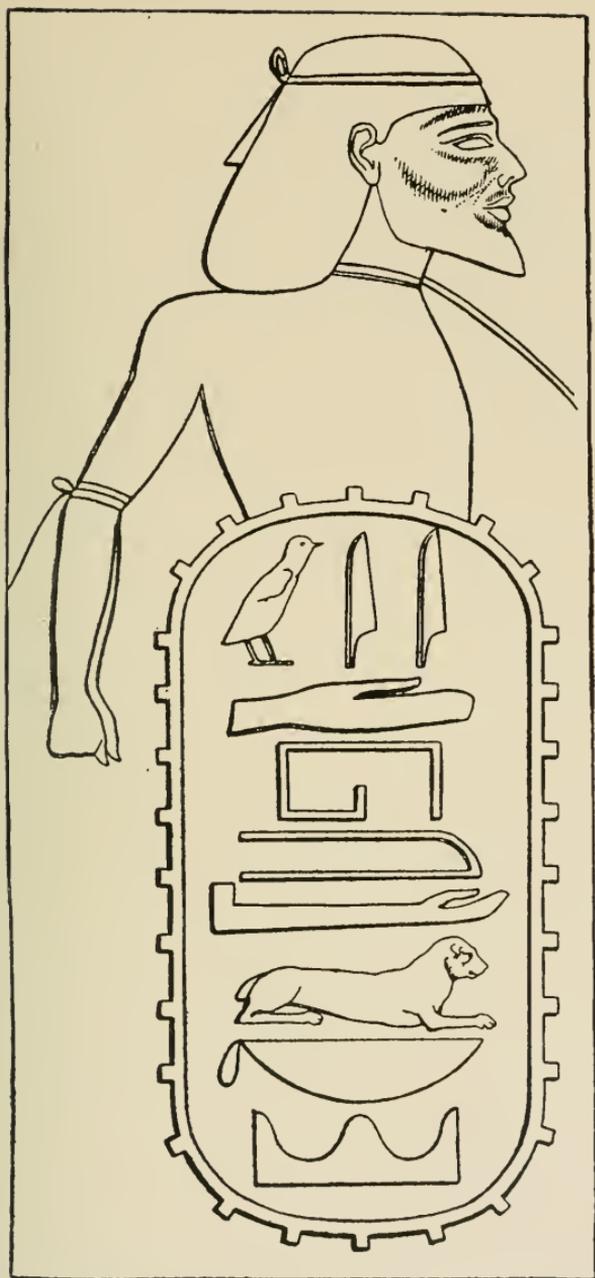
force! The Lybians are first: they are the leaders of the host, or at least, its most important section.

But the full information and minute accuracy of the Chronicles as to an event which occurred quite five centuries before the Books were written, is also strikingly shown by an omission. *Where are the Egyptians?* We look over this enumeration of the peoples, but we fail to find any mention of *them*. When we turn to the monuments of Egypt we discover the explanation. Maspero says that even under the Ramessides—the preceding dynasties—the purely Egyptian part of “the native militia, without exception, were reduced to a mere rabble.” “The chariotry,” he says, “had not degenerated in the same way. . . . But it was the mercenaries who constituted the most active and effective section of the Pharaonic armies. These troops formed the backbone on which all the other elements—chariots, spearmen, and native archers—were dependent.” As time went on, this tendency to rely upon the foreign troops increased, and it had been specially accentuated by Shishak’s immediate predecessors. “The Tanite kings,” I again quote from Maspero, “enrolled these mercenaries in large numbers; they entrusted them with the garrisoning of the principal towns, and confirmed the privileges which their chiefs had received from the Ramessides, but the results of such a policy were not long in manifesting themselves, and this state of affairs had not been barely a century in existence before Egypt became a prey to the barbarians.”* Under

* Page 765.

Shishak, therefore, the king who owed his power to the barbarians, this element would be made more prominent than ever. The last thing he must have desired was to recall the martial spirit of the ancient Egyptians. He put his trust in the barbarians who from west, and south, and east must have responded enthusiastically to his call when he resolved to invade Judah. All this can be seen, not only in the enumeration of the nations which constituted the host, but also in the statement that "the people were without number" (verse 3). And yet critics talk of the Books of Chronicles as "unhistorical!"

A still closer study of the accounts in Kings and Chronicles of this invasion deepens these impressions. What was supposed by Champollion, and by many besides, to be a portrait of Rehoboam, will be found upon the opposite page. Opinion to-day regards it as a symbolical representation of a Jewish town, or of the Jewish kingdom. There is one thing in the inscription which favours the latter view. The reader will notice the sign at the bottom of the shield or envelope (*cartouche*). Those three peaks are the indication that the name of a foreign and mountainous country stands above them. Now, to read this name, we begin at the top, and at the right of the top line, and go down to the bottom. Those two objects, like feathers, form the letter *i* or *y*. The bird represents *u*. This line, then, gives us the syllable *Ju*. The sign next in order—the open hand—is *t* or *d*. We have now got *Jud*. The next sign is that for the letter *h*. Here, then, if we connect this with what goes before,



SUPPOSED PORTRAIT OF REHOBOAM.

we have got at last the quite recognisable name *Jud(a)h*. The four letters which follow are *m*, *ā*, *l*, and *k*. This gives us *mālek*, a very near approach to the Hebrew word for "kingdom." The whole, then, apparently means "kingdom of Judah." And what now of the figure which bears this inscription? It would appear as if there were still good ground for connecting it with Rehoboam. The Egyptian scribes were clever draughtsmen; and what more natural than that a sketch of the Jewish king should be embodied in the representation of his captured kingdom?

Let us note one point more in this Providential confirmation. In the long list which Shishak inscribed upon the Temple wall at Karnak there are no fewer than 133 names of Jewish towns. Some of these have been identified with those given in Kings and Chronicles as belonging to the time. That is much, but it is a small matter compared with what is indicated by that number 133. These are each surrounded by the repetition of this shield or envelope, which represents a battlemented wall. *These, then, were fortified places, cities, towns, and places of strength.* Such a number, to be contained within the small territory that was now left to Rehoboam, means that all told us in Kings and Chronicles regarding the prosperity of Israel under David and Solomon *must have been literally true.* For the land to have been studded with such a host of towns; for these to have been fortified, and supplied with the munitions of war; the land must have been covered with a huge population, and the royal treasuries must have been

filled to overflowing. And yet a sceptical criticism would bid us cut down the figures and disbelieve the glowing accounts of the Scriptures! But, when they have thrown away the Bible, they encounter Shishak with his 133 fortified Jewish cities and towns! If it is a fact that he found these there, we need those very Scripture accounts to explain how they came to be in existence, and to stand in the conquering Egyptian's pathway. German theories, so masterful that the Scriptures must be cut up into fragments, and the fragments branded as idle legends and shameless impostures, lest the theorists should be discredited or inconvenienced, are heredashed against enduring facts, and sink into the abyss into which the reputations of their authors will follow them in due time.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SIN OF JEROBOAM.

JEROBOAM'S modification of the Israelitish worship is one of the many proofs which the world's history has supplied of how fatal a choice is made when crooked policy is preferred to simple faith. He saw clearly enough that his newly-established kingdom would be perpetually threatened by the recourse of the tribes to the Temple and the altar at Jerusalem. The house of David had a *prestige* which could be counterbalanced by nothing which he or his successors

could hope to possess. Memories clustered round the throne of Jerusalem inexpressibly dear to every Israelite's heart, and if the ten tribes were permitted to go up as heretofore—and he himself among them—this, he thought, could have only one ending. “The heart of this people,” said he, shall “turn again unto their lord, even unto Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam king of Judah” (I. Kings xii. 27).

To all this there was a very obvious answer. If God had given the kingdom to him and to his children, who could snatch it away? That was faith's natural reply; but with faith Jeroboam seems to have been but lightly endowed. There was also another possibility. If by good government and ungrudging toil on his people's behalf Israel was made prosperous and happy, Jeroboam had no cause to dread the comparison that would inevitably be made at the great festival gatherings. But this fear was the tempter's opportunity; and Jeroboam fell.

It seemed to him absolutely necessary that the recourse of the tribes to Jerusalem must be stopped. He accordingly arranged for two new religious centres. Two of the ancient high-places were selected, one at Bethel in the south, the other at Dan in the north, of his territory. To these the people had turned only too readily in their previous idolatries, and there seems to have been no national protest now. But, having selected these, the Israelitish king was confronted with a new problem. If the ritual at Bethel and Dan was only a pale and unimpressive reflection of that

at Jerusalem, the issue of the experiment could easily be divined. The tribes would hunger for the familiar Temple Courts, and he might in this way create the very secession that he feared. "Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto the Israelites, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt. And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan" (verses 28, 29).

The choice was quite in accord with what we are told of the place of Jeroboam's exile. The worship of the Bull-god was a special characteristic of Memphis and its neighbourhood; and it was just there that Jeroboam had spent these years of waiting. At the court of Shishak, in Bubastis, Jeroboam had been surrounded by this very form of Egyptian idolatry. Probably he had also joined in the ceremonies at which the whole court attended. There is nothing said in the Scripture to explain why this particular form of idolatry was adopted. It is not even said that it was the State religion in that part of Egypt where Jeroboam had so long resided. We have only a simple record of facts. But, because this is a record of facts, every fresh discovery which unveils the place and the times of that Egyptian sojourn casts fresh light upon the narrative, and lays bare the links which connect one incident with another. Such experiences never meet us in the nightmare of myth, or in the vagaries of legend; and when we encounter them, as we do encounter them here, we see in them the hall-mark of history.

But the narrative of Jeroboam's sin bristles with difficulties for the higher criticism. The critical theory is that the Aaronic priesthood is a development. At first, any Israelite, they say, could be a priest. But Deuteronomy was forged, we are told, in 621 B.C. to mend this state of matters. It was then thought necessary to confine the priestly functions to one tribe; and, so, that of Levi was chosen, and the Israelites were told that this had been the arrangement all along! They were now told (say the critics) that this choice of Levi had been made by God, and had been made known to Israel by Moses! Israel might have been expected to receive this announcement with considerable astonishment, not to say incredulity. But the critics permit no difficulty of that kind to hinder their novel reconstruction of a nation's history. We are assured that if we are ever to understand the Jewish religion it must be fully accepted that 621 B.C. saw the first beginning of the strictly Levitical priesthood. But by-and-bye it was discovered that too small a draft had been made upon the national credulity. The Levitical priesthood was too widespread, and consequently too little under control for practical purposes. A new departure was, therefore, made in the time of Ezra, about 160 years later. The priesthood was then taken from the Levites generally, and confined to the family of Aaron; and once more Israel was informed that this had been the rule from the commencement of their national existence; that the decree had proceeded from Jehovah, and been made known to their fathers in the wilderness by Moses!! The Scriptures

speak of the Israelites as a stubborn and stiff-necked people, believing little and resisting everything. But, if these critical theories are true, no people that has ever lived deserved that character so little. They must have accepted everything with a quite unparalleled docility, and have been endowed with a faith that bows at every critical vagary with a simplicity of which we have no example outside the realm of fancy.

We now come upon a statement, however, which apparently demands the most serious critical attention. We read that Jeroboam "made priests of the meanest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi" (1. Kings xii. 31). Apparently, then, the alleged forgers of Deuteronomy were strangely enough anticipated. Here we learn that the priesthood had been confined to the tribe of Levi more than 350 years before the Deuteronomic conspirators were born! It had evidently been a constant custom in Israel to confine religious functions to this section of the people; and, moreover, it was a custom which had received a Divine sanction. All this is the inevitable conclusion of these words; for they distinctly count it a grievous sin in Jeroboam that he set aside this regulation. The reader will already have been reminded of the Scripture statement that "where no law is, there is no transgression." If it was *sin* in Jeroboam to set aside the sons of Levi, they, and they alone, must already have been Divinely intrusted with all the functions of the Temple ministry.

But the words take us farther. I need not point out that they do not necessarily mean that there was no

Aaronic priesthood then known. It is certainly not stated that he passed over the family of Aaron. But the words gain in force when we note that it is taken for granted that everyone understands that this was done, and when we see in the statement the picture of an impious daring that discards even the *tribal* arrangement. It was sin, indeed, to set the *Aaronic* priesthood aside, but how measureless the impiety that blots out also the *tribal* boundary! But the words to which I specially refer are these which tell us that he "made priests of the meanest of the people." Why were these selected? We may conclude with absolute certainty that Jeroboam had no intention to insult the tribes or to cast contempt upon his own handiwork. The choice of the meanest of the people for the new priesthood could only have been an *unfortunate necessity*. It must have been a humiliating arrangement to a man who naturally desired to surround the new worship at Bethel and Dan with all possible *éclat*.

Now this compels us to ask, what made such a selection necessary? He could have been driven to choose the meanest of the people only on one ground. These could most easily break with revered customs; they had less at stake, too, in embarking upon any course which would entail the loss of public esteem. What was it, then, that any man had to break with in making himself the minister of Jeroboam's new ritual? And why was the selected priest likely to be regarded with contempt and even with horror? There can only be one really satisfactory answer, it seems to me, to these questions. The Law, not only of the

Levitical ministry and of the Aaronic priesthood, but of the feasts and of the sacrifices was already known. *It was known to the whole people.* It had been known to them for long generations. The Law of Moses had no need either to be developed or to be forged. It was already in existence: it had long been the possession and the glory of the whole Israelitish people; and, to find men who would break with that, Jeroboam had to get those on whom the bribes of sustenance and of an unexpected position would be sure to tell; and so he "made priests of the meanest of the people."

CHAPTER IX.

ZERAH'S INVASION.

THE Books of Chronicles were written to place before the Israelites, who were returning from the land of their captivity, the lessons of their history. It was a reading of the past in view of the need of the then present. Israel was called afresh to obedience and to faith; and, from the stores of the past, testimonies were brought to show that faith and obedience are the path to deliverances and rest, and to national prosperity and glory. But, as these testimonies are oftentimes marvellous, the Books of Chronicles have been the special object of critical contempt. It has been said that, wherever the Chronicler ceases to rely upon the older Books of Samuel and of Kings, he

draws upon his imagination. And one very generally accepted proof of this is what are called "his exaggerated numbers."

This latter feature has drawn the judgment of many to the critics' side in this matter. We have already dealt with some of these statements and failed to find the exaggeration, though we have encountered evidence enough of the culpable carelessness of those who have brought the charges. Other instances will be met with from time to time, and, I believe, with a like result. But a more serious charge of fabrication is brought against the account given in 2 Chronicles xiv. 9-15. There, we are told, there came up against Asa, the grandson of Rehoboam, king of Judah, "Zerah the Ethiopian with an host of a thousand thousand (a million), and three hundred chariots; and came unto Mareshah. Then Asa went out against him, and they set the battle in array in the valley of Zephathah at Mareshah. And Asa cried unto the Lord his God, and said, Lord, it is nothing with Thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O Lord our God; for we rest on Thee, and in Thy name we go against this multitude. O Lord, Thou art our God; let not man prevail against Thee. So the Lord smote the Ethiopians before Asa, and before Judah; and the Ethiopians fled."

We can well understand why that incident should be written down for the consolation of the poor Temple-builders, and for our own who have still to build, as they did, with the trowel in one hand and a sword in the other. But the fact that this is not

mentioned in Kings has been held to be quite enough to stamp it with suspicion. "Like certain other statements in the Books of Chronicles," says Prof. Sayce, "the passage stands alone, no other reference to the event being found in the Bible. The 'higher' criticism has accordingly thrown doubt upon it, the Chronicler with his exaggerated numbers and endeavour to transform the earlier history of Israel into a history of ritual, being naturally viewed by the 'higher' critics with disfavour. Indeed, the late Bishop of Natal (Colenso), has gone so far as to speak of his 'fictions.' The account of the invasion of Judah by 'Zerah the Ethiopian' has accordingly been pronounced to be unhistorical." *

Professor Sayce looks now with still less favour upon critical judgments than when those words were written. And I believe that nothing more than a close inspection of these words of Chronicles is needed to show that the charge of exaggeration cannot be maintained. The number of chariots will be noted. They are only 300. This is a startlingly small equipment for an *Egyptian* force, whose chariotry was always their chief reliance. But why should the spirit of exaggeration, if it had any existence outside the rationalistic imagination, have fainted when it came to set down the number of the chariots? Why were they not multiplied by ten (the multiplier said to have been in special favour with the Chronicler)? Three thousand chariots would certainly have looked more symmetrical when accompanied by a million of infantry.

* *The Higher Criticism and the Monuments*, p. 362.

But, till some explanation can be found for that 300, the charge of exaggeration cannot rationally be maintained. An exaggerator would certainly not have failed to have startled us with his account of the chariots.

The one million does undoubtedly seem large ; but it is not unparalleled. Canon Rawlinson reminds us that "it does not exceed the known numbers of other oriental armies in ancient times. Darius Codomannus brought into the field at Arbela a force of 1,040,000 . . . Xerxes crossed into Greece with certainly above a million combatants. Artaxerxes Mnemon collected 1,260,000 men to meet the attack of the younger Cyrus."* It is quite conceivable, therefore, that, in certain circumstances, Judah might have been invaded from Egypt by a similar force. Has anything been discovered which throws light upon the Scripture narrative? Shishak had two descendants, a son and a great-grandson, who both bore the name of Osorkon, or Usarken. The consonants of this name are well represented by those in the Hebrew name *Zerach*, and it has long since been proposed to identify Zerah with Usarken II., the great-grandson of Shishak ; and Prof. Sayce refers to a confirmation of this found by Mr. Naville in his explorations in Bubastis. "One of the monuments," he writes, "disinterred there, during the excavations carried on for the Egypt Exploration Fund, is dated in the twenty-second year of Osorkon II., the great-grandson of Shishak I. On it the king is made to declare that 'the Upper and

* *The Speaker's Commentary* (note on passage).

Lower Rutennu have been thrown under his feet.' The Upper Rutennu signified Palestine in the geographical language of Egypt, the Lower Rutennu being Syria; and it would seem, therefore—though the title of Conqueror may be only honorific—that Osorkon had been engaged in a successful campaign in Asia."*

The history of this dynasty is still involved in obscurity. The king referred to in Scripture does not appear, however, to be a descendant of Shishak. He is called "the Ethiopian," and his army is also said to have consisted of "Ethiopians." These references seem plainly to imply that Ethiopia had invaded Egypt, and then crossed its eastern border and attacked the kingdom of Judah. Regarding that invasion, Lenormant,† I know not on what authority, speaks quite definitely. Referring to Usarken I., he says: "We have only reason to think that it was in his reign, or in that of his successor, that Azerch-Amen, king of Ethiopia, starting from Napata, invaded Egypt, and traversed its whole length to the mouth of the Nile, subjected it for the time to his sceptre, and penetrated into Palestine at the head of an army of Ethiopians and Lybians. . . . The defeat of the king of Ethiopia" (by Asa) "was so complete that he does not seem even to have attempted to maintain his position in Egypt, but to have retired at once to his own States. However, the road opened by his invasion was soon to be followed by other

* *The Higher Criticism and the Monuments*, p. 363.

† *Ancient History of the East*, vol. i., pp. 274, 275.

Ethiopian conquerors." It is a striking fact, that, from this time forward, for some centuries Ethiopia was Egypt's danger. Asa's victory broke the rod when it was first stretched out; but it afterwards grew again and fell heavily upon the land of the Pharaohs.

THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS.

CHAPTER I.

THE MOABITE STONE.

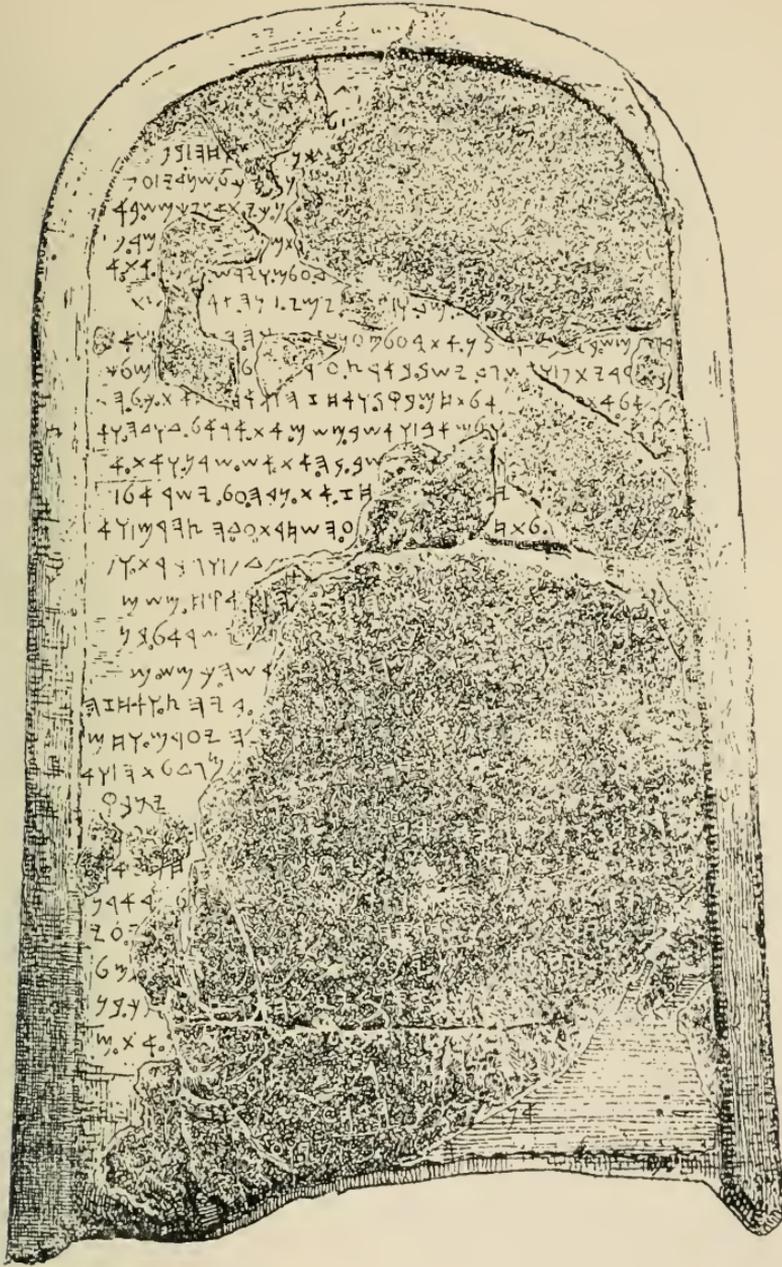
WE have now to turn from the great power on the west of Israel, and to fix our attention upon the east. Egypt's day of conquest is closed, and the shades of her long and dismal night are already falling. In Assyria and in Babylon, however, a very different race is massing its forces for the onset. Of these fierce adversaries and cruel masters we shall have much to say. But, first of all, a surprising discovery in a land closely adjacent to the territories of Israel and Judah claims our notice.

