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HOLY BIBLE

CREATION OF THE WORLD

ESTABLISHMENT OF GOD'S KINGDOM

BY THE BLESSED LORD AND SAVIOUR

JESUS CHRIST

IN TWO VOLUMES.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

BY THE REV. AND Eminent

Author of the History of the Christian Church

and the History of the Christian World

from the Beginning of the Christian Era

to the Present Time

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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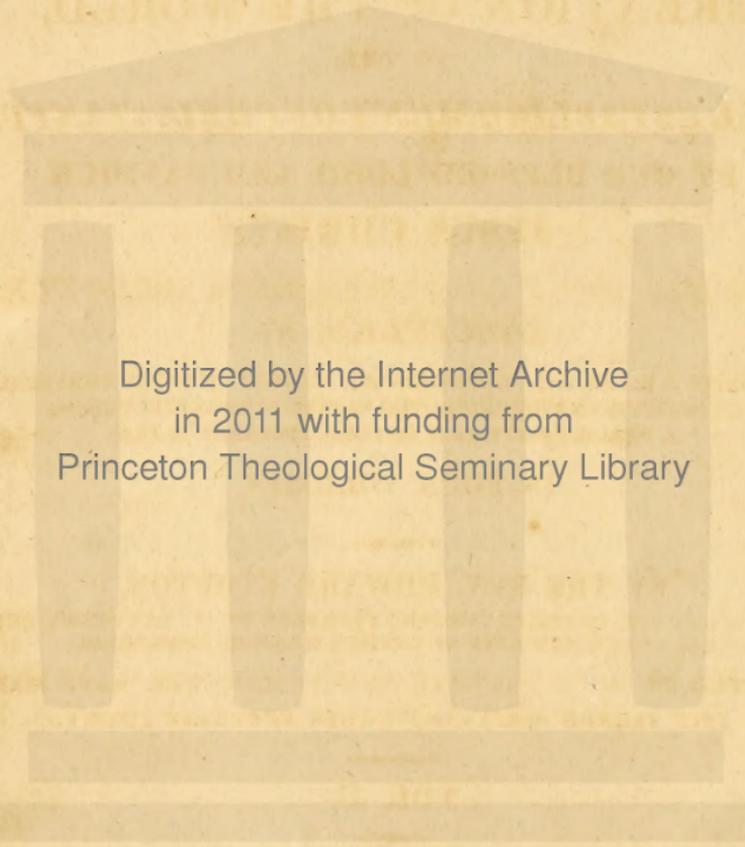
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A
NEW AND COMPLETE
UNIVERSAL HISTORY
OF THE
HOLY BIBLE,
FROM THE
CREATION OF THE WORLD,
TO THE
FULL ESTABLISHMENT OF CHRISTIANITY,
BY OUR BLESSED LORD AND SAVIOUR
JESUS CHRIST,
AND HIS HOLY EVANGELISTS, APOSTLES,
DISCIPLES, &c.

CONTAINING A CLEAR AND COMPREHENSIVE ACCOUNT OF EVERY REMARKABLE
TRANSACTION RECORDED IN THE SACRED SCRIPTURES, DURING
A PERIOD OF UPWARDS OF FOUR THOUSAND YEARS.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

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BY THE REV. EDWARD KIMPTON,
VICAR OF ROGATE, IN SUSSEX, MORNING PREACHER OF ST. MATTHEW'S, BETH-
NAL-GREEN, AND LATE OF CHRIST'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.
ASSISTED BY MANY LEARNED GENTLEMEN, WHO HAVE MADE
THE SACRED WRITINGS THEIR PECULIAR STUDY.

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VOL. II.
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FIRST AMERICAN EDITION.

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1813.

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- The Building of Babel—Confusion of Tongues, and Dispersion of the People.
- History of Abraham and his Family.—Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, &c.
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- Persecutions of the Israelites by Pharaoh King of Egypt, with the various Transactions that took place previous to their being miraculously released from Bondage.
- The astonishing Miracles performed by Moses in Egypt, the Wilderness and other places.
- The Travels and various Revolutions of the Israelites, with the great Miracles wrought in their favor by Divine Interposition before their Settlement at Jerusalem.
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OF THE

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AND

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SUCH AS

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ABRAHAM,	SAMUEL,	JEREMIAH,	NEHEMIAH,
ISAAC,	DAVID,	DANIEL,	HOSEA,
JACOB,	SOLOMON,	JONAH,	ZECHERIAH,
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TOGETHER

WITH A FULL AND UNIVERSAL HISTORY

OF THE

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OF OUR

BLESSED REDEEMER,

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A
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BOOK II.

FROM THE DEATH OF MOSES, TO THE BUILDING OF
SOLOMON'S TEMPLE.

[INCLUDING A PERIOD OF 447 YEARS.]

CHAP. XII.

David's restoration and return to Jerusalem. Is reconciled to Shimei, and returns Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, his possessions, which he had bestowed on Ziba, the steward of Mephibosheth. His gratitude to Barzillai. Sheba raises an insurrection, upon which David sends Amasa, his general, against him, who is treacherously wounded by Joab. Sheba's rebellion suppressed. The Israelites are afflicted with a famine, on account of Saul's slaughter of the Gibeonites. David gives up seven of Saul's descendants, who are hanged on gibbets erected for the purpose, after which the famine ceases. David engages the Philistines and conquers them. Composes a psalm of thanksgiving on the occasion. Account of David's Worthies. David numbers the people, for doing of which he incurs the Divine displeasure, and on that account the Israelites are afflicted with a dreadful pestilence. David humiliates himself before God for his transgression, and, by order of the prophet Gad, erects an altar on the occasion, and offers up sacrifices, upon which the plague ceases.

THE defeat of Absalom, and the extinction of the rebellion under him, was no sooner known among the

tribes of Israel, by the flight of those who had escaped out of the battle to their respective places of abode, than David's friends, who were very numerous through all the kingdom, used the proper methods to bring over to their duty all those who had been engaged in, or favored the rebellion. To effect this they reminded the people, that David had, by his victories, delivered them out of the hands of their enemies, particularly the Philistines; and yet, notwithstanding these eminent services, he had been forced to abandon his capital, and flee out of the land, at the instigation of Absalom, his son, who had been advanced to the kingdom in his stead. But that as Absalom was now dead, there could be no reason for their delaying to return to their allegiance to David, and coming to an unanimous resolution of bringing him back to Jerusalem, and restoring him to his throne and government.

These representations had their proper effect, insomuch that the different tribes were eagerly desirous of recalling him from his banishment, and re-establishing him in the kingdom; his friends, out of affection and loyalty to him, and those who had joined Absalom in his rebellion, to atone for their crimes, and more effectually to secure their pardon.

David, who continued for some time at Mahanaim after his victory, waiting to see what effect the news of it would have upon the people, received the agreeable intelligence, that they were in general disposed in his favor, and were concerting measures for his restoration. But as the tribe of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, had not yet shewn any disposition to return to their obedience, nor sent him any invitation to take possession of the city, he wrote to Zadok and Abiathar the priests, desiring them to repair to, and expostulate with, the elders of Judah in these words: *Why are ye the last to bring the king back to his house? seeing the speech of all Israel is come to the king, even to his house. Ye are my brethren, my bones and my flesh. Wherefore then are ye the last to bring back the king?* He likewise sent a particular message to Amasa, the rebel general: *Say ye to Amasa, Art thou not of my bone and of my flesh?* that is, of my own family, and my near relation? *God do so to me, and*

more also, if thou be not captain of the host before me continually, in the room of Joab.

This part of David's conduct was exceeding prudent and necessary. The tribe of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, were under the command of Amasa, who was peculiarly guilty, as he had headed the rebellion under Absalom, and had great reason to fear David's resentment; and who certainly would have kept possession of Jerusalem, and continued the spirit of disaffection to the king, had he not been assured of indemnity both for himself and his adherents. David, therefore, well knowing the importance of the tribe of Judah, and of Amasa, who had seized the city, and garrisoned it with a strong body of troops, thought it absolutely necessary to regain their affections and recover their interest. To effect this, without mentioning a single word of the rebellion, he only puts them in mind that he was of their own tribe, and gently reproaches them for being the last, who should have been the first, of the tribes to obtain his restoration. As for Amasa, he first compliments him on being his near relation, and then assures him that he should be captain-general of his army instead of Joab.* The prudence of this conduct immediately appeared by its effects: for he, that is, Amasa, *bowed the hearts of all the men of Judah, even as the heart of one man*; and in return for his great generosity and goodness to them, they immediately sent a deputation to invite David, and all his servants to Jerusalem.

Amasa and the tribe of Judah being thus gained over, and all the other tribes appearing well disposed in favor of David, he resolved to set out immediately on his return to Jerusalem. He was accompanied by a great number of people belonging to the different tribes in whose country he had resided during the rebellion; as also by the deputies from Judah, who assured him that the whole tribe,

* With respect to the promise made by David to Amasa of placing him in Joab's room, the prudence of it will plainly appear, if we consider that Joab and Amasa stood in the same degree of consanguinity: the offer, therefore, must have been influenced by the personal qualities of the man, the importance of gaining him over (he being a person of great power and authority) and a resentment against Joab for the murder of Abner, and the assassination of Absalom.

would, in a body, assemble at Gilgal, and from thence march to the river, provide every thing necessary for his passage over it, with his servants and attendants, and supply him with all accommodations for his journey to the city.

The whole tribe of Judah attended David as their deputies had told him, and with them went Shimei, who had cursed and thrown stones at the king in his flight, attended with a thousand Benjamites. To shew his extraordinary zeal and joy at David's restoration, he went down to Jordan before the king had passed over it, and before the tribe of Judah could reach it, hoping no doubt, that by this appearance of his peculiar affection to him, he should atone for his past insolence and treason, and more readily obtain the king's forgiveness.

As soon as David had got on the opposite side the river Jordan, Shimei presented himself before him, fell prostrate at his feet, and, in a very suppliant manner, apologized for his villainous behavior, recanting all his accusations, acknowledging that he had grievously offended, and humbly imploring forgiveness. "Let not, says he, my lord impute iniquity to me, neither do thou remember what thy servant did perversely, the day that my lord the king went out of Jerusalem, that the king should take it to heart. For thy servant doth know that he hath sinned. Therefore behold I am come the first this day of all the house of Joseph, to go down to meet my lord the king." Abishai, (moved with a just indignation against a wretch, who first, in the malice of his heart, falsely and virulently abused his sovereign, and attempted to murder him, and then meanly retracted his calumnies to save his life, fearful of being punished like a traitor and regicide as he well deserved) said to the king, "Shall not Shimei be put to death, because he hath cursed the Lord's anointed?" David, though warm, could not be deliberately vindictive; and therefore, being displeased with Abishai's proposal, told him he intermeddled with an affair that did not concern him, and that the prompting him to revenge himself on Shimei, though it might proceed from zeal in him for his service, was, in reality, the advice of an enemy: that it was exciting him to an unnecessary instance of severity, since his restora-

tion was now happily accomplished, and needed not the death of Shimei, or any other person, to secure it; and that therefore he was resolved no man should be put to death that day in Israel. "What have I to do with you" (says he) ye sons of Zeruiah, that ye should this day be "adversaries to me? Shall there any man be put to death this day in Israel? For do not I know that I am this day king over Israel?" He then turned to Shimei, and gave him his royal word and oath that no harm whatever should come to him on his account; upon which assurance Shimei made his reverence, and departed.

Another remarkable person who went to wait on David at this time was, the perfidious Ziba, accompanied by his fifteen sons, and twenty servants. He had again imposed upon his master, for, when he ordered him to make ready his ass, that he, among others, might go and meet the king, he slid away himself to make his court first; so that Mephibosheth, being lame, was forced to stay at Jerusalem (where he had all along mourned* for the king's absence) until David arrived: But when he was admitted into his presence, and the king seemed to be angry with him for not having accompanied him in his exile, he charged this *seeming* neglect upon the perfidy of his servant, whose iniquity he so clearly pointed out, and set his own case in so fair a light,† that the king was con-

* The words in the text are, that *he had not dressed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his clothes, from the day that the king departed*, 2 Sam. xix. 24. These were some of the instances, wherein the Jews were accustomed to express their mourning; and they are here mentioned by the historian, as evidences of the falshood of Ziba's information against his master, since no one who neglected himself to this degree, could be supposed ambitious of a crown. *Not dressing his feet* may signify either not cutting his toe-nails, or his *not washing his feet*, which the Jews were accustomed very frequently to do, because of the bad scent which was natural to them, as well as the Arabians, and some other nations; and therefore his omission of this could not but make him offensive to himself. *Not trimming his beard* was letting his hair grow negligently, and without any order: for the manner of the Jews was, to cut the hair from the lip upwards, and what grew likewise on the cheek, but what was on the chin, and so backwards to the ear, they suffered to grow; and *not washing his clothes* must denote his not putting on clean linen, but wearing the same shirt the whole time.

† The words Josephus puts into Mephibosheth's mouth, when pleading his excuse to David for not attending him, and acknowledg-

vinced of the treachery of Ziba, and therefore revoked the hasty grant he had made in his favor, and restored to Mephibosheth those possessions of which he had been divested by the artifices of his perfidious and treacherous servant.

Before David had advanced as far as the river Jordan, in his return to Jerusalem, he was met by another person of distinguished note who came to compliment him on the occasion. This was Barzillai, the Gileadite, who testified his friendship and allegiance to him, during the time of the rebellion, by supplying him and his men with great quantities of provisions during their stay at Mahanaim. After Barzillai had paid the king reverence, David, in gratitude for favors received, gave him an invitation to accompany him to Jerusalem, and at the same time promised that as soon as he arrived there he would liberally provide for him. The good old man answered, *How long have I to live that I should go up with the king to Jerusalem? I am this day fourscore years old, and can I discern between good and evil? Have I any relish for the pleasures and enjoyments of a court? Can thy servant taste what I eat, or what I drink? Can I any more hear the voice of singing men and singing women? Wherefore then should thy servant be yet a burthen to my lord the king? Thy servant will go a little way over Jordan with the king; and why should the king recompence it me with such a reward?* hereby acknowledging that the honor he did him by his kind invitation to his court was too great a recompence for the small proofs he had given him

ing the favors received from the king, are to this effect:—"Nor has he only disappointed me (speaking of Ziba) in the exercise of my duty, but has been doing me spiteful offices to your majesty likewise: But you, Sir, are so just, and so great a lover of God and truth, that I am sure your generosity and wisdom will never entertain a calumny to my prejudice. Our family has had the experience of your piety, modesty and goodness to a degree never to be forgotten. in passing over and pardoning the innumerable hazards and perfections that you were exposed to in the days and by the contrivance of my grand-father, when all our lives were forfeited, in your power, and at your mercy. But then, after all this gracious tenderness, your superadding the honor of taking me to your table, (a person so obnoxious in regard of my relations) as a friend and as a guest, nothing could be either greater, or more obliging, and for all which I return you my most sincere and grateful acknowledgments."

of his affection and zeal for his person and government. He then desired the king's permission to turn back again, that he might die in his own city, and be buried by the grave of his father and mother. But that he might not appear to undervalue the king's kind offers, he said, *Behold thy servant Chimham,* let him go over with my lord the king, and do to him what shall seem good unto thee.* David replied, *Chimham shall go over with me, and I will do to him that which shall seem good to thee, and do for him whatsoever thou shalt require of me.* Barzillai accordingly attended the king over the river Jordan, where the king embraced him in the most affectionate manner, wished him all happiness, and sent him highly pleased to his habitation and family.

When David had crossed the river Jordan, he proceeded with all expedition towards Gilgal, attended not only by the whole tribe of Judah, but considerable detachments from half of the other tribes; as also the thousand men with Shimei, of the tribe of Benjamin. When they came to Gilgal they found that the rest of the tribes were come down, in large bodies, to pay their submission to David. These, understanding that the tribe of Judah had been particularly summoned by David to attend him, which none of the other tribes had been, and that upon their single invitation, without waiting for the other tribes, he had resolved to return to Jerusalem, they were incensed to the highest degree, and such a difference arose between the men of Judah and them as occasioned a new rebellion. The Israelites in general thinking the credit of the king's restoration would be fixed on the tribe of Judah alone, thus expostulated with David: *Why, said they, have our brethren the men of Judah, stolen thee away (clandestinely, as it were taken thee from the rest of their brethren) and have brought the king and his household, and all David's men with him over Jordan?* as though he was their peculiar exclusive property, with whom the rest of the tribes

* It is generally supposed that Chimham was Barzillai's son. See 1 Kings ii. 7. In Jeremiah xli. 17. there is mention of *the habitation of Chimham*, which was near Bethlehem; and it is reasonable to suppose that David, having a patrimony in the field of Bethlehem, bestowed it upon this son of Barzillai, from whence the place received the name of Chimham.

had no share. The men of Judah, without suffering David to interpose, imprudently replied, *Because the king is near of kin to us*, as being of our tribe, and therefore we have some peculiar interest in him. *Wherefore then be ye angry with us* for our being the first to shew our affection to him? especially as we have put the king to no expense for our attendance on him, nor received any gratuity for our zeal in serving him. This answer farther inflamed the Israelites, who replied, with indignation, "We have ten parts in the king, and we have also more right in David than ye: why then did ye despise us, that our advice should not be first had in bringing back our king." This the men of Judah treated with contempt, and answered the discontented tribes in so haughty a manner, that they wanted nothing but a leader to head them, to bring about a second revolution, and prevent David's re-settlement on the throne.

Turbulent and factious persons are seldom wanting in cases of public disturbance, and such an one soon appeared among the Israelites. Sheba, the son of Bichri, a Benjamite, (who had probably been an officer in the late rebellion, and was of a profligate temper and character) taking advantage of these discontents, immediately blew the trumpet of sedition, and cried out in the midst of the people, *We have no part in David, neither have we any inheritance in the son of Jesse. Every man to his tent, O Israel.* This was spoken by way of indignation to the claims of the tribe of Judah of a superior interest in David as king. Since you will have it that the king is yours, be it so. We renounce all interest in, and claim to him; and you and the king may go together. Let us return to our camp, O Israel, and provide a king for ourselves.

As the Israelites in general were ever prone to rebellion, this speech of Sheba's took immediate effect. The body of the people deserted David, marched off under Sheba, and probably would have advanced him, or one of Saul's family, to the crown, had not proper measures been immediately taken to quash the defection in its infancy. The tribe of Judah continued faithful to the king, whom they conducted with all expedition, to his palace at Jerusalem.

As soon as David had taken possession of Jerusalem, and was reinstated in his palace, one of his first cares was,

to remove those concubines, or secondary wives, whom Absalom had so scandalously abused. He therefore ordered them to be separated from the palace, and maintained in a proper place of seclusion and retirement, where they were kept the remainder of their lives as widows, without having any future commerce with man. This was certainly a very prudent step taken by David, for had they been permitted to appear again in public, it might have been of bad consequence, at least it would have renewed in the minds of the people the opprobrious infamy of his son, whose faults he was anxiously desirous of burying in oblivion.

The insurrection of Sheba was now become too serious to be neglected. David, therefore, gave orders to Amasa (whom he appointed captain-general in Joab's stead) to assemble the troops of the tribe of Judah within three days, and to put himself at the head of them, that he might review them in person at Jerusalem. Amasa, by some means or other, did not appear at the time appointed, upon which David, to prevent the inconvenience of any farther delay, and the increase of Sheba's party, ordered Abishai, Joab's brother, to gather together the king's guards, and what other forces he could collect, and immediately pursue Sheba, to prevent him, if possible, from seizing any of the fortified cities for his security. Abishai, accordingly took Joab's own regiment, consisting of the Cherethites and Pelethites, together with all the mighty men that were in, or near the city, and marched out of Jerusalem in pursuit of the rebel. Joab attended him though not as general; and when they had got as far as the great rock of Gibeon, they were joined by Amasa, with the men of Judah he had collected, who put himself at the head of the whole as commander in chief.

The garment that Joab wore was girt round him in the military manner, and over it was the belt of his sword, so fastened that the sword hung upon his loins in the scabbard. As Joab went up to Amasa, the sword falling out of the scabbard, he caught it in his left hand, and said to Amasa, *Art thou in health my brother?* immediately after which he took hold of Amasa's beard with his right hand in order to salute him, as was then the custom of the country. Amasa, either not seeing the sword in his left hand,

or, because he suspected no treachery, not regarding it, received Joab's salute, when the perfidious wretch instantly plunged his sword into Amasa's body, killed him on the spot, left him weltering in his blood, and then haughtily and treasonably put himself at the head of the army.— This was, as Josephus observes, a very impious and execrable action, thus to murder a relation, who had never injured him, out of envy for his being created general, and having an equal share in the king's favor with himself. He had murdered Abner before on the same account: but for that he had a specious pretence, namely, that he did it to avenge the death of his brother Asahel; whereas he had not any excuse whatever for the murder of Amasa.

After Joab had executed this horrid piece of butchery on Amasa, he left one of his servants to stand by the body; and, lest the troops should be at a loss what to do when they saw their general dead, he ordered him to tell them, as they marched by, that whoever was in Joab's interest, and David's faithful friend, they should immediately follow Joab. But when the soldiers saw Amasa wallowing in his blood, they flocked around him, were shocked at the spectacle, and seemed unwilling to follow Joab in the expedition. The officer observing this removed the dead body out of the road into a neighboring field, and covered it with a cloth, upon which the people went on after Joab, who was gone before in pursuit of the rebel.

In the mean time Sheba, in order to draw together a considerable army, had marched with his adherents from Gilgal, through all the tribes that lay in his way to Abel-Maacah, a fortified town belonging to the tribe of Naphtali, in the northern part of Judea. Not meeting with that success he had expected, he resolved not to proceed any farther, but, for the present, to secure himself in the town of which he was now possessed.

As soon as Joab understood where Sheba had shut himself up, he immediately marched with his army to the place, whither he had no sooner arrived, than he ordered his men to throw up a fort or rampart against the wall of the city, from whence he battered it in order to beat it down. After making some progress in this business, a prudent woman of the city, getting upon the top of the walls, called to the besiegers, and begged she might be per-

mitted to speak to their general. This being granted, Joab approached the walls within hearing, when the woman addressed him in words to this effect: "It has, says she, been always a custom founded on the law of God, whenever the Israelites came before any city, to offer peace in the first place, even though the inhabitants were of another nation; much more ought it to be done to a people, who are all of the same blood, and the greatest part of them loyal subjects to the king." *I am one of them that are peaceable and faithful in Israel: thou seekest to destroy a city, and a mother in Israel: why wilt thou swallow up the inheritance of the Lord?* Joab told her he had not any ill design against the people of the city; all he requested, was that they would deliver up the rebel Sheba, on doing which he would immediately raise the siege, and draw off his army. The woman desired him to desist for a short time, and his request should be complied with: *Behold, said she, his head shall be thrown to thee over the wall.* The woman then went to the principal people of the city, to whom she related the conference that had passed between her and Joab, and expostulated* with them so forcibly on the great danger they were in, that they immediately seized Sheba, cut off his head, and threw it over the wall to Joab, in the presence of the whole army.

In consequence of this Joab, agreeable to his promise, ordered a retreat to be sounded, and the soldiers dispersed, every man to his tent. Having thus put an end to the rebellion, Joab returned to the king at Jerusalem, and was continued in the post of captain-general, which he had usurped after the murder of Amasa.

This circumstance hath occasioned some very severe reflections on David's honor and justice, and he is reproached by some because Joab was continued in the command, and

* The words Josephus puts into the woman's mouth on this occasion, are to the following effect: "Will ye, says she, like traitors, suffer your wives and children to perish for the sake of a villain whom none of you know? What has Sheba done for you that can balance the obligations you lay under to David? Or, setting aside all other arguments, how can you be so unreasonable as to suppose that you are able to resist the force of so powerful an army as is even now before you? Be quick in your determination, for on that depends either your safety, or immediate destruction."

not a single syllable of any notice taken by David of the murder of Amasa, whom he himself had appointed general; as though David had acquiesced in the murder, and confirmed Joab in the command of the army, as the reward of it. But that David did greatly resent this murder of Amasa, is evident from his last advice to Solomon, in which he nobly recommends, and gives it in charge to him, to do justice on that bloody assassin for the murders of Abner and Amasa. David was not now able himself to do it, and Joab was too powerful a subject to be brought to any account. We have seen that he had insolence enough, after Absalom's death, to threaten the king with a new revolt, if he did not do what he ordered him; and after the assassination of Amasa, he usurped, in defiance of his master's appointment, the command of all the forces. They seem to have had an affection for him as a brave and successful general; he had just now restored the quiet of the land, by entirely quelling the insurrection under Sheba, and returned to Jerusalem, without fear of the king, and in defiance of justice, as generalissimo of the army; and continued to assume this rank, not by David's order and inclination, but by his mere acquiescence in a measure that was contrary to his will, but which he was not able, at this time, to set aside.

We come now to a part of David's history and conduct, that hath been, by some, thought exceptionable, though we cannot help thinking it far otherwise, it being an illustrious proof of the generosity of his temper, the regard he paid to his oath to Saul, and the friendship he owed to the memory and family of Jonathan. That the reader may be the better judge of this matter it will be necessary to recapitulate some matters (which we shall do in as concise a manner as possible) that have been already amply mentioned, and which took place while Joshua was leader of the people.

The inhabitants of Gibeon, (a large royal city, which, after the division of the country, was yielded to the tribe of Benjamin) were Amorites by birth and nation; and when the Israelites under Joshua invaded the land of Canaan, the Gibeonites, hearing what Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai, and fearful of their own safety, fraudulently persuaded the Israelites to enter into a league with

them, which was solemnly ratified by a public oath, so that they had the national faith for the security of their lives and properties; for which reason the Israelites, when they came to their cities, and were informed of the fraud, murmured against the princes for having made a league with the Gibeonites. The princes, to appease the people, said to them, "We have sworn unto them by the Lord God of Israel, therefore we must not touch them. We will even let them live, lest wrath be upon us, because of the oath which we sware unto them." They were accordingly spared, but condemned to servitude, and made hewers of wood, and drawers of water, for the congregation, and for the altar of the Lord, perpetually, in the place which he should choose, that is, wherever the tabernacle or ark should reside.—See Joshua ix. x. xviii.

But Saul, to ingratiate himself with the people, under the specious pretence of public spirit, and to appear warm and active for the national interest, *sought to slay them, and to destroy them from remaining in any of the coasts of Israel.* He actually put many of them to death, employing those of his own house or family in the execution: this he did in cold blood, in times of peace, when the Gibeonites were unarmed and destitute of assistance; and all in direct violation of the public oath and faith he had given them for their security. His crime was therefore enormous and highly aggravated, laid the nation under the guilt of perjury and murder, and subjected them to the Divine displeasure.

Though the punishment due for the blood which had been thus horridly shed was (for reasons not to be accounted for) postponed for a considerable time, yet it at length took place. Soon after the quelling of Sheba's rebellion the Israelites were afflicted with a most dreadful famine, which continued for three successive years, in the last of which David, moved by so extraordinary a calamity, enquired of the Lord the cause of it, and was answered by the Oracle, that it was for Saul, *and his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites.** In consequence of this

* The circumstance of Saul's death could be no reason against bringing to justice those of his *bloody house*, who had been the instruments of his cruelty in the destruction of the poor Gibeonites, if any of them were alive after his death, whatever might be the number of

David sent for some of the principal persons who had escaped the massacre, and said to them, *What shall I do for you? wherewithal shall I make the atonement, that ye may bless the inheritance of the Lord?* What satisfaction do you require for the injuries that have been done you? The Gibeonites answered, *We will have no silver nor gold of Saul, nor of his house; neither for us shalt thou kill any man in Israel.* David then bade them ask what they would have, and their request should be immediately granted. They replied, “The man that consumed us, and that devised against us, that we should be destroyed from remaining in any of the coasts of Israel; let seven men of his sons be delivered unto us, and we will hang them up unto the Lord in Gibeah of Saul, who was chosen of the Lord.” David told them their request should be immediately complied with; upon which (sparing Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, and all the male line of Saul,* who had any claim to, or were capa-

years between the commission of the crime, and the inflicting the vengeance it deserved. The reason why the oracle expressly dictated no act of expiation, was because David only enquired for what reason the famine was sent. When this was known, it was also well known that the Gibeonites were to have some proper satisfaction made to them; so that though the oracular answer did not dictate in express words any act of expiation, yet it was of such a nature as that David was immediately led to think of an expiation; for he knew that the *shedding of blood* was only to be atoned by the *shedding of his or their blood*, on whom the murder was chargeable; so that the oracle did really dictate, though not in words, the necessity of an expiation, by pointing out the crime for which the famine was sent. It is not easy to say when the slaughter of the Gibeonites was committed: the Jews, indeed, pretend, that Saul had taken it into his head, in one of his phrenetic fits of zeal, to cut them all off; but they give us no authority for it. It is therefore generally, and with greater probability, believed to have happened when he slew all the priests and inhabitants of Nob, for the Gibeonites were a kind of servants to the priests, and employed in some of the lowest and most laborious offices.

* David had given Saul his oath, “that he would not cut off his seed after him, nor destroy his name out of his father’s house.” Had Saul’s family committed crimes worthy of death, David’s oath would have been no reason against punishing them according to their deserts; and such punishment if deserved, had been no breach of his oath. If David did not cut off his seed after him, so as to destroy his name out of his father’s house, he did not violate his oath to Saul. Now David did not cut off one single person of Saul’s family, whose death had a tendency to destroy his name out of his father’s house.

ble of contending with him for the crown and disturbing him in the possession of it) he delivered to them the two bastard sons of Rizpah, Saul's concubine, and the five sons of Micah, his youngest daughter, by Adriel, the son of Barzillai the Meholathite.

These seven descendants of Saul being delivered into the hands of the Gibeonites, they immediately put them to death, by hanging them on gibbets erected for the purpose; and in this situation it was intended they should continue till there fell rain upon the earth, the want of which had occasioned the famine. Rizpah was so affected at the fate of her two sons, that she had a tent made of sackcloth (pitched near the place where they were executed) for her to live in, that by the help of her servants, she might keep watch day and night to prevent the birds and beasts from destroying the carcasses; and in this situation did she continue till they were taken down and interred.

It is to be observed, to the honor of David, that though he was under the necessity of delivering up some of Saul's family to justice, in order to give satisfaction to the injured Gibeonites, yet he took the first opportunity he could to pay the last tokens of respect that were in his power to the memory of Saul and his unhappy family. As soon as it appeared that the natural cause of the famine was over by the return of the rain, he ordered the

The seed is always reckoned by the males, and not the females of a family; and the name in a father's house could only be preserved by the male descendants. But David gave up only two bastards, the sons of Rizpah, Saul's concubine, who were not the legal seed of Saul; and five of the sons of his eldest daughter by Adriel, (who could only keep up Adriel's name, and not Saul's;) and hereby observed, without the least violation, his oath to Saul. Not one of the persons he surrendered was capable of succeeding Saul, especially whilst any of the male branches were alive. Now, at this very time, Mephibosheth, Jonathan's eldest son, dwelt in David's family at Jerusalem; and though lame in his feet, yet he was sound enough to be the father of a son named Micha, who was at this time old enough to have children, and, indeed, had afterwards four sons, from whom descended a numerous posterity, amounting in the whole (sons and grandsons included) to not less than one hundred and fifty. This was undoubtedly a farther proof that David did not violate his oath to Saul in his treaty with the Gibeonites; but, on the contrary, that he took every measure his thoughts could project of strictly preserving it.

bones of Saul and Jonathan (which had been buried near Jabesh-Gilead) to be taken up, and, with the bodies of those who had been hung up by the Gibeonites, interred them honorably in the sepulchre of Kish, Saul's father; whereby he amply testified that so far from having any enmity against Saul's family, he was pleased with the opportunity of shewing respect to his name and memory. This whole account concludes with the following observation of the historian: *And they performed all that the king commanded, and after that God was intreated for the land: God approved of David's generosity to the family and remains of his enemy, and, as a reward for it, sent prosperity to him and his people.*

The calamity of the famine being removed, David's attention was engaged in opposing the Philistines, who, though they had been greatly humbled in the beginning of his reign, having yet some gigantic men among them, again waged war against him. He accordingly marched against them at the head of a very considerable army, and engaging them, soon obtained a complete victory, great numbers being slain, and the rest put to flight. But this battle was very near proving fatal to David. One of the Philistines (a man of so large a size that his lance weighed three hundred shekels) seeing him detached from his army, and quite spent, turned short, and suddenly struck him to the ground; but Abishai, the brother of Joab, coming at the precise moment to his relief, not only preserved the king, but killed the Philistine. The whole army were so sensible of the king's danger, and the interposition of Providence for his safety, that they swore he should never, from that time, personally engage in battle, lest his natural courage should involve him in the like or worse misfortunes, by means of which the nation would sustain an irreparable loss, and the people be deprived of those distinguished blessings they had so often experienced under his government.*

* The prohibition of David's going again to battle is thus beautifully expressed by the sacred historian: *Thou shalt go no more out with us to battle that thou quench not the light of Israel*, 2 Sam. xxi. 17. Good kings are, in scripture, called the light of the people (1 Kings xi. 36) because the beauty and glory, the conduct and direction, the comfort and safety, and welfare of a people, depend on, and are derived from them.

Notwithstanding this defeat, the Philistines were still determined to disturb the peace of Israel. Having rallied their scattered forces, they fixed their place of rendezvous in the plain of Gob, upon which David dispatched an army against them, and a battle taking place the Israelites again became victorious. In this expedition, Sibbechai, the Hushathite, a very brave and experienced warrior, acquired great reputation by killing Saph, one of the race of giants, with his own hands.

After this two other battles took place between the army of the Philistines and that of David, both of which terminated in favor of the Israelites. In these battles were slain two of the most gigantic men among the whole race of the Philistines, one of whom was brother to the famous Goliath, who had been slain by David during the reign of Saul. This last conquest quite sickened the Philistines, who disbanded their army, and relinquished all farther thoughts of interrupting the Israelites.

David, having thus overcome his enemies, composed a psalm or hymn on the occasion, in which he returned thanks to God for his great protection not only on this, but on all other occasions during his life. This beautiful hymn, which is full of the most grateful acknowledgments to his Divine benefactor, is contained in the 22d chapter of the Second Book of Samuel, and in the 18th among the whole list composed by the immortal Psalmist.

At this time David had about him great numbers of men of the most approved courage and military prowess, thirty-seven of whom he called his mighty men, or Worthies, from their having performed exploits of the most dangerous and surprizing nature. Of these we shall only take notice of the actions of five as related by the sacred historian, and from whom a tolerable idea may be formed of the achievements of the rest.

The first of these was Adino, the Eznite, who, in one encounter, broke into the ranks of the enemy, and, with his own hands, laid eight hundred men dead at his feet.

The next was Eleazar, the son of Dodo, the Abolite, who distinguished himself for his great valor and strength in an engagement at which David was present. The Philistines were so numerous that the Israelites gave way and fled; but Eleazar maintained his ground, and encoun-

tering the enemy, made such a dreadful slaughter among them, that his sword was in a manner glued to his right hand with their blood. This example of bravery animated the whole army, who immediately rallied their forces, fell on the Philistines, and obtained a complete victory.

The third was named Shammah, the son of Agee, the Hararite. This champion also, in an engagement with the Philistines, maintained his ground with such courage, after the Israelites had given way, that he put the enemy to flight, and from his distinguished valor was obtained a complete conquest.—These three heroes, besides the feats already mentioned, performed one of a very singular nature in conjunction, the particulars of which are as follow: The army of the Philistines lay in the valley of Rephaim, between David's camp and Bethlehem, where they had likewise a garrison. David intimated a desire of having some water from the well of Bethlehem, which being heard by these three chiefs, they forced their way through the enemy's camp, and having drawn some water out of the well, returned uninterrupted (the Philistines staring at them with amazement as they passed) and presented it to the king. When David understood at what price it had been purchased, even at the most imminent hazard of their lives, he would not drink of it, but, giving God thanks for their safety, poured it on the ground as an offering to the Lord.

The fourth of these champions was Abishai, the brother of Joab, who, in one day, slew three hundred of the Philistines with his own hands.

The fifth and last we shall mention was Benaiah, the son of Jehoida. This mighty man was challenged by two brothers (Moabites) famous for their military exploits, both of whom he engaged at the same time, and laid them dead at his feet. He likewise encountered with an Egyptian, a man of prodigious strength and size. His adversary was well provided with arms, and himself almost defenceless, notwithstanding which he closed with him, wrested his spear from his hands, and killed him with his own weapon. But he performed another achievement still more extraordinary than the former. A lion had fallen into a pit, from whence he could not extricate himself, and there being at the same time a deep snow, the mouth of the

pit (which was narrow) was almost closed. The lion, finding himself not likely to effect his escape, set up a most hideous roar, upon which Benaiah, being directed by the noise, went to the place, and immediately descending into the pit, struck the lion so forcibly on the head with his club, that he fell to the ground and instantly expired.

Such were the exploits performed by these five champions, and the other thirty-two were no less distinguished for their great courage and military prowess.

David, whatever was the occasion of it, suddenly took it into his head that he would know the number of his people,* forgetting the command of Moses, who had said, that on such occasion there should be an oblation of half a shekel by the head offered to the Lord, (See Exod. xxx.) He accordingly gave orders to Joab to go through the whole kingdom, and bring him an account of all the people. Go, said he, *through all the tribes of Israel, from Dan even to Beersheba, and number ye the people.* Joab strongly remonstrated against such a procedure,† and that

* The words in the text are, *And again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go number Israel and Judah,* 2. Sam. xxiv. 1. But in the original there is no nominative case at all. We find it however supplied in 1 Chron. xxi. 1. where it is said, that *Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel:* But then, by the word *Satan*, there is no necessity why we should understand the devil properly so called, because any evil minister, or counsellor, that advised David to number the people, will answer the signification of the word as well: and that there was such counsellor, who prompted David to this action, seems to be implied in these words of Joab: *Now the Lord thy God add unto the people (how many soever they be) an hundred fold, and that the eyes of my lord the king may see it, but why doth my lord the king delight in this thing?* 2 Sam. xxiv. 3. Whereby it seems plain, that the matter had been debated in the king's council before, and that, though Joab was one who opposed it, David was more influenced by the persuasion of some other.

† It is evident that this action of David's was thought a very wrong step, even by Joab himself, who remonstrated against it, being apprehensive of the bad consequences that might attend it: and therefore *Joab counted not Levi and Benjamin,* 1 Chron. xxi. 6. *because the king's word was abominable to him.* It is probable we do not understand all the circumstances of this very singular transaction; but Joab's sense of it (who was no scrupulous man) shews that David's conduct in it was exceeding imprudent, and might subject his people to very great inconveniences.

in a manner more modest than was customary with him; but the king's orders were positive, upon which Joab, assisted by some of the king's principal officers, sat out on the expedition. They began on the east side of the river Jordan, went round by the north parts of Canaan, and returned to Jerusalem at the end of nine months and twenty days. By the estimate Joab brought there appeared to be 800,000 men fit to bear arms, and 500,000 in the tribe of Judah only; exclusive of the tribes of Levi and Benjamin, whom he had not numbered.

David had no sooner received the account of the number of his people than his heart misgave him. He knew he had offended the Almighty in what he had done, and entreated pardon by the most fervent prayers and supplications. *I have sinned, said he, greatly in that I have done: and now I beseech thee, O Lord, take away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly.*

The next morning the prophet Gad was sent to David with an offer of three things for his choice; namely, a seven years famine; persecution by his enemies for three months; or a pestilence for three days. The choice of such great evils exceedingly perplexed and confounded David, who, knowing he must accept of one of the three, argued with himself to this effect: "If, says he, I chuse the famine, it will appear as if I had more care for myself than my people, as it is very unlikely I should be distressed for the want of bread. If I chuse a course of unsuccessful battles with the enemy, it will appear the same, having strong holds or castles, to which I can fly for safety. But for the last, it is a calamity common as well to kings as subjects, and which strikes terror into all without distinction. I had rather fall into the hands of God than those of my enemies." *Let us fall now into the hand of the Lord; for his mercies are great, and let me not fall into the hand of man.**

* This was as much as if he had said, "I am now fully convinced of the great provocation I have given to the Lord my God, by breaking his law in numbering the people from motives of ostentation, and not with a view of supporting the temple service, for which numbering was originally intended. I am likewise, in the most humble manner, forced to acknowledge that I have put my trust in the arm of flesh, and not in the Lord Jehovah, who was at all times ready to help me. But still let me fall into the hands of that Divine Being, for I know that his tender mercies are over all his works,

David having made choice of the pestilence, God was pleased to send it immediately among the people, and it raged with such irresistible violence, that within the three days it took off no less than 70,000 men. It began in the extreme part of the kingdom, and made hasty advances towards Jerusalem, which when the king and inhabitants heard, they clothed themselves in sackcloth, and, with all humility, cried unto God for mercy. A little before the evening sacrifice (or before the time of evening prayer) there appeared an angel over Jerusalem, brandishing a flaming sword, as if going to destroy it. As soon as David saw this Divine messenger, he broke out into an exclamation to this effect: "Lord, punish the shepherd, but preserve the sheep; pour down thy wrath on me and my family, but let me beseech thee to spare the innocent people, for 'tis I alone who have offended thee." *I have sinned, and I have done wickedly: but these sheep, what have they done? Let thine hand, I pray thee, be against me, and my father's house.**

It may not be improper to make a short digression, in order to put to rights such (and many no doubt, there are) as may think it strange that the people should be involved in the same punishment with David, who, at first view, appears to have been the only person that had committed the offence. It is to be observed, that kings in general are no otherwise to be punished in their regal capacities, nor, oftentimes, to be brought to account for the errors of their administration, but by public calamities; by famine, pestilence, foreign wars, domestic convulsions, or some other like distresses, that affect their people. If, therefore, it pleases God to shew his displeasure against princes for the public errors of their administration, it must be right and

"the mercies of my enemies are, at best, little more than cruelty. Let God chastise me, for surely he is my friend, and will be so both in time and in eternity."

* The judgment against David for his transgression was sufficiently visible, otherwise he could not have seen the form that the destroying angel assumed; but here we find, that as a most pious man and a good sovereign, he repents of those sins he had committed in the most voluntary manner, and while he looks upon himself as the procuring cause of all the evils that had happened, he begs that God would wreak his vengeance upon him, and not upon his people, who were innocent.

fit for him to afflict their people; and, indeed, this is nothing more than what frequently happens in the common course of Providence. If this be a difficulty, it affects natural religion as well as revealed: and the same considerations that will obviate the difficulty in one case will solve it also in the other. Besides, in this case, the people even themselves were very culpable; for the command was absolute: *When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel, then shall they give every man a ransom for his soul.* And therefore, as they knew, or might have known, that, upon being numbered, they were to pay the prescribed ransom, which yet they neglected or refused to do; as partners in the offence, they justly shared in the penalty inflicted. It is allowed, that the tax was not at this time demanded by David; and this was his sin, in setting aside a positive command of God. The demanding this tax by his own authority might have created a national disturbance, and therefore should have prevented him from numbering his people. But they submitted to be numbered, and were therefore bound to pay the tax, whether David demanded it of them or not, for the law did not exempt them from the payment, if he who numbered them did not demand it. They were to pay it as a ransom for their lives, and to exempt themselves from the plague; and were therefore punished with a plague for their neglect and disobedience.

David, indeed, takes the guilt upon himself, and declares his people innocent of it: *These sheep, what have they done?* And it is true that the order to number the people was David's, of which his people were wholly innocent: but they should have remonstrated against it to the king, or voluntarily to have paid the capitation tax required of them, and as they did neither, they could not plead innocence as a reason for their exemption from punishment. And even supposing they were free from all blame in this affair, can we suppose they were so entirely free from all other transgressions, as that it was injustice in God to visit them with a pestilence? Were not many of them concerned in the rebellion of Absalom? Is it not expressly said that the *anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel?* And can we suppose that the righteous Lord, whose mercy is over all his works, could be angry with the people if innocent.—If not, God did them no injustice by sending the pesti-

lence; and therefore none by sending it at that time, and as an immediate punishment of David's sin. God, by virtue of his supreme authority over mankind, may resume life whenever he pleases. If there be no sin, the immediate resumption of life will be no punishment; if there be, a resumption of life will not be unjust, though the immediate reason of that resumption may be, for the punishment of another; especially as all such instances have a real tendency to promote the public good, and to preserve alive in the minds both of princes and people, that reverence for the Deity, without which neither public or private virtue can subsist, nor the prosperity of kingdoms ever be secured and established upon solid and lasting foundations.

We shall only just add, to what we have already observed, that it is very plain the Israelites were punished, not altogether because David numbered the people, but because they had offended the Lord, and, by their vices, called down their punishment upon them: nor can we, upon a review of what has been related, want proofs of their criminality. Can any thing be more shameful and sinful than the rebellion we have mentioned in this and the preceding chapter? rebellion against a good and pious king, established over them by the immediate choice of God himself? Doubtless such conduct justly merited chastisement from the hand of God: and it may, perhaps, be thought not unworthy of observation, that other nations, after rebellions against their lawful monarchs, have suffered the like punishment with the Israelites in the present case. The latter part of David's exclamation to God, *let thine hand be against me, &c.* is a noble instance of his generous concern for the welfare of his people. The language is tender and pathetic: it is the real language and spirit of a genuine, a true father of the people, devoting himself and family as sacrifices to God for the preservation of his subjects.—But to return.

In consequence of David's solemn humiliation and intercession with God for his people, the prophet Gad was sent to him the same day, with an order that he should erect an altar unto the Lord in the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite.* David immediately set about obeying the

* This threshing-floor was on Mount Moriah, where Cain and Abel are said to have offered up their sacrifices; where Abraham in-

Divine commands, and when he came to the place, Araunah, seeing him at a distance, ran to meet him, and, after paying reverence, asked him, Why he came there, and what commands he had for his servant? David told him he came to purchase his threshing-floor, in order to raise an altar on it, and to offer sacrifices to God. Araunah replied in words to this effect: "Not only my threshing-floor, but all that I have is at my lord's service; and I humbly beseech God that he will be pleased to accept your sacrifice." David thanked him for his generous offers, but told him, he could not accept of them, for that it must be a purchase, and not a gift, as it would not be right to offer a sacrifice at another's expense. He therefore gave him fifty shekels of silver for the threshing-floor and some oxen, and immediately offered up sacrifices to God, who, in consequence thereof, was pleased to reinstate him in his favor. *The Lord was entreated for the land, and the plague was stayed from Israel*, the city of Jerusalem being mercifully spared, and exempted from this dreadful calamity.

After this David, encouraged by the Divine protection in having removed the pestilence from his people, continued to offer up sacrifices on the altar he had erected in this place; and publicly declared, *This is the house of the Lord God, this is the altar of the burnt-offering, for Israel*;* hereby consecrating the spot for the erection of the intended temple, and to be the seat and center of public worship for all the tribes of Israel.†

tended offering up his son Isaac, and where the temple of Solomon was afterwards erected.

* See 1 Chron. xxii. 1.

† It is not improbable, that God, at this time, revealed to David the exact frame and fashion of the temple; that from the acceptableness of his sacrifices he perceived that this threshing-floor was the place which God had designed for the situation of his temple, and that he not only purchased that, but the whole top of Mount Moriah likewise, for the ground-plot of the intended building.

CHAP. XIII.

David, being grown old and diseased, is cherished by Abishag, a young woman, a Shunammite. Adonijah, David's eldest son living, makes an attempt to obtain the throne in consequence of his father's infirmities. He is assisted in the conspiracy by Joab and Abiathar; but all their endeavors prove fruitless. Solomon, by David's appointment, is anointed king by Zadok and Nathan. Adonijah, being terrified flies to the altar, and is spared by Solomon. David makes a speech to the princes of the respective tribes concerning the building of the temple. His last charge to his son Solomon. His death and character.

DAVID, being now grown into years (in his seventieth year, or ready to enter on it) experienced a great decay in his natural vigor and warmth, insomuch that though he was well covered with clothes, he could not get any heat. In consequence of this a consultation was held among his physicians, who advised that, to supply him with natural heat, a virgin should lie in the same bed with him. Accordingly, one Abishag, a young and beautiful* woman of Shunam, belonging to the tribe of Issachar, was brought to him, and made his concubinary wife; but David had never any carnal knowledge of her, being, from his infirmities, incapable of possessing connubial enjoyments.

As David was become almost inactive from his natural infirmities, Adonijah (who, next after Absalom, was his eldest son) taking advantage of his imperfections, entertained thoughts of assuming the sovereignty, on a presumption that his father either could not, or would not, obstruct him. He was, indeed, a prince of exquisite beauty, greatly admired by the people, and particularly indulged† by his father. He was in disposition much the

* If it be asked, how the beauty of the person to be employed for this purpose was concerned in David's health, we answer, that the beauty he required is evidently beauty of complexion, which, as it indicates the health and temperament of the body, might, in the present case, be of singular importance.

† It is remarked of David, that one of his great faults, and what led him into many premunires, was, his extraordinary indulgence to his children, of whom he was so fond, that he seems to have over-

same as his brother Absalom, and pursued the like measures, having set up a pompous equipage, retained a prodigious number of attendants, and living in the most sumptuous manner.

Adonijah had gained over to his party Joab, the general of the forces, and Abiathar the priest, by whose advice he invited all his brothers (except Solomon) and all the great men of Judah (except Nathan the prophet, Benaiah, captain of the guards, and the officers of the army, who, with Zadok the priest, were not for him) to a sumptuous entertainment at Enrogel, near Jerusalem, the design of which was, as soon as the company began to be merry, to proclaim him king.

Nathan the prophet, who knew God's designation,* David's choice, and the people's interest, having received intelligence of the meeting appointed by Adonijah, gave information of it to Bathsheba, strongly advising her to go to the king, and press him, in the most urgent manner, immediately to declare Solomon his successor, things being come to such an extremity as to threaten the most imminent danger.

Bathsheba, taking Nathan's advice, immediately repaired to the king, and having acquainted him with Adonijah's conspiracy, begged him to name her son Solomon his successor, agreeable to the promise he had formerly made, and ratified with an oath. While she was with the king Nathan entered the apartment, and confirmed all she had said relative to the conspiracy; upon which David turning to Bathsheba, said, *As the Lord liveth, that hath redeemed my soul out of all distress, even as I swear unto thee by the Lord God of Israel, saying, Assuredly Solomon thy son shall reign after me, and he shall sit*

looked their errors, and not reprov'd them, though he was bound to do it by a plain law (Levit. xix. 17.) and could not but know that the high-priest Eli was severely punished for such neglect.

* God had promised David by Nathan, (2 Sam. vii. 12.) that he would set upon his throne a son that should proceed from him, which plainly signified, that none of his sons already born were to be the person; and in 1 Chron. xxii. 8, &c. he declared by the same prophet, that, after his father, Solomon should reign, and build him an house. This Adonijah could not but know; and therefore his setting himself against the decree of heaven made his sin the greater in attempting to possess himself of the throne.

upon my throne in my stead; even so will I certainly do this day.

David strictly performed his promise to Bathsheba. He immediately commanded Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah, the captain of his guards, with the officers and ministers of state, to mount Solomon on the mule he was accustomed to ride himself;* and having, in this manner, conducted him to Gihon,† Zadok and Nathan should there anoint him with holy oil, after which they should proclaim him king by sound of trumpet, saying, *God save king Solomon.* All this was strictly executed agreeable to the orders of David, after which Solomon was conducted back to Jerusalem amidst the shouts and acclamations of the people.

But how thunderstruck was Adonijah and his company, when, being just upon the point of proclaiming him king, they heard the sound of the trumpet, and the shouts of the people attending Solomon! As soon as they were informed of the occasion, fearful of the consequences of their conspiracy, each man thought proper to shift for himself. Adonijah, their leader, (conscious he had committed a

* In these days it was a capital offence to ride upon the king's ass, or mule, to sit upon his throne, or to handle his sceptre, without his order: whereas, on the contrary, to have the honor to ride on the king's beast, by his appointment, was the highest dignity that could be bestowed on a subject. It was always considered in this light by the Persians, as appears from the story of Mordecai, in the sixth chapter of the Book of Esther.

† Gihon was a little river or brook near Jerusalem, which discharged itself into the brook Kidron; and was afterwards rendered famous by the noble work of Hezekiah, 2 Chron. xxxii. 30. Maimonides, and other Rabbies, assert, that the kings of the house of David were all obliged to be anointed by the side of a fountain or river; which they say was the reason why David commanded his servants to bring his son down to Gihon, and anoint him there. At this place, without the walls of Jerusalem, Zadok and Nathan anointed Solomon; that is, one of them poured out the oil, and the other anointed his head, drawing a circle round it in the form of a crown, to denote his delegation to the royal dignity. Another reason the Jews assign for choosing a situation for anointing their kings near a river is, to shew the perpetuity of their kingdom, because rivers run always, though the cities which they wash are continually decaying, and liable to destruction. Probably Gihon was more particularly chosen on this occasion, as being near Jerusalem, the most public place of resort, at that time, in the whole kingdom.

crime worthy of death, by usurping the kingdom without his father's consent, and against the known design of God) fled to the altar for safety and protection. Here he continued some time, till, having obtained of Solomon a promise of life, on condition he would never make any future attempt against his government, he was admitted into the king's presence, where he made his obeisance to Solomon, in token of thankfulness for his preservation, and in acknowledgment of his brother's superiority and right to the throne of Israel.

David, having exalted his son Solomon to the throne, considering within himself that he was very young and tender, sent for him, and gave him a strict charge that, after his death, he should build an house for the Lord God. He told him that he had intended doing it himself, but that as he had made great wars, and shed much blood in them, God would not permit him to carry his design into execution: but that he had promised a son should be born to him, under whose reign he would give peace and quietness to Israel, and that he should build an house to his name. He then strongly exhorted him to undertake the work, prayed God that he would give him wisdom and understanding, and assured him he would prosper if he kept the statutes of the Lord as directed by Moses. After this he acquainted him with the preparations of gold, silver, materials, and workmen of all sorts, that he had already made towards the edifice, and that he had commanded all the princes of the people to assist him in erecting it, as they were now in a state of great prosperity, and profound peace. That he had divided the Levites, and the descendants of Aaron into their several orders and stations, and appointed to each of them their distinct offices and services, in every thing relating to the temple, and the solemn worship to be performed in it.

A short time after this David convened an assembly of all the princes of Israel, the princes of the tribes, and the captains of all the companies that ministered to him by course, with all the officers and mighty men; the whole of whom being assembled at Jerusalem, he addressed them in words to this effect:* “Hear ye, my brethren and my

* The latter part of the speech which Josephus puts into David's mouth on this occasion, runs thus: “Our Father Jacob (as you all

“ people: I had determined in my own mind to have
 “ built an house, where the Ark of the Covenant of the
 “ Lord might perpetually abide, and for the footstool of
 “ the throne of our God, and have made great prepara-
 “ tions for erecting this building. But from this I was
 “ prevented by the order of God, who, by his prophet,
 “ said to me, thou shalt not build an house for my name,
 “ because thou hast been engaged in many wars, and
 “ thereby hast shed much blood. However the Lord God
 “ of Israel chose me, before all the house of my father, to
 “ be king over Israel for ever; for he hath chosen in
 “ Judah the ruler, and in the house of Judah, the house of
 “ my father, and among the sons of my father, he took
 “ pleasure in me to make me reign over all Israel; and
 “ from all my sons, for the Lord hath given me many sons,
 “ he hath chosen Solomon my son to sit upon the throne
 “ of the Lord over all Israel. And he said unto me,
 “ Solomon thy son, he shall build my house, and my
 “ courts, for I have chosen him to be my son, and I will
 “ be to him a father. And I will establish his kingdom
 “ for ever, if he firmly bind himself to do my command-
 “ ments and judgments, as they are observed at this day.
 “ Now therefore, in the presence of all Israel, the congre-

very well know) had twelve sons, and yet Judah was chosen by com-
 mon consent to be ruler of all the rest. You know likewise, that I
 myself (though there were then six brothers of us) was advanced by
 God to the government, and that none of the rest thought themselves
 injured: Wherefore I must now, in like manner, require it of you,
 and of all your sons, that you submit cheerfully and dutifully to my
 son Solomon, and that ye do it without any grumbling, or civil dis-
 sention, because it is from God's immediate command and commission,
 that he derives his authority. Put the case now, that God should have
 set a stranger over you, how great a folly and madness would it
 have been for you to murmur at it? But how thankful ought you to
 be, for the choice of so near a relation, when you yourselves are par-
 takers of the honor that is done to your brother? There is nothing I
 so much long for, as to see God's gracious promises take a speedy
 effect, and the whole people put into a lasting possession of the bless-
 ings they are to enjoy under the reign of Solomon. And all this, my
 dear son, (says he, turning to Solomon) will be made good, and every
 thing succeed to your wish, so long as you govern according to piety
 and justice, with respect to your duty both towards God and man, up-
 holding a reverence to the laws, and treading in the steps of your fore-
 fathers; but, whenever you pass these bounds, there is nothing but
 ruin and misery to be expected.”

“gation of the Lord, and in the hearing of our God, I
 “beseech you, observe and diligently follow all the com-
 “mands of the Lord your God, that you may inherit
 “this good land, and leave it for an inheritance to your
 “children after you for ever. And thou, Solomon my
 “son, acknowledge thou the God of thy fathers, and serve
 “him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind; for
 “the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth every
 “imagination of the thoughts. If thou diligently seek
 “him, he will be found of thee, and if thou forsake him,
 “he will reject thee for ever. Observe now, that the Lord
 “hath chosen thee to build an house for a sanctuary. Be
 “resolute and perform it.*

Having said this, David, in the presence of the whole assembly, gave his son Solomon patterns, draughts or models, of all the porches and buildings that were to belong to the temple; the order of the courses he had fixed for the priests and Levites; on account of the gold and silver he had provided for all the instruments and vessels that were to be made use of in the solemnities of the temple.

* There is certainly no person, who reads over this speech of David's with attention, but what must admire the great prudence and piety that appears in it. He was now grown old; he had advanced Solomon to the throne, who had elder brethren that might envy his advancement, and endeavor to disturb the settlement that had been made in his favor. To secure the affection and fidelity of all the principal persons then assembled, he puts them in mind that he chose the tribe of Judah before all the others, as the tribe in which the regal power should be established, his father's house before all the other families of that tribe, himself before all his brethren to be king of Israel, and Solomon, in preference to all his other sons, to succeed him in the throne of the kingdom of the Lord over Israel, and that he had commanded him to build his house, and the courts belonging to it, promising to establish his kingdom, if he continued faithful and diligent in keeping his commandments. This would have argued the greatest imprudence and folly, had not the assembly well known that the Divine appointment David appealed to was real; but as he was sensible they knew this, a more prudent step could not have been taken to reconcile the affections of the people to Solomon's interest, and secure him in the peaceable possession of the throne. His solemn exhortation to the states of his kingdom, and his son, to keep all the commandments of God was a noble proof of his real piety, and his concern for the public welfare; as he knew this was the only method by which the national prosperity could be properly secured.

service; the candlesticks and lamps; the table of shew-bread; the altar of incense; and the cherubims that were to cover with their wings the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord. Having done this, he addressed himself in words to this effect: "All these things the Lord made me to understand by inspiration, even all the works of his pattern;" or, as we would rather render the words, the pattern of all these works. "Be strong, and of good courage, and do it. Be not afraid or dismayed, for the Lord my God is with thee. He will not fail thee nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the House of the Lord. And behold the course of the priests and Levites shall be with thee, for all the service of the house of God, and there shall be with thee, for all manner of workmanship, every willing skilful man for any manner of service. All the princes also, and all the people, will be wholly at thy command."

But David had yet a farther view in convening this assembly of the states of his kingdom, and that was still more effectually to secure their assistance to his son and successor, in carrying on, and completing the building of the temple, by persuading them to a liberal contribution towards this important service. To effect this, he farther addressed them nearly as follows:* "Solomon my son, says he, whom alone God hath chosen, is young and tender, and the work is great, for the palace is not for man, but for the Lord God. I have, therefore, with the utmost zeal and power, prepared gold and silver, and brass, and wood, for all things that are to be made out of these several materials, and all manner of precious stones, and marble stones in abundance. Besides, as I have set my affection towards the house of my God, I have gold and silver that is my peculiar property, which I will give for the house of my God, above all that I have otherwise prepared for the house of the sanctuary; the gold for things of gold, and the silver for things of silver, and for all manner of work to be made by the hands of the artificers. And who now will willingly offer with a full hand this day unto the Lord?"

* See 1 Chron. xxix, 1, &c.

This truly royal munificence of David inspired a noble generosity in the whole assembly, and each, ambitious to imitate the glorious liberality of their prince, willingly made their offerings to the same sacred service, rejoicing to contribute their share, and doing it with a perfect heart, out of an unfeigned affection to the God of Israel, and a fervent desire of having a temple erected to his name and honor. Their contributions amounted to five thousand talents and ten thousand drams of gold, eighteen thousand of brass, and an hundred thousand of iron, besides precious stones that were paid into the treasury of the house of the Lord.

David's heart was filled with pleasure when he saw how willingly and bountifully the assembly contributed towards carrying on the service he had recommended to them; and, in the fullness of his joy, addressed himself in thanksgivings to God to this effect:

“Blessed be thou, O Jehovah, God of Israel; our Father, for ever and for ever. To thee belong greatness, power, glory, victory, and majesty. For all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine. Thine is the kingdom, O Jehovah, and thou art exalted as head over all. Riches and honor are from thy presence, for thou rulest over all, and in thy hand and disposal is power and might; in thy hand to make great, and strengthen every one thou pleasest. And now, O our God, we make our acknowledgments to thee, and praise thy glorious name. But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able willingly to offer, as we have now done? But all things are from thee, and of what we have received from thy hand, we have given unto thee. For we are strangers before thee and sojourners, as all our fathers were. As a shadow are our days on earth, and there is no hope of long continuance here. All this store therefore, O Jehovah our God, which we have provided to build an house to the name of thy holiness, is from thy hand; for thine are all things. But I know, O my God, that thou searchest the heart, and that thou approvest every instance of integrity. As for me, in the uprightness of my heart, I have freely offered up all these things; and I have also seen with joy, that thy people who are present here, have offered freely and liberally to thee. O Jeho-

“ vah, thou God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, our
 “ fathers, let this be thy care, perpetually to form the
 “ thoughts of the hearts of thy people, so as to prepare
 “ their hearts towards thyself. And to Solomon, my son,
 “ give thou a perfect heart, that he may observe thy pre-
 “ cepts, thy testimonies, and thy statutes; and that he
 “ may do every thing and build the temple, towards which
 “ I have made the necessary preparations.”*

After David had finished his address to Jehovah, the God of Israel, he ordered the whole assembly publicly to bless the God their fathers. They immediately offered him their solemn praises, and, in token of their acknowledging him as their God, bowed themselves down before him; after which they made their obeisance, and did homage to the king. This being done, David dismissed the assembly, who, the next day, offered up sacrifices, feasted on them with great joy before the Lord, confirmed David's choice of Solomon to succeed him, and anointed him a second time king over Israel.

* This prayer of thanksgiving made by David cannot be read without the greatest surprize and pleasure. The address to the Almighty is expressed with great dignity and propriety; and the sentiments of the Deity are rational and sublime. He acknowledges God as infinitely great and powerful, as encompassed with glory, as the author of victory, as clothed with majesty, as the great proprietor of heaven and earth, as universal sovereign, supreme in dominion, the great source of riches and honor, having the kingdoms of the earth in his disposal, and as distributing greatness, power and prosperity to whomsoever he pleases; as the searcher of the heart, as approving integrity, and more pleased with the right disposition of the giver, than the offering he presents. And having acknowledged that his own, and his people's prosperity, were owing to the Divine goodness, and solemnly prayed that they might constantly adhere to their God, and his son be a pattern to them of religious subjection and obedience, he excites them to a public and general adoration of God, and thus accomplished the great scheme he had at heart, namely, the peaceable succession of Solomon his son to his throne and kingdom. It is scarcely possible to conceive any solemnity more truly grand and royal than this: a solemnity heightened by religion, honored by the presence of a powerful prince and the states of his kingdom, increased by the magnificence and plenty of the entertainment, brightened by the joy and gladness of the whole assembly, and that concluded by such a settlement of the government, as produced an almost forty years of uninterrupted prosperity and peace.—On this occasion David composed the 72d Psalm, which the reader will find corresponds with the prayer of thanksgiving above mentioned.

A short time after this, David, finding, from his natural infirmities, that his dissolution was near at hand, called for his son Solomon, and gave him his last exhortation; the substance of which was nearly the same as he had before delivered to him; namely, to walk in his ways, and keep his statutes and his commandments, his judgments and his testimonies, that he might prosper in all he did.* Having said this, he gave Solomon a particular charge with respect to two persons who had highly offended and injured him, namely, Joab and Shimei. The charge to Joab was conceived in these words: *Thou knowest also what Joab the son of Zeruiah did to me, and, what he did to the two captains of the host of Israel, unto Abner, the son of Ner, and unto Amasa, the son of Jether, whom he slew, and shed the blood of war in peace, and put the blood of war upon his girdle that was about his loins, and in his shoes that were on his feet; that is, treacherously, and under pretence of*

* The words Josephus puts into David's mouth on this occasion, are to the following effect: "I am now (says he) going a journey common to all, but to a place from whence no traveller returns. Wherefore, while I am yet living, let me remind you of those things I have before said to you; namely, that you exercise your authority with justice over your subjects, humbly obey God who has been pleased to bestow the government on you, and carefully observe those laws and commandments which he has transmitted to you from the great legislator Moses. Be careful that you are not induced to violate these injunctions, either from the flatteries of your courtiers, your own corrupt desires, or any other cause whatever. If you do, be assured your great and divine protector will immediately forsake you; whereas, on the contrary, if you behave yourself towards him as you ought, and as I most sincerely wish, you will confirm the kingdom to your posterity; no other house but our's will sway the sceptre of the Israelites, but it will be continued to you, and yours for ever. Forget not the crimes of Joab, who, through jealousy, put to death two just and faithful generals, namely, Abner, the son of Ner, and Amasa, the son of Ithra: punish him for their deaths as you shall think fit; for, being more powerful than myself, he has hitherto escaped the threats of justice. I beseech you to do all the good offices you can for the sons of Barzillai, the Gileadite, not under the light of an obligation, but as an acknowledgement for the great benefits I received from their father during my banishment, which I reckon as a debt incumbent on our whole family to discharge. As for Shimei, the Benjamite, who reviled me in the days of my persecution, and whom I afterwards pardoned, you may act with him as you think proper, but I would not have him escape unpunished."

peace and friendship, besprinkled his girdle, and wet his shoes with the blood of these two generals, as though he had slain them in battle. *Do, therefore, according to thy wisdom, and let not his hoary head go down to the grave in peace.*

Here are three murders David mentions to Solomon as the grounds of his charge not to let Joab die a natural death. The one is intimated: *Thou knowest what he did to me*, viz. when he cruelly stabbed Absalom, contrary to my immediate orders: the two others are expressly mentioned, namely, those of Abner and Amasa; and on these accounts he advises Solomon to put him to death. This advice may appear strange to some, but we cannot help thinking, upon mature consideration, that it was worthy of a good king, and fit to be given at a time when he thought himself not long for this world. The crimes which drew down this punishment upon Joab have been already sufficiently displayed not to be forgotten by the reader. Many reasons concurred to prevent David's calling him to an account; but it is plain that he never forgot nor forgave his crime: nay, he could not, consistently with the law, have forgiven him, if he had been inclined to it. His deferring his punishment so long was no reason why he should always do it. Reasons of state prevented its being inflicted before, and reasons of state required its being put into execution at this juncture. In time of war it was dangerous to attempt it on account of the power, influence, and military skill of Joab; in a time of peace it was safe, because Joab's power was then upon the decline, and his services were unnecessary. Joab was ambitious, enterprizing and restless, and having not proved very loyal to the father, might have practised the same perfidy against the son; who, being young, and scarcely settled on his throne, might have suffered from his treachery, his want of fidelity, and his ambitious views, which were insatiable.