In the year 1868 the Rev. F. Klein, a German missionary, was travelling in Moab. A friendly Arab sheikh drew the attention of the traveller to an inscribed stone which stood in the neighbourhood of his tent. It was a block of black basalt of extreme hardness, about 3 feet 10 inches high, 2 feet broad, and 14½ inches thick. The form of the stone need not be described, as the reader will be able to see that in our illustration. The front of the stone was covered with an inscription which Mr. Klein was unable to read; but, knowing that the stone might prove to be valuable, he tried to purchase it for the Museum in Berlin.

The Arabs were quite aware, however, that if the stone was worth so much in Berlin, it might be worth? still more in London or in Paris. Sir Charles Warren, then agent for the Palestine Exploration Fund, was informed about the monument ; but knowing that the Prussian Consulate at Jerusalem was in treaty for its purchase, he took no steps in the matter.

As time went on, the matter leaked out ; and M. Clermout-Ganneau, then dragoman of the French Consulate, heard that the stone was lying with its inscribed face exposed to the weather. He sent natives into Moab to take a squeeze of the inscription, and to endeavour to buy the stone from the Arabs. £80 had been offered by the Prussian authorities, and M. Clermont-Ganneau's messenger went as far in his offer as £375. This offer, after long haggling, was accepted by the Arabs. By this time, however, the Turkish officials had become aware of what was going on, and the Governor of Nablûs put in his claim to dispose of the stone and to pocket the proceeds. But the Arabs resolved that, if the discovery was not to profit them, it should profit no one else. They consequently kindled a fire beneath it, and when they had heated it sufficiently they cracked it into pieces by pouring cold water on it. The pieces were distributed among a number of families and were placed in their granaries as charms to preserve their grain from blight.

A large number of these pieces was afterwards recovered ; and, with the help of the impression of the inscription previously secured by M. Clermont-Ganneau, the stone has been restored as far as possible,



751E
 701E4ywo
 49wvzvex
 24w
 4x
 209x4y600
 x
 4x37.12yz
 33x
 407604x475
 46w
 16
 0.29475wz.57w
 49x749
 367x
 44719
 44599yHx64
 4964
 44444.6444x4y
 w9w4y34w6y
 4x444w.w4x43.5.9w
 1649wz.60344.x4IH
 4Yw99h 320x44w30
 4x6
 1x931y11
 wwy.HP4
 78649
 wwy.47w4
 4IH4h 334.
 wHY.7402 3
 4Y13x67
 9372
 4
 7944
 207
 6
 787
 w.x4.

and is now in the Jewish Museum at the Louvre in Paris. It is one of the most precious treasures even in that priceless collection; for it is one of the very earliest alphabetical monuments yet known, and it has intervened with startling effect in the controversy as to the age of Hebrew writing. It is a monument raised by Mesha, the king of Moab, who is named in 2 Kings, and referred to also in 2 Chronicles. It celebrates the deliverance of his country from the dominion of Israel. It mentions Omri, records the duration of the Moabitish servitude, and brings less direct, but not less valuable, testimony to the accuracy of the Scripture history.

2 Kings opens with the words: "Then (literally, 'and') Moab rebelled against Israel after the death of Ahab." It would seem from this brief notice that the rebellion commenced when Ahab died, and when his successors were struggling to repair the effects of the calamitous struggle with Syria. Nothing further is said till we reach the 3rd chapter, where we read (verses 4-27), in connection with the reign of Jehoram of Israel: "And Mesha king of Moab was a sheepmaster, and rendered unto the king of Israel an hundred thousand lambs, and an hundred thousand rams, with the wool. And it came to pass, when Ahab was dead, that the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel." The rebellion was at first, no doubt, a mere withholding of the annual tribute. This had been passed over without notice during the brief reign of Ahaziah. Jehoram, his brother, had been a year or two on the throne before

the matter could be dealt with, for the only answer was a military expedition sufficiently strong to crush the Moabitish people. Even now, indeed, Israel by itself was not equal to the undertaking, and Jehoram, we are told, begged the help of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah. The combined forces, apparently in order to avoid being attacked in the rear by the Syrians, passed down by the south of Judah and "the wilderness of Edom," and then marched northward to attack the Moabites on their southern border. But no adequate provision had been made to meet the hardships of the desert. "They fetched a compass of seven days' journey; and there was no water for the host, and for the cattle that followed them." Elisha was with them, and was entreated to intercede for them. The result was not only a bountiful supply of water; but, also, the delivery into their hands of the Moabitish host. Mesha, rendered desperate by his calamities, gathered round him 700 men and endeavoured to break through the Israelitish forces, and to reach the king of Edom, with whom, perhaps, he hoped to find an asylum. Defeated in this attempt, he offered up his eldest son as a burnt-offering to Chemosh. The altar was raised upon the wall of the city in which Mesha was being besieged, and the dreadful tragedy was thus enacted in the sight of the allied forces. The Scripture tells us that in consequence of this act, "There was great indignation against Israel: and they departed from him, and returned to their own land" (verse 27).

The words seem, at first sight, to mean that Judah and Edom were indignant with Israel at having

reduced the Moabites to such extremity, but the phrase seems to indicate that the indignation spoken of was the indignation of God. If this is the sense, then Israel was in some way held to be responsible for this enormity. But all that concerns us now is the fact that the land of Moab was vacated by the Israelites and their confederates. Let us now turn to the Moabite version. Mesha, as has been said, tells the story of his rebellion and of his triumphs. The following translation is given by Dr. Neubauer* (the numbers indicate the lines in the original; the words in square brackets are supplied to indicate the sense).

1. I, Mesha son of Chemosh-Melech King of Moab
the Di-
2. bonite. My brother reigned over Moab thirty
years, and I reign-
3. ed after my father. I made this monument to
Chemosh at Khorkah. A monument of sal-
4. vation, for he saved me from all invaders, and let
me see my desire upon all my enemies. Om-
5. ri [was] King of Israel, and he oppressed Moab
many days, for Chemosh was angry with his
6. land. His son followed him, and he also said: I
shall oppress Moab. In my days Chemosh said,
7. I will see my desire on him and his house. And
Israel surely perished for ever. Omri took the
land of
8. Medeba, and [Israel] dwelt in it during his days
and half the days of his son, altogether forty
years. But there dwelt in it

* *Records of the Past* (New Series), vol. ii., p. 200.

9. Chemosh in my days. I built Baal-Meon and made therein the ditches; I built
10. Kirjathaim: the men of Gad dwelled in the land of Ataroth from of old, and built there the king of
11. Israel Ataroth; and I made war against the town and seized it. And I slew all the [people of]
12. the town, for the pleasure of Chemosh and Moab: I captured from there the *Arel* of Doda and tore
13. him before Chemosh in Kerioth: and I placed therein the men of SRN and the men
14. of MKH RTH. And Chemosh said to me, Go seize Nebo upon Israel; and
15. I went in the night and fought against it from the break of dawn till noon: and I took
16. it, and slew all, 7,000 men [boys?], women [girls],
17. and female slaves, for to Ashtar-Chemosh I devoted them. And I took from it the *Arels* of Jahveh, and tore them before Chemosh. And the King of Israel built
18. Jahaz, and dwelt in it, whilst he waged war against me; Chemosh drove him out before me. And
19. I took from Moab 200 men, all chiefs, and transported them to Jahaz, which I took
20. To add to it Dibon. I built Korkah, the wall of the forests and the wall
21. of the citadel: I built its gates, and I built its towers. And
22. I built the house of Moloch, and I made sluices of the water ditches in the middle

23. of the town. And there was no cistern in the middle of the town of Khorkah, and I said to all the people, Make for
24. yourselves every man a cistern in his house. And I dug the canals for Korkhah by means of the prisoners
25. of Israel. I built Aroer and I made the road in [the province of] the Arnon. [And]
26. I built Beth-Bamoth, for it was destroyed. I built Bezer, for in ruins
27. [it was. And all the chiefs] of Dibon were 50, for all Dibon is subject; and I placed
28. one hundred [chiefs] in the towns which I added to the land: I built
29. Beth-Medeba and Beth-Diblathaim and Beth-Baal-Meon, and transported thereto the [shepherds(?)]
30. and the pastors] of the flocks of the land. And at Horonain dwelt there . . .
31. . . . And Chemosh said to me, Go down, make war upon Horonaim. I went down [and made war]
32. . . . And Chemosh dwelt in it during my days. I went up from thence
33. . . . And I . . .

The concluding lines of the inscription are so mutilated that nothing can be made of them. What has been preserved, however, makes the Moabite stone one of the most valuable discoveries of our time. The reader will observe that Mesha is very

careful in his reckoning. He tells us that Omri, the father of Ahab, and the founder of a new dynasty in Israel, began the oppression of his country. "Omri," he says, "was king of Israel, and he oppressed Moab many days" (line 5). He adds, that "Omri took the land of Medeba and [Israel], dwelt in it during his days and half the days of his son, altogether forty years" (line 8). Israel's possession of Medeba would, no doubt, cease when the deliverance came which Mesha celebrates. The forty years, if this be so, would then be the duration of the oppression. Does the Scripture chronology agree with this? The word "son" is frequently applied in Hebrew; and, consequently, in the Moabite tongue, which was essentially the same language, to "grandson." Now, Joram reigned 12 years, and the half of that time ("half of the days of his son," line 8)

would be	...	...	...	...	...	6 years
Ahaziah, Joram's elder brother, reigned				2	„	
Ahab, their father, reigned	...	...	22	„		
Omri reigned	..	...	...	...	12	„
					—	
						42 years.

If we suppose, then, that Omri's conquest of Moab was made at the close of the second year of his reign, we should have exactly the 40 years mentioned by Mesha. The references to the reigns of the contemporary kings of Judah indicate a slight overlapping of the figures given above, and a corresponding shortening of the 42 years. But that may be met by the fact that Omri was general of the Israelitish

forces, and that the conquest of Moab may have been made before his nominal reign began. Prof. Sayce suggests, on the other hand, that "40" is to be taken as a "round number," and that it is not to be understood as a definite period. But it seems clear that Mesha is recording the duration of the oppression with exactness. He speaks of it as having endured "half of the days of" Omri's son, and "altogether forty years."

There are in this inscription other, and not less noteworthy, confirmations of the Scripture records. It is clear that there had been, for one thing, an invasion, and it was during that invasion that the deliverance came. He raises the stone as "a monument of salvation; for he (Chemosh) saved me *from all invaders*, and let me see my desire upon my enemies." The word "salvation" speak of a signal deliverance; and the circumstances related in the Scripture enable us to understand how that deliverance is so confidently and effusively ascribed to Chemosh. The Scripture tells us that it was when Mesha offered his son for a burnt offering upon the wall that "there was great indignation against Israel: and they departed from him, and returned to their own land" (II. Kings iii. 27). Till then, everything had gone against Mesha and the Moabites. His last desperate attempt to cut a way through the besieging host had failed utterly. He was now penned within his hill fortress awaiting the hour when the sword should finish what it had begun. And just at this supreme moment, the land was suddenly cleared of

the foe. The allies turned their backs upon Edom without having suffered a single defeat. There is but a step between Mesha and death when the invaders are suddenly arrested by an unseen hand, and are swept from the land of their exploits by Divine indignation. What more natural for the idolater than to connect this with his fearful sacrifice, and to ascribe it all to the intervention of Chemosh? That striking expression, "a monument of salvation," is thoroughly in accord with the facts narrated in the Scripture history; and cannot, indeed, be explained apart from some incident of the kind.

Mesha recounts what happened after the invaders had withdrawn, and when the Israelitish colonists, who were now left unsupported, were attacked and destroyed in detail. In this account we note that Mesha is not a worshipper of only one god. Although he ascribes his victories to Chemosh, Ashtar-Chemosh and Moloch are not left without marks of Mesha's gratitude and devotion. We note also something of the abominations of those idolatries by which Israel was surrounded. This is displayed, not only in the fearful sacrifice of Mesha's first born, but also in the terrible fate of his captives. He mentions 7,000 men, women, and female slaves that were slain before Ashtar-Chemosh. What the *Arels* were, who are mentioned in the inscription, we cannot say with certainty. The name, in all probability, refers to noted heroes, men famous for warlike deeds. These were torn alive to make a spectacle for Chemosh; "I captured from there the *Arel* of Doda and tore him

before Chemosh ;” “and I took from it (Nebo) the *Arels* of Jehovah and tore them before Chemosh.”

Other points are worthy of notice. Among the alleged “myths” of Genesis is the history of the origin of the Moabite people. They were descendants of Lot, the nephew of Abraham ; and, consequently, according to this so-called “myth,” the Moabites would be a Hebrew-speaking people. And now, in the marvellous providence of God, we are able to inspect with our own eyes the language written by a Moabite king ; and, since it is written for their reading, the language also of the Moabite people in the beginning of the ninth century—we may say the tenth century—B.C. And, when we scan this language, we discover that it is virtually the Hebrew of the Israelites ! “The Moabite dialect,” says Dr. Neubauer, “is tinged with non-biblical words and forms, *but the construction remains Biblical.*” * “The language of the inscription,” Professor Sayce writes, “is noteworthy. Between it and Hebrew *the differences are few and slight.* It is a proof that the Moabites were akin to the Israelites in language as well as in race. . . . The likeness between the languages of Moab and of Israel extends beyond the mere idioms of grammar and syntax. It is a likeness which exists also in thought. The religious conceptions of the Moabite are strikingly similar to those of the Israelite, and he looks out at the world with much the same eyes.” † There are thus traces of identity in modes

* *Records of the Past*, New Series, vol. ii., p. 199.

† *The Higher Criticism and the Monuments*, p. 373.

of thought as well as of speech. Could there be more convincing testimony that these two nations have been cut out of the same block?

And the Moabite stone, like so many other recent discoveries, crushes the critical theories to their foundations. It is now taken for granted that Israel's earliest "religious literature"—such is the new title for "the Oracles of God" that were committed to them—does not go further back than the eighth century B.C. That is, written language was not in use in Israel for a century after the time when we now know that it was in use in Moab! But its use in Moab had plainly existed for centuries before the days of Mesha. "The angular forms of the Moabite characters," says Prof. Sayce, "as seen upon the stone of Mesha, indicate that writing had long been employed in Moab for monumental purposes."* Are we to believe that, when the Moabites were inscribing the deeds of their kings, and the praises of their gods, upon monumental stones, Israel possessed no alphabet, and had no idea of the art of writing?

Another matter of no small importance may be mentioned in closing our account of this most important discovery. Some of the more ignorant of the critical—at least of the rationalistic—host have represented the Hebrew Scriptures as subject to the greatest uncertainty. They tell us that it was the custom to write the ancient manuscripts in one unbroken flow of letters of the alphabet: that these letters ran on without separation, one word being

* Page 387.

added to another without even a space between them. They then ask what certainty can there be that, in separating this stream of letters and dividing it into words, we have not blundered? As a matter of fact, however, no scholar has ever had that task to do. The Hebrew Scriptures have come down to us with words separated like our own, and with a most elaborate system of punctuation, so that no modern printing of any language could possibly be clearer. But it may be asked, on what was this ancient reading of the manuscripts founded? Have we in the Hebrew Bible of to-day merely the guesses of ancient scholars, or the divisions, the words, and the sentences of the inspired penmen? The Moabite stone gives us a most conclusive answer to that question. For, in this ancient inscription, the words are separated from each other by a point, so that no one could possibly run two words together even if he wished to do so. More than that, the words are divided into sentences by short upright lines. The following example will show this pointing:—

I·(am)·Mesha·son·of·Chemosh·Melech·king·of·Moab·
the·Dibonite | My·father·reigned·over·Moab·thirty·
years·and·I·reigned·after·my·father |

Are we, in order to oblige our critical friends, and to make room for their theories, to imagine that the Moabites had this elaborate system of punctuation, and that Israel knew nothing of it? Are we to “empty ourselves” of our reasoning faculty, and not even to whisper that, if a people who had preserved the language and phrases and modes of thought of

the Hebrews, had also this device for preventing confusion and mistake in their written communications, the mother tongue must have possessed some similar system? And, indeed, a comparison of other ancient monumental writing, the Roman and the Persian among the number, show that it was a device as common as the possession of alphabetic writing.

CHAPTER II.

THE HITTITES.

BEFORE we turn to the Assyrian monuments and note the rich abundance and conclusiveness of their confirmations of Bible history, it may be well for us to inquire how far recent discovery has borne out the references of Scripture to two other neighbouring nationalities. We have just seen how unexpected a light has been cast upon Israel's relations with Moab. Have there been like discoveries on other sides of Palestine?

There is one ancient people, which is frequently named from Genesis to Ezekiel, but of which profane history contained no record whatever. This silence of ancient "authorities" was followed by the usual consequence. The Scripture references to the Hittites were declared to be unhistorical. "Even more frequent and more fatal than historical hair-splitting," writes Prof. Sayce, "has been the habit of arguing from the ignorance of the critic himself. Time after time

statements have been assumed to be untrue because we cannot bring forward other evidence in support of the facts which they record. The critic has made his own ignorance the measure of the credibility of an ancient document. . . . The mention of 'the kings of the Hittites' in the account of the siege of Samaria by the Syrians (II. Kings vii. 6), was declared to be an error or an invention; but it was only the ignorance of the critic himself that was at fault."*

There is nothing, indeed, more dangerous than to



SOME HITTITE HEADS.

assume that what one does not know is not knowledge. The Hittites, once supposed to have been either non-existent, or, at least, an insignificant tribe, we now know to have been a great and warlike people. The Egyptian monuments have left us what are evidently highly characteristic pictures of these ancient friends of Abraham. The accompanying sketch of heads of Hittite prisoners speaks for itself. Representations found upon monuments reared by the Hittites themselves show that the Egyptians have not handed down to us caricatures of their ancient foes, but that here also, their art has held the mirror up to nature. "The face was distinguished by a

* *The Higher Criticism and the Monuments*, pp. 15, 16.

retreating forehead and chin, and a large protrusive nose. . . . The eyes were black and lozenge-shaped, the lips full, the beard scanty, the hair dark, and the skin yellow. The physiological type, in short, was that of the Mongolian. . . . Like the Chinaman, the Hittite gathered the hair behind his head into a 'pig-tail.'”*

The Hittites seem to have been at first a migratory people who gradually found their way into southern lands from their home in the far north. There they soon became a united, organised, and warlike nation, with whom both Egypt and Assyria had to battle long for the supremacy of Northern Syria. The paintings preserved on Egyptian monuments have made us acquainted with the dress, as well as with the face and figure, of the ancient Hittite. “The Hittite dress,” says Prof. Sayce, “was as characteristic as the Hittite face. It was distinguished by the use of a boot with upturned ends, such as is still worn by the mountaineers of Asia Minor and Greece. The boot is, in fact, a snow-shoe, and betrays the northern origin of its wearers, just as the use of a similar shoe betrays the northern origin of the modern Turk. As we learn from the sculptures of the Ramesseum at Thebes, the Hittites of Kadesh still clung to the native boot even in the hot valleys of Syria, where it was eminently unsuitable. An ancestral dress seems even more difficult to discard than an ancestral language.” † “The high cap worn by Khetasar”—that is to say, the prince of the Hittites—“recalls,”

* *Ibid.*, p. 140. † *Ibid.*, pp. 142, 143.

says Colonel Conder, "the still more remarkable pointed caps of the Borghaz-Keui reliefs. It was a head-dress worn later by Scythians and by natives of Media, and resembled the *tutulus* represented in Etruscan tombs. It was also a distinctive Turkish head-dress—though surrounded by the Moslem turban—down to quite recent times, and a distinctive costume not found in use among Arian or Semitic peoples."*

This, to begin with, bears out the statement of Genesis x. 15, that the Hittites are a Hamitic race, and is another of the numerous confirmations which modern science has contributed to this, the only account contained in all literature, of the origin of the nations of the earth. Those who are so ready to turn aside from their former steadfastness and to speak of "the myths of Genesis," might well ask themselves whether such absolutely correct information is usually supplied by myths and legends. But, after the place of the Hittites in history was no longer open to dispute, there were still difficulties. In the history of Abraham, Hittites are mentioned as residing in Hebron. It was to "the sons of Heth" that Abraham spake, saying, "I am a stranger and a sojourner with you: give me a possession of a burying place with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight" (Genesis xxiii. 4). This means that in 2,000 B.C. this race was in the extreme south of Palestine. But, while it was undeniable that the Hittites formed an important part of the population

* *The Hittites*, p. 101.