We may consider this transaction in another light: we may consider Joab as relative to David in his public capacity. Now David, in his public capacity, was king of Israel: Joab, in his public capacity, stood related to him as his general, and assisted him, and adhered to him in his extremities. David therefore, in *his* public capacity, as king, was obliged to punish Joab with death in his public

capacity as general, assassin, and murderer. If Joab had been his faithful general, and frequently assisted David in his extremities; private obligations are in their nature inferior, and ought to give way to public ones; and the yielding up such an offender to public justice, when personal obligations might have been pleaded in his favor, was a nobler sacrifice in its nature, and renders David's merits, as a prince, the more illustrious. In this light we must commend the master, who died meditating and ordering the punishment of a servant, who, by basely stabbing two worthier men than himself, forfeited the protection of his king and country, and cancelled all the obligations that could arise from his former services. It should be added, that whatever Joab's past services were to David, and however faithfully he had formerly been attached to him, yet he had now been engaged in a conspiracy to depose him, and to set aside the intended succession to the crown, and had actually proclaimed Adonijah king, during his father's life. This was adding rebellion to murder. What was David to do? Was he to have forgiven him at his last hours, in order to manifest his own charity? No! For if a prince's charity influences him, living or dying, to pardon repeated offences, inconsistent with the public safety, it is folly and weakness, and not virtuous charity; it is cruelty to his people, instead of real generosity and goodness. David had not this charity, and it heightens his character that he had not. His last charge to Solomon shews his inviolable regard to justice, by positively ordering the execution of a murderer too powerful for himself to punish; and he would neither have been a wise nor a righteous prince had he forgotten to do it.

After David had given this charge to his son Solomon, to execute the due punishment on Joab for his numerous and aggravated crimes, he gave him another, relative to Shimei* the Benjamite, who, as hath been already ob-

* The sense of the two charges given by David to his son Solomon relative to Joab and Shimei, are thus expressed by the learned Bishop Patrick: Speaking of the first he says, "Thou rememberest what Joab did unto me: with what insolence he treated me in the time of the war against Absalom; how, contrary to my orders, he slew him, and afterwards talked to me in a menacing and imperious manner. Thou rememberest what he did to Amasa, whom I

served, when the king was in his flight from Jerusalem, to prevent his falling into Absalom's hands, met him, railed at, and cursed him in his journey; and, as he went on, had the farther insolence to pelt him with stones. *Behold*, said he to Solomon, *thou hast with thee Shimei, the son of Gera, a Benjamite of Bahurim, which cursed me with a grievous curse, in the day that I went to Mahanaim: but he came down to meet me at Jordan, and I swore to him by the Lord, saying, I will not put thee to death with the sword. Now therefore hold him not guiltless: for thou art a wise man, and knowest what thou oughtest to do unto him; but his hoary head bring thou down to the grave with blood.**

“intended to have put in his place, and made the general of all my forces; and what to Abner, who was then endeavoring to gain over to my party all that adhered to the house of Saul. The injury done to these two brave men redounds upon me, since they were both under my protection, and both murdered, basely murdered, because I had an esteem for them; and till justice be done to their murderer, (which I in my life-time had not power to do) *their innocent blood will not depart from my house*. Do thou therefore take care to ass-soil it, and whenever he commits any transgression against thee, let the blood of these two valuable men be charged to his account, and let him, as he has long deserved, be put to death.”

Speaking of Shimei, he says, “Thou hast Shimei with thee, and some share perhaps he may have in thy favor; but trust him not, he is no friend to kings or kingly power. Remember what he did to me in my distress; how bitterly, how virulently he cursed me to my face; and I make no doubt, but that he would be the same to thee in the like circumstances. I forgave him in my exile, because I looked upon him, as an instrument in God's hands to humble me for my great offence. I forgave him in my return home, because he came to me when my heart was open, and unwilling to damp the joy of my restoration with the effusion of any blood. I promised him his life; and let not that promise be violated in my days: but what I did is no rule or obligation to thee. Let him not die, however, for his offence against me, but rather watch his conduct, and, if he should chance to give thee a fresh occasion, be sure to lay hold of it, because it is not in his nature to be a good subject.”

* The ingenious Dr Delaney observes, that the words *but his hoary head bring thou down to the grave with blood* is not rightly translated; for that the particle *vau* should be rendered, as in similar cases, not connectively, but disjunctively: for instance, Agur, (Prov. xxx.) beseeches God to keep him from the extremes, both of poverty and wealth: if the *vau* were to be rendered connectively, the petition would run thus: *Give me not poverty and riches*—which is absurd: in the same analogy this verse, rightly translated, will stand thus: *Now therefore neither hold him not guiltless, (for thou art a wise man,*

It appears, from the expression, *Behold thou hast with thee*, that Shimei was at this time in Jerusalem; and therefore David thought it a proper opportunity for confining him, that he might not spread disaffection to Solomon's government among those of his own tribe, or of any of the other tribes of Israel: a precaution the more necessary in the infancy of Solomon's reign, and as some of his brethren were inclined to dispute with him the succession to the crown. It is far from being improbable, that Shimei was in the party with Adonijah against Solomon, as he was in that of Absalom against David, and this is the true reason of those words, *Now therefore hold him not guiltless*, that is, "Though I forgave him, and swore to him that he should not die, do not thou look on him as an innocent man that is reconciled to my family, and thy succession to the throne of Israel: he is Shimei still, and wants nothing but a fair opportunity to declare it. Clear him not, therefore, as I did, if thou findest him guilty of any mal-practices: *but his hoary head bring down*, &c. Cut him off as an old offender, and dangerous enemy, to secure thy own peace, and the safety of thy government." Farther, David's telling Solomon that he *swore to Shimei, that he would not put him to death for his outrage and treason* is a demonstrative proof that he did not advise Solomon to put him to death for the crime which he himself had solemnly forgiven; for, can it be imagined that David would tell Solomon he had sworn not to put Shimei to death, and in the same breath order him, in violation of his oath, to be put to death? If he intended that Solomon should have immediately put him to death, there would be neither reason nor sense in the words, *thou art a wise man, and knowest what thou oughtest to do unto him*. Now to what purpose was it to tell Solomon that he knew how to behave to Shimei, if David's command was immediately to cut him off, and Solomon understood him in that sense? But that Solomon did not understand his father in this sense is evident, by his ordering him to build an house for himself in Jerusalem,* as well as from the

&c. nor his hoary head bring thou down to the grave with blood. In this sense, the advice is full of humanity, as well as wisdom; and Solomon understood and observed it in this sense, and no other.

* See 1 Kings ii. 36.

different manner in which he afterwards treated Shimei and Joab. By the way, let it be observed, that after Shimei's confession of his fault, Abishai asked, *shall not Shimei be put to death, because he cursed the Lord's anointed?* By this question he meant, put to death instantly, as appears from David's answer, *Shall there any man be put to death this day in Israel? Do not I know that I am this day king over Israel? Therefore the king said to Shimei, Thou shalt not die; and the king swore to him, viz. that he should not then, or on that day, or at that time, be put to the sword.* On the whole, nothing farther can certainly be collected from the words, as they stand connected, but that David reprieved Shimei from immediate execution, and left himself at liberty to call him to an account at any other time for the outrage and treason of which he had been guilty; and therefore David violated no oath, if he actually ordered Solomon to put him to death as a dangerous enemy to his person and government; and much less still if, for the same reason, he advised him to keep a strict watch over Shimei, and put him to death only in case he should commit any crime in future that merited the forfeiture of his life. This is the true state of the case, and we would only ask those who are inclined to impeach David's character on account of his conduct in this particular, how they can think it either inconsistent with piety, or the advice of a prince on his death-bed? It is true, forgiveness of enemies is a duty, provided they cease to become our enemies; but no man is obliged by any law so to forgive an enemy, continuing such, as not to take the proper methods to guard against the effects of his enmity, and bring him to justice, if no other method will prove effectual. Much less is a prince obliged so to forgive an implacable enemy to his crown and government, and one who is likely to disturb the settlement of the crown in his successor, as not to order the successor to be upon his guard against him, and punish him, when guilty, according to his demerits. Such a caution and order is what he owes to his people; and he may die, as a private person, in charity with all mankind, and forgive every private injury against himself; and yet as a prince advise what is necessary to the public good after his decease, and even the execution of particular persons, if,

by abusing the lenity and respite they once received, they should be guilty of new and capital offences.

At the same time that David gave these charges to his son Solomon relative to Shimei and Joab who had done him the most distinguished injuries, he did not forget one from whom he had received the greatest benefits, by having assisted him at a time when distress stared him in the face abroad, and wretchedness and misery visited his family at home. *But shew kindness, said he, unto the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite, and let them be of those that eat at thy table: for so they came to me when I fled because of Absalom thy brother.*

This was the last interview Solomon had with his father David, who, a very short time after, paid the debt of nature in the 71st year of his age, and 40th of his reign, seven of which he ruled over the tribe of Judah alone, and thirty-three years more over all Israel.* He was buried with great pomp in that part of the city of Jerusalem, which himself had taken from the Jebusites, and called, after his own name, the City of David.†

* It is said (2 Sam. v. 5.) that David reigned seven years and six months in Hebron, and thirty-three in Jerusalem, which makes his reign forty years and an half. But we must remember, that it is very common, in scripture computation, to omit smaller sums, and only reckon by a round number; for which reason these six months are not taken notice of in this account of David's reign.

† The sepulchre of David was always held in the greatest veneration by the Jews. It was in being in St. Peter's time, for so he tells the people, Acts ii, 29. Dio (in the life of Adrian) informs us that part of it was fallen down in the Emperor Adrian's reign. Modern travellers describe some magnificent monuments hewed in a rock not far from Jerusalem, which are, doubtless, very ancient, but they do not agree that they were the sepulchres of the kings of Judah. It is, however, somewhat strange, that the place of David's sepulchre (which both the Chaldeans and Romans, when they took Jerusalem, thought proper to spare) should now be so entirely lost, that, for many years past, not the least traces of it have been to be found. But though Providence has so ordered it, that the place of David's sepulchre should not at present be known, yet there does not want an eternal monument of his most excellent genius. The Book of Psalms, which, for the most part, was composed by him, doth publish the glory of its author more than the most pompous Eulogics; and the son of Sirach has consecrated an epitaph to his memory which will remain when brass and marble shall be no more. *As the fat (says he) is taken away from the peace-offering, so was David chosen out of the people of Israel. He played with lions as with kids, and with bears as*

With respect to the character* of David, his life is loaded with such a multiplicity of the most singular transactions, that, to give it in a compass usual to other distinguished characters would not be to do him that justice his great merits deserve. We shall therefore, in as concise a manner as possible, recapitulate the principal incidents that occurred from his first becoming popular to the period that produced his dissolution, whereby the reader's mind will be properly refreshed, and the character due to David will not be curtailed of any particle that is necessary to immortalize the name of so excellent and illustrious a person.

David the youngest son of Jesse, (a shepherd youth,) was chosen of God to be king of Israel, and at his command anointed to this dignity by the hands of Samuel, a venerable prophet, in the room of Saul, who had been rejected for his disobedience to the divine orders, in feloniously seizing to his own use, the prey of an enemy, which God, the supreme king of Israel, had devoted to destruction. —He is introduced to court as a man expert in music, a mighty valiant man, a man of war, prudent in matters, a

with lambs; he slew a giant when he was young, and took away reproach from the people; for he called upon the Most High Lord, and he gave strength to his right hand to slay this mighty warrior, and to set up the horn of his people. So the people honored him with ten thousands, and praised him in blessings of the Lord; for he destroyed the enemies on every side, and brought to nought the Philistines, his adversaries:—In all his works he praised the Holy One most high, and blessed the Lord with words of glory:—He set singers also before the altar, that, by their voices, they might make sweet melody, and daily sing praises in their songs. He beautified their feasts, and set their solemn times in perfect order:—The Lord took away his sins, and exalted his horn forever; he gave him a covenant of kings, and a throne of glory in Israel.—See Ecclesiasticus, chap. xlvii. 2, &c.

* The character Josephus gives of David is to this effect: “He was (says he) a most excellent person, and possessed every virtue that became a king, and one who had the welfare of so many nations committed to him. He was superior to all others in valor, and in all his wars on behalf of his subjects, he himself rushed into dangers, and by undergoing all the difficulties of warfare, encouraged his soldiers to noble actions, rather than commanded them as a sovereign. He had an excellent faculty of considering and discerning how to provide for future events, and managing those that were actually present. He was sober, mild, kind to those in distress, just, and humane. As to those things, which kings may claim as their peculiar prerogatives, he offended in no one instance, by the abuse of the greatness of his power, but in the affair of the wife of Uriah.”

comely person, and one favored of the Lord.—By his skill in music he relieved Saul under a melancholy indisposition that had seized him, was highly beloved by his royal master, and made one of his guards.—In a war with the Philistines he accepted the challenge of a gigantic champion, who defied the armies of Israel, and being skilful at the sling, he slew him with a stone, returned safely with his head, and thus secured to his prince an easy victory over his country's enemies.—The reputation he gained, by this glorious action, raised an incurable jealousy and resentment against him, in the mind of the king his master; who, after two unsuccessful attempts to murder him, married him to his younger daughter, that she might be a snare to him, and that he might cause him to fall by the hands of the Philistines; sending him upon an expedition against them, to bring in an hundred of their foreskins, in which he hoped he would have met with his own destruction.—In this exalted station, and amidst the dangers that encompassed him, he behaved with singular prudence, so that he was in high esteem both in the court and camp.—The modesty and prudence of his behavior, and his improved courage and resolution, gained him the confidence and friendship of Jonathan, the king's eldest son, who *loved him as his own soul*, became his advocate with his father, and obtained from him a promise, confirmed by an oath, that he would no more attempt to destroy him.—But his jealousy returned by a fresh victory David gained over the Philistines; who, finding the king was determined to have his life, retired from court, and was dismissed in peace by Jonathan, after a solemn renewal of their friendship, to provide for his own safety.—In this state of banishment, there resorted to him companies of men, who were uneasy in their circumstances, oppressed by their creditors, or discontented with Saul's tyrannical government, to the number of six hundred men, to protect him from the violence of his unreasonable persecutor; whom he kept in the most excellent order, exercised in the most friendly services, and by whose valor he gained signal advantages for his country; but never employed them in opposition to, or rebellion against the king, or in a single instance to distress or subvert his government—Such was the veneration he paid him, and so sacred the regard he had for his life, such the

generosity of his temper, that though it was thrice in his power to have cut him off, he gloriously spared him, and was absolutely determined never to destroy him, whom God had constituted the king of Israel.—His friendship with Jonathan, the king's son, was a friendship of strict honor, whom he never seduced from his allegiance and filial duty; in him Jonathan had so firm a confidence, that as he knew he would be king, he promised himself he should be the next person in dignity and authority under him; and with his friend David covenanted by oath, that *he would not cut off his kindness from his house for ever.*—Being provoked by a churlish farmer, who evil treated and abused his messengers, he, in the warmth of his temper, swore he would destroy him and his family; but was immediately pacified by the address and prudence of a wife of whom the wretch was unworthy; her he sent in peace and honor to her family, and blessed for her advice, in keeping him from avenging himself with his own hand.—Being forced to banish himself into an enemy's country, he was faithful to the prince who protected him; and, at the same time mindful of the interest of his nation, he cut off many of those, who had harassed and plundered his fellow subjects.—When pressed by the king, into whose dominions he retired, to join in a war against his own country, and father-in-law, he prudently gave him such an answer as his situation required; neither promising the aid demanded of him, nor tying up his hands from serving his own prince, and the army that fought under him; only assuring him in general, that he had never done any thing that could give him just reason to think he would refuse to assist him against his enemies.

Upon the death of Saul, he cut off the Amalekite who came to make a merit of having slain him; and by the immediate direction of God, who had promised him the succession, went up to Hebron, where, on a free election, he was anointed king over the house of Judah; and after about a seven years contest, he was unanimously chosen king by all the tribes of Israel, *according to the word of the Lord by Samuel*, upon the death of Ishbosheth, who was treacherously murdered by two of his own captains; whom David justly cut off for their perfidy, treason and parricide.

As king of Israel, he administered justice and judgment to all his people, was a prince of courage, and great military prudence and conduct, had frequent wars with the neighboring nations, to which he was generally forced by their invading his dominions and plundering his subjects; against them he never lost a battle; he never besieged a city without taking it, nor, as for any thing that can be proved, used any severities against those he conquered, beyond what the law of arms allowed, his own safety required, or the cruelties of his enemies rendered just, by way of retaliation; enriching his people by the spoils he took, and providing large stores of every thing necessary for the magnificent temple he intended to erect, in honor of the God of Israel.—Having rescued Jerusalem out of the hands of the Jebusites, he made it the capital of his kingdom, and the place of his residence; and being willing to honor it with the presence of the Ark of God, he brought it to Jerusalem in triumph, and divested himself of his royal robes, out of reverence to God, he clothed himself in the habit of his ministers, and with them expressed his joy by dancing and music; contemned only by one haughty woman, whom, as a just punishment of her insolence, he seems ever to have separated from his bed.—Though his crimes were heinous, and highly aggravated, in the affair of Uriah and Bathsheba, he patiently endured reproof, humbly submitted to the punishment appointed him, atoned for his sins, as far as he could, by a sincere repentance, and obtained mercy and forgiveness from God, though not without some severe marks of his displeasure, for the grievous offences he had been guilty of.—A rebellion is raised against him by his son Absalom, whose life he commanded the general to spare.—When forced by it to depart from Jerusalem, he prevented the just punishment of a wretch who cursed and stoned him.—When restored to his throne, he spared him upon his submission, and would not permit a single man to be put to death in Israel, upon account of it.—He, with a noble confidence, made the commander of the rebel forces general of his own army, in the room of Joab, whom he intended to call to an account for murder and treason.—After this, when obliged by the command of God, to give up some of Saul's family to justice, for the murder of the Gibeonites, he spared Mephibosheth,

Micah, and his family, the male descendants of Saul and Jonathan, who alone could have any pretence to dispute the crown with him, and surrendered only Saul's bastard children, and those of his daughter by Adriel, who had no right or possible claim to the throne, and could never give him any uneasiness in the possession of it; and thus shewed his inviolable regard for his oaths, his tenderness to Saul, and the warmth of his gratitude and friendship to Jonathan. —In the close of his life, and in the near prospect of death, to demonstrate his love of justice, he charges Solomon to punish Joab, for the base murder of two great men, whom he assassinated under the pretence of peace and friendship; and to manifest his care of his successors's safety, and prevent any disturbances in the beginning of his government, he charges him to have an eye on the conduct of an old turbulent rebel, and, except cutting him off, to deal with him according to his prudence, and not to spare him if he found any thing in him worthy of death.—And as if one thing more was wanting to complete the catalogue of his noble actions, he professed the greatest regard for every appearance of virtue and holiness, and gave the most shining and indisputable proofs of an undissembled reverence for, and sincere piety to God; ever obeying the direction of his prophets, worshipping him alone throughout the whole of his life, and making the wisest settlement to perpetuate the worship of the same God, throughout all succeeding generations.

With respect to his psalms, they breathe the genuine disposition of piety; they are written with a true spirit of poetry; the sentiments to be found in them are often the most grand and sublime, and which, had they been wrote on any other subjects but those of religion, would have been regarded as proofs of a most excellent genius; and his admirers would have wondered at the calmness and sedateness of a man, who, amidst the multiplicity of his affairs, the variety of the persecutions he suffered, the imminent dangers that surrounded him, and the numerous wars he was engaged in, could find any leisure hours, or tranquil dispositions, for the polite and delicate entertainments of poetry and music.

Such are the outlines of a Jewish prince, whom Christians justly extol *as a man after God's own heart*; whom

God himself called to be king over Israel; who faithfully answered the purposes for which God raised him; in whose family he established the throne; with whom he made an everlasting covenant; and who was the great progenitor of the Messiah himself, who now reigns over all, and *shall reign, till all his enemies are put under his feet.*

CHAP. XIV.

Solomon succeeds his father David on the throne of Israel. Adonijah, his elder brother, conceals a scheme for possessing himself of the sovereignty, in which he is assisted by Joab, Shimei and Abiathar the priest. The scheme is detected by Solomon, who puts to death Joab and Shimei, and removes Abiathar from the priestly office. Solomon marries the daughter of Pharaoh king of Egypt. He asks for wisdom of God, who not only grants his request, but moreover promises him riches and honor. Gives evident tokens of his superior knowledge and power in various instances. Receives a congratulatory address from Hiram king of Tyre, who furnishes him with timber for building the temple, in return for which he sends Hiram wheat and oil. Builds the temple. Account of the ancient state of Jerusalem, with a particular description of the temple built by Solomon.

ON the death of David, his son Solomon who had been declared by him king of Israel, with the Divine approbation, acceded to the throne, to the universal satisfaction of the people. He was complimented on the occasion by the princes and great men of all the tribes, who, in congratulatory addresses, wished him success in all his undertakings, and that he might enjoy a long and happy reign.

Solomon was no sooner seated on the throne than a circumstance occurred that compelled him, for his own security, to put in execution the commands of his dying father. Adonijah, his elder brother, had, in his father's life-time, made bold pretensions to the throne, but his schemes were disconcerted, and he was pardoned by Solomon, on condition of his becoming a good subject, and that

he would never more make any attempt to obtain the sovereignty. But, by the persuasion of Joab and Abiathar, he was now put upon another bold project, which was, to desire Abishag (the late king's concubine in his old age) in marriage, hoping thereby to strengthen his interest, and that he might be enabled, at some future opportunity, to disturb the peace of Solomon. To effect this, he went to Bathsheba, the queen-mother, whom he intreated to ask the king to permit him to marry Abishag. Bathsheba did as she was desired, but the king was so far from granting her request, that he was shocked at the boldness of it, and said, *Why dost thou ask Abishag the Shunammite for Adonijah? ask for him the kingdom also; for he is mine elder brother; even for him, and for Abiathar the priest, and for Joab the son of Zeruah.** Convinced, by this request, that Adonijah had some treasonable design at the bottom, Solomon determined to prevent the execution of it by immediately cutting him off. *Now, therefore, said he, as the Lord liveth, which hath established me, and set me on the throne of David my father, and hath made me an house, as he promised, Adonijah shall be put to death this day.* In consequence of this resolution he dispatched Benaiah the captain of his guards, to Adonijah, with orders to put him instantly to death; which orders being strictly obeyed, Solomon thus got rid of one of his most implacable enemies.

Having thus removed Adonijah, the king called for Abiathar the priest, whom he rebuked, in very severe terms for his disaffection. He told him, that though he deserved death for having been false to him in joining with Adonijah, yet, for the services he had done his father, and the assistance he gave in removing the Ark to Jerusalem, he would spare his life: “ But, says he, as a punishment for your iniquities, you shall no longer enjoy the priestly office; neither shall you ever again come into my sight.

* Had Solomon complied with this request of his mother in favor of his elder brother, it must have been productive of the most fatal consequences. It is no wonder the king should be irritated at the demand, though he reproved Bathsheba in the gentlest terms his indignation would admit; for Adonijah, by asking Abishag, David's wife, did, in fact, ask the kingdom also, since the wives of the deceased monarch could only belong to the person who succeeded to the throne.

“Go, therefore, immediately, to Anathoth, and there, on pain of death, wear out the remainder of your days.”

When Joab heard the fate of Adonijah and Abiathar, (being conscious of his guilt, and expecting no less punishment than death) he fled for protection to the tabernacle, not doubting but the veneration the king had for so sacred a place would secure his safety. But no sooner did Solomon understand where he had taken shelter, than he commanded Benaiah immediately to go to the place, and put him to death. Benaiah went agreeable to the king's command, and, finding Joab at the altar, bade him come forth; but Joab would not quit his situation, saying, if he must perish, he had rather die there than in any other place. In consequence of this, Benaiah returned to the king, and told him what Joab had said; upon which Solomon ordered him to go immediately back, and dispatch him.* “Do (said he) as he hath said, and fall upon him, and bury him; that thou mayest take away the innocent blood, which Joab shed, from me, and from the house of my father. And the Lord shall return his blood upon his own head, who fell upon two men more righteous and better than he, and slew them with the sword, my father David not knowing thereof; to wit, Abner, the son of Ner, captain of the host of Israel, and Amasa, the son of Jether, captain of the host of Judah. Their blood shall therefore return upon the head of Joab, and upon the head of his seed for ever: but upon David, and upon his seed, and upon his house, and

* It was formerly very customary among princes, to employ their officers, or greatest confidants, in such like executions. Among the Romans, the soldiers were always the persons, who carried to prison, to torture, or to execution, such as were found guilty of any offence; and this Tertullian makes an argument to dissuade Christians from engaging in the wars, lest thereby they should be obliged to imprison, punish, or execute malefactors. In Dan. ii. 24. we read, that *Nebuchadnezzar sent Arioch, who was chief commander of his troops, to destroy the wise men of Babylon*, because they could not interpret his dream; and therefore we need less wonder, that we find Solomon employing Benaiah, the captain of his guard, on the like office: but whether he did not first drag Joab from the altar, before he slew him, for fear of polluting the holy place with blood, or whether Solomon did not rather think fit to have him killed even at the altar, and let all men see, that no place, though ever so sacred, should secure any man from the hand of justice, commentators have not agreed.

“upon his throne shall there be peace for ever from the Lord.” Benaiah, agreeable to the king's orders, went a second time to the tabernacle, where, finding Joab in the same situation he had left him, he immediately put him to death, after which Solomon made Benaiah general of his army instead of Joab, and appointed Zadok to the priesthood instead of Abiathar.

The next person that engaged the king's attention was Shimei, who had so grossly treated David in his flight from Jerusalem. Being brought before Solomon, he ordered him to be confined in the city, as a prisoner at large; but with a strict injunction not to move out of it on pain of death.* *Build thee, said he, an house in Jerusalem, and dwell there, and go not forth thence any whither. For it shall be, that on the day thou goest out, and passeth over the brook Kidron, thou shalt know for certain that*

* The reader is here desired to recur to the defence of David's charge relating to Joab and Shimei at the close of the preceding chapter. It is there asserted that the charge was different, as it respected each of them. This difference is farther evident from the different manner in which Solomon treated them. If the charge had been the same with respect to Shimei, as it was to Joab, what should have prevented Solomon from immediately executing Shimei, as well as Joab? But this Solomon, in his wisdom, knew he could not do; for David told him that he had pardoned Shimei to prevent his execution; because his offence was personal, and David had a right to forgive it. But he had never pardoned Joab, nor in justice could do it, because he was guilty of death for repeated murders, by the laws of God and man. Solomon therefore acted wisely and justly in reference to Shimei by sparing him, but honorably confining him, that he might have the proper security for his future good behaviour. Shimei, sensible of the king's kindness, tells him, (1 Kings ii. 38. *The saying is good, &c.* And when, upon breaking his word, he was sent for by Solomon, the king reproached him for his perjury, for acting contrary to the condition of life which he himself had owned to be just and equitable, and for the wickedness that his heart was privy to, in his conduct to his father David; the mercy that had been shewed him in the pardon of that offence, aggravating his fresh crime in disobeying the king's command; a crime, that shewed he was of a restless spirit, and incapable of being restrained within due bounds by the most solemn oaths, or any sense of interest, gratitude or duty whatsoever. Solomon adds, (ver. 44, 45.) *The Lord shall return thy wickedness, &c.* plainly intimating that Solomon now cut him off, as an act of prudence and justice to a restless implacable enemy to his person and government, and that he saw it necessary so to do for *establishing the throne of David before the Lord.*

thou shalt surely die: thy blood shall be upon thine own head. Shimei seemed very thankful for his life on these conditions: *The saying, (said he) is good, as my lord the king hath said, so will thy servant do.* For some time Shimei kept himself within the bounds of his confinement, but a circumstance at length occurred, that induced him to break through his obligation, and thereby subject himself to the forfeiture of his life. Some of his slaves having ran away from him, and entered themselves into the service of Achish, king of Gath, he imprudently went to reclaim them, information of which being given to Solomon, on his return he ordered him immediately to be put to death, which was accordingly done by the hands of Benaiah his general.

Solomon having thus secured himself on his throne by taking off the heads of the faction who were against him, resolved to strengthen his power by a foreign alliance, which he did by marrying the daughter of Pharaoh, king of Egypt.* After this he rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem, which he made much larger and stronger than before, and erected fortifications, in different parts, for its better security.

Solomon, though young in years, strictly obeyed the commands of his dying father. He lived religiously, paid great attention to the administration of justice, and pre-

* This part of Solomon's conduct has been censured by different commentators, who observe, that whatever augmentation of power he might promise himself from this alliance, he certainly ran the hazard of having his religion corrupted. In answer to this we have to observe, that there is no doubt but this princess, when she was espoused to Solomon, quitted the religion of her ancestors, to which Psalm xlv. 10, 11, is thought to allude. It is certain that we do not find Solomon any where reproved in scripture for making this match; nor can we think that his book of Canticles, which is supposed to be his epithalamium, would have found a place in the sacred canon, had the spouse, whom it all along celebrates, been at that time an idolatress. It may seem strange that in all the history of the Jews, from the time of Moses to that of Solomon, no mention should be made of the kings of Egypt, as if they had no concern in the affairs of Canaan, but were wholly diverted some other way: but for this their own historians account, when they tell us that, during this space of time, the "Egyptian kings did nothing worth recording." Clemens Alexandrinus, in a passage taken from Alexander Polyhistor, tells us, that the proper name of this Egyptian king, whose daughter Solomon married, was Vaphres.

served inviolate the laws of his country. Desirous of making his acknowledgments to God for the great benefits he had received at his hands, he went to Gibeon (where the original tabernacle and altar made in the wilderness were kept) and there offered up a thousand* sacrifices to the Lord. This distinguished piety was so acceptable to God, that the night following he appeared to him in a vision, and promised to grant whatever he should ask. Solomon said, “Thou hast shewed unto thy servant
 “David, my father, great mercy, according as he walked
 “before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in up-
 “rightness of heart with thee; and thou hast kept for him
 “this great kindness, that thou hast given him a son to
 “sit on his throne, as it is this day. And now, O Lord
 “my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of
 “David my father: and I am but a little child: † I know

* It is not reasonable to suppose that the thousand sacrifices which Solomon is said to have made here, were offered in one day. The king, we may imagine, upon one of the great festivals, went in procession with his nobles to pay his devotion in Gibeon. Each of the great festivals lasted seven days; but Solomon might stay much longer at Gibeon, until, by the daily oblations, a thousand burnt-offerings might be consumed.

† It is plain that Solomon means here that he was only a little child, a mere infant in understanding and abilities to guide and govern so great a people. See Psalm cxxxi. 2. The phrase *to go out or come in* is not only an Hebraism frequent in the sacred writings, but also a similitude taken from a little child yet unable to walk firmly, and ignorant of all things; such as Solomon here professes himself to be, as the ruler of so great a people. It is generally agreed that he was about twenty years of age when he began to reign. Though Solomon in his great modesty might request of God no more than the gift of government, or, as he expresses it, *an understanding heart, to judge the people, and to discern between good and bad*; yet God, out of his abundant grace, gave him a general knowledge of all other things, as the following history informs us; and that, whereas other men gather their knowledge from study and observation, Solomon had his by an immediate inspiration from God; insomuch that he who went to bed, as ignorant as other men, awoke in the morning as an angel of God. But though his knowledge of things was in a great measure infused, yet he did not therefore neglect his study: *he gave his heart to seek and search out by his wisdom, concerning all things under the sun*; in which search, as himself testifies, Eccles. i. 13. he took no small pains: so that his gifts extraordinary did not supercede the use of other means in the acquisition of knowledge; but by application and experience, he perfected what he had so advantageously received from the hands of God.

“not how to go out or come in. And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude. Give, therefore, thy servant, an understanding heart, to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?”

The Almighty was so well pleased with the nature of the request made by Solomon, that he not only promised him the wisdom he asked, but likewise that he should have such an abundance of riches and honor as should not be equalled by any monarch on earth. When Solomon awoke he found it to be a dream sent from God; and therefore, returning to Jerusalem, he immediately went to the Ark of the Covenant (which was placed in a tabernacle that had been made for it by David) and there offered up sacrifices in abundance.

A short time after this an opportunity offered, which fully displayed the great wisdom the Almighty had been pleased to give to Solomon in conformity to his Divine promise. Two women, who lived together in one house, were brought to bed about the same time, one of whom, having overlaid her child, took the living one privately from the other woman, and placed her dead child in its stead. She who found the dead child by her, accused the other of having stolen her living one, and left her own dead child in its stead. The other strongly denied the accusation, so that the question was, to whom did the living child belong? In order to determine this dispute they went to the king, when each having related her tale, and made a claim to the living child, the king called for one of his guards, and ordered him to cut it asunder, that it might be divided between the two claimants.* In consequence of

* Solomon knew at once that the only sign whereby to discover the true mother would be her affection and compassionate tenderness for the child; and therefore, in order to distinguish between the two, his business was to make trial of them. And if we suppose, that when he commanded the child to be divided, he spoke with a sedate countenance and seeming earnestness (as the true mother's petition to the king makes it apparent he did) then we may suppose farther, that not only the two women, but all the people present, were struck with horror at the thoughts of the design being carried into execution; which, when it ended in so just a decision, quite contrary to what

this, the real mother of the living child earnestly begged that it might be saved, even though it should be given to her adversary, while the pretended one was for having the king's orders put in execution. Solomon was so well convinced that she who had expressed such a tenderness and compassion for the living child was the real mother, that he ordered it immediately to be delivered to her, and chastised the other woman for her wickedness, in having first killed her own child, and being afterwards desirous of the death of that of her friend.* This determination was so

they expected, raised joy in every breast, and gave a more advantageous commendation to the judge. It is the opinion of some, that Solomon made a discovery of the truth antecedent to this experiment: that by observing the countenance, the manner of speech, and all the motions of the women, he discerned the secrets of their hearts, and penetrated to the bottom of the business; and that his commanding the child to be divided afterwards was only to notify to the company what he before had discovered. However this be, it may not be improper upon this occasion to mention an instance or two out of profane history, of as singular addresses, though much inferior to this, in discovering such secrets as seemed to be past finding out. Suetonius, in his life of Claudian, tells us, that emperor discovered a woman to be the mother of a young man, whom she would not own for her son, by commanding her to be married to him; the horror of committing incest having obliged her to declare the truth. In like manner Diodorus Siculus relates, that Ariopharnes, king of the Thracians, being appointed to arbitrate between three men, who all pretended to be sons of the king of the Cimmerians, and claimed the succession, found out the true son and heir, by ordering them to shoot each man his arrow into the dead king's body, which one of them refusing to do, was deemed the lawful claimant.

* The whole of this singular contest between the two women, their representation of it to Solomon, and his peculiar method of determining it, may be thus paraphrased:

In contest fierce two women storm aloud,
 And force their passage through the yielding croud,
 The monarch's throne with eager haste they gained;
 The monarch's presence scarce their rage restrained;
 Silent they stand, all impotent in woe,
 While down their cheeks the trickling torrents flow.
 The first, a lively, vigorous infant bears,
 Fruit of her fraud, but solace of her cares.
 The next a livid, senseless corse embraced
 (Death's ghastly terrors all its form defaced)
 Toward the high throne with fierce access she flies,
 While tears of rage stood trembling in her eyes,

singular an instance of the king's great sagacity and wisdom, that the people ever after considered him as a prince totally guided by Divine impulse.

The wisdom of Solomon, added to the great propriety of his conduct in the administration of public affairs, soon spread a happy influence over all his dominions, and eve-

A sigh that instant from her bosom broke,
 Another followed, and at length she spoke:
 "Attend, O monarch! nor disdain to hear
 "A wretched woman with impartial ear;
 "If e'er compassion touched thy royal breast,
 "If e'er thou knewest to pity the distressed;
 "Pity, ah! pity this my load of grief,
 "Justice is all I ask for my relief.
 "That woman view—of all my woes the cause,
 "Who dared to violate thy sacred laws.
 "One common house, one common fate we share, }
 "One common board supplies our daily fare, }
 "And once two tender babes employed our care. }
 "—'Twas silence all—when not a gleam of light
 "Shot through the solid darkness of the night,
 "Crushed with unusual load, her infant lay
 "A lifeless corpse—the spirit winged its way;
 "That cursed impostor, practised to entice,
 "By long experience in the paths of vice:
 "That monster—tore my infant from my arms,
 "Blooming in youth, and fresh with vigorous charms.
 "Soon as Aurora ushered in the light,
 "Sudden these clay-cold limbs distract my sight!"

Thus while she spoke with fierce collected ire
 The other burns—her eye-balls flash with fire.
 Now anguish, wrath, and grief, to passion wrought,
 Despair and secret shame, and conscious thought
 Of impious guilt, her laboring soul oppressed,
 Rolled in her eyes, and raged within her breast.
 First she stood dumb—at length the fury woke,
 The struggling storm found vent, and thus she spoke:
 "Is't, then, in vain in truth itself to trust?
 "And is it thus the God's assist the just?
 "Hell! burst, rage, roar aloud with hideous cry,
 "If thou art half so mad, so hot as I.
 "Patience, be gone! shall I, shall I resign
 "My darling child, the child so justly mine!"

Thus wild she raved: distracted was her walk,
 Mad were her motions and confused her talk.
 Fictitious madness! such a false disguise,
 Might well have baffled less discerning eyes;
 But vain her arts, her plotted measures fail;
 For heavenly wisdom penetrates the veil

ry subject was, in some degree or other, made partaker of it. All Judah and Israel lived in the greatest security; and all the neighboring nations either paid him tribute, or were his friends and allies. He ruled over all the countries and kingdoms from the Euphrates to the Nile, and in many places his dominions extended much farther. He lived in greater splendor than any of his predecessors had done. The daily allowance of provision for his table consisted of thirty measures of fine flour, threescore measures of meal, ten fat oxen, twenty others from the pasture, and a hundred sheep, besides fowls, deer, and other articles.

Of mortal fraud: such power Divine was given,
And such are mortals when opposed to heaven.

The king demands a sword—the guards obey,
And at his feet the fatal weapon lay:

“Let this, said he, the dubious cause decide;

“In equal parts the living child divide.”

Now, threatening fate the deadly weapon stood
High poised in air, and seemed to thirst for blood.

When thus the impostor: “Just is the decree,

“Thy words give joy, and wisdom breathes in thee:

“Strike, strike at once, the long contention end,

“With instant ruin let the sword descend!”

The genuine mother, trembling for her son,
Averts the impending blow, and thus begun:

“Was it, perfidious! was it, then, decreed,

“That only *I* must for *thy* falshood bleed?

“Canst thou, forgetful of thy crime, begin

“To slight my ruin, and enjoy the sin?—

“Since *your* loved infant has resigned its breath,

“And lies benumbed in the cold arms of death,

“Take this sad offspring of my fruitless throes,

“Leave me to pine in grief and endless woes,

“Ere to the sword my darling I resign,

“Mine be the shame, the happy conquest thine.”

“Enough, ’tis plain, the sapient monarch cries,

“Even nature’s self points out to whom’s the prize;

“Whose soul relenting with compassion burnt,

“Whose tender bowels on her offspring yearnt,

“Who first, by nature’s powerful instinct swayed,

“Saved her dear infant from the threatening blade;

“Let her receive the child—let contest cease,

“And different nations part in leagues of peace.”

Thus he, while through the court loud shouts arise,

And acclamations rend the lofty skies;

O’er the wide earth was spread the rising fame,

And distant shores resound the monarch’s name.

In this pompous manner did Solomon live, beloved by his people, dedicating his time to their interests and welfare. He gave daily instances of the great increase of his wisdom, and in learning and knowledge surpassed even the Egyptians, who had hitherto been reputed the most discerning people on the earth.* In short, he was esteemed the wisest of mankind, and his reputation was spread throughout every nation. He composed three thousand proverbs, and one thousand and five poems. He knew the virtues of all plants and trees, from the highest to the lowest; and in his writings treated on the nature of all kinds of beasts, birds, reptiles and fishes.† So uni-

* There were three nations in the east of Canaan, which were very famous for their wisdom and erudition: the Chaldeans, beyond the Euphrates, the Persians beyond the Tigris, and the Arabians, on the nearer side of the Euphrates, a little towards the south: but whether the Persians and Chaldeans were remarkable for their learning in Solomon's days, is much doubted among commentators. The book of Job sufficiently shews that the Arabians (for of that nation was Job and his friends) were famous for their learning in ancient times: and as to the Chaldeans and other oriental people, since the sons of Noah took up their habitation about Babylon and the neighboring countries, it is reasonable to suppose, that where mankind first began to settle themselves into regular societies, there arts and sciences first began to appear. The Egyptians, however, pretend to precedency in this and several other accomplishments. They say that the Chaldeans received the principles of philosophy at first from a colony which came from Egypt, as Diodorus Siculus indeed makes mention of such a colony, conducted by Belus. But the Chaldeans, on the other hand, maintain, that from them it was that the Egyptians received their first instructions, and according to some, that Abraham was the person who first communicated to the Chaldeans the knowledge of astronomy and other sciences. However this be, Solomon received from God a perfect knowledge of all that useful and solid learning, for which the eastern people and the Egyptians were justly famed; for, (as it follows) he was a great moral philosopher, a great natural philosopher, and an excellent poet.

† The several books which treated of the nature and virtue of animals, as well as plants, are supposed to have been lost in the Babylonish captivity; but Eusebius informs us, that king Hezekiah, seeing the abuse which his subjects made of Solomon's works, by placing too much confidence in the remedies which he prescribed, and the natural secrets which he discovered, thought proper to suppress them all. But notwithstanding this, since his time, many wicked and pernicious books concerning the secrets of magic, medicines, and incantments, have appeared under the name of this prince, in order to gain the more credit and sanction.

versal was his knowledge, and so great his fame, that he was held in esteem by the princes of all countries, many of whom sent their ambassadors to Jerusalem to pay him reverence.

When Hiram, king of Tyre (son of him who sent David timber and artificers to build his palace) heard of the death of the late king, for whom he had the greatest affection, he sent ambassadors to Solomon, to condole with him on his father's death, and congratulate him on his accession to the throne. By the return of these messengers, Solomon sent Hiram a letter, the substance of which was to this effect:

King SOLOMON to King HIRAM.

“Be it known to you, O king, that my father was desirous of erecting a temple to the worship of God; but he was prevented from executing his design by being perpetually engaged in war, from which he never ceased till he had made his enemies his tributaries. I thank God for the peaceable state in which he left me, and having now a proper opportunity, I purpose to erect a temple, which the Almighty was pleased to foretel my father should be done by me. My request, therefore, is, that you will let some of your people go with my servants to Mount Libanus, to assist them in cutting down materials for the building, as I am sensible they are better acquainted with that business than my subjects: and as for wages, whatever you thing reasonable shall be punctually paid.”

King HIRAM to King SOLOMON.

“It gives me the greatest pleasure to think that the government of your blessed father has, by God's Providence (for which his holy name be praised) fallen into the hands of so virtuous and excellent a prince. The request in your letter shall be diligently attended to: I will order the fairest and tallest cedars and cypress trees to be cut down, and carried to the sea-side, where proper vessels shall be provided to carry them to such port as you may think proper to direct, from whence they may be conveyed by your people, to Jerusalem. In return for this, I shall esteem it a very singular obligation if you will supply us

with such a quantity of corn as you can conveniently spare, being greatly distressed for want of that necessary article."

On the receipt of this letter Solomon was so well pleased with the generous frankness of Hiram, that, in return, he ordered to be sent him, annually, twenty thousand measures of wheat, and twenty measures of pure oil. And this was the first earnest of that friendship which afterwards became permanent between these two monarchs.

Matters being thus agreed on, Solomon appointed 30,000 men to assist those of the king of Tyre, in cutting down wood on Mount Libanus; but only 10,000 were sent at a time, who, after staying a month, returned to their homes, and ten thousand others were sent in their stead; so that each division by thus taking their turns alternately, were only one month abroad, and two at home. Besides these, Solomon employed 70,000 proselytes (who were the remains of the ancient Canaanites) in carrying burthens on their shoulders; 80,000 in cutting stone out of the quarries; and 3,600 in overseeing the work. And, to finish the inner part of the temple, as well as frame some of its choicest vessels, Hiram sent him a most skilful artist of his own name, whose mother was of the tribe of Dan, but his father a Tyrian. The great abilities of this man were such, that they extended to all kinds of works, whether in gold, silver, brass, or iron, whether in linen, tapestry, or embroidery; and by his directions all the curious furniture of the temple was both designed and finished.

All things being ready for building the temple, the foundation was laid in the fourth year* of king Solomon's reign, in the month Zif, which answers to our March, 480 years after the children of Israel came out of Egypt, in the year of the world 2992, and 1012 before Christ. It was

* If it should be asked, why Solomon did not begin the building of the temple sooner, since his father had left him the plan, and all things necessary for the undertaking? It may be answered, that the materials his father had provided lay rude and unfashioned, and at a considerable distance: this time was therefore requisite to form them into the exact symmetry and order in which the scripture represents them; especially as the very stones, which made the foundation, were probably vast blocks of marble or porphyry, and all polished in the most exquisite manner. Therefore four years cannot be accounted an unreasonable time, to gather gold and silver sufficient to defray so vast an expense.

finished in the eleventh year of Solomon's reign, in the month *Bul* (or *October*) so that it was seven years and a half in building.* The whole was completed with such dexterity, that neither hammer nor ax, nor any tool of iron was heard during the whole time of its being erected; such admirable care and contrivance was used in preparing and adjusting the respective materials.

But before we proceed to give a description of this famous building, it may not be improper to take some notice of the situation and ancient state of the city of Jerusalem, which, at the time of the temple being erected, was in its greatest splendor.

The city of Jerusalem was built upon two hills, and encompassed all round with mountains. It was situated in a barren and stony soil; but the places adjacent were well watered, having the fountains of *Gihon* and *Siloam*, and the brook *Kidron* at the foot of its walls. *Jebus*, (or the original city which *David* took) was seated on a hill towards the south; and, on the opposite quarter, towards the north, was *Mount Zion*, where *David* built his new city, and called it after his own name, and where likewise stood his royal palace, as also the temple of the Lord; for the temple was built on *Mount Moriah*, which was one of the hills belonging to *Mount Zion*.

Between these two mountains lay the *Valley of Millo*, which formerly separated ancient *Jebus* from the *City of David*, but was afterwards filled up by *David* and *Solomon*, to make a communication between the two cities. But besides this *Valley of Millo*, we read in Scripture of the *House of Millo*,† which is said to be in the *City of*

* The temple itself, indeed, was but a small edifice, but the many courts and offices that were about it made the whole a prodigious pile, and the exquisiteness of the art, with the small number of artists employed about it, made a longer time requisite. It must, however, be acknowledged that, considering all things, *Solomon* made an extraordinary dispatch: for if the building of *Diana's temple* at *Ephesus* employed all the people of *Asia* for the space of two hundred years, and no less than three hundred and sixty thousand men, for twenty years together, were employed in erecting one pyramid (as *Pliny* affirms) no reasonable person can wonder that this temple was seven years and a half in building, but, on the contrary, will be surprized to think it could have been done in so short a time.

† 2 Kings xii. 20.

David,* and therefore, was built either on Mount Zion, or some adjacent place.

With respect to the house of Millo (as we have no description of such a building) it may not be improper to make some enquiry what could be meant by it. The word Millo is thought to be derived from a Hebrew root, which signifies *to be full*, and is therefore, in the Sacred History, supposed to denote *a large capacious place*, designed for public meetings, or, in short, a senate-house. That this was some edifice of a public nature may be inferred from the notice that is taken of it among some others of Solomon's public buildings, where, the reason of the tax which he levied upon his subjects is said to be this, "that he might build the House of the Lord, and his own house, and Millo, and the walls of Jerusalem, &c. (1 Kings ix. 15.) Since, therefore, we cannot but suppose that it was a building of a very public nature; and since we find farther, that the servants of king Joash (2 Kings xii. 20.) arose, and made a conspiracy, and slew him in the house of Millo (very probably when he was come thither to debate, and consult with his princes and other chief men) it seems to be incontestible that this House of Millo was erected for a public senate-house, though, at the same time, there is reason to imagine, it might likewise be used for other purposes.

In the reign of Hezekiah, when Senacherib marched against Jerusalem with a design of besieging it, the king took counsel with his princes, and, among other things that were thought proper for his defence, it is said, that *he built up all the walls that was broken, and repaired Millo, and made darts and shields in abundance.* 2 Chron. xxxii. 5. And from hence we may infer, that this Millo was a place of great consequence to the strength of Jerusalem, and, very probably, was made to answer two purposes, namely, as a senate-house for public debates, and an arsenal for the reception of military stores.

The palace built by David for himself (to which was added that built by his son Solomon for the king of Egypt's daughter) must certainly have been a very magnificent structure, since he had both his workmen and ma-

* 2 Chron. xxxii. 5.

terials sent from Old Tyre, which, at that time, surpassed all other nations in the art of building. But of this we can give no other account than that it stood westward from the temple, and consisted of a large square court, defended by flankers: from one of these was the descent by stairs into the gardens, which, in all probability, were watered by the fountain of Siloam.

The fountain of Siloam rises just beneath the walls of Jerusalem, on the east side thereof, between the city and the brook Kidron; and was probably the same with the fountain Enrogel, or the Fuller's fountain, whereof we find mention in Joshua, xv. 7. and in the books of Samuel, and the Kings. Some travellers will have it, that the water of this fountain is brackish, and has not a good taste; but the prophet Isaiah, when he utters the complaint of God against the Jews, *forasmuch as this people refuseth the waters of Shiloah, which go softly, &c.* seems to denote the contrary. However this be, St. Jerom himself affirms, that the waters of this fountain made the Valley, through which they ran, (as watering the gardens and plantations that were there) very pleasant and delightful.

The fountain of Gihon, which sprang, very probably, from an adjacent hill of the same name, was on the west side of Jerusalem; and as king Hezekiah (2 Chron. xxxii. 30.) ordered the upper channel of this fountain to be conveyed into Jerusalem, that when the city was besieged, the enemy might not have the benefit of its waters; so we need not doubt, but that the other spring of Siloam was, in like manner, conveyed into the city, and that, for the convenience of its inhabitants, they were both, in several places, distributed into pools; though some make that of Siloam to be without the walls.

The brook Kidron ran in the Valley of Jehosaphat, on the east of Jerusalem, between the city, and Mount Olivet. It had usually no great quantity of water in it, and was frequently quite dry; but, upon any sudden rains, it swelled exceedingly, and ran with great impetuosity. It was indeed of singular service to the ancient city, as it received its common-sewers, and, upon every violent flood, emptied them into the Dead-sea.

Mount Olivet, or the Mount of Olives, (which doubtless had its name from the great quantity of olive-trees that

grew there) was situated to the east of Jerusalem, and parted from the city only by the Valley of Jehosaphat, and the brook Kidron; for which reason, it is said to be a Sabbath-day's journey, i. e. about a mile from it. It was on this mountain that Solomon built temples to the Gods of the Ammonites, and of the Moabites, in complaisance to his wives, who were natives of these nations; and for this reason it is likewise called in scripture, the Mount of Corruption, because such as follow vain idols are frequently said in scripture to *corrupt themselves*. Some indeed have imagined, that this mount of corruption was a distinct place, but the matter of fact is, that Mount Olivet had three summits, or was made up of three several mountains, ranged one after another, from north to south. The middle summit was that, from which our Lord *ascended*; towards the south was that, whereon Solomon *set up his Abominations*, (2 Kings xxxiii. 13.) and towards the north was the highest of all, which was commonly called Galilee.

Mount Calvary, which, to all appearance, had its name from the similitude it bore to the figure of a skull, or man's head, was to the west of the ancient Jerusalem, just without the gates: and, as our Saviour suffered there, we may presume it was the common place, where criminals of all kinds were generally executed.

The Valley of Hinnon, or of the sons of Hinnon, lay to the south of the city, and was remarkable for the cruel and barbarous worship of Moloch, where parents made *their children pass through the fire*, or be *burnt in the fire*, by way of sacrifice to that Idol; and where it was usual to have musical instruments (from whence it obtained likewise the name of Tophet, the Hebrew word 'Toph signifying the same as Tympanum in Latin, and Timbrel in English) to drown the lamentable shrieks of the children thus sacrificed. In this place there was afterwards kept a perpetual fire, to consume the dead carcasses which were brought from Jerusalem; and therefore our Saviour, alluding to this, calls Hell by the name of Gehenna, or the Valley of Hinnon.

The valley of Jehosaphat, (which is likewise called the Valley of Kidron, because of the before-mentioned brook which ran through it) lay on the east side of Jerusalem, be-

tween the city and the mount of Olives; and near this spot it was that our Saviour ascended into heaven.

There is another Valley, that the scripture makes early mention of, and that is, *the Valley of Shaveth*, which is likewise called *the King's Dale*, (Gen. xiv. 17.) where *Melchizedeck met Abraham*, in his return from the slaughter of *Chederlaomer*. According to Josephus, it was, in his time but about two furlongs distant from Jerusalem, and for this reason perhaps, it has been thought by some, to be no other, than the Valley of Jehosaphat; though others make it different, yet so, as to come up near to the said Valley, and to lie on the south-east part of the city, nor far from the king's gardens. Why it obtained the name of the *King's Dale*, whether it was from its near situation to the king's palace and gardens, or from its being the place, where the kings were accustomed to exercise themselves, or to be entertained by seeing others perform their exercises of running, riding and the like, is not agreed, and, in all probability, will never be determined.

According to the Scripture accounts there were several gates belonging to the ancient city of Jerusalem; but their respective situations (not being particularized) cannot be, with certainty, determined. There is reason, likewise, to believe that their names have been varied, or that one and the same gate has gone under different appellations. As there were several circuits of walls belonging to the city, it is more than probable, that some of these gates did not lead out of the city into the country, but only from one division to another.

The *Gate of the Valley*, which, doubtless, had its name from leading into some valley, (and, as some travellers will have it, to the Valley of Jehosaphat) was situated on the east side of the city.

The *Dung-gate*, (which appears to have received its name from the dung and filth of the beasts that were sacrificed at the temple being carried out of it) was probably the same with that which is so called at this time, and, as well as the Gate of the Valley, was situated on the east side of the city.

The *Water-gate* (which took its name from the water being conveyed through it into the city) was likewise sit-

uated on the same side; as was also the *Gate of the Fountain* (so called from its near situation to the fountain of Siloam) except that it inclined a little towards the south.

The *Gate of Ephraim* stood on the north side of the city, and was so called from its opening to the main road leading to that part of the country where the tribe of Ephraim were situated.

The *Horse-gate*, *Sheep-gate*, and *Fish-gate* are supposed to have received their names from the several markets of these creatures held on the respective spots assigned for those purposes. The two former were situated on the east side of the city, and the latter on the north.

The *High-gate*, or the *Gate of Benjamin* (so called, from its situation towards the land or tribe of Benjamin) is supposed by some, to have been the principal gate of the royal palace; but from what we read concerning the prophet Jeremiah being grossly abused near this gate, it appears to have been situated by the House of the Lord. See Jeremiah xx. 2.

Having thus mentioned the respective gates of this ancient city, we shall now proceed to take notice of its royal sepulchres, some remains of which are still existing. On the north side of the city (without the walls now, but then, probably within them) are several subterraneous chambers, which are wonderfully magnificent, and at present called *the Sepulchres of the kings*. These have been minutely described by several modern travellers, (particularly Thevenot and Maundrel) all of whom give their relations in like manner, and to this effect:—"When you come to the place, you pass through an entry, hewed out of a rock, which admits you into an open court about twenty-six feet square, all cut out of the rock, which is of solid marble, and serves instead of walls. On the left of this court is a portico nine paces long, and four broad (with a kind of architrave running round its front) cut out of the same rock, as are likewise the pillars that support it. At the end of this portico there is a passage into the sepulchres, which (when you have crept through it with some difficulty) lets you into a large chamber of above four and twenty feet square. Its sides and ceiling are so exactly square, and its angles

“ so just, that no architect, with levels and plummets,
 “ could build a room more regular. From this room you
 “ pass into six more, one within another, and all of the
 “ same fabric with the first, except that the two inner-
 “ most are deeper than the rest, and have a descent of
 “ about six or seven steps into them. In every one of
 “ these rooms (except the first) were coffins of stone,
 “ placed in niches, along the sides of the room, and
 “ amounted in all to about fifty.”

This is, in all probability, the only real work that now remains of the Old Jerusalem; and, what makes it justly looked upon as a wonder is, that the ceiling, the doors, as well as all the rest, their hinges, posts, frames, &c. are all cut out of the same continued rock. It may, therefore, be worth our enquiry to what purposes these structures were used, and who, possibly, might be the persons deposited in them.

It is the opinion of the generality of those who have inspected these subterraneous structures, that they were not the sepulchres of the kings of Judah, because the Scripture tells us (1 Kings ii. 10. and xi. 43.) that David and Solomon, and most of their successors, were buried in the City of David; and yet these grotts lie without the gate of Damascus (as it is now called) at a considerable distance from that part of Jerusalem. But how far the City of David did formerly extend, or where we shall find any other signs of the places where David, and the other kings, his successors, were buried, we have not any hints given us. The Reverend Mr Maundrel (from the following passage in Scripture, *and Hezekiah slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the chiefest of the sepulchres of the sons of David*) is of opinion, that this was the place where Hezekiah, and the sons immediately born to David, that were not deposited in the royal sepulchres, were buried. But it is much more probable (and what both the Syriac and Arabic versions seem to confirm) that, by the sons of David here we are not to understand his *immediate* sons, properly so called, but, rather, the kings that succeeded him. This is a form of speech frequently made use of by the Sacred Writers; and therefore the sense of *Hezekiah's being buried in the sepulchres of the sons of*

David must be, that he was buried in the sepulchres of the kings descended from *David*.

To the opinions already given of these repositories of the dead, we shall add that of *Le Bruyn*, who supposes, they were the sepulchres of *Manasseh*, his son *Amon*, and his grandfather *Josiah*, kings of *Judah*. Of *Manasseh*, the scripture expressly tells us, that *he was buried in the garden of his own house, in the garden of Uzzah*, 2 *Kings* xxi. 18. 26.

And of *Amon* it is said, that he was buried in the garden of *Uzzah*, which garden *Mannasseh* might, very probably, purchase, and, being taken with the pleasantness of it, might there build him a house, which is here called his own house, in contradistinction to his royal palace, which was built and inhabited by his ancestors on *Mount Zion*. Of *Josiah* indeed, the sacred history does not say expressly, that he was buried here; all that it tells us is, that *he was buried in the sepulchres of his fathers*, but whether in the city of *David*, or in the garden of *Uzzah*, it makes no mention: And therefore, since both his father and grandfather were buried in this garden, there is reason to think, that *Josiah* was here buried likewise; especially considering, that, in one of these subterraneous rooms, (as *Le Bruyn* tells us) which seemed to be more lofty than the rest, there were three coffins curiously adorned with carved works, which he took to be the coffins of these three kings.

But of all the buildings that ancient *Jerusalem* had to boast of, the *Temple*, which *David* designed, and *Solomon* perfected, was the most magnificent. We are not however to imagine, that this *Temple* was built like one of our churches; for it did not consist of one single edifice, but of several courts and buildings, which took up a great deal of ground. The place whereon it was erected, was the top of *mount Moriah*, and the building all together made an exact square of eight hundred cubits, or one thousand four hundred and sixty feet long on each side, exactly fronting the east, west, north, and south.

To make this building more firm and secure, it was thought necessary to begin the foundation at the bottom of the mount; so that the sides were three hundred and thirty-three cubits (or about 608 feet high) before they

were raised to the level of the temple; and this afforded a most noble prospect towards the chief part of the city, which lay westward. It is impossible to compute the labor of laying this foundation, because it is impossible to tell how much of the mountain must, in some places, be removed, and in others filled up, to bring it to an exact square for so great a height. "The foundation (as Josephus tells us) was laid prodigiously deep, and the stones were not only of the largest size, but hard and firm enough to endure all weathers, and be proof against the worm. Besides this, they were so mortised into one another, and so wedged into the rock, that the strength and curiosity of the basis was not less admirable, than the intended superstructure, and the one was every way answerable to the other."

The ground-plot, upon which the temple was built, was a square of six hundred cubits every way. It was encompassed with a wall of six cubits high, and the same in breadth, and contained several buildings for different uses, surrounded with cloysters supported by marble pillars. Within this space was the Court of the Gentiles, fifty cubits wide, and adorned, in like manner, with cloysters and pillars. To separate this court from the Court of the Israelites, there was a wall of five hundred cubits square. The Court of the Israelites was an hundred cubits. It was paved with marble of different colors, and had four gates, to every quarter one, and each rising with an ascent of seven steps. To separate this court from the Court of the Priests, there was a wall of two hundred cubits square; and the priests court was an hundred cubits, encompassed with cloysters, and apartments, where the priests, that attended the service of the temple, were used to live. This court had but three gates, to the east, to the north, and to the south, and were approached by an ascent of eight steps. These courts were all open, and without any covering, but, in case of rain, or other bad weather, the people could retire under the cloysters, that were supported with rows of pillars, and went round every court.

In the Israelites Court, over-against the gate of the Priests' Court, was erected a throne for the king (which

was a magnificent alcove) where he seated himself when he came to the temple.

In the Priests' Court was the Altar of Burnt-Offerings, which was much larger than that of the tabernacle, having ten brazen lavers four cubits high, each standing on ten bases. There was likewise a great basin (which the tabernacle had not) called the Brazen Sea: it was five cubits high, and ten cubits in diameter, and was supported by twelve brazen oxen resting on bases, each of which had four wheels.

On the west side of the Altar of Burnt-Offerings was an ascent of twelve steps, which led to what may be properly called the Temple; and this consisted of three parts, namely, the *Porch*, the *Sanctuary*, and the *Holy of Holies*.

The *Porch* was about twelve cubits long and twenty broad, at the entrance, of which, stood the two famous pillars called Jachin and Boaz, whose names import, that *God alone was the support of the temple*; and its gate was fourteen cubits wide.

The *Sanctuary*, or Nave of the Temple, was forty cubits in length, and twenty in breadth. In it were the Altar of Incense, and the Table of Shew-Bread; but because the temple was larger, and required more light than the tabernacle, instead of one, it had five golden candlesticks.

The *Holy of Holies* was a square room of twenty cubits, in which was placed the Ark of the Covenant, containing the two tables of stone, on which were engraved the ten commandments as delivered by God to Moses. The two cherubims were made of olive-wood covered with gold: they were ten cubits high, and their wings five cubits long: they stood upright, having their wings stretched out, one of each of which touched the wall on either side, and the other two met in the centre, covering the Ark.

According to the account given by the celebrated Jewish Historian Josephus, round the temple, and against its walls, were built thirty cells, or little houses, which served as so many buttresses, and were, at the same time, no small ornament to it; for there were stories of these cells one above another, whereof the second was narrower than the first, and the third than the second, so that their roofs and balustrades, being within each other, made three different terraces (as it were) upon which a person might walk round

the temple. Within, these little houses were ceiled with cedar, their walls were wainscotted with the same, and embellished with carving and fretwork, inlaid with gold, which, with their dazzling splendor, made every thing about them look truly magnificent.

Upon the whole, we may observe, that the glory of this temple did not consist in the bulk or largeness of it, (for in itself exclusive of the surrounding courts, it was but a small pile of building, no more than a hundred and fifty feet in length, and a hundred and five in breadth,) but its chief grandeur and excellency lay in its out-buildings and ornaments, in its workmanship, which was every where very curious, and its overlayings, which were vast and prodigious; for the overlaying of the *Holy of Holies* only, (which was a room but thirty feet square, and twenty high) amounted to six hundred talents of gold, which comes to four millions three hundred and twenty thousand pounds of our sterling money.

We shall conclude our account of this famous building with the words of Josephus: "The whole frame, says he, was raised upon stones polished to the highest degree of perfection, and so artificially put together, that there was no joint to be discerned, no sign of any working tools being upon them; but the whole looked more like the work of Providence and Nature, than the product of Art, and human invention. As for the inside, whatever carving, gilding, embroidery, rich silks, and fine linen would do, of these there was the greatest profusion. The very floor of the temple was overlaid with beaten gold, the doors were larger, and proportioned to the height of the walls, twenty cubits broad, and still gold upon gold." *In a word, it was gold all over, and nothing was wanting, either within or without, that could contribute to the glory and magnificence of the work.*

To the beforementioned account given of the ancient state of Jerusalem, it may not be improper to subjoin a few observations relative to its present state, as given by that celebrated and much admired Geographer, *Charles Theodore Middleton, Esq.**

* The excellent Work, from which we have taken this extract, is the most modern on the subject, and contains many more particulars

“ Jerusalem (says he) is now about three miles in circumference, and lies in 31 deg. 50 min. north lat. and 36 deg. east long. and is situated on a very rocky mountain. The 'Turks (by whom it is at present inhabited) call it Cudsembaric. It is very thinly inhabited; the walls are weak and without bastions, and the ditch is very inconsiderable. The streets are narrow and the houses mean. Pilgrims and travellers, who flock from all parts either through devotion or out of curiosity, are the principal support of the city. A 'Turkish bassa resides here, to keep good order, collect the Grand Seignor's revenues, and protect the pilgrims from the insults of the Arabs.

“ No European Christian is permitted to enter the city till the requisite duties are discharged; nor can a stranger safely stay here, without being upon good terms with the Latin fathers.

“ The pilgrim's principal object is the church of the Holy Sepulchre, situated upon Mount Calvary. It is 100 paces in length, and 60 in breadth; the workmen were obliged to reduce the hill to a plain area, in order to lay the foundation; but great precaution was used not to alter any part of it, where our Saviour's passion was concerned. The scene of the Crucifixion is left entire, being about twelve yards square, and stands at this day so much higher than the floor of the church, that it is ascended to by twenty-one steps. The Holy Sepulchre, which was originally a cave hewn out in the bottom of the rock, may be now compared to a grotto standing above ground, and having the rock cut away, and levelled all round. The walls of the church of the Holy Sepulchre are of stone, and the roof of cedar; the building is covered with a superb

than what are related by other writers on the same subject. It is entitled, *A New and Complete System of Geography, containing a full, accurate, authentic and interesting Account and Description of Europe, Asia, Africa and America; as consisting of Continents, Islands, Oceans, Seas, Rivers, Lakes, Promontories, Capes, Bays, Peninsulas, Isthmuses, Gulphs, &c. and divided into Empires, Kingdoms, States and Republics. Embellished with upwards of One Hundred and twenty superb Copper-Plates, engraved by the most celebrated Artists, consisting of Views, Maps, Land and Water Perspectives, Birds, Beasts, Fishes, &c. as also the various Dresses of the Inhabitants of different Countries, with their strange Ceremonies, Customs, Amusements, &c.* Printed for J. COOKE, No. 47, Pater-noster-Row.

cupola, supported by sixteen large columns, and open at top. Over the altar there is another fine dome; the nave constitutes the choir, and the ailes of the church contain the most remarkable places where the circumstances of our Saviour's passion were transacted, together with the tombs of Godfrey and Baldwin, the two first christian kings of Jerusalem. In the church of the Crucifixion, the hole is shewn in which it is said the cross was fixed. The altar has three crosses richly adorned on it, particularly with four lamps of immense value, which are kept constantly burning. The cloister round the sepulchre is divided into sundry chapels. The Latins, who take care of the church, have apartments on the north-west side, but they are never suffered to go out, the Turks keeping the keys, and furnishing them with provisions through a wicket. Some grand ceremonies are performed at Easter, representing Christ's passion, crucifixion, death, and resurrection, of which take the following authentic account.

“ At dusk the pilgrims and monks meet in the chapel of the apparition; the lights are extinguished, and a sermon is preached by one of the Latin priests; then each being furnished with a lighted taper, all walk in procession round the church. They stop first at the Pillar of Flagellation, when a hymn is sung, and a sermon preached: thence they proceed to the Chapel of the prison, to hear another hymn and another sermon: at the Chapel of the division of the garment, to which they go next, a hymn is sung, but no sermon preached. They then proceed to the Chapel of Derision, the altar of which is supported by two pillars, and underneath is a piece of grayish marble, on which they say the soldiers placed Christ, when they crowned him with thorns, and mocked him, saying, “ Hail king of the Jews!” Here a sermon is preached, and a fourth hymn sung. They next enter another chapel, parted from the former only by a curtain, and advancing to the east end, come to the very spot on which our Redeemer was crucified. This chapel is covered all over with mosaic work; and adorned with thirteen lamps, and a candlestick with twelve branches. A hymn is here sung, and a sermon preached on some text relative to the passion: then two friars, who personate Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, come with great solemnity to the cross, and take

down the image that resembles Christ, which they put in a winding sheet, carry it to the stone of unction, and sing a hymn over it: a sermon is then preached in Arabic, and thus the ceremonials conclude.

“On Mount Moriah, in the south part of the city, stands the edifice called Solomon’s Temple, which is situated upon the same spot as the ancient temple; but it is uncertain by whom it was erected. The middle part, where the Jewish Sanctum Sanctorum was supposed to have stood, is converted into a Turkish mosque.

“It is to be observed, that the Turkish sangiac who governs this city, resides in the very house where Pontius Pilate is supposed to have formerly lived. The principal part of the churches have been converted into mosques. The priests and other Christians are kept miserably poor by the tyranny of the government, and have scarce any subsistence but what they procure by accommodating strangers with food and lodging, and selling them relicks.”

Such are the particulars of the present state of the city of Jerusalem itself as related by this celebrated Historian. As for the remarkable places in its neighborhood, with other matters well worthy the attention of the curious, we must refer our readers to the work itself; it being now time to quit this digression, and resume our History.

A
NEW AND COMPLETE
UNIVERSAL HISTORY
OF THE
HOLY BIBLE.

BOOK III.

FROM THE BUILDING OF SOLOMON'S TEMPLE, TO THE
BABYLONISH CAPTIVITY.

[INCLUDING A PERIOD OF UPWARDS OF 400 YEARS.]

CHAP. I.

Solomon places the Ark of God, and the Tabernacle, in the Temple. His solemn dedication of the temple, and prayer on the occasion. God appears to Solomon a second time in a dream. Solomon offers Hiram, king of Tyre, twenty cities, which he refuses to accept. He builds cities, and subdues the Hittites, Amorites, &c. Sends ships to Ophir, which bring from thence great quantities of gold. Receives a visit from the Queen of Sheba, who admires his wisdom, and, on her departure, makes him many valuable presents. His great riches. He is deluded by strange women, and falls into idolatry. God raises up against him Hadad and Rezon, and declares to Jeroboam, by the prophet Abijah, that he shall reign over ten tribes. Jeroboam flies into Egypt. Death of Solomon.

THE great work of the temple being finished, Solomon to celebrate the dedication of it with the greatest magnificence, postponed that ceremony till the following year, which was a year of jubilee, and at which time there always assembled a vast concourse of people from all parts of the kingdom. On this occasion he sent messen-

gers to all the elders of Israel, the princes of the different tribes, and the heads of the families, ordering them to repair to Jerusalem at the time appointed, which was a few days before the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles.*

The people being assembled, and all things ready, the ceremony began on the eighth day of the seventh month, called *Ethanim*, which answers to the latter end of our October. It opened with a very grand and solemn procession, in which the priests carried the Ark, from the place David had erected for it, to the temple, where they deposited it in the most holy place, between the two golden cherubims which Solomon had caused to be made by Hiram, as a kind of covering to it. The king himself accompanied by all his chief officers, and the elders of

* The *feast of tabernacles* lasted eight days, and was instituted as a memorial of the Israelites having dwelt in tents or tabernacles while they were in the desert. The principal ceremonies observed in the celebration of it were as follow: They dwelt, during the whole solemnity, in tents, or booths, made of boughs of trees, like bowers, in the open air. They offered every day a great number of sacrifices, besides the usual ones, of which there is a particular account in the 29th chapter of Numbers. During the whole time of the feast they carried in their hands branches of palm-trees, olives, citrons, myrtles and willows. These they tied together with gold or silver lines, or with ribbons, and going into their synagogues, walked round the altar with them in their hands, singing *Hosannah*, that is, *Save I beseech thee*; during which ceremony the trumpets sounded on all sides. On the seventh day of the feast they went seven times round the altar, and this was called the Great *Hosannah*. On the last day they repeated their *Hosannah* often, saying, "For thy sake, O our Creator, *Hosannah*; for thy sake, O our Redeemer, *Hosannah*; for thy sake O our Seeker, *Hosannah*:" as if they addressed themselves to the Trinity to save and help them. But one of the most remarkable ceremonies performed at this feast was, the *libations*, or *pouring out of the water*, which was done every day. A priest went and drew some water in a golden vessel, at the pool of Siloam, which he poured on the altar (first mixing some wine with it) at the time of the morning service, the people, at the same time singing, *With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation*. Thus as this festival was commemorative of God's favor to his people while they dwelt in tents and tabernacles in the wilderness, and was designed to remind them of their short and pilgrim state here below (see Psalm xxxix. 12.) so did it foreshadow the future dwelling of the Messiah in the tabernacle of human flesh, whence their greatest comforts were to flow, and through whom they, and all mankind, were to receive the *water of life*, the *spirit of grace*.

Israel, marched before the Ark: these were followed by a great number of priests and Levites, who sung some canticles proper on the occasion, and played upon various instruments. Next to the Ark followed another body of singers and players, with other priests bearing the golden candlesticks, altar of incense, and other sacred utensils of the sanctuary; and last of all, the Tabernacle of the Congregation.* As the procession passed, the priests offered sacrifices in various places, the number of which, on their way, and at the temple, after depositing the different articles in the parts allotted for them, amounted to 20,000 oxen, and 120,000 sheep.† While the priests were placing the Ark in the Holy of Holies, the air rang with the sound of trumpets, and the voices of the Levites, who sang the praises of God, repeating these words at proper stanzas: *Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; and his mercy endureth for ever.*

No sooner had the priests left the Holy of Holies, where they had deposited the Ark, than the whole temple was covered with a miraculous cloud, so that the priests could not proceed farther in celebrating the praises of God. This being observed by Solomon, he immediately con-

* This was the tabernacle built by Moses, which, for the prevention of schism, and to make the temple only the place of devotion, was now taken down and deposited in the treasury, where it continued till the taking of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans; when (as Josephus informs us) God admonished Jeremiah to take it, together with the ark, and the altar of incense, and hide them in some secret place, for fear of profanation; and it is doubted whether they have ever yet been removed.

† We are not to suppose that so great a number of cattle could be offered all on the same day, much less on one altar. The continuance of this meeting was for fourteen days, seven in the feast of tabernacles, and seven in the dedication of the temple; and because the brazen altar before the door of the temple was not sufficient to receive all the sacrifices, Solomon ordered other altars to be erected in the courts of the priests, and perhaps in other places, which were to serve only during this solemnity, when such a prodigious number of sacrifices were to be offered; for, at other times, no altar was allowed but the brazen one which had been made by Moses. It is, however, no bad observation of Josephus, that, during the oblation of so many sacrifices, the Levites took care to “perfume the air with the fragraney of incense and sweet odors, to such a degree, that the people were sensible of it at a distance; otherwise the burning of so many beasts at one time must have occasioned a very offensive scent.

cluded that what he had done was acceptable to the Lord, and that he had shewn this as a sign that he had taken possession of the place. He therefore threw himself prostrate on the ground, and in that situation continued for some time. At length he arose, and, turning towards the sanctuary, addressed himself in solemn prayer to God,* beseeching him graciously to accept of the house

* The prayer Josephus puts into the mouth of Solomon on this occasion is to the following effect: "Lord, says he, what are the most glorious works of man in balance even with the smallest of thy benefits and mercies? Or what can we, that have nothing to give, pretend to do for thee that wastest nothing? when the very least of thy bounties are above and beyond all requital? We can only render thee praise, acknowledgment and thanksgiving, and that, indeed, is a prerogative which thou hast vouchsafed to mankind above all other creatures: so that this I am not only allowed, but obliged to do, in the name of myself and family, and the whole people of Israel, for all thy multiplied favors and infinite goodness towards us. Now having no other way of expressing our duty and affections, than by the means of bare empty words, that are only so much air drawn in and breathed out again, be pleased to accept of our humble gratitude in that human capacity: first, for thy gracious goodness to my dead father, in raising him from a shepherd's crook, to an imperial sceptre; and, in the second place, for making good to thy servant Solomon all thy promises and predictions in his favor. Lord! continue thy bounties to us, as to thy chosen people: preserve, prosper, and perpetuate the government to our family by a constant train of successions, from generation to generation, according to thy promises to my father, living and dying. Lord! grant us all this; and to all mine, those virtues and graces that may make them acceptable in thy sight. I do farther most humbly beseech thee to let thy holy spirit descend upon this temple, in the blessing of thy peculiar presence. Heaven and earth I known are too little for the majesty of thy glory, and more the workmanship of men's hands in a fabric of much wood and stone: and yet I cannot but presume to implore thy providence and protection over it: Lord! preserve it from the power and rage of enemies; and be pleased to take care of it, as of thine own property and possession. And if at any time hereafter thou shalt be moved in thy just displeasure to punish this people for their transgressions, with famine, pestilence, or any other judgment whatever answerable to the degree of the wickedness, Lord! be pleased, upon their humble supplications to thee in thine own house, with prayers and tears, for mercy and forgiveness, to accept of their true repentance, and to remove thy judgments. This I most humbly beseech thee, not for the Hebrews alone, but for the relief indifferently of all people whatever, that shall offer up their petitions to thee in this holy place. By these means it will appear to the whole world that this is thy house, and we thy people:

which he had built for his sake; to bless and sanctify it, and to hear the prayers of all, whether Jews or Gentiles, who, upon any occasion, either of public or private calamity, might direct their supplications to him from that holy place. He likewise besought of God that he would fulfil the promise which he had been pleased to make to his father David, in favor of his family, and the kings who should succeed him in the government of the people.—This most beautiful and solemn prayer is contained in the eighth chapter of the first book of Kings, beginning at the 23d and running to the 53d verse; and the whole of it may be thus paraphrased:

By thee, eternal God of truth, I reign,
 By thee, at length, I've raised the spacious fane, }
 Which David oft had vowed, but vowed in vain. }
 The royal David, my victorious sire,
 Decked in emblazoned arms, and war's attire;
 Inured to blood, and hostile cruelty,
 Was not thought fit to build a house for thee:
 Or on thy sacred altars to expand,
 A peaceful offering with a warrior's hand.
 Yet I, his son, thou vow'dst should build thine house;
 O God of truth, well hast thou paid thy vows!
 Hear then, thou holiest God of Abraham, hear, }
 From thine eternal mansions bend thine ear, }
 Those mansions leave, and deign to inhabit here. }
 I'm lost in thought! can then the Immortal deign
 To dwell on earth, to dwell with mortal men?
 Can this (built with our hands) this structure hold
 Him, from whose hands eternal world's have rolled?
 Yet, O descend, thou God of Abraham, hear, }
 From thine eternal mansions bend thine ear, }
 And make this dwelling thy peculiar care. }
 When adversaries shall each other vex,
 And mutual strifes the doubtful truth perplex;
 When, trembling, both approach thy awful fane,
 And both, thy sacred oaths, their cause maintain:
 Then do thou hear, O God of Abraham, hear, }
 From thine eternal mansions bend thine ear, }
 Judge the wrong-doer, and the guiltless clear. }
 If e'er, with sins oppressed, this guilty land,
 Fall by the sword, and feel a tyrant's hand;

“and that the Hebrews are not so inhumane as to envy strangers the
 “common dispensations of the Author and Fountain of all our hap-
 “piness.”

If they must drag the haughty victor's ear,
 And smart beneath the iron rods of war:
 Yet O, when they shall, suppliant, feel their shame,
 Fall at thine altar, and invoke thy name;
 Then do thou hear, O God of Abraham, hear,
 From thine eternal mansions bend thine ear,
 Forgive their trespass, and receive their prayer. }
 When heaven withhold its seasonable rains,
 And famine dire bestrides the parched plains;
 When round the wastes the wistful hind shall stare,
 Curse his own toils, and unsuccessful care;
 If then repentant they approach thy shrine,
 And sadly deprecate the wrath divine:
 Then do thou hear, O God of Abraham, hear,
 From thine eternal mansions bend thine ear,
 And bless with fruitful showers the teeming year. }
 When foreign men from distant nations come,
 And gazing enter this imperial dome,
 When o'er thine altars Gentile hands they raise,
 And, in a tongue unknown, exalt thy praise;
 Then do thou hear, O God of Abraham, hear, }
 From thine eternal mansions bend thine ear,
 And let e'en distant lands thy blessing share. }
 When Israel's sons a hostile act design,
 And great in arms their crested warriors shine;
 If unto thee, the Lord of Hosts, they pray,
 And from thy hands expect the doubtful day;
 Then do thou hear, O God of Abraham, hear, }
 From thine eternal mansions bend thine ear,
 Go with their armies—lead their hosts to war. }
 But if thy sacred justice hath decreed,
 That, for their sins, the stubborn ones shall bleed:
 If captives they must visit foreign lands,
 And tread, with toilsome steps, on barbarous sands;
 Yet then, if then they look with longing eyes,
 Back on thy temple, and their native skies,
 Hear them e'en then, O God of Abraham, hear, }
 From thine eternal mansions bend thine ear,
 And smile propitious on thy suppliants there. }
 Then let thy power, and out-stretched arm restore,
 The wretched exiles to their native shore;
 As erst of old, thy wonder-working hand,
 O'er sands and seas led forth the chosen band, }
 From Goshen's plains, and Egypt's swarthy land. }

Solomon, having finished this solemn address to God, arose, and, turning himself to the people, with his hands spread, spoke to them as follows: “Blessed be the Lord that hath given rest unto his people Israel, according to

“ all that he promised: there hath not failed one word of
“ all his good promise, which he promised by the mouth
“ of Moses his servant. The Lord our God be with us,
“ as he was with our fathers: let him not leave us, nor
“ forsake us: That he may incline our hearts unto him,
“ to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments,
“ and his statutes, and his judgments, which he com-
“ manded our fathers. And let these my words, where-
“ with I have made supplication before the Lord, be nigh
“ unto the Lord our God day and night, that he maintain
“ the cause of his servant, and the cause of his people
“ Israel, at all times, as the matter shall require; that all
“ the people of the earth may know that the Lord is God,
“ and that there is none else. Let your heart, therefore, be
“ perfect with the Lord our God, to walk in his statutes,
“ and to keep his commandments, as at this day.”

After having thus addressed the people, Solomon again offered up a number of sacrifices, and *hallowed the middle of the court that was before the House of the Lord*. The feast of the Dedication, in conjunction with that of the Tabernacles, lasted fourteen days, at the expiration of which, all things being performed with the greatest order and solemnity, Solomon dismissed the people, who returned, with hearts full of joy, to their respective habitations.

In the night of the very same day that Solomon had finished the ceremonies of dedicating the temple, God appeared to him a second time while he was asleep; and the words he said to him were to this effect: “ That he had heard his prayers, and accepted his sacrifices: that he would preserve his temple, and make it the house of his dwelling; that is to say, so long as he himself, and his posterity and people, should continue to walk before him, as David his father did, in pureness of heart; promising him, upon that condition, to advance him to the highest degree of earthly bliss; to perpetuate the throne of Israel to his family, so that there should never want a prince of that line, and of the tribe of Judah, to hold the sceptre. But, on the contrary, if ever they should betray and depart from, or forget the worship they professed, and run after strange gods, they should be quite rooted out from off the face of the earth, and Israel be no longer a people; but, after being torn to pieces, and broken with

wars and other calamities at home, be forced to shift for themselves in the wide world, as vagabonds and exiles. The voice farther told him, that in case of such an apostacy, his new-erected fabric should come to be sacked and burnt by the hands of barbarians, and Jerusalem itself laid in ashes by a merciless enemy; insomuch that people should stand amazed at the very report of such misery and distress, and wonder how it should come to pass that a people, who were but yesterday the envy of all mankind for riches, external glory and reputation, should now, all on a sudden, be sunk and lost to the last degree of wretchedness and contempt, and reduced to this despicable state too by the same hand that raised them. To which question their own guilty consciences should make this answer: *Because they forsook the Lord their God, who brought forth their fathers out of the land of Egypt, and have taken hold upon other gods, and have worshipped them, and served them: therefore hath the Lord brought upon them all this evil.*

Solomon had a peculiar taste for building, and therefore, a short time after he had consecrated the temple, he set about erecting a magnificent palace* for himself, in the execution of which he was greatly assisted by his old

* The description of this palace, which we may gather from Josephus, Lamy, and others, that have treated of Solomon's buildings, is in this manner related:—"Upon several rows of pillars, there was erected a spacious pile of building, in the nature of a common hall, for the hearing of causes. It was a hundred cubits in length, fifty in breadth, and in depth thirty, supported by fifteen square columns, covered with Corinthian work in cedar, and fortified with double doors, curiously wrought, that served both for the security and ornament of the place. In the middle of this hall was another edifice of thirty cubits square, and underset with strong pillars, wherein was placed a throne of state, on which the king himself used to sit personally in judgment. On the right-hand of this Court of Justice stood the king's own palace, and, on the left, that which he built for Pharaoh's daughter, both fitted up with cedar, and built with huge stones of ten cubits square, which were partly plain, and partly overlaid with the most precious marble.—The rooms were hung with rich hangings, and beautified with images and sculptures of all kinds, so exquisitely finished, that they seemed to be alive, and in motion. It would be an endless work (says Josephus) to give a particular survey of this mighty mass of buildings; so many courts and other contrivances, such a variety of chambers and offices, great and little, long and large galleries, vast rooms of state,

friend the king of Tyre. He likewise built another palace for his queen, and a third, which he called the House of the Forest of Lebanon,* and in which he principally resided during the summer.

In acknowledgment for the great services received from Hiram king of Tyre, Solomon offered him twenty cities in the land of Galilee, adjoining to his own country; but, for some reason or other, he did not think proper to accept them. From this refusal, that part of the country was called Cabul, which in the Phœnician language, signifies, *It does not please me.*

The fortifications of Jerusalem being deemed insufficient for the defence of that spacious and opulent city, Solomon applied himself to the completion of such repairs as were deemed necessary for the security of the place. He rebuilt the walls round the city, and erected a senate-house in that part of it called Millo. He likewise repaired and fortified the cities of Hazor, Megiddo, Beth-horon the Nether, Baalath, Tadmor in the wilderness of Syria, and Gazer, the latter of which the king of Egypt took from the Canaanites, and gave it in dower with his daughter. He fortified all the cities in which were kept his chariots and horses, as also those he had allotted as magazines for corn, wine, and oil.

There was still a stubborn remnant of the Canaanites who resided near Mount Lebanon, and who, for some time, had disputed their allegiance to the kings of Israel. These Solomon reduced to a state of subjection, made them tributaries by obliging them to supply him yearly

“and others for feasting and entertainment, set out as richly as could
 “be, with costly furniture and guildings; besides that, all the ser-
 “vices for the king’s table were of pure gold. In a word, the whole
 “house was, in a manner, made up, from top to bottom, of white
 “marble, cedar, gold and silver, with precious stones, here and there
 “intermingled upon the walls and ceilings, after the manner of the
 “adorning of the temple.”

* It is the opinion of some commentators, that this house was the same with the palace which Solomon built in Jerusalem, and that it received its name from the tall pillars that supported it, which looked like the cedars in the forest of Lebanon; but this opinion is certainly ill founded, because the Holy Scriptures speak of it as a distinct building, though, perhaps, it might not be far distant from the other, on some cool shady mountain which made it resemble Mount Lebanon.

with a certain number of slaves, to be employed in tilling the land, and other sorts of drudgery. As for his own subjects, he appointed a great part of them either to be surveyors of his works, or guards to his person, or commanders in the army, or traders and merchants, so that he might make his nation as famous as it was possible to be effected by human policy.

To increase his wealth, and promote commerce, Solomon caused a fleet of ships to be built in Ezion-Geber, a port in the Red Sea, in which he was greatly assisted by his good friend and ally Hiram, king of Tyre, who sent him a number of expert pilots and skilful mariners. By these means his subjects, who soon attained the art of navigation, were enabled to make several advantageous voyages to different parts; and particularly, in one to Ophir, they brought him home no less than four hundred and twenty talents of gold, with many other commodities and curiosities of considerable value.

The great fame Solomon had now acquired both for his riches and wisdom, was spread throughout most parts of the world, and the greatest respect was paid him by the princes and nobility of all the surrounding countries. Among others who heard of his fame was the Queen of Sheba, who being a princess of extraordinary understanding, and highly accomplished, the character given of Solomon so captivated her, that she resolved to see and hear him, wisely concluding that experimental proof surpassed the most confirmed report, which, on proper examination, might be found inconclusive, or unauthenticated. Having debated the matter for some time with herself, she at length came to a resolution, notwithstanding all the hazards and difficulties of a long and tedious journey, to make him an honorable visit: this she did not only for the satisfaction of gratifying her curiosity, but likewise to enjoy the benefit of instruction from that wisdom, of which she had heard so very extraordinary an account.

Thus resolved, the Queen of Sheba set out on her journey to Jerusalem, attended by a train suitable to her dignity, taking with her a number of camels laden with spices, gold, precious stones, and various other valuable articles. On her arrival at the city she was introduced to the king, who received her with all possible honor,

courtesy and respect, due to her character. Her purpose was, to try if Solomon's wisdom was answerable to the high commendations she had heard of it; and therefore, in discourse, she proposed to him several enigmatical questions. The king answered all the difficulties she proposed with such ease and clearness as perfectly astonished her, and she beheld a display of his surprizing power far superior to what had been represented. She greatly admired the magnificence of his palace; the discipline and economy of his household, and the peculiar grace and propriety with which he conducted all his affairs. She was likewise infinitely pleased with the sight of the daily sacrifices, and the application, care and veneration with which the priests and Levites performed their part in the worship. The whole she beheld, struck her mind with the most sensible impression, and, in the height of her amazement, she addressed the king in words to this effect: "Great Prince, said she, report is so doubtful and uncertain, that without an experimental and demonstrative confirmation of the truth of what we hear, we are forced to suspend our judgment, especially when the fame of things relates either to extreme good or evil; but with respect to your incomparable faculties, that is, to the advantages of the mind in a superlative degree of knowledge and understanding, and the glory of your outward state, the rumor has been so far from partial, that it falls short even of common justice; for though report conveyed as much to your honor as words could express, I have yet the happiness, at this present time, to see much more than I heard. Blessed are the Israelites, blessed are the friends and people of Solomon, that stand ever before him, and hear his wisdom; and blessed be God for his goodness to this land and nation, in placing them under the government of so excellent a prince."

Nor did this great princess testify her admiration of the extraordinary qualifications of Solomon by words alone; but, as a farther instance of the high respect she entertained for the king, made him a present of one hundred and twenty talents of gold, together with a great quantity of aromatic spices, rich perfumes, and precious stones to a considerable value. Solomon, on his part, was not want-

ing in making a grateful acknowledgment of the favors then conferred on him: he not only gave the queen all she asked, but complimented her with several articles which he thought attracted her fancy. After this reciprocal interchange of presents given and taken, the queen of Sheba took her leave, and returned, highly satisfied, to her own country.

Soon after the departure of the queen of Sheba, Solomon's fleet returned from Ophir, (otherwise called the land of Gold) bringing rich stones and pine wood in abundance: the latter was made use of partly for pillars and supporters to the temple and palace, and partly in the construction of psalteries, harps and cymbals, on which the Levites played when they sang to the praise and glory of God.

Solomon received by this fleet six hundred and sixty-six talents of gold, over and above the merchants' adventure, and what the governors and princes of Arabia sent him for presents. Of this gold he caused to be made two hundred targets, each weighing six hundred shekels, all of which he hung up in the great hall of the Forest of Lebanon. He likewise made a most superb and grand throne of ivory, which he used both as the seat of judgment and to hold public audiences. It was placed in the midst of a flight of rich pillars of cedar, curiously carved, and inlaid with gold. The throne itself, which was in the form of a niche, was covered with ivory, inlaid, and intermixed with curious ornaments in gold: the ascent to it was by six steps, each supported on either side by a small lion, and the arms of the seat by two large ones as big as the life. All these, and even the steps themselves, were covered with ivory and gold. The drinking-vessels belonging to the king were all of gold, decorated with precious stones, and curiously wrought by the most eminent artists; and of this rich metal were all his common utensils made. In the traffic carried on, no money passed, Solomon sending his own ships, from the sea of Tarshish, with different articles of his own country, and receiving in exchange negroes, gold, silver, ivory, apes, &c. This voyage, in going and returning, usually took up three years.

The great fame of Solomon's wisdom, power and riches having now extended to the remotest parts, several of the most potent princes embraced every opportunity of testify-

ing, by their submission and munificence, the veneration in which they held so distinguished a character. They sent him gold and silver, plate, purple robes, spices and perfumes of all sorts, horses, chariots, and mules for burthen, such as, for strength and beauty, they thought would be most acceptable to the king. In short, the richest presents were sent him from every quarter; and to see the face, and hear the wisdom, of the renowned Solomon, was the prevailing ambition of the great men of that age.

Hitherto we have seen nothing in Solomon but what was truly great and wonderful; but the latter actions of his life greatly tarnish and disgrace his character. His raging desires after women transported him beyond all bounds; nor could those of his own country serve his turn, for he took indifferently women of various nations, Sidonians, Tyrians, Ammonites, Edomites, &c. contrary to the institution of Moses, which forbid any intercourse of marriage with strangers, wisely foreseeing that strange women might inveigle them over to worship strange gods. This was the true reason of the precaution against such marriages; for the violation of one law is but a step towards the breaking of another; and the taking of a prohibited wife naturally led to the embracing of a prohibited religion.

But Solomon's sensual appetite was not to be checked by the counsels of sobriety and reason. He had no less than seven hundred wives, who were princesses, and three hundred concubines; and the passion he had for the personal charms of some, and the conversation of others, led him into compliance with them in the impiety of their practices and opinions, as the most effectual earnest he could give of his tenderness and affection. As he grew more advanced in years he felt the decay of age in his mind, as well as in his body, and as he became more and more remiss in the exercise of the true worship, he was the more easily prevailed upon to join with these strange women in a false one; and even went so far as to assist them in offering up sacrifices to their respective idols.*

* It is astonishing that a person of Solomon's wisdom should have been persuaded by his wives to forsake the religion in which he had been so well instructed, and which he was so fully convinced to have been delivered to Moses by that Omnipotent Being, who had brought the Israelites from a land of bondage, placed him on the throne of

This sad apostacy in Solomon highly offended the Almighty, who was pleased to send a prophet to him with a message to this effect: "That his wickedness was no secret, and that he should not long go unpunished. With respect to the promise made to his father, that he should have no other successor, the prophet told him his government should not be taken from him while he was living, but that after his death his son should suffer for the iniquities of his father; not that there should be an universal defection, but that ten tribes only should revolt, and the other two continue in their allegiance to the son of Solomon for his grandfather's sake, and for the sake of the temple of Jerusalem, which God had made choice of for the place of his habitation on earth."

This severe chastisement, which foretold the removal of Solomon from the most exalted glory and dignity, to the lowest state and condition, wounded him to the very soul; nor could he, on reflection, deny the justice of the sentence.

A very short time after this dreadful judgment was denounced against Solomon for his transgressions, God stirred up a bitter enemy against him. His name was Hadad, an Edomite by birth, and a branch of the royal family, whose animosity against Solomon arose from the following circumstances. When the Israelites overran the country of Edom, under the command of Joab, who at that time was David's general, Joab, having subdued the people, put to the sword all the male children he could find in the province. Hadad was at this time a youth, and happening to make his escape, fled to Pharaoh king of Egypt, who not only received him with great humanity, but very generously gave him houses, lands and revenues for his support; and such was his affection for him that he at length gave him his own wife's sister in marriage, who bore him a son that was trained up with the children of Pharaoh.

When Hadad heard of the deaths of David and Joab, he asked permission of Pharaoh to return to his own country. The king, not being pleased with this request, asked

David, and inspired him with that wisdom which rendered him famous throughout the earth. It affords, however, a striking lesson to all mankind to beware of the infatuation of vice; since even a Solomon was not secure from its delusions, and, once unhappily immersed in it, seems never to have disengaged himself from it.

him, what he wanted, or what he meant by so earnestly wishing to leave the best friend he had in the world. Hadad told him he was perfectly satisfied with all the favors he had been pleased to bestow on him; but that he was anxiously desirous of paying a visit to his own country, and therefore begged he would indulge him in his request.

By repeated solicitations, Pharaoh was at length prevailed on to give his assent; upon which Hadad repaired to Edom, with a full design of stirring up the people to a rebellion against Solomon. On his arrival at the place he found the garrisons so strong, and the country in such a posture of defence, that there was no possibility of success by a surprize: he therefore altered his plan, and went from thence into Syria, where he joined interest with one Rezon, a fugitive from his master Hadadezer, the king of Zoab. This person had gathered together a great number of men, over whom he made himself captain, and, with their assistance, seizing on Damascus, he there reigned as king of Syria, and, in conjunction with Hadad, greatly distressed Solomon in the declining part of his reign.

But the most dangerous enemy Solomon had was Jeroboam, the son of Nabat, a bold and enterprising man, whom the king had made overseer of his buildings, and whom, for his great abilities, he had likewise appointed chief ruler of the House of Joseph; that is, of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh.

As Jeroboam was one day walking in the fields he was met by the prophet Ahijah, who, taking hold of his garment, which was new, rent it into twelve pieces,* ten of

* Language, as appears from the nature of the thing, from the records of history, and from the remains of the most ancient languages still subsisting, was at first exceeding rude, narrow and equivocal; so that men were perpetually at a loss on any new conception, or uncommon incident, to explain themselves intelligibly to each other. This necessarily set them upon supplying the deficiencies of speech by apt and significant *signs*. Accordingly, in the first ages of the world, mutual converse was upheld by a mixed discourse of *words* and *actions*; (hence came the eastern phrase, *Exod. iv. 8. of the voice of the sign*) and use and custom, as in most other affairs of life, improving what had risen out of necessity into ornament, this practice subsisted long after the necessity was over; especially among the eastern people, whose natural temperament inclined them to a mode of conversation, which so well exercised their vivacity by motion, and gratified it by a perpetual representation of material images. Of this

which he bid him take, and then addressed him as follows :
 “ Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel: Behold, I will
 “ rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will
 “ give ten tribes to thee: but he shall have one tribe for my
 “ servant David’s sake, and for Jerusalem’s sake, the city
 “ which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel. Be-
 “ cause that they have forsaken me, and have worshipped
 “ Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Zidonians; Chemosh, the
 “ god of the Moabites; and Milcom, the god of the children
 “ of Ammon; and have not walked in my ways, to do that
 “ which is right in mine eyes, and to keep my statutes and
 “ my judgments, as did David his father. Howbeit, I will
 “ not take the whole kingdom out of his hand: but I will
 “ make him prince all the days of his life, for David my
 “ servant’s sake, whom I chose, because he kept my com-
 “ mandments and my statutes: But I will take the kingdom
 “ out of his son’s hand, and will give it unto thee, even
 “ ten tribes. And unto his son will I give one tribe, that
 “ David my servant may have a light always before me in
 “ Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen me to put my
 “ name there. And I will take thee, and thou shalt reign
 “ according to all that thy soul desireth, and shall be king
 “ over Israel. And it shall be, if thou wilt hearken unto
 “ all that I command thee, and wilt walk in my ways, and
 “ do that which is right in my sight, to keep my statutes
 “ and my commandments, as David my servant did, that I
 “ will be with thee, and build thee a sure house, as I built
 “ for David, and will give Israel unto thee. And I will for
 “ this afflict the seed of David, though not for ever.”

Jeroboam was not a little elated at the words of the prophet; and being naturally of a very haughty and

we have innumerable instances in scripture, as well as in the present instance. By these *actions* the prophets instructed the people in the will of God, and conversed with them by signs: as it likewise appears that the information by *action* was, at this time and place, a very familiar mode of conversation, this will lead us to a reasonable and true defence of the prophetic writings, and enable us to clear them from the charge of absurdity and fanaticism. The absurdity of an action consists in its being extravagant and insignificant; but use and a fixed application, made those in question both just and pertinent. The fanaticism of an action consists in a fondness for unusual actions and foreign modes of speech; but these in question were idiomatic and familiar.

aspiring temper, every thing that contributed to gratify his ambition, made him turbulent and restless. The prophetic prediction was strongly impressed on his mind; and therefore, the first step he took was, to tamper with the people he commanded, and to instil into their minds the spirit of disaffection to their sovereign.

The proceedings of Jeroboam were soon made known to Solomon, who concerted a plan to surprize and dispatch him; but the plot being discovered, he made his escape and fled to Shishak, king of Egypt. Here he continued during the remainder of Solomon's life, who, after having reigned forty years, died about the 58th year of his age, and was buried in the city of David.

Solomon was certainly the wisest and richest prince that ever existed. He might, indeed, have likewise reigned the happiest, had not his inordinate attachment to women hurried him into the commission of such enormities in the sight of God as entailed not only misery on himself, but were also the source of numberless misfortunes that afterwards happened to the people he had been chosen to govern.

The character which the Author of Ecclesiasticus gives of Solomon is exceeding beautiful, and pity it is that it should be so stained by the impropriety of his conduct during the latter part of his life. "Solomon, says he, reigned in a peaceable time, and was honored, for God made all quiet round about him, that he might build an house in his name, and prepare his sanctuary for ever. How wise wast thou in thy youth, and, as a flood, filled with understanding! Thy soul covered the whole earth, and thou filledst it with dark parables. Thy name went far into the islands, and for thy peace thou wast beloved. The countries marvelled at thee for thy songs and proverbs, and parables and interpretations. By the name of the Lord, who is called the Lord God of Israel, thou didst gather gold as tin, and didst multiply silver as lead.—But thou didst bow thy loins to women, &c."—See Eccles. xlvii. 13, &c.

CHAP. II.

Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, succeeds to the government. He refuses the advice of his father's counsellors: upon which ten of the tribes revolt, and make Jeroboam king. Jeroboam seduces the people into idolatry. His hand suddenly withereth, but is restored at the instigation of a prophet. The same prophet, for his disobedience, is slain by a lion. Jeroboam's wickedness, and the death of his son Abijah. Shishak, king of Egypt, besieges Jerusalem, and plunders the temple. Death of Rehoboam. Abijam, the son of Rehoboam, succeeds to the government of Judah. He obtains a considerable victory over Jeroboam, but soon after dies. He is succeeded by his son Asa, a very good prince, who, after gaining a victory over the king of Arabia, makes a thorough reformation in religion. Death of Asa. Of the different kings who governed the ten tribes during the reigns of Rehoboam, Abijam and Asa.

ON the death of Solomon, the government of the people fell of course to his son Rehoboam, who immediately repaired to Shechem, in order to declare himself the successor to the throne, under the sanction of the unanimous suffrages of the people. Jeroboam, at the time of Solomon's death, was in Egypt, and being strongly urged, by some of the grandees, to return, he took their advice, and with all possible expedition hastened to Shechem. On his arrival he joined many of the princes and leading people in an application to Rehoboam, whom they advised to adopt a mild government, observing that, in some instances, Solomon had been rather oppressive; and that instead of rendering himself an object of terror to his subjects, his safety and happiness required him to regulate his conduct in such a manner as to obtain an acquiescence to the measures of his government from an unfeigned affection to his person, rather than from a dread of his power.

Rehoboam told them to depart, and that in three days he would give them an answer. This circumstance occasioned a jealousy among the people, who considered that an immediate compliance with so reasonable a request would not have been refused by a prince disposed to promote the happiness of his subjects. They reflected, how-

ever, that the suspension did not imply an absolute denial, and therefore waited the event with favorable expectations.

In consequence of this general application, Rehoboam summoned together the counsellors and friends of his late father, and requested their advice in what reply he should make to the people. They recommended it to him by all means to treat them with courtesy and condescension, assuring him that he would gain much more upon them by a popular freedom, than confining himself to the formalities of majesty and state, there being nothing so likely to fix a tie on the hearts of the people, as affability and condescension in the prince.

Words could not have been formed more to the purpose in general, or more especially to Rehoboam's purpose in particular, having a kingdom at view, than these. But so infatuated was this young prince with the thoughts of his new station, that, rejecting the wholesome counsel given him, he applied to some persons of his own age and disposition, resolving to abide by their opinions and sentiments.* The answer they advised him to give the people was to this effect: "That they should feel more weight from his little finger than they had done from the loins of his father: that if they had been oppressed before, the oppression should be increased; and that if whips were the instruments of chastisement made use of by his predecessor, he would himself inflict a more painful discipline by chastising them with scorpions."

In the utmost anxiety of hope and fear, the people assembled on the third day; when the king delivered his answer to them precisely in the words which the young men had recommended. In consequence of this they im-

* It was a custom among the kings of the east to have their sons educated among other young lords of the same age; which, as it created a generous spirit of emulation, and both endeared the prince to the nobles, and the nobles to the prince, could not but tend greatly to the benefit of the public. So that Solomon's method and design in the education of his son was wise, and well concerted, though it failed of success. These *young men*, however, were not so young but they might have known better, for Rehoboam was one and forty years old when he entered upon the kingdom. So that these nobles who were brought up with him must have been about the same age; but they were young in experience and wisdom, and therefore they gave the king such unseasonable advice.

mediately threw off their allegiance, and unanimously cried out, *What portion have we in David? neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse. To your tents, O Israel: now see to thine own house, David.*

When Rehoboam understood this, he sent Adoram, the collector, to appease the people, and, probably, to assure them that their taxes should be abated: but this pacification came too late; their passions were raised to such a degree, that without permitting Adoram to use any exculpatory arguments, they immediately fell on him, and stoned him to death. Rehoboam, seeing this, thought it high time to consult his own safety, by hastening to his chariot and flying to Jerusalem; by which means he secured the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin, but all the rest of the Israelites made choice of Jeroboam, declaring they would never again acknowledge the sovereignty of a descendant of David. Thus was this great kingdom divided into two parts, and ever after went under different denominations, namely, the kingdom of Judah, and the kingdom of Israel, though the latter included the whole before.

Rehoboam, fired with indignation at the affront put upon himself in the person of Adoram, his collector, resolved to seek revenge on the disaffected Israelites. As soon therefore as he had got safe into Jerusalem, he summoned a full convention of the two tribes that stood firm to their allegiance, from whom he selected 180,000 choice troops, proposing to himself, with this body of men, to march against the other ten tribes, and, by force, reduce them to obedience. But while he was preparing for this enterprize, he received a visit from the prophet Shemaiah,* who, by the direction of God, advised him to desist from prosecuting his intentions, because it was the Divine will and pleasure that the division of the kingdom should come to pass, that the prediction of the prophet Ahijah might be fulfilled. Rehoboam readily took the advice of Shemaiah, and immediately disbanded his army; after which he built several strong holds

* This prophet was very well known in the reign of Rehoboam. He is supposed to have written the annals of that prince; and of what authority he was in Judah we may gather from his having so easily prevailed with the king, and 180,000 men, to lay down their arms and return home, merely by declaring that the division which had happened was by the order and appointment of God.

in different parts of the country, furnished them with good garrisons and provisions, and erected magazines in several cities within the environs of his capital.

In the mean time Jeroboam enlarged and beautified Shechem, built him a palace, and made it a royal city. He likewise repaired Penuel, a fortified place on the other side of the river Jordan, where he likewise built a palace, and to which he frequently resorted in hopes of gaining over the affections of the two tribes that were attached to Rehoboam.

The time was now near at hand for celebrating the feast of Tabernacles, upon which Jeroboam reflected that if his people should repair to Jerusalem to celebrate that festival, the ceremonies of religion might so far operate on their minds as to induce them to acknowledge allegiance to his antagonist, whereby both his life and government would be in the most imminent danger. In consequence of this reflection, he set up two golden calves, with altars belonging to them, the one in Bethel, which was the most southern, and the other in Dan, which was the most northern part of the country. Having done this he summoned together the heads of the ten tribes under his command at the two different places, and shewing them the images, addressed them as follows: * *It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: Behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.*

The people in general were by these means seduced from their obedience to the true worship of God, but the regular priests would not give their assent to such idolatries. In consequence of this, Jeroboam inhibited them the exercise of their own religion, banished them

* The words Josephus puts into Jeroboam's mouth, on this occasion, are to the following effect: "It is unnecessary, my friends and countrymen, to mention the Omnipresence of the Deity: in whatever place we are, he hears and accepts the prayers we offer him. I therefore conceive that, for the exercise of your religion, it will be totally needless to undertake a tedious journey to Jerusalem. The builder of the temple was but a mortal like ourselves: the golden calves which are placed in the temples at Bethel and Dan, have been consecrated as well as the temple at Jerusalem. You will be at no loss for the want either of priests or Levites: let such as are inclined to execute the sacerdotal function qualify themselves by sacrificing a calf and a ram, by which ceremony alone, Aaron, the first of the order, was initiated into the priesthood."

his kingdom, and appointed any, who were so inclined, to take the sacerdotal office, and officiate in their stead. By these means a great accession of strength accrued to Rehoboam's party, for the priests that were banished resorted all to Jerusalem, and were followed by as many of the other tribes as had any regard to the true worship of God.

As the Feast of Tabernacles was held at Jerusalem on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, so Jeroboam appointed a feast to be held at Bethel on the fifteenth day of the eighth month.* To give the better countenance to his new-invented religion, he officiated himself, assuming the character of high-priest. He was attended by all the new priests he had appointed, and having gone through the different ceremonies according to the form of the temple worship, proceeded at length to that of the sacrifice; but just as he was about to put fire to the offering, he was interrupted by a prophet† from Jerusalem. This prophet, having made his way through the people up to the altar, loudly exclaimed as follows: O altar, altar, thus saith the Lord: "*Behold, a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name; and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and*

* It is the opinion of some that as the Feast of Tabernacles was appointed by God to be observed after gathering in of the fruits, which might be sooner ripe than in the northern parts of the country, so Jeroboam might pretend that the eighth month would be a better time for it than the seventh, because then they would be gathered in in all parts. Others imagine he might have this farther design in the alteration of the month, namely, that the people of Judah, when their own feast was over a month before at Jerusalem, might, if their curiosity led them, have the opportunity of coming to his. But the plain case is, that he did every thing he could in opposition to the established religion, and his chief intent was, to alienate the people from Rehoboam.

† Commentators are not agreed who this prophet was, neither is there any foundation for so much as a conjecture; the prophecy, however, is one of the most remarkable in sacred writ. It foretels an action that exactly came to pass above three hundred and forty years afterwards. It describes the circumstances of the action; and specifies the very name of the person who was to do it; and therefore every Jew who lived in the time of its accomplishment must have been convinced of the Divine authority of religion, founded upon such prophecies as this; since none but God could foresee, and consequently none but God could foretel, events at such a distance.

men's bones shall be burned upon thee. That no doubt might be entertained of the truth of this prediction, the prophet farther said, *This is the sign which the Lord hath spoken, Behold, the altar shall be rent, and the ashes that are upon it shall be poured out.*

This speech from the prophet so incensed Jeroboam, that, stretching out his hand, he ordered the people who stood by to seize him; but, at that instant, his hand became so stiff and benumbed that he could not pull it back again. At the same time, the altar split asunder, and the fire and ashes that were on it fell to the ground.

Jeroboam being convinced that the prophet had been actuated by a spirit of inspiration, saw his own impiety, and earnestly requested him to supplicate the Almighty for the restoration of his withered hand. The prophet readily complied with this request, and Jeroboam, having recovered the perfect use of his limb, made grateful acknowledgments for the miraculous cure he had received, and strongly pressed his benefactor to stay and take some refreshment with him. But this invitation the prophet declined, saying, *If thou wilt give me half thine house, I will not go in with thee, neither will I eat bread, nor drink water in this place. For so was it charged me by the word of the Lord, saying, Eat no bread, nor drink water, nor turn again by the same way that thou camest.* This abstinence and reserve of the prophet induced the king to be more attentive to what he had predicted than he otherwise would have been; and his anxiety increased as he continued to reflect on the event.

It happened at this time that there lived in Bethel a very old prophet, who, by the flattering events which he pretended would come to pass, had highly ingratiated himself in the favor of Jeroboam. The old prophet being informed by his sons of the miracles which the Man of God from Judah had wrought, became so jealous of being supplanted in his interest with the king, that, notwithstanding he was oppressed with the infirmities of age and sickness, he arose from his bed, and, being mounted on his ass, rode in quest of the stranger, whom he overtook while he was resting himself under the shade of an oak tree. The usual salutation being exchanged, the old prophet complained of the unkindness of the stranger in not having

called at his habitation for refreshment, and strongly entreated him to return and eat with him. The young prophet refused his request, giving him the same reason for it as he had done to Jeroboam. The other made answer, that the prohibition did not extend to him, for that he was himself a prophet, and sent by the express direction of God to give him an invitation to dinner. Not suspecting any treachery, the young prophet was prevailed on to return; and while they were seated at table, and engaged in the freedom of conversation, a vision suddenly appeared, when a voice, addressed to the young prophet, spoke as follows: *Thus saith the Lord; forasmuch as thou hast disobeyed the mouth of the Lord, and hast not kept the commandment which the Lord thy God commanded thee, but camest back, and hast eaten bread, and drank water in the place of the which the Lord did say to thee, Eat no bread, and drink no water; thy carcase shall not come unto the sepulchre of thy fathers.*

It was not long before this dreadful sentence was put in execution. As the young prophet was on his way to Jerusalem, he was suddenly attacked by a lion who instantly dispatched him: but, when he had so done, he neither tore his body, nor did the least injury to the ass on which he rode. When the old prophet understood what had happened he immediately went to the spot, and laying the body on his ass, took it to Bethel, and there buried it in his own sepulchre. Having done this, he gave a strict charge to his family, that whenever he died they should lay his body as near that of this prophet's as possible; saying, he was confident that what he had foretold concerning the altar of Bethel, and that form of idolatry which Jeroboam had set up, would most certainly come to pass.

A short time after this it happened that Abijah, the son of Jeroboam, a young prince of very promising hopes, fell sick; upon which Jeroboam ordered his wife* to dress

* The most probable reason why Jeroboam chose to send his wife on this errand is, because it was a secret not to be entrusted to any one else: a secret, which, had it been divulged, might have endangered his whole government; because if once his subjects came to understand that he himself had no confidence in the calves which he had set up, but in any matter of importance, had recourse to true

herself as a person in a private station, and go to the prophet Ahijah at Shiloh, (who had formerly predicted that he should himself obtain the royal dignity) and enquire of him the fate of the child. The prophet was at this time blind, and therefore Jeroboam thought it would be no difficult matter to impose on him, and that he would imagine the queen to be no other than a common woman.

In conformity to Jeroboam's orders, his wife, having disguised herself in a proper manner, set out on her journey to Shiloh, in order to make enquiry of the prophet concerning the fate of their darling son. Before she arrived at the place, Ahijah was addressed by a voice from heaven, informing him that the woman was coming to his house, and on what occasion; what questions she would put to him, and what answers he should return. Accordingly, when the queen came to the door of Ahijah's house, he said to her, *Come in thou wife of Jeroboam: why feignest thou thyself to be another? for I am sent to thee with heavy tidings.* He then bid her return immediately home, and deliver to her husband a message he had received from God, the substance of which was to this effect. *Thus saith the Lord God of Israel: "As I deprived the* "house of David of the regal authority, and from a mean "station in life exalted thee to the dignity of a throne;

worshippers of God, it is not to be imagined what an inducement this would have been for them to have forsaken those senseless idols, and to have returned to the worship of the God of Israel, whom they had imprudently forsaken. The queen, therefore, was the only person in whom he could place confidence on this occasion. As a mother, he knew that she would be diligent in her enquiry, and, as a wife, faithful in her report. He might have several reasons for ordering her to disguise herself. Though Shiloh lay within the confines of Ephraim, yet there is great reason to believe that it was subject to the house of David, and belonged to the house of Judah: and therefore Jeroboam thought it not safe to venture his queen in a place under his rival's government, without putting her in some disguise. He knew likewise that the prophet Ahijah was greatly offended at him for the idolatry he had introduced, and therefore thought (as justly he might) that if the prophet knew her to be his wife, he would either not tell her any thing, or make things much worse than they really were. The way, therefore, to come at the truth was, as he thought, to do what he did: but herein appears his infatuation, that he should not think the person whom he deemed capable of resolving him in the fate of his son, able to see through this guile and disguise.

“ and as thou hast, with the greatest ingratitude, deserted
 “ me, and impiously put up gods of thy own invention,
 “ made by the hands of men, and preferred them before
 “ the Creator of the universe, I will therefore extirpate
 “ thee and thy house from the face of the earth, and give
 “ the carcasses of thy people to be eaten by dogs and the
 “ birds of the air. Another king shall be in thy stead,
 “ who shall not suffer one man of thy family to remain
 “ alive, nor shall the people themselves avoid punishment,
 “ for they shall be driven out of the land they inhabit,
 “ and be scattered beyond the Euphrates, for imitating
 “ thy wickedness, and worshipping thy gods in contempt
 “ of me, and what I have commanded.”

The prophet having given the queen this message to deliver to her husband from God, bid her hasten home, and inform him of it as soon as possible. He likewise told her, with respect to the child, that it should expire the very instant she entered the city.

With this doleful message, and melancholy tidings, the queen left Ahijah, and no sooner did she arrive at her home than she found the prophet's prediction strictly verified, for the child a very short time before, had given up the ghost. After her first grief had a little subsided she delivered the message to her husband as delivered to her by the prophet, and related every particular that had passed between them.

But all these judgments, and miraculous events, wrought no reformation in the wicked Jeroboam. He continued to erect altars in high places, and to ordain priests from the lowest classes of the people; and instead of endeavoring to deprecate the judgment threatened, used every means he could to promote and establish idolatry.

Nor was his rival Rehoboam, king of Judah, much better. For three years, indeed, he kept up the true worship of God at Jerusalem, but it was more from a principle of state policy, than of true religion. When the time of Jeroboam's subjects coming over to him on that account was at an end, he threw off the mask, and discovered his inclinations towards idolatry; and, as his example was followed by his subjects, they soon forsook the worship of the true God, and carried their idolatrous practices to the most extravagant height. They not only

built them high-places, and images, and groves, on every high hill, but, to add to their gross impiety, introduced every detestable act of wickedness for which the ancient Canaanites had been so justly expelled.

As a punishment for this defection, the Almighty was pleased, on the fifth year of Rehoboam's reign, to send against him and his people Shishak, king of Egypt. This prince invaded his dominions with a very numerous army, and having ravaged the country, taken most of the fortified places, and entered Jerusalem without opposition, ransacked the temple and palace of their rich furniture and moveables; took away all the money that was found in the king's treasury, as also the treasury of the sanctuary, and, at the same time, carried off the golden shields that had been made by Solomon: instead of which, by this depredation, Rehoboam was reduced so low as to be obliged to make brazen ones for the use and ornaments of his guards.

After this transaction we have little or nothing more recorded of Rehoboam, only that he reigned twelve years longer over Judah: that he had eighteen wives, and threescore concubines, by whom he had twenty-eight sons and threescore daughters: that he appointed Abijam (who was his eldest son by his favorite wife Maachah) to succeed him on the throne: and that, after a continued contest with his rival Jeroboam, he died in the 58th year of his age, in the seventeenth of his reign, and was buried in the City of David.

Abijam succeeded his father in the kingdom of Judah in the eighteenth year of the reign of Jeroboam, king of Israel. Though young, he was a prince of a very martial spirit, and therefore resolved, if possible, to put an end to the dispute that had so long subsisted between the two kingdoms of Judah and Israel. For this purpose he raised an army of 400,000 men, and marched against Jeroboam, whose forces were double that number. As soon as the two armies were drawn up in order of battle, Abijam, placing himself on an eminence, in the hearing of the Israelitish army, addressing them in a long speech,* in

* The speech Josephus puts into Abijam's mouth, on this occasion, is to the following effect: "It is impossible, said he, you can have forgot that God has promised that David and his posterity, shall

which he pointed out the injustice of their cause in revolting from his father Rehoboam; the right he claimed on his side, since God had given the whole kingdom to David, and his posterity; and the reasonable expectation he had of the Divine assistance in what he was going about, since the religion of Jeroboam was false and idolatrous; whereas he, and the men of Judah, had the pure

“rule this kingdom. I am therefore surprized to find my father forsaken, and his subject Jeroboam put in his stead, as well as to see that you have taken up arms against a government which God has established; and that you cannot be satisfied without driving the legal possessor from what small portion is still remaining under his jurisdiction: for Jeroboam has already usurped authority over the greatest part of the kingdom. The Almighty, however, will not suffer him long to possess what he has so wickedly obtained, but will severely punish him for his crimes, and cause those rapacious and oppressive measures to cease, which, instead of endeavoring to terminate, he employs his constant attention to aggravate. What cause can be assigned for this falling off? You never received any injurious treatment from my father: once, indeed, incited by evil counsel (of which Jeroboam was the principal cause) he unhappily made use of an improper expression, on which every one of you departed in a rage, not only relinquishing allegiance to your sovereign, but your duty to God. You ought to have proceeded with deliberation, and have judged more favorably of that weakness which is incident to all mankind; you should also have reflected on my father's youth, and that he did not affect to be endowed with any excellent gift of speech; you should have considered him also as the son of Solomon, from whom you had received such signal obligations. I should have supposed that all these considerations might have induced you to excuse an hasty expression; and, on the father's account, it would have been no more than an act of justice to have made some allowance for the son. But it is evident you never considered these things, nor is it probable you will, if I may form my judgment from the forces now before us. In what is your ultimate resource fixed? It cannot surely be in your golden figures of calves, your altars and high places! You confide in your evil deeds, and not in your religious practices. You act in opposition to every law both Divine and human: against both of these you militate in taking up arms against us, who have always worshipped the true God, not an idol carved from stone or wood, and imposed upon a weak and silly multitude, by the impiety of their prince, but God the Creator of heaven and earth, who is the primary and ultimate cause of all things. Repent, therefore, of the wickedness you have committed, and follow better courses hereafter; or, if you are determined to contend, let it be for the protection of those laws from which you derive your present greatness and felicity.”

worship of the living God, his temple, and his ordinances, among them.

So far was Jeroboam from being solicitous to make any reply in answer to Abijam's expostulation, that, even before he had done speaking, he ordered a detachment to march round, and intercept his retreat. The troops of Abijam were greatly alarmed at this proceeding: but their leader encouraged them to preserve their fortitude, exhorting them to depend on the protection of the Almighty, who would render abortive the most consummate treachery, levelled against the righteous cause which they were engaged to support. This revived their courage, and they addressed themselves in prayer to God for success, till the signal was given for beginning the battle, when, with loud shouts, they attacked the enemy with such vigor, that they were soon defeated, and no less than 500,000 men were slain in the action.

Abijam improved this victory by pursuing Jeroboam, and taking from him so many strong cities (among which was Bethel, where he had lately set up one of the golden calves) that he was never after able to make head against his adversary, who, by this, and some other successful achievements, grew great and powerful.

Had Abijam lived long, he might, probably, have reduced the Israelites to a total subjection; but his government was very short, for, after reigning not quite three years, he paid the debt of nature, and was buried among his ancestors in the City of David.*

Abijam was succeeded by his son Asa, who came to the throne in the twentieth year of the reign of Jeroboam, king of Israel. This prince was of a very different temper to that of his father. As he enjoyed the felicity of a settled peace for the ten first years of his reign, he wisely made use of his time in removing the abominable vices which

* The reason some assign for God's shortening the days of Abijam is, his not having destroyed idolatry, when, by taking of Bethel, he had it in his power. And, indeed, however he might plead his possession of the temple and priesthood, to make his argument good against Jeroboam, yet the character which the sacred historian gives him is far from being respectful: *He walked, says he, in all the sins of his father; nor was his heart perfect with the Lord his God, as the heart of his great grand-father David.*

had been introduced among the people. He broke down their idols, and demolished their altars in all the cities of Judah; but he had not yet power and authority sufficient to destroy the high places. The vessels of silver and gold, which both he and his father had consecrated to the service of the temple, he presented to the priests; and, by all the enforcements of regal authority, compelled his subjects to pay a proper attention both to their civil and religious duties.

During this time of peace he fortified several cities on the frontier parts of his kingdom. He likewise trained up the greater part of his subjects in the art of war; insomuch that, in a short time, he had an army of 300,000 men of Judah, armed with shields and spikes, and 280,000 men of Benjamin, armed with shields and arrows, all of whom were men of true courage, and firmly resolved to hazard their lives in defence of their country.

Towards the latter end of the tenth year of Asa's government, Zerah, king of Ethiopia, invaded Judah with an army consisting of ten hundred thousand foot, and three hundred chariots. On his arrival at a place called Mareshah, Asa marched with his army against him, and encamped in the valley of Zephathah, at a small distance from the enemy. When Asa beheld the formidable power of Zerah, he invoked the aid of the Almighty, declaring that he had taken up arms only through the confidence he reposed in him, and that his assistance would more than compensate for the inferiority of numbers, and every other disadvantage. *Lord, said he, 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 no man prevail against thee.*

These humble solicitations were not in vain, for as soon as the battle began, God struck the Ethiopians with such a sense of fear, that they immediately gave way, advantage of which being taken by the army of Asa, prodigious numbers of the enemy were killed on the spot, and the rest fled with the utmost precipitation. Asa and his army closely pursued them, killed many in the flight, took the spoil of their camp, carried away their cattle, smote the

cities that were in league with them, and then returned in triumph to Jerusalem.

When Asa had got within a small distance of the city, he was met by Azariah the prophet, who, having commanded him to halt, addressed him in words to this effect: “It hath, said he, pleased the Almighty, on account of your virtues, to give you this signal victory, and if you proceed in a similar discharge of your duty in future, you may be assured that success will attend all your undertakings: but if otherwise, you will suffer the most dreadful calamities; your cities will be razed, and your people dispersed throughout the earth, without having any fixed place of residence. Exercise yourselves, therefore, in acts of piety before it is too late, and unanimously offer up your thanks to God for the happiness you at present enjoy.”

In consequence of this address from the prophet, Asa had no sooner got to Jerusalem, than he set about measures for totally extirpating idolatry, and recovering the true worship of God among his people. He destroyed all the idols that were to be found, not only in Judah and Benjamin, but in all the countries he had conquered likewise. He repaired the altar of burnt-offerings, and summoned not only natives, but strangers also, to the worship of the true God. On a festival which he had appointed, he ordered seven hundred oxen, and seven thousand sheep (part of the spoil which he had taken from the Ethiopians) to be sacrificed; and at the same time engaged in a covenant with his subjects (which was confirmed by oath) that whoever forsook the true worship of God should, according to the law of Moses, be put to death.

Maachah, the grand-mother of Asa, had been a patroness of idolatry; and therefore, to shew his impartiality, he removed her from court, and prohibited her from coming near the queen for fear of infecting her; and understanding she had set up an idol, he caused that, as well as the grove in which it was placed, to be burnt, and the ashes thrown into the brook Kidron.

At this time Baasha was king of Israel, and the great fame of Asa in bringing about a reformation in religion, together with the blessings wherewith God had hitherto distinguished his reign, being made known to the subjects

of Baasha, they threw off their idolatry, and came over in great numbers to Jerusalem. As soon as Baasha perceived this he resolved, if possible, to put a stop to it; to do which he fortified Ramah, a town belonging to the tribe of Benjamin, and which was so conveniently situated, that, by keeping a garrison there, he could prevent all people from passing to and fro without leave, and thereby cut off all communication between his people and those of Judah.

When Asa understood the measures taken by Baasha, he considered it as a prelude only to farther innovations, and therefore resolved to stop his progress before it was too late. To effect this he took all the silver and gold that was in the temple,* as well as what was found in his own exchequer, and sent it as a present to Benhadad, king of Syria, requesting his assistance against Baasha. So considerable a bribe could not well fail of having its wished-for effect; and therefore Benhadad set about the measures for which it was offered. He immediately attacked several cities belonging to the Israelites with such success, that Baasha was forced to abandon his design of fortifying his frontier towns towards Judah, in order to defend the other parts of his kingdom that were thus furiously invaded. Asa availed himself of this opportunity, by demolishing the works raised by Baasha at Ramah, with the materials of which he built Geba and Mizpah.

The conduct of Asa in applying to Benhadad for assistance, on this occasion, was certainly very inexcusable. It evidently implied a distrust of God's power or goodness to help him, and therefore the prophet Hanani was sent to

* In cases of extreme danger, it was always held lawful to employ sacred things in the service of one's country; but there was no such necessity in this case. God had appeared wonderfully in Asa's defence against an enemy much more powerful than Baasha was; nay, he had promised him his protection at all times, and success in all his undertakings, if he would but adhere to his service; and yet, forgetting all this, he strips the temple of its treasure, and bribes a heathen prince to come to his assistance, and break his league to another to whom he stood engaged: so that here were three offences in this one act of Asa. 1. He alienated things consecrated to God without necessity. 2. He did this out of a carnal fear, and a distrust of that God, whose power and goodness he had lately experienced: and 3. He did it with an ill intent to hire Benhadad, in breach of his league and covenant with Baasha.

reprove him for it. But, instead of receiving his reproofs with temper and thankfulness, he was so exasperated, that he put the prophet in chains, and gave orders for the execution of several of his subjects.

Asa, towards the close of his life, grew very peevish and passionate, and was uneasy with all about him. This change of temper was greatly enhanced by his being violently afflicted with a disorder in his feet (probably what we call the gout) which, at length, rising upwards, put a period to his life in the 41st year of his reign. Instead of being buried, as the manner of the Jews was, his body was burnt with great quantities of perfumes and spices, after which his bones and ashes were collected together, and buried in a sepulchre which he had provided for himself in the City of David.

Asa was succeeded in the government of Judah by his son Jehoshaphat; but before we proceed to recount the transactions of his reign, we must take some notice of the occurrences and revolutions that took place among the kings of Israel.

In the first or second year of Asa's reign died Jeroboam, of some acute distemper, which the scripture does not specify. His reign was famous (or rather infamous) for the revolt of the ten tribes, the public institution of idolatry, and the terrible defeat which Abijam gave him, and which he himself appears not long to have survived.

Jeroboam was succeeded by his son Nadab, who imitated his father in all his wickedness; but his reign was not long. In less than two years he was treacherously killed by Baasha, his captain-general, who usurped the crown, and, to maintain himself in that usurpation, put every one that was related to his predecessor to death. This was certainly a very wicked and barbarous act, though it produced the accomplishment of the prophecy which Ahijah had denounced against the house of Jeroboam.

He reigned twenty-four years, during which he was guilty of the greatest tyranny and oppression, and paid so little attention to his religious duties, as even to turn them into ridicule. For this disobedience, Jehu the prophet was sent, by the command of God, to tell him that both he and his whole race should be extirpated, in the same manner

as had been the family of Jeroboam. But these threats availed little; he still followed his iniquitous courses, and continued so to do till the time of his death, which happened in the twenty-sixth year of the reign of Asa, king of Judah.

Baasha was succeeded on the throne of Israel by his son Elah, who was as vicious and debauched a prince as his father. But his reign was very short; for, in the second year, while he was carousing in his steward's house, he was assassinated by Zimri, a considerable officer of the horse, who, to secure the kingdom to himself, immediately cut off all Baasha's friends and relations, by which was fulfilled the prediction of the prophet Jehu.

Zimri, though he had possessed himself of the throne, was far from being secure on it. He had not, as Baasha did, gained the army (which was then besieging Gibbethon, a city in the hands of the Philistines) over to his interest; so that, when they heard of Elah's death, they declared for Omri their general. In consequence of this he immediately raised the siege, and marching to Tirzar (the then royal city of the Israelites) soon made himself master of it. This so alarmed Zimri, that, seeing all lost, and despairing of any quarter from the enemy, he retired into one of the apartments of the palace, to which he set fire, and the whole building was consumed, himself perishing in the flames, after a reign of only seven days.

Every thing was now in the most embarrassed state, and the nation formed itself into two parties: one faction supported the interest of Omri, and the other declared for Tibni, the son of Ginath. This occasioned a civil war for four years, when Omri, having slain his rival, enjoyed the throne without farther interruption. But his reign must be acknowledged to have been very wicked, when we find it recorded of him, that he not only walked in the ways of Jeroboam, but *did worse than all before him*. He very probably introduced other and more abominable idolatries than had been practised by his predecessors, which are therefore called by the prophet Micah (chap. vi. ver. 16.) *the works of the house of Ahab*. He compelled the people to worship the golden calves, and, by severe laws (which, in consequence thereof were called the Statutes of Omri) restrained them from going to Jerusalem, and worshipping

the true God. During his reign he bought of one Shemer a piece of rising ground, whereon he built a palace for his own habitation, which, in a short time, increasing to a city, was, from the first owner of the place, called in Hebrew Shomeron (but, according to the Greeks, and our translation, Samaria) and was ever after made the place of the king's residence, and the metropolis of the Israelitish kingdom.

Omri paid the debt of nature about three years before Asa king of Judah. He was succeeded by his son Ahab, who, in wickedness, surpassed all his predecessors. But of this prince we shall treat at large in our next chapter, and conclude this with the following observation: That though, while Asa reigned in Judah, Israel was in the hands of seven or eight different princes, viz. Jeroboam, Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri, Tibni, Omri, and Ahab; yet such was their hardness in sin and idolatry, that, in all these changes, not one of them ever thought of returning to the house of David, or paying any attention to the worship of the true God at Jerusalem.

CHAP. III.

Jehoshaphat succeeds to the government of Judah, and endeavors to extirpate idolatry. The wicked reign of Ahab, king of Israel. The prophet Elijah foretels a famine, which accordingly comes to pass. The manner of his living in exile, and his interview with Ahab. His contest with the priests of Bual, whom he orders to be put to death. He flies on account of the threats of Queen Jezebel, and appoints Elisha to the prophetic office in his stead. Ahab defeats Benhadad twice, and at length makes a dishonorable peace with him. Queen Jezebel procures the murder of Naboth, a citizen of Jezreel, for which God threatens Ahab and his posterity. Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, assists Ahab in the siege of Ramoth-Gilead, where Ahab is slain by an arrow. Jehoshaphat's wise government, prosperity and death. He is succeeded by his son Jehoram, who turns out a bloody prince, lives detestably, and dies unlamented. The wicked and inglorious reign of Ahaziah king of Israel. The prophet Elijah is translated into heaven, in the presence of his servant Elisha, who succeeds him in the prophetic office. Comparison between the prophet Elijah, John the Baptist, and our Blessed Redeemer.

ON the death of Asa, his son Jehoshaphat, who was then in the thirty-fifth year of his age, succeeded to the government of Judah. He was a prince possessed of most excellent morals, and in all acts of piety, as well as the reformation of religion, imitated, if not excelled, the former part of his father's reign. The first thing he did after his accession was, to extend his territories, and to establish garrisons in the several cities within his dominions, as well as in those which had been obtained from Jeroboam by his grandfather Abijam. To express his zeal for the service of God, he destroyed all those idolatrous high places, and groves, which had been made in the reign of his father, and were left after his decease. That the people might be properly acquainted with the nature and force of the laws, (of which they had for some time been ignorant) he sent itinerant priests and Levites with letters to the princes of all the principal cities throughout his dominions, as also the heads of each family, re-

questing that they would receive them kindly, and assist them in expounding the law, and instructing his subjects, as well in the knowledge of their civil as religious duties.