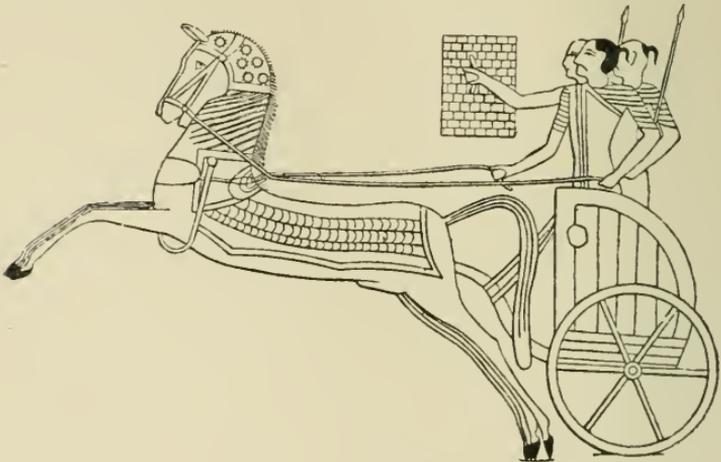
? Or do
Europeans
- Wilson

of Northern Syria, it was strenuously denied that they were to be found so far south as Hebron. The progress of discovery has proved, however, that this mention of the Hittites in Hebron, so greatly despised and so contemptuously thrust aside, was a valuable historic hint. The Hittite power had anciently extended to the south of Palestine, and they were actually there in the time of Abraham. "Not less interesting," writes Colonel Conder," is the allusion to Hittite tribes as living in Hebron in the time of Abraham, and to their settled life in cities, and to their wealth. The Hittites were driven out of Southern Palestine about 1600 B.C. by Thotmes III. In the Book of Joshua they appear as inhabitants of Northern Syria, and this was their home from about 1500 to 700 B.C. But in the lowest strata of the ruins of Lachish, not far west of Hebron, a Hittite seal has been found, with others, bearing titles of the Egyptian eighteenth dynasty, and the seal of Teie, Consort of Amenophis III. The mention of Hittites in the far south thus points to an early age, and agrees with the contemporary notice of Amraphel and Abraham."* Lachish was as far south as Hebron, and the seal was found below the deposits which contain the traces of the Israelitish occupation of the city. In other words, the Hittites were in Lachish, and consequently as far south as Hebron, before the times of Joshua.

The next notice of the Hittite power is met with in the account of Solomon's commercial operations.

* *The Bible and the East*, pp. 29, 30.

We read: "And Solomon had horses brought out of Egypt. . . . And a chariot came up and went out of Egypt for six hundred shekels of silver, and an horse for a hundred and fifty: and so for all the kings of the Hittites, and for the kings of Syria, did they bring them out by their means" (1. Kings x. 28, 29). Were the Hittites in existence then? and were they a leading power in Northern Syria, and one, too, that was specially distinguished for its force of



HITTITE WAR CHARIOT.

chariots and of cavalry? Although all attempts to decipher the Hittite inscriptions have hitherto failed, these questions have been very fully answered by their ancient foes on the east and on the west. Rameses II. has left a graphic description of the great battle of Kadesh, in which he nearly perished, but where he at last succeeded in winning a signal victory. The city was situated on the river Orontes, in the north-east of Syria. The king of Egypt states that the Hittite

king had a force of 2,500 chariots, a number which may be commended to the serious attention of those who set down such figures when they are met with in the Bible as "evident exaggerations." But, though defeated, the Hittites were still so powerful that Rameses was pleased, after repeated invasions, to end his campaigns against them with a solemn treaty—the earliest treaty on record—which was followed three years later by his marriage with the Hittite king's daughter.

Nothing could be more eloquent of the power of the Hittites than the terms of this treaty. It was engraved upon a plate of silver. The Hittite monarch is described as "the mighty suzerain of the Hittites." One of its provisions ran as follows: "The suzerain of the Hittites will never invade Egypt or carry away ought thence, nor shall Rameses Meriamen, the great king of Egypt, ever invade the land of the Hittites, or carry away ought thence." They agree further to aid each other in case either land is invaded by a foe, and they are to deliver up to their lord any fugitives who may seek an asylum in either country. It also contains a remarkable testimony to the multiplied idolatries of both peoples. "This tablet of silver," so runs the treaty, "is witnessed by a thousand gods, the warrior gods, and the goddesses of the land of the Hittites, together with a thousand gods, the warrior gods and the goddesses of the land of Egypt." This was earlier, it is true, than the time of Solomon; but, as we shall immediately see, it was also their condition centuries afterwards. The Hittites were

consequently a great northern power in the days of Solomon. They had a large chariot force, and they were constantly in want of these and of the horses for which the Egypt of the time was famous.

We come, last of all, to the mention of the Hittites in connection with the account of the invasion of Israel by the Syrians in the time of Jehoram, the son of Ahab. This, as we have already been reminded, was set down as "an error or an invention." The critic knew nothing of any "kings of the Hittites," and, consequently, the mention of them in the Scripture showed its alleged unhistorical character. Elisha had promised the besieged king and city deliverance. The Syrians heard "a noise of chariots and a noise of horses, even the noise of a great host; and they said one to another, Lo, the king of Israel hath hired against us the kings of the Hittites, and the kings of the Egyptians to come upon us. Wherefore they arose, and fled in the twilight, and left their tents, and their horses, and their asses, even their camp as it was, and fled for their life" (II. Kings vii. 6, 7). We know that 40 years after this time the Hittites were still a powerful people. Shalmaneser II., king of Assyria, was opposed in his fifth campaign by a coalition of the peoples of Syria. This was powerful enough to delay the advance of the Assyrian armies for a year. The next year Shalmaneser tells us that Hadadezer and Irkhulina roused "the kings of the Hittites," and of the sea-coasts, and advanced on Assyria, "trusting in each other's might."

The Hittites were, therefore, in existence, and still retained their warlike fame in the days of Jehoram, king of Israel. The reader will have observed the expression "*the kings of the Hittites,*" both in this passage and in that from 1 Kings x., which describes Solomon's commerce. Rameses II. has, apparently, dealings with only one Hittite king, or over lord of the provinces. The forces of the nation were evidently then under the sway of one monarch. But here, in Shalmaneser's inscription, the very phrase of the Scripture occurs—"the *kings of the Hittites.*" The power which, in the twelfth or thirteenth century B.C., was concentrated in the hands of one leader, was now divided among a number of sovereigns. The Scripture history bears the stamp of the time also in the similar phrase, which describes the then political condition of Egypt. The Syrians exclaim in their terror that Jehoram has hired against them, not only the kings of the Hittites to come down upon them from the north, but also "the kings of the Egyptians" to rush upon them from the south. They were thus about to be caught, they imagined, between two fires. Now, just at this very time, the monarchy of Egypt was also broken up. "The age of the twenty-third dynasty," says Lenormant, "was a time of contention and revolution; the land was divided between rival families, and full of civil discord."* Maspero has explained the causes which led to this division of the Egyptian kingdom. The feeble successors of Shishak had divided the land into

* *Manual of the Ancient History of the East.*

principalities for greater ease in governing, and in collecting the taxes. The governors of these gradually gained confidence as the central power grew weaker. "Relying," he says, "upon bands of Libyan mercenaries, they usurped not only the functions of royalty, but also the title of king, while the legitimate dynasty, confined to a corner of the Delta, exercised there scarcely a remnant of authority."* Hence, the Scripture, so minutely accurate, speaks neither of the king of the Hittites, nor of the king of Egypt, but of "the kings of the Hittites" and "the kings of the Egyptians."

CHAPTER III.

THE KINGS OF DAMASCUS.

DAMASCUS is one of those favoured spots apparently destined to be centres of population and sites of famous cities. A place of broad streams in the midst of a vast waterless plain, it attracted the wandering tribes in the remotest times. It was already a city when Abraham passed from Haran to Palestine about 2,000 B.C., and it has retained its place, through many vicissitudes, even to the present hour. Geographers, warriors, and travellers have vied with each other in celebrating its praises. Strabo refers to Damascus "so highly extolled," and adds that "it is a considerable city, and in the time of the Persian

* *Histoire Ancienne des Peuples de l'Orient*, p. 408.

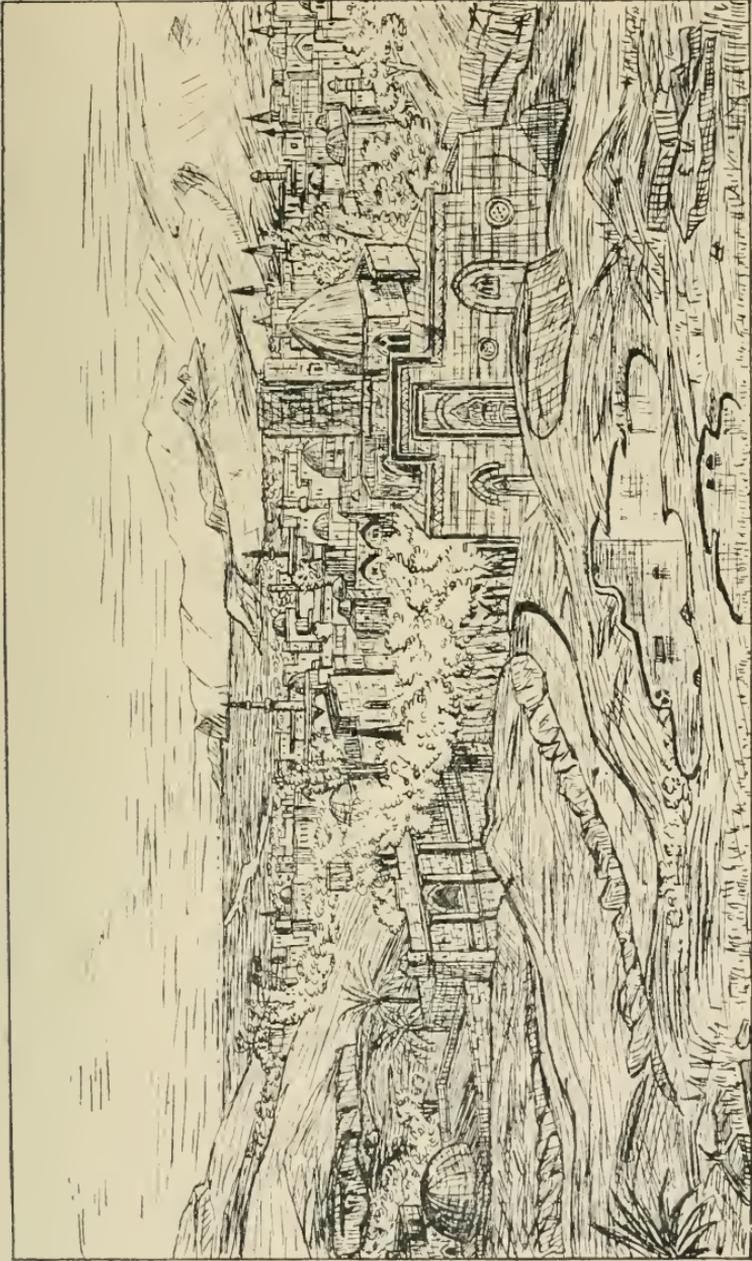
empire was nearly the most distinguished place in that country." Julian speaks of "the great and sacred city of Damascus, surpassing every city both in the beauty of its temples and the magnitude of its shrines, as well as in the timeliness of its seasons, the limpidness of its fountains, the volume of its waters, and the richness of its soil."

Though the glory has long since passed from Damascus, modern travellers speak quite as enthusiastically of the city and its surroundings. "One of the most magnificent prospects in the world," writes an author whom we have already quoted,* "burst upon my sight: like the first view of Constantinople, it is unique. We were looking down from an elevation of a thousand feet upon a vast plain, bordered in the distance by blue mountains, and occupied by a rich, luxuriant forest of the walnut, the fig, the pomegranate, the plum, the apricot, the citron, the locust, the pear, and the apple—forming a waving grove of more than 50 miles in circuit, possessing a vast variety of tint, a peculiar density and luxuriance of foliage, and a wildly picturesque form, from the branches of the loftier trees throwing themselves up above a rich underwood of pomegranates, citrons, and oranges, with their yellow, green, and brown leaves; and then conceive our sensations to see grandly rising in the distance, above this vast superficies of rich luxuriant foliage, the swelling leaden domes, the gilded crescents, and the marble minarets of Damascus; while, in the centre of all, winding towards the

* Addison. *Damascus and Palmyra*, vol. ii., p. 92.

city, ran the main stream of the river Barrada. As we descended, here and there the openings in the trees displayed little patches of green verdure, or a glimpse of richly-cultivated gardens: the whole of the rich tract was surrounded by a mud wall, beyond which all was arid and desert." Dean Stanley says: "Perhaps in no part of the East is there so wonderful a witness to the peculiarly Oriental connection between verdure and running water as the view on which we are now entering. The further we advance, the contrast becomes more and more forcible; the mountains more bare, the green of the river bed more deep and rich. At last a cleft opens in the rocky hills between two precipitous cliffs: up the side of one of these cliffs the road winds; on the summit of the cliff there stands a ruined chapel. Through the arches of that chapel, from the very edge of the mountain-range, the traveller looks down on the plain of Damascus. It is here seen in its widest and fullest perfection, with the visible explanation of the whole secret of its great and enduring charm. . . . The river, with its green banks, is seen at the bottom, rushing through the cleft; it bursts forth, and, as if in a moment, scatters over the plain, through a circle of 30 miles, the same verdure which had hitherto been confined to its single channel. It is like the bursting of a shell—the eruption of a volcano—but an eruption not of death, but of life.

"Far and wide in front extends the level plain, its horizon bare, its lines of surrounding hills bare, all bare far away on the road to Palmyra and Bagdad.



VIEW OF DAMASCUS, SHOWING THE UPPER COURSE OF THE RIVER BARRADA.

In the midst of this plain lies at our feet the vast lake or island of deep verdure, walnuts and apricots waving above, corn and grass below; and in the midst of this mass of foliage rises—striking out its white arms of streets hither and thither, and its white minarets above the trees which embosom them—the City of Damascus. . . . It is this grand aspect of Damascus which at once reveals the long-sustained antiquity of the city. Its situation secured its perpetuity; the first seat of man in leaving, the last on entering, the wide desert of the East. There may be other views in the world more beautiful; there can hardly be another at once so beautiful and so instructive. ‘This is, indeed, worth all the toil and danger it has cost me to come here,’ was the speech of the distinguished historian” (Henry Thos. Buckle) “whose premature death at Damascus almost immediately afterwards gave a mournful significance to his words.”*

The first mention of Damascus in its relations with Israel meets us in connection with David’s extension of his power eastwards to the Euphrates. The Syrians of Damascus came to the help of Hadadezer king of Zobah. They were defeated in a great battle in which they had to mourn 22,000 slain. Their alliance with the king of Zobah was exchanged for subjection to David and to Solomon, the great kings of Israel. Damascus was too important, lying as it did in the centre of Israel’s eastern territory, to be treated with indifference, or to be simply subjected to tribute. It had to be held with a strong hand, and

* *Sinai and Palestine*, p. 414 i.

so we read that David put garrisons in Syria-Damascus (1. Chronicles xviii. 6). In Solomon's reign there was an ominous outbreak of resistance under Rezon, a noble of the northern Syrian court, "who had fled from his lord Hadadezer king of Zobah. And he gathered men unto him and became captain over a band, when David slew them of Zobah: and they went to Damascus, and dwelt therein, and reigned in Damascus. And he was an adversary to Israel all the days of Solomon, besides the mischief that Hadad" (king of Edom) "did; and he abhorred Israel, and reigned over Syria" (1. Kings xi. 23-25). When Solomon died, and the kingdom was suddenly rent asunder, then came the long-desired opportunity of Damascus. It seized what it could of the eastern territory, and carried its ravages by-and-bye into the kingdom of the ten tribes, and to the gates of Samaria.

That was the founding of the dominion which was to harass so long the kingdom of Israel. Even Omri, a statesman and an efficient general, was no match for the Syrian king of his day. As we have just seen, he subdued Moab, but he could not successfully encounter the forces of Damascus. We have no direct record of the terrible humiliation which Israel suffered even under the great Omri; but it is referred to in the confession made by Ben-hadad, when he in his turn had been conquered by Ahab, the son and successor of Omri. We read in 1 Kings xx.34: "And Ben-hadad said unto him, The cities, which my father took from thy father, I will restore; and thou shalt make streets for thee in Damascus, as my father made in Samaria."

This supremacy of Damascus throws a curious light upon an alliance that had a fatal influence upon the ten tribes. After referring to the disasters alluded to in the passage which I have just quoted, Maspero says: "Omri indemnified himself by some successes over the Moabites, and imposed upon them a very heavy tribute in wool and flocks. But this victory was not sufficient to counterbalance his losses. With gains of this kind only, Israel ran a risk of losing its independence, and of remaining always the vassal of Damascus. Omri was sensible of this, and looked around him for some support from without. Egypt was too far distant; the Assyrians could hardly cross the Euphrates; religious and political hatreds put an abyss between him and Judah. He turned to the side of Phœnicia, and obtained for his son Ahab the hand of Jezebel, the daughter of Ithbaal, king of Tyre." *

In this unfortunate alliance we have, therefore, another of those reflections of the time to which our attention is called so often in these researches. Damascus was not subdued, however, by this alliance with Tyre. Ahab, like his father, was harassed continually by the Syrian power, and lost his life at last in a great battle with it at Ramoth-Gilead. There were occasional triumphs for Israel, among which that under Jeroboam II. ought not to be forgotten, for one special reason only, if for no other. The reference to this runs as follows: "In the fifteenth year of Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah, Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel began to reign in

¹ *Histoire Ancienne des Peuples de l'Orient*, p. 371.

Samaria, and reigned forty and one years. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord: he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin. He restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain, according to the word of the Lord God of Israel, which He spake by the hand of His servant Jonah, the son of Amittai the prophet, who was of Gath-hepher. For the Lord saw the affliction of Israel, that it was very bitter: for there was not any shut up, nor any left, nor any helper for Israel. And the Lord said not that He would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven: but He saved them by the hand of Jeroboam the son of Joash. Now the rest of the acts of Jeroboam, and all that he did, and his might, how he warred, and how he recovered Damascus, and Hamath, which belonged to Judah, for Israel, are they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Israel" (II. Kings xiv. 23-28)?

The critics have long ago discovered, as they imagine, the secret of the Books of Kings. They speak constantly of the "pragmatism" of the Books. This means that the author has in view not merely the events, but also their causes and their consequences. And what else, pray, could any history do that is written for our learning? If such books are to be banished from our literature, many of our classics will disappear, as well as the histories of the Bible. But the critics have explained themselves. The interpretation of the events is, according to them,

supplied by the writer of the Books; and it reveals, they hold, his simple, but narrow and superstitious, view of things. It has led him also, they believe, to exaggerate the deeds and the prosperity of *good* kings, and to paint in blacker colours the story of those who followed the religious customs of neighbouring monarchs. De Wette says: "The author had evidently a prophetic and didactic tendency. The chief object he aimed at was to set forth the efficacy of the prophets. . . . We find pragmatic remarks: In 1 Kings xiii. 33, 34, the house of Jeroboam was cut off because he made priests of the lowest of the people, and not of the Levites. . . . National calamities are sent to punish national sins."

Now, if after those words had been written, which tell us that Jeroboam II. "did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord," the critics had been asked to complete the history, no task could well have seemed easier to them. According to "the pragmatism" of the Book of Kings, this piece of the history could end in only one way. It must, of course, be a tale of disaster. If Jeroboam went to war with Damascus, the conflict must end in an overwhelming overthrow for Israel. What, then, are our "pragmatic" friends to say to *this*? For here we find nothing but success. "He restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain. . . . He recovered Damascus and Hamath." Here is unexpected deliverance and amazing triumph. The task that Omri and Ahab could not accomplish, even with the aid of the alliance with Tyre, this bad king triumphantly fulfils.