Such judicious proceedings as these, in the infancy of his government, could not fail of gaining over the hearts of the people in general, who, to support the dignity of their sovereign, brought him presents from all quarters. This struck such a terror into his enemies, that instead of entertaining any thoughts of invading his dominions, they quietly submitted to his government. Even the Philistines came voluntarily and paid him a tribute, which had been suspended for some years, and the Arabians (whose riches consisted in cattle) sent him annually seven thousand seven hundred rams, and an equal number of he-goats, as an acknowledgment of their homage.

Jehoshaphat, to secure himself in this tranquil state, took particular care to make himself strong in arms, as well as in wealth. He had an army of above eleven hundred thousand men, besides those who were in garrisons, and such fortified places as he had supplied with abundance of all kinds of military stores. In short, he was rich and happy, great and honorable; beloved by his subjects, and revered by his enemies.

But, notwithstanding all this prudence, Jehoshaphat was guilty of an indiscretion of a material nature, namely, marrying his son Jehoram to Athaliah, daughter to Ahab, king of Israel, which both displeased God, and involved him and his family in various embarrassments.

Ahab, king of Israel, who succeeded his father Omri, was one of the most wicked princes, and abominable idolaters, that ever sat on the throne of Israel. He not only continued the worship of the calves, which Jeroboam had set up, but, having married Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal, king of Tyre, to indulge her, he introduced that mode of idolatry paid to the idol Baal, built a temple in Samaria, erected an altar, and made a grove, in which were daily committed the most horrid impurities.

As an instance of the daring impiety of the Israelites, while under the government of this wicked king, one Hiel, who lived at Bethel, the famous seat of all idolatry, ventured to rebuild Jericho, in defiance of the curse which Joshua had denounced against any man that should at-

tempt it. But the presumptuous wretch found, to his cost, that Joshua's prediction was verified in him, when he saw his eldest son die as soon as he had begun the work, the rest of his children drop off as he continued it, and, last of all, his youngest son taken away when the whole was completed.*

In order to make the abandoned Israelites sensible of the great enormities they daily committed, and how highly offensive their proceedings were to the Divine Majesty, God was pleased to send a message to Ahab by the prophet Elijah,† the purport of which was, that him and his people should be afflicted with a grievous famine (occasioned by the want of rain) which should last for three successive years.

After Elijah had delivered this message to Ahab, and the Divine threat began to take place, he retired, by the direction of God, to the brook Cherith,‡ where he concealed himself for some time, during which he was miraculously supplied with food by ravens, which brought him bread and flesh twice every day, and his drink was the water of the brook, near which he had taken up his residence. At length the water of the brook began to fail, upon which God was pleased to provide for his faithful servant Elijah, by directing him to leave that place, and

* The sentence we see here fulfilled was pronounced about four hundred and forty years before, and is a most striking proof of the Divine Prescience, as well as of the authority of those sacred writings which contain so remarkable a prediction. Hiel was probably a professed idolater; and therefore, either at the instigation of the court, might undertake the rebuilding of Jericho, or in defiance of God, and to let the world see that what was denounced in his name was not of the least significancy; but the event proved the contrary, and he met with that punishment due to his presumption.

† The prophet Elijah, who in the New Testament, is commonly called Elias, was a native of Thezbeh, a town on the other side of the Jordan, in the tribe of Gad, and in the land of Gilead. The scriptures do not make any mention either of the quality of his parents, the manner of his education, or his call to the prophetic office. However, he was certainly one of the chief, if not the prince of the prophets of his age; a man of a great and elevated mind, of a generous and undaunted spirit, a zealous defender of the laws of God, and a just avenger of the violations of his honor.

‡ It is generally agreed that this brook was very near to, and on the west side of, the river Jordan.

go to Zarephath,* where he had appointed a widow woman to receive and furnish him with every necessary refreshment.

In obedience to the Divine commands, Elijah set out on his journey for Zarephath, whither the famine had not only spread itself, but likewise over the whole country of Sidon, as well as the land of Israel. When the prophet came near the town he met the widow, to whom he was directed, gathering sticks; upon which he immediately called to her, desiring that she would fetch him a little water that he might quench his thirst. As the woman was going for the water, Elijah requested that she would also bring with her a morsel of bread. She told him that a handful of meal and a little oil was all she had to keep herself and son from starving, and that she was gathering sticks to bake it into a cake. *As the Lord thy God liveth, said she, I have not a cake, but a handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and behold I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in, and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die.* But the prophet encouraged her to do as he requested, assuring her that neither her meal or oil should fail during the time of the famine. She accordingly obeyed the prophet, whose words proved strictly true; for though she and her son, together with Elijah, constantly applied to the barrel of meal and cruse of oil for food, yet they were no sooner diminished than an immediate supply took place. Thus did these three live for the space of two years, near the close of which the woman's son was taken ill and died. This misfortune she attributed to Elijah, saying, *O thou man of God, art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?* Elijah said to her, *Give me thy son;* and then carrying the body into a private chamber, he earnestly prayed to God that he would be pleased to restore the child to life. This request being

† Zarephath, or, as it is called in the New Testament, Sarepta, was a town that lay between Tyre and Sidon, but nearest the latter. Mr Maundrell observes, that it is the same which is now called Sarphan, about three hours travel from Sidon, in the way to Tyre. It consists at present only of a few houses on the tops of the mountains; but there is reason to believe that the principal part of the city stood in the plain below, because there are still ruins to be seen there of very considerable extent.

complied with, Elijah delivered the child to its mother, saying, *See, thy son liveth*; upon which the woman replied, *Now by this I know thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth.**

After Elijah had lived in this state of obscurity between two and three years, God commanded him to return to the land of Israel, to present himself before Ahab, and inform him that, in a short time, there would rain fall upon the earth. The famine, at this time, raged with the greatest violence throughout Samaria, insomuch that the people were very near being starved to death. The king was so distressed for want of provender for his cattle that he commanded Obadiah, a principal officer of his household, to go over one half of the country in quest of forage for their subsistence, while himself, attended by a proper number of servants, went over the other part on the same errand. Obadiah was the most religious man of all the king's domestics, and a person naturally possessed of the most tender feelings. As an instance of this, the cruel queen Jezebel, the wife of Ahab, had given orders for persecuting all the prophets of the Lord, upon which Obadiah, at the hazard of his own life, concealed one hundred of them in two caves, fifty in each, and in these places constantly supplied them with every article that was necessary for the preservation of their existence.†

* The woman certainly had sufficient reason to believe that Elijah was a prophet, or person sent from God, when she saw the miraculous increase of the meal and oil. However, on his not curing her son when he lay sick, but rather suffering him to die, her faith began to droop; whereas, upon seeing him revive, her faith revived with him, and through the joy of having him again restored to her, she accounted this latter miracle much greater than the former.

† Elijah, in his appeal to the people, tells them, *I, even I, only remain a prophet of the Lord.* 1 Kings, xviii. 22. From this expression we cannot imagine that the hundred prophets, whom Obadiah preserved in the caves, were men actually inspired, and invested with a prophetic character, but such only as were the disciples of the prophets, and candidates for that office. It is not unlikely that, even in Jezebel's time, there were remaining in Israel schools of the prophets, which she endeavored to destroy, as well as those who were bred up in them, that there might none be left to instruct the people in the true religion. These she certainly looked upon as enemies to her idolatry, and might possibly persuade her husband that they were disaffected to his government, and favorers of the kings of Judah,

As Obadiah was on his way in search of provender for his master's cattle, he happened to meet with the prophet Elijah, whom he saluted with the greatest respect. The prophet, knowing who he was, desired him to go immediately and acquaint the king, that he desired to speak with him, for that he had business to communicate to him of the utmost importance. Obadiah at first excused himself, being fearful that Elijah might vanish before he returned, whereby he should incur the indignation of the king, who had taken the greatest pains to find him out without effect: "In what," said he, "have I sinned that thou wouldest deliver thy servant into the hand of Ahab to slay me? As the Lord thy God liveth, there is no nation or kingdom whither my lord hath not sent to seek thee; and when they said, He is not there, he took an oath of the kingdom and nation that they found thee not. And now thou sayest, Go tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here. And it shall come to pass, as soon as I am gone from thee, that the Spirit of the Lord shall carry thee whither I know not; and so when I come and tell Ahab, and he cannot find thee, he shall slay me: but I thy servant fear the Lord from my youth. Was it not told my lord, what I did, when Jezebel slew the prophets of the Lord, how I hid a hundred men of the Lord's prophets, by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water? and now thou sayest, Go tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here: and he shall slay me."

To remove the fears of Obadiah, Elijah assured him that he would not remove from the place where he was, till he went and brought the king to him. *As the Lord of hosts liveth*, said he, *before whom I stand, I will surely shew myself unto him to-day.*

Thus assured, Obadiah went in search of his master, whom he soon found and brought to the place where he had left Elijah, and where, as the prophet had promised, he still remained. At the first interview the king began to upbraid him with being the cause of the calamity under

because they worshipped the same God, and thought that the proper place of his worship was at Jerusalem: and therefore, the greater was the piety and courage of Obadiah, in rescuing so many victims from the hands of this furious and enraged woman.

which the nation had so long labored. But Elijah boldly returned the charge, and having taxed him with the worship of false gods (which was the source of all their woe) he undertook to prove that they were no more than false gods, provided the king would be pleased to summon all the people to meet upon Mount Carmel, and to bring thither the four hundred and fifty priests of Baal, together with the four hundred priests of the groves, who were supported at Jezebel's table.

So fair a proposal could not but be accepted by the king, who accordingly issued out orders for the people to attend, and laid a particular charge that they should bring the priests with them. When they were all assembled, Elijah, having first upbraided them for their vile prevarication in mixing the worship of God and the worship of Baal together, made them a proposal to this effect: "Since, " said he, there can be no more than one infinite, supreme, " Almighty, and independent Being, let us, at this time, " make the experiment who this Being is. You, who are " the worshippers of Baal, have all the advantages on " your side, the favor and protection of the court, four " hundred and fifty priests of one kind, and four hundred " of another; whereas I, who am the messenger of God's " cause, am but one poor banished man; and yet let two " oxen be brought before us. Let the priests of Baal chuse " their ox, dress it, cut it in pieces, and lay it on the altar, " but let there be no fire thereon; and I, in like manner, " will do so to my ox. Let them pray unto their gods, and " I will call on the name of Jehovah; and then let the " God, who (by consuming the sacrifice with a sudden flash " of fire) shall make it appear that he hath heard the " prayers, be owned, by this whole assembly, to be the " one, the true, the supreme independent Being."

This mode of determination being approved of by the multitude, Ahab's priests prepared their altar, laid the ox on it, and called on their idol Baal; but no answer being given, they were greatly alarmed, and expressed their surprise by the most uncommon gesticulations, sometimes jumping over the altar, and sometimes dancing round it. In this situation they continued till noon, when no answer being yet given by Baal, the prophet Elijah, to aggravate their perplexities, mocked them saying, *Cry aloud; for he*

is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is on a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked.* This had the intended effect: they repeated their invocations to the most violent degree, and even went so far (as their custom was when they met with a disappointment) as to cut and slash themselves with knives and lancets, till some of them were near expiring with the loss of blood.

The priests of Baal continued their farce of devotion to their false god to no purpose, till the day was more than half spent, when the prophet Elijah desired them to draw near to him. The people having obeyed his orders, he took twelve stones, according to the twelve tribes, with which he repaired *the Altar of the Lord that had been broken down.*† Having done this he laid his bullock upon

* Nothing can be imagined more cutting and sarcastic than these words of the prophet, in which he ridicules in the finest manner possible, their wretched, false, and derogatory ideas of the Deity. The two last notions of *being asleep*, and *not at home*, how absurd soever they may be, when applied to the Deity, were certainly such as several idolaters conceived of their gods, as appears from various passages in Homer; in one of which, Iliad i. ver. 423. he tells us that Thetis could not meet with Jupiter, because “he was gone abroad, and would not return in less than twelve days;” and at the conclusion of that book he gives us an account of the manner in which the deities went to sleep.

“Then to their starry domes the gods depart,
The shining monuments of Vulcan’s art;
Jove on his couch reclined his awful head,
And Juno slumbered on his golden bed.”—POPE.

What debasing ideas these, compared with that awful intelligence which revelation gives us of a Deity, *who neither slumbereth nor sleepeth*; but who, every where present, at all times knows even the secrets of the heart; and is at all times ready to hear, and able to grant, the petitions of his people!

† This altar, which the sacred writer here calls *the Altar of the Lord*, was certainly one of those which were built in the time of the judges and first kings of Israel, when, for want of a fixed place of worship, such structures were permitted. Both Tacitus and Suetonius speak of the *God of Carmel*, whom Vespasian went to consult when he was at Judea; but they tell us that there was neither temple nor statue upon the mountain, except one altar only, plain, but venerable for its antiquity. The altar of Carmel seems to have had its original from the altar of the true God, which the ancient Hebrews

the wood and poured a great quantity of water three different times on the sacrifice, on the wood, and on the altar, so that the water filled the trench which was dug round the altar to receive it.

It was now about the time of offering the evening sacrifices, when every thing being properly prepared, Elijah approached the altar, fell on his knees, and thus implored the true God: *Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, (said he) 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 hearts back again.*

No sooner had Elijah finished his prayers to God, than fire immediately descended from heaven, which not only consumed the burnt offering, but likewise the wood and stones, and even dried up all the water in the trench. This miraculous display of the Divine power so astonished the people, that they immediately fell on their faces, and acknowledged that the God of Elijah was the true God. When the people had a little recovered from their surprize, Elijah ordered them to seize all the priests of Baal, to lead them to the foot of the mountain near the brook Kishon, and there put them to death; which orders being executed, the people dispersed to their respective habitations.

Justice having thus taken place on the impious and false prophets, Elijah again ascended the mount, where, having prayed for some time, he sent his servant to see if he could discover any signs of rain: he accordingly went, but returned with an answer in the negative. Elijah sent him again, but with no better success: at length, after going seven times, he brought him word that he saw a small cloud rising out of the sea, no bigger to look at, than a man's hand. In consequence of this intelligence, Elijah ordered his servant to go immediately to Ahab, and advise him to hasten to his chariot, and make the best of his way home, lest he should be prevented by the rain. Ahab took his advice, and the prophet, having properly girded his

first erected, and Elijah afterwards repaired; and which even the heathens held in such veneration, that when they came to be masters of the country, they would not so much as place an image by it.

vest about him, ran all the way before till he came to Jezreel, during which time, the clouds gathered very thick, and discharged abundance of water.

As soon as Ahab got home, he informed his wife Jezebel of all that had passed, and particularly of Elijah's having put to death the priests of Baal. Fired with resentment at this presumption, the queen vowed revenge against Elijah, and immediately dispatched a messenger to inform him that the next day his life should certainly pay for theirs. *So let the gods do to me, said she, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them, by to-morrow about this time.*

On the receipt of this message Elijah, thinking himself not safe in Ahab's dominions, immediately withdrew to Beersheba, a town in the southern part of the territories belonging to the tribe of Judah. Here he dismissed his servant, and then pursued his journey into the wilderness of Arabia Petræa. In the evening, being greatly fatigued, he laid himself down under a juniper-tree, sick of the world, and desirous to leave it. *It is enough, said he; now, O Lord, take away my life: for I am not better than my father.* After saying this he fell asleep, but it was not long before he was awoke by an angel, who, bringing him victuals and drink, bade him eat heartily, for that he had a long journey to take. The prophet did as he was ordered, and, with the strength of that repast, walked forty days and forty nights,* till he came to mount Horeb, the place where God at first delivered the law to Moses.

As soon as Elijah got to the top of mount Horeb, he betook himself to a cave, intending very probably to spend the remainder of his days in obscurity. But he had not been long in this place before he had a vision, wherein God having first, by several emblems, made him sensible of his Almighty power and presence, gave him to understand, that the number of his true worshippers was greater than he imagined, and that he would not fail to take vengeance on the house of Ahab for their abominable idolatry. To

* Not that it was forty days journey from Beersheba to Mount Horeb (it being not above four or five days) but Elijah, probably through fear of being apprehended by Jezebel, who had vowed his destruction, wandered out of the way, and by that means made it forty days before he arrived at Mount Horeb.

this purpose he ordered him to return into his own country by the way of Damascus, where he was to anoint Hazael, king of Syria; Jehu, king of Israel; and to appoint Elisha as his successor in the prophetic office; intimating thereby, that these men would be proper instruments, in his Almighty hand, whereby to punish the idolatry of Israel, and to assert the righteousness of his own cause.

Elijah, being sensibly impressed with what he had seen, as well as the orders enjoined, immediately left Horeb, and proceeded on his way towards Damascus. He had not travelled far before he found Elisha at plough, and, as he passed, threw his mantle* over him: the other understanding this to be a call to the prophetic office, immediately left the plough, ran home, settled the affairs of his family, took his leave of them, and went after Elijah, with whom he lived in the character of a servant during the remainder of his life.

A short time after this, Benhadad, king of Syria, raised a very powerful army, and being joined by thirty-two kings from beyond the Euphrates, he marched into the country of Ahab, king of Israel, and after ravaging some places in his way, laid siege to Samaria, the capital of Ahab's dominions. Benhadad made all the necessary preparations for beginning the attack; but previous thereto, he sent a haughty message to Ahab, demanding all that belonged to him in satisfaction for some presumed affront, on the giving up of which, he promised to raise the siege and withdraw his army: *Thy silver and thy gold, said he, are mine; thy wives also and thy children, even the goodliest, are mine.*

Ahab was in no condition to oppose so powerful an enemy, and therefore tamely submitted himself to his

* The mantle was the proper habit of a prophet, and therefore Elijah's throwing his upon Elisha was the ceremony here used for his inauguration to the prophetic office; though, as it was customary for servants to carry their master's garments after them, others understand it only as a token that Elisha was to be his servant, to attend upon him, and succeed him in his office. However this be, it is probable that when he threw his mantle over him, he said something whereby he acquainted him with his design, though the particular words in so brief a history are not expressed.

mercy: *My lord, O king*, said he, *according to thy saying, I am thine, and all that I have.*

But this tameness only increased the insolence of Benhadad, who sent a second message to Ahab, demanding that his servants and officers might, on the following day, search the houses, lodgings, &c. of him and his domestics, and that they should have the liberty of carrying off whatever they thought proper.

Ahab was not so easily reconciled to the compliance of this message as the former. He therefore, called a council of his friends, who being assembled, he addressed them in words to this effect: “Benhadad, the king of Syria, said he, has sent me two proposals, by the first of which, he agreed to raise the siege, on my acknowledging my silver and gold, my wives and children, to be at his disposal; which I consented to, because I would not let any interest of my own supercede the public good. But his second proposal is, that they be permitted to make a general search, and carry off what they please, which is only a pretence to widen the breach between us. They thought, doubtless, that I should remain firm to the first contract: but now they demand a delivery of my people and country, which they may be assured I shall not comply with, and that a war will be the consequence: but I am determined to abide by your advice.”

As soon as Ahab had finished his speech, the whole council reprobated the insolence of Benhadad, and unanimously declared for war. In consequence of this, the answer returned by the ambassadors was, “That the first demand would yet be complied with by the king; but the honor and safety of the citizens required that he should refuse the second.”

Benhadad was so mortified at this answer, that he sent Ahab a third message, importing, that he should not trust in the strength of his fortress, for he would raise works above his walls, which he could easily do, by only each of his soldiers contributing a handful of earth. The answer returned by Ahab was, *Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself, as he that putteth it off.*

When Benhadad received this message he was drinking with the thirty-two kings who had joined him; and the cou-

tents of it so enraged him, that he immediately ordered his army to prepare themselves for investing the city.

In the mean time Ahab was visited by a prophet, who assured him that God would grant his people a victory over their numerous enemies. Ahab, knowing the small force he had, which consisted only of 7000, besides 232 young men, servants to the princes of Israel, and being doubtful of success against so great an army as that of the enemy, asked the prophet, by what means he should gain a victory. The prophet replied, by the young men, servants to the princes of Israel.

Benhadad and his thirty-two kings, were at this time drinking in their tents, secure of victory; but they soon found themselves not so safe as they imagined. In consequence of the assurance Ahab had received of success from the prophet, he about noon, dispatched the 232 young men to attack the guard of the Syrians, who being immediately followed by the rest of his army, they fell on the enemy with such courage and resolution, that they were thrown into the utmost disorder. Prodigious numbers were killed on the spot, and the rest fled with the greatest precipitation, Benhadad himself very narrowly escaping with his life. The spoil taken from the enemy in gold, silver, equipage, &c. was very considerable; with the whole of which, Ahab and his little army returned in triumph to Samaria.

A few days after Ahab had obtained this victory he received a second visit from the prophet, who gave him a particular charge to be on his guard, and to keep his army in proper order, for that in the beginning of the next year, the Syrians would again invade his country, and that with an army no less considerable than that he had so lately conquered.

The prediction of the prophet was strictly verified. Some of Benhadad's generals persuaded him that the reason of their ill success arose from their having fought on the hills, but that if they attacked the Israelites in a level part of the country, there would be no doubt of their attempts being crowned with success. *Their gods, (said they, speaking of the Israelites) are gods of the hills; therefore, they were stronger than we: but let us fight*

against them in the plain, and surely we shall be stronger than they.

Benhadad readily took the advice of his generals, and having raised an army equal in force to that of the preceding year, marched into the country of the Israelites, and encamped near Aphek,* a city belonging to the tribe of Asher.

Ahab, having paid a strict attention to the advice of the prophet, was prepared to receive the enemy, and though with a force far inferior to the Syrians, marched out to give them battle. The two armies lay opposite to each other, for six successive days, in the course of which, a prophet came to Ahab with this message: *Thus saith the Lord, Because the Syrians have said, The Lord is God of the hills, but he is not God of the vallies; therefore will I deliver all this great multitude into thine hand, and ye shall know that I am the Lord.*

Encouraged by this Divine promise, on the seventh day Ahab, having properly disposed of his small army, attacked the Syrians with the most distinguished vigor, and so successful was he that no less than 100,000 were killed on the spot, and the rest, in order to save themselves, fled to the city of Aphek. But they were far from finding any security here: the vengeance of God pursued them, for on their entering the city the walls suddenly fell to the ground, by which no less than 27,000 were crushed to death.

Terrified at this dreadful judgment, Benhadad, with some of his principal officers and friends, retired for security to a private building within the city. They debated, for some time, in what manner they should act, till at length Benhadad's friends advised him to dispatch ambassadors to Ahab in the humblest manner, and make their submission on such

* Aphek was situated at Libanus, on the banks of the river Adonis, between Heliopolis and Biblos; and, in all probability, is the same that Paul Lucas (in his voyage to the Levant) mentions as swallowed up in a lake about nine miles in circumference, wherein there are several houses all entire to be seen under water. The ancients tell us, that the soil about this place was very bituminous, which seems to confirm the opinion of those who think, that subterraneous fires consumed the solid substance of the earth whereon the city stood, so that it sunk at once, and a lake was soon formed in its place.

terms as he should think proper to stipulate. *Behold*, said they, *we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings: let us, we pray thee, put sackcloth on our loins, and ropes* upon our heads, and go out to the king of Israel: peradventure he will save thy life.*

This advice being approved of, ambassadors were immediately dispatched to king Ahab, requesting him to make such propositions as he should think proper, and whatever they were, they should be strictly observed. Ahab was very moderate in his demands: the only conditions he insisted on were, that the Syrians should restore all the country, which they had taken from Baasha, king of Israel, and grant him some privileges in their capital city Damascus, as a token of their homage and subjection.

Such mild terms of accommodation could not but be acceptable to Benhadad; the consequence of which was that a league of friendship immediately took place between the contending monarchs. But this league was highly offensive to God, who was pleased to send a prophet to Ahab with a message to this effect: "That, had he destroyed Benhadad (as God had put it in his power) his dominions should have been annexed to the kingdom of Israel; but that, since he had acted otherwise, his life should pay for the life of Benhadad:† for that he should be slain in battle with the Syrians, who, instead of being held in subjection by the Israelites, should, in a few years, become their

* This was the dress of humble supplicants in those times. The sackcloth on their loins was a token of great sorrow for what they had done; and the ropes on their heads an indication that they would submit to whatever punishment Ahab should think proper to lay on them.

† Ahab's great offence consisted in suffering so horrid a blasphemer as Benhadad to go unpunished, which was contrary to an express law, Lev. xxiv. 16; and this law extended not to those only that *were born in the land*, but to strangers likewise that were among them, and in their power as Benhadad certainly was. God had delivered him into Ahab's hand for his blasphemy, as he had promised, and therefore this act of Providence, compared with the law, plainly intimated, that he was appointed by God for destruction: but Ahab was so far from punishing him as he deserved, that he treated him like a friend and a brother, dismissed him upon easy terms, and took his bare word for the performance of the covenant, without the least regard to the reparation of God's honor.

masters, take their towns from them, and make ravages in different parts of their country.

Ahab, instead of humbling himself at the denunciation of this heavy sentence, or expressing any sorrow for his fault, retired to his palace at Samaria sullen and displeased, and, in a short time, added to the offence he had committed by a transaction of the most unjustifiable nature.

Adjoining to the gardens belonging to the royal palace of Jezreel, one Naboth, a citizen of the place, had a vineyard, which Ahab was desirous of obtaining, in order to enlarge his own grounds. To effect his wishes, he offered Naboth an equivalent either in land or money; but Naboth, on account of its being his paternal inheritance, refused to part with it on any terms whatever. This gave Ahab the greatest uneasiness, insomuch that he took to his bed from mere discontent, and was so sullen and uneasy, that he would not receive any kind of refreshment.

When Jezebel found her husband to continue in this melancholy situation, she was anxious to know the cause of his disorder: *Why, said she, is thy spirit so bad, that thou eatest no bread?* To which he replied, *Because I spake unto Naboth the Jezreelite, and said unto him, Give me thy vineyard for money, or else, if it please thee, I will give thee another vineyard for it: and he answered, I will not give thee my vineyard.*

As soon as Jezebel was acquainted with the cause of her husband's complaint, she first upbraided him with his pusillanimity, or not knowing how to exert the authority of a king, and then, to cheer his spirits, bade him banish all melancholy, for that she had thought of an expedient by which means he might be put in possession of Naboth's vineyard. But this was a diabolical scheme indeed, and such an one as could only have been concerted by the most abandoned and wicked of her sex. She wrote letters from Samaria, in Ahab's name, and sealed with his signet, to the principal men in Jezreel, ordering them to proclaim a fast, to bring Naboth before the judges, and to suborn two false witnesses, who should depose against him, that he had blasphemed God and the king,* that he might be carried out of the city and stoned to death.

* By the law of Moses it was death to blaspheme God, Lev. xxiv. 16. and by custom it was death to revile the king, Exod. xxii. 28.

Notwithstanding the baseness of this plot, yet such influence had the king over the elders of Jezreel, (they supposing the order to come from him) that every thing was executed according to the plan laid down by the wicked Jezebel, and the innocent Naboth fell a sacrifice to the covetous disposition of the king, and the diabolical machinations of a base and perfidious woman.

As soon as Jezebel received intelligence of the death of Naboth, she immediately repaired to the king, informed him of the circumstance, and told him to go to Jezreel, and, without any ceremony, take possession of the vineyard. Ahab followed his wife's directions; but, on his return to Samaria, he was met by the prophet Elijah, who, by God's directions, first upbraided him for having slain the innocent, and seized on his inheritance, and then denounced a judgment on him to this effect: "That where the blood of Naboth had been licked by the dogs, they should likewise lick the blood of Ahab and Jezebel; and that the crime of taking away the life of an innocent man by perjury, should be punished by the extirpation of their whole race."

Ahab was so affected at the denunciation of this judgment, that he became deeply penitent for his sins: he clothed himself in sack-cloth, fasted, went barefoot, and gave every other testimony of the most unfeigned sorrow and humiliation. Hereupon the prophet was commissioned to acquaint him, that, in consideration of his contrition, the judgment which had been threatened should be postponed during his life, but that it should certainly take place in that of his son; the truth of which prediction will hereafter appear.

Now, in order to make safe work, the evidences (as they were instructed) accused Naboth of both these crimes, that the people might be the better satisfied to see him stoned. There is this difference however to be observed between these two crimes, that, if a man had only blasphemed God, he was to be tried by the great court at Jerusalem, (as the Hebrew Doctors tell us) and his goods came to his heirs; whereas, when a man was executed for treason against the king, his estate went to the exchequer, and was forfeited to the king, against whom the offence was committed: and for this reason it was, that they accused Naboth of this crime likewise, that his estate might be confiscated, and Ahab, by that means, get possession of his vineyard.

We have already observed that Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, had imprudently married his son and heir to the daughter of Ahab; which alliance produced an intimacy between the two kings. In consequence of this, Jehoshaphat went one day to Samaria, to pay a visit to Ahab, who entertained him and his attendants in the most splendid manner. Ahab, taking advantage of this opportunity, invited Jehoshaphat to accompany and assist him in the siege of Ramoth-Gilead, a town belonging to the tribe of Gad, which the king of Syria unjustly detained from him. Jehoshaphat agreed to assist Ahab in this expedition, but being unwilling to set about it without consulting the Divine approbation, he desired Ahab to enquire of the prophets concerning the event. In compliance with Jehoshaphat's request, Ahab assembled together his own prophets, the number of whom amounted to about four hundred, and putting the question to them, they answered, *Go up; for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king.*

Jehoshaphat was far from being satisfied with what these prophets predicted: he was conscious in himself that they were not men favored of God, and therefore asked Ahab, whether he had no other prophets to whom he could apply on this occasion. Ahab told him there was one other, named Micaiah, who was the son of Imlah, but that he detested the man for having predicted only unhappy events, and for that reason he had ordered him to be kept in confinement. Jehoshaphat insisted on seeing this person, upon which a messenger was dispatched to bring him from the prison. In their way the messenger told Micaiah that the prophets had declared the event of the war would prove favorable to Ahab, and endeavored to prevail on him to give a like report: *Let thy word, I pray thee* (said he) *be like the word of one of them, and speak that which is good.* To which Micaiah replied, *As the Lord liveth, what the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak.*

When Micaiah came in the presence of the two kings, Ahab put the question to him, enjoining him neither to extenuate or aggravate the truth. Micaiah told him, that he had seen the people of Israel, like sheep without a shepherd, dispersed and pursued by the Syrians; and that by this representation the Lord had intimated that only

the king should fall in the engagement. Ahab having heard this prophecy, turned to Jehoshaphat, and asked him whether he was not now convinced that he had not wrongfully accused the man; upon which Micaiah, addressing himself to Ahab, spoke in words to this effect: "I have no enmity towards you: the prediction is the effect of an inspiration from the Almighty, by whose express command I have faithfully delivered it to you: but, by the flattering impositions of the false prophets, you are persuaded to engage in a war which will prove your destruction."

As soon as Micaiah had finished his prediction, one of Ahab's false prophets (after dissuading the king from paying any attention to what he said) ran up to him and smote him on the cheek; upon which Micaiah told him, that he would be shortly called to a severe account for his conduct, and that he would be driven to the necessity of flying to hiding places for the security of his person. The infatuated king, listened to what his false prophets had told him, and enraged at the prediction of Micaiah, ordered him to be taken back to prison, and there kept till he should return from the war. *Take Micaiah, said he, and carry him back unto Amon the governor of the city, and to Joash the king's son; and say, Thus saith the king, put this fellow in the prison, and feed him with bread of affliction, until I come in peace.*

The next day the confederate kings led their forces towards Ramoth-Gilead. But when they came within sight of the enemy, Ahab's courage began to cool, and, thinking to evade the force of Micaiah's prophecy, he threw off the badge of royalty, and disguised himself, but at the same time advised Jehoshaphat to keep on his royal robes. Benhadad, the king of the Syrians, had given particular orders to his generals to single out Ahab, (whom he considered as the chief author of the war) and, if possible, either to kill him, or take him prisoner. At first the Syrians mistook Jehoshaphat for the king of Israel, and therefore made after him; but at length, perceiving their mistake, and that he was not the person they wanted, they desisted from their pursuit, and directed their course another way in search of Ahab.

By some means or other, notwithstanding the disguise Ahab had put on, they found out his situation; and one of Benhadad's domestics discharging an arrow at him, it went through a part of Ahab's armor, and penetrated his body. Apprehending that this unfortunate circumstance might depress the spirits of his troops, the wounded monarch ordered his charioteer to remove him a small distance from the army, where having remained till near sun-set, the blood flowing from his wound all the time, he gave up the ghost. In the mean time the two armies continued harrassing each other the whole day, but Ahab was the only person slain, by which was strictly fulfilled the prophecy of Micaiah. On the approach of night the Syrians retired to their tents; and when an herald had proclaimed the death of Ahab, the two armies separated, and each repaired to their respective homes.

The body of Ahab was carried to Samaria, and there interred; and his son Ahaziah succeeded him in the government. The chariot in which Ahab was slain, and conveyed to Samaria, was so stained with the blood that issued from his wound, that they were obliged to wash it at a neighboring fountain; in doing of which the dogs came and licked it, whereby was fulfilled one part of the prediction of the prophet Elijah, which he denounced against Ahab and his wife for the murder of Naboth, the citizen of Jezreel.

After the return of Ahab's army to Samaria, Jehoshaphat went to Jerusalem, but was met on the way by the prophet Jehu, who severely reprov'd him for having formed a junction with the late idolatrous and wicked Ahab. This rebuke greatly afflicted Jehoshaphat, who no sooner arrived at Jerusalem, than he endeavored to atone for the fault he had committed by acts of piety and justice. He first offered sacrifices to God, beseeching him to pardon his offences; having done which he ordered the priests and Levites to instruct the people throughout his dominions, in the laws of Moses, and to make them thoroughly acquainted with the established religion of their ancestors. He appointed magistrates of the cities and large towns, whom he ordered to distribute justice to all ranks of people without favor or partiality. He selected from the priests and Levites, a certain number of judges, whom he directed that

when matters of consequence were brought before them from the adjacent cities, they should not determine but on the coolest deliberation; since a deficiency of justice in the city, where the temple of God, and the palace of the king, were erected, would be highly dishonorable.

The conduct of Jehoshaphat, and the measures he took to preserve justice, as well as the true religion, among his people, was highly acceptable to God: of which he was soon sensible, by a circumstance that happened in his favor of the most singular and miraculous nature.

The Moabites and Ammonites, assisted by a prodigious number of auxiliaries, whom they hired on the occasion, resolved to invade the dominions of Jehoshaphat, which having done, they marched as far as the city of Engedi, (about thirty-eight miles from Jerusalem) where they encamped, intending either to give Jehoshaphat battle there if he came to oppose them, or if not, to decamp and lay siege to Jerusalem.

As soon as Jehoshaphat understood the intentions of his enemies, and where they were situated, he was greatly alarmed, and immediately gave orders for a fast to be kept throughout his dominions. Having done this he convened a general assembly of the people, with whom he repaired to the temple, where, in the most fervent manner, he addressed himself in prayer to God for protection;* in which

* The prayer Jehoshaphat made to God on this occasion is deservedly accounted one of the most excellent we meet with in sacred history. He begins it with an acknowledgment of God's supreme and irresistible power, which extends itself every where, over all creatures in heaven and earth, which are every one subject to his authority.—*O Lord God of our fathers, art thou not God in heaven? And rulest not thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? And in thine hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee? He then remembers the peculiar relation, which the people of Israel have to him; the promise he made to Abraham, as a reward for his fidelity; and the deed of gift which he conveyed to him, and his posterity: Art thou not our God, who didst drive out the inhabitants of the land before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of thy people Abraham, thy friend? He then reminds him of the long possession they had of the country, and of the temple, which Solomon had built for his worship, to whom, at the consecration, (and therefore he refers to Solomon's words at the consecration, 1 Kings, viii.) he promised a gracious regard to all the prayers that should be offered there. And they dwell therein, and have built thee a sanctuary therein for thy name,*

he was not only joined by the whole assembly, but likewise all the women and children who had gathered themselves together on the occasion.

While Jehoshaphat and the people were thus fervently praying to God to protect them from the power of their enemies, the Almighty was pleased to send to them the prophet Jahaziel with this message: "Hearken ye (said he) all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat: Thus saith the Lord unto you, Be not afraid, nor dismayed, by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's. To-morrow go ye down against them: behold, they come up by the cliff of Zig, and ye shall find them at the end of the brook, before the wilderness of Jeruel. Ye shall not need to fight in this battle; set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; to-morrow go out against them: for the Lord will be with you."

Not only Jehoshaphat, but the whole multitude, were so elated at this intelligence, that they immediately fell on

saying, If, when evil cometh upon him, as the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we stand before this house, and in thy presence, (for thy name is in this house) and cry unto thee in our affliction, then thou wilt hear and help. In the next place he represents the foul ingratitude of their enemies in invading a country, to which they had no manner of title, even though the Israelites did them not the least harm when they came to take possession of it, but took the pains to march a long way about to get to it, rather than give any molestation; and, in aggravation of their wickedness in this respect, he suggests, that by this invasion they made an attempt, not only upon the rights of the Israelites, but of God himself, who was the great Lord and Proprietor, from whom they held the land: *And now behold the children of Ammon, and Moab, and Mount Seir, whom thou wouldst not let Israel invade, when they came out of the land of Egypt, but they turned from them, and destroyed them not; behold, I say, how they reward us, to come to cast us out of thy possession, which thou gavest us to inherit.* He then appeals to the justice of God, the righteous judge, who helps those that suffer wrong, especially when they have no other helper: for this is the last argument he makes use of to conciliate the Divine assistance, even the weak condition wherein he and his people were, which made them the objects of divine pity, especially since they placed their hope and confidence in him alone: *O Lord, our God, wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company, that cometh against us, neither know we what to do, but our eyes are upon thee.* 2 Chron. xx. 6, &c.

their knees, and worshipped the Lord: and the Levites accompanied them by singing praises to God in the most lofty strain.

Early the next morning Jehoshaphat marched his army into the wilderness of Tekoah, where, making a halt, he addressed the people in a very short, but pathetic speech, in which he pressed them to the service of the Lord, assuring them that if they would believe him and his prophets, they should certainly prosper. *Hear me, (said he) O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem: Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established: believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper.* Having said this, he appointed a certain number of singers, who were to march before the army, singing, as they moved along, these words: *Praise the Lord, for his mercy endureth forever.*

In this manner did the army of Jehoshaphat advance to meet the enemy; but before they came up with them it pleased God so to confound and infatuate them, that they fell upon each other through mistake: the Ammonites and Moabites, taking the people of Mount Scir for their enemies, fell on them, and put them to death; after which, not knowing each other, an universal confusion took place, and each fell by the hands of his antagonist.

When Jehoshaphat and his army came up to the spot they found not a single person of the enemy alive; and the spoil was so great that it was more than they could carry away. They employed themselves three days in gathering the riches left by their enemies, and on the fourth they repaired to a Valley, where they gave solemn thanks to God for their singular deliverance. This place was afterwards called the Valley of Berachach, which, in the Hebrew language, signifies, *the Valley of Blessing.* Having gathered up all the spoils they could conveniently carry away, Jehoshaphat, with his army, marched in triumph to Jerusalem, and were received by the people with the utmost demonstrations of joy. This event being soon circulated, it struck such a terror into all the neighboring nations, that no farther attempt was made, during the reign of Jehoshaphat, to disturb the public tranquility of the kingdom of Judah.

A short time after this Jehoshaphat imprudently joined himself with Ahaziah, king of Israel, in fitting out a large

fleet at the port of Ezion-Geber, in order to go to Tarshish to fetch gold. But this conjunction not being pleasing to God on account of the wickedness of Ahaziah, their project failed of success, for, before they could get out to sea, a storm arose, which raged with such violence, that the whole fleet was dashed to pieces upon a ridge of rocks near the mouth of the harbor.

After Jehoshaphat had reflected on this singular and melancholy event, he was fully convinced that it was a just judgment inflicted on him by Providence for having formed a connexion with so impious a prince as king Ahaziah. He therefore soon after (and not long before his death) fitted out a fleet, solely on his own account, from the port of Eloh, which making a good voyage, returned in proper time, and brought him not only gold, but great quantities of very valuable articles, the natural produce of the country.

Jehoshaphat, during the remainder of his reign, employed his time in acts of piety, and used all the means in his power to work a thorough reformation among his people; though he could not, during his life, totally extirpate the high places. He reigned twenty-five years over Judah, died at the age of sixty, and was buried in the city of David.

On the death of Jehoshaphat the throne of Judah was filled by his eldest son Jehoram, a prince of a very cruel and wicked disposition. His father Jehoshaphat had six other sons; but, to give no umbrage or suspicion, he had in his life time, removed them from the court, made them governors of fenced cities, and given them separate fortunes of their own. But, notwithstanding all this precaution, as soon as Jehoram was settled on the throne, he not only murdered all his brothers, but likewise several chief men of Israel, who (as he suspected) either adhered to their party, or were likely to revenge their deaths.

In consequence of these proceedings, and other acts of impiety daily committed by Jehoram, the prophet Elijah sent him a very severe letter, in which he first upbraided him for departing from the religion of his ancestors, and then threatened him with heavy judgments as a punishment for his enormities: "Because, said he, 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 king of Israel, and has 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.”

It was not long before the dreadful judgment pronounced by the prophet Elijah began to take place. The Edomites, who had been subject to the house of David, now rebelled; and having expelled Jehoram's deputy, set up a king of their own, and were never after subject to the government of Judah. The people of Libnah likewise, a city of his dominions, shook off their allegiance, and refused to acknowledge him any longer for their sovereign.

These were but the beginnings of Jehoram's troubles; for a short time after, the Philistines and Arabians invaded his dominions, ravaged the country, plundered his palace, carried away his wives and children, and returned home in triumph.

To complete his punishment, and fulfil the prediction of the prophet Elijah, God was pleased to afflict him with a most violent dysentery, under which he languished in great torments for the space of two years, at the expiration of which he died unlamented, in the fortieth year of his age, and eighth of his reign. He was buried in the City of David, but in such contempt did his subjects hold him, that they refused him royal interment, and instead of laying his body in the sepulchre of his predecessors, it was deposited in a private place appointed for the purpose.—It is worthy of observation, that there was hardly any calamity that could be thought of which did not befall this wicked prince. His kingdom was destroyed and depopulated by the fiercest nations; his treasures ransacked; his wives and children carried into captivity; himself afflicted with a sore disease for two years; and, when he was dead, denied the honor of a royal interment. All which calamities were threatened in the writing sent him in the name of Elijah, that he might not think they came

by chance, but by the special direction of God, as a punishment for his impiety and wickedness.

We must now take notice of the occurrences that happened during the reign of king Ahaziah, who, as we have before observed, succeeded his father Ahab on the throne of Israel.

This prince was so naturally attached to every degree of vice, as even to outdo his father. His reign, however, was very short (being in the whole not above the space of two years) but it was inglorious and full of trouble.

Soon after his accession to the throne, the Moabites, who had always been obedient to the kings of Israel, from the first separation of the two kingdoms, now took the opportunity of revolting, nor was it in his power to reduce them to subjection.

In the beginning of the second year of his reign, he received a violent hurt by a fall from the terrace of his house, insomuch, that in a short time, he was reduced to a very bad state of health. In this extremity, placing his dependence on the idols which he worshipped, he sent to Baal-zebub,* the god of Ekron,† to know if he should recover: but, by God's appointment, the prophet Elijah was sent to meet the messengers, and to turn them back with this answer to Ahaziah: *Is it not because there is not a God in Israel, that ye go to enquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron? Now therefore, thus saith the Lord, thou shalt not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die.* Having said this, Elijah departed, first ordering the messengers to hasten home with the intelligence he had given them, to their master.

The quick return of the messengers greatly surprized Ahaziah, who asked them the reason of it. They told him they had met with a man on the way, who bade them return, and report to him, in the name of the God of the Israelites, that he should not survive his disorder. The king then demanded a description of the person who had sent

* The word Baal-zebub signifies the *god of flies*: but how this idol obtained that appellation it is not easy to determine.

† Ekron was a city of the Philistines, which fell by lot to the tribe of Judah, but was afterwards given to the tribe of Dan, though it does not appear that the Jews ever had a quiet possession of it.

such a message; upon which they told him that he was a hairy man, and that he wore a leathern girdle.

From this description, Ahaziah imagined the person to be Elijah the prophet; and therefore, dispatched an officer of his army, with fifty men under his command, to apprehend him, intending to put him to death for his presumption. The officer, meeting with Elijah on the top of a mountain, accosted him in these words: *Thou man of God, the king hath said, come down.* Elijah replied, *If I be a man of God, then let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty.* No sooner had he said these words, than fire immediately descended from heaven, and the officer, together with his fifty men, were instantly destroyed.

As soon as Ahaziah understood the fate of the officer and fifty men, whom he sent to apprehend Elijah, instead of being alarmed at it, he sent another officer, with fifty more, all of whom, for their presumption, shared the same fate. This, however, made no impression on the hardened king, who dispatched a third officer, with fifty others. This person acted very differently to the two former, for when he came to Elijah, instead of peremptorily demanding his person, he fell on his knees, and addressed him as follows: *O man of God, said he, I pray thee, let my life, and the life of these fifty thy servants, be precious in thy sight. Behold, there came fire down from heaven, and burned up the two captains of the former fifties, with their fifties: therefore, let my life now be precious in thy sight.*

At this instant the voice of the Lord came unto Elijah, ordering him to attend the officer and his company, and go with them to Ahaziah. The prophet obeyed the Divine command, and as soon as he came in the presence of the king, he, without any ceremony, addressed him as follows: *Forasmuch as thou hast sent messengers to enquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, therefore thou shalt not come down off that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die.**

* The circumstances attending the fate of Ahaziah, as denounced by the prophet Elijah, have been greatly objected to by such as have not considered the whole matter in its proper light. To remove these objections, and justify the conduct of the prophet, who was divinely directed, we must first of all consider, that the wickedness of Ahaziah

It was not long before this prediction of the prophet was verified. The king's illness increased every day, and

and his people was exceeding great. He was not moved by the untimely death of his father, but followed his pernicious example, still seducing the people, and provoking the God of Israel by his abominable idolatries. The author of the book of Chronicles informs us, that his impiety was so provoking, that God had abandoned him, and would not prosper the naval expedition of Jehoshaphat, because he joined the fleet of this vicious prince. The wickedness of Ahab, so great in itself, was highly aggravated by his making the people to sin. By his evil example and authority, he corrupted their worship, and justly drew upon himself the guilt of their transgressions. Ahaziah and his people could not but know what judgments this prophet had denounced against his family, on account of their idolatries. How great then must their guilt be, in persisting in them, notwithstanding these warnings? The king himself was certainly an incorrigible sinner; for when he was dangerously ill from his fall from the terrace, he did not repent, but sent to enquire of Baal-zebub, the idol of the Ekronites. This fresh instance of his impiety so offended the true God, that he decreed he should not recover, and sent Elijah to foretel his death to the messengers. But even this message, instead of touching him with remorse, excited in him the wicked resolution of murdering the prophet. No one can doubt but that he designed to take away his life, who reflects on the implacable hatred his family bore this holy man for reproving their wickedness; the resolution his mother Jezebel had formed of cutting him off, and the obstinacy with which the king himself persisted in his sins. The manner of sending for him confirms this to have been his design. Why did he not send the same messengers as he did to Ekron? How came he to send a company of soldiers, if he had not the design of taking away his life? The captains commanded him to come down, but in a haughty manner, because they thought he must surrender himself, and had he refused to go with them, would undoubtedly have compelled him by force.

If the king himself was so obdurately wicked, though his life was endangered by the fall, we may justly presume that those who were employed on this occasion were not much better; for they must have been either idolaters, or the worshippers of the true God. If they were idolaters, their sin must have received no small aggravation from their engaging in this attempt; and they could not but know that Elijah did not deserve death for predicting the consequences of their master's indisposition, as a prophet. If they worshipped the true God, it was a great crime in them to go against the prophet of that God in whom they believed, and attempt his life, contrary to the dictates of their own consciences. Yet, were they either, they could not be excusable, and supposing them to have been idolaters, we may conclude that they executed this commission with pleasure. And if those who went first upon this design were culpable, what daring sinners must those be who made the second attempt, though such sig-

he at length gave up the ghost, after reigning, or rather being on the throne of Israel, only two years. Having no

nal vengeance had overtaken those who preceded them? That it was the will of God to destroy these men, may be inferred from the presence of the angel who guarded this prophet. This is still farther evident from the nature of the punishment inflicted upon them. Though Elijah had been ever so much enraged, he could not bring down the devouring flames against them. Nor, had he prayed for this interposition, would his prayers have been heard, if he had desired what was unfitting with the conduct of infinite wisdom. The prophet appealed to this event for the truth of his mission, *If I be a man of God, &c.* which means no more nor less, than that they had stiled him a *man of God*, by way of derision; but to convince them of the reality of this title, he assured them, that God himself would vindicate his character by sending down fire from heaven. What he foretold, happened to the cost of those who called down this punishment upon them, by persisting in their infidelity.

Should it be asked, why these men were singled out to suffer divine punishment, when the whole nation was plunged in the same idolatrous practices and immoralities? It is easy to reply, that these men suffered in the case before us, because there was not the same reason why others should suffer, nor could the death of any others so well answer the ends of infinite wisdom. If this catastrophe was intended for the punishment of evil-doers, who so fit to be made examples, as those who were actually engaged in the wicked enterprize? It was done for the security of a righteous man, whose life was in almost inextricable danger. It would have been impossible for him to escape, when beset by a whole company of soldiers; and if he surrendered, he lay at Ahaziah's mercy, who was his inveterate and implacable enemy. In this distress, God mercifully rescued him, by destroying those wicked agents, and by these means reserved him for future usefulness. This end was accomplished; for the third captain came with another view, and spake in a very different manner, which plainly shewed he disapproved of the king's conduct, and that he was so impressed with fear at the destruction of the first and second companies, as to expect, should he follow their example, the like consequences. This punishment was intended to confirm Elijah's mission, and vindicate the honor of the *only God*. The fire coming from heaven upon Elijah's denouncing it, manifestly proved that Elijah was inspired by the Creator of all the earth. And as it recalled to their minds the contest he lately had with the priests of Baal, wherein the descent of fire had been used as a test of the supreme power of the God of gods, this occurrence could not but operate upon their minds with double weight, and convince them of the wickedness of their enterprize; and since they were convinced by the former manifestations of the divine power, the destruction of these men by a first and second descent of fire from heaven, was sufficient to rouse them out of this lethargy. As these men were the king's servants, their punishment might more sensibly convince him of his wickedness in seducing the people, and the people

son, he was succeeded by his brother Jehoram, at which time, Jehoram,† the son of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, was in the second year of his reign.

The denunciation pronounced by the prophet Elijah against the wicked king, Ahaziah, was the last business he did of a public nature by Divine commission, during his earthly peregrinations, he being soon after translated into heaven. We have the greatest reason to imagine, that God had been pleased to give him some intimation of the time when this miraculous event should happen; for, previous to his departure, he visited the sons of the prophets

of their sin in following his example. Had as great a number of idolaters been destroyed in another place, it could not have had so good an effect; but their being struck dead in their attempt upon the prophet's life, was proper to convince both the king and his subjects that he was really commissioned by God, and that the punishments he had denounced against their idolatries would certainly be inflicted. These few, therefore, were not only taken away to preserve the prophet, but also to reclaim the people, and to prevent the ruin of the whole nation. When the general depravity of the kingdom is duly weighed, the number of those who perished will appear very small. If it should be asked, why this severity was twice inflicted; the reply is easy; because the prince was so wicked, and his servants so daring, as to make a second attempt. Hardened as they were, when the same punishment was inflicted a second time, they began to relent, as appears from the address of the third captain, who speaks not in the imperious language of the two first, but in the style of a suppliant, who was convinced that Elijah was really a prophet of the true God.

If we consider this judgment as an act of God, there is nothing in it but what is agreeable to his perfections. That it was an instance of his *power* will not be contested, because it was what no man nor any superior being could inflict without his permission. His *holiness* and justice are conspicuously seen, because this catastrophe was intended as a punishment against enormous crimes, and the persons who suffered were engaged in a wicked attempt upon the life of his prophet. It could not be inconsistent with his *goodness* and *clemency*, because the death of these few was designed for the reformation of all the nation. His *wisdom* appears herein, inasmuch as by these means the prophet's life was preserved; and it was well adapted to the state of the kingdom, which, at this time, called for some striking and alarming dispensation.

† To prevent confusion, the reader is desired to observe, that in the course of this part of the history, there is mention made of two Jehorams, who reigned much about the same time; one, the second son of Ahab, who succeeded his brother Ahaziah, and was king of Israel; and the other, who was son and heir to Jehoshaphat, and reigned in Judah.

that were at Bethel and Jericho, and took his leave of them with such solemnity, that they suspected it was the last visit he intended to make them. He would willingly have left his servant Elisha at both these places, but he being apprized that his master's time was but short on earth, resolved to continue with him to the last, saying, *As the Lord liveth, and as thy servant liveth, I will not leave thee.*

When Elijah found the strong attachment his servant had to him, and his resolution of not leaving him, he made no farther attempt to oppose his wishes; upon which they both set forward towards the land of Gilead, the place of Elijah's nativity, and from whence he was to be translated. They were accompanied some way by fifty of the prophets, who at length stopped, but kept their eyes on them till they came to the river Jordan, which they were obliged to pass in their way to the land of Gilead. On their arrival here, Elijah took off his mantle, and spreading it over the river, the waters immediately separated, and they passed over on dry ground.

After proceeding a short way on the other side the Jordan (and still in sight of the fifty prophets,) Elijah said unto Elisha, *Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee.* To which Elisha replied, *I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me.* Elijah answered, *Thou hast asked a hard thing: nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so.*

As they went on, and were thus talking together, there suddenly appeared, as it were, a bright chariot and horses coming towards them, which no sooner arrived, than it passed between them, and Elijah, at that instant, entering the chariot, a sudden gust of wind arose, directed by angels, which transported him into heaven.

Elisha, seeing his master ascend, cried out, *My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!* When he was no longer to be seen, he rent his clothes, and expressed his sorrow by the deepest lamentations. His grief having a little subsided, he took up Elisha's mantle, which he had dropped in his ascent, and returning to the river Jordan, spread it over the waters, which im-

mediately divided, and he passed on the other side in his way home.

The fifty prophets, who saw this second miracle, were convinced that Elisha was endued with the same spirit that had been possessed by his master: and therefore, on meeting him, they acknowledged him his successor, and paid him equal respect. Imagining, however, that Elijah might be transported into some distant or desert part of the country, they desired permission to send out fifty men in search of him. Elisha told them it would be to no effect; but they seeming to wish for the indulgence required, he gave his assent. In consequence of this, they dispatched the fifty men in search of Elijah, but finding their efforts in vain, after a trial of three successive days, they returned.

In the mean time Elisha prosecuted his journey towards Jericho, whither he had no sooner arrived, than the people, knowing the power with which he was invested, applied to him to remove two material disadvantages under which they had long labored, namely, the brackishness of the water in the river, and the barrenness of the land. *Behold*, said they, *I pray thee, the situation of the city is pleasant, as my Lord seeth: but the water is nought, and the ground barren.* Elisha told them to bring him a new cruse with some salt in it, which being done, he went to the spring of the river, and, throwing in the salt, said, *Thus saith the Lord, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from hence any more dearth, or barren land.—So the waters were healed.*

It was not long after Elisha had performed this singular and beneficial miracle, before another took place, by which it evidently appeared that he possessed, in the most ample manner, the same powers which had so singularly distinguished his late master. As he was on his way from Jericho to Bethel, he was met near the latter city by a great number of *little children*, who seeing him bald, mocked him, crying aloud, *Go up thou bald-head, go up thou bald-head.* After Elisha had passed them, he turned himself round, and, for their insolence, *cursed them in the name of the Lord.* The consequence of this curse immediately took place, for two she bears, rushing out of a neighboring wood, suddenly fell on the children, and no less than forty-

two were destroyed by those voracious animals,* whose fierceness, (according to the opinion of Bishop Patrick) might have been increased by the loss of their whelps.

* In order to rescue the character of the prophet Elisha from the objections of infidels on account of the catastrophe of these *children*, it may not be improper to make some few observations on the subject. It evidently appears, from other passages in scripture, (as Gen. xliii. 8. and 1 Kings iii. 7, &c.) that the persons, termed *little children*, were grown to the age of maturity, and consequently were capable of being concerned in any riotous proceedings. Nay, their coming out of the city implied as much. They came out of Bethel, the chief seat of idolatry; they had strongly imbibed the prejudices of their parents, and were old enough to distinguish between idolatry and the worship of the true God. They probably had heard, if they had not seen, that Elijah was taken up into heaven. The prophets of the true God, who resided in this place, were apprised of this event before it happened; and it could not but be supposed, that an event of so astonishing a kind would become the chief topic of their conversation. The manner in which Elisha had repassed the river, was undoubtedly spread abroad during his abode at Jericho; and his mission as a prophet was confirmed beyond dispute. They knew him to be a prophet of the true God, and derided him on account of his office; nay, they made a jest of the ascension of Elijah, a strong reprove of their idolatries; and in making a jest of that remarkable event, they shut their eyes against a miracle, which seems to have been wrought to reclaim them. The words, *Go up thou bald-head, go up thou bald-head*, plainly refer to the ascension of Elijah; and if our translators had made use of the word *ascend*, instead of the words *go up*, this allusion would have appeared plainer and stronger. What still aggravates their guilt, is, that they did not meet with the prophet by accident, but went out with a design to insult him. They likewise went in a body, which shewed that their motive was malice, and their going not casual. From hence it seems probable, that they went out, not only to deride the prophet, but likewise to prevent his entering into the city. They feared he would be as zealous against their idolatries, as Elijah had been; and by this insult they intended to free themselves from his remonstrances. Though the prophet could not but be displeased with the insult, yet no part of the narrative will countenance us in supposing that the curse he denounced against them, was owing to the peevishness of his temper, or the ebullition of his anger. Though his rage had been ever so turbulent, it would not have supplied him with power to command these savage creatures to leave the woods at an instant, and to come to a place they did not frequent, as a public road must be supposed to be, in order to destroy these insolent youths. As his curse would have no effect had it proceeded from a peevish temper, we have no just cause from his cursing them, to suspect, that he was agitated by any furious or malicious passion. The word *curse*, in scripture, has three different acceptations. It signifies to *inflict* a curse; and in this sense God is said to have *cursed*

From Bethel Elisha went to Mount Carmel (where was probably a school of the prophets) and from thence he proceeded to Samaria, where he had soon various opportunities of displaying those prophetic powers with which he was invested, as will appear from the contents of the ensuing chapter.

We shall close the present chapter with some few observations on that remarkable event, recorded in Sacred Writ, (and which we have, agreeably thereto, already mentioned) relative to the translation of the prophet Elijah into heaven; and shall also point out the great affinity there was between him, John the Baptist, and our Blessed Redeemer.

At the time the separation took place between Elijah and his servant Elisha, who was to succeed him, it is expressly said, *Behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder: and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.*

These words are certainly not to be taken in a literal sense; nor can we presume to enter into any precise explanation of them. We may suppose, that a bright and

the ground after the fall. It signifies to *wish* a curse; and in this sense Shimei is said to have *curst* David. Lastly, it signifies to *pronounce* or *foretel* a curse; and in this sense Elisha is said to have *curst* the children. The historian expressly asserts that *he curst them in the name of the Lord*. To *speak in the name of the Lord*, is to deliver what he commands; to *prophecy in the name of the Lord*, is to foretel what he reveals; and to *curse in the name of the Lord*, is to declare a curse which he is pleased to inflict, and has authorized the prophets to denounce: so that in cursing these supposed *children*, Elisha acted as a minister of the Supreme ruler of the world; and, by his order foretold the punishment that was going to be inflicted upon these idolaters. His pronouncing this curse was not the cause of their catastrophe; but the certainty of their catastrophe, and the command of God, were the causes of his pronouncing this curse. On the whole it appears, that the persons who mocked Elisha were not infants, but arrived to years of maturity: it appears that they did not insult him by chance, but by design; that they went out in crowds on purpose; that they mocked him because he was the prophet of the true God, from whom they had apostatized; and that he did not wish their untimely end from a principle of revenge, but only predicted it as a prophet. The punishment itself will appear just, if we consider the time, place, persons, and likewise how well it was adapted to convince the people of the heinousness of idolatry, and to recover them to that purity of worship which their law was peculiarly intended to preserve.

radiant cloud, which, as it ascended, might appear like a *chariot and horses*, raised Elijah from the earth, and leaving this globe behind, wafted him into the seats of the blessed.

The assumption of Elijah (as well as that of Enoch) appears to have been not only to give the world a sensible proof of another, and a better country, even a heavenly one, but also to point out the interposition of God for the sake of his servants, as well as to signify the future ascension of his son, who was to be the Redeemer of lost mankind.

Elijah was, in various respects, a type both of our Saviour and John the Baptist, as will appear from the following observations:

I. The New Testament sufficiently points out the affinity between Elijah and John the Baptist: nay, John is even called by the name of this prophet; and Christ himself so calls him in the encomium which he passed upon John, Matth. xi. 14. *And if ye will receive it, this is Elijah, which was for to come.* The prophet Malachi likewise mentions his name when he predicts that John was to appear before, and be the forerunner of, the Messiah. *Behold*, says he, *I will send you Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and illustrious day of the Lord.* And accordingly the angel told Zecharias, the father of the Baptist, that his son should go before the Messiah, in *the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, &c.* So that Elijah was a type of John the Baptist, as to the spirit and power of his ministry; and that in so remarkable a manner, that he is even called by his *name*. John was, as it were, another Elijah in spirit and ministry, though not in person; and thus we may account for his answer, when the priests and Levites sent to him; *Art thou Elijah, &c.?* and he said, *I am not.* “I am not that prophet personally, as you expect him to appear, though I am come in his *spirit* and in his *power*, mystically, but not identically the same.”

There was some analogy between these two great personages also in their outward garb and deportment; the hairy raiment and leathern girdle; and also in their lonely and mortified lives in the wilderness; and their being per-

secuted by wicked princes, Elijah by Ahab, and Jezebel, John by Herod and his wife Herodias.

But chiefly was Elijah a type of John in his sanctity, courage, and undaunted zeal for reformation; and in the spirit and purpose of his ministry, to awaken a sinful generation, to bring many, both of the rising and declining age, to that real piety towards God, which is the surest band of mutual duty to each other; to bring many, who were before totally ignorant and regardless of duty, to the knowledge of God, which is the only wisdom, and can only justify us in the sight of heaven. This Elijah eminently performed, when he caused the people to cry, *The Lord He is God, the Lord He is God*: This John also eminently performed, when numbers flocked to his baptism on the banks of the river Jordan, and he pointed out to the awakened penitents, the *Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world*.

II. But Elijah was more especially a type of CHRIST, not only with respect to his ascension into heaven, but also in reference to the miracles he wrought; his invincible courage and zeal in the cause of God; and his commissioning successors to carry on the work of his ministry, after his departure from this world.

Elijah fasted forty days and forty nights in Mount Horeb, the place where God appeared to Moses, and gave the law to his people Israel, and where also Moses fasted the same length of time; who, with Elijah, was the only person of whom we read this extraordinary miracle, and who therein figured our Saviour *Christ*, the great prophet and law-giver of his people, who fasted forty days and forty nights in the wilderness: and hence we read, that in our Saviour's transfiguration on the mount, these two distinguished persons appeared with him in glory; Moses the great law-giver, and Elijah the zealous restorer of that law, which led to Christ, its end and perfection, and in whose honor their respective ministrations terminated.

Elijah was entertained by a widow, whose son notwithstanding died, and he raised him to life again; so Christ was entertained by Martha and Mary, whose brother Lazarus nevertheless died, and was also raised by him from the dead.

The spirit of Elijah rested upon Elisha. He cast his mantle upon him, which had such an influence, that he left

all, and followed him. Through the like miraculous influence of the spirit, Christ called his apostles, who left all, and followed him; and upon these, his appointed successors, he caused his spirit to rest, when like Elijah, he ascended up before them into heaven, and a cloud received him out of their sight.

We shall conclude our observations on the prophet Elijah, with the character given of him, by the author of Ecclesiasticus, who, in chap. xlvi. 1, &c. has dedicated the following encomiums to his memory: "Then stood up
 "Elijah the prophet, as fire, and his word burnt like a
 "lamp. He brought out a sore famine among them, and
 "by his zeal he diminished their numbers. By the word
 "of the Lord he shut up the heaven, and also three times
 "brought down fire. O Elijah, how wast thou honored by
 "thy wondrous deeds? And who may glory like unto
 "thee? Who didst raise a dead man from death, and his
 "soul from the place of the dead, by the word of the Most
 "High; who broughtest kings to destruction, and honora-
 "ble men to their bed:—Who wast taken up in a whirl-
 "wind of fire, and in a chariot of fiery horses; who wast
 "ordained for reproofs in their times, to pacify the wrath
 "of the Lord's judgment, before it brake forth into fury;
 "to turn the heart of the father to the son, and to restore
 "the tribes of Jacob." In which last sentence, our author alludes to that passage in Malachi, chap. iv. 6. "Behold
 "I will send you Elijah the prophet, before the coming
 "of the great and dreadful day of the Lord; and he shall
 "turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the
 "hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and
 "smite the earth with a curse."

CHAP. IV.

Jehoram, king of Israel, makes war against Mesha, king of Moab, in which he is assisted by Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, and the king of Edom. The confederate princes obtain a victory, on which the king of Moab, in a fit of despair, sacrifices his eldest son on the walls of his own city. The prophet Elisha performs several singular miracles. Benhadad, king of Syria, lays siege to Samaria, the capital of Jehoram's dominions. The siege is miraculously raised. Benhadad is put to death by his servant Hazael, who succeeds him in the government of Syria. The prophet Elisha anoints Jehu king of Israel. Jehu kills Jehoram king of Israel, and Ahaziah, king of Judah. Causes Jezebel, the wife of Ahab, to be put to death. Destroys the princes of the blood, the relations of Ahaziah, and the priests and temple of Baal. Jehu, towards the close of his reign, falls into idolatry, for which God suffers him to be punished by Hazael, king of Syria. He dies, and is succeeded by his son Jehoahaz, who follows his father's steps in idolatry; and, after an unhappy reign of seventeen years, pays the debt of nature. Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab, the late king of Israel, and widow of Jehoram king of Judah, conspires the destruction of the line of David. Jehoash, the son of Ahaziah king of Judah, is preserved by Jehoiada the high-priest, and proclaimed king of Jerusalem. Athaliah is put to death by order of Jehoiada, through whose means Jehoash is established on the throne of Judah.

JEHORAM succeeded his brother Ahaziah on the throne of Israel, in the eighteenth year* of the reign of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah. Though he did not make any great reformation in his kingdom, yet he was far from being so wicked either as his father or brother. He removed the idols of Baal, but the golden calves, erected by Jeroboam, he suffered still to remain.

* We have observed, towards the close of the last chapter, that when Jehoram succeeded his brother Ahaziah on the throne of Israel, it was in the *second* year of the reign of Jehoram, king of Judah. It may, therefore, be naturally asked, how can it be here said (2 Kings, iii. 4.) that he began to reign in the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah? And in another place, (2 Kings, viii. 16.) that Jehoram, the son of Jehoshaphat began to reign over Judah in the *fifth* year of Jehoram, king of Israel? To remove this difficulty, it is only

A short time after Jehoram had ascended the throne of Israel, he formed the resolution of going to war with Mesha, the then king of the Moabites, the cause of which was this: The Moabites, from the time that David conquered them, continued to pay an annual tribute of one thousand lambs, and the like number of rams (all unshorn) to the kings of Israel, till the death of Ahab; after which they refused to pay their tribute to his son Ahaziah, who having but a short and sickly reign, was not able to reduce them. Jehoram, being of an active and spirited disposition, determined to recover this right, and therefore, demanded of Mesha, the accustomed tribute, which being refused, he resolved to bring him into compliance by force of arms.

In consequence of this resolution, Jehoram first raised a very considerable army, and then sent to Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, to request his assistance in his intended undertaking. Jehoshaphat readily complied, sending for answer, *I will go up: I am as thou art, my people as thy people, and my horses as thy horses.*

The two kings of Israel and Judah, having joined their forces, marched towards the wilderness of Edom, where their strength was increased by the conjunction of the king of that part of the country. These three princes, in order to surprize the enemy, took a compass of seven days march

supposing (as is very natural) that Jehoshaphat declared his son Jehoram king, while himself was alive, and reigned in conjunction with him for the space of seven years. In this case, Jehoram, the son of Ahab, might begin his reign in the *second* year of Jehoram, son of Jehoshaphat, viz. in the *second* year that he reigned with his father, who was then alive; and Jehoram son of Jehoshaphat, may be said to have begun his reign in the *fifth* of Jehoram, the son of Ahab, meaning the time, when, after his father's death, he began to reign alone. That the kings of Judah and Israel (as well as other oriental princes) were accustomed to appoint their successors, and, even during their life-time, to give them some share in the administration, is plain from several instances: and that Jehoshaphat found it expedient to settle his son in the kingdom with himself, seems to be intimated in 2 Chron. xxi. 3. where it is said, that *he gave the kingdom to Jehoram, because he was his first-born, and gave gifts to the rest of his sons*, who, being many, might perhaps be forming parties, and entering into cabals about the succession to the kingdom; and therefore, to put an end to all such contests, Jehoshaphat declared Jehoram king, while himself was on the throne, because he was his first-born.

in the wilderness of Edom, when they found themselves so distressed for water, as well for their men as cattle, that they sunk into the utmost despondency. Jehoram was so distressed in his mind, that he impatiently exclaimed, *Alas! that the Lord hath called these three kings together, to deliver them into the hand of Moab!* But Jehoshaphat, bearing the calamity with more coolness, asked, if there was not a prophet of the Lord near at hand, of whom they might make enquiry, as well concerning their present distressed situation, as the fate of their intended expedition. Being informed, by a servant belonging to Jehoram, that, in a tent without the camp was the prophet Elisha, the three kings immediately repaired to him. As soon as Elisha saw Jehoram, he said to him, *What have I to do with thee? get thee to the prophets of thy father, and to the prophets of thy mother.* To which Jehoram replied, *Nay; for the Lord hath called these three kings together, to deliver them into the hand of Moab.* Elisha answered, *As the Lord of Hosts liveth, before whom I stand, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would not look toward thee nor see thee.*

Having said this, Elisha ordered a musician to be called, and while he was playing on his instrument, and singing, the prophet, being inspired by the spirit of God, told the kings to cut ditches, which should be supplied with a sufficiency of water, both for the people and their cattle. He moreover informed them, that God would enable them to overcome their enemies: that they should destroy all their plantations, choak up their rivers and fountains, and lay waste their country.

Early the next morning, the confederate kings found the prediction of the prophet strictly verified, for the ditches they had caused to be dug were filled with water, so that a plentiful refreshment was obtained both for man and beast.

The king of Moab, having heard of the intentions of the Israelites, and that they were on the way to invade his territories, marched out with a considerable army to give them battle, and came within sight of the Israelites soon after Elisha's prediction came to pass. When the Moabites perceived the water, which, from the reflection of the beams of the rising sun, appeared like blood, they con-

cluded that the three kings had quarrelled, that their armies had engaged and slain each other, and that they had nothing more to do than take possession of the spoil. But they soon found themselves mistaken, for when they came up to the camp of the Israelites, in order to rifle it, they met with a reception little expected, the Israelites immediately falling on them with such courage and resolution, that they were obliged to give way, great numbers were slain on the spot, and the main body reduced to the necessity of endeavoring to save themselves by a precipitate flight.

The Israelites, taking advantage of this success, pursued the fugitives a considerable way into their own country, in the course of which they destroyed their fortified places, choaked up their springs, cut down their timber, and made ravage and devastation wherever they went. The king of the Moabites was obliged to seek refuge in his capital city Kirharaseth, whither the confederate army marched, and laid siege to the place. Mesha, finding himself not able to hold out long against so considerable a force, resolved on making one bold attempt. He selected seven hundred of his choicest troops, at the head of whom he made a desperate sally, intending to break through the quarters of the king of Edom. But this attempt proved fruitless, he being repulsed, and glad to save himself by a hasty retreat to his city. This circumstance so deeply affected him, that, in a mere fit of desperation, he sacrificed his eldest son* on the walls of the city, which being seen by the Israelites, they were struck with such horror, at so barbarous an action, that they immediately raised the siege, and retired to their own country.

* Not only the Holy Scriptures, but several heathen authors assure us, that in cases of great extremity, it was customary amongst various people to sacrifice to their gods whatever was most dear to them. Cæsar in his war with the Gauls tell us, that when they were afflicted with grievous diseases, or in time of war, or great danger, they either offered men for sacrifices, or vowed that they would offer them; without which they imagined their gods could never be appeased. In conformity with this horrid custom, and to appease, no doubt, as he thought, the anger of his idol Chemosh, the king of Moab made this costly sacrifice of his eldest son; a deed which, it is plain, was held in the greatest abhorrence by the Israelites, who to prevent any more such sacrifices, *departed from him, and returned into their own land.*

After the defeat of the Moabites, and the raising of the siege of Kirharasheth, Elisha the prophet accompanied the king of Israel to Samaria, where he soon distinguished his superior powers by the performance of many great and singular miracles.

A poor woman, widow of one of the sons of the prophets, complained to him that her husband had left her poor, and that not having any thing to satisfy his creditors, they came to take away her two sons to make slaves of them.* Elisha asked her what she had in the house; to which she replied, that she had only a pot of oil. Elisha bade her borrow what empty vessels she could of her neighbors, and take them home with her; then to shut herself up with her two sons, and from her little but multiplied store, to pour into the vessels till they were full. The woman did as she was commanded, and the oil continued to run from her own vessel till all those she had borrowed were filled. She then went to Elisha, to tell him what had passed, and to thank him for his interposition in her behalf; upon which the prophet told her to dispose of as much of the oil as would satisfy her creditors, and that with the remainder she might support herself and family.

This miracle was soon succeeded by another. Elisha used frequently to go to Shunam, in the way to which lived a very wealthy woman, who, taking particular notice of him, invited him to her house, and treated him with great hospitality. After having called several times, and

* The Jewish law looked upon children as the proper goods of their parents, who had power to sell them for seven years, as their creditors had to compel them to do it in order to pay their debts. From the Jews this custom was spread to the Athenians, and from them to the Romans. The Romans, indeed, had the most absolute control over their children: by the decree of Romulus they could imprison, beat, kill, or sell their sons for slaves. Numa Pompilius first moderated this severity; and the emperor Dioclesian made a law that no free person should be sold on account of debt. The ancient Athenians had the like jurisdiction over their children; but Solon reformed this cruel custom, as, indeed, it seemed a little hard that the children of a poor man, who had no manner of inheritance left them, should be compelled into slavery, in order to pay their deceased father's debts; and yet, that this was the custom appears evident from the circumstance in question, the prophet, instead of reproving the creditors of the woman, putting her in a way how to pay the debts of her deceased husband.

refreshed himself at this woman's house, when on his journey to Shunam, she began to consider him in a light different to the generality of mankind, and expressed her sentiments on this head (as well as her desire to accommodate him the better) to her husband in these words: *Behold, (said she) I perceive that this is an holy man of God, which passeth by us continually. Let us make a little chamber, I pray thee, and let us set there for him a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick; and it shall be, when he cometh to us, that he shall turn in thither.*

The husband readily agreed to this proposition, and when the prophet next called she invited him to stay and repose himself for the night, as he would be the better enabled to prosecute his journey the next morning. Elisha accepted the woman's offer, and after refreshing himself, retired to the apartment which they had provided on the occasion.

Elisha, after having been repeatedly entertained by this woman, thought it necessary to make some amends for the kind treatment he had received from this hospitable stranger. He accordingly one day sent to her his servant Gehazi to acquaint her that he was desirous of making a grateful acknowledgment for her repeated civilities, and that if she had any request to make either to the king, or the general of his army, he would readily deliver it, and doubted not but it would be attended with success. She told Gehazi that she lived in friendship with her neighbors, and that she had not any occasion to complain, or wish for any thing more than what she then enjoyed. Gehazi returned with this answer to his master, who asked him what he should do for her? Gehazi replied, *She hath no child, and her husband is old.* Elisha then ordered his servant to go and fetch her to him. She accordingly came, and as soon as Elisha saw her, he said, *About this season, according to the course of life, thou shalt have a son.* The woman at first distrusted the prophet, but soon after found that she had conceived, and, in the proper course of time was delivered of a son about the season predicted by the prophet.

When the child was grown up, so that he could run about, he was one day taken exceeding ill while he was with his father among the reapers in the field; and being

carried home by a servant. he lay on his mother's lap till noon, and then expired. The afflicted mother, thus bereft of her only child, carried him up to the chamber, where Elisha was accustomed to lodge when on his way to Shunam, and laid him on his bed. Having done this she saddled an ass, and set out, with the greatest expedition for Mount Carmel, where she knew Elisha at that time resided. When she came within sight of the place, the prophet observing her to come in great haste and disorder, and knowing her, sent his servant Gehazi to meet her, and to ask if all was well. After giving an answer to this question, she hastened to Elisha, whom she no sooner saw than she threw herself at his feet, and, with tears flowing from her cheeks, related the particulars of the loss of her son. Elisha bade Gehazi take his staff, hasten with all expedition to the Shunamite's house, and lay it on the face of the child. This, however, was far from satisfying the distressed mother, who said to Elisha, *As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee.* Elisha, seeing how sensibly she was affected, complied with her request, and accompanied her home. In the mean time Gehazi (who had arrived at her house some time before Elisha) did as he was ordered by laying the staff on the face of the child. But this had not the least effect, upon which Gehazi left the house in order to return to his master. He had not, however, gone far before he met Elisha, in company with the woman, to whom he related what had passed, that he had done as he had commanded him, but to no purpose, for *the child was not awaked.*

As soon as Elisha entered the house he went up to the chamber where the child lay, and making fast the door, first *prayed unto the Lord*, and then laid himself gently on the child, in which situation he continued for some time, till at length life returned, and the child, after sneezing seven times, opened its eyes. Elisha then called the mother, who immediately coming up, he said to her, *Take up thy son.* The woman, overjoyed at seeing her son alive again, prostrated herself before Elisha, then took up her child, and left the room; after which the prophet took his leave and departed.

From this woman's house Elisha went to Gilgal, where at that time there happened to be a great dearth. There

being in this place a school of the prophets, Elisha ordered his servants to go into the fields, and gather herbs to make pottage, wherewith he intended to regale them. The servants did as they were directed, but one of them, through mistake, instead of wholesome herbs, gathered one of a very poisonous quality, which being shred in with the rest infected the whole, so that the young prophets no sooner tasted of the pottage, than they exclaimed, *O thou Man of God, there is death in the pot!* Elisha, on this, ordered them to bring him some meal, which being done, he threw it into the pot, by means whereof the poisonous quality was removed, the pottage became wholesome, and the young prophets regaled themselves with it without sustaining the least injury.

During the prophet's stay at Gilgal there came a man from Baal-shalisha, who brought him a present of twenty barley loaves of the first-fruits of the harvest. Elisha ordered the man to give them to the people that they might eat. The man, thinking so small a quantity was insufficient to satisfy the multitude, said, *What! should I set this before an hundred men?* Elisha replied, *Give the people that they may eat: for thus saith the Lord: They shall eat, and shall leave thereof.* The man did as he was ordered, upon which the people *did eat, and left thereof*, according to the word of the Lord.

These miracles gave such encouragement to the young prophets, that they addressed themselves to Elisha to have their habitation enlarged, it being too scanty for their reception. They therefore desired permission to go to Jordan to fetch timber for the purpose, and begged the prophet to accompany them on the business. Elisha complied with their request, and as they were felling trees by the side of the river, one of them accidentally dropped his ax, which falling in, prevented him from prosecuting his business. Not knowing what to do for the recovery of his ax, the man laid his complaint before Elisha, who asked him where it fell. The man shewing him the place, he cut a stick, and throwing it into the river, the ax immediately appeared on the surface of the water, which being taken up was restored to the person who had dropped it.

But the miracle more particularly pointed out in the Sacred History, performed by Elisha, is the following, which took place a short time after his return to Samaria.

Naaman, the king of Syria's general, a man famous for his exploits in war, and in high esteem with his master, had long been afflicted with a most violent leprosy, and had made application to the most eminent physicians of Syria, without obtaining the least relief. At length, his friends advised him to get letters of recommendation from the king his master to the king of Israel, beseeching him to use his utmost endeavors to procure a remedy for his faithful servant Naaman. The king of Syria complied with his general's request, upon which he set forward for Samaria, taking with him as a present to the king ten talents of silver, six thousand pieces of gold, and ten changes of raiment.

As soon as the king of Israel had read the letter delivered to him by Naaman from his master the king of Syria, he rent his clothes, and said, "Am I a God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy? wherefore consider, I pray you, and see how he seeketh a quarrel against me." News of this being communicated to Elisha, he immediately dispatched a servant to the king with this message: "Wherefore hast thou rent thy clothes? let him come to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel."

In consequence of this message the king referred Naaman to the prophet Elisha, to whom he immediately repaired with all his attendants and stately equipage. On his arrival at Elisha's house, instead of being received in form, as he expected, the prophet sent a servant to him with this message: "Go, and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again unto thee, and thou shalt be clean."

The proud Syrian, thinking himself not well treated, and expecting, very likely, that the prophet, by some personal act, would have performed the cure, was highly offended, and resolved immediately to return home. But being advised by his principal attendants that since the prescription was so easy, and to make the experiment would not be attended with much trouble, he went to the

river, and after having bathed seven times therein, found himself perfectly cured.

Naaman, rejoiced at his unexpected recovery, returned to Elisha, to whom he acknowledged that there was no other God than the God of Israel. He then importunately pressed him to receive a present, but this the prophet would by no means accept. In grateful acknowledgment of the benefit received, Naaman protested to Elisha that he would never after sacrifice to any but the God of Israel, and then begged him that he would give him two mules' burthens of earth* to carry home, wherewith he might build an altar. To deprecate any offence that might arise from waiting on the king his master when he went to worship in the temple of Rimmon, the idol of the Syrians, he, addressing himself to the prophet, said, "In this thing the Lord pardon thy servant, that when my master goeth into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leaneth on my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon: when I bow down myself in the house of Rimmon, the Lord pardon thy servant in this thing." To which the prophet gave him no other answer than this, *Go in peace.*

The Syrian General being thus dismissed by Elisha, took his leave, and set out on his return home. Gehazi, Elisha's servant, thinking it unreasonable that so wealthy a person should go off without paying any thing for so great a benefit, resolved to get something for himself, though his master had refused the presents offered. He therefore (unknown to any one, as he thought) followed Naaman, and soon overtook him. The general, knowing him to be the prophet's servant, no sooner saw him, than he alighted from his chariot, and demanded his business.

* He desired the earth of the land, because he thought it more holy and acceptable to God, and proper for his service; or because he would, by this token, declare his conjunction with the people of Israel in the true worship, and constantly put himself in mind of his great obligation to that God, from whose land this earth was taken. He might have had indeed enough of this earth without asking any one for it, but he desired the prophet to give it him, as believing, perhaps, that he, who put such virtue into the waters of Israel, could put as much in the earth thereof, and make it as useful and beneficial to him in another way. These thoughts, indeed, were groundless and extravagant, but yet were excusable in an heathen and novice, that was not as yet sufficiently instructed in the true religion.

Gehazi told him, that his master desired he would send him a talent of silver, and two changes of garments, for two sons of the prophets, who, since his departure, were come to visit him. Naaman, glad of this opportunity of making some acknowledgment to Elisha for the benefits he had received, pressed Gehazi, instead of one, to take two talents of silver with the garments. He likewise sent two of his own servants to carry them home; but before they came to the house Gehazi dismissed them, and then concealed the money and garments for his own use.

As soon as Gehazi came into the presence of his master, he asked him where he had been. To which he replied, *Thy servant went no whither.* Elisha then particularized all that had happened, and, as a punishment for Gehazi's baseness in endeavoring to impose on him, denounced this sentence: That the leprosy of which he had cured Naaman should adhere to him and his family forever. This prophecy immediately took place, and Gehazi was changed from a clean man into a deplorable leper.

The prophet Elisha certainly did Benhadad, king of Syria, a very material piece of service in curing Naaman, his great favorite, and general of his army, of a confirmed leprosy. But these services, however they might have been considered at first, were soon forgot, and Benhadad gave fresh instances of his great enmity towards the Israelites. Having raised a very considerable army with a design of besieging Samaria, he opened the campaign with the stratagems of war; and, in hopes of surprizing Jehoram's troops, placed ambuscades in various parts. But Elisha, by his spirit of prophecy, knew all his proceedings, and gave the king of Israel such intelligence, that all Benhadad's stratagems proved ineffectual.

Benhadad, finding himself fail in every attempt by stratagem, at first suspected that his counsels were betrayed; but this suspicion was removed by one of his officers telling him that Elisha (who was then at Dothan, a small city belonging to the half tribe of Manasseh, and not far from Samaria) must certainly have been the cause of all his disappointments.* Benhadad, giving credit to the observa-

* It is very reasonable to suppose that Naaman, on his return from Samaria, spread the fame of Elisha so much in the court of Syria, that some of the great men there might have the curiosity to make a

tion made by his officer, determined to seek revenge on Elisha, for which purpose he sent a detachment of his men to Dothan to seize him, and who, that very same night, invested the city.

Elisha's servant rising early the next morning, saw the place surrounded by a large body of men; not knowing of any forces to oppose them, he was greatly alarmed, and, running hastily to his master, expressed his fear and concern in these words: *Alas, my master! how shall we do?* Elisha told him to fear not; after which he prayed, and said, *Lord, open his eyes that he may see.*† This request was granted: the man's eyes were immediately opened, and he beheld a multitude of horses and chariots of fire standing in array in order to protect them. Elisha still continued praying to God, to defend them against the enemy, the consequence of which was that when they attempted to lay close siege to the place, they were suddenly struck with such a dimness as to lose the power of sight. When Elisha found this, he persuaded them that they had missed their way, and had mistaken the place they were bound to; after which he caused them to be led into the very midst of Samaria, where, at the prophet's request, God was pleased to open their eyes, that they might behold the great danger in which they were involved.

When the king of Israel understood what a number of the enemy were in his city, and how much they lay at his farther enquiry concerning him; and being informed of his miraculous works, they might from thence conclude that he could tell the greatest secrets, as well as perform the wonders related of him, and that, therefore, in all probability, he was the person who gave the king of Israel intelligence of all the schemes that had been contrived to ensnare him.

* It is probable this young man had been but a little time with his master; no longer than since Gehazi's dismissal; and therefore had not seen any proofs of his master's power in working miracles, or, if he had, the great and imminent danger he thought his master in might well be allowed to raise his fear, and shake his faith; and therefore some miracle was necessary for the removal of the one, and the confirmation of the other. It is allowed that angels, whether they are purely spiritual, or clothed with some material vehicle, cannot be seen by mortal eyes; and therefore as Elisha himself, without a peculiar vouchsafement of God, could not discern the heavenly host which at this time encamped about him, so he requested of God that, for the causes above mentioned, his servant might be indulged with that privilege.

mercy, he would willingly have put them all to the sword: but Elisha by all means dissuaded him from it, telling him that, as he would hardly be so cruel as to kill, in cold blood, even prisoners that were taken in war, much less should he touch those who were brought into his hands by the Providence of God. He therefore advised him to treat them with all manner of civility, and let them go: "Set bread and water before them (said he) that they may eat and drink, and go to their master." Jehoram did as the prophet directed, and the men, after refreshing themselves with the entertainment provided for them, returned to their own country.

As soon as these men got home they gave the king their master a minute account of all that had happened during their absence; on the reflection of which Benhadad resolved that, from thenceforward, he would never seek to injure the king of Israel in a treacherous manner; but, confiding in his own numbers and strength, would engage him in open war.

In consequence of this resolution Benhadad (forgetting the late kind behavior of Jehoram to his subjects, and still retaining a mortal hatred against the Israelites) marched with a considerable army to Samaria, laid close siege to the place, and in a short time reduced the people to such distress, that an ass's head was sold for fourscore pieces of silver, and five pieces were given for three quarters of a pint of pulse. In this distress Jehoram was apprehensive that some person might inform the enemy to what a degree the famine had reduced them; for which reason he daily walked round the fortifications, had an eye upon the guards, and was very attentive that no person whatever should enter the city without first undergoing a proper examination.

As Jehoram was one day walking on the walls of the city on this business, a strange woman called to him, and requested his assistance. The king, supposing the woman wanted food, asked her how she could expect him to relieve her, since he had neither barns nor wine-presses? The woman told him, she did not solicit for food, but for justice, and earnestly requested him to determine a dispute between herself and another woman. The king asking her meaning, she told him that her neighbor and herself, having each a male infant, and both ready to perish for want of

food, had agreed to kill their children in turn to prevent starving. That her child was killed and dressed on the preceding day, and the other woman partook of it; but now that she ought to partake of her child, the woman had departed from her promise, and concealed it.*

This melancholy tale so affected the king, that he rent his clothes, and, in a fit of rage, vowed to be revenged on Elisha, whom he took to be the cause of all the calamity. For this purpose he sent an officer to take off his head, whilst himself followed to see that his orders were properly executed.

Elisha, by the spirit of prophecy, had notice of this wicked design against his life; and therefore, having acquainted the people with it who were with him, he desired them to secure the doors, that the officer might not be admitted till the arrival of the king.

As soon as Jehoram came, the prophet earnestly exhorted him to have a little patience, and God would remove this affliction in due time. The king in a fit of despair, told him he would wait no longer, without trying some expedient whereby to obtain relief, and that since he would not offer any prayer to his God in behalf of the people, he would go and worship his father's idols, who, peradventure, would deliver him from the great evils under which he then labored. In answer to this the prophet assured him, that by the same hour, on the following day, provisions should be so cheap in Samaria, that the market price of a measure of fine flour should be only a shekel,† and the same sum for two measures of barley.

* The manner in which this melancholy story is related in the scriptures is as follows: *And as the king of Israel was passing by upon the wall, there cried a woman unto him, saying, Help, my lord, O king. And he said, If the Lord do not help thee, whence shall I help thee? out of the barn-floor, or out of the wine-press? And the king said unto her, What aileth thee? And she answered, This woman said unto me, Give thy son that we may eat him to-day, and we will eat my son to-morrow. So we boiled my son, and did eat him; and I said unto her the next day, Give thy son, that we may eat him; and she hath hid her son, 2 Kings, vi. 26, &c.* A melancholy story indeed! and a terrible display of that divine vengeance which Moses had long before told the Israelites would befall them, if they rebelled against God. See Deut. xxviii. 53.

† The shekel was much about the same as three shillings of our money; and though to have a measure of fine flour for such a sum at

This prediction was credited by the king, and all those of his attendants who had seen different proofs of the prophet's veracity. But one of the king's favorite officers, who commanded a third of his army, affirmed it to be a thing impossible, unless God should rain corn from the clouds. The prophet made him a short answer to this effect: "that himself should see the plenty, but should not be permitted to taste of it;" which prediction accordingly came to pass.

It happened at this time that there were four leprous persons lived without the gates of the city, it not being customary, according to the ceremonial part of the law, to admit any such within the walls. The famine raged with such violence in the city that no provisions could be expected from that quarter; and to remain where they were was but to give themselves up to the most lamentable of deaths: they therefore unanimously resolved to expose themselves to the mercy of the enemy, who would either relieve their necessities, or put them to death, so that their miseries would, one way or other, be soon terminated.

In consequence of this resolution, before it was day-light the next morning, they proceeded towards the camp of the Syrians, whither they had no sooner arrived, than to their great surprize, they found it entirely deserted by the enemy. On the approach of the lepers, the Syrians imagined they heard the noise of chariots and horses, and therefore concluded that the king of Israel had called in to his assistance the Hittites and Egyptians, and were coming to surprize them. This conjecture threw them into the greatest consternation, insomuch that every man began to shift for himself, and the whole army retired in confusion, leaving behind them their tents, cattle, treasure, and great abundance of all the necessaries of life.

The lepers, having gone throughout the camp, and found all safe, first regaled themselves in one of the tents, and then carried away a great quantity of gold, and other rich effects, all which they buried in a hole they had dug for the purpose. But while they were thus regaling and providing for themselves, they reflected that their country-

other times would not have been reckoned cheap, yet, according to the then situation of affairs, it was so to a very wonderful degree.

men were under the dismal apprehension of starving in the town, or perishing by the enemy, and that it was but justice to inform them as soon as possible, of the happy event that had taken place. *We do not well, said they to each other: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace: if we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us: now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king's household.*

In consequence of this reflection, they immediately returned to the city, and informed the porter at the gate, that the Syrians were fled, and left behind them all their tents, cattle, treasure, &c.

Intelligence of this being soon communicated to the king, he immediately summoned a council, to whom he gave it as his opinion, that it was only an artifice of the enemy to draw them out of the city, and that, placing themselves in ambush, they would suddenly fall on them, and obtain a complete victory. The council were of the king's opinion, one of whom observed, that it would be proper to send two horsemen as far as the river Jordan, and if their suggestions were justly founded, and they should be made prisoners, the loss would not be very considerable; but, if they did not discover any part of the enemy, they might reasonably suppose that all was safe, and that they had retired to their own country.

The king readily agreed to this proposal, and two men, mounted on horses, were immediately dispatched on the business. In a short time they returned, with an account that not a single person of the enemy was to be seen; but that there was plenty of corn and arms, with abundance of other valuable articles which the Syrians had left behind them.

In consequence of this intelligence, the people rushed out of the city in great numbers, pillaged the camp of the enemy, and brought in such a quantity of provisions, that, according to Elisha's prediction, one measure of flour, and two of barley, were sold each for a shekel. The nobleman who had disputed the prophecy of Elisha, was appointed by the king, to guard the gate which led from the city to the camp, in order to prevent disorder, but the crowd pressed on him with such vehemence that he was trampled to death; so that, though he saw the great abun-

dance of provisions brought to market, yet, as Elisha had predicted, he did not *eat thereof*.—Thus did the Lord work a double miracle for his people; at once delivering them from the Syrians, and giving them an unexpected supply for their necessities; fulfilling exactly the predictions of his prophet, and thus giving the highest authority to his mission.

After this, a very severe and long famine took place in the land of Israel, of which Elisha being apprized, gave his hospitable hostess the Shunamite warning, advising her to go with her family into some other country, till the calamity ceased. *Arise*, said he, *and go thou and thine household, and sojourn wheresoever thou canst; for the Lord hath called for a famine, and it shall come upon the land seven years.* The woman took the prophet's advice, but on her return, at the expiration of the seven years, found her estate was seized, and in the possession of strangers. On her asking for her right, and to be re-possessed of her estate, the usurpers refused her request, upon which she went to the king, who happened at the time to be talking with Gehazi, the late servant of Elisha, and who was recounting to him the various miracles he had seen performed by his master. As soon as Gehazi beheld the woman and her son, he told the king she was the person of whom he had been speaking, and the boy with her was her son, whom his master, after he was dead, had raised to life. The woman confirming what Gehazi had asserted, the king gave orders that her estate should not only be restored, but that the profits thereof should be paid her, from the time she left it to the day of her return.

From the miraculous raising of the siege of Samaria, Benhadad was deterred from making any farther attempts upon Israel: nor do we hear any thing more of him in the Sacred History, till about seven years after, when Elisha went to Damascus, the capital of Syria, to execute the order of declaring Hazael king, which was originally given to his predecessor Elijah.

Benhadad was at this time exceeding ill,* and hearing of the arrival of the prophet, whose great power and abili-

* The scripture does not inform us of the nature of Benhadad's disorder; but it is very evident that it was not so desperate, but that he might have recovered, had he not had foul play for his life. Ac-

ties he well knew, he sent Hazael, (who was then become one of his prime ministers) to wait upon him with a very handsome present, and to enquire of him whether or not, he should recover from the sickness under which he then labored. The prophet told him that the king might recover, but that *the Lord had shewed him he should surely die*. Elisha then looking steadfastly at Hazael, burst into a flood of tears; upon which the other asked, why he wept. The prophet replied, *Because I know the evil that thou wilt do unto the children of Israel: their strong holds wilt thou set on fire, and their young men wilt thou slay with the sword, and wilt dash their children, and rip up their women with child*. Hazael asked how he could be the author of such distress? To which Elisha replied, *The Lord hath shewed me that thou shalt be king over Syria*.

At these words Hazael's ambition took wing: he immediately left the prophet, and returning to his master, instead of telling him what had passed, gave him great hopes of his recovery. This, however, he soon took care to prevent, for the next morning he put him to death, by stifling him with a thick cloth dipped in water. As Benhadad had not any son of his own, and Hazael was a man universally esteemed by the people, more especially the army, he was, without hesitation, declared his successor.

The next thing Elisha set about, was to have Jehu anointed king of Israel, in conformity to the order given to his master Elijah, and to the Divine decree of punishing the family of Ahab for their manifold impieties.

The city of Ramoth-gilead had been a place of long dispute between the two crowns of Israel and Syria. Hazael, being an ambitious man, soon after his accession, invested the place, and made himself master of it; in consequence of which, Jehoram, king of Israel, assisted by Ahaziah, king of Judah, marched with their forces against him. On the first onset, Jehoram received a very dangerous wound,

According to the account of Josephus, it was no more than a fit of melancholy; for, "when he came to understand (as he tells us) that all the alarms of chariots and horsemen, that had given such an irreparable route to him and his army were, in truth, only judicial impressions of fright and terror, without any foundation, he looked upon it as a declaration from heaven against him; and this anxiety of thought made him as sick in body as he was in mind."

so that he was obliged to quit the army, and retire to Jezreel. His troops, however, continued to oppose the enemy under the command of Jehu, who, in the king's absence, acted as captain-general, and, in a short time, routed the enemy, and made himself master of the place.

The prophet Elisha, thinking this a very proper opportunity of executing the orders left him by Elijah, relative to the punishment of the house of Ahab, called one of his minor prophets, whom he ordered to go to Ramoth-gilead, and there anoint Jehu, the grandson of Nimshi, king of Israel. He directed him to perform the ceremony in as private a manner as possible, and after he had so done, to come away with the utmost expedition.

When the young prophet arrived at Ramoth-gilead, he found Jehu engaged with his officers, in consulting what steps should be taken relative to the farther prosecution of the war. On entering the place where they were assembled, he told Jehu he had a message to deliver to him in private. Jehu immediately retired with him into an inner chamber, which they had no sooner entered, than the prophet, taking out a vial of oil, poured it on his head, and then addressed him as follows: "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I have anointed thee king over the people of the Lord, even over Israel. And thou shalt smite the house of Ahab thy master, that I may avenge the blood of my servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of the Lord, at the hand of Jezebel. I will make the house of Ahab like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha, the son of Abijah. And the dogs shall eat Jezebel in the portion of Jezreel, and there shall be none to bury her." Having said this, the prophet opened the door of the room, and hastily departed.

As soon as Jehu returned to the council-chamber, the officers, having, from the appearance of the prophet, entertained a very mean opinion of him, asked who he was, and what he wanted. Jehu, at first gave them an evasive answer, but they seeming desirous of being particularly informed, he related to them all that had passed, told them he was a prophet, and that his business was to anoint him king of Israel, which he had no sooner done than he quitted the room and hastened away.

Notwithstanding the indifferent opinion the officers had before entertained of the prophet, when they understood what he had done, they considered the matter in a very serious light, and universally approving of the choice, immediately declared Jehu king of Israel.

The next day Jehu marched with a considerable body of forces to Jezreel, where Jehoram still continued on account of the wounds he received from the Syrians, and whither Ahaziah, king of Judah, had come to pay him a visit on the occasion.

Jehu's intent was, to get to Jezreel before Jehoram could receive any intelligence of what had passed at Ramoth-gilead, and there to surprize and seize him. But in this he was disappointed by means of a centinel* on the watch-tower of the city, who perceiving a large body of men approaching, and concluding that it was Jehu who commanded them, he hastily ran to Jehoram, and acquainted him with the particulars of what he had seen, and his conjectures who they were. In consequence of this, Jehoram immediately dispatched a messenger on horseback to the party, in order to know of whom it was composed. The man obeyed, and on making enquiry relative to the state of the army, Jehu, instead of satisfying him, ordered him to fall in the rear and join the march. The centinel on the watch-tower, seeing the messenger detained, told it to the king, who immediately dispatched a second person on the same errand; but he being likewise detained, the two kings mounted each their chariot, and set out to meet Jehu, who continued his march at a very regular and moderate pace. They met (as the Providence of God would have it) near the vineyard of Naboth, the Jezreelite, and very probably not far from the spot where that innocent and injured man was stoned to death. On their first meeting, Jehoram questioned Jehu concerning the situation of his troops,

* In times of peace, as well as war, it was customary to have watchmen set on high places, wherever the king was, to prevent his being surprized. Thus David, at Jerusalem, was informed by the watchmen, that his sons were escaped from the slaughter of Absalom, when he thought them all lost, 2 Sam. xiii. 34. and therefore Jehoram, who had an army lying before Ramoth-gilead, had great reason to keep a watchful eye upon every person that came to Jezreel, more especially from that quarter.

saying, *Is it peace, Jehu?* To which the other replied, *What peace, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel, and her witchcrafts are so many?*

From this answer Jehoram was convinced that Jehu had conspired against him, and was come, in an hostile manner, to avenge the idolatry and wickedness of his mother Jezebel. He, therefore, thinking his life in danger, turned his chariot, and endeavored to save himself by flight. But Jehu prevented him from effecting his design, for at that instant he let fly an arrow at him, which penetrating his heart, he fell dead in his chariot. As soon as Jehu saw this he ordered Bidkar, an officer of his guards, to throw the body into Naboth's field, which was near at hand, and there leave it, whereby was fulfilled the word of the Lord as spoken by the prophet Elijah, namely, that Ahab and his whole race should perish on the very spot, which he had unwarrantably usurped from Naboth.

When Ahaziah, king of Judah, saw the fate of Jehoram, he attempted to make his escape, but was pursued by a party of Jehu's men, who came up with him at Gur, and, as he was sitting in his chariot, gave him a mortal wound, so that, as soon as he reached Megiddo, he died. His remains were removed to Jerusalem, and there interred in the royal sepulchre of his ancestors. He reigned over Judah not quite two years, and was succeeded by his mother Athaliah, who, being an ambitious and enterprising woman, usurped the throne.

In the mean time Jehu made the best of his way to Jezreel, where Jezebel, the queen-mother, resolving to keep up her grandeur to the last, had dressed herself in her best attire, and fixed herself at a window of the gate of the city in order to view the procession. As soon as Jehu came opposite to the window she upbraided him with treachery, and reminded him of the unhappy fate of Zimri, who slew his king and master Elon. Jehu, without making her any answer, called out to her attendants, demanding them immediately to throw her down. She had with her two or three eunuchs, who being terrified at the peremptory demand of Jehu, and the sight of his formidable attendants, immediately obeyed his orders; the walls of the tower, against which she struck in falling, were stained with her blood, and when her body fell to the

ground it was so trampled upon by the horses as to be quite disfigured. Soon after Jehu arrived at the palace, he gave orders, in respect to the exalted station of Jezebel,* that her domestics should cause her remains to be buried with the honors due to her rank; but when they went to seek for her body, they found only a part of the skull, the palms of her hands, and her feet, the rest having been devoured by dogs. When Jehu was informed of this circumstance it gave him an additional veneration towards the prophecies of Elijah, who had foretold that, *in the portion of Jezreel should dogs eat the flesh of Jezebel.*

Jehu having settled himself in the quiet possession of Jezreel, set about devising means for a total extirpation of the family of Ahab. There were at this time seventy sons of that prince in Samaria, under the direction of the nobles, elders, and other great men of the city. Jehu, to effect his intentions, wrote letters to these guardians of the princes, desiring them to chuse out one, whom they thought most fit, to sit on the throne of Israel. This he did to sound their inclinations; but they, being well aware of his intent, and not unacquainted with the fate of the two kings, Jehoram and Ahaziah, returned him a very submissive answer, in which they declared themselves at his devotion. *We are thy servants, said they, and will do all that thou shalt bid us; we will not make any king: do thou that which is good in thine eyes.*

This declaration was highly agreeable to Jehu, who determined to take immediate advantage of it. He accordingly wrote other letters to the governors and guardians of the seventy princes, commanding them to send him their heads† the next day to Jezreel. *If ye be mine, said he,*

* Jezebel was the daughter of Eth-baal, king of Tyre; the wife of Ahab, and the mother-in-law of Jehoram, king of Judah, and the aunt of Ahaziah, who was likewise king of Judah.

† Besides the accomplishment of the Divine decree, Jehu had this farther design in requesting this cruel service of the rulers, elders and great men of the nation, viz. that thereby he might engage them in the same crime and conspiracy with himself: for, by prevailing with them to murder Ahab's kinsmen in this manner, he tied them to his interest so closely, that if any of the inferior people had been inclined to oppose his designs, they were, by these means, deprived of any man of figure and distinction to head them; and not only so, but by this expedient, Jehu thought likewise that he might, in a great measure, justify, at least lessen the odium of his own conduct.

and if ye will hearken unto my voice, take ye the heads of the men of your master's sons, and come to me to Jezreel by to-morrow this time.

The nobility and elders of Samaria strictly complied with this second demand of Jehu. They immediately ordered the heads of all the princes to be cut off, and putting them in baskets, sent them to Jezreel. Jehu, being informed of their arrival, told the messengers to lay them in two heaps at the entrance of the city, and there let them remain that night. The next morning he went to the place, and, after viewing the heads, thus addressed the people: *Ye be righteous: behold, I conspired against my master and slew him: but who slew all these?**

The next step Jehu took was, to destroy all that remained of Ahab's family in Jezreel. This he did with the strictest severity, not only putting to death such as were descended from him, but likewise the great men of his court, together with all his friends and priests, so that not a single person who had been any ways attached to Ahab, or his family, was left.

Having done this, Jehu left Jezreel, and set out for Samaria, the capital of the Israelitish dominions. On his way he overtook a company, consisting of forty-two people; and asking them who they were, and where they were going, they replied, that they were relations of Ahaziah, king of Judah, and were going to pay a visit to the court of Samaria, being ignorant of the fate of the two late kings, Jehoram and Ahaziah. As soon as Jehu understood who they were, he ordered his guards to seize them, and the whole forty-two people were immediately put to death.

When Jehu had got some way farther, he met Jehonadab, the son of Rechab, a man of great strictness and sobriety of life, who applauding his zealous endeavors for

* This was as much as to say, "I own, indeed, that I was a great instrument in taking off the late king; but am I more culpable than are the friends, the counsellors, the officers of Ahab? I pretend not to conceal my fault; but the approbation, which the principal men of the nation have given it, in taking up arms against the house of Ahab, and the wonderful success that has attended this enterprise of mine, are not these certain proofs that God has raised one up to execute his decree in this respect? And ought you not to acknowledge, in this case, the interposition of his hand?"

extirpating the race of Ahab, he took him into his chariot, saying, *Come with me, and see my zeal for the Lord.*

The first thing Jehu did after his arrival at Samaria was, to put to death all the descendants of Ahab that could be found in that city, so that in a short time the whole race were totally extirpated. He next formed the resolution of destroying the temple of Baal, together with all the false prophets and idolatrous priests, which design he carried into execution by the following stratagem. Calling together an assembly of the people, he told them that he was determined to pay a more strict attention to the worship of Baal than had been hitherto observed: *Ahab, said he, served Baal a little; but Jehu shall serve him much.* He then issued out a proclamation, in which he told the people that he intended to offer an uncommon sacrifice to Baal, and commanded all his priests, prophets and worshippers, on pain of death, to be present at the solemnity. The people strictly obeyed this injunction, and on the appointed day assembled at the temple, when the priests and prophets were presented with those vestments in which they were accustomed to be habited at the performance of their religious ceremonies. When Jehu arrived at the temple, accompanied by Jehonadab, he found it full even from one end to the other, so strictly did the people pay obedience to his proclamation;* and on his entering it, he commanded all persons to leave it who were not the true worshippers of Baal. This being

* It may be asked how all the worshippers of Baal could be induced, after Jehu's conduct, to assemble together? To which it may be replied, that as Jehu was a person of known indifference in matters of religion, who in this respect had always conformed to the humors of the court, and in the reign of king Ahab had been a strenuous worshipper of Baal, the people could not tell when they read his proclamation of a great feast of Baal, but that he had returned in good earnest to the religion which he had once embraced, and only deserted for a time, in complacency to others. But whether they deluded themselves into this persuasion or not, they knew by experience that Jehu was a man of a fierce and bloody temper, who would not fail to put his threats into execution; and therefore reading in the same proclamation, *Whosoever shall be wanting, he shall not live,* they found themselves reduced to this sad dilemma, either to go or die; and therefore they thought it the wisest method to run the hazard, and throw themselves upon his mercy; having this at least to plead for themselves, that they were not disobedient to his commands.

done, the priests proceeded to perform their usual ceremonies, with which they went on without interruption for some time, till at length, having made an end of offering up the burnt-offering, they were suddenly surprized by a great number of Jehu's guards, who, by his orders, put every one of them to the sword. After this they broke down the image of Baal, together with all the other images in the place, the whole of which they formed into one pile and committed to the flames. They then totally destroyed the temple, and, that the place whereon it stood might, in future ages, be looked upon as despicable, they adapted it for the reception of all kinds of filth.

Thus did Jehu entirely destroy the family of Ahab, and the worship of Baal, in the kingdom of Israel: which proceedings were highly approved of by the Almighty, who was pleased to entail the crown of Israel on Jehu's family to the fourth generation.

Though Jehu had given some very strong proofs of wishing to root out idolatry, yet there was little stability in his heart. Policy prevailed against religion, and he was induced to continue the old idolatry, even where he had destroyed the new. He suffered the golden calves, which had been set up by Jeroboam, still to remain, and laid not the least restraint on those who worshipped them. These negligences gave great offence to God, who, to make him sensible of his displeasure, was pleased to stir up Hazael, king of Syria, to invade his country. He took several of his frontier towns, by which he opened a way to make ravages in various parts of his kingdom, especially in the country beyond Jordan, where the tribes of Manasseh, Gad and Reuben in particular, suffered the most violent oppression.

In a word, we may say of Jehu that, as his conduct was of a mixed nature, so God rewarded his obedience, but punished his idolatry. He continued to be harrassed by Hazael during the remainder of his reign, the whole of which was twenty-eight years, when he died, and was buried in the city of Samaria.

Though Jehu did well in executing that which was right in the sight of God with respect to the abolition of the worship of Baal, yet he was certainly a bad man in his heart. His obstinately persisting in the sin of Jeroboam,

by preserving the golden calves, and rather countenancing than endeavoring to restrain those who worshipped them, may be justly alledged against him as an argument of his false-heartedness in all the other actions of his life. The reasons why he continued in this kind of idolatry were much the same as those given by the institutor, namely, lest, by permitting his subjects to go to the place appointed for Divine worship, he might open a way for their return to the obedience of the house of David; and not only so, but disoblige likewise a great part of the nobility of the nation, who, by this time, had been long accustomed, and warmly attached, to the worship of the golden calves. Herein, however, he made a clear discovery of his folly and his sin, in not daring to trust God with the preservation of that kingdom, which he had so freely bestowed upon him. For these transgressions he was severely punished, his subjects rendered miserable, and his reign ingloriously closed.

Jehu was succeeded on the throne of Israel by his son Jehoahaz, who, to preserve the crown from uniting with that of Judah, pursued the same methods his predecessor had done with respect to worshipping the golden calves. For this God was pleased to afflict both him and his people, by delivering him into the hands of Hazael and his son Benhadad (the third Syrian king of that name) who reduced him to so low an ebb that he had no more than fifty horsemen, ten chariots, and ten thousand foot soldiers left. At length, from the many defeats he had received, and the grievous oppression under which he labored, grown weary of life, as well as government, after a very troublesome reign of seventeen years, he died, and was succeeded by his son Joash.—The particulars that attended the reign of this prince we shall reserve for the next chapter; and here return to relate such occurrences as took place in the kingdom of Judah.

When Athaliah, daughter of Ahab king of Israel, and widow of Jehoram king of Judah, was informed of the devastations which Jehu had made in the iniquitous family of her father, she formed the resolution of revenging their deaths by so effectually extirpating the line of David, as not to suffer a man to escape her vengeance who should boast an hereditary claim to the throne of Judah. To effect

this she gave orders that not only the children of Ahaziah, but likewise their offspring, should be all put to death. These orders were accordingly put in execution, but, from a circumstance that occurred, were not, as she intended, fully accomplished. At this time Jehosheba, the sister of Ahaziah, by the father's side, was married to Jehoiada the high priest; and while Athaliah's executioners were murdering all the rest, she stole away Jehoash, the son of Ahaziah, and secretly conveyed him to her own dwelling. From hence she removed him to an apartment in the temple, where she kept him concealed, (unknown to any person whatever except her husband) during the whole six years of Athaliah's reign over Judah.

After the expiration of six years Jehoiada, uncle to Jehoash, resolved to place his nephew on the throne of his ancestors. To effect this he got over to his interest most of the officers of the army, together with many of the leading men of the kingdom, whom he prevailed on to unite their endeavors towards investing the young prince with the regal dignity. Having bound themselves by an oath of fidelity and secrecy, they dispersed in order to summon the priests, Levites, and principal men of the tribes, in the name of the high priest, to meet, with all expedition, at Jerusalem. As soon as they were assembled, Jehoiada informed them, that on condition of engaging in an oath of secrecy, he would communicate to them a matter of the highest importance to the public weal, wherein he should have occasion to request their assistance. He then administered the oath to them; after which, pointing to Jehoash, he addressed them in words to this effect: "Behold your king: he is the only surviving branch of the house of David, whose posterity it was promised should reign over us. It is my advice that you divide yourselves into three parties, one to guard the person of the king, and the other two to secure the gates of the temple, that none may be permitted to enter (except the priests and Levites) on pain of death."

The whole assembly unanimously approved of the conduct of the high-priest, whose next business was, to open a magazine which had been deposited in the temple by David, and to deliver to them arrows, lances, and other implements of war. The different parties being placed in

their respective situations, Jehoiada brought forth the young prince, placed the crown on his head, put the book of the law into his hand, anointed him, and then proclaimed him king of Judah, the people expressing their approbation by the loudest acclamations.

The shouts of the people reaching the palace greatly alarmed Athaliah, who, immediately summoning her guards to assemble, repaired to the temple, where she gained a ready admittance, but her attendants were not suffered to accompany her. As soon as she entered the place, to her great surprize she saw the young king seated on a throne, which had been erected for the purpose, the crown of royalty on his head, and the people and great men about him expressing their joy on the occasion. Such an unexpected sight we may very naturally suppose stung Athaliah to the quick, who, after rending her clothes, vehemently cried out, *Treason, treason*. But Jehoiada soon silenced her. He ordered the guards immediately to conduct her out of the temple, and put her to death, saying, that place was not to be polluted by the blood of a person so abandoned to wickedness; and that whoever made any attempt to rescue or assist her should be put to the sword. In obedience to these orders, the guards conducted Athaliah to the stable-gate belonging to the palace, where, without any opposition, they put her to death.

As soon as the sentence pronounced by Jehoiada was executed upon Athaliah, he again assembled the populace in the temple, and administered to them the oath of allegiance to their new king. He then made two covenants, one between the Lord, and the king and the people, and the other between the king and the people only. By the first of these the people were to restore the true worship of God, continue it, and root out all idolatry. The other was, that the king should govern according to law, and that the people should pay a proper reverence to him as their legal sovereign.

These ceremonies being over the whole multitude hastened to the temple, which Jehoram and his wife Athaliah had built during the reign of Ahab king of Israel, near Jerusalem, and dedicated to the idol Baal. After destroying the image of Baal, and every kind of ornament within, they levelled the whole structure with the ground,

and put to death one Matan, a priest, who was then in waiting.

Jehoiada, agreeable to the institution of David, committed the care of the temple of Jerusalem to the priests and Levites; and, according to the law of Moses, appointed a solemn sacrifice and incense to be offered each day. Having made these and some other reforms in the service of the temple, Jehoiada, with all the rulers and officers, followed by the whole multitude, conducted the young king to the palace, seated him on the royal throne, and put him into quiet possession of the kingdom of Judah.

CHAP. V.

Jehoash reigns well during the life of his uncle Jehoiada. He collects money to repair the temple. He suffers the people to forsake the true worship of God, for which he is greatly distressed by Hazael king of Syria. He is afflicted with a most violent distemper, and at length assassinated by two of his domestics. Amaziah, his son, succeeds him in the government, and punishes the two men that murdered his father. He engages the Edomites, obtains a complete victory, and puts to death 10,000 men whom he had taken prisoners. He falls into idolatry, is vanquished by Joash king of Israel, and afterwards murdered by his own subjects. Joash pays a visit to the prophet Elisha, who bestows on him his blessing, and assures him of victory over his enemies. Death of Elisha. A dead man, by being placed in Elisha's tomb, and touching his body, is restored to life. Joash engages the king of Syria, and obtains a victory three different times. He dies, and is succeeded by his son Jeroboam, who enlarges the kingdom of Israel, and after whose death an inter-regnum takes place of twenty-two years.

JEHOASH, king of Judah, began his reign when seven years of age, at which time Jehu was in the seventh year of his reign over Israel. He was a just and religious prince so long as the good priest Jehoiada lived, and restored the worship of the true God; but he did not destroy the altars that were erected in the high places.

Some time after Jehoash had been on the throne of Judah he formed the resolution of repairing the temple, which had suffered great injury in the days of Jehoram and Athaliah. For this purpose he directed his uncle Jehoiada to send certain priests and Levites to the several parts of his dominions, in order to raise a supply of money for repairing the temple, which was to be done by laying a tax on the people at a certain sum per head.

Jehoiada being convinced that the people were not in a disposition to apply their money towards the ends proposed, omitted to put the king's commands in force, and they remained unexecuted till the twenty-third year of his reign. Jehoash then sent for the high priest, together with the priests and Levites, whom he censured for their negligence, and repeated his orders for having them set about the necessary methods for raising the contribution required.

A variety of expedients were suggested by Jehoiada for raising the money; and at length he adopted the following, as promising to be the least burthensome to the people. A chest made of wood was placed over the altar, through the cover of which was cut a slit for the purpose of admitting donations; which being done, it was recommended to the people to contribute towards the intended work in proportion to their zeal for the holy religion. The public, being perfectly satisfied with this mode of collecting the necessary sum, brought contributions of gold and silver in great abundance. The high-priest was entrusted with the key of the chest, which, in the presence of the king, was opened every day; and after the money was counted it was registered by the clerk of the treasury. When it was found that sufficient treasure was accumulated for beginning the work, masons, carpenters, and other artificers were employed, and in a short time every breach throughout the whole building was completely repaired.

About this time the good and pious Jehoiada, high-priest, and uncle to the king, paid the debt of nature in the 130th year of his age. He was universally beloved by the people, and in consideration of his steady attachment to the house of David, and his exemplary virtues, his remains were deposited in the sepulchre of the kings.

The death of Jehoiada was productive of fatal consequences both to the king and people. The heads of the

court, who were idolaters in their hearts, taking advantage of the weakness of Jehoash, by their crafty management and insinuations, first obtained a licence for themselves to worship such idols as they should think fit, and then proceeded to delude him into the like apostacy. These examples soon operated on the people in general, who, forsaking the temple of the Lord, addicted themselves to the worship of idols and groves consecrated to false gods, so that the true and established religion was held in the utmost contempt.

These impieties were highly offensive to God, who was pleased to send several prophets, to expostulate both with the king and people on their abominable apostacy, and to threaten them with a severe punishment, unless they immediately reformed, and returned to the true religion. But the vengeance denounced against them, and the repeated examples of the fate of their predecessors and families, upon whom the judgments of heaven had been inflicted as a punishment for the enormity of their crimes, were not sufficient to effect a reformation. At length, the prophet Zachariah, son to Jehoiada, the late high-priest, and uncle to the king, was induced to remonstrate against the general impiety. This he did in such strong terms, that the king was offended at his freedom, and, forgetting the kindness of his father and mother, to whom he was indebted for his own life, gave orders to have him destroyed. A band of ruffians were appointed to put these orders in execution, who, meeting with him in one of the courts of the temple, stoned him to death. Zachariah, with his dying breath, appealed to God as his judge and witness, that he suffered only for having administered good counsel, and for being the son of a man who had effectually labored in the service of his king and country.

It was not long before the great avenger of all violence and wrong, was pleased to punish Jehoash for his base treatment of his servant and prophet Zachariah. The very next year, Hazael, king of Syria, marched with a considerable army into his dominions, and having made himself master of Gath, proceeded towards Jerusalem, killing in his way all the princes and great men who had seduced their king to idolatry. Jehoash was in no condition to make any resistance: and therefore, to redeem himself

from the miseries of a siege, he took all the rich vessels which his ancestors had devoted to the service of God, and all the gold that was laid up in the treasures of the temple (besides what was found in the royal treasury) and sent them as a present to Hazael, in order to prevail on him to withdraw his troops.

The largeness of the bribe tempted Hazael, who accepting it, immediately returned with his forces to Damascus. But the next year the Syrians again marched into the territories of Judah, and though Hazael was not with them, they defeated the forces which Jehoash sent against them, made great havoc in the country, entered Jerusalem, put some of the princes and rulers to the sword, and treated Jehoash himself with no small indignity and contempt.

But this was not all the punishment to be inflicted on the wicked Jehoash. No sooner was the Syrian army departed, than the distemper, or rather a complication of distempers, with which some time before God had afflicted him, grew worse and worse, so that he was at length obliged to be confined in his bed. While he was in this situation, Zabad and Jehozabad,* two of his own servants, took the opportunity of murdering him, in revenge for the death of the prophet Zachariah. Jehoash reigned forty years, and was buried in the city of Jerusalem; but his impious courses had rendered him so obnoxious in the eyes of the people, that his body was denied a place in the royal sepulchre.

Jehoash was succeeded in the government of Judah, by his son Amaziah, who, at the time of his accession, was twenty-five years of age. For some time he behaved tolerably well, though he followed the example of his predecessors, in suffering the high places to remain, and permitting the people there to offer sacrifice and burn incense.

When Amaziah found himself fully established on the throne, he very justly took revenge of the two traitors who

* These two murderers, whose fathers were Jews, but their mothers aliens. (the one being a Moabitess and the other an Ammonitess) were probably of the king's bed-chamber, and having constant access to him, might more easily accomplish their design. However, the king was so weak and feeble that he could not make any resistance, and had fallen into such contempt and disesteem, that his guards cared not what became of him.

had murdered his father, by ordering them to be put to death.* He did not, however, do any injury to their children, because it was contrary to the law of Moses, which expressly says, *The fathers shall not die for the children, neither shall the children die for the fathers, but every man shall die for his own sin.*

Amaziah, having thus revenged the death of his father, directed his attention to the political state of his kingdom. The Edomites, in the reign of Jehoram, king of Judah, had revolted and chosen a king for themselves, in which state they remained till the present time, when Amaziah formed the resolution of reducing them to their former subjection. For this purpose he new-modelled his army, and upon a general muster found them to be no less than 300,000 fighting men. But not thinking these sufficient for the intended expedition, he hired a great number of Joash, king of Israel, for which he paid him the compliment of an hundred talents of silver.

When Amaziah had got his combined army ready for marching against the Edomites, he received a visit from a prophet, who, by the direction of God, dissuaded him from employing the auxiliaries borrowed of Joash king of Israel, upon which he immediately discharged them, and resolved to attack the Edomites with his own people only.

The hired subjects of the king of Israel, thinking themselves shamefully dismissed, were greatly exasperated against Amaziah; and therefore, in their return home, they plundered all the towns in their way belonging to Judah, killed no less than three thousand men, and carried away a considerable booty, in order to make amends for the plunder they had promised themselves in going against the Edomites.

In the mean time Amaziah, at the head of his own forces only, marched against the revolters. The two armies met

* It appears that these two assassins continued to be men who possessed great interest and power at court, even after they had murdered their king; for his son retained them in his service for some time, nor durst he venture to execute justice on them until he was well settled in his authority, and divested all those of power who were their friends and abettors.

in the valley of Salt,* where a desperate battle ensued, which proved greatly in favor of Amaziah, who slew ten thousand on the spot, and took ten thousand prisoners. From hence he marched to Selah, the metropolis of Arabia Petraea, of which he soon possessed himself, and, from the top of the rock whereon the town stood, caused the ten thousand, whom he had made prisoners, to be thrown headlong down, so that they were all dashed to pieces.

Amaziah, elated with his conquest over the Edomites, and claiming too much merit to himself, forgot the God of battle, and relinquished the true worship of his Divine protector, for that of idolatry; for, on his return to Jerusalem, he brought with him the idols of Edom, to which he paid adoration, and offered incense. This so highly offended the Almighty, that he sent a prophet to reprove him for his apostacy; but instead of paying any regard to what he said, he bade him hold his tongue, threatening if he did not, he should be put to death. The prophet told him he would desist, but that the vengeance of heaven would be the certain consequence if he persisted in his idolatry.

A short time after this Amaziah, having resolved to resent the affront put upon him by the subjects of the king of Israel, whom he had dismissed from assisting him against the Edomites, and who had committed such ravages in different parts of his dominions in their return home, sent a very haughty letter to Joash, in which he challenged him to meet and engage him in a pitched battle. Joash treated this message with the utmost contempt, and, in return, sent Amaziah a parabolic answer to this effect: "A thistle, (said he) that grew on Mount Lebanon, sent on a certain time, to a cedar tree growing on the same spot, saying, Give thy daughter in marriage to my son; at which time, a wild beast passing by trod the thistle to the ground. Learn hence to lower your ambition, nor aim at things so much above you. Be cautious lest your pride, on having conquered the Edomites, should lead you to such actions as may, in time, produce the loss of your kingdom and life."

* The Valley of Salt lay towards the land of Edom, and was so called either from the salt springs, which were therein, or from salt being dug up in the place.

This answer enraged Amaziah to the highest degree, and Providence leaving him to the influence of his own passions, he made all the necessary preparations for engaging the army of the Israelites. When Joash found that Amaziah persisted in his intentions of fighting, he marched with his forces against him, and the two armies met at a place called Bethshemesh, a town belonging to the king of Judah's dominions. The troops were no sooner drawn up on each side, than those of Amaziah were so dispirited, that they gave way on the first onset, and consulting their own safety, immediately fled, leaving their king to the mercy of his antagonist.* Amaziah being thus a prisoner to Joash, the latter marched with his army in great triumph to Jerusalem, whither he no sooner arrived, than he broke down all the fortifications of the wall, from the gate of Ephraim to the corner gate, the whole being about four hundred cubits. Having done this, he entered the city with the greater part of his troops, and proceeded first to the temple, and then to the palace, both of which he plundered of their richest valuables, and then leaving Amaziah, returned with the spoil to Samaria.

Amaziah lived about fifteen years after being thus shamefully defeated by Joash, king of Israel; but we do not read of any thing more remarkable concerning him, except that he still persisted in his idolatry, and continued till his death to remain under the Divine displeasure. Towards the latter part of his life he carried his idolatrous practices to such lengths as to fall under the contempt of the greater part of his subjects; insomuch that some of the principal people of Jerusalem formed a conspiracy against

* The manner in which Josephus relates the defeat and captivity of Amaziah is as follows: "No sooner (says he) were his men advanced within sight of the enemy, but they were instantly struck with such terror and consternation, that they turned their backs without striking a blow; and, flying several ways, left Amaziah prisoner in the hands of his enemies, who refused to give him quarter upon any other terms, than that the citizens of Jerusalem should set open their gates, and receive him and his victorious army into the town; which, between the pinch of necessity, and the love of life, they were prevailed upon to do: so that Joash entered the place in his triumphal chariot through a breach of three hundred cubits in the wall (which he caused to be made) with his prisoner Amaziah marching before him."

his life. Amaziah, having received intimation of the design of his enemies, endeavored to escape, by flying to Lachish, a town situated on the frontiers of the country of the Philistines. But these endeavors to save himself proved fruitless, for the conspirators sent proper persons after him, who, taking a favorable opportunity that offered, put him privately to death. When his friends understood what had befallen him, they went to Lachish, from whence they brought his body (without any state or formality) to Jerusalem, and interred it in the sepulchre of his ancestors. Thus died Amaziah king of Judah, after a reign of twenty-nine years, during which time he not only offended God in the highest degree, but made himself, in the end, universally detested by his subjects. He was succeeded on the throne by his son Uzziah, (otherwise called Azariah) the transactions of whose life we shall defer to the next chapter, and here return to the particular occurrences that took place in the kingdom of Israel.

Some time after Joash had ascended the throne of Israel, it happened that the prophet Elisha fell sick of a disease, whereof he died. Joash, having always entertained the highest respect for the prophet, and paid him the greatest reverence, went to pay him a visit on this melancholy occasion. After he had expressed his grief for the situation in which he found him, and pointed out the great loss all Israel would have by his death, the prophet first bestowed on him his blessing, and then emblematically predicted to him the future success he would have over his enemies the Syrians. He bade him take a bow and arrows, open the window eastward, and shoot. Joash did as he was ordered, upon which the prophet said, *The arrow of the Lord's deliverance, and the arrow of deliverance from Syria: for thou shalt smite the Syrians in Aphek.* Elisha then bade Joash take the arrows and smite them on the ground. The king did as directed three times, and then stopped: upon which Elisha said, *Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times; then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed it: whereas now thou shalt smite Syria but thrice.* Joash, finding the prophet angry with him, took his leave and departed, soon after which Elisha paid the debt of nature.

Though this was the last prediction of Elisha, yet it was not the last miracle, for he performed one even after his death. As a company of Israelites were going to bury a dead person, they espied at a distance a band of men making towards them, upon which, in order to escape them, they threw the corpse into Elisha's tomb. As soon as the body of the dead man touched that of Elisha, life was instantly restored, he got upon his feet, arose out of the tomb, and followed those who had thrown him into it.*

This was a most singular miracle indeed, but whoever seriously reflects on it will easily discover that no innate power in the bones of Elisha could produce so wonderful an effect. It was the immediate work and operation of God himself, who was thus pleased not only to give his people a proof of the Divine mission of his prophet, but also of that future resurrection from the dead, which is fully revealed to us in the Gospel. A very celebrated divine remarks, that this was a clear symbol and prophecy of the resurrection of our Blessed Redeemer, only with this material difference, that Elisha raised a dead body without raising himself, whereas Christ not only raised himself, but gives life to all those who believe in him.

The miracle performed by Elisha after his death (which was a Divine confirmation of the truth of all his prophecies) could not fail of being a powerful means to encourage king Joash to engage in a war with the Syrians, more especially as he had assured him he should obtain a conquest over them three different times. Nor was his success little short of what the prophet had predicted; for, in three

* It appears, from this very remarkable circumstance, that Elisha died near the borders of Syria; for the people in the east were mostly buried where they died. At the time when the man here mentioned died, the Syrians had made several inroads into the land of Israel; and this was one of their straggling parties, which is here called a band. Men of such exalted characters as the prophet Elisha had monuments of stone, in the form of our square tombs, wherein their bodies were deposited, and therefore, the men who carried the dead body here spoken of, flung it into the tomb of the prophet, that they might be the more able to provide for their own safety. That the man should be restored to life by his body touching the bones of the prophet was, no doubt, a very great miracle, and, most probably, was wrought, that the people might be convinced, if they imitated the conduct of Elisha, his God would save and deliver them out of the greatest difficulties.

pitched battles, he defeated Benhadad (his father Hazael being then dead) recovered all the cities that had been taken from his father Jehoahaz, and re-united them to the kingdom of Israel.

After this Joash lived quiet from all his enemies, till Jehoash, king of Judah, gave him the small disturbance we have already mentioned. From this time we hear nothing more remarkable concerning him; and may therefore conclude, that, he lived in peace, and was succeeded by his son Jeroboam, the second person of that name who ruled over the kingdom of Israel.

Jeroboam II. came to the throne of Israel in the fifteenth year of Amaziah, king of Judah. He received great assistance, in the beginning of his reign, from the prophet Jonah, by the following of whose advice he proved successful in many military enterprizes. He recovered a large territory which several kings had taken from his predecessors, even all the country from Libanus on the north, to the lake Asphaltites on the south; but especially on the east of Jordan, whereby he greatly enlarged the conquests which his father had made before him.

In the days of David and Solomon, the cities of Damascus and Hamoth had been tributary to the kings of Judah; but having long revolted from Israel, Jeroboam conquered them again, and made them pay homage to him, as they had formerly done to his predecessors.*

Jeroboam II. reigned over Israel forty-one years, during the course of which he proved successful in a variety of the most dangerous enterprizes. He died with much honor and renown, and was buried with his ancestors; but,

* To some part of this king's reign must be referred the action which we read (in 1 Chron. v. 18.) was performed by the Reubenites, Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh, who, mustering together forty-four thousand seven hundred and sixty able men, made war upon the Hagarites; and being assisted by the Lord, to whom they addressed themselves in time of battle, they obtained a complete victory. The booty they made themselves masters of was very considerable, consisting of 50,000 camels, 250,000 sheep, 2000 asses, and 100,000 prisoners, besides great numbers slain in the battle. Thus did they prove victorious, because God was engaged on their side; and these two tribes and an half, having dispossessed the Hagarites, dwelt in peace and quietness from that period till the time of the Babylonish captivity.

whether through wars abroad, or discord and dissention at home, he left the government in so confused a state, that, after his decease, there was an interregnum for the space of twenty-two years.

CHAP. VI.

*Containing the most material incidents recorded in the Life and Transactions of the Prophet Jonah.**

DURING the time the throne of Israel continued vacant after the death of Jeroboam II. the prophet Jonah, who had done him many services during his reign, received a Divine commission to execute a matter of business of the most serious and important nature. The Ninevites had for a long time lived in the greatest wickedness, upon which the Almighty was pleased to command Jonah to go

* The remaining part of the History of the Old Testament consists, in a great measure, of the proceedings of the most distinguished prophets, who were appointed, by Divine Providence, at different periods, to work upon the minds of the people, and endeavor, by a variety of means, to bring them from a state of idolatry, to a thorough sense of the worship of the true God. The proceedings of these prophets we shall take notice of at the respective periods they occurred, they being, in the Sacred Writings, not ranged according to the order of time in which they happened. This is supposed to have arisen through the negligence of the priests in those days, who had the charge of registering and keeping them: for the manner was, when any prophet had written a prophecy, he caused it to be fixed to the gate of the temple, where it remained for a certain number of days, that all might read and take notice of it. After it had stood there the appointed time, the priests took it into the temple to record it in a book; but for want of due care to enter them in course as they were written, they left them in that disorderly manner in which we now find them. But besides this, it must be considered that many of the prophets, especially Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel, wrote in very troublesome times: Ezekiel and Daniel when in captivity at Babylon, and Jeremiah, when all things both in church and state were in the greatest confusion and disorder at Jerusalem; and the first copy of his book was destroyed by king Jehoiakim. From these considerations it is not to be wondered at that the writings of the different prophets should be misplaced; and instead of lamenting this defect, we ought to be thankful that they have been preserved at all.

to Nineveh, and denounce to the people, that he would destroy that great city, because of the sins of its inhabitants, or (as the Scripture expresses it) *because their wickedness was come up before him.*

Jonah, instead of obeying the Divine command, directed his course another way, and intending to retire to Tarshish, a town in Cilisia, embarked on board a vessel at Joppa,* a port situated on the Mediterranean Sea. But they had not been long sailed before God, to make it appear that nothing undertaken against his will can take effect, and that he accomplisheth his designs even by the resistance and opposition men make against them, caused a great tempest to arise, which so alarmed the mariners, that after laboring some time in opposition to the force of the waves, they found themselves in the most imminent danger of being shipwrecked, and therefore, in order to lighten their vessel, threw their lading into the sea.