It is quite true that this success is ascribed to God's pity for His erring people, who had been scourged without avail, and who were now in danger of perishing utterly. This is quite in accord with the claims of the Book—that it is God's Book, and not man's merely; and that it reveals to us the thoughts of God's heart, as well as the deeds of God's hand. But had this narrow view, this alleged falsification of history to serve a supposedly religious purpose, really moulded the book, these triumphs would never have been ascribed to a bad king. The writer would inevitably have told us that Jeroboam's reign closed in disaster, and that the better fate was the portion of a better man. The charge, therefore, of narrow and shallow "pragmatism" recoils upon the men who make it.

The kingdom of Damascus eventually went down before that power which crushed the northern kingdom of Israel as well. The Assyrian kings have left us the story of the invasions in which the kings of Damascus and the kings of Israel are frequently mentioned together. These references we shall deal with as they come before us in connection with the Scripture history. Meanwhile, it is enough that we note, that here again, in this picture which the Books of Kings give us of Damascus, we have another strong guarantee of their perfectly historical character. The Damascus of the Scripture is the very Damascus of the Assyrian monuments. These monuments have recorded the names of its kings, and have indicated the order of their reigns; and that order and these

names are the order and the names contained in the Bible.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ASSYRIANS.

BEFORE we resume our survey of the Scripture history, another people has to be noticed which fills a most important place in the narrative. Egypt had now entered upon a long period of decay, and her grasp of the East had been relaxed. This had given a place for the conquests of Israel under David and Solomon, and had latterly permitted the rise and development of the kingdom of Damascus. But meanwhile, what had been before, and was to be again, a mighty power, was nursing its strength on the extreme east.

The Assyrians were of the same race as the Semite Babylonians; and, like them, spoke a language which was closely allied to that of the Hebrews. They were short of stature, but broad-shouldered, muscular, and athletic. They were a people that seemed to be made for war. "The Assyrians," says Maspero, "were without contradiction, one of the most highly endowed races of further Asia. They had less originality than the Chaldeans, their masters in civilisation, but they had more tenacity and energy. They possessed in the highest degree the military qualities of physical strength, activity, decision, coolness, and bravery that

could not be shaken. They drove out the savage bull, or the lion which abounded in their country, and encountered it face to face.”*

They occupied the basin of the Tigris down to where that river descended into the plains of Chaldea. It was an ideal position for the birth-place and home of a great military power. On the south, they had one strong foe in the Babylonian kingdom; but this only gave them the necessary stimulus to ceaseless vigilance and to the study of the military art. On every other side they were freed from fear. East, north, and west of them there were only weak and isolated tribes, nearly all of them innocent of ambitions, and some of them no doubt glad to take shelter under the wing of a strong neighbour. Their connection with Israel's history was close and long-continued, and will come before us in subsequent chapters. But this connection was the subject of prophecy as well as of history; and the prophets, foretelling their advent and their deeds, have placed on record the picture which presented itself to the eye of inspiration. That it was inspiration we believe; but that is a belief which is not shared by all. It is, therefore, open to us—and, indeed, necessary—to ask whether these descriptions are accurate—whether they reveal true insight, and rightly describe the people whom we now know the Assyrians to have been?

We find one of these descriptions in Isaiah x.: “O Assyria, the rod of Mine anger, and the staff in their hand is Mine indignation. I will send him against an

* *Histoire Ancienne des Peuples de l'Orient*, pp. 298, 299.

hypocritical nation, and against the people of My wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire in the streets. Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few. For he saith, Are not my princes altogether kings? . . . As my hand hath found the kingdoms of the idols, and whose graven images did excel them of Jerusalem and of Samaria; shall I not, as I have done unto Samaria and her idols, so do to Jerusalem and her idols? Wherefore, it shall come to pass, that when the Lord hath performed His whole work upon Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks. For he saith, By the strength of my hand have I done it, and by my wisdom; for I am prudent: and I have removed the bounds of the peoples, and have robbed their treasures, and I have put down the inhabitants like a valiant man; and my hand hath found as a nest the riches of the peoples; and as one gathereth eggs that are left, have I gathered all the earth, and there was none that moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or peeped" (verses 5-14). In a former prediction we read: "The Lord shall bring upon thee, and upon thy people, and upon thy father's house, days that have not come, from the day that Ephraim departed from Judah, even the king of Assyria" (vii. 17).

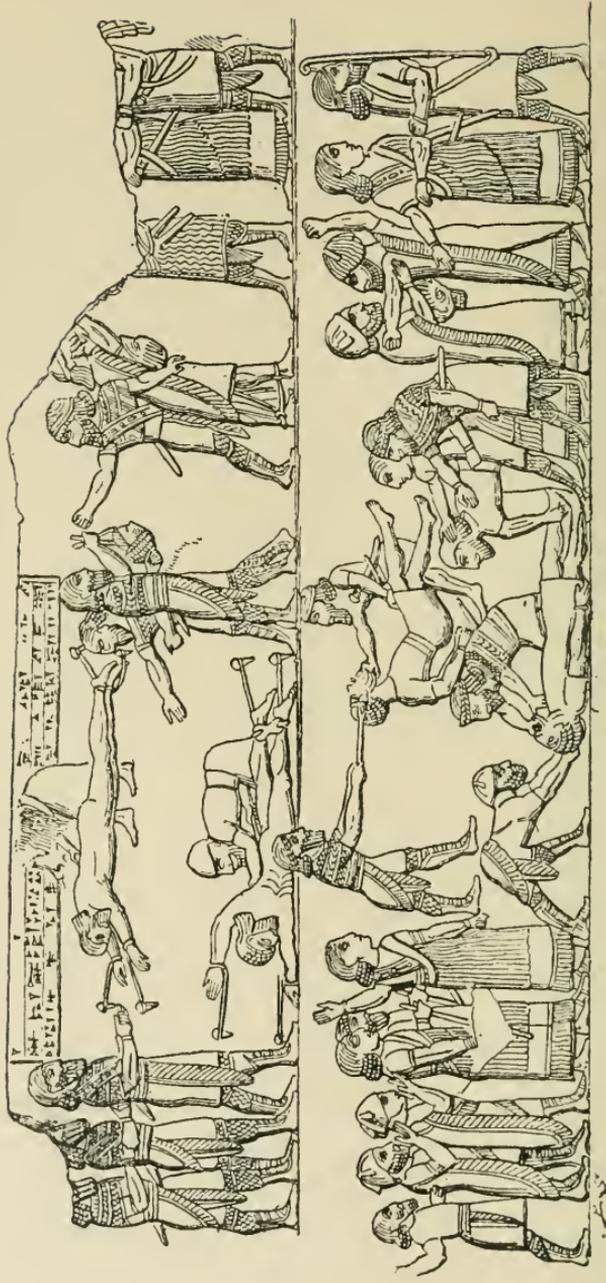
Here the visitation is represented as one of unparalleled terror. The days of the Assyrian were such as Israel and Judah had never experienced from the

time that they had become separate nations. Is there anything to explain this? Were the Assyrians distinguished in any way for special ferocity and systematic cruelty? The former of these two predictions represents them also as filled with self-confidence and unmeasured arrogance. Never, according to the predictions, had people been possessed by such a sense of mastery over their fellows, or had towered so high, in their imagination, above all their adversaries. They are said to be characterised also by an insatiable rapacity, and by an absolute pitilessness. The Assyrian gathers as the eggs from a nest the riches of the peoples, and he will tread Israel down "as the mire in the streets."

How clearly and faithfully the features of this people are depicted there will be seen from the following. Maspero, concluding the description, the beginning of which I have just quoted, says: "Great vices veiled these virtues. They were a bloody people, full of violence and of falsehoods, sensual, haughty to excess, crafty and perfidious *through contempt of their foes*. Few nations have abused more insolently the rights of the strongest. They demolished and burned the cities on their way, impaled, or flayed alive the rebel chiefs: in spite of the *éclat*, and the refinements of their external civilisation, they always remained barbarians."*

But they pictured and described themselves and their acts. The reader will find in the reproduction of the sketch reproduced from their own monuments, their confession of how they treated their prisoners.

* *Ibid.*, p. 299.



ASSYRIANS TORTURING THEIR PRISONERS (from the Assyrian Monuments).

Some of these victims are being flayed alive, and one man's tongue is being pulled out by the roots. Here are a few extracts from the boastful accounts of their campaigns, which the kings of Assyria have left behind them: "I filled with their bodies the ravines and the sunmits of the mountain. I beheaded them, and crowned with their heads the walls of their towns." * "I covered with ruins the districts of Saraoush and of Ammaoush, which from time immemorial had never submitted themselves (to a foe). I measured myself with their armies at the mountain of Arouma, I chastised them, I sowed the soil with their corpses like wild beasts, I occupied their towns, I carried away their gods, I led them away prisoners, them, their goods, and their treasures; I delivered the towns to the flames, I demolished them, I destroyed them, I made them ruins and rubbish, I imposed upon them the heavy yoke of my domination; and, in their presence, I presented my thanksgivings to the god Asshur, my lord." †

Another king had to retrace his steps to put down the revolt of a town in Mesopotamia. The rebels threw down their arms at his approach, and implored him for mercy. He was pitiless. "I slew of them," he says, in his inscription, "one out of every two. I built a wall before the great gates of the city: I flayed the leaders of the revolt, and I covered that wall with their skin. Some were walled up alive in the masonry, some others were impaled along the length of the wall; I flayed a great number of them in my presence,

* *Ibid.*, p. 295. † Pages 296, 297.

and I covered the wall with their skin. I gathered together their heads in the form of crowns, and their transpierced corpses in the form of garlands.”* These extracts, so painful to read, tell us what the words covered when God described these invasions as unparalleled in terribleness, and the Assyrian as the rod in His hand and the staff of His indignation. And here again, as we look from the description to the men and their deeds, we realise once more the absolute truthfulness and the perfect insight of the Word of God.

CHAPTER V.

ASSYRIAN CONFIRMATIONS—A CHRONOLOGICAL DIFFICULTY.

ORIGEN, in his reply to Celsus, which was written in the early part of the third century of our era, says: “The ancient histories of the Assyrians testify that they have had long wars with the Jews, just as the Jewish writers testify to the same effect on their side.” This is the one and only mention of these confirmations contained in any known surviving fragment of ancient literature. And from the silence of other writers, both before and after the time of Origen, we are forced to conclude that we have here a testimony to the Alexandrian catechist’s wide acquaintance even with the less known books of his day. Josephus,

* Page 366.

writing quite 120 years earlier, apparently knows nothing of these Assyrian histories. In his reply to Apion,* it is his aim to call witnesses to the antiquity of the Jews, and to their importance as a nation in ancient times. But he finds only one witness available among all the historians of those lands which warred so long with Israel. It is Berosus, the historian of Chaldea, and he speaks only of Nebuchadnezzar's capture of Jerusalem. Had Josephus known of the Assyrian testimonies, it is exceedingly improbable that he would have been silent regarding them, especially as they abundantly prove the existence of Israel centuries before Nebuchadnezzar was born.

It is worthy of note, however, that though Josephus would have found abundant proof of the antiquity of the Jewish and the Israelitish kingdoms, he would have discovered little that displayed their importance. Compared with the great kingdoms with which the Assyrians measured their strength, Israel and Judah were of small account. This sense of their insignificance is shown in the brevity of the references to them on the earlier Assyrian monuments. Tiglath-Pileser gives hardly one line in his inscription to Ahaz of Judah, and Sargon devotes only two and a-half lines to the conquest of Samaria. Little did the proud conquerors think that it was these brief references that would make their monuments of priceless value. History repeats itself. Rome's estimate of the Christians of the first century can be seen in Tacitus's brief and contemptuous mention of them. And what,

* Pages 19, 20.

one is led to ask, of present-day scorn of missions, and of contempt for the devoted, and therefore lowly, Christian worker? Will these not be equally eloquent of the blindness of the great, and the scientific, and the learned of our time?

When the mounds of Assyria were opened, and Botta brought to the light of day the palace of Sargon, and Layard unearthed ancient Nineveh and uncovered the sculptures and the inscriptions with which Sennacherib had adorned his favourite city, the greatest enthusiasm was excited in this country and on the Continent. The science of Assyriology attracted fresh talent to its heroic attempt to recall the languages and the literature of the ancient empires of the East. Among the new recruits was George Smith, the outline, at least, of whose story is well worthy of repetition. He has told us* how the discoveries to which I have referred fired his youthful imagination; but he has said nothing about the struggles he must have passed through before he acquired, when still a young man, his familiarity with the cuneiform writing, and with the languages of the inscriptions. His studies, prosecuted in the very scanty leisure then at his disposal, led him to see that the key to some of the chief difficulties lay in the annals of Tiglath-Pileser. He wrote to Sir Henry Rawlinson, then at the head of the Assyrian Department in the British Museum, to inquire whether he could have access to the casts and fragments of these inscriptions. The reply did honour to a man whose name will always be remembered as that of one

* *Assyrian Discoveries.*

of the most distinguished founders of the new science. He invited Smith to his work-room in the museum, and placed his materials at his disposal.

His subsequent intercourse with Sir Henry showed how far a really great mind is removed from petty jealousies. One result of George Smith's studies in the Museum was the discovery of the obelisk of Shalmaneser II., and we can imagine something of the student's delight as he read the words: "Tribute of Jehu, son of Omri, I received." The monument also mentioned "Hazael of Syria." This discovery was succeeded by fresh proofs of his skill, and Sir Henry then recommended that the Trustees of the Museum should secure Smith's services to assist him in the preparation of his great work, in which a large number of the Inscriptions in the Museum were placed before the scholars of Europe. Other discoveries followed, in which the names were found of Azariah king of Judah, Pekah king of Israel, and Hoshea king of Israel. He found several accounts, too, of the early conquest of Babylonia by the Elamites, which startled scholars into the recognition of the historical value of the fourteenth chapter of Genesis. Another discovery threw sudden light upon the very beginnings of human history, and invested with fresh interest and reverence some of the first words of the Bible. It was the discovery of a religious Babylonian calendar. There lay the proof before his eyes that the seven-day week and the weekly Sabbath were not confined to the Israelites, but belonged, as the Bible said they did, to the very earliest institutions of the human race. The

Sabbath had been made for man ; and it was bound up, not with the first, or the second, or the third, but with the *seventh* day. A still more startling discovery was the finding of a tablet which contained part of the Babylonian account of the Flood.

These results were published, and the enthusiasm which had greeted the achievements of Layard was revived. The proprietors of *The Telegraph* newspaper allotted a thousand guineas to conduct fresh investigations in Mesopotamia, naming one condition, that George Smith be placed at the head of the expedition. The expedition resulted in large and important additions being made to the precious store which had been already housed in the British Museum. This devoted and gifted student was cut down in the midst of his labours ; but the work has gone on till a flood of light has been poured upon some of the obscurest parts of the Old Testament Scriptures. We have already proved this in our studies in the Pentateuch, Joshua, and Judges. We are now to encounter equally gratifying confirmations of the Books of Kings and of Chronicles, and of the later Books of the Old Testament.

This important part of the history of the monarchies of Judah and of the ten tribes has its accuracy and value vouched for by one fact alone. The names of Assyrian kings are found in the Bible, and the names of Jewish and of Israelitish kings are found upon the monuments of Assyria. These occur, in each case, in the same order, and they belong to the same times. This sweeps aside the allegations about myths and

legends that were so freely made by learned ignorance determined not to admit the supernatural. The pit of the excavator is the grave of the higher criticism, and its occupancy of the receptacle is only a matter of time. It awaits it, and will cover it with a deeper than an Assyrian oblivion. These names show that the actors of the time, and the writers of these books, were looking upon the same things, and were acquainted with the same men. In other words, just as the actors were makers of actual history, the writers were recorders of actual history.

The discoveries have produced striking confirmations also of the Biblical dates. These have been all the more welcome since it had become a commonplace with "liberal" theologians that the dates in Kings and Chronicles were, through the errors of transcribers, in "a most corrupt state." Upon that, a word or two will have to be said by-and-bye. But at a comparatively early period in the researches, a discovery was made which seemed to show that at one point at least the Assyrian records did not agree with the Bible. About the 6th year of Shalmaneser II. he made an expedition into Syria, of which he has left a full account. A strong confederation of the Syrian rulers, numbering 12 kings and princes, barred his way, and a great battle was fought at Karkar, which resulted in their overthrow. They had about 4,000 chariots, a number which may also be commended to the attention of those who imagine the Bible figures to be exaggerated. Among these kings Shalmaneser mentions "Ahab of Israel" (I quote

Schrader's translation).* Ahab had brought into the field with him, says the Assyrian king, "2,000 chariots (and) 10,000 men." Now, Ahab died, according to Usher's Bible Chronology, in 897 B.C.; according to other chronologists, in 900 B.C. But the date of this battle is fixed by the Assyrian chronology at 854 B.C. ! Consequently, if the Assyrian notice of Ahab is to be trusted, that king was alive, and was fighting along with the Hittites and his ancient enemies, the Syrians, 46 or 43 years after the Bible assures us that he was dead and buried !

The jubilation of our critical friends over this violent discord may, from their point of view, be excused. But a fresh reading of what the Assyrian king states may well give them pause. The name "Ahab" is, indeed, in the inscription; but "Israel" is a translation of the words *Mat Sir'-la-ai*, which is viewed with increasing doubt. It may safely be said that, if the name "Ahab" had not been found in this connection, *Sirlai* would not have been identified with Israel. Not only is the vowel "I" in "Israel" wanting at the commencement of the word, but the arrangement of the letters in the two names is different. Add to this that the kings of Israel are several times referred to by this king and by his successors, but *never in a single instance* are they described as kings of Israel. They are spoken of as "sons of Omri," as we shall immediately see, or as "of the land of Omri." Ahab of Sirlai, or Ahab the Sirlite, must have been a ruler—and an important one,

* *Cuneiform Inscriptions and the Old Testament*, vol. i., p. 186.

possessed of a large military force—somewhere in the north, or north-west, of Syria. Besides all this, where was Ahab to find a force of 2,000 chariots? The resources of the country had been brought so low that Ahab was unable to meet the king of Damascus in battle without first calling to his aid Jehoshaphat king of Judah. And it need not trouble us to find the name “Ahab” applied to one who was not an Israelite. Two Hazaels, for example, are mentioned in the inscriptions of Shalmaneser II., a Hazael of Arabia, and the Biblical Hazael of Damascus.

On these grounds, this supposed mention of Ahab of Israel may safely be dismissed.* There are two references to Jehu in inscriptions of the same king, Shalmaneser II. But both of these refer to him as a tributary, and not an opponent, of the Assyrian king. We shall have to speak of these notices and their testimony further on. I mention them now merely on account of the chronological difficulty which they create. Jehu is described as “son of Omri,” a usual designation, among the Assyrians, of the kings of Israel; and there can be no doubt that this is the Jehu mentioned in the Bible. Now, according to the Scripture, Jehu began to reign in 884 B.C., and he reigned in all 28 years (II. Kings x. 36); that is, his reign extended from 884 to 856 B.C. Shalmaneser II. began to reign, according to the Assyrian Eponym Canon, in 860 B.C., and he died in 825 B.C. This shows that he ascended the Assyrian throne four

* See also Dr. Horner's paper on “Biblical Chronology” in *The Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology*, vol. xx., pp. 235-246.

years before the death of Jehu ; and, consequently, it was not impossible for Jehu to have paid him tribute. But Shalmaneser's inscriptions make it quite plain, however, that the tribute was paid *after* the Bible date of Jehu's death. One of the notices belong to the 18th year of Shalmaneser, that is, to events which took place 14 years after Jehu is said to have been dead and buried.

Will the reader kindly excuse these arithmetical details, and try to struggle on with me a step or two further ? For I am sure he will think with me that, when we meet a difficulty like this, it is best to see what is in it. The point to which I ask attention is quite a broad one. There can be no doubt, as we have just seen, that the Assyrian chronology contradicts just here—and remember, it is here only—the chronology of the Bible. *But is the Assyrian chronology to be trusted ?*

It is quite true that the discovery of the Eponym Canon was hailed with delight, and is justly regarded as one of the best results of Assyrian research. It was apparently drawn up with the greatest care, and was received as an absolutely reliable witness. Each year was named after one of the great officials of the Empire, and sometimes after the reigning king. A list, arranged in this careful fashion, is naturally supposed to be correct as far as it goes. But confidence in tables, which were supposed to be quite as accurate, to say the least, has been rudely shaken by subsequent discovery. A chronological tablet was discovered by Mr. Pinches, a

considerable time ago, on which a full reliance was placed. I shall let Professor Sayce tell the story. "In a commercial community," he says, "like that of the Babylonians, accurate dating was a matter of vital importance; the validity of contracts, and of other legal documents, often depended on it; and an endeavour was, therefore, made at an early period to discover a way in which their dates could be ascertained with the least possible amount of difficulty." After describing how the Babylonian list was made up, he continues: "These lists constituted a series of chronological annals which placed Babylonian chronology on a firm and accurate footing, and enabled the later historian, who had access to them, to determine the date of any given event in the past history of the country."*

But the article goes on to speak of another of these lists which was brought to light quite recently. It deals with one of the periods covered by the first tablet, but it is apparently in hopeless disagreement with it. "The chronology," says Professor Sayce, "seems to be exact, and it is, consequently, curious that it disagrees very materially with the chronology of the same period as given in the Dynastic Tablet." One king, according to the first Tablet, reigns 20 years; but, according to the second, 30 years. There is a like difference of 12 years in another instance, and of five in a third.

It will not, therefore, surprise the reader to learn that the accuracy of the Assyrian lists, which con-

* *Proceedings of Biblical Archaeological Society*, vol. xxi., p. 10.

tradicts in this one instance a Bible date, has been challenged. The veteran and distinguished Assyriologist, Professor Oppert, says, in words which are worth quoting: "It has become a sort of fashion to look at the statements of the Books of Kings and Chronicles as quite inexact, ever since the lists of the Assyrian Eponyms were discovered. I protested against this uncritical proceeding 30 years ago, and I still firmly hold to my former opinion. In the present state of Assyriological science, we are enabled to show that the Books of Kings are the real basis of our historical knowledge on the subject, and that the pretended cuneiform chronology must bow to the mathematical correctness of the Holy Scriptures."* He shows that subsequent notices in the Assyrian inscriptions are in perfect accord with Biblical dates, and that, to make the two records agree, it would be necessary to cut out about 50 years out of the Bible dates at this point—a change which no chronologist would dare to attempt. He concludes that just here the Assyrian record has dropped out about 46 or 47 years. His contention is supported by one fact, the plain inference from which has not yet been faced. An eclipse is mentioned in the reign of Assur-daan, and this has been identified with an eclipse which happened in the year 763 B.C. It is because that date has been fixed that we have the date of 860 B.C. for the accession of Shalmaneser II., and all the trouble of this alleged contradiction of the Bible! If the Assyriologists are wrong in fixing on that special eclipse, then the

* *Ibid.*, vol. xx., p. 24.

foundation of the difficulty at once disappears. But Professor Oppert proves that this identification is wrong—*according to the testimony of the list itself!* It says that 121 years before this time Assur-Nazirabal ascended the throne, and he states that the God Samas (the sun) “made an eclipse propitious to me, and mightily I sat on the throne.”* But 121 and 763 make 884, and *there was no eclipse* in that region in 884 B.C. That settles the question as to the correctness of the date 763 B.C. *This was not, and could not have been, the eclipse referred to;* and Professor Oppert claims that, when astronomy is consulted to find two eclipses at Nineveh separated by an interval of 121 years, his contention that a number of years has been left out at this point in the Assyrian list will be fully established.

CHAPTER VI.

OMRI AND HIS CITY.

OUR attention will now be turned with some frequency to the northern kingdom of Israel. We shall have to mark its varying fortunes and its sudden and final eclipse. It may be well, therefore, that we should linger a moment to take note again of the greatest of its monarchs, and to glance at that city

which was destined to remain for long centuries a memento of his greatness.

We are told (1 Kings xvi.) that, when Zimri assassinated Elah, king of Israel, and massacred every male that was either related or friendly, to the royal house, that the army was at a distance besieging Gibbethon "which belonged to the Philistines." The general who had been placed at their head was Omri. It was, perhaps, natural, therefore, that, when tidings of the fearful tragedy reached the camp, the army should elect Omri as king. They needed one who should avenge the fallen, and whose strong hand should quell the turbulence which was certain to follow the events at Tirzah. Seldom has such a choice been more speedily or more fully justified. The camp at Gibbethon was at once broken up, and the army marched for Tirzah. The siege was so hotly pressed, that, in seven days from his usurpation, Zimri, "seeing that the city was taken, went into the palace of the king's house, and burnt the king's house over him with fire, and died." This, however, did not end the trouble. The people who did not belong to the army under Omri apparently favoured another candidate for the vacant throne. "Then were the people of Israel divided into two parts; half of the people followed Tibni, the son of Ginath, to make him king, and half followed Omri." Instead of submitting to a partition of the kingdom, the Israelitish general turned his forces against this new adversary. No details of the war are given. But it was no doubt a long succession of sieges, ending at last with the death of Tibni and

the subjection of his supporters. This struggle had occupied four years; for we read, that while Zimri ascended the throne "in the twenty and seventh year of Asa, king of Judah" (verse 15), it was not till "the thirty and first year of Asa, king of Judah" that Omri began to reign.

But Omri did not cease to exert himself when his opponents were overcome. We have already heard from King Mesha how he had subjected the country of Moab. It is quite evident, also, from the manner in which his name was impressed upon the East, that his arms must have been carried farther. We have already seen evidence of this in Benhadad's statement to Ahab as to "the streets which Ahab's father had made for himself in Damascus," and in the mention made of Omri in the Assyrian inscriptions. For two hundred years after this time the land of Israel is to the Assyrian people, *Mat Omri*, "the country," or land, "of Omri." This clearly indicates that the Assyrians had felt the weight of his arms, and had been compelled to treat with him on terms of equality conceded to none besides in the region of the West.

The only incident in his reign on which we linger, however, is the founding of the new capital of the ten tribes—a capital so wisely chosen that its pre-eminence was as enduring as his own fame. "He bought the hill Samaria of Shemer for two talents of silver" (about £680), "and built on the hill, and called the name of the city which he built after the name of Shemer, owner of the hill, Samaria." There is a token in that naming of the city of a right royal

nature. It reveals the existence in Omri of that genius of tact, that power of doing the right thing in the right way, that wins its way to the heart of a people as few things else can. Shemer found again in the new city the place that he had sold. He had parted with the land, no doubt, in the sad conviction that his name would perish from the place. But Omri makes the name abide, and gives to it a fuller glory.

The Israelitish king's genius, however, guarded well his fame and, for long ages, bound up his own name with the city which he founded. "As Constantine's sagacity," says Dean Stanley, "is fixed by his choice of Constantinople, so is that of Omri, by his choice of Samaria. Six miles from Shechem, in the same well-watered valley, here opening into a wide basin, rises an oblong hill, with steep, yet accessible, sides, and a long level top. This was the mountain of Samaria, or, as it is called in the original, Shômeron, so named after its owner Shemer, who there lived in state, and who sold it to the king for the great sum of two talents of silver. It combined a union not elsewhere found in Palestine—strength, beauty, and fertility. It commanded a full view of the sea and the plain of Sharon on the one hand, and of the vale of Shechem on the other. The town sloped down from the summit of the hill; a broad wall with a terraced top ran round it." *

"Omri," writes Maspero, "turned his attention to a site lying a little to the north-west of Shechem and

* *History of the Jewish Church*, vol. ii., pp. 242, 243.

Mount Ebal, and, at that time, partly covered by the hamlet of Shômeron, or Simrôn—our modern Samaria. His choice was a wise and judicious one, as the rapid development of the city soon proved. It lay on the brow of a rounded hill, which rose in the centre of a wide and deep depression, and was connected, by a narrow ridge, with the surrounding mountains. The valley round it is fertile and well watered, and the mountains are cultivated up to their summits; throughout the whole of Ephraim it would have been difficult to find a site which would compare with it in strength or attractiveness. Omri surrounded his city with substantial ramparts; he built a palace for himself, and a temple in which was enthroned a golden calf similar to those at Dan and Bethel. A population drawn from other nations besides the Israelites flocked into this well-defended stronghold, and Samaria soon came to be for Israel what Jerusalem already was for Judah, an almost impregnable fortress, in which the sovereign entrenched himself, and round which the nation could rally in times of danger. His contemporaries fully realised the importance of this move on Omri's part; his name became inseparably connected in their minds with that of Israel. Samaria and the house of Joseph were for them, henceforth, the house of Omri, Bit-Omri, and the name still clung to them long after Omri had died and his family had become extinct.'*

Samaria was demolished by John Hyrcanus, but was afterwards rebuilt with considerable splendour

* *The Struggle of the Nations*, p. 780.

by Herod the Great, who named it after the Emperor Augustus, calling it *Sebaste*, the Greek name for Augusta. This name still clings to the site. Although noticed from time to time by early travellers, it had practically passed from view in later times. Dr. Robinson, who was privileged to shed so much light upon the Biblical sites of Palestine drew fresh attention to this old Israelitish capital. "The whole hill of Sebüstieh," he writes, "consists of fertile soil; it is now cultivated to the top, and has upon it many olive and fig trees. The ground has been ploughed for centuries; and hence it is now in vain to look here for foundations and stones of the ancient city. They have been either employed in the construction of the later village; or removed from the soil in order to admit the plough; or have been covered over by the long course of tillage. Yet, on approaching the summit, we came suddenly upon an area once surrounded by limestone columns, of which fifteen are still standing and two prostrate. They measured seven feet nine inches in circumference. How many more have been broken up and carried away, no one can tell. . . ."

"The view from the summit of the hill presents a splendid panorama of the fertile basin and the mountains around, teeming with large villages; and includes also a long extent of the Mediterranean, not less than twenty-five degrees." *

Subsequent visitors have been even more profuse in their appreciation of the site selected by Omri.

Dean Stanley, in another work, reproduces the description already quoted, and adds:—"Situated on its steep height, in a plain, itself girt by hills, it was enabled, not less promptly than Jerusalem, to resist the successive assaults made upon it by the Syrian and Assyrian armies. The first were baffled altogether; the second took it only after a three years' siege, that is, three times as long as that which reduced Jerusalem. . . . On that beautiful eminence, looking far over the plain of Sharon and the Mediterranean Sea to the west, and over its own fertile vale to the east, the kings of Israel reigned in a luxury which, for the very reason of its being like that of more Eastern sovereigns, was sure not to be permanent in a race destined for higher purposes. . . . Although its existence has been brought fully to light only within the last few years, it still exhibits some relics of ancient architectural beauty. A long avenue of broken pillars, apparently the main street of Herod's city, here, as at Palmyra and Damascus, adorned by a colonnade on each side, still lines the topmost terrace of the hill. . . . But there is no place of equal eminence in Palestine, with so few great recollections. Compared with Shechem or Jerusalem, it is a mere growth of pleasure and convenience; the city of luxurious princes, not of patriarchs and prophets, priests and kings." *

"Here," says another writer, "is a spot of rare beauty—the perfection of hill and valley, with fine outlines against the sky, and all the wealth which abundant streams could furnish to a susceptible soil.

* *Sinai and Palestine*, pp. 245, 246.

Roberts, in his journal, says: 'It is difficult to conceive any place surpassing this in the beauty of its position or any spot more commanding in situation than that of the ancient capital of Samaria, standing, as it does, in the most fertile portion of Palestine, and enriched by the wealth and taste of the most superb of all its governors, Herod. I never was more delighted than when, slowly winding round the brow of the hill, it first burst upon my path in a wealth of glory and sunshine.'*

Once more, then, the recovery of an ancient site and the references of the contemporaneous records found upon the Assyrian monuments prove the Scripture to be—not legend—but absolutely sober, exact, and reliable history. The account of Omri is confined to twelve verses out of the thirty-four which go to make up the 16th chapter of 1 Kings. Nevertheless, so full are these in their brevity that we have in them all we require to know regarding Omri and his work. So careful and so masterly is the hand that paints the miniature, that the essential features of the man's story are all there, and we have in this short notice the key to the historical problem presented in those references of the Assyrian records to this king's name. For ages after, the territory of the ten tribes is to Assyria *Bit-Omri*, or *Mat-Omri*, "the house," or "the land," of Omri. Omri's name was bound up with that of the new capital, and so was naturally preserved in these after references. To talk of a Book like this as "legendary" is not "scholarly," unless

* *Footsteps of the Man of Galilee.*

freedom from prejudice and the possession of a well-balanced judgment have ceased to be part of the scholar's equipment.

CHAPTER VII.

SHALMANESER, HAZAEL, AND JEHU.

THE growth of Assyria as a military power was slow; but there were early indications of the great part which it was to play in the politics and the fates of the nations of Western Asia. Confined at first to the basin of the Tigris, it gradually extended its conquests westward to the Euphrates. About 1120 B.C. Tiglath-Pileser I. spread the terror of the Assyrian name over northern Syria. A bas-relief of his has been found near the source of the Tigris, which is the earliest Assyrian monument of the kind yet known. It tells us that by the favour of the great gods, Assur, Sammas, and Rammân, his rule extended to the great sea of the land of the West; that is, to the shores of the Mediterranean. In other inscriptions he records his victories over the Syrians, and the tribute of cedar-wood which he imposed upon the conquered lands. This means, no doubt, that the conquered territory included Mount Lebanon.

Archæologists have been struck by the religious devotion which marks the inscriptions of this earliest of known Assyrian conquerors. His great inscription,

after naming the seven great divinities of Assyria, runs thus :—

Great gods, ye who rule heaven and earth,
whose attack is ruin and desolation,
ye who have extended the royalty
of Tiglath-Pileser, the mighty, the well-beloved
to whom you have inclined your heart, the lofty
shepherd
whom you have chosen by the goodwill of your
heart,
whom you have crowned with a lofty crown, on
whom the sovereignty
of the land of Bel you have condescendingly
conferred
with the power, the dignity, the might
which you have granted him.

Here, notwithstanding the proud consciousness of unequalled greatness, there is something that touches us in his recognition that it has not been acquired by his own abilities, but is the gift of heaven. It will enable us to understand also how, under some monarchs at least, the attacks upon distant nations assumed the appearance of a religious war.

The dominion bequeathed by this monarch was lost under his successors. After an interval of two centuries, the Assyrian power revived. One of these later kings, Assurnasirabal, whose statue Mr. Layard unearthed at Nineveh, had an inscription engraved upon the breast of this image. In this he describes himself as the "great king, mighty king, king of the nations, king of Assyria, who reigned from the banks of the Tigris, even to Mount Lebanon, to the great sea. All the countries from the rising of the sun to the setting

of the sun he has subjected to his yoke." But, though Assurnasirabal was master of the sea-coast, and probably, therefore, of the Phœnician and the Philistine cities, there is nothing which indicates that Israel and Judah were disturbed. The hill country presented difficulties; and there was, besides, little promise of such rich booty as was to be found in the cities of the sea-coast. This absence of reference to the holy land is all the more striking when we consider the terms of another part of the inscription. "In those days," so runs the record, "I ascended Mount Lebanon, towards the great sea of the country of Akharri (the Mediterranean). In the great sea I have purified my arms, I have offered a sacrifice to the gods. I have received the tribute of the princes of the sea-coast, of the country of Tyre, of Sidon, of Gebal (Byblos), of Mahallat, of Mahiz, of Kahiz, of Akharri, of the city of Arvad, which is in the midst of the sea—silver, gold, lead, copper, copper vases, silk, and linen goods, their tribute. They embraced my feet."

Here not a single Israelitish or Jewish city is named, so that we may conclude that, during this prince's reign (889-860), the hand of Assyria had not yet been laid upon Israel. Even in the days of his successor, Shalmaneser II. (860-825), there was only a shadow of the coming chastisement. We have already seen how great reason there is to doubt that the Ahab of Sirlai, mentioned in an inscription of Shalmaneser's, is the Ahab of the Bible. His inscriptions, however, lay bare the times which immediately followed the days of Ahab, and one of these which mentions Jehu

is of special interest. The monument, which is an obelisk formed from a single stone, was discovered at Kurkli, near the source of the Tigris, and on the right bank of the river. It is now in the British Museum. It shows us the Assyrian king receiving the tribute of the subjected kingdoms.

The Scripture tells us that Elisha fulfilled the long-delayed mission given at first to Elijah—a mission delayed, without doubt, in mercy to Israel—and Hazael was anointed king of Damascus. We are told that when the prophet came to Damascus, the king of Syria, Hazael's master, was sick; and that, when he heard that the man of God was in the city, Hazael was sent to him with great gifts to inquire whether he should recover. The reply was that the king might recover, but that God had showed Elisha that the king would, nevertheless, certainly die. When he had said this, he looked steadfastly at Hazael till the accomplished courtier was abashed, and his glance fell. The prophet then burst into tears. "And Hazael said, Why weepeth my lord? And he answered, Because I know the evil that thou wilt do unto the children of Israel;" and then follows one of the most graphic pictures of massacre and horror which words have ever expressed (II. Kings viii. 12).

Here, then, we are told that Hazael's predecessor upon the Syrian throne was Benhadad. Now the Book of 2 Kings takes us down to the time when the final judgments had fallen upon Judah and Jerusalem, and when the wreck of the nation had abandoned the country and had gone down into Egypt (xxv. 26).

The Book was, therefore, written more than 300 years after the events, to which we have just referred, had happened. If the critics are correct in their estimate of the character of this Book, and if we have in it nothing better than mere legends and traditions regarding personages and events in Israelitish history, there is one thing which will be abundantly plain to the reader. It will be impossible that a Book, which contains so little that is absolutely reliable in Israelitish history, should be expected to give us accurate information regarding ancient Syria. When 2 Kings was written, the kingdom of Syria was only a dim tradition, if even so much as that. It had ceased to exist nearly two centuries before. Its records had perished with it. Who among the people of Palestine to-day remember the reign of the Mamelukes in Egypt? Would any man inquire *of these* who among those former lords of the Nile valley were in power 200 years ago, and in what order the Mameluke leaders succeeded one another? The idea of seeking such information there would be simply insane. But the Jewish people, in the fifth century B.C., were in an exactly similar position in regard to the history of the Syrian kingdom. Of the names of its kings, of the order of their succession, and even of its very existence as an independent power, they knew nothing. Well, then, if here the Bible gives us absolutely accurate information; if the independence of the Syrian kingdom, the names of its kings, the order in which they follow each other, their character and their deeds, are all mirrored upon the page of Scripture, it is im-

possible to escape from a conclusion which will place us in line with the devoutest believers in the Bible. We shall admit that this Book is not a collection of legends or traditions. We shall own that it has not even gathered together the ideas of the period when the Book was written. For one thing will be startlingly clear. The Book will have lifted the thick curtain of oblivion, and shown us, in this matter, the things of the past as plainly as we see the things of to-day; and, in a word, we shall confess that the history of the Scripture is as supernatural as its predictions.

That is really the truth which modern discovery is pressing upon mind and conscience in these rapidly multiplying confirmations of the Bible. These are displaying the full inspiration, and not merely the accuracy, of the Bible. The inscriptions of Shalmaneser II. have proved that in 2 Kings we are looking upon the Syria of the time. "In my tenth year," he says, "I crossed the Euphrates for the eighth time. . . . In these days Benhadar of Damascus, Irkulini of Hamath, and the twelve kings of the sea coast united their forces and . . . came to deliver battle in my presence." He tells how they were defeated, and how they fled to save their lives, leaving chariots and arms behind them. "In my eleventh year," the chronicle proceeds, "I departed from Nineveh. I crossed the Euphrates for the ninth time at the moment of the inundation." He records that once more Benhadar of Damascus and his allies met him in the field, and were visited with a still

more disastrous overthrow. A third mention of Benhadad occurs in the record of the fourteenth year of the reign of Shalmaneser. It may be well to quote this in view of the incredulity with which the statements of the Scripture as to the numbers sometimes embraced in ancient eastern armies have been received. "In my fourteenth year," he says, "the whole country, innumerable, I gathered together; with 120,000 of my soldiers I crossed the Euphrates at the time of its increase. In those days Benhadad of Damascus, Irkulini of Hamath, and the twelve kings of the shores of the upper and the lower sea assembled their soldiers without number. They marched against me. I joined battle with them. I routed them. I carried away their chariots (and) their horsemen. I took their weapons of war. To save their lives they fled."

Here we have not only the king named with whom the Bible had long made us familiar; but we also note that the Damascus of the Bible is the Damascus of the Assyrian monuments. It is one of the great kingdoms of the west. Benhadad is always named first, and the impression is conveyed that he was the head and soul of the confederacy which strove to resist the advance of the Assyrian conqueror. And now, four years afterwards, we come upon the name of Benhadad's successor, and this we discover to be none other than the courtier who is so livingly presented before us in the Bible. "In my eighteenth year, for the sixteenth time," Shalmaneser continues, "I crossed the Euphrates. Hazael of Damascus confided

in the might of his soldiers, and assembled his soldiers in their multitudes. Of Saniru, a peak of the mountains which are opposite to the Lebanon, he made his fortress. I fought against him. His defeat I accomplished; 6,000 men of his army, with their arms, I destroyed; 1,121 of his chariots, 470 of his horses, with their baggage, I took from him. To save his life he fled. I pursued him. In Damascus, his royal city, I enclosed him. Towards the mountains of the Hauran I went. Cities without number I plundered. I destroyed them. I set them on fire. I led forth their prisoners without number."

Hazael, as will be gathered from the significant silence of his adversary, was not captured. Damascus does not even appear to have been assaulted, nor, in the strict sense of the word, besieged. This is confirmed by the record, which brings the account down three years later. It runs as follows: "In my twenty-first year, I crossed the Euphrates for the twenty-first time. I marched against the cities of Hazael of Damascus. I took four of his cities. The tribute of Tyre, of Sidon, and of Gubal I received." This, too, it will be observed, is far from being a conquest of Damascus, or even a serious blow at the power of the Syrian king. Hazael, like Benhadad, was one of the most powerful adversaries of the Assyrian Empire. Not only then, did these kings appear in the order in which the Bible gives them, but the men, capable and warlike, and the kingdom over which they ruled, a menace and a terror to the neighbouring states, were the men and the kingdom with which the Scrip-

ture has for five and twenty centuries familiarised its readers.