In the mean time Jonah, sensible that the hand of Providence was in this extraordinary tempest, and being grieved for his disobedience and rebellion against the

* Joppa is a sea-port town in Palestine, upon the Mediterranean, and was formerly the only port which the Jews had upon that coast, whither all the materials, that were sent from Tyre, towards the building of Solomon's temple, were brought and landed. The town itself is very ancient, for profane authors reckon it was built before the flood, and derive the name of it from Joppa, the daughter of Elolus, and the wife of Cepheus, who was the founder of it. Others are rather inclined to believe, that it was built by Japhet, and from him had the name of Japho, which was afterwards corrupted into Joppa, but is now generally called Jaffa, which comes nearer to the first appellation. The town is situated in a fine plain, between Jamnia to the south; Cæsarea or Palestine to the north; and Rama or Ramula to the east: but, at present, it is in a poor and mean condition; nor is its port by any means good, by reason of the rocks, which project into the sea. The chief thing, for which this place was famous, in ancient pagan history is, the exposition of Andromeda, the daughter of Cepheus, king of Egypt, who, for her mother's pride, was bound to a rock, in order to be devoured by a sea-monster, but was delivered by the valor and bravery of Perseus, who afterwards married her: for in the times of Mela and Pliny, there were some marks remaining (as they themselves testify) of the chains, wherewith this royal virgin was bound to the rock, which projects into the sea. But all this is mere fiction, first founded upon the adventure of Jonah, who set sail from this port, and then improved with the addition of some particular circumstances.

Lord, was gone down into the hold, where he fell fast asleep; but this sound sleep rather arose from his trouble and affliction than from any satisfaction, or assurance he had of safety in the midst of such imminent danger, into which he had not only plunged himself, but likewise all those who were with him in the vessel.

The master of the ship, not thinking it proper that Jonah should lie and sleep while all the crew and passengers were either laboring to save the vessel, or praying to their idols, awoke him, bidding him rise and call upon his God that they might be saved from perishing. This, however, proving of none effect, and the master finding that the violence of the storm eluded and frustrated all their endeavors, and that the fierceness of it still increased more and more, suspected that this unusual tempest was occasioned by the extraordinary crimes of some person on board the vessel, and therefore proposed that all who were in it should cast lots, in order to know who was the author and occasion of their danger.

This proposition being universally approved of, was immediately carried into execution, when the lot fell upon Jonah. In consequence of this the mariners asked him who he was, and what he had done, to stir up the anger of heaven against them and himself. Jonah frankly acknowledged that he was a Jew, who worshipped the God of heaven; and not only a Jew, but a prophet likewise, who had been ordered to go to Nineveh, but, having disobeyed his orders, was now endeavoring to flee from the Divine presence: that, since he found it was impossible to do that, and every person's life, on his account, was in such imminent danger, he wished them to throw him overboard, as that only could be the means of abating the storm, and thereby securing their safety.

The mariners, being not a little surprized at this free and unconcerned confession of Jonah, by which he doomed himself to death, conceived more pity for him than he seemed to have for himself, and therefore endeavored to save his life by rowing hard in hopes of reaching land. But finding that all their endeavors were in vain, and that the waves ran still higher against them, they at length threw him overboard, expressing their reluctance in so doing, and acquitting themselves of having committed any

cruelty, in these words: *We beseech thee, O Lord, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood: for thou, O Lord, hast done as it pleased thee.*

No sooner was the prophet Jonah thrown into the sea than the tempest abated, and a calm immediately ensued, which struck such an impression on the mariners, that they vowed to offer up sacrifices to the Lord as soon as they should reach the shore.

In the mean time the Lord had prepared a great fish* to swallow up Jonah, who being in the belly thereof, and calling to mind his own disobedience, and the great mercy of God towards him, sang praises unto the Lord from that living grave; where, after he had continued three days and three nights, the fish, at God's command, vomited him out on the dry land.

Thus we see, that life came forth victorious and triumphant from the very entrails of death, to be a lively representation of that stupendous and ineffable victory which Our Blessed Redeemer was to obtain afterwards over death and hell; when, after Jonah had freely offered himself to be cast into the sea for the preservation of the mariners and passengers on board the ship, and after he had been three days and nights in the body of the fish, he arose from thence full of life by a glorious resurrection.

After God had so mercifully preserved Jonah in, and delivered him from, the great fish, he commanded him a second time to go to Nineveh, there to preach to the people, and declare the commission he had before given him. Jonah, instead of thinking, as he had done before, how to avoid executing the Divine command, readily set about the business. The city of Nineveh was (as the Scripture informs us) three days journey in length, so that when Jonah arrived at the place, he travelled one day in

* It has been a generally received opinion that this fish was a whale, but that such an opinion is erroneous will appear from the following observations: First, we never hear of whales being found in the Mediterranean Sea; and secondly, the throats of the largest whales are not wide enough to swallow a man. It was a large fish, of which there are many in those seas, but the particular species cannot be pointed out.

it, declaring to the people, as he passed along, that in forty days the whole city should be destroyed.

The Ninevites, terrified at this denunciation, and believing the word of God by his prophet, with an humble faith proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth from the greatest of them to the least, to the end that their sorrow and repentance might be as general as had been their corruption and sins; and that as no age, sex or quality had been free from contributing to the guilt, so none might be exempted from such penance as was likely to atone for their transgressions. The king himself no sooner heard of the destruction that threatened him and his subjects, than he quitted his throne, threw off his royal robes and ornaments, put on sackcloth, and sat in ashes. He likewise issued out an edict, which he caused to be proclaimed throughout the city, that neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, should, for a time, eat or drink any thing; and that all his subjects should cry mightily to God, and every one turn from their evil ways; “for, said he, who can tell but God will take pity on us, and turn away his fierce anger that we perish not.”

Thus did the inhabitants of a great and powerful city humble and abase themselves before God, even from the king upon the throne, to the poorest and most contemptible subject. As, therefore, they had thus with sincerity of heart acknowledged their transgressions, and changed their evil ways, God was pleased to lay aside the sentence he had denounced against them by the mouth of his prophet, and to suffer them still to live, that they might acknowledge his goodness, and, by their future conduct, avoid a repetition of the like dreadful denunciation.

The conduct of the Ninevites, on this occasion, is a great and illustrious example of sincere and hearty repentance; and therefore we ought often to set it before our eyes, that, as we have been, and still are, followers of them in sin and wickedness, so we may endeavor to imitate and express their repentance. And the rather, because our Saviour assures us, that this example of the Ninevites shall confound and condemn all those who, living under the preaching of the gospel, do still continue in impenitence and unbelief; because the menaces he has pronounced in the gospel against impenitent sinners ought, without com-

parison, to be more dreadful and terrible to us, than those of Jonah were to the inhabitants of Nineveh.

When Jonah found that God had repealed the sentence denounced against the Ninevites, he was greatly displeased, fearing lest he should be accounted a false prophet, because the judgment threatened was not executed according to his prediction. Though, indeed, properly speaking, he was very far from being a false prophet: in declaring that Nineveh should be destroyed in forty days, he declared nothing but the very truth; for (as St. Austin excellently observes) though that city still subsisted as to its buildings and walls, yet it was most happily destroyed by the repentance and conversion of its inhabitants; for wicked, licentious, riotous and haughty Nineveh was destroyed and overthrown, and an humble, penitent, and self-denying city now supplied its place.

Such was the weakness of Jonah (notwithstanding his being divinely inspired) that he suffered his fears on being accounted a false prophet to make so deep an impression on him, and had, on the occasion, so far given himself up to grief and discontent, that he beseeched of God to take away his life. *O Lord, said he, take, I beseech thee, my life from me: for it is better for me to die than to live. But the Almighty was pleased to bear with this sinful weakness of his prophet Jonah, and instead of granting his request, only chastised him in this short question: Doest thou well to be angry?*

This mild check, however, did not make Jonah properly reflect on his unseemly carriage to his Divine Protector. He was still in hopes that his prophecy would be fulfilled, and therefore, leaving the city, he made himself a booth on the east side of it, where he resided in order to see what would become of the place he wished to be assigned to destruction. Soon after he had placed himself in this temporary habitation, the Almighty was pleased to cause a gourd* to spring up in one night, which, by the next

* The Hebrew word Kikajon is, by the Septuagint, Arabic, and Syriac versions, translated *gourd*, but most of the ancient Greek translators, following St. Jerom in this particular, chuse rather to render it *ivy*. St. Jerom, however, acknowledges that the word *ivy* does not altogether answer the signification of the Hebrew word Kikajon, though he thinks it much better in this place than a gourd.

morning, so covered this little hermitage, as to make it a most cool and agreeable retreat.

Jonah was exceeding glad of this unexpected, though seasonable, refreshment; but, alas, it proved very short, for God had prepared a worm, which, eating into the root of the gourd, it soon withered, and left Jonah exposed to the violent heat of the sun. To add to this there arose a strong and hot easterly wind, which made Jonah so faint, and increased his discontented humor to such a degree, that he a second time earnestly besought of God that he might die.

Notwithstanding Jonah's great impatience, and his strong solicitation for death, the Almighty was pleased still to preserve him, and instead of complying with his second request of dying, asked him this question: *Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd?* To which Jonah replied, *I do well to be angry, even unto death.*

Though Jonah returned this short and peevish answer to God, yet, instead of expressing his displeasure, he was pleased to expostulate with him on his misconduct in words to this effect: "Consider (said he) Jonah what thou doest; thy own behavior condemns thee. Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou didst not labor, neither madest it grow, which came up in a night and perished in a night. And wouldest thou desire that I should have no concern or pity for that great city Nineveh, wherein are more than six score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left?"

What a beneficent and tender mode of arguing was this! and what a wretched picture have we in Jonah of the frailty of human nature! Jonah, though one of the chosen servants of God, would, with pleasure, have beheld a whole nation destroyed, rather than it should have been said, in after-times, that he had spoken a falsehood. Let us, therefore,

which, growing close to the earth, could not have shaded Jonah from the heat of the sun. According to him the Kikajon is a shrub, which grows in the sandy places of Palestine, and increases so fast, that, in a few days, it rises to a considerable height. It is supported by its trunk without being upheld by any thing else; and by the thickness of its leaves, which resemble those of a vine, affords, in hot weather, a very agreeable shade.

learn from this, that our passions are our greatest enemies, and that the more humble we are, the more we shall be objects of the Divine favor.

Such and such only are the particulars related of the prophet Jonah. The Book so called is rather an History than a prophecy; and if it was written by himself, it is a frank acknowledgment of his own faults and failings. It contains likewise remarkable instances of God's compassion and condescension to him, as also a noble type of our Saviour's burial and resurrection.

With respect to the whole of the Book of Jonah (which makes only four short chapters) as an historical subject, it is rather imperfect, both beginning and ending with the greatest abruptness. It begins with a conjunction copulative, *And the word of the Lord came unto Jonah*, from whence some commentators have thought it only an Appendix to some of his other writings; and it ends without giving us any manner of account, either what became of the Ninevites, or of Jonah himself, after this expedition. It is certain, from the compassionate expression which God was pleased to use towards the Ninevites, that (for that time at least) he reversed the judgment he had denounced against them; and it is not improbable to think, that when Jonah had executed his commission, and was afterwards satisfied with the merciful proceedings of God, he returned into Judea. The Author of the Lives and Deaths of the Prophets (who goes under the name of Epipharnies) tells us, that returning from Nineveh, and being ashamed to be seen on account of his prediction not having been fulfilled, he retired with his mother to the plain of Sear, where he lived in a state of obscurity the remainder of his days.

CHAP. VII.

Uzziah, king of Judah, begins his reign piously, and proves victorious over his enemies. He conquers the Philistines and Arabians, and having subdued the Ammonites makes them become his tributaries. He repairs the walls of Jerusalem, and adds several new fortifications to them. He usurps the sacerdotal office, for which he is struck with a severe leprosy. He languishes under his disorder for some years, and then dies, leaving the throne to his son Jotham. Some account of the prophets Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, and Isaiah.

AFTER the murder of Amaziah, king of Judah, at Lachish, his son Uzziah (who is likewise called Azariah) succeeded to the throne in the twenty-seventh year of the reign of Jeroboam II. king of Israel. Uzziah was only sixteen years of age when he took upon himself the government of Judah, notwithstanding which he acted with the greatest discretion. He was careful, active, valiant, courteous, just and pious, for which God prospered him in all his undertakings, and blessed his arms with the most distinguished success.

The first attack he made was against his enemies the Philistines, whom he worsted in several battles, dismantled many of their principal towns, and built cities in different parts of the surrounding country to keep them under proper subjection.

His next expedition was against the Arabians situated on the borders of Egypt. These he soon reduced, as he did also the Mehunims, a people who lived in the desert part of the country. He next went against the Ammonites, who were so terrified, that they, as well as the others, whom he had subdued, became his tributaries.

Uzziah, having thus conquered his enemies, next directed his attention towards Jerusalem, the capital of his dominions. He rebuilt the ruined walls, and repaired that breach which had been made by Joash king of Israel, when he entered the city with his army, after making Amaziah his prisoner. He built one tower of an hundred and fifty cubits high, besides several others in different parts of the walls; and erected castles and forts for the

protection of the country. He also constructed aqueducts, cisterns and basons for the convenience of his cattle, of which he had immense numbers, the lands about him being chiefly pasturage. As he was a great lover of husbandry, he employed great numbers of ploughmen and planters in the plains, as also vine-dressers on the mountains, by means of which, together with the profits arising from his cattle, he obtained considerable possessions.

But the chief glory of his kingdom lay in his military force, which consisted of three hundred and seventy thousand select men, under the command of two thousand six hundred brave and experienced officers, who had been trained up in the most perfect knowledge of martial discipline. The men were all furnished with swords, bucklers, spears, helmets, bows, slings, and other warlike weapons. As a farther security for the safety of the city against any bold invader, he erected battering machines* in several of the towers on the walls, as likewise machines for throwing darts and stones, with hooks and other offensive weapons, so that the city was in a much greater state of security than it had ever hitherto been.

* This is the first time we read of any machine either for besieging or defending towns, which is plainly the reason why sieges were of so long a continuance before these were invented. Homer, who is the most ancient Greek writer we know of who treats of sieges, describes a kind of entrenchment (though a poor one) some lines of circumvallation, and a ditch with palisades; but we do not hear a word of any machines, such as the ballistæ and catapultæ, which were used for the hurling of stones, and throwing of darts. Sardanopalus, king of Assyria, maintained himself in Nineveh for seven years, because the besiegers (as Diodorus Siculus observes) wanted such engines as were fit for demolishing and taking of cities, they not being then invented. Now it is said of Uzziah, that *he made in Jerusalem engines invented by cunning men, to be on the towers, and upon the bulwarks, to shoot arrows and great stones*; so that it must certainly be a mistake to attribute the invention of the ballistæ, the scorpio, or the onagar, to the Greeks or Romans, because we find them made use of in the east long before the Greeks had brought the military art to any great perfection. Uzziah was certainly the first inventor of them; and therefore it is said, that for these and other warlike preparations *his name was spread abroad*. From this time they began to be employed both in attacking and defending towns; and therefore we find the prophet Ezekiel, in describing the future sieges of Jerusalem and Tyre, makes mention of battering rams and engines of war, which, in all probability, were what later ages called their ballistæ and catapultæ.

Uzziah continued to possess uninterrupted felicity, and to be prosperous in all his undertakings, during the life of Zechariah;* but when once that good and faithful counsellor died (which was in the thirty-third year of his reign) he grew so intoxicated with the thoughts of his power and greatness, that, forgetting himself, he neglected the more important duties of his worship to God; herein following the example of his father, who was unable to enjoy a course of prosperity with proper moderation.

On a certain day, which was fixed for a solemn festival, Uzziah, having clothed himself in the dress of a priest, went to the temple to offer incense on the golden altar. Intimation of this being given to Azariah the high-priest, he, accompanied by eighty other priests, immediately repaired to the temple, and protested against such an assumption of the sacerdotal rights, which had ever been the peculiar privilege of the priests of the house of Aaron. Azariah enjoined him to desist from such profanity, saying, *It appertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the Lord, but to the priests the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense: go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed, neither shall it be for thine honor from the Lord God.*

This remonstrance had not the least effect on Uzziah, who, instead of paying any attention to it, fell into a violent passion, and treated the high-priest with the greatest indignity. God, however, was pleased to vindicate the sacredness of the sacerdotal office; for the very moment the king took the censer in his hand, and was going to burn incense, he was struck with a leprosy, upon which, fearful lest the Divine vengeance should punish him with death, he immediately left the temple, and hastened to his palace.

The disease with which God was pleased to afflict Uzziah for his presumption was of so malignant a nature as to be beyond the art of man to cure; the consequence of which was that his son Jotham (as his father's viceroy)

* It is not unlikely to suppose that this person was the son of that Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, who, by the command of Jehoash, king of Judah, was slain in the temple; that he was called after his father's name, was preceptor to Uzziah, and, though not a prophet, yet a man very skilful in expounding the ancient prophecies, and giving such instructions from them, as were necessary for the improvement and benefit of youth.

took upon himself the administration of public affairs, while Uzziah was obliged to quit the palace, and, as was the case with all lepers, to live in a private place detached from the city.

Thus did Uzziah, after having reigned thirty-three years with an eclat not inferior to any of his predecessors, become reduced to a state of the most abject distress, and in which he continued during the remainder of his life. After having reigned in the whole fifty-two years, nineteen of which he labored under the dreadful calamity inflicted on him for his presumption, he paid the debt of nature, in the 68th year of his age. As he was a leper, his body was not interred in the royal sepulchres, but in the same field at some distance from them.

During the reign of Uzziah, king of Judah, there happened some events mentioned in other parts of Scripture, which are not to be found in the books that are purely historical. Such are, the terrible earthquake, whereof Amos prophesied two years before it happened; the dreadful plague of the locusts, of which the prophet Joel gives a very full and lively description; and that extreme drought, attended with the most alarming flashes of fire which fell from heaven, and (as the prophet expresses it) *devoured all the pastures of the wilderness, and burnt up all the trees of the field.*

But what more particularly engages our attention here is, the succession of prophets, both in Israel and Judah, whom God was pleased to raise up to give the people instructions and exhortations, and to denounce his threatenings and judgments against them, on their persisting in their impieties. These he appointed not only to warn them by word of mouth (as his former prophets had done) but to commit their admonitions to writing, that posterity might see the ingratitude of his people, and all other nations, from their backslidings and punishments, might avoid the enormities into which their predecessors had fallen, and for which they had so justly incurred the Divine wrath.

The first of the prophets who distinguished themselves by Divine direction, during this period, was Hosea, the son of Beer, who, according to the introduction to his book, prophesied in the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jerobo-

am II. king of Israel; so that he must have continued to be a prophet at least seventy years. In the book called Hosea, which contains the writings of that prophet, he begins with giving an exact description, and severe prophetic reproof, of the wicked and corrupt state of the whole kingdom of Israel, and particularly of the infamous idolatry which was in vogue among them, in worshipping the golden calves, which, in the reign of Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, were set up at Dan and Bethel by Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, their first king, under whom they separated themselves from Judah, and the pure worship of God. He then very pathetically exhorts them to a serious and early repentance, but finding them still to continue in their impieties, from the kings and princes, even to the least and meanest of the people, he at length denounces to them the total destruction and overthrow of their state and kingdom; that they should be transported out of their own country, and carried captives into Assyria, where they should continue under a long and deplorable dispersion among strange and idolatrous nations. He likewise foretels, that the kingdom of Judah should, for some time, subsist after that of Israel, but that, at length, they likewise should be carried away captive beyond the Euphrates. Through the whole he lays open the sins, and declares the judgments of God against a people hardened and irreclaimable; but concludes with some consolation to the faithful and penitent, promising them comfort and support through the favor and grace of God in their heavenly king the Messiah that was to come, to whom, in due time, all the elect should be converted and gathered, in order to be eternally blessed in and through him.

The next prophet is Joel, the son of Pethuel. He mentions the same judgment that Amos does; and, under the similitude of an enemy's army, represents those prodigious swarms of locusts, which, in his time, fell upon Judea, and occasioned great desolation. He calls and invites the people to repentance, and promises mercy and forgiveness to those who will listen to the call. He likewise gives a full and exact prophecy, of the blessed and flourishing state the church should enjoy under the Messiah, whom he calls the *Teacher of Righteousness*; of the sending of the abundant and liberal communication of the Holy Ghost

to the elect and believers; of the preservation and protection of the church in the last sad and calamitous times; of her continuance and condition here upon earth; of the just and severe judgments of God against all her enemies; and, last of all, of her eternal glorification and felicity in heaven.

The prophet Amos, who is the next in turn, lived in the days of Uzziah, king of Judah, and of Jeroboam II. king of Israel. He was a shepherd of Tekoah in the land of Judah, and after being called to the prophetic office, was particularly sent to the ten tribes, or kingdom of Israel, where, by the command of God, he, jointly with Hosea, discharged the function of a prophet. After having denounced to all the nations bordering upon Palestine the just judgments of God on account of their enmity and animosity against his people, he next proceeds to those of Judah, and after again to the ten tribes of Israel. To these in particular he foretels and denounces heavy judgments of God, and in very express terms declares to them the entire subversion of their state and kingdom by their enemies' forces; their captivity and dispersion among strange and far distant nations, on account of the multiplicity and enormity of their sins, and their obstinacy against all the reproofs and censures of God, together with the many warnings and exhortations the other prophets gave them, in the name of God, to turn and repent. All which prophecies are backed and confirmed by several visions, and many descriptions of the power and majesty of God. But among all these threats and denunciations, he promiseth that the penitent and faithful shall be saved, and that the kingdom of the Messiah shall be established for the good and eternal salvation of all his elect, whether Jews or Gentiles.

The next prophet is Obadiah, who was cotemporary with Hosea, Joel and Amos. He denounces God's judgments against the Edomites for the mischiefs they had done to Judah and Jerusalem, whom he promises that they should be victorious over these Edomites, and others their enemies; and, last of all, foretels their reformation and restoration, and that the kingdom of the Messiah should be set up by the *bringing in of a great salvation*.

The last prophet we have to mention who distinguished himself during this period, was Isaiah, the son of Amos.

He is the principal of those called the Greater Prophets, not only in respect to the excellent matter of which he treats, but also for the admirable sublimity and elegance of his style. In the twelve first chapters of the Book of his prophecies he treats of several heads which particularly concern the Jews, whom he boldly censures and reproveth, teaches excellently, exhorts seriously, and comforts pathetically. From the 13th chapter to the 29th he mentions those prophecies which regard foreign nations and people, who were enemies to the Jewish nation, as also some others relating to the ten tribes, who had divided themselves from Judah and Benjamin, denouncing very severe and heavy judgments against them. But among these are mingled very comfortable promises of the grace and mercy of God to those who repent, who should be made partakers of an heavenly kingdom to be established by the Messiah who was to come. From the 29th chapter to the 36th he prophecies concerning the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, and of the captivity, or transportation of the Jews out of their own country into Babylon; all which are intermixed with several excellent and comfortable passages concerning the transactions that would take place during the time of the Messiah being on earth. From the 36th to the 40th chapter is recorded the History of king Hezekiah, taken from 2 Kings xviii. and 2 Chron. xxxii. From the 40th to the 49th chapter, the prophet foretels the coming of Christ, and the spiritual deliverance of his church, figured by the deliverance of the Jews from their Babylonish captivity by king Cyrus, as also their restoration and settlement in their own country. From the 49th chapter to the end of the Book are several very clear prophecies concerning the person and office of Christ and his kingdom, which should be extended throughout the world; of his passion, death and glorification; as also of the preaching of the Gospel, and the calling of the Gentiles, who were to be joined and incorporated with his people the Jews. All these things the prophet describes with so much clearness and undeniable evidence, that he seems rather to write an history of things past, than a prophecy of things to come. For this reason, some of the ancient fathers were of opinion, that Isaiah might, with equal propriety, be called an Evangelist as a

prophet, because in many places he speaks as clearly concerning the person, office, and miracles of Christ many hundred years before his incarnation, as the Apostles and Doctors of the New Testament have done since.

It is generally supposed that Amos, the father of Isaiah, was brother to Uzziah king of Judah, so that this prophet, with respect to his descent, was an illustrious person, as being a prince of the blood; it having been the wisdom of Providence to call persons of all sorts of conditions to the prophetic office, as well those of the highest, as the lowest quality.

According to the first verse of the first chapter of the Book of Isaiah, it appears that the time he prophesied was in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. And if we compute the years of the reign of these four kings, we must conclude, that Isaiah prophesied at least forty-five or fifty years, beginning with the last year of Uzziah, and ending with the fourteenth of Hezekiah; so that he must have consequently lived to a very great age.

Soon after he was appointed to the prophetic office he had many singular visions, the most remarkable among which was the following: God appeared to him in his majesty, and (to use the words of St. John the Evangelist) *he saw the glory of God, who sat upon a high throne surrounded by seraphims, who, in concert, repeated the following words: Holy! Holy! Holy! is the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory.*

Isaiah, at this clear and full view of the Divine Majesty, abased himself with the deepest humility, acknowledging that he was a man of impure lips, and therefore unfit either to see himself, or to declare to others the great things God had vouchsafed to shew unto him. While he was thus complaining of his own unworthiness, one of the seraphims that was about the throne took a live coal from the altar, flew to Isaiah, and touched his lips therewith, assuring him, that his iniquity was taken away, and his sins were purged from him.

As soon as Isaiah had received this assurance from the Angel, he felt the effect of the divine fire, and found himself enabled to preach and declare to the people whatever it should please God to charge him with. He therefore

pointed out to all those designed for the sacerdotal order how great a purity they ought to be endued with, before they engage themselves in that sacred function, and how earnestly they ought to beseech of God, that he would be pleased to send down from heaven not only a live coal, as he did to him, but (as St. Bernard saith) *a whole fire, to refine them, and make them as pure as they ought to be.*

According to the tradition of the Jews, and the fathers of the church, Isaiah lived till he was near an hundred years of age, when, during the persecution raised by Manasseh, king of Judah, that prince ordered him to be sawn asunder with a wooden saw, that he might take away his life by the most violent pains that could be invented.

The Author of the Book of Ecclesiasticus speaks in commendation of this holy prophet in words to this effect: “Hezekiah did the things that pleased the Lord, and “was strengthened in the ways of David as Isaiah had “commanded him, who was a great prophet, and faithful “in his vision. In his days the sun went backward, and “he lengthened the king’s life. He saw, (by an excellent “gift of the Spirit) what should come to pass at the last, “and he comforted those that mourned in Zion: he “shewed what should come to pass for ever, till the end “of time, and secret things before ever they happened.”

But there is no need to add more testimonies in praise of this holy prophet. Those who read his prophecies as they ought will find the testimony of the Spirit of God proclaiming him a great and true prophet indeed, and confirming the truth of his prophecies by the most incontestable evidence and demonstration. In short, the whole Book is highly serviceable to the church of God, in all ages, for conviction of sin, direction in duty, and consolation in trouble; and its author may be justly accounted a great prophet, whether we consider the extent and variety of his predictions; the sublimity of the truths which he reveals; the majesty and elegance of his style; the loftiness of his metaphors, or the liveliness of his descriptions.—But we shall have occasion to say more of this prophet in the succeeding part of our History.

CHAP. VIII.

Zachariah is made king of Israel, after the throne had been vacant twenty-two years. He is murdered by Shallum, who usurps the throne. Shallum is put to death by Menahem, the general of the forces, who succeeds him in the government. Menahem, after reigning ten years, dies, and is succeeded by his son Pekahiah. This prince is murdered by Pekah, the general of his forces, who usurps the government, and after a reign of twenty years, is murdered by Hoshea, who succeeds him, and under whose government the Israelitish kingdom is destroyed by Shalmaneser, king of Assyria. The story of Tobit and Tobias.

THE interregnum, or vacancy in the throne of Israel, which lasted upwards of twenty-two years, occasioned such a general confusion among the people, that at length they came to a resolution of placing Zachariah, the son of Jeroboam II. and the last of Jehu's line,* upon the throne. This happened in the thirty-eighth year of Uzziah, king of Judah; but as he proved a wicked prince, and followed the steps of his ancestors, he did not live long to enjoy the government: for, at the expiration of six months, he was murdered by Shallum, the son of Jabesh, who usurped the throne.

Shallum's government was much shorter than that of his predecessor, he being on the throne only one month. At the time of his murdering Zachariah, Menahem the general of the king's forces, was besieging Tirzah;† but as soon as he heard what had happened, he immediate-

* Zachariah was the fourth king from Jehu, and the last of his race; in whom was fulfilled that gracious promise God was pleased to make to Jehu, as a reward for his courage and zeal in executing the judgment which God had commanded him to do on the house of Ahab, viz. that he and his family should sit on the throne of Israel unto the fourth generation, which was about 100 years, the last of the family being this king Zachariah, the son of Jeroboam II.

† Tirzah was a long time the regal city of the kingdom of Israel. Jeroboam, who was the first king, though he dwelt for some time at Shechem, in his latter days at least resided here; as did all the kings of Israel till Omri, having reigned six years in Tirzah, built Samaria, and removed the royal seat thither, where it continued till a final period was put to the Israelitish kingdom.

ly raised the siege, and marching directly to Samaria, defeated and slew Shallum, after which, having great interest and authority not only with the army, but the heads of the people, he was placed on the throne.

Menahem, having thus secured possession of the government, returned with his army to Tirzah, in order to renew the siege, and reduce the inhabitants to subjection. Elated with his preferment, and naturally fired with ambition, he peremptorily demanded the gates of the city to be immediately thrown open, which orders not being obeyed, he took the place by storm; and having plundered it, marched to Tiphseh, laying waste the whole country between the two places. On his demanding the inhabitants of Tiphseh to open the gates of the city, they likewise refused, upon which, after making himself master of the place, he put all to the sword, without distinction either of age or sex; and, in short, such was his barbarity and cruelty, that even women with child did not escape his unbounded resentment.

For some time during the reign of this prince, the kingdom of Israel was torn with terrible convulsions; rapine, murder, and all manner of violence, especially superstition and idolatry, prevailing throughout the land; and though they were often admonished, reproved, and threatened by the prophets, yet they would not desist from their evil ways, but, on the contrary, bid defiance to every civil and moral obligation.

This perverseness and wickedness of the Israelites so highly offended God, that he was pleased to punish them by means of Pul, king of Assyria, who, taking advantage of the universal distractions among the people, marched with an army, and invaded the kingdom of Israel on that side of the river Jordan which lay nearest to Babylon. As soon as Menahem found himself thus powerfully attacked, he, by a present of a thousand talents of silver, (which he raised from the wealthiest of his subjects) prevailed with him not only to withdraw his forces, but likewise, before he left the kingdom, to recognize his title to the crown of Israel. This was one great reason why Menahem held the government in peace and quietness for the space of ten years, at the expiration of which, and in the fiftieth year of Uzziah, king of Judah, he paid the debt of nature, and was succeeded on the throne by his son Pekahiah.

The reign of Pekahiah, however, was but very short, for after he had been on the throne about two years, Pekah, the general of his army, conspired against him, and having slain him in the tower of the royal palace, usurped the government.

Pekah sat on the throne of Israel twenty years, but his reign was attended with many difficulties and perplexities, and he was at length divested of his life in the same manner he had taken away that of his predecessor. Tiglath-Pileser, the then king of Assyria, invaded his dominions several times, took many of his principal cities, ravaged the country, and carried away great numbers of his subjects captives. At length Hoshea, the son of Elah, taking advantage of Pekah's confusion and distress, found means to murder him, and afterwards obtained possession of the throne of Israel.*

It was not long before Hoshea found that his usurpation of the government was attended with many incumbrances; for he, imitating his wicked predecessors, and, together with the people, continuing in disobedience and rebellion against the Lord, and slighting the admonitions and threatenings of the prophets, they at length so highly provoked God, that he deserted them, and suffered the king of Assyria sorely to afflict them.

Shalmaneser, the then Assyrian monarch, (who succeeded his father Tiglath-Pileser, in the fourteenth year of Ahaz king of Judah) invaded the Israelitish dominions

* After Hoshea had murdered his predecessor Pekah, the elders of the land seem to have taken the government into their own hands, for he had not the possession of the kingdom till the latter end of the 12th year of Ahaz; i. e. nine years after he had committed the fact. He came to the crown it must be owned in a very wicked manner, and yet his character in scripture is not so vile as that of many of his predecessors; 2 Kings, xvii. 2. For whereas the kings of Israel had hitherto maintained guards upon the frontiers, to hinder their subjects from going to Jerusalem to worship, Hoshea took away these guards, and gave free liberty to all to go and pay their adoration where the law had directed; and therefore, when Hezekiah had invited all Israel to come to his passover, this prince permitted all that would to go, and when upon their return from that festival, they destroyed all the monuments of idolatry that were found in the kingdom of Samaria, instead of forbidding them, in all probability he gave his consent to it; because without some tacit encouragement at least, they durst not have ventured to do it.

with a very considerable army, and after ravaging several capital places, at length laid siege to Samaria, which having subdued, he made Hoshea promise to become his vassal, and to pay him an annual tribute so long as he remained on the throne of Israel.

Hoshea, for some time, sent his presents and his tribute money with very great punctuality; but at length, having entered into a confederacy with So,* king of Egypt, he flattered himself with being able, by his assistance, to shake off the Assyrian yoke, and therefore withdrew his subjection, by refusing to pay the tribute, as he had been accustomed to do for more than seven years.

In consequence of this remissness, Shalmaneser, who was a stranger to the cause of it, marched with a very large army against Hoshea, and having subdued all the surrounding country, and amassed prodigious wealth,† he advanced to Samaria, and immediately laid siege to the place. Such was the strength of the fortifications, and such the resolution of Hoshea, that the inhabitants held out more than three years, but at length were compelled to surrender, which was in the ninth and last year of Hoshea's reign.

Shalmaneser, having made himself complete master of Samaria, punished Hoshea with great severity, by ordering him to be immediately put in chains, conducted to prison, and there kept in close confinement during the remainder of his life. The inhabitants not only of Samaria, but also of the principal places in the Israelitish dominions, he made captives, carrying them away, and placing them in the northern parts of Assyria, and in the cities of the

* This So, with whom Hoshea entered into confederacy, is, in profane authors, called Sabacon, that famous Ethiopian mentioned by Herodotus and Diodorus Siculus, who, in the beginning of Hezekiah's reign, invaded Egypt, and having taken Boccharis, the king thereof, prisoner, had him, in great cruelty, burnt alive, and then seized on his kingdom.

† Among other rich things which Shalmaneser took and carried away in this expedition, was the golden calf which Jeroboam had set up at Bethel, and which, ever since his time, had been worshipped by the ten tribes that had revolted with him from the house of David, as the other golden calf, which he set up at the same time at Dan, had been taken from thence about ten years before by Tiglath-Pileser, when he invaded Galilee, the province wherein that city stood.

Medes. Such was the wretched fate of a people, who disdained subjection to the laws, and despised the admonitions of the prophets, who repeatedly forewarned them that a continued course of impiety would certainly end in their destruction.

In order to supply the place of the Israelites in the land of Samaria, Shalmaneser sent several colonies of his own subjects from Babylon and other places, to inhabit the principal parts of the country. But these being too few for the purpose, and withal a very wicked and idolatrous people, the Divine Providence permitted lions, and other wild beasts, to multiply upon them to such a degree, that they were forced to make a representation thereof to the Assyrian court, which they did in words to this effect: "That, being ignorant of the manner wherein they were to worship the God of the country, they supposed that this affliction was sent upon them; and, therefore, they humbly prayed, that some priests of the Jewish nation might be sent to instruct them in that particular." This request was immediately complied with; but as these colonies consisted of a mixture of different nations and provinces, they joined the worship of the true God, with that of the several idols of the countries from whence they came, so that the whole was a medley of different religions, some of which, as practised by the colonists, were of the most strange and unaccountable nature.

Such was the end of the Israelitish kingdom, after it had subsisted above two hundred and fifty-six years; and such was the beginning of that mixture of people, who afterwards went under the name of Samaritans.

Among the captive Israelites who were carried away by Shalmaneser, was one Tobit,* a man of the tribe and city

* Though the Book of Tobit, from whence this story is taken, was not admitted by the Jews among their canonical books of scripture, nor received as canonical till the Council of Trent passed an order for that purpose, yet it has been allowed, not only by the Jews, but likewise the generality of Christian Fathers, to be a true history of this particular family, an admirable example of charity and beneficence, and an excellent pattern of paternal care and filial obedience. The book itself is supposed to have been written, the former part by Tobit himself, and the latter by his son; at least it is thought that they left behind them memoirs of their family, and such materials, as a later author, who lived very likely either in, or after the captivity,

of Naphthali. He had served God from his youth, and in the course of his life distinguished himself by such acts, as most tended to the benefit of his fellow creatures. He married one Anna, a woman of his own tribe, by whom he had a son named Tobias, or Tobit, who being naturally of a good disposition, led a very pious and religious life.

This little family, during their captivity, continued in the strictest manner they were able, to serve their God; they would not eat of the food of the heathens, but lived after the manner of the Jews. The piety of Tobit was so conspicuous, and his whole conduct so meritorious, that he was at length taken notice of by Shalmaneser, who, confiding in his integrity, made him his purveyor, and at the same time gave him permission to go whither he pleased.

Tobit made a pious use of this indulgence, by taking every opportunity he could of visiting and relieving his distressed countrymen. He went one day to Rages, a city of the Medes, having with him ten talents of silver which the king had bestowed on him; and finding one Gabael, of

might compile, and digest into proper order. It is not doubted, but that the original of this book was either in Hebrew or Chaldee. St. Jerome having met with a Chaldee copy of it, did not question but that he had got the original, and, accordingly, employed a man, who was perfectly well skilled in that language, to render it into Hebrew, whilst himself translated it into Latin; and this is the version that the church of Rome chiefly esteems. Before this version, there was another (which is reckoned the most ancient) done into Greek; but who the author of it was, or from what language he translated it, we have but small foundation for conjecture; though some have been apt to think, that it came from the same fountain from whence St. Jerome had his, but that the translator had taken such freedoms with the text, as obliged him to re-translate it. The Latin translation, which was in use before St. Jerome's appeared, seems to have been taken from the Greek, though in many places it varies from it, by abridging sometimes, and sometimes amplifying the narration. The Hebrew copies, published by Fagius and Munster, are nothing but translations (and those very modern ones) from the Greek or Latin versions, though in many places of the book, they take the freedom to vary from them. That of Munster is supposed to have been done by himself, and that of Fagius by the Jews of Constantinople, in the year 1517, and has so near a conformity to the Greek, that no doubt can be made of its being descended from thence. These are the several versions that we have of this Book of Tobit, which, as it was not received into the Canon of the Jews, was not therefore admitted into that of the ancient Christian authors, who confined themselves to those books only, which the Jews allowed to be canonical.

his own tribe, very poor, and in great distress, he lent him the ten talents of silver, at the same time taking his promise for the re-payment of the money.

A short time after this, Shalmaneser died, and was succeeded by his son Sennacherib, who was a very cruel prince, and persecuted the poor Israelites with the greatest severity. But this did not intimidate the good and pious Tobit, who still continued to do all the services for his countrymen that lay in his power: he went daily to visit, and distribute among them whatever he could obtain for their relief: in short, he fed the hungry, clothed the naked, and buried those who died, or were slain by order of the king.

Sennacherib had been some time in the land of Judea, when it pleased God to send among his soldiers a most dreadful plague, which in a short time carried off great numbers. In consequence of this, Sennacherib left the country, and returning home full of rage against the Israelites, he ordered many of them to be put to death. The good Tobit was greatly afflicted for the distresses of his countrymen, and as the last thing he could do for those who had fallen victims to the king's cruelty, he decently interred their remains. The king being informed of this, ordered Tobit to be put to death, and all his possessions to be seized: but Tobit, having luckily got notice of these orders, immediately fled, and as he had been a friend to many in distress, so he did not now want a friend to conceal him from the malice and resentment of the king.

About two months after the flight of Tobit, the king was murdered by his two sons, upon which Tobit returned to his house, and, through the interest of Achiacharus, his nephew, who was cup-bearer to Sarchedonus, the successor of Sennacherib, all his goods and possessions were restored to him. The danger he had been in during the life of the late king did not deter him from still continuing to bury the dead; upon which some of his neighbors mocked and reviled him, saying, *This man is not yet afraid to be put to death for this matter: who fled away; and yet, lo, he burieth the dead again.*

Tobit, having one day greatly fatigued himself in the charitable office of burying the dead, laid himself down to rest under a wall. While he was asleep there fell from

a sparrow's nest some hot dung on his face, some of which getting into his eyes, there came a whiteness over them which obscured his sight. He immediately applied to the physicians for relief, but they were unable to do him any service, and he continued for some time totally blind. This affliction he bore with great patience, but it reduced him to such distress, that his wife was obliged to work for the support of the family.

Tobit, thinking he had not long to live, gave his son many excellent instructions relative to his future conduct in life; having done which he ordered him to go to Rages, to recover the ten talents he had lent Gabael. Young Tobias expressed his unwillingness to undertake the journey alone; upon which his father bade him look out for some civil person to bear him company, and he would amply requite him for his trouble.

While young Tobias was in search of a proper person to accompany him on this business, the angel Raphael appeared to him in the shape of a young Israelite, and offered to conduct him to Gabael at Rages, at whose house he said he had been, calling himself Azariah, the son of Ananias. Pleased with the figure of the person who offered these services, young Tobias went with him to his father, who, after some enquiries who he was, and what reward he would have for his trouble, agreed he should accompany his son, and the necessary preparations being made on the part of Tobias, they set out on their journey.

On the evening of the first day they stopped at a house near the banks of the river Tigris,* and Tobias, being

* The river Tigris was not much celebrated in ancient times, but it is well known to those who have, of late years, visited our East-India settlements. It rises in the Armenian mountains, and received its name from its rapidity, the word Tigris, in the Medean language, signifying a dart or arrow. It passes through the lake Arethusa, and afterwards sinking into the earth, rises again on the other side of Mount Tauris: that it is the same river hath been evinced by a variety of experiments, for things thrown in on one side have been brought up on the other. It proceeds from Mount Tauris to the lake Thespi-tes, but often sinks under ground by the way, particularly in one place, where it hides itself for the space of twenty-five miles, and then breaking up to the surface of the earth, it proceeds with great rapidity. Between Assyria and Mesopotamia, it receives several rivers into its bosom; and below Bagdat, it branches into two chau-

fatigued with walking, went to the water to wash his feet, accompanied by the angel Raphael. When he came to the river he saw a fish coming out of the water, which was of so prodigious a size that he was fearful it would devour him. The angel, observing how much he was intimidated, bade him take courage, lay hold of the fish, and pull him upon the land. Tobias did as he was commanded, upon which the angel bade him take out the entrails, and carefully preserve the heart, gall and liver, assigning for a reason, that the heart and liver being burnt on coals, the smoke arising from them would drive away evil spirits, and that the gall was an excellent remedy for removing imperfections in the sight. They then dressed a part of the fish, and, after having properly refreshed themselves, proceeded on their journey to Rages.

When they came near Ecbatane,* a city of Medea, the angel told Tobias there was a man in that city called Raguel, who was of the same tribe with him, and a near kinsman; and that he had an only daughter named Sara: that they would go and lodge at his house, and that he should ask of him his daughter in marriage. Tobias told him he was informed that she had already been married to seven husbands, who were all dead and that the evil spirit had killed them on the very night of their marriage. That he feared the same fate would befall him, and being an only son his death would cause such great affliction to his aged parents that it would hasten their end. The angel answered, that the persons over whom the evil spirit had power were such as married without the fear of God, and only thought of satisfying their brutal appetites: that to prevent the like misfortunes which had befallen the others, when he married the young woman he should strictly observe continence for the first night, and spend the

nels, which both disembogue themselves into the Euphrates, and by that means form an island.

* The city of Ecbatane was one of the most ancient of which we have any accounts in history, for it was built by Dejoces, the first king of Medea, several centuries before the Jews were led into captivity. Before that period the Medes, like the Celtes of old, lived in woods, dens and caves; but this wise prince, having collected them together, and built this city, made it the seat of his regal dignity. It was finely situated on an eminence, from which there was the most extensive prospect of fields, woods, rivers and vineyards.

greater part of his time in prayer to God. That he should lay the liver of the fish on the fire, and it would drive away the evil spirit; and that after the first night was passed he should take the young woman in the fear of the Lord, and for the sake of having children.

When Tobias and the angel Raphael arrived at the house of Raguel, he received them with great respect, and entertained them in the best manner his house would afford; from which treatment Tobias was encouraged to do as the angel had directed, namely, to ask of Raguel his daughter Sara in marriage. The old man at first hesitated to comply with his request, fearing lest the same mischief should fall on him which had happened to the other seven that had married her; but the angel bidding him not fear, he called his daughter, and taking her by the hand, presented her to Tobias, saying, *Behold, here she is, take her after the law of Moses, and lead her away to thy father.*

Tobias punctually performed what the angel had enjoined with respect to his conduct to his wife on the first night after marriage. He roasted the liver of the fish, on the coals, and spent the whole night in continence and prayer, addressing himself to God in these words: “Blessed art thou, O God of our fathers, and blessed is thy holy and glorious name for ever; let the heavens bless thee and all thy creatures. Thou madest Adam, and gavest him Eve his wife for an helper and stay: of them came mankind: Thou hast said, It is not good that man should be alone; let us make unto him an aid like unto himself. And now, O Lord, I take not this my sister for lust, but uprightly: therefore mercifully ordain that we may become aged together.”

Raguel, who expected the same fate would attend Tobias as the other seven who had been married to his daughter, arose early in the morning, went out, and dug a grave in order to inter the body as soon as possible. On his return he desired his wife to send one of the maids to see if Tobias was alive. The girl, on entering the room, found them both in bed, and asleep, of which giving her master notice, he first praised God, and then ordered one of his servants to go and fill up the grave.

This unexpected event gave such satisfaction to Raguel, that he made a most sumptuous entertainment on the occasion, and conjured his son-in-law Tobias to stay with him a fortnight, after which he would give him half his possessions, and he should return in safety to his father. Tobias complied with Raguel's request, but that he might not seem to neglect the business on which his father had sent him, he entreated the angel, whom he still took to be Azariah, to go to Rages, in order to receive the money of Gabael, which he was indebted to his father. The angel did as Tobias desired, and having settled with Gabael, and told him all that had passed relative to Tobias's marriage, he took him with him to Ecbatane, in order to participate of the nuptial feast.

In the mean time old Tobit and his wife were in the greatest anxiety of mind on account of the long absence of their son. The mother, indeed, was inconsolable, saying, *My son is dead, seeing he stayeth so long: Now I care for nothing, my son, since I have let thee go, the light of mine eyes.* But old Tobit used all the arguments he could to remove her apprehensions, and pacify her, saying, *Hold thy peace, take no care, for he is safe.*

The fourteen days of the marriage feast being expired, young Tobias requested of his father-in-law, that he might take his leave and return home, as his parents would consequently be very uneasy at his long absence. Raguel readily consented to this request, and gave him, as he had promised, one half of his possessions with his daughter; having done which he blessed them, and said, *My children, the God of heaven give you a prosperous journey.* Then addressing himself to his daughter, he gave her this advice: *Honor thy father and thy mother-in-law, which are now thy parents, that I may hear good report of thee.* Edna, the wife of Raguel, then addressed Tobias as follows: *The Lord of heaven grant that I may see thy children of my daughter Sara before I die, that I may rejoice before the Lord: behold, I commit my daughter unto thee of special trust: wherefore do not intreat her evil.*

Tobias, having taken leave of his father-in-law, set out on his journey home, accompanied by the angel, his wife, and several servants, taking with him many cattle and camels, with other articles, which Raguel had given him

as a marriage portion with his daughter. When they came within some distance of Nineveh, the angel and Tobias went on before, in order to satisfy Tobias's parents, as soon as possible, of his safety, as also to make the necessary preparations for receiving the company that followed him. On their way the angel (having directed Tobias to take the fish's gall with him) told him that as soon as he should see his father to anoint his eyes with it: that as it would make them smart, he would consequently rub them with his hands, whereby the film would come off, and his sight should be restored.

The mother of Tobias, being anxious for the return of her son, had gone some way from her house in expectation of seeing him: nor was it long before her wishes were gratified. As soon as she beheld him, she ran with eager joy back to her house, saying to her husband, *Behold thy son cometh, and the man that went with him.* When Tobias arrived his mother embraced him with tears of joy, and then expressed her satisfaction in these words: *Seeing I have seen thee, my son, from henceforth I am content to die.* The old man, hearing his son's voice, arose to meet him at the door, in order to salute him, but being blind, he stumbled and could not proceed. Young Tobias, taking him by the hand, placed him in his seat, and immediately, agreeable to the direction of the angel, rubbed his eyes with the fish's gall, saying, *Be of good hope my father.* The gall making the old man's eyes smart, he rubbed them, upon which the film, or whiteness came off, and he beheld his darling son Tobias. He immediately embraced him, and wept for joy, having done which he expressed his thankfulness to God for the recovery of his sight in these words: *Blessed (said he) art thou, O God, and blessed is thy name for ever; and blessed are all thine holy angels: for thou hast scourged, and hast taken pity on me: for, behold, I see my son Tobias.*

After these mutual embraces were over, Tobias related to his parents the particulars of all that had happened during his absence, and informed them that his wife, with her attendants, were near at hand. In consequence of this, old Tobit accompanied his son to the gate of the city, in order to receive them, the people in their way expressing

their astonishment at his having recovered his sight, of which he had been totally divested upwards of eight years.

As soon as Tobias's wife, with her attendants, arrived, old Tobit received her with all the tenderness of a parent, saying, *Thou art welcome, daughter: God be blessed which hath brought thee unto us, and blessed be thy father and mother.* The whole company then proceeded to Tobit's house, where they celebrated the marriage with the greatest festivity and joy for seven days.

After their festivity was over on this occasion, old Tobit recollected the obligation he lay under to Azariah, who had accompanied his son in his journey, and brought him safe back. He therefore told Tobias to reward him for his trouble, and to give him something more than what he had agreed to do. *My son, (said he) see that the man have his wages which went with thee, and thou must give him more.* Young Tobias replied, *O father, it is no harm to me to give him half of those things which I have brought: for he hath brought me again to thee, and made whole my wife, and brought me the money, and likewise healed thee.*

Tobias, calling the angel to him (whom he had all along taken for Azariah) offered him half of what he had brought with him from Ecbatane as a reward for his services. On this Raphael discovered himself to be a messenger from God, saying, *I am Raphael, one of the seven holy angels, which present the prayers of the saints, and which go in and out before the glory of the Holy One.* So unexpected a declaration greatly alarmed both Tobit and his son, who immediately fell prostrate on the ground. The angel bade them arise, and fear not, for all things should go well with them. *It is not, (said he,) of any favor of mine, but by the will of God I came; wherefore, praise him forever. All these days I did appear unto you; but I did neither eat nor drink, but ye did see a vision. Now therefore give God thanks, for I go up to him that sent me.* After the angel had said this, Tobit and his son arose, when, to their great astonishment, they no more beheld the person they had taken for Azariah, he having between his address to them, and their rising from the ground, suddenly disappeared.

This singular incident struck a deep impression on the minds of both Tobit and his son, the former of whom wrote a most excellent prayer on the occasion, in which he ex-

pressed his thankfulness to God for the great benefits he had received at his hands, and strongly recommended it to others to fly to him for protection.

Tobit lived many years after this, during which time he principally employed himself in the same manner he had done previous to the loss of his sight, namely, doing all the good that laid in his power towards relieving the distresses of his captive brethren. When he found his end approaching, he called to him his son Tobias, to whom, after giving him some excellent instructions relative to the future conduct of his life, he foretold the destruction both of Nineveh and Jerusalem, and advised him, after his and his mother's deaths, to retire with his family into Media. "Go, my son," said he, "into Media, for I surely believe those things which Jonas the prophet spake of Nineveh; that it shall be overthrown, and that for a time peace shall rather be in Media; and that our brethren shall lie scattered in the earth from that good land; and Jerusalem shall be desolate, and the house of God in it shall be burned, and shall be desolate for a time; and that again God will have mercy on them, and bring them again into the land, where they shall build a temple, but not like to the first, until the time of that age be fulfilled; and afterward they shall return from all places of their captivity, and build up Jerusalem gloriously, and the house of God shall be built in it forever with a glorious building, as the prophets have spoken thereof. And all nations shall turn, and fear the Lord God truly, and shall bury their idols. So shall all nations praise the Lord, and his people shall confess God, and the Lord shall exalt his people; and all those which love the Lord God in truth and justice shall rejoice, shewing mercy to our brethren. And now, my son, depart out of Nineveh, because that those things which the prophet Jonas spake shall surely come to pass."

Tobit having given this advice and these instructions to his son, soon after paid the debt of nature, at which time he was in the 185th year of his age.

Tobias strictly obeyed the injunctions of his dying father, for after the death of his mother he left Nineveh, and retired with his whole family to his father-in-law's at Ecbatane, whom he still found living in a very advanced age.

On the death of Raguel, Tobias inherited all his possessions, and, from his industry, became exceeding wealthy, so that at his death he left an ample provision for his family. He followed the steps of his father in doing acts of beneficence, not only to his countrymen, but to all others who labored under distress; and having thus spent his time he at length died in the 127th year of his age. A short time before his dissolution he heard of the destruction of Nineveh, which was taken by Nabuchodonosor: *and before his death he rejoiced over Nineveh.*

CHAP. IX.

Jotham, the son and successor of Uzziah, reigns prosperously over Judah for sixteen years, and then dies. He is succeeded by his son Ahaz, who is a very wicked prince, and, instead of reforming the people, promotes idolatry. Rezin, king of Syria, and Pekah, king of Israel, invade his territories, and greatly perplex him. He makes a league with the king of Assyria, and becomes tributary to him. He orders the temple of Jerusalem to be shut up, suppresses the true worship of God, and supplies its place with the idolatrous worship of the Syrians. He dies, and, for his impieties, is refused interment in the royal sepulchres. He is succeeded by his son Hezekiah, who renews the passover, destroys idolatry, and restores the worship of the temple. His sickness and remarkable recovery. He forms an alliance with the king of Babylon. Makes a truce with Sennacherib, king of Assyria. Receives an haughty and threatening message from him, at which he is greatly alarmed, but is comforted by the prophet Isaiah, who assures him that no danger shall ensue. Sennacherib marches against Jerusalem with a design of totally destroying it, but is prevented by the Divine interposition, the greater part of his army being destroyed in one night by an angel. Death of Hezekiah.

WE have in the preceding chapters of this book, related every particular circumstance that occurred from the first separation of the Israelites into two kingdoms, to the overthrow of the ten tribes, or that of Israel, by Shalmaneser, king of Assyria. Previous to, as well as for many

years after, the latter incident, a variety of circumstances took place in the kingdom of Judah, the history of which we shall now resume from the death of Uzziah, and proceed regularly to relate every transaction that happened till the overthrow of that kingdom, and the captivity of the inhabitants, by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon.

On the death of Uzziah, king of Judah, his son Jotham succeeded to the throne, at which time he was twenty-five years of age, though, from his father's natural imperfections, he had the whole administration of affairs in his hands some years before. He was a prince remarkable for his excellent qualities and virtues; a man exemplary for his reverence to God, his justice to man, and his care for the commonwealth. He made it his business to set and keep things in order; to rectify whatever he found amiss; and, in matters of religion, would have made a thorough reformation, but his people were naturally so exceeding wicked, that they obstructed his designs. He took care, however, to repair the temple; to rebuild the high-gate which led from his palace, and, to secure himself against hostile incursions, raised several structures both in the mountains and forests, for the security and defence of his kingdom.

Thus did Jotham continue to dispose of his time for the benefit and security of his subjects for some years, during which peace and tranquility were preserved throughout his dominions. But at length he was interrupted by the Ammonites, who had been formerly conquered by David, and made tributary to the crown of Judah. These people, having grown exceeding powerful, invaded his territories, and made depredations in various parts; upon which Jotham, marching against them with a considerable body of forces, soon drove them out of his country, and imposed a tribute on their king of an hundred talents of silver, ten thousand measures of wheat, and as many of barley, to be paid annually.

The Ammonites continued to pay this tribute to Jotham for three years, at the expiration of which Rezin king of Syria, and Pekah, king of Israel, having entered into a confederacy against Judah, they took this opportunity of revolting; and Jotham had it never after in his power to reduce them to subjection.

Before the preparations for war on the parts of the two confederate kings, Rezin and Pekah, took effect, Jotham paid the debt of nature, in the forty-first year of his age, and sixteenth of his reign. He was buried in the royal sepulchre of his ancestors, and his death was universally lamented by his subjects.

On the decease of Jotham, his son Ahaz (who was then about twenty years of age) succeeded to the throne. He was a very wicked prince, and, instead of following the maxims of his father, not only gave himself up to idolatry, but endeavored to promote it among his subjects. But he was at first in some degree interrupted by the state of public affairs at his father's death, he greatly dreading the consequences that might arise from the preparations making by the conjunctive kings, Rezin and Pekah, against him.

The plan laid down by the confederate kings, was first to make themselves masters of Jerusalem, and then to extirpate the whole house of David, and set up a new king, of their appointment, on the throne of Judah. This plan, however, proved abortive. It was the will of Providence to punish Ahaz alone for his wickedness, and not to cut off the whole race of his servant David. He was, therefore, pleased to send to Ahaz the prophet Isaiah, to encourage him in making the most vigorous defence against the enemy, and to assure him that they should not succeed in their attempt. As a proof that what he said might be depended on, the prophet gave Ahaz two signs, one of which was to be accomplished speedily, and the other at some distance of time. The first of these was, that the son, which Isaiah then had, should not be of age to discern between good and evil, before both the two kings Rezin and Pekah should be cut off from the land.* The other was, that a virgin should conceive, and bear a son, who should be called Immanuel;† so that he might rest himself satisfied, because the destruction of the house of David could in no case happen, until the Messiah should be born, in this miraculous manner, of a virgin descended from that family.

The confederate kings, having made all necessary preparations, marched with a very formidable army into the

* Isaiah viii. 4.

† Ibid. vii. 14.

kingdom of Judah, and after committing various depredations in different parts of the country, at length laid siege to Jerusalem. Ahaz, in consequence of the advice given him by the prophet Isaiah, used his utmost efforts to defeat their design of taking the place; and such was the strength of the city, and the unanimous resolution of the inhabitants, that the enemy, finding themselves not able to obtain a conquest so soon as they expected, raised the siege, and returned home.

Notwithstanding the manifest interposition of Providence in behalf of Ahaz, yet, to such a degree was he naturally prone to wickedness, that, instead of any ways reforming, he grew more wicked and obdurate in his sins. He not only promoted the worship of the golden calves (for which he had not the same political reason the kings of Israel had) but made molten images likewise for all the idols of the heathens. To these he sacrificed, and burnt incense in the high-places, and on hills, and under every green tree; and, to add to all his other impieties, he made his son pass through the fire* in the valley of Hinnom† according to the custom of the heathens, whom God had cast out to make room for the children of Israel.

These distinguished enormities were so highly offensive to God, that he was pleased to punish him by means of the two confederate kings Rezin and Pekah, who, the year

* It is the opinion of all commentators, that this passing through the fire was performed either by causing the child to pass between two fires made near each other, by way of its consecration to the service of the idol Moloch, or by shutting up the child in the body of the idol, which was made of brass, in body like a man, but in head like an ox. It was so great in bulk, that the body was divided into seven distinct cells, into one of which the child to be sacrificed being put, was suffocated and burnt to death by the heat which was conveyed from a fire without. And that the shrieks of the child might not be heard, the priests beat drums, from whence the place was called *Tophet*, which, in the Hebrew language signifies a *drum*.

† Hinnom was, in all probability, the name of some eminent person in very ancient times, to whom this valley belonged, to whose posterity it descended, from whence it is sometimes called *the Valley of the children of Hinnom*. It was a fine spot of ground situated on the east side of Jerusalem, and so delightfully shaded with trees, that it invited the people to make it a place of idolatrous worship, whereby it in time became infamous, and was at last turned into a public dung-hill for the reception of all kinds of filth brought from the city.

following, marched into his country with the same considerable army they had under their command when they laid siege to Jerusalem. They divided their troops into three parts, the first of which was placed under Rezin king of Syria, the second under Pekah king of Israel, and the third under Zichri, a mighty man of Ephraim; so that they invaded the dominions of Ahaz in three different parts at the same time.

Rezin, king of Syria, possessed himself of Elath,* out of which he drove the Jews, placed the Edomites in their stead, and, having loaded his army with spoils, and taken a prodigious number of captives, returned in triumph to Damascus.

Pekah, king of Israel, marched with his army against Ahaz, and gave him so terrible an overthrow, that no less than one hundred and twenty thousand men were slain in the field of battle.

Zichri, taking advantage of this victory, marched with his army to Jerusalem, and, having made himself master of the city, slew Maaseiah, the king's son, together with several of the most principal people belonging to the court.

After these two defeats, the Israelitish armies, namely, the one under Pekah, and the other under Zichri, returned to Samaria, taking with them a prodigious quantity of spoil, with upwards of two hundred thousand prisoners whom they intended to have sold for slaves. But in this they were disappointed by means of the prophet Oded, who, on their approach near the city, went out to meet them, accompanied by a great number of the principal inhabitants. As soon as Oded came up with the two confederate kings, and saw the number of captives they had with them, he remonstrated with the two commanders Pekah and Zichri, on their cruelty to their brethren in these words: "Behold (said he) because the Lord God of your fathers was wrath with Judah, he hath delivered

* Elath, or Elah, was a famous port on the Red Sea, which David, in his conquest of the kingdom of Edom, took, and there established a great trade to various parts of the world. In the reign of Jehoram, the son of Jehoshaphat, the Edomites recovered their liberty, and became sole masters of this city, until the time that Uzziah recovered it to the dominions of Judah; but in the reign of Ahaz, the Syrians retook it, and restored it to the Edomites.

“them into your hands, and ye have slain them in a rage that reacheth up unto heaven. And now ye propose to keep under the children of Judah and Jerusalem for bondmen and bondwomen unto you: but are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God? Now hear me, therefore, and deliver the captives again, which ye have taken captive of your brethren: for the fierce wrath of the Lord is upon you.”

When Oded had finished his speech, the principal men of the city who accompanied him, strengthened his remonstrance by addressing themselves to the two commanders in these words: “Ye shall not bring in the captives hither; for whereas we have offended against the Lord already, ye intend to add more to our sin and to our trespass: for our trespass is great, and there is fierce wrath against Israel.”

Pekah and Zichri listened to these remonstrances with all due attention; they not only released the captives, but likewise clothed and relieved them out of the spoils they had taken, after which they conducted them to Jericho, such as were not able to walk being carried on asses; from whence they returned at discretion to their respective habitations.

No sooner was the kingdom of Judah delivered from the severe oppression of the confederate kings Pekah and Rezin, than it was invaded by enemies from other parts, who treated the people with the greatest cruelty. The Edomites to the south, and the Philistines to the west, siezed on all those parts of the country which lay contiguous to them, and, by ravages and inroads, committed the most violent depredations.

The affairs of Ahaz were in such a situation, that he was unable to send a proper force to repel the incursions of his enemies. He therefore dispatched ambassadors to Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria, with a considerable present, consisting of all the gold and silver he could find in the temple, together with assurance that, if he would but send forces to his assistance, he would ever after become his vassal.

The Assyrian monarch was captivated with the bribe, and so well satisfied with the promises made by Ahaz, that he readily engaged in his interest; and, marching with

a considerable army against Rezin, king of Syria, slew him in battle. Having done this, he besieged and took Damascus,* after which, he reduced the whole country under his dominion, transplanted the people to Kir, and so put an end to the kingdom of Syria, after it had continued nine or ten generations.

Having thus reduced the kingdom of Syria, the next step taken by Tiglath-Pileser, was to march against Pekah, king of Israel, over whom he was so successful that he possessed himself of all the principal places in his dominions situated beyond the river Jordan. He then plundered the land of Galilee, and afterwards proceeded towards Jerusalem in order to get more money from Ahaz as a reward for his services. Such was his avarice, and such the weakness and pusillanimity of Ahaz, that he even melted down the vessels of the temple to satisfy him, after which he marched back to Damascus, and there wintered, without doing Ahaz any farther services.

These indignities, which another man might have resented, Ahaz, in his circumstances, thought proper to overlook; and not only so, but when he heard that Tiglath-Pileser was returned to Damascus, he went thither to pay him homage and obeisance, as his vassal and tributary.

* The city of Damascus was in being during the time of Abraham, and some of the ancient fathers inform us, that this patriarch reigned there immediately after Damascus its founder. Thus much, however, is certain, that one, whom Abraham had made free, and appointed steward of his house, was of Damascus (Gen. xv. 2.) at the time he pursued Chedorlaomer and the five confederate kings as far as Hobah, which lies northward of Damascus, Gen. xiv. 15. The scripture does not mention any thing more of this city till the time of David, when Hadad (who, according to Josephus, was the first that took upon him the title of the king of Damascus) sending troops to the assistance of Hadadezer, king of Zabab, was himself defeated by David, and his country subdued. Towards the end of Solomon's reign Rezin recovered the kingdom of Syria, and shook off the Jewish yoke, 1 Kings, xi. 23, &c. Some time after this Asa, king of Judah, implored the help of Benhadad, king of Damascus, against Baasha, king of Israel. 1 Kings, xv. 18. And from this time the kings of Damascus were generally called Benhadad, till, in this last controversy with them, Ahaz called in the assistance of the Assyrian monarch, who killed their king, and carried his subjects into captivity, according to the predictions of the prophets Isaiah and Amos. See chapters vii. of each.

While Ahaz continued at Damascus he happened to see an idolatrous altar, which, from its curious make, so attracted his fancy, that he ordered a model of it to be taken, and sent to Urijah the high-priest at Jerusalem, with orders to have another made as like it as possible. Urijah indiscreetly obeyed the king's injunction; upon which, Ahaz, immediately on his return home, removed the altar of the Lord from the temple, and not only ordered the new one to be placed in its stead, but, for the future, that sacrifices should not be offered on any other. In short, to such lengths did he indulge himself in his favorite idolatry, and with such contempt did he look upon the true worship of God, that, after having defaced several of the most stately vessels in the temple, he caused it at length to be wholly shut up, and suppressed all Divine worship throughout his dominions. He ordered altars to be raised not only in various parts of Jerusalem, but likewise in all the principal cities of Judah, and on these were offered sacrifices to the various idols worshipped by the Syrians.

While Ahaz was thus carrying on his horrid impieties, God was pleased to stop his career, by suddenly cutting him off in the very prime of his life, being only thirty-six years of age, and in the sixteenth of his reign. He was buried in the city of David, but not in the royal sepulchres, that honor being denied him on account of the wickedness of his life.

On the death of Ahaz, the throne of Judah was filled by his son Hezekiah, a prince of distinguished abilities, and celebrated for his strict adherence to justice and piety. No sooner had he got full possession of the kingdom, than he began, in good earnest, to set about a thorough reformation of religion. He ordered the gates of the temple, which his father had shut up, to be opened, his father's new altar to be removed, and the altar of the Lord to be restored to its place. Having done this, he summoned together the priests and Levites, whom he addressed in words to this effect: "It is unnecessary for me to remind you of the misfortunes consequent on my father's sins, in your refusing the worship due to God, and uniting with him in the adoration of his idols: but as experience hath now taught you how dreadful a thing it is to trifle with

“heaven, I recommend that all past failings may be buried in oblivion: that you cleanse yourselves from former pollutions, and that you purify the temple by sacrifices and consecrations, in doing of which, and that alone, you may hope for future prosperity, as well as pardon for the sins you have committed.”