It remains to say one more word as to the Israel of that time. The Scripture makes Hazael of Damascus and Jehu of Israel to be contemporaries. They were called at the same time, and from apparently similar positions to succeed their masters. What do the inscriptions say as to this? The reply can be given in a word. In the record of Shalmaneser's fourteenth year, it will be remembered, Benhadad is mentioned as still reigning at Damascus. In his eighteenth year Benhadad has passed away, and Hazael has taken his place; and *in this same year* the name of Jehu first appears in the inscription. After telling how he enclosed Hazael in his royal city of Damascus, Shalmaneser proceeds: "Towards the mountains of Bahlirahsi, which touch upon the sea, I went. An image of my majesty I made in their midst. In those days the tribute of Tyre, and of Sidon, AND OF JEHU, SON OF OMRI, I received."

Sometime, therefore, between the 14th and the 18th year of Shalmaneser II., Benhadad had died, and Hazael had succeeded him upon the throne. The interval is narrow. In the 14th year of the Assyrian king, Benhadad is alive and well; and Hazael could not, therefore, have been reigning for more than three years, and possibly had reigned for little more than one year, in Shalmaneser's 18th year. And here is Jehu, in this very year, firmly seated upon the throne of Israel, and presenting his tribute to the Assyrian king. The Scripture

represents these men as contemporaries, and contemporaries in these countries and in these very circumstances; and now, when the monuments are unearthed which record the events and give us the names of the personages of this very age, we behold again the men and the circumstances which are mirrored in the Bible. Jehu's presentation of tribute, too, to Shalmaneser, shows how thorough-going the agreement is. No intimation is given that the Assyrian armies had invaded Israel. There is, apparently, no compulsion forcing Jehu to present himself among the tributories. Was there anything, then, which can explain this readiness of his to acknowledge the supremacy of Assyria?

A full answer to the question is found when we turn to the brief record of Jehu's reign contained in 2 Kings. There we read: "But Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel with all his heart: for he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, which made Israel to sin. In those days the Lord began to cut Israel short: and Hazael smote them in all the coasts of Israel; from Jordan eastward, all the land of Gilead, the Gadites, and the Reubenites, and the Manassites, from Aroer, which is by the river Arnon, even Gilead and Bashan" (x. 31-33). Hazael was fulfilling his allotted task, and the judgment of the ten tribes had begun to fall. The prospect of relief from this terrible enemy, which was now afforded by the arrival of the Assyrian armies, must have been eagerly hailed by Jehu and his people. It required no compulsion,

therefore, to bring him to the feet of Shalmaneser. Assyria was a friend and deliverer, for the crushing of Syria promised to be Israel's salvation.

CHAPTER VIII.

ELIJAH THE PROPHET.

THERE are twenty-two chapters in 1 Kings, and twenty-five in 2 Kings—in all, 47 chapters in the two Books. A reflecting reader is accordingly impressed when he notes that nearly 14 chapters—more than one-fourth of the entire contents of the two Books—are devoted to the lives of Elijah and Elisha. These men were not kings, neither were they statesmen. They led no armies; they negotiated no political alliances; they headed no insurrections. The critics have, consequently, asked themselves how it has happened that in Books which contain the history of the kings of Israel and of Judah, these two prophets should occupy so large a place. The replies which they have given naturally reflect their estimate of the Scripture. The entire history is to them a bundle of traditions, and here, they imagine, they find the legend-making process revealed. A writer in *Hasting's Bible Dictionary*, referring to these chapters, says: "Like other historical parts of the Old Testament, they may have lived in the mouths of the people for generations, forming a powerful

means of religious education, before they were committed to writing." In other words, just as eastern story-tellers now make and repeat their entrancing tales of love and wonder, so some unknown writers made and repeated these chapters; and, after they had in this way won a place in the affections of the people, they were transferred to the page of Scripture!

That is the latest form of the new creed now to be submitted to all the Churches, and which is being strenuously imposed meanwhile upon almost all students of Divinity. The so-called "moderate" critics are thus coming into line with their advanced brethren. For in this, as in everything else, they are only decoys to lead the churches into the meshes of practical atheism. The most advanced critics have said nothing worse than this mediating *Bible Dictionary*. Kuenen's reference to these narratives is clouded with exactly similar suspicion and doubt. He cannot build upon them. He cannot even venture an opinion upon their disclosures without the following proviso: "If there be any foundation in fact for the beautiful narrative of Elijah's contest with the prophets of Baal upon Mount Carmel, and his flight to Horeb; if the author, or rather the poetical creator, of this narrative has not altogether lost sight of the historical reality, when he brings forward Elijah as the sole representative of Jahvism, and describes his triumph, not without exaggeration—then," * &c., &c. And *The Encyclopædia Biblica* is only a little more explicit in showing what the critical position means. It speaks

* *The Religion of Israel*, vol. i., pp. 355, 356.

of "the legendary narratives in which his (Elijah's) history is enshrined;" and, referring to what the writer considers to be the oldest part of the narrative, he says: "We must allow time for the creative work of popular fancy, and the rise of partial misconception as to the points at issue in the deadly struggle. The narrative has been mutilated at the beginning," &c.

According to this representation, "the fathers," instead of receiving "the lively Oracles to give unto us" (Acts vii. 38), themselves fashioned them! But the theory proceeds upon an utterly mistaken notion of the purpose of these books. They give to us, not the history of the kings of Israel and of Judah, or even of the people of God during the kingly period. They tell the story of *God's work* among His chosen, though erring, people. This purpose is confessed in almost every line. It stands out conspicuously in the judgment which is passed upon each of the kings. It arrests us when the long-deferred judgment falls upon the Northern kingdom of the ten tribes (see II. Kings xvii.): "Therefore the Lord was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight: there was none left but the tribe of Judah only" (verse 18). It compels us to pause again as the Book nears its close in the account of the extinction of the kingdom of Judah also: "Surely at the commandment of the Lord came this upon Judah, to remove them out of His sight" (xxiv. 3). Now, viewed from this standpoint, the chapters which treat of Elijah and Elisha are a necessary and essential part of this Divinely-planned Book. Elijah intervenes

at a great crisis. The ritualism of Jeroboam had been followed by the open idolatry of Ahab and of Jezebel. The worship of Baal was not only set up within the palace, but was also being forced upon the people. Those who opposed the daring innovation were rooted out of the land. Jezebel had slain the prophets of the Lord until Elijah alone was left. And now, just when the triumph of evil seems to be complete, God intervenes; and the space allotted to the ministry of these heroic servants of God indicates the importance of their mission for Israel and for the world.

The objection to the miraculous character of the narrative similarly disappears upon reflection. The miracles are undoubtedly of an astounding character. The scene upon Carmel when the fire descends from heaven and kindles the drenched sacrifice, and consumes the very stones which form the altar; the raising of the widow's son from the dead; the cure of Naaman; the recovery of the axe-head from the Jordan—these form a series of narratives which has impressed the readers of Scripture in all ages, and which impresses us still. But the reflective reader will recall another fact. There never has been a nation which has had such a sense of the existence, and of the power, and of the character, of God as that which is possessed by the Jew. It is a sense of the Divine existence which has not been fostered by any image or emblem. He is the invisible, and yet to the Jew He is also the known, and the ever-present, God. What has woven this conviction into

the very fibre of the nation's life? Remember the nation's destiny, and everything is clear. The Israelite was to reveal God; and he has revealed Him. But to reveal God, the Israelite had first to know God. Hence, the miracles of Egypt, of Sinai, of the wilderness, and of Palestine. And hence, also the miracles of Elijah, and of Elisha, when faith in the living God had to be planted anew, and when idolatry was to be cast away by the people as a thing of naught.

The history admits of comparison with the results of recent research only at one or two points; but wherever there is contact with these, the Scripture account is, as usual, clearly confirmed. We are told that Elijah's ministry began with the imposition of a famine which afflicted Israel for "three years and six months" (James v. 17). Towards the end of this period, the famine had extended to the sea-coast of Palestine; for, when Elijah leaves the brook Cherith and seeks an asylum at Sarepta in Phœnicia, the widow who is to sustain him is about to prepare a last meal for her child and herself, and then to look death in the face. Was there, then, a famine in Phœnicia at the time? It will be remembered that Jezebel, the wife of Ahab, was the daughter of Ethbaal, the then reigning king of Tyre. Josephus quotes the following from Menander of Ephesus, an ancient Greek historian. "Now, Menander," he says, "mentions this drought in his account of the acts of Ethbaal, king of the Tyrians; where he says thus: 'Under him there was a want of rain from the

month Hyperberetæus till the month Hyperberetæus of the year following; but when he made supplications, there came great thunders. This Ethbaal built the city Botrys, in Phœnicia, and the city Auza, in Lybia.'—By these words," adds Josephus, "he designed the want of rain that was in the days of Ahab; for at that time it was that Ethbaal also reigned over the Tyrians, as Menander informs us."*

This famine, it will be noticed, is caused by a marked absence of rain. Though a usual cause of famine in the East, it is not the only one, and in this respect the famine mentioned by Menander closely agrees with that recorded in the Scripture. In announcing the plague, "Elijah the Tishbite . . . said unto Ahab . . . there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word" (1. Kings xvii. 1). This intense drought (says Menander) extends, *during the last year*, to Tyre. This is also in strict accord with the Scripture, which tells us that it was in the end of the famine, and after the drought had become so intense in Israel that the brook Cherith was dried up, that Elijah went to spend the last months at Sarepta, in Phœnicia. The famine (according to the Phœnician account) ends also with a remarkable storm which Ethbaal ascribes to Baal's answer to his intercessions. The storm mentioned in the Scripture came from the Mediterranean sea, and therefore *passed over Tyre* on its way to Carmel and the territory of the ten tribes, and it was one which those who witnessed it would long remember. The prophet's servant came

* *Antiquities*, VIII., 13, 2.

and said: "Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea like a man's hand. . . . And it came to pass in the meanwhile, that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain" (1. Kings xviii. 44, 45). This notice, valuable for its confirmation of the Scripture, gives us fresh insight into the contest of which the Israelites were then spectators. For there is an evident reason why, at its climax, the Phœnicians should share in Israel's affliction. It was Baal, the idol of the Phœnicians, that was on its trial. Could this so-called deity save those who were now being asked to put their trust in him? Could he save even that land which had adored and praised him for long centuries? There can be no doubt that Ethbaal had presented the fearful offerings, and had besieged the Tyrian altars with the hideous rites, which the Baal-worship demanded; and, nevertheless, during all those fatal months "there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded" (1. Kings xviii. 29). Baal had thus had a long trial in his own favoured land before his claims were finally tested and disproved at Carmel.

Recent researches in Palestine and a fuller knowledge of the Baal-worship have seriously discredited the critical verdict as to the unhistorical character of the scene on Carmel. The brief but vivid account of the meeting of Elijah and Ahab (1. Kings xviii. 17-19) bears the inimitable stamp of reality. The words reveal the men. Elijah bids Ahab assemble Israel at Carmel along with the prophets of Baal

and the prophets of Astartè. The royal edict is issued, and the tribes are gathered. The lonely prophet addresses the multitude. He makes no reference to the test to which Baal has already been subjected; for from this prolonged and fearful infliction their new god has not delivered them. He proposes that the pretensions of Jehovah and of Baal be put to the proof there and then. Baal's prophets are 450 men: he alone is left of the prophets of Jehovah. He asks the people to give them two bullocks. Let the prophets of Baal take one bullock and prepare it for an offering. Let them raise an altar, lay the wood, and place the offering on it, but put no fire under. Elijah will do likewise; "and the god that answereth by fire let him be God. And all the people answered and said: It is well spoken."

The arrangement being thus ratified, the worshippers of Baal had to submit to the ordeal. Their sacrifice was selected, slain, and prepared. They "called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying: O Baal, hear us! But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made. And it came to pass at noon that Elijah mocked them, and said, 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. And they cried aloud and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets till the blood gushed out upon them" (verses 26-28).

The Phœnician inscriptions have hitherto yielded

almost no information regarding Baal and his worship. The only description of the worship of the great divinity of Tyre and Sidon known to be in existence is this which is embalmed in the record of the scene on Carmel. But the Phœnician sailors and merchants had planted the worship of Baal in their distant colonies, and they bore it with them wherever they secured a foothold in foreign lands. We learn from an Egyptian monument that Baal had a temple at Memphis, and among the ruins of this city a statuette has been found representing Baal with a priest and a worshipper offering their adoration. After the conquests of Alexander Baal was admitted as a Greek god, and was identified with Zeus and Jupiter. An altar with an inscription was found in 1810, at Vaison, in France, which shows that Baal was worshipped even in Gaul.*

It is remarkable, therefore, that, notwithstanding this wide extension of Baal-worship, so little information should have come down to us regarding its characteristics. There is one exception, however, which, slight as it first appears, is deeply significant. We are told in 1 Kings xviii. 26, that the priests "leaped upon (or around) the altar which was made." That is, they engaged in a sacred dance which thus seems to have formed a part of the customary worship of the god. This has been strangely confirmed by the discovery of an ancient temple of Baal at Beyrouth. In the inscriptions found among the ruins he is called *Baal-Markōd*, that is, "Baal of the

* See Vigouroux, *La Bible et les Decouvertes Modernes* (sixth edition), vol. iii., p. 598.

dance." The dance, therefore, entered, just as the Scripture represents it to have done, into the worship of the Tyrian god.

But we are enabled to go farther than this. The worship of Baal was closely connected with that of Astartè, the female divinity so closely associated with him. Her worship had come with his into Israel as a matter of course, and, while Baal had his 450 priests, she had 400 (verse 19, where we have to read Asherah, or Astartè, for "groves.") It is natural to conclude that these would be worshipped with similar rites, and that if we could learn how Astartè was honoured by her votaries, we should have some insight into the worship of her consort. Now this we are able to obtain, for the worship of the Syrian goddess became the rage of antiquity, and its novelty attracted the attention and exercised the pens of Greek and Roman writers. Her priests were called "Galli," a name derived, it is said, from a river in Phrygia named *Gallos*, the waters of which were alleged to fill with frenzy those who drank them. The name thus mockingly applied to the priests of the goddess is in itself a testimony to the character of the rites by which she was worshipped.

The bloody nature rites, by which the Syrian goddess was worshipped, attracted, as I have said, the attention of ancient writers. Lucian says: "On certain special days the multitude assembles in the temple, and some of the numerous Galli along with the men consecrated to the goddess, of whom I have spoken, go through their rites. They lacerate their

arms, and smite one another upon the back. Among the assistants a large number play the flute, others clash the cymbals, and others chant the sacred songs." Apuleius, speaking of the Galli, says: "The day following, after having put on garments of various colours so as to be arrayed in a hideous fashion, having besmeared their faces with a coat of clay, and painted themselves round the eyes, they sally forth with small mitres on their heads and covered with yellow cloaks, some of silk and others of linen. . . . All have yellow stockings upon their feet. . . . Tucking up their sleeves even to the shoulder, they raise in the air large knives and axes, and leap about like furies, for the tones of the flute increase still more their frenzy and their stampings. After having passed in front of a number of wretched cabins, they come to the country house of a wealthy proprietor, and at the entrance they commence to yell and make a frightful uproar. They abandon themselves to fanatical evolutions. Throwing back the head, and turning the neck in every possible way, they make their long-hanging hair whirl round like a wheel. At intervals they bite their flesh. At last, with the double-edged knives which they carry, they make all sorts of incisions on their arms.

"However, one of them displays still more insane transports. Every moment he draws from his breast profound groans, like one inspired who is not able to retain the Divine breath with which he is filled, and he appears to succumb to the most violent delirium. . . . He commences his clamorous and lying

ramblings by accusing himself of some sacrilegious indiscretion, and he announces that he is about to inflict upon himself the punishment due for his fearful fault. He then seizes a whip specially made for these effeminate men. . . . He inflicts upon himself repeated blows, opposing to the pain of this punishment a truly marvellous endurance. From the slashing of the knives and from the bruises of the whips the soil is reddened with the blood of those womanish beings; and it was not without agitation that I saw it run from their wounds in long streams."

Catullus has also in his "Atys" pictured the worship of the mother goddess, and the mental experiences of her devotees. "Atys," he writes, "borne in swift barque over the deep seas, eagerly touched with impetuous foot the Phrygian Grove, and approaches the shady wood-girt abodes of the goddess. There, stung with raging madness, wandering in mind, with sharp flint he rolled down on himself those weights. And when he knew himself no more a man, bespattering the ground with fresh blood, as an excited woman, he seized with snowy hands the light timbrel—the timbrel, the trumpet of Cybele, the instruments of thy sacred rites, O mother. Brandishing in his tender fingers the hollow bull-skin, trembling, he began to chant thus to his comrades: 'Arise, come together, O Galli, to the deep groves of Cybele; come together, you wandering cattle of your mistress Dindymena, you who, as exiles, are seeking abodes in a strange land, you who have

under my leadership followed my footsteps, and have borne the rapid seas, the fierceness of the deep, and have, with excessive hatred of Venus, mutilated your bodies; come, with impetuous wanderings rejoice your master's mind. Let slow-minded hesitation give way: come, follow to the Phrygian home of Cybele, to the Phrygian groves of the goddess; where sounds the voice of cymbals, where re-echo the timbrels, where solemnly sings with bent reed the Phrygian piper, where the ivy-wreathed maenads violently toss their heads, where the sacred shrines shake with shrill shrieks, where the wandering troop of the goddess is wont to flit: whither we must hasten with maddened dancing.'"

It will be observed that the leaping, the cries, and "the cutting of themselves with knives and lancets after their manner till the blood gushed out upon them" (verse 29), were retained in the worship of "the Syrian goddess." That this was indeed the consort of Baal seems to be indicated by what Livy tells us of the introduction of the worship of "the great mother" into Rome. The Roman Republic was struggling with Hannibal and his Carthaginian hosts, when in 205 B.C. an oracle, he tells us, was drawn from the Sibylline books which said that the enemy of the Republic would be driven from Italy if "the mother" of Ida were brought to Rome. An embassy was sent to Attalus, king of Pergamos, who sent a sacred stone which was esteemed to be "the mother of the gods." One naturally asks why *her* presence in Rome should have been judged

sufficient to drive Hannibal out of Italy? What relation was there between her and the Carthaginian, or Phœnician, host? When we understand that she was really the great Phœnician goddess, the consort of the great Phœnician god Baal, and that this stone was supposed to be her most sacred image, the expectation of the Romans immediately assumes, from their point of view, a certain reasonableness. This was Hannibal's acknowledged mistress; and if the Romans gained her favour and she granted their prayer for deliverance from this fearful scourge, Hannibal must needs obey and depart.

When Baal had been fully proved, and his priests had invoked him in vain from morning till the time of the evening sacrifice with cries and frantic leapings and blood, Elijah gathered the people around himself. In their presence, he "took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the Lord came, saying, Israel shall be thy name: and with the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord" (1. Kings xviii. 31, 32). He next made a trench about the altar, "as great as would contain two measures of seed." That is, a trench was dug around the altar so broad that it formed a space which it would have taken two seahs of seed (a little over two pecks) to sow. This means that the trench was very wide, the object apparently being to remove the suspicion that fire was conveyed to the sacrifice by some deception palmed off upon the people. The depth of the trench was another answer to doubt. But Elijah furnishes overwhelming

proof that, if *God* will not answer by fire, no other power will be able to kindle the sacrifice. When the wood had been arranged, and the parts of the victim were laid upon it, he said: "Fill four barrels with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice and on the wood. And he said, Do it the second time. And they did it the second time. And he said, Do it the third time. And they did it the third time. And the water ran round about the altar" (verses 33-35). And as if even this were not enough, "he filled the trench also with water (35). Then, when the moment had come to offer the evening sacrifice, Elijah "came near and said, Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that Thou art God in Israel, and that I am Thy servant, and that I have done all these things at Thy word. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that Thou art the Lord God, and that Thou hast turned their heart back again" (36, 37). There are here no self-inflicted lacerations or scourgings; there are no mad leapings or whirlings; there are no outcries. There is only the quiet approach, and the fervent heart's cry. "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" (38, 39).

CHAPTER IX.

ELIJAH THE PROPHET (*Continued*).

SEVERAL things are implied in the narrative, part of which we quoted at the close of the last chapter. The scene is placed in Carmel, a well-known range in the north of Palestine. A place is found on the mountain (so the narrative says) for a large assembly, which includes as a very small part of it the 450 prophets of Baal. There is space enough for their altar, and for that of the Lord, which Elijah found thrown down, and which he re-erected, to be placed. There is water enough in the neighbourhood to yield the large supply with which Elijah drenched the altar and filled the trench. And, last of all, there is a spot on some neighbouring height or peak from which the distant Mediterranean can be seen. Have the recent researches in Palestine found any place on the Carmel range which combines these features, or is this account of the great decision between Jehovah and Baal the creation of popular fancy?

“No site in Palestine,” says Tristram, “is more indisputable than that of the little hollow in the knoll 300 feet below us”—he was standing on the edge of a cliff 1,000 feet above the plain beneath—“where the Lord God of Elijah manifested His divinity before Ahab and assembled Israel.” The site has also ancient testimony in its favour, for the great event had

evidently left its impress so deeply upon the minds of the Israelites and of the surrounding peoples that the report of it had travelled far and lingered long. Iamblichus, the biographer of the great Greek philosopher, Pythagoras, who died in the year 470 B.C., tells us that the latter was led to visit Carmel because of its reputation as a sacred place, and he himself afterwards made a pilgrimage to the same spot; and Tacitus relates that Vespasian came to Carmel to consult the far-famed oracle there at a time when the promptings of ambition were struggling in his breast with the fears inspired by prudence. "Between Syria and Judea," writes the Roman historian, "stands a mountain known by the name of Mount Carmel, on the top of which a god is worshipped, *under no other title than that of the place*; and, according to ancient usage, *without a temple, or even a statue*. An altar is erected in the open air, and there adoration is presented to the presiding deity. On this spot Vespasian offered a sacrifice."*

It is remarkable that these two points should be particularised—(1) that the Divinity whose altar stood on Carmel was not identified with any of the heathen gods, and, indeed, bore no name; and (2) that there was neither temple nor statue, but an altar only. It is hard to resist the conclusion that this famed altar was no other than the altar of Elijah, on which the consuming fire fell from heaven. But the place had, nevertheless, completely passed from the knowledge of learned Europe, and had escaped the researches of

* *Historia*, 11. 78.

even so thorough an observer as Dr. Robinson. It was recovered quite independently by two travellers, by Van de Velde in 1852, and by Dean Stanley in 1853; and now that the spot has been found, it answers in every particular to the descriptions and the allusions of the Scripture narrative, proving once more that the Bible bears no impress of wavering tradition or of ignorant fancy, but that its every word is steeped in unerring knowledge.

This is the unanimous testimony of all who have visited the place, or who have weighed traveller's reports. "It is an interesting question," says Prof. Rawlinson, "what was the exact scene of this extraordinary contest. Carmel is a long and narrow ridge, stretching in a nearly straight line, which runs from N.N.W. to S.S.E., from the shores of the Mediterranean inland, a distance of more than twelve miles. It terminates towards the north-west in a bluff about 600 feet high; and towards the south-east in another similar but much loftier bluff, the elevation of which is estimated at 1,600 feet. Even this, however, is not its highest point. About four miles from the south-eastern bluff, at the village of Esfieh, the mountain culminates, attaining an altitude of 1,728 feet. Local tradition places the site of Elijah's sacrifice not on the highest point, but at the south-eastern extremity of the ridge, where a shapeless ruin, composed of great hewn stones, and standing amid thick bushes of dwarf-oak, in the near vicinity of a perennial spring, is known to the Arabs as *El-Maharrakah*, 'the place of burning,' or 'the sacrifice.' All the circumstances of the locality

adapt it for the scene of the contest. It is the part of the mountain nearest to Jezreel, which is in full sight." The river Kishon flows to the north of the range, and runs along in the narrow valley between Carmel and the heights to the north. To have gone down to the river Kishon, Elijah and the people must have been on the *eastern* side of the range. This entirely agrees with the implied necessity of ascending to the *top* of the mountain to behold the sea; for from the *western* side of the range the sea is everywhere visible. It is on this eastern side that *El-Mahraka* is situated, and it is in full view of the Kishon. It is situated in a large and comparatively level space, considerably below the top of the range. There is still a well near the place of the altar, which, even in its decayed state, Colonel Conder found to contain in its cool depths a considerable amount of water. Dr. Thomson on one occasion found it dry in the heat of summer, and suggests that water was brought for the sacrifice from the springs of the Kishon. But the ruined well (which is still declared by the natives to contain water in the hottest season), can hardly be judged any more than that of Sychar by its present condition.

Another difficulty which has been raised is, strangely enough, due to an oversight. Col. Conder says, "we require a site for the altar near the summit, or the prophet's servant must have taken an hour at least for each journey;" and, then, if a site at the summit is chosen, there comes in, he says, the difficulty about the water. But it has not been noticed that, when Elijah returns to pray, *he does not go back*

to the altar. We are told, on the contrary, that he "went up to the *top* of Carmel" (1. Kings xviii. 42). Here, again, a supposed difficulty merely serves to emphasize the absolute agreement of the narrative with the characteristic features of the locality. The altar had been on the lower level, where "the place of burning" and the adjoining well are now found; and, just because it would have taken the servant an hour each journey from the point at which the sea was visible to the altar, Elijah, after the slaughter of the priests and his counsel to Ahab, passed the place of the altar and "went up to the top of Carmel."

There is a remarkable notice in 2 Chron. xxi. 12-15 of a message sent by Elijah to Jehoram king of Judah. We are told that "there came a writing to him from Elijah the prophet, saying, Thus saith the Lord God of David thy father, Because thou hast not walked in the ways of Jehoshaphat thy father, nor in the ways of Asa king of Judah, but hast walked in the way of the kings of Israel, and hast made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to go a whoring, like to the whoredoms of the house of Ahab, and also hast slain thy brethren of thy father's house, which were better than thyself: behold, with a great plague will the Lord smite thy people, and thy children, and thy wives, and all thy goods: And thou shalt have great sickness by disease of thy bowels, until thy bowels fall out by reason of the sickness day by day."

This has been made the occasion of sneers and blunders; Elijah, it is said, had (according to the

chronology of the Books of Kings) passed away years before Jehoram of Judah began to reign. This must, therefore, have been a letter from a dead prophet—a communication from the other world. To meet this objection even so careful a book as *The Speaker's Commentary* feels itself called upon to re-adjust the Scripture. "It follows," says the writer, "that the account of his (Elijah's) translation occurs in Kings out of its chronological order." This conclusion is reached because of the assumption that Jehoram did not begin to reign till after the death of his father Jehoshaphat. "It proves," says the same writer, "that the prophet was still upon the earth after the death of Jehoshaphat—when it follows (1) that the account of his translation occurs in Kings out of its chronological order; and (2) that Elisha, who prophesied in the time of Jehoshaphat (II. Kings iii. 11-19), commenced his public ministry before his master's translation." But if this explanation were to be accepted, we should only have exchanged one difficulty for another that would be hardly less formidable. The Scripture tells us that Elisha received his endowment for service only as Elijah was taken up into heaven. Are we to imagine that Elisha had already begun his public ministry, and had worked so mighty a miracle as that narrated in the passage referred to before he had received the spiritual endowment for which he entreated? And if he had done this, what need had he to beg that favour? It is plain that no relief is to be had by adopting the theory of this generally excellent commentary.

But there is no occasion whatever to plunge ourselves into fresh difficulties, or even to be distressed over this supposed inconsistency. If Jehoram king of Judah was already reigning in the days of Elijah, and had, indeed, reigned so long as to manifest the spirit and to do the deeds of which the prophet's letter accuses him, we may well be allowed to ask—where is the difficulty?

The chronology of the Books of Kings calls for a more careful study than it seems to have yet received. It is quite evident from their statements that a king frequently associated with himself the son whom he had selected as his successor. This was probably due to the unsettled political conditions of the time; but, whatever the explanation may be, there is no room for doubt as to the fact. By refusing to admit this, and by impatient attempts to cut the tangled threads of the succession dates, the chronology has been thrown into utter confusion. Having engaged in this mad work, and having surrounded themselves with a mass of wreckage, we can hardly be astonished when certain commentators crowned their efforts by assertions, as reckless as they are unworthy, about "the corruption of the numbers" in Kings and Chronicles.

Without reverent respect for authorities, and without patience in the attempt to follow and to harmonise their statements, no historian has ever succeeded in presenting a reliable account of past events to his contemporaries. How great the patience is which is demanded from the interpreter of Scripture will be

seen from the two following notices which also concern us in our present inquiry. In 2 Kings i. 17 we are told that Ahaziah the son of Ahab died, and that his brother Jehoram succeeded to the sovereignty of Israel "in the second year of Jehoram, king of Judah." This means that Jehoram of Judah had already reigned one full year and part of a second year before his namesake in Israel ascended the throne. Now, compare this with the statement in the same Book (II. Kings viii. 16) that "in the fifth year of Joram the son of Ahab, king of Israel Jehoram, the son of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, began to reign." This means quite as plainly that Jehoram of Judah began his reign only when his namesake of Israel had already reigned four full years, and part of a fifth! Quite naturally, in view of this, a hasty man—I shall not say a commentator, for no commentator can afford to be a hasty man—will ask us whether there has ever been a flatter or more flagrant self-contradiction?

When, however, we allow the statements of the history to guide us, every appearance of contradiction disappears, and welcome light breaks upon us. We are told (1. Kings xxii. 42) that Jehoshaphat reigned in all twenty-five years. In the same chapter we learn (verse 51) that Ahaziah, the son of Ahab, ascended the throne of Israel in the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat. Now let this date be marked; for it was a year in which Jehoshaphat had taken one of the most important steps in his entire career. He had marched out of Judea with a Jewish army to join Ahab in his attack upon Syria. I do not insist that it was extremely

natural that, putting his life in this way upon the hazard of a battle, a wise man like Jehoshaphat would have made some provision for the government of his own country; and that, having many sons, and knowing the risk of anarchy to which, in the event of his death, the country might be exposed through their ambitions, he had in some way secured the peaceable possession of the throne to the son whom he had selected for that honour. I do not, I repeat, insist upon the likelihood of this. I ask only that this seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, be marked as the year in which Ahaziah, king of Israel, began to reign.

Let us now read verse 51 again: "Ahaziah, the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, *and reigned two years* over Israel." 2 Kings i. tells us that his death was caused by a fall; but the one matter which we have to bear in mind now is that his short reign ended in the nineteenth year of Jehoshaphat. Let us now turn to 2 Kings i. 17: "So he died according to the word which Elijah had spoken, and Jehoram reigned in his stead *in the second year of Jehoram*, the son of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, because he" (that is, Ahaziah) "had no son." Here Jehoram, Ahaziah's brother, immediately succeeds Ahaziah upon the throne of Israel. He did this, as we have seen, in the nineteenth year of Jehoshaphat: but we are here told this was also the second year of Jehoram of Judah. Consequently Jehoram of Judah must have begun to reign in the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat, his

father. In other words, he began his career as king *in the very year* in which his father left Jerusalem to enter upon the Syrian campaign. Here there is surely a plain intimation that there was a co-regency in Judah, and that the elevation of Jehoram of Judah took place in the seventeenth year of his father's reign. It also seems to intimate that Jehoram's was not a merely nominal reign, and that the will which now directed the sovereignty of Judah was the son's, and not the father's. Something has apparently been done to make him the outstanding personage of the two sovereigns of Judah, and when Jehoram of Israel's accession has to be dated, this is done in terms of the reign of Jehoram, and not of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah.

We now approach the huge difficulty, as some would name it, of 2 Kings viii. 16. There we read: "And in the fifth year of Joram, the son of Ahab, king of Israel, Jehoshaphat being then king of Judah, Jehoram, the son of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, began to reign." In other words, when Jehoram of Israel had reigned four years and some months, Jehoram of Judah became king in the life-time of his father. That is, we now learn that in six or seven years after the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat—in other words, in the 23rd or 24th year of his reign—he surrenders the sovereignty entirely to his son. We do not know the circumstances, and, therefore, can only guess at them. Perhaps some failure of mental or of bodily vigour may have warned the good king that it was time to retire from the fatigue and the pomp of royalty. But, whatever

led to it, the final step was then taken, and Jehoram reigned alone in Judah. Thus our difficulties, when patiently questioned, have each come burdened with special information. They help us to piece out the story, and to lift the curtain of oblivion from a vanished past.

Let us now return to our first difficulty with which all this has the closest possible connection. The letter of Elijah to Jehoram of Judah *was not a missive from the other world*—a letter dropped down from heaven. Jehoram of Judah was reigning before Elijah passed away from the earth. He was already in the second year of his reign when Ahaziah of Israel died, and while Elijah was still exercising his ministry among the ten tribes. It is *after* the record of Ahaziah's death that we meet the account of Elijah's translation. What interval separated the two events we do not know. Seeing that the prophet's ministry was concluded before the next king's reign was ended, clear arrangement was secured by concluding Elijah's story before that of Jehoram of Israel was begun. The scene on the other side of Jordan may, therefore, have occurred a considerable time after the death of Ahaziah. In any case, Elijah did not pass away until some time after Jehoram of Israel had ascended the throne, and until Jehoram of Judah had still further opportunities of displaying the spirit that was in him. The fearful fratricides with which Elijah charges him had been perpetrated; and, just as Ahab had quailed before the stern denunciations of the prophet, so Ahab's son-in-law quailed before them

now. Both had reason enough to tremble. Jehoram's murders were probably as adroitly managed as Naboth's was. Jezebel's counsel, we may well believe, was not lacking to her willing pupil. And now the servant of Jehovah, who has pronounced the doom of the tigress and her brood, completes his task in the despatch of the letter in which Jehoram reads the sentence pronounced upon him by Him with whom he had to do.

CHAPTER X.

THE PROPHET ELISHA.

WHEN Elijah was sent back from Sinai to resume his work among the ten tribes, he was commanded to go to the wilderness of Damascus (1. Kings xix. 15). There he, no doubt, abode in security till Jezebel's frenzy had passed away; but, meanwhile, God provided him a companion for his enforced solitude, and a co-worker in his after labours. In the selection of this like-minded servant and successor for the great prophet, the Lord (we naturally imagine) might have turned to the Schools of the Prophets and would have selected one from among those who had devoted and separated themselves for His service. These Schools of the Prophets, apparently originally founded by Samuel, had lived on, notwithstanding Israel's idolatry. They seem to have been fostered, and, perhaps, also extended, by Elijah

himself. But to none of these is he now told to turn. And such has often been the Lord's way. The Schools of the Prophets have been passed by—not because God repudiated them or had no delight in them—but because He would send them the blessing which they needed. They were reminded then, as they have been since reminded again and again, that God's hand is full of blessing, by the side of which the mere results of art, and of culture, and of self-devotion, and of hard training suddenly sink into utter insignificance. Paul was chosen even from those who were outside the Church of Christ; and the result was a deeper sense of the Divine power and of the Divine mercy. It was a baptism for the Church of fresh faith and joy; and the choosing of Elisha brought with it like stimulus for the faithful of his time.

The knowledge, which has increased so rapidly of late years, of the places and the customs of Palestine, enables us to follow the hints in the narrative—hints which are overwhelming proof that we are, in these narratives, in contact with a Mind that sees everything and that understands everything. Elijah is commanded to betake himself to the wilderness of Damascus—the great desert to the north-east of Israel. There he would be secure from the vengeance of the maddened queen of Israel. But on his way he comes to Abel-meholah, and communicates the Divine call to Elisha: “So he departed thence, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was ploughing with twelve yoke of oxen before him and he with the twelfth: and Elijah passed by him”—literally, *crossed*

over to him—"and cast his mantle upon him" (I. Kings xix. 19). Here we learn that Elijah has evidently passed up along the way by which Israel came originally from the wilderness to the land of their possession. He has come up by Edom and Moab, and is passing along the east of the Jordan to the wilderness of Damascus; for "the crossing over," which is mentioned, seems to apply to his having forded the Jordan.

Light is similarly thrown upon Elisha's circumstances. He is a young man, and his parents and himself have their place among the poor cultivators, the peasantry of the Jordan valley. Abel-meholah lies about twenty miles to the south of the Lake of Galilee, and not far from the bank of the Jordan. The soil was rich and fruitful, but Israel's decline had begun, and the insecurity, which is the curse of the land to-day, was blighting its industries then. The Syrian bands and the Arab marauders could easily cross the ford, swoop down upon the scattered toilers, and be far away with their booty before forces could be gathered to pursue them. This seems to be the reason why Elisha is ploughing with so many neighbours; for he apparently owns only that one pair of bullocks which he slays to make a feast for the neighbours and friends who were with them. "We read," writes Dr. Thomson, "that Elijah found Elisha, the son of Shaphat, ploughing, with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth. We are not to suppose that he had a team of twelve yoke of oxen before him. If you count these here

at work, you find seven separate ploughs following one after another as closely as possible; and I have seen more than a dozen of them thus at work. To understand the reason of this, several things must be taken into account. First, that the arable lands of nearly all villages are cultivated in common; then, that Arab farmers delight to work together in companies, partly for mutual protection, and in part from their love of gossip; and as they sow no more ground than they can plough during the day, one sower will answer for the entire company." * Elisha's feast told of the joy of his soul, and of his utter breaking with his past to enter untrammelled upon the career which the mercy of God had so suddenly opened to him.

Years pass, and we learn nothing of Elisha. God's training is long and slow. Little seems to be accomplished till the moment comes when the man of God is revealed. The next glimpse we have of Elisha is as Elijah and his servant go down for the last time by the mountain pass from Bethel to Jericho. It is a silent journey; for there is that in both hearts of which nothing can be said. It is one of those crises in mortal lives when the poverty of speech stands confessed, and talk is desecration. They cross the Jordan, miraculously divided before their feet by the stroke of the prophet's mantle (II. Kings ii. 8)—the Lord's reminder to them both that the God of Israel's glorious past was also their God; and, therefore, a stimulus to Elijah's hope and to Elisha's prayer.

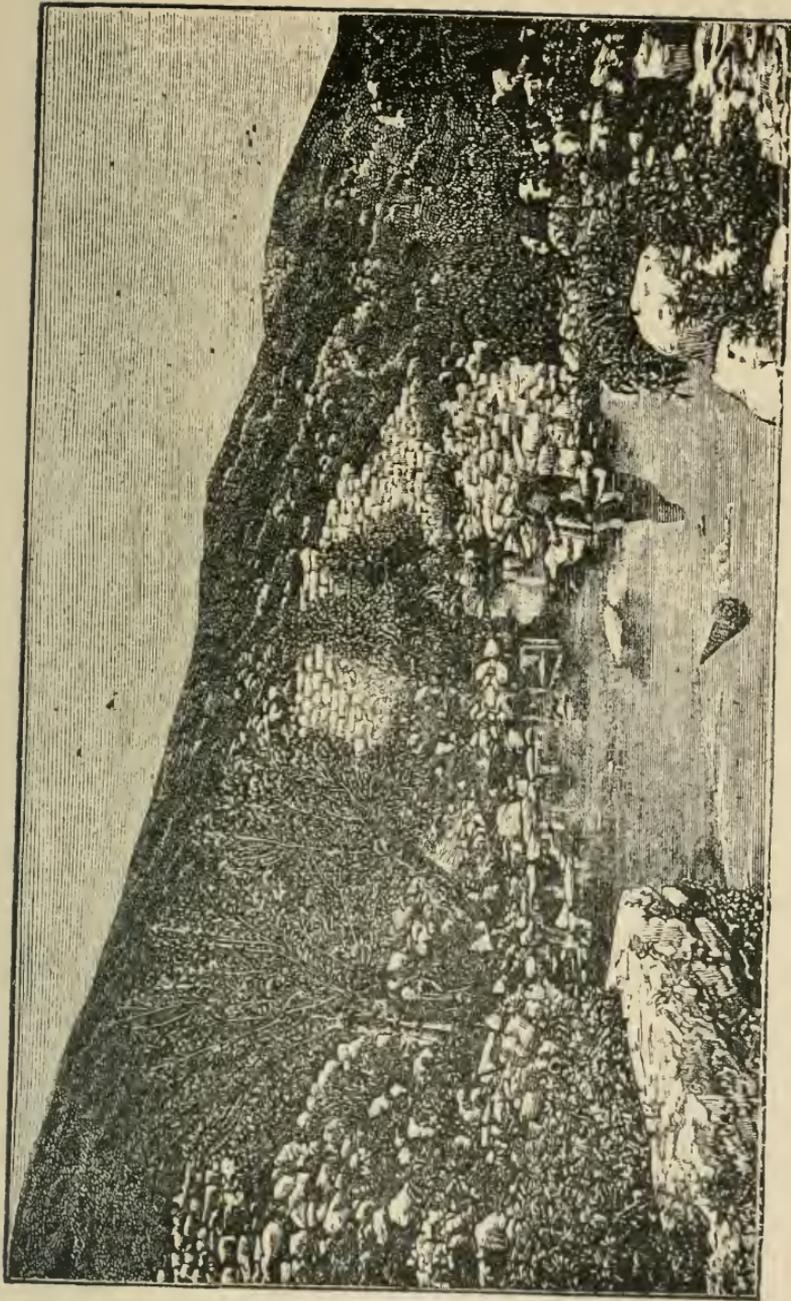
Elisha returned alone, but in the power of Elijah.

* *The Land and the Book*, p. 144.

He tarried a few days at Jericho, and there the townspeople came to him with an apparently startling suggestion. "The situation of this city," they said, "is pleasant . . . but the water is naught, and the ground barren," or rather, as in the margin, "causing to miscarry" (II. Kings ii. 19). Their coming plainly meant that they desired that the prophet should work a lasting change, and remove the bitterness of the waters. The prophet's response was immediate and full. He asked for a new cruse, or vessel, and desired them to put salt in it. "And he went forth unto the spring of the waters, and cast the salt in there, and said, Thus saith the Lord, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land. So the waters were healed unto this day, according to the saying of Elisha which he spake" (verses 20-22).