The priests readily obeyed the king's commands, and having recovered all the vessels that could be found, they first cleansed them, and then placed them before the altar of the Lord; after which they removed every impure thing that had been put into the temple by the wicked Ahaz, and threw them into the brook Kidron.

As soon as Hezekiah was informed of the necessary preparations being made in the temple for the worshipping of God, he went to it early the next morning, attended by all the chief men of his court, and there offered burnt-offerings and sacrifices in such abundance, that the priests were too few to slay them, and were forced to accept of the help of the Levites, who (so great was the corruption then in the priesthood) were more ready to sanctify themselves than the priests. When they had made an end of offering, the king and all the people bowed themselves and worshipped, the priests sang praises to God in the words of David,* and of Asaph the Seer, while the Levites accompanied their voices with various kinds of musical instruments.

The service of the temple being thus restored, Hezekiah next proposed within himself to revive the Passover, which, on account of the division of the kingdom, and the frequent commotions that took place in consequence thereof, had not been properly observed for a considerable time. To this purpose he advised with the princes and chief men of the kingdom, who unanimously approved of his intention; but, because it was thought that neither the temple, the priests, nor the people, could be sufficiently sanctified against the

* David was not only a great poet, but likewise master of music, and might therefore compose and modulate his own hymns; but, whether the music of them might not be altered or improved in after-ages is a matter of some uncertainty. The Asaph, here mentioned, was the person who lived in David's days, so famous for his skill in music; and the several devout pieces he composed are those we meet with, prefaced by his name, in the Book of Psalms.

usual time of observing it (which was in the first month of the year) it was resolved that it should be celebrated in the second.*

In consequence of this resolution, a proclamation was issued out, by order of the king, requiring not only the people of Judah, but likewise those of Israel, to attend the solemnity. The proclamation for this purpose, which was dispersed throughout the two kingdoms, was to the following effect: “Ye children of Israel, turn again unto the Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, and he will return to the remnant of you, that are escaped out of the hands of the kings of Assyria. Be ye not like your fathers, and like your brethren, who trespassed against the Lord God of their fathers, who therefore gave them up to desolation as ye see. Now be ye not so stiff-necked, as your fathers were, but yield yourselves unto the Lord, and enter into his sanctuary, which he hath sanctified for ever; and serve the Lord your God, that the fierceness of his wrath may turn away from you. For if ye turn again unto the Lord, your brethren and your children shall find compassion before them that lead them captive, so that they shall come again into this land: for the Lord your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away his face from you, if ye return unto him.”

It could hardly be expected but that, after so long a disuse of this holy festival, an attempt to revive it should meet with some scorn and opposition; and therefore we need not wonder that many of the tribes of Ephraim, Manasseh and Zebulun, should, on being invited to the feast by Hezekiah’s messengers, treat them with contempt, which they did by reviling and mocking them. Great numbers, however, even from these parts, gladly embraced

* The direction which the law gives is, that the passover should be celebrated *on the fourteenth day of the first month*: but because it was found impossible to get all things in readiness against that time, it was judged more advisable to adjourn it to the fourteenth of the next month, rather than stay till the next year: and for this they had some encouragement; because the law allows that in case any man be unclean by reason of a dead body, or be on a journey afar off, he may eat the passover on the 14th day of the second month. Numb. ix. 10, 11. And what was an indulgence to particular persons, they thought might well be allowed to the people in general.

the opportunity of worshipping God the true way, and, previous to the time appointed, repaired to Jerusalem. As for the men of Judah, the power of God wrought so effectually upon them, that they unanimously obeyed the king and his princes, who, they verily believed, acted by the command of the Lord.

All things being prepared as well as the time would permit, and the idolatrous altars in Jerusalem demolished and thrown into the brook Kidron, the people met, and on the fourteenth day of the second month celebrated the passover. The good king Hezekiah, being fearful that in so great a multitude there might be some who had not observed the ceremony of sanctifying themselves, offered this atoning prayer for them: "The good Lord pardon every one that prepareth his heart to seek God, even the Lord God of his fathers; although he be not cleansed, according to the purification of the sanctuary."

The concourse of people assembled on this occasion was so numerous, that it might be justly reckoned one of the greatest passovers that had been solemnized from the days of king Solomon. The usual time which the law directs for the continuance of this feast is seven days; but, as it had been long neglected, they now doubled the time, and kept it fourteen. The king gave to the people one thousand bullocks and seven thousand sheep; and the princes gave the like number of bullocks and ten thousand sheep. The whole fourteen days were spent in the greatest festivity, and universal joy prevailed throughout the streets of Jerusalem.

As soon as the passover was ended, Hezekiah commanded the people to go immediately and break down all the images, burn the groves, and demolish the high-places and altars, not only throughout Judea, but also in those parts which belonged to the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh.* He likewise gave orders for the destruction of the Brazen

* Though the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh lived in a part of the dominions belonging to the king of Israel, yet Hezekiah might direct this abolition of idolatry among them, either in virtue of a law, which bound Israel as well as Judah, and required the extirpation of these things in the whole land of Canaan, or, from a firm persuasion that his neighbor the king of Israel, who had permitted his subjects to repair to the passover, would not disapprove of his conduct.

Serpent, which had been erected by Moses as a monument of God's great mercy to the Israelites in their passage through the wilderness; but which, owing to the iniquity of the preceding times, had been long made an object of idolatrous worship.*

Hezekiah having thus restored the true religion, and rooted out idolatry not only throughout his own dominions, but in some parts of those belonging to Israel, next directed his attention towards restoring the temple-worship to its ancient splendor and purity. To effect this, he put the priests and Levites in their courses, and appointed to each his proper ministration. The tithes and first fruits, which idolatrous princes had detained on purpose to bring the priesthood to poverty, and thence into contempt, he returned to the temple; and ordered the daily oblations, as well as the larger offerings on the greatest festivals of the year, to be defrayed solely at his expense.

* The reason which the scripture assigns for Hezekiah's destroying this brazen serpent is, *because, unto this day, the children of Israel had burnt incense to it*, 2 Kings, xviii. 4. We are not however to suppose, that, all along from the days of Moses, this brazen serpent was made an object of worship: this is what neither David, nor Solomon, in the beginning of his reign, would have allowed, nor can we think, but that either Asa, or Jehoshaphat, when they rooted out idolatry, would have made an end of this, had they perceived that the people, at that time, either paid worship, or burnt incense to it. The commencement of this superstition therefore must be of a later date, and since the time that Ahab's family, by being allied to the crown of Judah by marriage, introduced all kinds of idolatry. Now one false inducement to the worship of this image might arise from the words of Moses. For, whereas it is said, *that whosoever looketh upon it shall live*, (Numb. xxi. 8.) some might thence imagine, that, by its mediation, they might obtain a blessing, and so make it the object of their superstition at first. However, we may suppose that their burning incense, or any other perfumes before it, was designed only in honor to the true God, by whose direction Moses made it; but then, in process of time their superstition so much increased, that they either worshipped the God of Israel under that image, or (what is worse) substituted an heathen God in his stead, and worshipped the brazen serpent, as his image; which they might more easily be induced to do, because the practice of some neighboring nations was to worship their gods under the form of a serpent. On this account Hezekiah wisely chose rather to lose this memorial of God's wonderful mercy to his people in the wilderness, than suffer it any longer to be abused to idolatry. He therefore *broke it in pieces*; that is, as the Talmudists explain it, he ground it to powder, and then scattered it in the air, that not the least remains of it might be afterwards seen.

From these acts of piety, and for his continuing to strengthen the establishment of the true religion, God was pleased to reward Hezekiah with a long and prosperous reign; and he justly merited the title given him by his subjects, namely, that of being one of the best of kings that ever sat upon the throne of Judah.

Hezekiah, having thoroughly restored the true worship of God throughout his dominions, next directed his attention to politics, by endeavoring to recover those places which had been taken by the Philistines during the reign of his father. While Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, was engaged in the siege of Samaria, he marched with a considerable army against them, and, in a short time, not only regained all the cities of Judah which they had seized, during the time that Pekah, king of Israel, and Rezin, king of Syria, jointly distressed the land, but also dispossessed them of almost all their own territories, the two cities of Gath and Gaza excepted.

After Shalmaneser had reduced Samaria, and made the Israelites captives, he sent messengers to Hezekiah to demand the tribute which his father Ahaz had agreed to pay annually to the kings of Assyria. Hezekiah refused complying with this request, upon which Shalmaneser threatened to invade his dominions and lay siege to Jerusalem; but he was diverted from executing his design by being at this time engaged in war with the king of Tyre, and before it was ended he paid the debt of nature.

Shalmaneser was succeeded by his son Sennacherib, who was no sooner settled on the throne than he renewed the demand his father had made to Hezekiah for the tribute; but he still refusing to comply, Sennacherib made the necessary preparations for invading Judea, fully resolved to compel him to submit by force of arms.

About this time Hezekiah was taken exceeding ill, and received a message from God, by the prophet Isaiah, to settle his affairs, and prepare for death. Hezekiah knew no other way of deprecating this sentence but by making immediate application to his God, whom he addressed with tears flowing from his eyes,* in these words: *I*

* The message God sent to Hezekiah was, that *he should die*, that is, that his distemper, according to the natural course of things, was mortal, and above the power of human art to cure. But this denun-

beseech thee, O Lord, remember how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. This short address had so good an effect, that before Isaiah had passed the middle court, he was directed to return, and deliver to Hezekiah this second message: *Thus saith the Lord, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will heal thee; on the third day thou shalt go up unto the house of the Lord. And I will add unto thy days fifteen years; and I will deliver thee, and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city for mine own sake, and for the sake of my servant David.*

Hezekiah, surprized at this sudden reverse of his doom, and fearful of its taking place, asked the prophet by what sign he might know he should recover. Isaiah told him he might take his choice, either to have the shadow on the sundial go ten degrees forward or backward; upon which, Hezekiah choosing the latter, it accordingly came to pass. The prophet then ordered a plaister of figs to be applied to that part of the king's body, from whence principally

evacuation was not absolute and irreversible. It implied a tacit condition, even as did Jonah's prediction of the destruction of Nineveh, which the repentance of its inhabitants prevented, as Hezekiah's humiliation retarded the time of his death. He had at this time been on the throne about fourteen years, and had no issue; and the Assyrians were now making great preparations to invade his kingdom. These matters considered, the king had other reasons, besides the natural aversion which all men have to death, to be concerned at the thoughts of its approach, and to wish for a prolongation of life. Length of days, and a peaceable enjoyment of old age, was a promise which God had made to his faithful servants, and the reward he usually paid them; and therefore Hezekiah was inclined to look upon himself as under God's displeasure for being so hastily summoned away. In himself he saw the royal family of David extinct, and all the hopes of having the promised Messiah born of his race become abortive. He saw the storm that was gathering and threatening his country with desolation, while there was not any of his family to succeed him on the throne, and all things were in danger of running into anarchy and confusion; and therefore, having this prospect before his eyes, he might well melt into tears at the apprehension of his approaching death, which would extinguish all his hopes, and complete all his fears, in making him go down childless to the grave.

arose the cause of his complaint;* which having done, in the space of three days he recovered, and went up to the temple to return thanks to God for so wonderful a deliverance.

The fame of this cure, and the miracle attending it, spread so far as to reach the ears of Berodach-baladan the son of the king of Babylon, who sent ambassadors with letters and presents to congratulate Hezekiah on his recovery, and at the same time to form an alliance of friendship with him. Hezekiah was so taken with the honor done him on this occasion, that, thinking he could not more properly return the compliment than by shewing the ambassadors the grandeur of his kingdom, he very indiscreetly gave them a sight of all his strength and treasure. For this his misconduct the prophet Isaiah was sent to reprove him, and to let him know, that a day would come when all the stores he made such ostentation of, should be carried into Babylon, and that his sons, after becoming captives, should be eunuchs in the royal palace of that city. This severe admonition Hezekiah received in a very decent and humble manner, saying, *Good is the word of the Lord which thou hast spoken. Is it not good, if peace and truth be in my days?*

During these transactions Sennacherib marched with his army against the fenced cities of Judah, and having taken several of them, he came at length and sat down before Lachish, threatening, after he had possessed himself of that city, to lay siege to Jerusalem.

Intimation of Sennacherib's intentions being made known to Hezekiah, he by the advice of his chief counsel-

* What Hezekiah's distemper was the scripture does not expressly tell us. The original word denotes an *inflammation*, but of what kind it was we are not informed. It being therefore thus left to conjecture, some have thought it an *imposthume*, some a violent *ulcer*, and others a *quincy*; all of whom are led in their opinions by what the naturalists tell us of the virtue of the article applied for his cure, viz. that figs in a decoction, are good to disperse any inflammation about the glands, by gargling the throat; and that, in a cataplasm, they wonderfully soften and ripen any hard tumor. But wherever the quality of the application might be, that there was a Divine interposition in the whole affair is evident, both from the speediness of the cure, and the nature of the sign, which God was pleased to give Hezekiah, in order to convince him that what he had said by the mouth of the prophet would certainly take place.

lors, made all manner of preparations for a vigorous defence. He repaired the walls of the city, and farther strengthened them with additional fortifications. He provided darts and shields in great abundance, and all other arms and implements that might be useful either to defend the place or annoy the enemy. He had the people enrolled who were fit for war, and placed over them good officers that they might be properly instructed in all military exercises. Having done this he assembled them together, near the gate of the city, and, to remove all fearful apprehensions they might entertain from the enemy, addressed them as follows: *Be strong and courageous; be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him. With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the Lord our God to help us, and to fight our battles.* This speech was highly pleasing to the people, who expressed their satisfaction by the loudest shouts and acclamations.

But, notwithstanding these preparations, Hezekiah after reflecting on the inequality of power, thought it better to submit and compound the matter with Sennacherib, than to run the hazard of a battle, and suffer his country to be ravaged and plundered by the enemy. To this purpose he sent ambassadors to Lachish, entreating Sennacherib to withdraw his army, promising, on these conditions, to submit to such terms as he should think proper to stipulate. The haughty Assyrian demanded thirty talents of gold and three hundred talents of silver; which Hezekiah with great difficulty paid, being obliged, after exhausting all the treasures both of the palace and temple, to strip the very doors of the latter of the gold plates wherewith they were overlaid.

The base and perfidious Sennacherib, having received the money, refused to stand to the agreement, and, instead of raising the siege, or withdrawing his army, sent away a large detachment, under the command of Rabshakeh, Tartan and Rabsaris, three of his generals, to lay siege to Jerusalem. As soon as they arrived near the walls of Jerusalem, they encamped their forces, and dispatched a messenger to demand a parley with Hezekiah. The king thinking it unsafe to go in person, ordered Eliakim, his deputy-governor, together with Shebna and Joah, the

keepers of the records, to repair to the Assyrian army, and remonstrate with the generals on the impropriety of their master's conduct. As soon as they came to the Assyrian camp, and related their business, Rabshakeh, the principal of the three generals, in a very peremptory and haughty manner, bade them enquire of their master why he had presumed to dispute admitting the army into the city, and hesitated to acknowledge submission to the great and powerful Sennacherib. He told them that Egypt was not in a condition to withstand the Assyrian army, and therefore, if Hezekiah flattered himself with the hopes of assistance from that quarter, he would find himself deceived, for he would be trusting to a broken reed which would wound the hand that pressed it.* He desired them to inform Hezekiah that the present expedition was undertaken by the direction of the Lord, who had already granted his father a complete victory over the Israelites, and would certainly render him equally successful in the war against Jerusalem.

Rabshakeh addressed himself to Hezekiah's ambassadors in Hebrew, in which language he was well versed; and Eliakim, apprehending that what he said being generally understood might have an unfavorable effect on the multitude (who were within hearing) requested him, if he had any thing farther to say, to speak it in the Syriac tongue: but Rabshakeh being apprized of Eliakim's motive for desiring a change of language, exalted his voice, and continued his harangue in Hebrew to this effect: "It is necessary (said he) that your people should understand the commands of the king my master. I am aware that it is your purpose to amuse the people with the vain hopes of subduing our

* The words in the text are, *Now behold thou trustest upon the Staff of this bruised Reed, even upon Egypt, 2 Kings, xviii. 21.* The comparison is excellent, to denote an ally, that is not only weak and unable to help, but dangerous likewise to those that rely upon him for succor; and his representing the power of Egypt to be as brittle as the canes or reeds that grow on the banks of the Nile, (for it is to this, no doubt, that the Assyrian orator alludes) is a great beauty in the similitude. This, however, must be allowed, that what he here speaks, in contempt of the Egyptian strength, has more of ostentation in it, than truth; because the Assyrian army, having lately failed in making an attempt to subdue that kingdom, was now returned into Judea.

“ army; if you have courage to attempt this enterprize I
 “ will supply you with two thousand horses:—but, alas,
 “ you are not able to provide them riders. Being thus re-
 “ duced, why will you longer deliberate? Your compli-
 “ ance will ensure your safety, while a farther opposition
 “ will involve you in the most imminent danger; for neces-
 “ sity will, at length, compel the weak to yield to the
 “ strong.”

When Hezekiah's messengers acquainted him with the purport of Rabshakeh's harangue to them, he rent his clothes, put on sackcloth, went to the temple, and, prostrating himself on the ground, fervently prayed to God for his assistance and protection against his enemies. Having done this, he dispatched Eliakim and Shebna, accompanied by a number of priests, to the prophet Isaiah, beseeching him to exert his utmost endeavors, by prayers and sacrifices, to intercede with the Almighty in his behalf, that thereby he might be enabled to humble the power and pride of his enemies. Isaiah yielded to the request made to him on the part of Hezekiah, and sent the ambassadors back with this message to him: *Thus shall ye say to your master, Thus saith the Lord: Be not afraid of the words which thou hast heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me. Behold, I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumor, and shall return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.*

Rabshakeh, having summoned Jerusalem to yield, and receiving no answer, returned with his forces to Sennacherib, who was now at Libnah, and where news was brought him that Tirhakah, king of Ethiopia, had invaded some part of his dominions. In consequence of this intelligence, he immediately raised the siege at Libnah* in order to march against the enemy, but previous thereto he sent a summons to Hezekiah no less insolent than that given by

* Libnah was not far from Lachish, both being situated on the mountains of Judea; and it is probable, that Sennacherib, not finding himself able to carry the latter, had removed the siege to Libnah, which was a place not so well fortified, and so situated that, by keeping a good guard at the entrance of the mountains, he might carry on the siege without fear of interruption from the forces of any other power.

word of mouth by his general Rabshakeh. This summons was sent in a letter, which Hezekiah had no sooner read, than he repaired to the temple, spread it before the Lord, and implored a deliverance from the outrageous Sennacherib. He soon after received a message from the prophet Isaiah, the purport of which was, that he need not fear the Divine assistance against his enemies, since the Lord had taken the city of Jerusalem under his protection, and therefore would not suffer the king of Assyria, notwithstanding all his vain boastings, to come near it.

In the mean time the king of Assyria, having engaged the Ethiopian army, and obtained a complete victory, was in full march to Jerusalem, fully resolved to destroy the place, and put all the inhabitants to the sword. But in this he soon found himself mistaken, for the very night after the prophet had given Hezekiah assurance of security, an Angel of the Lord came down to the camp of the Assyrians, and smote no less than an hundred four score and five thousand men.

This so terrified Sennacherib, that he immediately hastened with the remainder of his army, into his own country, and took up his residence at Nineveh. He had not, however, been long here, before Isaiah's prediction was fully verified: his two eldest sons, Adrammelech and Sharezer, formed a conspiracy against him, and taking the opportunity while he was at worship in the temple of his idol Nisroch, suddenly fell on him, and slew him. After committing the horrid deed, the murderers fled for security into Armenia, leaving Esarhaddon, their youngest brother, to succeed on the throne.

Hezekiah being now relieved from all his fears, through the signal destruction of the Assyrian army, lived the remainder of his days in peace and tranquility, being both honored and revered by all the neighboring nations, who, from this, and some other instances, clearly perceived that he was under the immediate protection of God, and were therefore afraid to give him any molestation. Hezekiah, being at rest from wars, applied his thoughts to the good government of his people, and to such matters as were most necessary for the welfare and security of his kingdom. He erected several magazines in Jerusalem, which he well furnished with all kinds of ammunition, and made a new

aqueduct for better supplying the city with water. At length, after a course of great and worthy actions, he died in the twenty-ninth year of his reign, and was buried, with great solemnity, in the most honorable part of the sepulchres of the descendants of David.

The character which the scripture gives of Hezekiah is this: "That neither before nor after him, was there ever a king of Judah like him. He put his whole trust in the Lord, and cleaved to his law, without turning from it to the right or to the left. He opened the gates of the House of God, which his father had shut up, with a design to abolish the true worship of God. He commanded the priests and Levites to sanctify themselves, in order to the purifying of that holy place, which had been so abominably profaned. He cut down all idolatrous groves, and destroyed the Brazen Serpent which Moses had formerly made but was become an object of sacrilegious adorations. He took great care to re-establish the priests and Levites in their long discontinued functions, and to provide for their subsistence and maintenance; to which end he revived the laws of the tents and first-fruits."

As this good king took pleasure and delight in the ways of God, and in establishing the purity of his worship, which had been long laid aside, so God was pleased to crown his enterprizes with success, and to reward his piety by enabling him to conquer his enemies. The prophet Isaiah was sent to him, on several occasions, to be his counsellor and comforter. This holy man always encouraged him to put his trust more and more in that God whom he worshipped; and as it pleased the Almighty to put Hezekiah's faithfulness, and the uprightness of his heart to the test, by stirring up the most powerful and formidable enemies against him; so this holy prophet was always ready to comfort and encourage him, that he might not be terrified at the danger that threatened him.

These circumstances furnish us with the most evincing proof how happy that prince must be, who listens to, and adviseth with, holy and good men; and Isaiah, no doubt, thought himself happy in living under the government of so good and religious a prince. It farther appears, from this remarkable example, that when kings truly fear God,

they easily agree with those who are his true servants, and are ready to comply with whatsoever they declare to them in the name of the Lord; accounting it a greater and more real honor to respect his *word* in his *ministers*, than to be honored and obeyed by all their *subjects*.

CHAP. X.

Manasseh succeeds to the government of Judah after the death of Hezekiah. He reigns wickedly, and gives all the encouragement in his power towards advancing idolatry. He is attacked by Esarhaddon, king of Assyria, who, after obtaining a complete victory, carries him prisoner to Babylon. He repents for his past conduct, is set at liberty, and returns to Jerusalem. He removes idolatry, and restores the true religion. He dies, and is succeeded by his son Ammon, who, after a reign of only two years, is murdered by some of his domestics. Josiah, when only eight years of age, succeeds to the throne of Judah. He destroys idolatry, and makes a thorough reformation in religion. He gives orders for repairing the temple. Hilkiah, the high-priest, finds the book of the law of Moses, and presents it in great form to Josiah. The king, on reading it, and finding the heavy curses denounced against a wicked people, is greatly afflicted. He consults the prophetess Huldah, from whom he receives some consolation. He calls an assembly of the people, and after causing the Book of the law of God to be distinctly read to them, makes a covenant for the strict observance of every thing contained in it. He makes a farther reformation in his kingdom, and keeps the Passover with great strictness and solemnity. He engages the Egyptian army under Necho, and being slain, is universally lamented by the people.

THE good king Hezekiah was succeeded on the throne of Judah by his son Manasseh, who, at the time of his accession, was only twelve years of age. Though he was but young, yet he could not be a stranger to the happy measures pursued by his father; but, as he had the misfortune to fall into the hands of such guardians and chief ministers as were ill affected to Hezekiah's reformation, they took all the care imaginable to breed him up in the

strongest aversion to it, and to corrupt his mind with the worst of principles both as to religion and government.

In the course of a few years all that had been done by Hezekiah was completely overthrown by Manasseh. The most abominable practices, which had called down the vengeance of heaven upon the Israelites, were the examples by which his conduct was regulated. He not only worshipped idols, restored high-places, and erected altars unto Baal, but even profaned the holy temple, by taking out the Ark of the Covenant, and placing an idol in its stead. He made his son pass through the fire to Moloch, practised witchcrafts and enchantments, and consulted soothsayers, and such other persons as dealt with familiar spirits.

Manasseh was naturally of a very cruel disposition, and therefore such as would not conform to his abominations, he persecuted with the greatest severity. Men of the most exemplary piety were put to death for disapproving of his maxims, and even some of the prophets* fell sacrifices to his wicked apostacy: scarce a day passed but great numbers were put to the sword, and otherwise divested of their existence, so that the streets of Jerusalem were filled with the blood of his innocent subjects.

These horrid impieties so provoked the Lord, that he was pleased to send some of his prophets to Manasseh with this dreadful message: "Because Manasseh, king of Judah, hath done these abominations, and hath done wickedly above all that the Amorites did, which were before him, and hath made Judah to sin also with his idols: therefore thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Behold, I will bring such evil upon Jerusalem and Judah, that whosoever heareth of it, both his ears shall tingle. And I will stretch over Jerusalem the line of Samaria,

* Among these was the prophet Isaiah, who was now upwards of an hundred years of age. In the late reign he was in great esteem at court, and being himself of the blood royal, he thought it more incumbent on him to endeavor to reclaim Manasseh from his degenerate and wicked courses. But this so exasperated the king against him, that, instead of paying any attention to his remonstrances, he caused him to be apprehended, and, to make his torture both more lingering and exquisite, had him sawn asunder with a wooden saw; and to this it is probable the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews refers, when he says, *they were sawed asunder*, Heb. xi. 37.

“ and I will wipe Jerusalem as a man wipeth a dish, wiping it, and turning it up-side down. And I will forsake the remnant of mine inheritance, and deliver them into the hands of their enemies; and they shall become a prey and a spoil to all their enemies; because they have done that which was evil in my sight, and have provoked me to anger since the day their fathers came forth out of Egypt, even unto this day.”

Manasseh, instead of being any ways affected at those threats, treated the messengers with contempt; and continuing to pursue his iniquitous courses, the Almighty was pleased to punish him by means of Esarhaddon, king of Assyria. This prince, having been some time settled on the throne, directed his thoughts towards the recovery of those places his father Sennacherib had lost in different parts of Syria and Palestine. For this purpose he raised a very considerable army, at the head of which he marched into the territories of the ten tribes, and after possessing himself of various places, returned, taking with him great numbers of the Israelites who had been left after the reduction of Samaria by his grand-father Shalmaneser.

Esarhaddon, having thus far proved successful, dispatched a considerable part of his army, under the command of his most experienced generals, to invade Judea, and, if possible, to reduce the whole country. Manasseh marched with his army against them, and a desperate battle ensued, which terminated in favor of the Assyrians. Manasseh, in order to save himself, fled, and took shelter in a thicket of briars and brambles, but being discovered by the enemy, they conducted him to Esarhaddon,* who put him in irons, and carried him prisoner to Babylon.

This distressed situation greatly afflicted Manasseh, and made him so sensible of his heinous provocations against God, that with deep sorrow and humiliation, he, in the

* We learn, from Isaiah xx. 4, that Esarhaddon (whom the sacred writer in that place calls Sargon) king of Assyria, sent Tartan his general into Palestine; and it was he, very probably, who took Manasseh, and carried him prisoner to Babylon. Esarhaddon was, some time before, no more than king of Assyria; but, on his accession to the throne, he made himself master of Babylon and Chaldea, and so united the two empires together.

most fervent manner, implored the Divine forgiveness.* The Almighty was pleased to listen to his prayers, and so to soften the heart of Esarhaddon, that, after some time had elapsed, he restored him to his liberty, and re-instated him in his kingdom.

Manasseh now exerted his utmost abilities to make every possible atonement he could for his former crimes. He purified the city of Jerusalem, consecrated the holy temple anew, and made it the business of his life to manifest a due reverence and gratitude towards his Divine Protector. Conscious that his former guilt had, in a great measure, been the cause of the miseries which his people had endured, he endeavored to effect a reformation among them, both by his example and authority. He caused an altar to be erected agreeably to the directions of Moses, upon which daily oblations were made: and having restored the religious ceremonies to their original purity, he directed his attention towards improving the fortifications of the city. He made the necessary reparations in the old walls, and, as a farther security, encompassed them with new ones. He erected several strong and lofty towers, and provided the out-works with all necessary ammunition and stores.

Manasseh continued to devote his time to the advancement and support of the true religion, as well as the welfare and security of his subjects, during the remainder of his life, and for which God was pleased to bless him with a long and prosperous reign; longer, indeed, than any of the kings of Judah reigned, either before or after him. He died after possessing the throne full fifty-five years; and yet (notwithstanding his signal repentance) because his former wickedness was so great, he was not allowed the honor of being buried in any of the royal sepulchres, but was laid in a grave made in the garden belonging to his own house, called the garden of Uzzah.†

* We have a prayer which, it is said, Manasseh made during his imprisonment at Babylon. The church does not receive it as canonical; but it has a place among the apocryphal pieces, and, in our collection, stands before the books of the Maccabees. The Greek church has received it into its book of prayers, and it is sometimes used in the performance of their religious worship.

† It is the opinion of some that this garden was made in that very spot of ground where Uzzah was struck dead for touching the ark of

Manasseh was succeeded on the throne by his son Ammon, who, imitating the first part of his father's reign, and not the repentance of his latter, gave himself up to all manner of wickedness and impiety; so that God was pleased to shorten his government, by permitting some of his own domestics (after a reign of only two years) to conspire against him and slay him. But, wicked as he was, the people took care to revenge his murder, by putting to death all those who were any ways concerned in it. They would not, however, honor his remains with a place among the sepulchres of the sons of David, but deposited them with those of his father in the garden of Uzzah.

On the death of Ammon, the throne of Judah was filled by his son Josiah, who, at the time of his accession, was only eight years of age. He was a prince naturally possessed of the most amiable and virtuous disposition; and, having the happiness to fall under the protection and management of better guardians, during his minority, than did Manasseh, his grandfather, he proved, when grown up, a prince of very extraordinary worth, and, from his judicious and wise conduct, became universally beloved and respected by his subjects.

Before Josiah had completed his twelfth year he gave an instance of his piety, by extirpating the abominable worship of idols, and restoring the people to the religion of the true God. Such of the ordinances of his predecessors as he found productive of ill consequences, he abolished: such institutions as were expedient he retained; and to those which required alterations, he made amendments which would have conferred honor on the most consummate wisdom, and the experience of advanced years.

Having made this reform in the city of Jerusalem and its environs, he next took a progress throughout the kingdoms, firmly resolved to purge religion from all those corruptions which had been introduced in the preceding reigns. He caused all the groves and altars, together with the carved and molten images, which his apostate predecessors had

the Lord, 2 Sam. vi. 7. while others imagine, that it was the place where Uzziah, who died a leper, was buried, 2 Chron. xxvi. 23, and that Manasseh was buried here, he being unworthy, because of his manifold sins (whereof he nevertheless repented) to be laid in any of the royal sepulchres of the kings of Judah.

dedicated to idolatrous worship, to be destroyed. The graves of idolatrous priests he ordered to be opened, and their bones taken up and burnt on the altars; and whatever priests of the Levitical order had, at any time, sacrificed on the high-places, though it were to the true God, he took care to remove from the sacerdotal office.

Not satisfied with having made this reform in his own dominions, Josiah visited the cities of Ephraim and Manasseh, and all the rest of the land, which had formerly been possessed by the ten tribes, and there did the like.*—He put to death all the priests of high-places, and burnt their bodies upon the altars on which they had been accustomed to offer up sacrifices; and every monument of idolatry that could be found he effectually destroyed.

Josiah, having thus made an universal reformation in religion, not only in his own dominions, but those likewise which formerly belonged to Israel, returned to Jerusalem, and next directed his attention towards the reparation of the temple. For this purpose he deputed commissioners to receive contributions of gold and silver from

* It may be thought by some that Josiah followed the dictates of his zeal a little too far in destroying the images and altars, with other monuments of idolatry, in the kingdom of Israel, where he had neither any regal or judicial authority: but it should be remembered, that his authority in this regard was founded upon an ancient prediction, where he is particularly named, and appointed to this work of reformation by God himself, and that, consequently, he could not be guilty, of an infringement upon another's right, even though he had no farther commission. But the ten tribes, we are to consider, being now gone into captivity, the ancient right, which David and his posterity had to the whole kingdom of Israel (before it was dismembered by Jeroboam, and his successors) devolved upon Josiah. The people, who escaped the captivity, were united with his subjects, and put themselves under his protection. They came to the worship of God at Jerusalem, and did doubtless gladly comply with his extirpation of idolatry, at which the Cuthites, (the new inhabitants of the country, who worshipped their gods in another manner) were not at all offended. The kings of Assyria, 'tis true, were the lords and conquerors of the country; but, from the time of Manasseh's restoration, they seem to have conferred upon the kings of Judah (who might thereupon become their homagers) a sovereignty in all the land of Canaan, to the same extent, wherein it was held by David and Solomon, before it was divided into two kingdoms. So that Josiah, for sundry reasons, had sufficient power and authority to visit the kingdom of Israel, and to purge it from idolatry, as well as his own.

the people; but, averse to give cause of complaint, his subjects were at liberty either to promote or decline the subscription. The contributions being deposited in the treasury, Maaseiah, the governor of the city, Shaphan the scribe, Joah the recorder, and Hilkiah, the high-priest, were appointed to engage workmen, provide materials, and regulate the expenses of the intended reparations. The king directed Hilkiah to apply what gold and silver should remain, after every thing was paid for the necessary repairs of the temple, in the formation of cups, chalices, and other vessels and utensils for the service of the holy religion; and likewise ordered that all the gold and silver deposited in the royal treasury should be manufactured into vessels for the like purpose.

The repairs of the temple being completed, and all expenses defrayed, Hilkiah, in conformity to the king's orders, took out the money (of which there was a considerable overplus) for the purpose of converting it into vessels for the use of the temple, in doing of which he found a Book of the law of the Lord, given by Moses. This Book Hilkiah gave to Shaphan the king's secretary, who, accompanied by him, and several others of the priests, went to the king, and after informing him that his commands had been strictly obeyed relative to the reparation of the temple, presented it to him in great form, telling him what it was, and where it had been found. The king ordered Shaphan to read a part of its contents, which being done, Josiah, with agony of grief, rent his robes in dread of the heavy curses denounced against a wicked people.*

* Whether it was the whole Pentateuch, or the book of Deuteronomy only, which the high-priest found in the temple, is uncertain; but it is generally agreed, that the part, which Shaphan read to the king, was taken out of the book of Deuteronomy, and, not without some probability, that the xxviiith, xxixth and xxxth chapters were that portion of scripture, which the secretary, who (as we are told 2 Kings, xxii. 8.) had read the book before he brought it to the king, thought proper upon this occasion to turn to; for therein is contained a renewal of the covenant, which Moses, as mediator, had made between God and the people of Israel at Mount Horeb; and therein are those threats and terrible comminations to the transgressors of the law, whether prince or people, which affected Josiah so much; and *which Moses had given to the Levites to put on the side of the covenant, that it might be there for a witness against the transgressors of it, Deut. xxxi. 25, 26.*

In the height of his affliction he desired Hilkiab, with several of the priests who were present, to go immediately to the prophetess Huldah,* requesting them to unite their endeavors to prevail upon her to make intercession with God for pardon towards himself and his subjects. He told them there was great reason to apprehend that the vengeance of heaven would be directed towards the present generation, as a punishment for the iniquities of their progenitors; and that without obtaining a reconciliation with the Lord, they should be dispersed over the face of the earth, and terminate their lives in misery.

Hilkiab, with the rest of the people appointed to accompany him, immediately repaired to the prophetess, to whom having related the cause of the king's affliction, and his earnest desire she would intercede with God in behalf of him and his subjects, she answered them as follows: "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Tell ye the man that sent you to me, Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the curses that are written in the book which they have read before the king of Judah: Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands: therefore my wrath shall be poured out upon this place, and shall not be quenched."

* This is the only mention we have of this prophetess, and certainly it makes much to her renown, that she was consulted upon this weighty occasion, when both Jeremiah and Zephaniah were at that time prophets in Judah. But Zephaniah perhaps at that time might not have commenced a prophet; because, though we are told that he prophesied in the days of Josiah, Zeph. i. 1. yet we are no where informed, in what part of his reign he entered upon the prophetic office. Jeremiah too might at that time be absent from Jerusalem, at his house at Anathoth, or some more remote part of the kingdom; so that, considering Josiah's haste and impatience, there might be no other remedy at hand to apply to but this woman. *Great is the wrath of the Lord that is kindled against us*, says the king to his ministers, 2 Kings, xxii. 13. and therefore his intent, in sending them, might be to enquire, whether there were any hopes of appeasing his wrath, and in what manner it was to be done. Being therefore well assured of this woman's fidelity, in delivering the mind and counsel of God, the ministers, who went to enquire, concluded rightly, that it was much more considerable, what message God sent, than by whose hand it was that he conveyed it.

“ ed. And as for the king of Judah, who sent you to en-
 “ quire of the Lord, so shall ye say unto him, Thus saith
 “ the Lord God of Israel, concerning the words which
 “ thou hast heard: Because thine heart was tender, and
 “ thou didst humble thyself before God, when thou
 “ heardest these words against this place, and against the
 “ inhabitants thereof, and humblest thyself before me, and
 “ didst rend thy clothes, and weep before me, I have even
 “ heard thee also, saith the Lord. Behold, I will gather
 “ thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy
 “ grave in peace, neither shall thine eyes see all the evil
 “ that I will bring upon this place, and upon the inhabit-
 “ ants of the same.”

As soon as Josiah received this message from the prophetess, he immediately dispatched messengers to the several cities within his dominions, commanding the priests, Levites, and his subjects in general, to repair, with all expedition, to Jerusalem. These orders being obeyed, and the people assembled, he repaired to the temple, where, in the hearing of the whole multitude, he caused the law of God to be distinctly read; after which both he and all the people entered into a covenant strictly to obey every article contained in that sacred book. Sacrifices were then made, and prayers offered up for obtaining the blessing and protection of God; after which the king dismissed the people, and returned to his palace.

Soon after this Josiah made another progress not only throughout his own dominions, but also into the principal cities of Samaria; and wherever he found any the least relic of idolatry, he caused it to be totally destroyed.

Having now made a thorough reformation in religion, and, in the most extensive manner, restored the true worship of God, Josiah, on his return home, assembled the people at Jerusalem for the purpose of celebrating the passover, the time for that festival being near at hand. On this occasion the king gave from his own store thirty thousand lambs and kids, and three thousand oxen: the principal priests presented to the others of the sacerdotal order two thousand six hundred lambs, and three hundred oxen; and the chiefs of the Levites gave to their tribes five thousand lambs and five hundred oxen. A solemn sacrifice was made of these victims, according to the precepts of

Moses; and the ceremony was performed under the direction of the priests. An exact conformity to the law and ancient usage was observed on the celebration of this festival, which was the most solemn that had been known since the time of the prophet Samuel. *And there was no passover like to that kept in Israel, from the days of Samuel the prophet; neither did all the kings of Israel keep such a passover as Josiah kept, and the priests and the Levites, and all Judah and Israel that were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.* In a word, this excellent prince did all that in him lay to atone for the sins of the people, and appease the wrath of God; but the Divine decree for the removal of Judah into a land of their captivity was passed, irrevocably passed.*

A short time after the celebration of the passover, Pharaoh Necho,† king of Egypt, desired permission of Josiah to pass through Judea, in order to go and attack Charchemish, a city belonging to the king of Babylon, and situated upon the banks of the Euphrates. Josiah would not, by any means, consent to this request; but, getting together his forces, posted himself in the Valley of Megiddo, with

* Though Josiah was doubtless sincere in what he did, and omitted nothing to restore the purity of God's worship wherever his power extended, yet the people had still an hankering after the corruption of the former part of Manasseh's reign. They complied indeed, with the present reformation, but this was only out of fear of incurring the king's displeasure, or of feeling the severity of his justice. Their hearts were not right towards God, as appears from the writings of the prophets who lived in those times; and therefore, seeing no sign of their real repentance, God was pleased to preserve the decree of their future punishment.

† Pharaoh, signifies no more, in the Egyptian language, than king, and was therefore given to any one that sat upon that throne: but Necho (according to Herodotus) was his proper name, though some will have it to be an appellative, which signifies *lame*, because this Pharaoh (as they suppose) had a lameness, which proceeded from some wound he had received in the wars. The same historian tells us, that he was the son and successor of Psameticus, king of Egypt, and a man of a bold and enterprising spirit; that he made an attempt to join the Nile and the Red Sea, by drawing a canal from one to the other; that, though he failed in this design, yet, by sending a fleet from the Red Sea through the streights of Babel Mandel, he discovered the coasts of Africa, and, in this his expedition to the Euphrates, resolved to bid fair (by destroying the united force of the Babylonians and Medes) for the whole monarchy of Asia.

a design of obstructing his passage. The Egyptian king, hearing of this, sent ambassadors to Josiah, desiring him to desist, declaring that he came not to invade his territories, but purely to do himself justice on the king of Babylon; and assuring him withal, that what he did, in this case, was by the order and appointment of God. *What, (said he) have I to do with thee thou king of Judah? I come not against thee this day, but against the house wherewith I have war: for God commanded me to make haste: forbear thee from meddling with God, who is with me, that he destroy thee not.*

Josiah did not think proper to return any answer to this message; and therefore, on Necho's marching up to the place where he was posted to receive him, a battle immediately ensued, wherein the Egyptian archers discovering Josiah (though he had disguised himself before the action began) plied that quarter of the army where he fought so very warmly with their arrows, that Josiah at length receiving a mortal wound from one of them, was removed into another chariot,* and conveyed to Jerusalem, where, after a reign of thirty-one years, he died, and was buried in the sepulchre of his ancestors.

The death of so excellent a prince was deservedly lamented by all his people, but by none more sincerely than the prophet Jeremiah, who (having a thorough sense of the greatness of the loss, as well as full foresight of the sore calamities which were afterwards to follow upon the whole kingdom of Judah) wrote a song of *lamentation*† on this occasion; but that is lost; and the other, which goes under

* It was the custom of war, in former times, for great officers to have their led horses, that if one failed, they might mount another. The kings of Persia (as Quintus Curtius informs us) had horses attending their chariots, which, in case of any accident, they might make to; and, in like manner, we may presume, that, when it became a fashion to fight in chariots, all great captains had an empty one following them, into which they might betake themselves, if any mischance befel them in the other.

† It was usual with the Jews to make lamentations, or mournful songs, on the deaths of great men, princes and heroes, who had distinguished themselves in arms, or by any civil arts had merited well of their country. From the expression in 2 Chron. xxxv. 25. *Behold they are written in the Lamentations*, we may infer, that they had certain collections of this kind of composition. The author of the book of Samuel has preserved those which David made on the deaths of

his name, and is still remaining, was composed on the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar.

The character given of Josiah by the author of the Book of Ecclesiasticus is as follows: "All (says he) except David, and Hezekiah, and Josiah, were defective. They forsook the law of the Most High; even the kings of Judah failed. But the remembrance of Josiah is like the composition of the perfume that is made by the art of the apothecary: it is as sweet as honey in all mouths, and as music at a banquet of wine. He behaved himself uprightly in the conversion of the people, and took away the abomination of iniquity. He directed his heart unto the Lord, and, in the time of the ungodly, he established the worship of God."

Saul and Jonathan, of Abner and Absalom: But this mournful poem, which the disconsolate prophet made on the immature death of good Josiah, is no where extant; which is a loss the more to be deplored, because, in all probability, it was a master-piece in its kind, as there never was an author more deeply affected with his subject, or more capable of carrying it through all the tender sentiments of sorrow and compassion, than the prophet Jeremiah.

CHAP. XI.

Jehoaház succeeds to the government of Judah after the death of his father Josiah. He is deposed by Pharaoh Necho, king of Egypt, who puts him in prison, where he continues the remainder of his life. He is succeeded by his brother Eliakim, whose name, by order of Necho, is changed to that of Jehoiakim. He reigns wickedly, and puts to death the prophet Urijah. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, invades Jerusalem, conquers it, and takes Jehoiakim prisoner, but afterwards releases him. Jeremiah upbraids the people with their disobedience, and prophecies their captivity, for which he is obliged to conceal himself to avoid their resentment. He employs one Baruch to write a copy of his prophecies, and read them to the people in the temple. Jehoiakim, being informed of this, sends for the book, and, after hearing a part of it read, destroys it, ordering the prophet and his amanuensis to be taken into custody. Jehoiakim refuses any longer to pay tribute to Nebuchadnezzar, who, in consequence thereof, sends an army against him. He is taken prisoner by the Babylonians, and put to death. He is succeeded by his son Jehoiachin, who, after a reign of only three months, is taken prisoner to Nebuchadnezzar, and sent to Babylon. Zedekiah is made king of Judah in his stead. He is advised by Jeremiah to live in obedience to the king of Babylon, for which the prophet is grossly abused. Jeremiah prophecies the destruction of Babylon, and Ezekiel that of Jerusalem.

ON the death of Josiah, his son Jehoahaz* was anointed king of Judah; but his reign was of short duration. He was naturally a very wicked prince, and shewed manifest signs of his wishes to overturn that wise and good regulation which had, with so much pains, been established

* Jehoahaz was not the eldest son of Josiah, as will appear from the following circumstances. He was but twenty-three years of age when he began to reign, and reigned only three months; after which his brother Jehoiakim, when he was made king, was five and twenty years old. On this account it is said, that the people anointed him, because, as he did not come to the crown by right of succession, his title might have otherwise been disputed; for in all controverted cases, and where the kingdom came to be contested, anointing was ever thought to give the preference. At this time, however, the Jews might have some reason to prefer the younger brother, because, very probably, he was of a more martial spirit, and better qualified to de-

by his predecessor. But his wicked intentions were frustrated by means of Pharaoh Necho, king of Egypt, who, on his return from the expedition against the Babylonians (in which he had proved successful) hearing that Jehoahaz had assumed the sovereignty of Judah, sent for him to Riblah* in Syria, whither he had no sooner arrived than he caused him to be put in chains, and sent to Egypt, where he spent the remainder of his days in misery and disgrace.

Jehoahaz had an elder brother named Eliakim, whom Necho, on his going to Jerusalem, placed on the throne of Judah, having first changed his name to Jehoiakim. He laid him under an annual tribute of an hundred talents of silver and one of gold, having done which, he left Jerusalem, and returned in triumph to his own country. The money for discharging this tribute Jehoiakim raised by a general tax throughout his kingdom, rating every man according to his circumstances.†

No sooner was Jehoiakim fully placed on the throne of Judah, than he began, in imitation of his brother, to destroy that good order and discipline which had been established by his father; and the people, who never with sincerity came into that good king's reformation, took this opportunity of following the bent of their depraved inclinations. For these impieties God was pleased to send the prophet Jeremiah to admonish and exhort them to repentance, and to assure them, that if they persisted in their wicked way of living, he would make the temple like the house of Shiloh, and the city of Jerusalem a curse to all nations. Having received this message, Jeremiah went first to the king's palace, where he denounced God's judg-

ment upon the king of Egypt. His proper name, it is thought, was Shallum; but the learned bishop Usher supposes that the people, looking upon this as ominous (because Shallum, king of Israel, reigned but one month) changed it to Jehoahaz.

* Riblah, according to St. Jerome, was the same place which was afterwards called Antioch. Its situation was one of the most agreeable in all Syria, for which reason the kings of Babylon frequently made it their place of residence.

† It is very probable the prophet Jeremiah had regard to this taxation, when, in his mournful complaint of Jerusalem, he says, *she that was great among the nations, and princess among the provinces, how is she become tributary?* Lam. i. 1.

ments against him and his family ; after which he repaired to the temple, and there spoke in like manner to the people. The priests, being offended at the freedom of Jeremiah, caused him to be seized, and brought before the king's council, in hopes of having him put to death ; but Ahikam, one of the chief lords thereof, so interceded in his behalf, that he got him discharged by the general consent not only of the princes, but likewise of all the elders of the people then present.

There was at this time* another prophet named Urijah, who had likewise declared against the iniquity of the prince and the people ; but he did not escape the resentment of the king. As soon as he understood that Jehoiakim had a design against his life, he fled into Egypt ; but this, however, did not secure him : the king sent messengers after him, and being apprehended and brought back to Jerusalem, he was put to death, and his remains treated with very great indignity.

About three years after Jehoiakim had been on the throne of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon and Assyria, to revenge the late expedition of Pharaoh-Necho, king of Egypt, who had taken from him many principal places in Syria and Palestine, marched against him with a very powerful army, and having totally defeated the

* About this time also were living the prophets, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, and Nahum, who, being called to the prophetic office in the reign of Josiah, continued (very likely) to this time, because we find them prophesying the same things that Jeremiah did, viz. the destruction and desolation of Judah and Jerusalem, for the many heinous sins of which they were guilty. As to Habakkuk, neither the time in which he lived, nor the parents from whom he was descended, are any where named in scripture ; but his prophecying the coming of the Chaldeans, in the same manner that Jeremiah did, gives us reason to believe, that he lived in the same time. Of Zephaniah it is directly said, that he prophesied in the time of Josiah, and in his pedigree, (which is also given us) his father's grandfather is called Hezekiah, whom some take for the king of Judah, and, consequently, reckon this prophet to have been of royal descent. As to Nahum, lastly, it is certain, that he prophesied after the captivity of the ten tribes, and before that of the other two, which he foretold. Though therefore the Jews do generally place him in Manasseh's reign, yet others chuse to refer him to the latter part of Josiah's, as being nearer to the destruction of Nineveh, and of the Assyrian monarchy, to which several prophecies of his principally relate.

troops under his command, so improved that victory, that, in a very short time, he took from him all the country that lies between the river Euphrates and the Nile.

Having proved thus successful over Necho, king of Egypt, Nebuchadnezzar next laid siege to Jerusalem, which he soon took, and after plundering the temple, and making the king prisoner, returned with him and the spoil in triumph to Babylon.* In a short time, however, he released the king, and restored him to his crown, on condition that he should become tributary to him during the remainder of his life.

A circumstance took place, previous to Nebuchadnezzar's besieging Jerusalem, which clearly evinced the beneficence of Providence to an undeserving people, and, had they not been hardened in their wickedness, might have so opened their eyes as to have produced a reformation. The approach of Nebuchadnezzar's army having alarmed the Rechabites† (who, according to the institution of Jonadab, the son of Rechab, their founder, had always abstained from wine, and hitherto only lived in tents) they, apprehending themselves in more danger in the open country than in the capital, fled for safety to Jerusalem. By means of these people, God was pleased to point out to the Jews, in the most clear light, their great disobedience to his word and command. He ordered the prophet Jeremiah to conduct them to the temple, and there, in the presence of the people, offer them wine to drink. The prophet obeyed the Divine injunction, but when he

* It is thought, and with great reason, that at this time the prophet Daniel, with his three companions, Hananiah, Michael and Azariah (who were afterwards called Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego) were carried with the king captives to Babylon. For Daniel says, when Nebuchadnezzar took Jehoiakim, and the vessels of the temple, he spake unto Ashpenaz, the master of the eunuchs, that he should take with him to Babylon some of the children of Israel, of the seed of the king, and of the princes, such as were well favored, and without blemish, of good parts and well educated; that being instructed in the language and learning of the Chaldeans, they might be fit to serve the king in his palace; and that the eunuchs, among others, made choice of these four. See Dan. i. 3, 4, 6.

† The Rechabites were Midianites, who lived in tents; and although, in some respects, they conformed to the laws of Moses, yet they had not hitherto been admitted as proselytes, and consequently, could not attend the temple service.

presented it to the Rechabites, they refused his offer, alledging for a reason, that it was contrary to their institution, which they had never yet violated. The prophet, after due commendation of their obedience, turned it upon the Jews, and reproached them, who were God's peculiar people, for being less observant of his laws, than the poor Rechabites (who were not of the stock of Israel) had been of the injunctions of their ancestor.

But this had no effect on the depraved Jews, who still gave a loose to their wicked inclinations, in which, indeed, they were encouraged by the king after his return from captivity. To strike, if possible, some impression on them, Jeremiah prophesied many dire calamities and woeful desolations that would fall on them if they did not repent; more particularly, that Nebuchadnezzar would again come against Judah and Jerusalem, that he would lay waste the country, and carry the people captive to Babylon, where they should continue in that situation for the space of seventy years. But this likewise was so far from making the least impression on the people, that it only enraged and exasperated them the more against the prophet, inasmuch, that thinking himself in danger from their malicious and wrathful indignation, he, for some time, concealed himself, and that so privately, that though diligent search was made after him, he could not be found.

While Jeremiah was in this state of seclusion, he received a message from God, commanding him to collect together, and digest in a book, all the prophecies which he had given him, not only against Israel and Judah, but likewise other nations, from the time that he first began to prophecy (which was in the thirteenth year of the good king Josiah) that, by the people's hearing all his judgments summoned up together against them, they might be brought to some sense of their transgressions, and repent of those evil deeds they had so long and so strongly imbibed.

In obedience to the Divine orders, Jeremiah employed Baruch,* his amanuensis, to write down what he should

* Baruch, the son of Neriah, and grandson of Maaseiah, was of an illustrious birth, and of the tribe of Judah. Seriah, his brother, had a considerable employment in the court of king Zedekiah, but himself kept close to the person of Jeremiah, and was his most faith-

dictate, the whole of which formed an accurate list of the various prophecies Jeremiah had received, at different times, from God. This being done, he ordered Baruch to go to the temple on the day of Expiation, and there read the contents of it in the hearing of all the people. Baruch strictly followed his master's instructions, and after reading the book first to the people who were in the courts below, he next repaired to the secretary's chamber, where he again read it in the presence of the princes and elders. As soon as the latter heard the contents, they advised Baruch immediately to depart, and, with his master, to secrete themselves till they should know the king's pleasure concerning it, when they would apprize them of the issue. In consequence of this advice, Baruch departed, leaving the book in the custody of the princes and elders of the people.

It was not long before Jehoiakim was informed of what had passed, and that the prophecies of Jeremiah had been read in the temple, not only before the people in general, but likewise in the hearing of the princes and principal men belonging to the court. Being unacquainted with the contents, he sent one of his attendants for the book in which they were contained, who, having brought it, he commanded him to read it. The attendant obeyed the royal orders; but he had not gone far, before the king, disgusted at hearing the judgments denounced against him and his people, snatched it out of his hand, and, notwithstanding the importunity of his nobles to dissuade him from his intentions, he first cut the book to pieces, and then committed it to the flames. Having done this, he im-

ful disciple, though his adherence to his master drew upon him several persecutions, and a great deal of bad treatment.

The book called Baruch is introduced with an historical preface, wherein it is related that Baruch, being then at Babylon, did, in the name of the captive king and his people, draw up an epistle, and afterwards read it to them for their approbation; and that, together with it, they sent a collection of money to the high-priest at Jerusalem for the maintainance of the daily sacrifices.

Of the whole of this book there are but three copies; one in Greek, and the other two in Syriac, whereof one agreeth with the Greek, though the other very much differs from it; but in what language it was originally written, or whether one of these be not the original, or which of them may be so, 'tis next to impossible to tell.

mediately dispatched officers to apprehend the prophet and his amanuensis, but, agreeable to the advice of the princes, they had both withdrawn, nor could the least tidings be heard of them.

In consequence of the destruction of this first book, Jeremiah was commanded to make another of the like nature; and to it were added some farther denunciations against Jehoiakim and his house, which, in a short time, began to take effect.

Jehoiakim had lived in subjection to the king of Babylon for three years, during which he had punctually paid the tribute levied on him by Nebuchadnezzar, when he restored him to his liberty. But Jehoiakim now determined to throw off the yoke, and, therefore, not only refused to pay him any more tribute, but, as a mark of his intentions to make all the opposition that laid in his power, formed a confederacy with Necho, king of Egypt, the professed enemy of Nebuchadnezzar.

Nebuchadnezzar, not being at leisure* himself to chastise the insolence and disobedience of Jehoiakim, sent orders to all his lieutenants and governors of the respective provinces belonging to his dominions, immediately to march with their forces into Judea, and, without hesitation, lay siege to Jerusalem. These orders were obeyed,

* What detained him from going in person against Jerusalem we are not told; only it appears, that, in the tenth year of Jehoiakim, he was engaged in an arbitration between the Medes and Lydians, the occasion of which was this:—After the Medes had recovered all the Upper Asia out of the hands of the Scythians, and again extended their borders to the river Halys, which was the common boundary between them and the Lydians, it was not long before there happened a war between these two nations, which was managed for five years together with various success. In the sixth year, intending to make one battle decisive, they engaged each other with their utmost strength; but, in the midst of the action, and while the fortune of the day seemed to hang in an equal balance between them, there happened an eclipse, which overspread both armies with darkness; whereupon they desisted from fighting, and agreed to refer the controversy to the arbitration of two neighboring princes. The Lydians chose Siennesis, king of Cilicia; and the Medes Nebuchadnezzar (who, by Herodotus, lib. i. is called Labynetus) king of Babylon, who concluded a peace between them, on the terms, that Astyages, son of Cyaxares, king of Media, should take to wife Ariena, the daughter of Halyattis, king of the Lydians; of which marriage, within a year after, was born Cyaxares, who is called *Darius the Mede*, in the book of Daniel.

and Jehoiakim, for some time, held out with great resolution, till at length, from the great number of parties which had formed a confederacy against him, he was reduced to the necessity of shutting himself up in the city. Here, however, he did not continue long, for the enemy pressing hard, he made a sally in hopes of saving himself, but was taken prisoner, immediately put to death, and his body thrown in the highway, not being allowed even common interment. Thus in the eleventh year of his reign, was completely fulfilled the prophet's prediction concerning this wicked prince: *He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem.**

On the death of Jehoiakim, his son Jehoiachin (who is likewise called Coniah) succeeded to the throne; but, in the little time that he continued thereon (which was only three months) persisting in his father's impieties, he drew upon himself a bitter declaration of God's wrath, which was delivered to him by the prophet Jeremiah in these words: *As I live, saith the Lord, though Coniah, the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah, wore the signet upon my right hand, yet would I pluck thee hence: And I will give thee into the hand of them that seek thy life, and into the hand of them whose face thou fearest, even into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of the Chaldeans. And I will cast thee out, and thy mother that bare thee, into another country, where ye were not born; and there shall ye die.†*

It was not long before these threats (owing to Jehoiachin's continuing his impieties) were carried into execution. Within three months after his father's death, Nebuchadnezzar came in person with his royal army to Jerusalem, and immediately caused the place to be attacked with a close siege on every side. Jehoiachin was so terrified at this, that without making the least attempt to defend himself, he took his mother, his princes, and chief ministers out of the city, and quietly delivered himself and them into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, who, though he

* Jer. xxii. 19.

† Jer. xxii. 24, &c.

thought proper to save his life, sent him, and those who were with him, prisoners to Babylon.*

Besides, these, Nebuchadnezzar, at this time, carried away with him a prodigious number of other captives, among whom was the prophet Ezekiel. He not only took with him all the mighty men of valor, but likewise all the most useful artificers, to the number of ten thousand men, together with the greatest part of the treasures out of the temple† and the royal palace. The people he left in Jerusalem were the poorer sort, over whom he appointed Mattaniah (uncle to Jehoiachin) king. Before he left him, he compelled him to take a solemn oath to be faithful and true in his obedience to the crown of Babylon; and to bind this engagement the stronger, he changed his name to Zedekiah, which, in the Hebrew language, signifies, *the Justice of the Lord*; intending thereby to remind him of the vengeance he was to expect, should he violate that fidelity he had so solemnly engaged to preserve.

* Jehoiachin continued in prison till the death of Nebuchadnezzar; but when Evilmerodach, his son, succeeded to the throne, he not only released him from his imprisonment (which had continued thirty-seven years) but treated him with great humanity and respect, allowing him an honorable maintenance, and giving him the precedence of all other princes in Babylon. The prophecy of Jeremiah, however, was amply fulfilled, he spending the remainder of his days in the place of his captivity.

† Nebuchadnezzar carried away the treasures and rich furniture of the temple at three different times: First, in the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim, when he first took Jerusalem, he carried half of the vessels of the house of God away into the land of Shinar, and put them into the house of his god, Dan. i. 2. These were the vessels which his son Belshazzar profaned, Dan. v. 2. and which Cyrus restored to the Jews, Ezra i. 7. to be set up in the temple again when rebuilt: Secondly, in the reign of Jehoiachin he took the city again, and cut in pieces a great part of the vessels of gold used in the temple service, and which by some chance or other had escaped his former plunder. Thirdly, in the 11th year of Zedekiah, he pillaged the temple once more, when he broke in pieces the pillars of brass, &c. and took along with them all the vessels of silver and gold that he could find, and carried them to Babylon. It is something strange that among all this inventory, no mention is made of the ark of the covenant, which of all other things was held most sacred. But it is very probable that it was burned together with the temple in the last desolation; for what some say of its being hidden by the prophet Jeremiah in a certain cave in mount Nebo, is certainly a mistake.

Though Zedekiah was no stranger to the fate of his predecessors for their great wickedness against God, yet he followed their evil ways, and daily practised the most horrid impieties. The prophet Jeremiah was sent to admonish him for his conduct, which he did by relating to him a vision of two baskets of figs, the one good and the other bad.* By the first he represented the captivity of those that were in Babylon, which being limited to a certain time, was for the good of their posterity. By the latter he represented the condition of Zedekiah, and those that remained in the land of Judah, all of whom the Lord threatened to deliver up to their enemies, and make them a reproach in all places, adding, that the Lord would send among them the sword, pestilence and famine. But these threats made no impression on Zedekiah, who still pursued his wicked courses, and his subjects, following his example, gave themselves up to all manner of licentiousness.

Some time after Zedekiah had been seated on the throne, several princes of the neighboring nations, viz. the Ammonites, Moabites, Edomites, Zidonians, Tyrians, &c.

* This vision, with the threats denounced against Zedekiah and his people, is related by the prophet in these words: "One basket had very good figs, even like the figs that are first ripe; and the other basket had very naughty figs, which could not be eaten, they were so bad. Then said the Lord unto me, What seest thou, Jeremiah? And I said, figs; the good figs, very good; and the evil, very evil, that cannot be eaten they are so evil. Again the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel; Like these good figs, so will I acknowledge them that are carried away captive of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans for their good. For I will set mine eyes upon them for good, and I will bring them again to this land: and I will build them, and not pull them down; and I will plant them, and not pluck them up. And I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the Lord; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart. And as the evil figs, which cannot be eaten, they are so evil; surely thus saith the Lord, So will I give Zedekiah the king of Judah, and his princes, and the residue of Jerusalem, that remain in this land, and them that dwell in the land of Egypt: and I will deliver them to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth for their hurt, to be a reproach and a proverb, a taunt and a curse, in all places whither I shall drive them. And I will send the sword, the famine, and the pestilence among them, till they be consumed from off the land that I gave unto them and their fathers."

sent their ambassadors to Jerusalem, to congratulate him on his accession, and to propose a league against the king of Babylon, in order to shake off his yoke, and prevent his return into those parts of the country. But this scheme proved abortive, by means of the prophet Jeremiah. The prophet had some time before received Divine orders to make bonds and yokes, and put them about his neck in token of that bondage with which the Lord had threatened Judah, and other nations. On this occasion, by the command of God, he sent bonds and yokes by the ambassadors of those princes who solicited an alliance with Zedekiah to their respective masters, and with them a message to this effect: "That God had given all their countries to the king of Babylon, and therefore their wisest course would be to submit to his yoke, which, if they refused to do, both they and their countries should most certainly be destroyed."

After Jeremiah had sent this message, with the yokes and bonds, to the kings of the Ammonites, &c. he went to Zedekiah, and having persuaded him to submit to the king of Babylon, and not give credit to false prophets, who might flatter him with a deliverance from his power, he prevailed with him not to enter into the league that was proposed.

There were at this time in Jerusalem many false prophets, whose predictions were so pleasing to the people that they paid no attention to the true ones. Among these was one named Hananiah, who had the insolence to take the yoke from off the prophet Jeremiah's neck, and break it, saying, in the presence of all the people, "Even so will I break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon from the neck of all nations within the space of two full years."*

Jeremiah took this treatment with great patience, and retired; but it was not long before he received orders from God to go to Hananiah with this message: "Go and tell Hananiah, saying, Thus saith the Lord, Thou hast broken the yokes of wood; but thou shalt make for them yokes of Iron. For thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, I have put a yoke of iron upon the

* Jeremiah xxviii. 11.

“neck of all these nations, that they may serve Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; and they shall serve him: and I have given him the beasts of the field also.”* Jeremiah obeyed the Divine command, and going to Hananiah, addressed him as follows: “Hear now, Hananiah: the Lord hath not sent thee; but thou makest this people to trust in a lie. Therefore thus saith the Lord: Behold, I will cast thee from off the face of the earth: this year thou shalt die, because thou hast taught rebellion against the Lord.”† It was not long before it appeared who was the true prophet, for according to Jeremiah’s prediction, Hananiah died within the year.

A short time after this Zedekiah sent ambassadors to Babylon,‡ by whom Jeremiah took the opportunity of transmitting a letter to the chiefs of the Jews then in captivity,§ advising them not to be deceived by false prophets,|| who might make them entertain hopes of a speedy restoration: that by the ordination of God, their captivity was to last seventy years; and that the people left at Jerusalem would be of little use to assist them in their deliverance, because God, in a short time, would afflict them with sword, pestilence and famine, so that the greatest part of them would be consumed, and the remainder scattered over the face of the earth. He therefore exhorted them

* Jeremiah xxviii, 13.

† *Ibid.* ——— 15.

‡ On what occasion Zedekiah sent this embassy to the king of Babylon we are not informed; but it is reasonable to suppose that, as Judea was then tributary to the Babylonians, the king did it out of policy, to keep up a good understanding with them.

§ Ezekiel (who was at this time in Babylon) was not as yet possessed of the spirit of prophecy; and, for this reason, Jeremiah took care of the Jews who were then captives in that land, by sending them instructions in what manner they were to behave, *viz.* to seek the peace of the city whither they were carried away, Jer. xxix. 7.

|| The two persons mentioned in scripture, who took upon them to be prophets sent from God in Babylon were, Ahab, the son of Kolaiah, and Zedekiah, the son of Maaseiah. These two, feeding the people with false promises of a speedy restoration, hindered them from making any settlements in the parts assigned for their residence. But, as the prophet Jeremiah denounced their sudden destruction, so it happened; for Nebuchadnezzar, understanding that they disturbed the people by their vain prophecies, ordered them to be seized and roasted alive; which orders were accordingly executed.

to live quietly and peaceably in the country whither they were carried, without expecting any return, until the time which God had appointed.

On the receipt of this letter one Shemaiah, a very popular man among the captive Jews at Babylon, took upon him to write to Zephaniah, the second priest, and to all the priests and people of Jerusalem, representing Jeremiah as a mad man, and a mere pretender to prophecy, at the same time advising them to keep him in close confinement.

A short time after Jeremiah was informed of this letter being sent to the priests and chief people of Jerusalem, he received Divine orders to send again to the captives in Babylon, to let them know he would punish Shemaiah and his posterity very severely, for having deluded them with false prophecies; and, at the same time, to convince those that were in Jerusalem, he shewed them, by the emblem of a potter's vessel,* that it was in the power of the Almighty to destroy what nation or people he pleased. But all this was not productive of the least good: the people still resolved to go on in their wicked ways, and, to avenge themselves of the prophet, who gave them some disturbance therein, they grossly abused him, then beat him, and at length put him in the stocks.

It was much about this time that Ezekiel was called to the prophetic office; and it is remarkable that he prophesied the like kind of destruction against Jerusalem, as the prophet Jeremiah did against Babylon. At Jerusalem Jeremiah foretold the Divine judgments which were to be executed upon Chaldea and Babylon by the Medes and Persians, which he wrote in a book, and delivered to Seraiah, who was then going upon an embassy to Babylon†. He gave him instructions to read the contents of the book to his captive brethren on the banks of the river Euphrates; after having done which, to tie a stone to it and throw it into the river, thereby to denote, that as it would naturally sink, so should the Babylonish empire be so totally destroyed as never to rise again.