The miracle is one of those by which Israel was electrified, and the hearts of thousands were won for God. There is nothing easier to a certain class of mind than to assume that the miracle was never worked, and that the narrative is a legend. There are some things, however, which make others hesitate to follow. They pause, for instance, before this evidently symbolic action which is attributed to the prophet. He asks that salt be placed in a new dish. They know that salt in itself was powerless to sweeten waters which had already too much of that very element in them; and that, even if the salt had been helpful, there was no necessity for its being put in a *new* dish. Any other receptacle would have served equally well

to carry the salt to the fountain. They quite naturally, therefore, ask themselves whether there may not be some high significance in this first act in Elisha's ministry among the people. Sin, it seems to them, could hardly have a more eloquent symbol than Jericho's fountain. Its waters, instead of carrying sweetness and fruitfulness into the world's life, have carried bitterness and death. They have "caused to miscarry," not only the noble and beneficent thoughts of man, but also the very endeavours of God. The means, too, by which the bitter waters are healed are equally suggestive. Salt is used in the New Testament to represent that quality in the Christian's life which arrests the progress of the world's corruption, and that sweetens the fountains of thought and speech. "Ye," said Jesus, to those who were to be filled with His Spirit and to carry the gospel to the ends of the earth—"Ye are the salt of the earth." And that salt, strange to say, is in a new dish. It has never had, and it never can have, any other dwelling-place save a renewed nature. It is found only in the men who have been born from above through belief of the truth—the men who are a new creation in Christ Jesus. And it has come first of all in that new Manhood, the source and the pattern of all the renewed manhood that has followed—the manhood of God incarnate. It is not the way of legend to give us a prophecy like that, and to silently paint a picture which has to wait for ages for that which it foresaw, and which, when the thing that it foresaw has come, is found to be the best expression of its mission and of its character.



AIN ES SULTAN—ELISHA'S FOUNTAIN.

Divine foresight might do that ; but blind, blundering legend-makers—never!

The fountain associated by tradition with the miracle now bears the name of “the Sultan’s fountain.” It is close to the mountains on the west of Jericho, and about two miles distant from the wretched village which now bears that name. “The water,” says Dr. Thomson, “is sufficiently abundant to turn a large mill, is beautifully transparent, sweet and cool, and swarms with small fish. There seems to be no reason,” he adds, “to doubt the tradition that this is the identical fountain whose bitter waters Elisha healed. On the margin of this delightful brook grow great numbers of bushes.” The city of Elisha’s time, there can be no doubt, was much nearer to the mountains and the fountain than is the present village. But that the fountain was outside the city, and at some distance from it, is evident from the words: “And he (Elisha) *went forth* unto the spring of the waters” (verse 21). It is the only spring in what must then have been the neighbourhood of the city, the other fountain, called *Duk*, being three miles distant. This explains the anxiety of the men of Jericho, and the evident need which lent weight and urgency to their request. Here we have the close correspondence which characterises history, but which is necessarily foreign to legends which have been retailed, and modified, and changed by those who were as unacquainted with the places as they were distant from the times to which the stories they related referred. The theory of ever changing tradi-

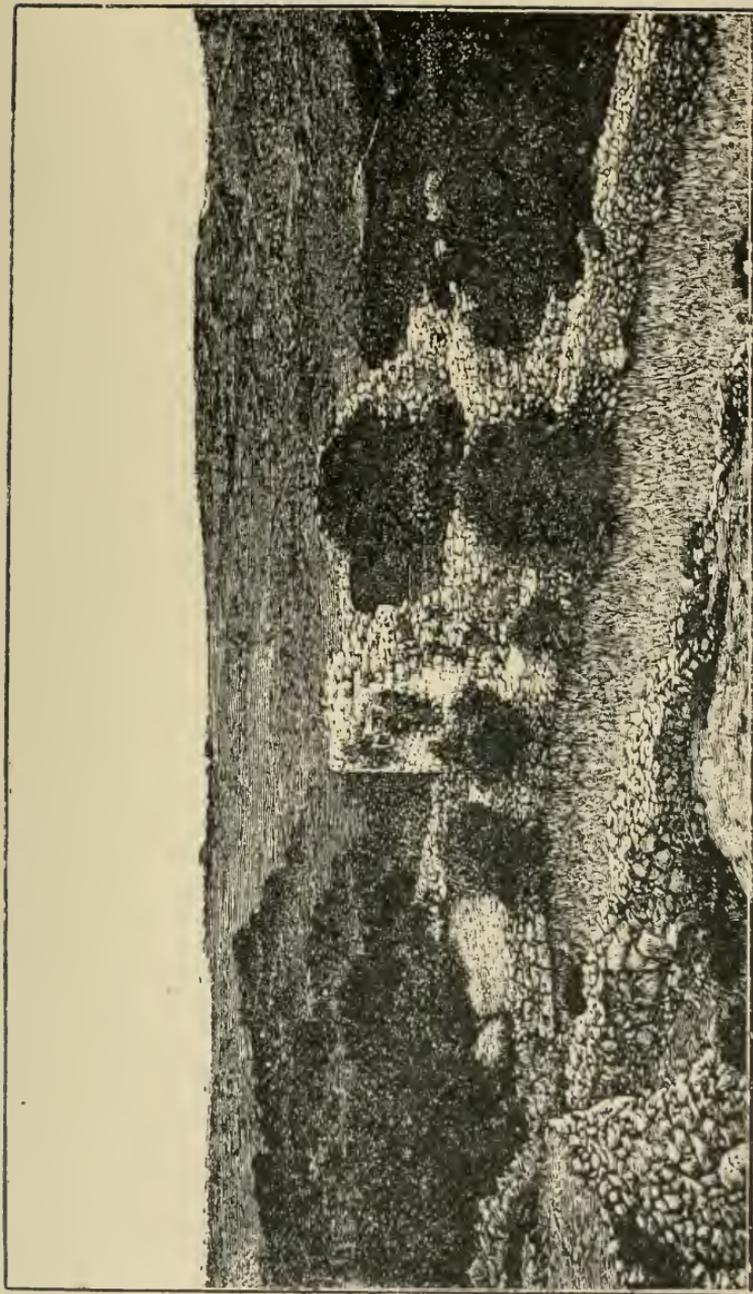
tions may suit the requirements of the critics, but it is utterly inapplicable to the narratives of the Bible.

We touch upon quite another aspect of the Scripture when we pass from the mercy extended to Jericho to the judgment visited upon the lads of Bethel. After ascending from Jericho to the table-land above, the prophet had to pass by Bethel. "And he went up from thence unto Bethel: and as he was going up by the way, there came forth little children out of the city, and mocked him, and said unto him, Go up, thou bald head. . . And he turned back, and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of Jehovah. And there came forth two she bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them" (verses 23, 24).

This event furnishes so convenient a weapon for those who desire to assault the Bible that we cannot be astonished that many have used it. There have been those also who, quite apart from the use thus made of it by the foe, have found not a little perplexity in it. They have felt it to be quite opposed to the spirit of the New Testament. My readers are so familiar, not only with the objections, but also with the feelings to which I refer that I do not require to dwell upon them. But they may not have sufficiently considered a very obvious reply. What is the spirit of the New Testament? They conceive of it possibly as an infinite patience—a spirit that can suffer but that cannot strike, that is always gentle, and never terrible. But what, then, of the swift and fearful judgment upon Ananias and Sapphira? What of Paul's address to the sorcerer Elymas: "O full of all

subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord"? And what of the judgment upon *him* when he was immediately deprived of sight? What, too, of the judgments threatened in the New Testament? It is surely needful that those who talk so confidently about the spirit of the New Testament should see to it that they are not substituting their own fancies for New Testament facts. Perhaps the reply is that they are referring specially to the spirit of Jesus. I know that the predictions were amply fulfilled that said He should not strive, nor cry, nor break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. But what of His rebuke to Peter: "Get thee behind Me, Satan," and of those fearful woes upon the Pharisees? And shall we find no place for those awful indications of coming judgment found in the parables in which the Lord has pictured to us His coming again? The notion entertained by some of the spirit of the New Testament is as opposed to New Testament statements as it is out of accord with God's dealings with Israel, with the nations, and with ourselves. He is a God of mercy, but He is also a God of judgment.

Let us now look at the facts and see whether even this tragic incident did not serve God and Israel's highest interests. It is unfortunate that our version should have given the translation "little children." The word used in the Hebrew answers to our word "lad," or "youth;" and, while sometimes used of mere children, is also applied to fully grown young



RUINS OF A SQUARE TOWER AT ANCIENT BETHEL.

men. The word "little," which appears in the description, plainly points out that these were not fully grown young men, but were "young lads." Bethel had from the first been the seat of the revolt against God's law, and the spirit of revolt seems to have spread until even the youth of the city were filled with it. The tidings of the wonders on the east and on the west of Jordan—the ascent of Elijah, the endowment of Elisha with a double portion of his spirit, the parting of the waters of the Jordan, and the healing of the fountain at Jericho—had, no doubt, been carried over all that district. Indeed, there seems to be a reference to the ascension of Elijah in the taunt that is now flung at his successor. The word which occurs in verse 11 ("And Elijah *went up* by a whirlwind into heaven,") is used in the lads' cry. They shout after this solitary man on whom is now resting the burden of Israel's sin and need—"Ascend, Baldhead! Ascend, Baldhead!" Understood in this way it was a peculiarly daring and impious mockery of the sign which God had just given to them in common with the rest of Israel. Now, will those, who have been troubled with what we may freely call the appalling severity of this judgment, ask themselves one question? If this scornful repudiation and mockery of God's ambassador had been passed over in silence, and if the example of Bethel had been followed all over the land, could Israel have escaped a corresponding judgment? Would not the land have rushed in its madness against the buckler of the Almighty? In any case, Elisha's mission would

have been a failure. A prophet, jeered at and hooted by the lads at the gate of a city, could not have effected much good within its walls. Looked at in this way there was both wisdom and mercy in the prompt action that nipped rebellion in the bud. The flood of impiety that might have covered the land was arrested. Its grave was dug in the judgment which fell so swiftly upon that tumultuous throng; and the heart of Israel, and of Bethel also, was awed as these "forty and two" were carried to the tomb, and as the tidings of their swift destruction sped from tribe to tribe.

Prof. Geo. A. Smith says that "No school of criticism denies the reality of Elisha, or of his services to Israel." "But," he adds, "it would be equally impossible to prove the historical reality of the series of curious marvels attributed to Elisha from sources outside the annals of the kings of Israel. These, however, are practically of no importance to the Christian preacher."* This is a fair sample of the way in which the Bible is being cut into pieces and the fragments thrown to the dogs. It is taken for granted that the writer of the Book has to go to the annals of the kings of Judah and of Israel for his information; and that, consequently, when he treats of Elijah and Elisha, he is forced to consult other sources. For that theory there is not a shadow of foundation. It is, indeed, true that the reader is occasionally referred to those annals for fuller information regarding certain monarchs. But so far is

* *Modern Criticism and the Preaching of the Old Testament*, p. 84.

this from proving that the writer is dependent upon those sources that it leads to the very opposite conclusion. If the writer of Kings had been copying, or had been merely presenting a fresh picture from those old materials, the reader did not require to be referred to *them*. He would have found all essential information in the Book before him. But the Scripture has an entirely different, and an infinitely higher, purpose. It presents us with the Word of Him before whose bar kings are judged, and whose award is now revealed that the judges of the earth may be admonished, and that light may be shed upon the ways along which we are all passing through time to eternity.

It requires equal blindness as to the character of the contents of the Book to speak of the prophet's deeds as "curious marvels" and to set them aside as valueless for Christian instruction. No part of Scripture has been more wonderfully confirmed than this Second Book of Kings. The confirmations afforded by the Assyrian and other monuments are, as we shall afterwards see, of a specially striking kind. They do not merely repeat the Bible statements. They, on the contrary, piece them out. The Bible and the monuments are independent witnesses; they are both in immediate contact with the events; and their statements fit into each other like hand and glove. We have had one instance of this in the comparison of the Moabite stone with 2 Kings iii. In that chapter we have one of these "curious marvels"—in other words, the record of a genuine miracle—but there can be no

doubt whatever of the thoroughly historical character of the chapter, when we view it in the light of King Mesha's description of the crisis through which he and his people passed.

Chapter V., the story of the healing of Naaman, presents us with another proof of this. Legend and myth are children of fancy and folly. The restraining bonds of fact and the associations of time and place are cast aside, and the adventurous voyagers float along without compass or rudder, turning to this side and that as the breezes waft them. The Jews themselves have fully illustrated this, and shown the broad dividing line which exists between legend and history. The Talmud, for example, makes Nimrod and Abraham to be contemporaries; it tells us that when Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem, the holy city was defended by giants,* *etc., etc.* Here, on the other hand, is a Book which keeps rigorously to absolute fact. How close this fidelity is will be seen from the circumstance which I now ask the reader to note. Naaman's indignant remonstrance has caused nearly as much disquiet to commentators as it probably occasioned to the prophet. "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better," he exclaimed, "than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them and be clean?" (II. Kings v. 12). Here Damascus is plainly referred to as watered by *two* well-known rivers. But where shall we find them? The city is, indeed, permeated and surrounded by streams; but these are not separate rivers: they are merely branches

* Paul Isaac Hershon, *Treasures of the Talmud*, p. 208.

of the same river—the Barada, which we have already described. There is absolutely no other river running either through or round the city.

Various expedients were tried to overcome this difficulty. One of these attracted Dr. Wilson as it attracted many others. “Near Fijeh,” he says, “a stream comes down from the left hand, and joins the Barada. . . . Many are of opinion—I believe warrantably so—that it is the Abana of Scripture.” But, though this is a very important source of the abundant waters of the Barada, it is only a fountain. Its entire course measures *one hundred yards*, and it could never have been described as a river. But the difficulty was due solely to our ignorance, and to superficial research. In the first place, it was taken for granted that by “Damascus” the Scripture meant, and could only mean, the city. It was this first blunder that limited our search to Damascus and its suburbs. It was not known that Damascus was the name also for the territory of which the city was the capital. Ezekiel’s description of the borders of Damascus (xlvi. 16) might have suggested this. He speaks of “Sibraim which is between the border of Hamath and the border of Damascus.” Here both Damascus and Hamath are used as the names of large districts. Contemporary inscriptions also place it beyond doubt that the name of the capital city frequently stood for the entire country. The Eponym Canon speaks of an expedition of Tiglath-Pileser III. “to the land of the Dimasqa,” that is, to the land of Damascus.* This

* Dr. Pinches. *The Old Testament*, &c., p. 353.

is quite decisive, as it proves that the name of the capital was applied to the whole territory at this very time. We find in the contemporary inscriptions similar mention of "Menahem of Samaria," and "Hiram of Tyre." This does not mean that Menahem was possessed only of the city called Samaria, or that Hiram owned nothing outside the walls of Tyre. It means, on the contrary, that Tyre represented the whole Phœnician principality, that Samaria stood for the entire territory of the ten tribes, and that by Damascus was meant in the same way that fertile portion of Syria over which Rezin then ruled, and which had also been possessed by Naaman's master.

This has removed half the difficulty; and more enterprising and painstaking travellers have taken away the rest. Down in the south of the Damascus plain, about nine or twelve miles distant from the city, there is a second river which runs a similar course to the Barada. This is the more noticeable that it is the only other river which can possibly be described as a river of Damascus. Any good map of the district, such as that in Dr. Cunningham Geikie's *The Holy Land and the Bible*, shows it so plainly that one is astonished that it could have escaped notice so long. "It is somewhat strange," writes Dr. Porter,* "that the topography of the beautiful plain of Damascus, so often visited, and so widely celebrated, should have remained so long unknown. The roads through it are among the best in Syria; and, except in times of civil war, perfectly safe. The scenery,

* *The Journal of Sacred Literature (New Series)*, vol. v., p. 46.

too, presents a pleasing contrast to the parched desert, to which the eyes of the wanderer in this land soon become accustomed. Travellers, however, seem to have their beaten track, which one after another follows and describes; and thus even those whose express object has professedly been to visit and explain Bible lands, have hitherto been satisfied with a vague conjecture as to the probable extent and nature of the lake into which the rivers of Damascus flow."

He then indicates that the same reason accounts for the ignorance concerning the river 'Awaj. He describes this "second river of Damascus," as seen from the top of Mount Hermon, where it takes its rise. "As I stood on the loftiest summit of the mountain, looking towards the east, a long serpentine line of verdure, here and there broken, intersecting the plain before me, attracted my attention. I could trace it from a flat expanse in the far distance, now winding between low hills, and now meandering through the plain, till it reached the base of the towering cone on the top of which I stood. This is the river 'Awaj, the ancient Pharpar. A valley of great depth here runs up into the very heart of the mountain, from east to west. . . . In the very head of this valley, in a direction from the summit south by east, I could see a number of small fountains, whose waters, after flowing through fields and meadows, unite beside the village of 'Arny, half-an-hour below: this is the principal source of the 'Awaj. The stream which is called Nahr el-'Arny (the river of 'Arny) flows in a swift course down the picturesque

and rugged valley." This is the northern branch of the 'Awaj. Up the glen of Beit Jeim, and about two miles higher up than the village of that name, "a clear sparkling rivulet" dashes along between graceful poplars and wide-spreading walnut trees. "Fifteen minutes below the village is a fountain, bursting forth from a clump of trees. . . . Its waters are equal to those of the stream with which it at once unites, and flows down to the plain into which the valley opens twenty minutes below."

These two branches unite and form the river 'Awaj, which, like its sister, the Barada, carries fertility with it wherever it goes. The writer speaks of one part as marked by "a fertile plain, about a quarter-of-a-mile wide, along the side of the river. . . . Several villages stand near the river; and the banks are lined with poplar and other trees, the dark-green foliage of which relieves the monotony of the surrounding scenery. . . . The 'Awaj, at Kesweh, turns sharply to the north-east for more than half an hour, sweeping round the base of Mânia. It then again resumes its former course through the fine vale between the parallel ridges." Various villages divert its waters by means of canals. "Still, notwithstanding these drains upon it, when passing Kesweh, it fully equals in volume the half of the Barada above the fountain of Fijeh. The banks of the river between the hills present a pleasing and rich appearance. Verdant meadows and finely-cultivated corn-fields cover the vale through which the stream meanders, and a fringe of poplars and willows marks its course."

This, then, is the long-lost Pharpar; for the Abana is identified with the Barada by an Arabic writer in the eleventh century. As soon as we know that, in the language of that very time, the name "Damascus" was applied to the country as well as to the city, and as we catch sight of this, the only other river of the plain, we feel the force of this absolute agreement between the place and the words of Scripture—an agreement which is utterly irreconcilable with the vagueness of tradition, or with the extravagances of legend, and which displays the sobriety and the accuracy of fully-informed history. We can see the relative position of these two rivers, indeed, in the very order in which Naaman names them. "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus," he indignantly asks, "better than all the waters of Israel?" It will be noted that he is comparing country with country—Damascus with Israel; so that here also one is forced to see in "Damascus" the name not of a city merely, but of a district. He names Abana first, whose waters rolled through the city, and, probably, by the very walls of his palace. If this was to be a mere matter of washing, why should he have stirred from his place? Would not the Abana have answered the purpose? And if—he seems to say with all the scorn which our poor reason so often assumes in its criticism of the ways of God—its waters must be set aside, why should not the Pharpar suffice? Here plainly the Abana is the nearer, and the Pharpar the more distant stream.

And, when we ask why this was recorded for our,

and for Israel's, learning, we grow still more ashamed of that contemptuous epithet—a "curious marvel." For this "curious marvel" is, as our Lord has indicated, an actual prophecy. Naaman is a Syrian. He is also a leper. But he is not alone in this; for "many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet" (Luke iv. 27); and, though the power of the Lord was present to heal, "none of them was cleansed save Naaman the Syrian." The incident was a rebuke and warning. It told of the only possible issue of this long conflict with God. It pictured the time when grace despised would abandon Israel and be poured out upon the Gentiles.

Believers in the Bible have found matter there for many a powerful appeal. But we only fully note how utterly misleading the statement is that these narratives "are practically of no importance to the Christian preacher" when we recall how marvelously the dealing with Naaman reflects God's dealing with those now being blessed among the Gentiles. Naaman sets out in state, armed with the letter of the king, and possessed of abundance of silver, and gold, and changes of raiment. He has taken thought for everything that can command or buy a cure, and nought is lacking. But at the king's gate it avails nothing, and at the prophet's door it is valueless. Naaman must take his stand by the side of the poorest, and receive his cleansing as God's absolutely free gift. Surely there is direction there of the most vital kind for every seeker after a clean heart! But there is more. Naaman expects an imposing cere-

mony. "I thought," said he, "he will surely come out, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and wave his hand over the place, and recover the leper" (II. Kings v. 11). Instead of that he receives only a message—a word, such as we receive to-day. He is to go back from Samaria to the boundary of the land of God's people, the rolling river through which Israel crossed, and there to dip seven times. And in that stream of cleansing, through which all God's people have passed into the land of God's rest, the lepers of to-day must plunge. They must bow beneath the atoning blood. They must bow not once only before the crucified and let the sense encircle them and sweep over them that Christ bore their sins in His own body on the tree. They must do it again, and again, and again. And then the miracle will be repeated. Their flesh will come again—sweet and clean—"like unto the flesh of a little child."

It is well that this unbelief warns us. To go with it is to part with this.

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