* See Jeremiah xix.

† The chief business of this embassy was, to request of Nebuchadnezzar a restitution of the sacred vessels of the temple which he had taken away when he carried Jehoiakim captive into Babylon.

At Babylon Ezekiel, by several types and prophetic revelations, foretold the taking of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans; Zedekiah's flight from the city by night; the putting out of his eyes; his imprisonment, and death at Babylon; the carrying away of the Jews unto captivity; the desolation of their country, and the many and great calamities which would befall them for their iniquities. But to such as were in captivity, who, avoiding those iniquities, endeavored to keep themselves steady and faithful in God's service, God, by the mouth of his prophet, promised to become a sanctuary in a strange country, and to bring them back again unto the land of Israel, where they should flourish in peace and righteousness, and once more, *become his people, and he their God.**

Thus did these two great prophets visit the people, endeavoring, both by significant emblems, and direct predictions, to reclaim them. The one endeavored to make those easy under their captivity at Babylon, while the other used every means in his power to make such as were left at Jerusalem lay aside their wickedness and repent. But they still persisted in their obstinacy and disobedience, for which God at length brought on them those calamities he had so often foretold, and so severely threatened, by the mouths of his prophets. But before we relate these particulars we must take notice of a memorable transaction that intervened, which, being rather of a detached nature, we shall reserve in a chapter by itself.

* Ezekiel xi. 20.

CHAP. XII.

The Siege of Bethulia, with the singular exploit of Judith, a widow lady, who cut off the head of Holofernes, general of the Assyrian army, and thereby prevented the city from falling into the hands of the enemy.*

NEBUCHADNEZZAR, king of Assyria, having been, for some time, at enmity with Arphaxad, king of Media, at length resolved to give him battle. He accordingly marched against him with a considerable body of forces, fully resolved either to reduce him to subjection or perish in the attempt. Arphaxad made the necessary preparations to oppose his antagonist, and the two armies met in the plains of Ragau, where a desperate battle took place, in which the army of Arphaxad was totally routed and himself slain. Nebuchadnezzar, having been thus successful, prosecuted his enterprize, and after having made himself master of several of the principal cities belonging to Arphaxad (among which was Ecbatane, the royal seat of the Median empire) he returned with his forces in great triumph to Nineveh, the place from whence he had set out on this singular expedition.

* The book of Judith, from whence this history is taken, some modern critics have endeavored to represent as nothing more than an allegory, though there is not any thing in it that has the air either of fiction or parable. Though the Jews have not placed it among their canonical books, yet they have ever considered it as a true history. Who was the author is unknown, but it is very probable that it was composed during the captivity, because it was written in the Chaldean tongue. It has been a great dispute among the learned whether the transactions related in this book took place *before* or *after* the Babylonish captivity. Those who maintain the latter opinion support their argument from the words of the history itself, wherein the author expressly tells us (chap. iv. 3.) that *the Israelites were newly returned from captivity, and all the people of Judea were lately gathered together, and the vessels, and the altar, and the house were sanctified after their profanation.* But this can mean no more than those who were made captives in the reign of Jehoiakim, for the captivity (at the time Jerusalem was destroyed in the reign of Zedekiah) continued seventy years, before the expiration of which Nebuchadnezzar had quite subdued Arphaxad, king of the Medes, and demolished Ecbatane.

Nebuchadnezzar had, previous to his engaging in this enterprize, summoned the people of all those countries that were tributary to him, to attend on the occasion; but, apprehending that some of them had disobeyed his orders, soon after his return, he enquired of his principal officers, nobles and counsellors who, they were that did attend, and who had treated his commands with indignity. On the report being made, it appeared that those who had disregarded his orders were what resided in the different provinces to the west; upon which Nebuchadnezzar was so irritated, that he determined to chastise them, in the most severe manner, for their disobedience.

In consequence of this resolution, Nebuchadnezzar sending for Holofernes, the chief captain of his army, and next in authority to himself, addressed him as follows: “ Behold, said he, thou shalt go forth from my presence, and take with thee men that trust in their own strength, of footmen a hundred and twenty thousand, and the number of horses, with their riders, twelve thousand. And thou shalt go against all the west country, because they disobeyed my commandment. And thou shalt declare unto them, that they prepare for me earth and water: for I will go forth in my wrath against them, and will cover the whole face of the earth with the feet of mine army, and I will give them for a spoil unto them: So that their slain shall fill their valleys and brooks, and the river shall be filled with their dead till it overflow: and I will lead them captives to the utmost parts of the earth. Thou, therefore, shalt go forth, and take beforehand for me all their coasts: and if they will yield themselves unto thee, thou shalt reserve them for me till the day of their punishment. But concerning them that rebel, let not thine eye spare them; but put them to the slaughter, and spoil them wheresoever thou goest. For as I live, and by the power of my kingdom, whatsoever I have spoken, that will I do by mine hand.”

These orders were strictly attended to by Holofernes, who immediately took the field with a prodigious army,*

* The author of the book of Judith has described the strength of the army Holofernes took with him, in these words: Holofernes mustered the chosen men for the battle, as his lord had commanded him, unto an hundred and twenty thousand, and twelve thousand archers on.

and having wasted and destroyed several different nations, at length proceeded towards Judea, striking terror into the people wherever he went.

As soon as the Israelites heard what great destruction Holofernes had made, the nations he had conquered, and that he was marching with all haste towards their country, they immediately fortified their towns, gathered together what forces they could, and possessed themselves of the mountains, in order to interrupt the Assyrian general from entering Judea. Holofernes, surprized to think they should attempt to make any opposition against his army, enquired of the Moabites and Ammonites, what strength that people had, and what motives could induce them to attempt an opposition: "Tell me now, said he, who this people is that dwelleth in the hill country, and what are the cities that they inhabit, and what is the multitude of their army, and wherein is their power and strength, and what king is set over them, or captain of their army; and why have they determined not to come and meet me, more than all the inhabitants of the west?" One Achior, a chief man among the Ammonites, gave him a concise history of that nation, and having informed him in what manner they had been sometimes protected, and at other times abandoned by their God, concluded, that if they had offended their God, he would deliver them into his hands; but if they had not, their God would defend them, and all his army would not be able to subdue them.

As soon as Holofernes received this account from Achior, he ordered some of his servants to conduct him to Bethulia, and deliver him into the hands of the Israelites. The servants obeyed their master's orders, but when they came near the city, the inhabitants, knowing them to belong to the Assyrian army, went out to oppose them; upon which they bound Achior, left him at the foot of a hill, and returned to their camp. As soon as the Israelites came up to Achior, they unbound him, and conducted him to the governors of the city, who immediately called an assembly of the people, and placing Achior in the midst, they asked him what he knew relative to the state of the Assyrian army, and

horseback.—A great multitude of sundry countries with them, like locusts, and like the sand of the earth; for the multitude was without number. Judith ii. 15, 20.

what were the intentions of their commander. Achior told them, the army was very considerable, that the commander had spoken with the greatest contempt of the Israelites, and that it was his determined resolution to enter Judea, and put all the inhabitants to the sword. This intelligence struck such an impression on the people, that they immediately fell down and worshipped God, crying out, “O Lord God of heaven, behold their pride, and pity the low estate of our nation, and look upon the face of those that are sanctified unto thee this day.” Ozias, one of the governors, then conducted Achior to his house, and being accompanied by the elders of the people, they spent the whole night in prayer, beseeching God to interpose in their behalf against so formidable and daring an enemy.

The next day Holofernes marched his army into Judea, and encamped in a valley near Bethulia, intending with all expedition, to lay siege to the place. The appearance of the Assyrian army struck the inhabitants of Bethulia with the greatest terror, and so pressing were they with Ozias, the head governor, to give up the city, that, to appease them, he promised to comply with their request if they were not relieved within the space of five days. “Brethren, said he, be of courage, let us yet endure five days, in the which space the Lord our God may turn his mercy towards us; for he will not forsake us utterly. And if these days pass, and there come no help unto us, I will do according to your word.”

The greatest inconvenience the Israelites labored under was, the want of water; for otherwise, the town, by reason of its situation, which was on a very lofty hill, was inaccessible. This inconvenience was occasioned by the advice of the Idumeans, who told Holofernes there was no method of reducing the place, but by cutting off the water at the foot of the mountains, from whence the city was supplied with that article. This advice Holofernes pursued, which occasioned Ozias to promise the people he would not attempt to hold out longer than five days, unless he should meet with that relief which would enable him to remove so material an inconvenience.

At this time their dwelt in Bethulia a widow named Judith, who was as eminent for her virtue and piety, as for her great riches, and the distinguished respect with

which she was looked upon by the heads of the people. This woman, hearing the engagement Ozias had made with the inhabitants in order to appease them, sent for him, and, in the presence of the principal men of the city, rebuked him for his conduct. Ozias made the best apology he could on the occasion, saying, "the people were very thirsty, and compelled us to do unto them as we have spoken, and to bring an oath upon ourselves which we cannot break. Therefore now pray thou for us, because thou art a godly woman, and the Lord will send us rain to fill our cisterns, and we shall faint no more." Judith then addressed herself to them as follows: "Hear me, and I will do a thing that shall go throughout all generations to the children of our nation. Ye shall stand this night in the gate, and I will go forth with my waiting-woman: and within the days that ye have promised to deliver the city to our enemies, the Lord will visit Israel by mine hand. But enquire not ye of mine act: for I will not declare it unto you, till the things be finished that I do." To this the whole assembly replied, "Go in peace, and the Lord God be before thee, to take vengeance on our enemies."

Judith, after addressing herself in prayer to God for success, made the necessary preparations for carrying her project into execution. She was not insensible of her own personal charms (for she was exceedingly handsome, as well as virtuous) and from the power of these, she flattered herself with being able to accomplish her design of frustrating the intentions of the Assyrian general. To effect this she put on her richest attire, and decorated herself with the most costly ornaments; having done which, she left Bethulia, and, accompanied only by a female servant, set out towards the camp of the Assyrians.

When Judith came to the outskirts of the Assyrian camp, the guards stopped her, asking who she was, and from whence she came. She told them she was an Hebrew who had fled from her countrymen, being sensible that their destruction was near at hand; and that she was come to acquaint their general by what means he might make himself master of Bethulia, without the loss of a single man. The guards, struck with the beauty of her person, the grandeur of her dress, and the words which she spoke,

immediately conducted her to their general, who received her with all that civility and respect her appearance seemed to demand. Having understood the design of her leaving Bethulia, which she related to Holofernes in the same manner she had done to the guards, he not only promised her his protection, but likewise appointed a proper apartment for the accommodation of her and her maid.

Holofernes was already enamored with this fair stranger, not only on account of the beauty of her person, but the natural accomplishments of her mind. He ordered his servants to accommodate her in the same manner with himself; to furnish her with the like kind of provision, and to give her such of his wines as she should think proper to accept.

Judith returned thanks to Holofernes for his kind offers and protection, but at the same time requested that, as she was a strict observer of the religion of her country, she might be permitted to eat separately* such provisions as she had brought with her. She likewise desired that she might have leave, without any molestation, to go out of the camp at night, or before it was day, in order to perform her devotions;† both of which requests were readily granted by Holofernes.

Thus did Judith continue in the Assyrian camp for three days, during which she was treated with the greatest

* There were several sorts of meats eaten by the heathens, which were prohibited in the laws of Moses, and, therefore, Judith took with her such a quantity of provision as she thought would be sufficient for the time of her absence. Another reason, indeed, may be assigned for this part of her conduct, namely, the fear she was under that something of an intoxicating nature might be given her, so as to make her an easy prey to the lust of Holofernes, who, no doubt, would have first seduced her, and then triumphed over the loss of her virtue.

† As prayers are certainly the most proper to be offered up in places of retirement, and as the hurry and noise of a camp must be very inconvenient for the performance of religious offices, Judith, who professed herself to be a woman of strict piety, had a good pretence to request of the general the liberty of retiring out of the camp, (when she thought proper, and without any questions being asked her) to perform her devotions, which, she foresaw, would be a means of favoring her escape, after she had executed the grand part of her project. And it was certainly from this precaution only, that her request of paying her devotion without the camp was founded.

respect, and, agreeably to her request, was permitted to go every night into the valley of Bethulia, where she offered up her prayers to God, beseeching him so to direct her, that she might become the preserver of the distressed Israelites. On the fourth day Holofernes made an entertainment for his own domestics only, not inviting any of the officers of the army. On this occasion he sent Bagoas, his eunuch, who had the principal management of his private affairs, to invite Judith to the feast. "Go now, said he, and persuade this Hebrew woman which is with thee, that she come unto us, and eat and drink with us. For, lo, it will be a shame for our person, if we shall let such a person go, not having had her company; for if we draw her not unto us, she will laugh us to scorn." Bagoas obeyed his master's orders, and going to Judith's tent, addressed her as follows: "Let not this fair damsel fear to come to my lord, and to be honored in his presence, and drink wine, and be merry with us, and be made this day as one of the daughters of the Assyrians, which serve in the house of Nebuchadnezzar." Judith replied, "Who am I now, that I should gainsay my lord? Surely whatsoever pleaseth him, I will do speedily, and it shall be my joy unto the day of my death."

As soon as Bagoas left Judith, she immediately dressed herself in her best attire, and, taking her maid with her, went to the tent of Holofernes, who no sooner saw her than his heart was ravished with her appearance, and he resolved, if possible, to possess those enjoyments he had meditated from the moment of his first seeing her. He was so well pleased with her conversation during the repast, and his mind so elated with the thoughts of enjoying her that night, that he gave a thorough loose to indulgence, and at length became so intoxicated with wine that he laid himself down on his bed, and fell fast asleep. Bagoas seeing this, and knowing his master's intentions, dismissed all the company, except Judith (and her maid who waited for her mistress without the tent) and then withdrew himself.

Now was Judith's project ripe for execution. Standing by his bedside, and beholding him dead, as it were with drink, she thus addressed herself to God: "O Lord God of all power, (said she) look at this present upon the

“ works of mine hands for the exaltation of Jerusalem. “ For now is the time to help thine inheritance, and to execute mine enterprizes to the destruction of the enemies “ which have risen against us.” Having said this, she took down a scymitar that hung by the bed-side, and taking hold of the hair of Holofernes’s head with her left hand, said, “ Strengthen me, O Lord God of Israel this “ day.” She then struck Holofernes on the neck with all her might, and at the second stroke severed his head from his body.

As soon as Holofernes was dead, Judith pulled down the canopy of his bed, and immediately left the tent. His head she gave to her maid, who put it into the bag in which they had brought their provisions; and they directly made the best of their way through the camp, not being any ways suspected by the soldiers, who, knowing the indulgence that had been given to Judith, supposed she was going as usual into the valley to pay her evening devotions.

Judith made the best of her way to Bethulia, whither she had no sooner arrived than she hastily called out to the watchmen to open the gates. “ Open, open now the “ gate, said she: God, even our God is with us, to shew “ his power yet in Jerusalem, and his forces against the “ enemy, as he hath even done this day.” The men, knowing her voice, immediately opened the gates, and no sooner had she entered the city, than the elders and principal people, who heard of her return, being greatly astonished, ran hastily to congratulate her: upon which she addressed herself to them in these words: “ Praise, praise “ God, for he hath not taken away his mercy from the “ house of Israel, but hath destroyed our enemies by mine “ hands this night.” She then took the head out of the bag, and shewing it to the people, said, “ Behold the head “ of Holofernes the chief captain of the army of the As- “ syrians, and behold the canopy wherein he did lie in his “ drunkenness; and the Lord hath smitten him by the hand “ of a woman. As the Lord liveth, who hath kept me in “ my way that I went, my countenance hath deceived him “ to his destruction, and yet hath he not committed sin “ with me, to defile and shame me.”

The people were so struck with the sight of Holofernes’s head, that they immediately fell on their faces and worship-

ped God, saying, with one accord, "Blessed be thou, O our God, which hast this day brought to nought the enemies of thy people." Ozias, the chief governor, particularly addressed himself to Judith in these words: "O daughter, blessed art thou of the most high God above all the women upon the earth; and blessed be the Lord God, which hath created the heavens and the earth, which hath directed thee to the cutting off of the head of the chief of our enemies. For this thy confidence shall not depart from the heart of men, which remember the power of God for ever. And God turn these things to thee for a perpetual praise, to visit thee in good things, because thou hast not spared hazarding thy life for the affliction of our nation, but hast avenged our ruin, walking a strait way before our God."

Judith, well knowing the consternation into which the sudden death of Holofernes would put the Assyrian army, gave such directions to the Bethulians as she thought necessary in order to take a proper advantage of it. She advised them as soon as the morning appeared, to hang the head of Holofernes* on the highest part of the walls of the city, and then every one to take up arms, and sally out of the gates, as if they meant to attack the enemy, but, in reality, only to give them an alarm, that thereupon they might have recourse to their general (as she supposed they would) and thereby come to know the fate that had befallen him. That if, after this discovery, they should find the Assyrians appear in confusion, they should immediately advance towards them, and if they found them inclined to retreat, they should pursue them with the utmost expedition, and take every advantage they could; but if on the contrary, they found them likely to stand their ground, they should then for their own safety, retreat to the city.

The Bethulians had sufficient reason strictly to observe the instructions of a woman whose conduct had so far put

* This advice given by Judith is consistent with many circumstances we meet with in ancient history. It was natural for her to imagine, that the Assyrian army would be thrown into great confusion by the unexpected death of their general, and, therefore, nothing could be more consistent with human policy than the advice she here gave; for it often happens, when the commander in chief is cut off, for the inferior officers to dispute among themselves concerning precedence, and that has frequently occasioned the loss of armies.

them in the way for their deliverance. Agreeably to her advice, after having hung up the head of Holofernes on the walls of the city, they armed themselves, and made their appearance in the passes of the mountains. As soon as the out-guards of the Assyrian camp saw them, they immediately gave notice to the officers, who immediately dispatched a messenger with the intelligence to the general. Upon this Bagoas, his eunuch, went to Holofernes's tent, and knocking at the door for some time without receiving any answer, he at length opened it, and went in, where, to his great amazement and surprize, he saw the headless body of his master lying in his blood. Missing Judith, who he thought had lain with Holofernes that night, he went to her tent, but not finding her there, he immediately judged that she was the author of this mischief and disgrace to the Assyrians.

Information of this event being soon dispersed throughout the camp, the Assyrians were thrown into such confusion, that every one began to shift for himself, and they fled with the utmost precipitation, some into the plains, and others into the hilly parts of the country. The Bethulians (together with other neighboring people, to whom Ozias had sent intelligence of the death of the Assyrian general) pursued them in small parties from several quarters, and having slain a considerable number, and greatly enriched themselves with the spoils which the enemy had left behind them, they returned in triumph to Bethulia.

The news of this singular deliverance having reached Jerusalem, Joacim the high-priest, accompanied by the elders of the people, went to Bethulia, in order to pay their respectful acknowledgments to the person who had been the chief cause of so remarkable an incident. As soon as they saw Judith, they blessed her with one accord, after which Joacim addressed her as follows: "Thou art the exaltation of Jerusalem, thou art the chief glory of Israel, thou art the great rejoicing of our nation: Thou hast done all these things by thine hand: thou hast done much good to Israel, and God is pleased therewith: blessed be thou of the Almighty Lord for evermore." Joacim and the elders then conducted Judith to Jerusalem, she taking with her the canopy of Holofernes's tent, to-

gether with all his plate, and other valuable articles which had been presented her by the heads of Bethulia, after the people had returned from plundering the camp of the enemy.

When Judith arrived at Jerusalem, the people received her with an inexpressible satisfaction,* being happy at the sight of a person who had been the means of rescuing their countrymen from the most impending danger. Joacim, the high-priest, accompanied by the elders, conducted Judith to the temple, where they offered up burnt-offerings, and gave public thanks to God for this singular deliverance from the destructive machinations of their enemies. The oblation presented by Judith, consisted of the plunder of Holofernes's tent, which had been presented to her by the soldiers after their return from pursuing the enemy, and possessing themselves of the riches they had left behind them. On this occasion a feast was held in Jerusalem for the space of three months, during which Judith continued in that city; but after the rejoicings were over, she returned to Bethulia, where she lived in great splendor and renown the remainder of her life. She died at the age of 105, greatly lamented by the people, who expressed their grief on the occasion, by mourning for her seven days. Her remains were deposited in the cave of her husband Manasseh, for whose memory she had such a respect, that, after his death, though she had many advantageous and honorable offers, she continued a widow the remainder of her life.

* The joy which the people expressed on Judith's entry into Jerusalem, is thus related: *Then all the women of Israel ran together to see her, and blessed her, and made a dance among them for her; and she took branches in her hand, and gave also to the women that were with her, and they put a garland of olive upon her, and on her maid that was with her, and she went before all the people in the dance, leading the women, and all the men of Israel followed with garlands, and with songs in their mouth. Judith xv. 12, 13.*

CHAP. XIII.

Zedekiah, king of Judah, enters into a confederacy with the king of Egypt. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Assyria, lays siege to Jerusalem. Ezekiel and Jeremiah, prophesy the destruction of that city. Zedekiah, fearful of Nebuchadnezzar's army, pretends to reform, and proclaims a Manumission, or free liberty, to all Hebrew servants; but, on the king of Egypt coming to his assistance, he withdraws the proclamation. The prophet Jeremiah is thrown into a dismal dungeon, from whence he is released at the instigation of Ebed-Melech, one of the king's eunuchs. Jeremiah's last interview with Zedekiah. The city of Jerusalem taken by Nebuchadnezzar. Zedekiah's sons put to death before his face, himself made a prisoner, and, after having his eyes put out, sent in chains to Babylon. The city of Jerusalem, together with the temple, plundered and burnt. Many of the nobility and priests put to death, by order of Nebuchadnezzar. The prophet Jeremiah is treated with great respect, being permitted either to stay in his own country, or go with the rest of the captives to Babylon. He chuses the former, and receives letters of recommendation from Nebuchadnezzar to Gedaliah, who is appointed governor over the people left in the country of Judah.

ZEDEKIAH, king of Judah, having, since the commencement of his reign, (which was now seven years) labored under the Babylonish yoke, determined, if possible, to shake it off; for which purpose he sent ambassadors to Pharaoh-Hophra, king of Egypt, with whom he entered into a confederacy against Nebuchadnezzar, king of Assyria, resolving to make the most vigorous opposition against him, should he endeavor, by force, to make him still his tributary.

As soon as Nebuchadnezzar heard of this conjunction, and the intentions of Zedekiah, he immediately gathered together a very considerable army, obliging all those nations that were subject to him, to send a certain number of men properly armed for war. With this formidable army, Nebuchadnezzar marched into Judea, fully resolved to punish Zedekiah for his perfidy and rebellion. Having in the course of two years overrun the country, and taken

most of the principal cities, he at length, in the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign (in the tenth month of the year and on the tenth day of the month) came before Jerusalem, and blocked it up so close on every side, that the inhabitants could not get out, the consequence of which was, that, in the course of time, their provisions were expended, a famine ensued, and the most distressed scene appeared in the streets of Jerusalem.

It is remarkable, that on the very day that Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Jerusalem, the prophet Ezekiel (then a captive in Chaldea) had it revealed to him, by the type of a boiling pot, what destruction should befall the city of Jerusalem; all which happened in direct conformity to the revelation he had received.

After the siege of Jerusalem had some time commenced, the prophet Jeremiah was ordered to inform the king, that the Babylonians, notwithstanding all the opposition they could make, and all the assistance he could obtain, would certainly take it, and destroy it by fire; and that himself should be carried prisoner to Babylon, and finish his days in captivity.

This intelligence, added to the dread of Nebuchadnezzar's army, wrought such an impression on the minds of Zedekiah and the chief people about him, that they entered into a solemn covenant, from thenceforward, strictly to obey the laws of God, and to lay aside that idolatry and wickedness to which they had been so long accustomed. In consequence of this resolution, Zedekiah proclaimed a manumission, or free liberty to all Hebrew servants, of either sex, according to what the law enjoined. See Deut. xv. 12, &c. But this indulgence was of short duration. Hophra, king of Egypt, coming to the assistance of Zedekiah, Nebuchadnezzar raised the siege, and marched with his army in order to give him battle. In consequence of this, the king, thinking the Assyrians were gone for good and all, repented of the covenant he had made, and the proclamation he had issued for the liberty of his subjects; and, therefore, commanded every servant, both male and female, to return to their servitudes.

This base prevarication was so offensive to God, that he ordered the prophet Jeremiah to repeat his former judgments of sword, pestilence and famine, on all the peo-

ple of Jerusalem and Judah; and that he would execute his wrath upon them to their utter destruction.

In consequence of these threats, Zedekiah sent several times to Jeremiah, requesting him to pray to God in behalf of himself and his people. The answers returned by the prophet were always positive, and to the same effect; namely, that the Egyptians, in whom he placed so much confidence, would certainly deceive him: that their army would return without giving him any assistance; and that the Assyrians would thereupon renew the siege, take the city, and, together with the temple, destroy it by fire.

While the Assyrians were gone to engage the army of the Egyptians, Jeremiah thought it a proper time to leave Jerusalem, and retire to Anathoth, the place of his nativity, by means of which he might avoid the consequences which he knew would follow after Nebuchadnezzar should resume the siege of Jerusalem. He accordingly left his abode in the city, in order to retire to the place intended; but when he came to pass the gate he was interrupted by the captain of the guard, who seized him as a deserter, and carrying him before the princes, they were so enraged, that they first beat him, and afterwards committed him to the common jail of the city.

During these transactions, the Egyptians (on whom Zedekiah had placed so much dependence) not daring to engage the army of the Assyrians, fled before them into their own country, leaving the deluded king and his people, with their unequal strength, to contend with Nebuchadnezzar, who returned more exasperated than ever, to re-invest the city of Jerusalem.

Zedekiah began now to be seriously alarmed, knowing the power he had of himself to be very unequal to combat with the formidable army of Nebuchadnezzar. In the midst of his anxiety, he sent messengers to Jeremiah, who was then in prison, to know what would be the issue of the war: to which the prophet returned him an answer to this effect: "That God, being highly provoked against him and his people, for their manifold iniquities, would fight against the city, and smite it; that both he and his people should be delivered into the hands of the king of Babylon; that those who continued in the city during the siege should perish by the pestilence, by the sword,

“and by famine; but that those who endeavored to escape, though they fell into the hands of the Assyrians, should have their lives preserved.”

When the princes and chief commanders heard this answer, they were so enraged that they went immediately to the king, and earnestly pressed him, severely to punish Jeremiah, for that such speeches would certainly discourage the soldiers and people, and in a short time produce a general defection. The king, not knowing what to do in this critical conjuncture of affairs, delivered him into their hands, and they, with unrelenting cruelty, ordered him to be thrown into a filthy dungeon.* In this shocking place the prophet must have inevitably perished, had it not been for Ebed-Melech, one of the king's eunuchs, and a particular favorite with him. By the intercession of this person, the prophet was soon released from his lamentable situation, and carried back to the prison in which he had been before confined; and for this interposition he gave Ebed-Melech assurance from God, that on the sacking of the city, he should not be one among those who should fall by the sword.

The Assyrians now pressing the siege with the greatest vigor, Zedekiah, who had yet hopes of receiving some consolation from the prophet Jeremiah, desired to have a private conference with him. Accordingly messengers were dispatched to bring him out of prison, which being done, the king took him to a private apartment in the temple, and there asked him several questions, particularly what he thought would be the fate of the war. But the prophet could give him no other answer to his questions than what he had done before; only he advised him to surrender to the enemy, as the best expedient he could take, to save both himself and the city. Though the prophet urged the king, in the strongest terms, to take his advice, yet he would by no means assent to it. He therefore broke off

* It is the opinion of some, that, when Jeremiah was in this dismal place, he made those mournful expressions which are set down in the third chapter of the Lamentations. *They have cut off my life in the dungeon, and cast a stone upon me.—I called upon thy name, O Lord, out of the low dungeon, and thou hast heard my voice, &c. ver. 53, 55, 56.*

the discourse, and after enjoining him to preserve secrecy* in what had passed between them, remanded him to prison. And this was the last interview the prophet ever had with the king.

The siege of Jerusalem, which had been in hand near two years, began now to draw to a conclusion. The inhabitants were reduced to such distress through the scarcity of provisions, that they were forced to rake the very dung-hills for food, and at length to feed on each other.† In this dreadful situation did they continue for some time, when, in the night of the ninth day of the fourth month, and in the eleventh year of Zedekiah's reign, the city was taken by storm, and every place filled with blood and slaughter. The king, accompanied by some of his friends, endeavored to make his escape towards the wilderness; but they had not gone far before they were taken and conducted to Nebuchadnezzar, who was then at Riblah. After severely reproaching‡ Zedekiah for his base perfidy, Nebuchadnezzar ordered his sons to be put to death before his face, as also those princes who had been the means of persecuting the prophet Jeremiah. As for the king himself, Nebuchadnezzar commanded his eyes to be put out, and then binding him in fetters of brass, sent him to Babylon, where he finished his days in a loathsome prison. Thus was fully accomplished what the two prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel had foretold concerning this wicked prince,§ whose enormities

* It was necessary for Jeremiah to keep what had passed between him and the king a secret for his own sake; for, if the princes had known it, they would have been so enraged against him that they might have instantly caused him to be put to death.

† See Lamentations iv. 4, 5. and Ezekiel v. 10.

‡ The words Josephus puts into Nebuchadnezzar's mouth, when reproaching Zedekiah for his perfidy, are to this effect: "Did you not promise me (said he) to manage the power and authority that I put you in possession of for my advantage and behalf? And am not I well requited, do you think, for making you a king in your nephew Jehoiachin's place, by your employing the credit and interest that I gave you, to the ruin of your patron and benefactor? But that God is great and just, who, for the punishment of your treachery and ingratitude, hath now made you my prisoner."

§ The prophecy of Jeremiah is delivered in these words: *He shall be delivered into the hands of the king of Babylon, and shall speak with him mouth to mouth, and his eyes shall behold his eyes*, chap. xxxii. 4. Ezekiel's prophecy is thus expressed: *I will bring him to Babylon,*

were so great as to bring down on him that Divine vengeance he so justly merited.

Nebuchadnezzar, having thus punished Zedekiah, sent Nebuzaradan, the captain of his guards to Jerusalem, with orders to raze the place, plunder the temple, and carry the people who were left captives to Babylon. These orders were executed with the utmost rigor; for Nebuzaradan, having taken all the vessels out of the temple, and gathered together all the riches he could find, either in the king's palace or in the houses of the princes and nobility, he set both the temple and city on fire, overthrew all the walls, fortresses and towers belonging to it, and, in short, made the whole one continued scene of desolation.*

Nebuzaradan, having thus destroyed the city and temple, made all the people he found in the place captives. The heads of those, which were about seventy in number, among whom were Saraiah the high priest, and Zephaniah the second priest, he carried to Riblah, where Nebuchadnezzar ordered them all to be immediately put to death. The poorer and laboring part of the people, such as could till the ground, and dress the vineyards, he left behind, and made Gedaliah† their governor. All the rest he carried to Babylon, except the prophet Jeremiah, of whom Nebuchadnezzar had given him strict charge to take particular care. He therefore not only took him out of prison

to the land of the Chaldeans, yet he shall not see it, though he die there. chap. xii. 13. Both of these prophecies were literally accomplished; for Zedekiah was carried to Ziblah, where he saw the king of Babylon, and spake to him, and beheld his children executed; but had afterwards his eyes put out, and was then carried to Babylon, where he was incapable of seeing the city, because he had lost his eye-sight.

* On these two sad occasions, viz. the taking of the city, and destruction of the temple, Jeremiah composed a mournful poem, which is called his Lamentations. In the two first chapters he describes the calamities of the siege; in the third he deploras the persecutions which himself had suffered; in the fourth he bemoans the fate of the city and temple, and Zedekiah's sad misfortune; and in the fifth, he addresses his prayer to God in behalf of his brethren, the Jews, under their dispersion and captivity.

† Gedaliah was the son of Ahikam, the great friend of Jeremiah; and it is not unlikely that, by the prophet's advice, who exhorted all, both king and people, to surrender themselves to the Assyrians (Jer. xxxviii. 5, 17,) he made his escape from the city, and went over to the king of Babylon; and for this reason was promoted to the government of Judea.

when he first came to Jerusalem, but, as the rest were on their departure, gave him his choice, whether he would go with him to Babylon, where he should be maintained at the king's expense, or continue in his own country. The prophet chose the latter, upon which Nebuzaradan not only dismissed him with an handsome present, but likewise gave him letters of recommendation to Gedaliah the governor, in which he strictly enjoined that he should treat him with the most distinguished respect.

Thus was an end put to the Israelitish monarchy, after it had continued four hundred and sixty-eight years from the time that David began to reign over it; three hundred and eighty-eight years from the revolt of the ten tribes; and one hundred and thirty-four years from the extinction of the Israelitish commonwealth.

We shall close this chapter and book with some observations and general reflections on the natural causes of the Babylonish captivity; and point out the great wisdom of Providence in directing such a dispensation.

The whole Jewish nation, both Judah and Israel, had all along a strong and strange propensity to idolatry; and their morals were as corrupt as their religion. What their peculiar temptations were, we know not; but all the endeavors of those who were good kings, and all the preaching of holy prophets, sent by special commission from God, were ineffectual to produce a reformation.* They were therefore carried away captive into Babylon. This dreadful calamity came upon them gradually; but gradual punishment effected no amendment in the religion or morals of the nation. Zedekiah, the last king, was as bad as his predecessors; therefore the whole land of Judea was reduced to utter desolation for the sins of the people.

The great propriety of this dispensation will be seen, if we attend to the following reflections:

1. The lenity of God evidently appeared in his bringing this terrible overthrow upon them so gradually, after a succession of judgments, from less to greater, for a long space of time, which should have been a warning to them, and by experience have convinced them, that the threatnings denounced by the prophets would certainly come to pass.

* See 2 Chron. xxxvi. 14.

2. That it was a just punishment for their sins, particularly for their idolatry, whereby they forsook God, and therefore God justly forsook them, and delivered them into the hands of their enemies, as Moses had foretold. Levit. xxvi. 30—35.

3. This dreadful calamity was, no doubt, inflicted by Providence as the most effectual means of working their reformation. In their captive disconsolate state they had time, and their calamities had a natural tendency to give them a disposition, to reflect on the long series of iniquity and perverseness which had brought them under the heaviest of God's judgments. Now *their own wickedness corrected them, and their backslidings reproved them; now they must know and see that it was an evil thing and bitter, that they had forsaken the Lord their God, and that his fear had not been in them.* In the land of their captivity the discourses of the prophets, declaiming with the highest authority against their profane and wicked practices, would be still sounding in their ears, and their abject, wretched condition, the consequence of such practices, would sink deep into their hearts, and surely give them an utter detestation of what they too well knew was the cause of all their sufferings.

4. The law of God, written by Moses, as the rule of their conduct in all affairs both civil and religious, and the ground of their happiness, they had so far neglected, that it was almost unknown and lost among them.* This contempt of the Divine law the prophets had frequently protested against,† and publicly declared, that it would be their destruction. And, in their ruined state, this must be remembered as the primary reason of all their sufferings; and they must be thoroughly sensible that a due regard to the love of God was the only way to recover his favor, and their own prosperity, and accordingly must be disposed to be attentive to it; which, indeed, was the case. This was another good effect of this dispensation, and may be justly given as one grand reason for their being so strongly fixed against idolatry ever after the Babylonish captivity.

* See 2 Kings, xxii. 8—12.

† See Isaiah v. 24. xxx. 9. Jeremiah vi. 19. viii. 8. ix. 13. Hosea viii. 12. Amos ii. 4. and in many other places in the books of the prophets.

5. This dispensation was also calculated to produce good effects among the different nations into which they were carried captives: for, wherever they were dispersed in the eastern countries, they would endeavor to propagate the knowledge of the true God, which was now seriously impressed upon their hearts. During their captivity Divine Providence, by many signal instances of his interposition, which were published and known over all the vast extent of the eastern empire, raised some of them to the highest posts of dignity and power in the courts of Assyria and Persia,* and the most haughty monarchs openly confessed the living and true God as the only and Supreme Being,† and made decrees, which were published throughout their spacious dominions, that the people should profess and worship him alone.‡

From these observations and reflections it is evidently clear, that the Jews (notwithstanding their depravity in their own country) during the captivity of seventy years, must have been a burning and shining light all over the eastern countries. And thus, in this dispensation, God, the father and governor of the world, was working for the reformation and improvement of mankind, in bringing about that which is the true excellency of their nature, and the only foundation of all their happiness.

* Dan. i. 19, 20.

† Ibid. ii. 47—19. iv. 34, &c.

‡ Ibid. iii. 29. vi. 25. &c.

A
NEW AND COMPLETE
UNIVERSAL HISTORY
OF THE
HOLY BIBLE.

BOOK IV.

FROM THE BABYLONISH CAPTIVITY, TO THE BIRTH OF
CHRIST.

[INCLUDING A PERIOD OF 588 YEARS.]

CHAP. I.

Gedaliah, who was appointed governor of Judea after the reduction of Jerusalem and the captivity of the people, takes up his residence at Mizpah. Ishmael, the son of Nethaniah, a person of royal descent, forms a conspiracy against him, and kills him. He likewise puts to death the greater part of the Jews and Chaldeans in Mizpah, together with fourscore Israelites, who were going into the town to offer presents to Gedaliah. Being fearful that his cruelty will be revenged by the captains of Judah, he flies for security into the land of the Ammonites. The Jews who are left after his escape retreat, contrary to the advice of Jeremiah, whom they take with them, into Egypt. They fall into idolatry, for which the prophet severely reproves them. Account of the farther prophecies both of Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

WE have observed, towards the close of the last Book, that Nebuzaradan, the captain-general of Nebuchadnezzar's forces, after destroying the city and temple of Jerusalem, appointed Gedaliah governor over those whom he left behind to till and cultivate the country. In

consequence of this, Gedaliah took up his residence at Mizpah,* to which place the prophet Jeremiah, accompanied by his servant Baruch, repaired, and was treated by the governor with that respect which was consistent with the recommendations he received from Nebuzaradan, previous to his departure for Babylon.

Soon after the departure of the Assyrians, all those Jews who had, during the siege, fled from the city, and secreted themselves, some among the neighboring nations, and others in the fields and deserts of their own country, hearing that Gedaliah was made governor of the land, resorted unto him at Mizpah. Among these were Ishmael, the son of Nethaniah, Johanan, the son of Kareah, and two others named Jaazaniah and Seraiah, all considerable men, and who had, before the reduction of Jerusalem, held lucrative posts in the army. On their arrival at Mizpah, Gedaliah, the governor, treated them with very great respect, and, in the most friendly manner, advised them to continue in their own country, and content themselves with being subject to the king of Babylon. *Fear not*, said he, *to be the servants of the Chaldees: dwell in the land, and serve the king of Babylon, and it shall be well with you.* He then desired them to fix on such places as they thought proper for their residence, and offered them the assistance of his own people to fit up their dwellings.

Ishmael, as well as the other three, appeared perfectly satisfied with the offers made by Gedaliah, and the former particularly expressed himself in the most thankful terms; but his behavior was all a deception, and his design in going to Mizpah was of the most base and treacherous nature. Being of the blood-royal, he thought after the departure of the Assyrians, to make himself king of Judea, and had therefore resolved to kill Gedaliah, and seize on the government; in which horrid plot he was assisted by Baalis, king of the Ammonites, under whose protection he had continued during the siege of Jerusalem.

* Mizpah was situated on the east side of the river Jordan, and in the division of the land fell to the tribe of Dan; and here it was that Gedaliah either chose to fix his habitation, or, perhaps, was ordered to fix it, because it lay nearer than any other place to Babylon, from whence he was to receive his instructions with respect to the administration of the government.

Though Ishmael carried on his base design with the greatest privacy, yet, from the intercourse that took place between him and his confederate, the king of the Ammonites, the plot was at length discovered by Johanan, who immediately gave intelligence of it to the governor, at the same time desiring that he might have permission to put him to death, and thereby prevent his perfidious design being carried into execution. *Let me go, I pray thee,* said he, *and I will slay Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and no man shall know it: wherefore should he slay thee, that all the Jews which are gathered unto thee should be scattered, and the remnant of Judah perish?*

Gedaliah, being a man of a generous temper, and not apt to entertain jealousies of others, was unwilling to give credit to what Johanan had related. He told him he thought it impossible that any man could so far deviate from all sense of moral obligation as to seek the destruction of his preserver; and that even if that was the case, he would not so far violate the laws of hospitality as to take away the life of a man who had sheltered himself under his protection. Gedaliah, therefore, took no notice of Johanan's information, but continued the same friendly correspondence with Ishmael he had done ever since his arrival at Mizpah.

About a month after this Gedaliah made a grand entertainment, to which he invited many of the principal people of the city, among whom were Ishmael, and ten of his companions who had engaged with him in conspiring against the life of Gedaliah. This was the most favorable opportunity that could have offered for Ishmael to carry his horrid and base design into execution; nor did he fail taking advantage of it. In the midst of the entertainment he and his companions (having provided themselves with arms for the purpose) suddenly arose from the table, and falling on Gedaliah, not only put him to death, but likewise all that were present. They then sallied into the streets, murdered great numbers of the people, as well Chaldeans as Jews, and made the rest captives. The second day after these horrid transactions took place, it happened that a party of fourscore men, from different parts of the country, came to Mizpah, in order to offer presents to Gedaliah, in acknowledgment of their subjec-

tion to his government. Ishmael, being apprized of their arrival, went, accompanied by his companions, some way from Mizpah to meet them, which he had no sooner done than he offered to conduct them to the governor's house. This offer was readily accepted; but no sooner had they got into the city than Ishmael and his companions fell on them, and put no less than seventy to the sword. The other ten were spared, in consequence of their promising to deliver to Ishmael a great quantity of treasures* they had concealed in a field not far from Mizpah.

Ishmael, after these horrid massacres, not thinking himself secure at Mizpah, left it, taking with him all those he had made captives (among whom were the daughters of king Hezekiah) and proceeded towards the land of the Ammonites, intending again to take shelter under the protection of Baalis, their king, who had urged him on to the undertaking of the late treacherous enterprize against Gedaliah.

In the mean time Johanan, and the rest of the captains of Judah, having heard of the horrid deeds committed by Ishmael at Mizpah, and that he had fled, gathered together their forces, and marching in pursuit of him, overtook him at the fountain of Gibeon. As soon as the captives who were with him saw Johanan, they immediately ran to the pursuers, while Ishmael, with only eight men, made his escape into the land of the Ammonites.

The people being thus left under the care and protection of Johanan and the rest of the captains, they, reflecting on what Ishmael had done in murdering Gedaliah, were apprehensive that the Chaldeans might possibly revenge his death upon them. To provide, therefore, against the worst, they retired with them to Chimham,†

* According to the scripture phrase treasures signify any thing hid, or kept in reserve, whether gold, silver, corn, wine, oil, apparel, or any other thing: and, among the people of the east, it was an usual thing to bury their corn, and other provisions, in deep holes and caverns, which they dug and filled up so very dexterously, that no one could perceive the earth had been moved, nor could any find them out but those who made them.

† This was the place which king David gave, near five hundred years back, to Chimham, the son of old Barzillai the Gileadite, and which still retained his name. It was in the neighborhood of Bethlehem, about two leagues from Jerusalem, and at a much greater distance from Babylon than the city of Mizpah.

from whence, should they be called to an account, they might the more easily make their escape into Egypt, whither they had some thoughts of taking up their residence.

The prophet Jeremiah, with his faithful servant Baruch, were among those whom Ishmael the conspirator had carried away captives from Mizpah, and who accompanied Johanan, and the rest of his countrymen, to their new habitation at Chimham. They had not been long here before Johanan, and the other princes of the people, went in a body to Jeremiah, requesting that he would consult the Lord concerning their intended journey into Egypt; at the same time assuring him that they would readily comply with whatever he should think fit to enjoin them. “ Let, we beseech thee (said they) our supplication “ be accepted before thee, and pray for us unto the Lord “ thy God, even for all this remnant: for we are left but “ a few of many, as thine eyes do behold us: that the “ Lord thy God may show us the way wherein we may “ walk, and the thing that we may do. Whether it be “ good, or whether it be evil, we will obey the voice of “ the Lord our God, to whom we send thee; that it may “ be well with us, when we obey the voice of the Lord “ our God.”

Jeremiah promised to comply with their request, and at the expiration of ten days calling together, not only Johanan and the rest of the captains, but likewise the whole multitude, he addressed them as follows: “ Thus “ saith the Lord, the God of Israel, unto whom ye sent “ me to present your supplication before him: If ye will “ still abide in this land, then will I build you, and not “ pull you down, and I will plant you, and not pluck you “ up. Be not afraid of the king of Babylon, saith the “ Lord, for I am with you to save you, and to deliver “ you from his hand: and I will shew mercies unto you, “ that he may have mercy upon you, and cause you to “ return to your own land. But if ye say, We will not “ dwell in this land, neither obey the voice of the Lord, “ saying, No; but we will go into the land of Egypt, “ where we shall see no war, nor hear the sound of the “ trumpet, nor have hunger of bread, and there will we “ dwell: Then it shall come to pass, that the sword

“ which ye feared shall overtake ye in the land of Egypt,
“ and the famine whereof ye were afraid shall follow
“ close after you there in Egypt; and there ye shall die.
“ So shall it be with all the men that set their faces to go
“ into Egypt to sojourn there: they shall die by the sword,
“ by the famine, and by the pestilence; and none of them
“ shall remain or escape from the evil that I shall bring
“ upon them.”

This message, notwithstanding the professions the people had made of strictly abiding by what Jeremiah should direct, was treated with the utmost contempt, and Johanan, with the rest of the captains, accused him of having been influenced by his servant Baruch, to deliver such orders. In short, they were ultimately bent on going to Egypt; and therefore, taking all the remnant of Judah, men, women and children, the king's daughters, Jeremiah the prophet, and Baruch his servant and scribe, with them, they went and settled in the country of the Egyptians,* where they continued till those judgments which God, by the mouth of his prophet, had threatened, came upon them for their obstinacy and disobedience.

No sooner had the Jews settled themselves in Egypt, than (notwithstanding the punishments that had been denounced and inflicted on them for their impieties) they gave themselves up wholly to idolatry, worshipping the moon and other false deities of the land. The prophet Jeremiah remonstrated with them on the impropriety of their conduct, and pointed out to them the dreadful consequences that must infallibly ensue should they persevere in their impieties. But all these remonstrances were of none effect; upon which the prophet received orders from God to denounce on them, in the most express terms, the severest judgments, and at the same time to tell them, that

* The places in which the Jews are said to have settled themselves in Egypt at this time were, Migdol, Tarpanhes, Noph, and the country of Pathros. See Jer. xlv. 1. Migdol is the same place in Egypt which Moses makes mention of (Exod. xiv. 2.) over-against Baalzephon, not far from the Red Sea. Tarpanhes is Daphne, not far from Pelusium, the first city in Egypt in the road from Judea. Noph is Memphis, situate above the parting of the Nile, or where the Delta begins, and not a little famous for its pyramids; and the country of Pathros is the same with Thebais, or the Upper Egypt, so called from the city of Thebes, which was the first capital in the country.

the king of Egypt (under whose protection they vainly thought themselves secure) should be delivered into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, in the same manner as had been Zedekiah their late king. The abandoned Jews paid not the least attention to these alarming denunciations, but continued their idolatrous practices till the prediction of Jeremiah was strictly fulfilled, which happened about eighteen years after it was delivered.

From the time this prediction was denounced, we have but few farther particulars either with respect to the prophet Jeremiah,* or his cotemporary Ezekiel.† They both, no doubt, continued in their prophetic offices till their deaths; but when, or where, that happened, or whether natural or untimely, the scripture is silent, and tradition is uncertain. This, however, we may learn from their own writings, that, after they had discharged their

* St. Jerome, (in his life of the prophet Jeremiah) and Dorotheus (in his Synopsis of the lives and deaths of the prophets and apostles) tell us that he was stoned to death in Egypt by his own renegado countrymen the Jews, for preaching against their idolatry. It appears, indeed, from the account we have of their behavior (Jer. xlv. 16.) that they were bent both against him and his reproofs; and therefore it is the more likely that they were the authors of his death than, as some say, the Egyptians were, for his prophesying against him and his king. For the Egyptians (according to the same tradition) having, by the prophet's prayers, been freed from the crocodiles, which very much infested them, held him in such great honor and esteem, that, in testimony thereof, they buried him in one of their royal sepulchres. The truth is, Jeremiah was, all his life-time, exposed to the ill-treatment of the Jews, whose irregularities and sad apostacy he was always reproving; and therefore the author of the book of Ecclesiasticus, in the encomium which he gives of this prophet, seems to draw his character from the persecutions he suffered: *they intreated him evil, who nevertheless, was a prophet*, Eccles. xlix. 7.

† With respect to the prophet Ezekiel, St. Jerome tells us, that he was put to death by a prince of the children of Israel, whom he reproved for his idolatry; but who this prince was we are not informed. He was buried, as some say, in the same cave wherein Shem and Arphaxad were deposited on the banks of the Euphrates; but Benjamin of Tudela (in his travels) tells us, that, at some leagues from Bagdat, he saw a magnificent mausoleum, which was said to be the tomb of this prophet, on the top of which was a famous library, wherein was the original of the prophet's prediction, written with his own hand; and that not only the Jews, but the Persians, Medes, and many of the Musselmen made this a place of devotion, and came thither to make their presents and perform their vows.

duty to their own people the Jews, they received Divine directions to address the rest of their predictions to the Gentiles. Accordingly we find Jeremiah prophesying against Egypt in the 46th chapter; against all the Philistines, in the 47th; against the Ammonites, Edomites, and other people, in the 49th; and against Babylon in the 50th and 51st; with some promises, here and there interspersed, concerning the redemption of Israel.

In like manner we find Ezekiel prophesying against the Ammonites in the 25th chapter; against the Tyrians, and those that traded with them in the 26th and 27th; against the prince of Tyre in the 28th; against Egypt in the 29th, 30th, 31st, and 32d; against the shepherds of Israel in the 35th; and against the enemies of the church of God, under the names of Gog and Magog, in the 38th and 39th; with promises of a restoration to his captive countrymen, as a sure confirmation of which, by way of conclusion, he gives a long description of the rebuilding the temple and city of Jerusalem.

CHAP. II.

Daniel, with his three friends, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, are distinguished for their proficiency in learning at Babylon, whither they were carried captives by Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel tells the king his dream, and the interpretation thereof. His three friends are thrown into a fiery furnace for refusing to worship an image set up by Nebuchadnezzar. They are miraculously delivered without receiving the least hurt, and afterwards advanced to great honors by the king. Nebuchadnezzar conquers Egypt, and destroys many of the Jews who had retreated thither after the murder of Gedaliah, governor of Judea, making the rest his captives, and carrying them to Babylon. He has another remarkable dream, which is interpreted by Daniel. He grows proud and arrogant, for which he undergoes a most remarkable punishment, being deprived of his senses, and reduced to the condition of a beast. He continues in this state for seven years, at the expiration of which he is restored to his senses, and reinstated in his former majesty. His death and character.

AMONG the captives carried away by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, after the first time of his reducing Jerusalem to the reign of king Jehoiakim, were many youths of the first distinction, whom the conqueror, in consequence of their great natural abilities, kept in his palace, and employed proper people to make them thoroughly acquainted with the language and learning of the Chaldeans. The most conspicuous among these were, Daniel (who was descended from the royal family of David) and three of his very intimate friends, named, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. As it was the custom among conquerors to change the names of their captives, especially when they were to serve in any capacity about the court, so Aspenaz, master of the eunuchs, by order of Nebuchadnezzar, changed the names of these four as follows: Daniel was called Belteshazzar; Hananiah, Shadrack; Mishael, Meshech; and Azariah, Abednego.

These four captives, having peculiar abilities above the rest, were instructed in all the learning of the Chaldeans, and orders were given that they should have a daily allowance of meat and wine from the king's table.

But Daniel, being a devout observer of the religion of his country, desired of the chief eunuch that he and his friends might be excused from that indulgence, and that, instead thereof, they might have only pulse and water for their sustenance. Melzar (for that was the name of the chief eunuch) thinking such indifferent diet would make them not look so well as those who lived on better food, objected to his request, fearful that, in consequence thereof, he should receive anger from the king his master. Daniel besought him to indulge them with the trial for ten days only, which being granted, Melzar's fears were removed, for at the expiration of the time they appeared hearty and well, in consequence of which they were permitted to continue the diet which Daniel had so earnestly requested.

This religious abstinence recommended Daniel and his companions to the more immediate care and protection of God, who, whilst they were following their studies in the arts and sciences of the Chaldeans, was pleased to furnish them with such understanding and knowledge, that when, at the end of three years, they were brought before the king, he found them by far to excel in wisdom all the magicians and astrologers of his country: but more especially Daniel, to whom God was pleased to impart a most singular knowledge in the understanding and interpretation of dreams.

It was not long before Daniel had an opportunity of displaying the great powers which had been so providentially bestowed on him, in preference to his companions. It happened one night that king Nebuchadnezzar had a dream, which so strongly impressed his mind as to make him exceeding uneasy; and what contributed to his perplexity was, that he could not recollect the substance of it. To assist his memory in this particular, he summoned together all his wise men (especially those who made pretensions to the knowledge or art of divination) demanding them to tell him the substance of his dream and the interpretation thereof. They answered, that the interpretation they could very readily tell, if they knew what he had dreamed, but as to the dream itself to tell that was impossible. This threw the king into a most violent rage, and he threatened both them and their families with destruction if they did not make known to him his dream.

But they still persisted in their inability to perform what he demanded, telling him that it was the province of a deity, and not of man, so to divine, and that no king had ever demanded so unreasonable a request. This answer farther irritated the king, who immediately gave orders that all the wise men in Babylon, without exception, should be put to death.

As soon as Daniel understood the cause of this dreadful decree, in which he knew himself and his companions to be included, he immediately repaired to Arioch, the captain of the king's guards, requesting a respite from the execution of it, and that he would, in the mean time, conduct him to the king. This request being complied with, Daniel begged of Nebuchadnezzar that he would for a short time suspend the execution of his decree, during which he did not in the least doubt but he should give him full satisfaction both as to his dream and the interpretation thereof.

Nebuchadnezzar, having complied with Daniel's request, he immediately went home, and related the whole matter to his three companions, beseeching them to join in prayer with him to God that he would be pleased to reveal to him this great and important secret, whereby not only their lives, but also those of all the wise men in Babylon, might be saved. The prayers of Daniel and his companions were heard, for that very night Daniel received in a vision a full revelation of the king's dream; upon which, when he awoke, he addressed himself to God as follows: *Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his: he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding: he revealeth the deep and secret things. he knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him. I thank thee, and praise thee, O thou God of my fathers, who hast given me wisdom and might, and hast made known unto me now what we desired of thee: for thou hast now made known unto us the king's matter.*

Early the next morning Daniel went to Arioch, the captain of the guards, and told him he had found out the king's dream, desiring him at the same time to conduct him into his presence. Arioch (happy in this intelligence, and pleased with the thoughts of avoiding the execution of

the king's decree) readily complied with Daniel's request, and conducted him to the palace. As soon as Nebuchadnezzar saw Daniel, he asked him if he could make known to him his dream and the interpretation thereof. To which Daniel replied, *the secret which the king hath demanded cannot the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers, shew unto the king: but there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days.* He then related the dream itself, which he described in words to this effect: * "You saw (said he) O king, an
 " image of a vast dimension, excellent in brightness, but
 " terrible in aspect. The head of this image was of fine
 " gold, the breast and arms of silver, the belly and thighs
 " of brass, the legs of iron, and the feet partly iron and
 " partly clay. You saw likewise, O king, a stone cut out
 " of the mountain, but from whence it came you knew not.
 " This stone, falling upon the feet of the image, broke it
 " in pieces, and then the rest of the image mouldered into
 " dust, which the wind dispersed, so that it was no more to
 " be seen; but the stone, which, in this manner, destroyed
 " the image, increased to a great mountain, and filled the
 " earth."

Daniel, having thus related the dream, next proceeded to give the interpretation of it, which he did in words to this effect: "You, who are supreme above other kings, and
 " to whom the God of heaven hath given power, and
 " strength, and glory, are signified by the head of gold.
 " After you another kingdom shall arise, but as inferior to

* Josephus makes Daniel introduce the king's dream, and the interpretation thereof, with this preamble: "It is not any high conceit
 " of my own wisdom, as if I understood more than the Chaldeans do,
 " or any designed reproach upon them, for not being able to resolve a
 " question, which I am able to unriddle, that I engage in this matter;
 " for I am not a person, that pretends to more skill and knowledge,
 " than my neighbors; but it is purely the work of God, in pity to the
 " miserable, and in mercy to my prayers, for the life and safety of
 " myself and my friends, that has now laid open this dream to me, and
 " explained the meaning of it. Nor have I been so solicitous for the
 " safety of myself, and my companions under your displeasure, as for
 " your own honor and glory, lest you should tarnish them, by putting
 " to death (contrary to all right and justice) so many worthy men,
 " merely because they were not able to do a thing, that is impossible
 " (without Divine assistance) for flesh and blood to perform."

“ yours as silver is to gold: after that there shall arise a
 “ third kingdom, emblemed by brass, which shall govern
 “ the earth; but the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as
 “ iron, and vanquish all the rest. And whereas the feet
 “ were partly iron and partly clay, this kingdom shall be
 “ divided; part of it shall be strong, and part weak, as clay
 “ and iron cannot be solidly mixed together. But in the
 “ times of these empires the God of heaven shall set up a
 “ kingdom (signified by the stone) which shall never be de-
 “ stroyed: that kingdom shall not be left to another people;
 “ but it shall disperse and consume all these kingdoms, and
 “ it shall last forever. And whereas you saw that the stone
 “ which broke the image in pieces was cut out of the
 “ mountains without hands, the great God hath made
 “ known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter;
 “ for the dream is true, and the interpretation of it
 “ certain.”*

* By the different emblems in the interpretation of this dream was signified to Nebuchadnezzar the four grand empires of the world; namely, the Chaldean, Persian, Grecian and Roman. The Assyrian or Chaldean, is represented by gold, because it was the first, and the most magnificent, if not the most extensive; and Nebuchadnezzar, being then upon the throne, is said to be head of it. That of silver represents the Persian empire, founded by Cyrus on the ruins of the Chaldean, but inferior to it, at least in its duration if not in its extent. That of brass is the Grecian empire, founded by Alexander on the ruins of the Persian, and its character is, that it *should bear rule over all the earth*, Dan. ii. 39. which was verified in its great founder; for, upon his return from India to Babylon, the ambassadors of almost all the known parts of the world resorted thither, to pay their homage and acknowledgment of his dominion. That of iron is the Roman Empire, which is distinguished by its breaking in pieces, and subduing all things, ver. 40. For, whilst it was in its full strength and vigor, under its consuls and first emperors, it brought under its dominion all the kingdoms and states, that were then subsisting in Europe, Africa, and a great part of Asia; but, from that time, it became a mixture of iron and clay. Its emperors proved most of them vicious and corrupt, either by their tyranny making themselves hateful to their subjects, or, by their follies and vices, contemptible. Lastly, that of the Stone out of the mountain is the fifth monarchy, or the kingdom of the Messiah; which, against all the power and policy of the Roman empire, prevailed, not by an external force, but by the powerful preaching of the gospel, to the suppression and defeat of wickedness and impiety, idolatry and superstition, and it shall stand for ever, and never be destroyed, Dan. ii. 44. which can be said of no other kingdom, but that of Jesus Christ, which, for these seventeen

Nebuchadnezzar was so astonished at this wonderful discovery of his dream, and the interpretation thereof, that, after prostrating himself before Daniel, he commanded that an oblation and sweet odours should be offered up to him; and then addressed him as follows; *Of a truth it is that your God is a God of Gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldest reveal this secret.* The king then complimented Daniel with many valuable presents, placed him at the head of his learned men, and made him governor of the whole province of Babylon; and, at his request, put his three friends into places of the highest trust and importance.

Some time after this, Nebuchadnezzar, having grown proud in consequence of the interpretation of his dream, ordered a statue of gold to be made thirty yards in height, and of a proportionable bigness. This monstrous figure he ordered to be set up in the plains of Dura, near Babylon, and summoned his subjects of all degrees and conditions to appear at the dedication of it. He likewise issued out a proclamation that on the day this ceremony should be performed, every person, as soon as the signal was given (which was to be by the striking up of music) should all prostrate themselves on their faces and worship it, on pain of being thrown into a burning fiery furnace.

This order was strictly obeyed by all except the captive Jews, among whom those which particularly attracted the notice of the Chaldeans were, Daniel and his three friends. They did not, however, chuse to interrupt Daniel on account of his very great importance, and being the king's favorite; but they laid an accusation before the king against his three friends, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. These three being carried before Nebuchadnezzar, he asked them the reason why they disobeyed his orders, telling them if they continued obstinate, and did not worship the image in the same manner as the rest of his subjects, they should receive the punishment denounced against offenders in the proclamation issued on the occasion. They, however, peremptorily refused paying adoration to the

hundred years and upwards, has withstood the violence of persecutions, and all other contrivances formed against it, and has the sure promises of its Almighty founder on its side, that *the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it*, Matt. xvi. 18.

image, and defied the king's threats, telling him they trusted in a God, who was able to deliver them from his rage. *O Nebuchadnezzar, said they, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy Gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.*

Nebuchadnezzar was so incensed at this peremptory reply, that he ordered the sentence pronounced in the decree to be immediately put in execution against the three youths, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego; and farther commanded that, on this occasion, the furnace should be made seven times hotter than usual, which being done, they should be bound and thrown into it, as contemners of his royal will and pleasure. These orders were strictly obeyed, and the furnace was made so intensely hot, that the persons appointed to throw them in, were scorched to death. But the three persons consigned to destruction by the king received not the least hurt: no sooner were they thrown into the furnace than the cords with which they were tied were loosed, and they walked in the midst of the fire, blessing and praising God.* The king who had placed himself at a secure distance in order to see the sentence executed, observing the fierceness of the fire to abate, and that instead of three, there were four persons in the

* According to the vulgar Latin edition of the Bible, in the third chapter of Daniel, between the twenty-third and twenty-fourth verses, is added the *Song of the three Children*; but being no where extant, either in the Hebrew or Chaldee language, and never received in the canon of Holy Writ by the Jewish church, it is placed among the apochryphal writings, where it stands next to the book of Baruch, though the church of Rome, by a decree of the council of Trent, has not only given it, but likewise the history of *Susanna*, and of *Bel and the Dragon*, a place among the canonical scriptures. The *Song of the three Children* consists of two parts, namely, a Prayer and a Thanksgiving. The Prayer is a devout confession of the sins of the people, and an acknowledgment of God's righteousness in bringing their captivity, and other calamities, upon them. The Thanksgiving is a more solemn excitation to all persons whatever, but more especially the three Hebrew children, who were thus saved from the hand of death, to bless the Lord, praise him, and exalt him above all for ever and ever.

furnace, cried out with surprize and amazement, *Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? Lo, I see four men loose walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.* The king then approaching the furnace, called to Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, saying, *Ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come hither.* They accordingly came out of the furnace in the presence of the king and all his attendants, who saw them unhurt, not a hair of their heads being singed, or the least scent of fire arising from their bodies.

The haughty king was now convinced that there was a more powerful Being than himself, who could protect his servants from the rage of the most insolent and arbitrary tyrant. He therefore, in a sudden transport of devotion, broke out into the following exclamation: *Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god except their own God. Therefore, I make a decree, that every people, nation and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill: because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort.* Having said this, Nebuchadnezzar dismissed Daniel's three friends, and afterwards promoted them to much greater honors than they had before enjoyed in the province of Babylon.

Some time after this, the judgments which the prophet Jeremiah had denounced against his countrymen the Jews, when they rejected the counsel of God, and fled into Egypt for protection (as they vainly thought) began to operate. Nebuchadnezzar, notwithstanding that the subjects of Pharaoh-Hophra, king of Egypt, had revolted from him, and declared Amasis, an officer of his court, their king, he took advantage of the intestine troubles that ensued; and marching with a great army into the country, in a short time, laid it waste from one end to the other. Of the Jews, who, after the murder of Gedaliah, had fled thither, some he slew, and others he carried away captive to Babylon; so that scarce any escaped, but such as fled

out of Egypt, and afterwards settled themselves in their own land at the end of the captivity.

Nebuchadnezzar, having thus reduced the kingdom of Egypt, and constituted Amasis his viceroy, returned in triumph to Babylon, where he indulged himself in the pleasures of his court, and, for a time, quietly enjoyed the fruits of his conquests. At length his peace of mind was interrupted by another dream, which he perfectly remembered, and, therefore, sent for his own magicians first, to give him the interpretation of it. The Chaldeans, after hearing the dream, were as much at a loss how to interpret it, as when the king demanded the discovery of his former dream which he had forgot. The revealing of these great secrets was reserved for the servant of God; and, therefore, the king, not meeting with any satisfaction from his own subjects, at length sent for Daniel, to whom he recounted his dream in words to this effect: “I saw (said he) a tree of a prodigious bigness, which seemed to reach from earth to heaven. It was fair, and full of fruit; yielded shelter to the beasts and fowls, and sustenance to all flesh. I saw likewise an angel coming down from heaven, who cried with a loud voice, Hew down the tree, cut off the branches, shake off the leaves, scatter the fruit, and let all creatures depart from it; but let the stump remain in the earth, and bind it with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field, and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth: let his heart be changed from that of a man, and a beast’s heart be given him, and let seven times pass over him.—This dream I king Nebuchadnezzar have seen. Now thou, O Daniel, declare the interpretation thereof, forasmuch as all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make known unto me the interpretation: but thou art able; for the spirit of the Holy God is in thee.”

When Daniel heard the dream, he was so affected at the dreadful judgments it portended to the king, that, for some time, he was unable to speak. Nebuchadnezzar, judging the cause of his silence, endeavored to encourage him, saying, *Let not the dream, or the interpretation thereof, trouble thee.* To which Daniel replied, *My lord, the dream be to them that hate thee, and the interpretation*

thereof to thine enemies. Daniel then addressing himself with great tenderness and concern for the king, proceeded to the interpretation of his dream, in words to this effect: "The tree (said he) O king, which thou sawest in thy dream, is thyself; for thy greatness reacheth unto the heavens, and thy dominions to the end of the earth: But the angel, who came from heaven with orders to cut down the tree, denotes the decree of the Most High, which is determined against thee, viz. that thou shalt be driven from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field; that thou shalt eat grass with the oxen, and be wet with the dew of heaven; that seven years shall pass over thee, before thou comest to consider, that God ruleth over the kingdoms of men; and that, after such a term, thou shalt be restored to thy kingdom, which is the thing intimated by the stump of the tree that was ordered to be left. And now, that thou hast heard the interpretation of this dream, permit me, O king, to advise thee to atone for thy sins by a holy life, and by acts of mercy to the poor; and to recommend thyself to the mercy of God, that he may prolong thy posterity."

It might very naturally have been supposed, that Nebuchadnezzar, who had seen the verifying of Daniel's prophecies, and had likewise been an eye-witness of God's great power and providence, would have been somewhat depressed in mind at this interpretation of his dream, which was a judgment of the most severe nature pronounced solely against himself. But, instead of humbling himself, and endeavoring, by repentance, to deprecate the Divine decree as Daniel advised him, he became intoxicated with pride and arrogance, and, being detached from war, employed his time in raising buildings in Babylon, as monuments of his greatness.

About twelve months after Daniel had interpreted the king's last dream, Nebuchadnezzar, being one day walking about the palace, and surveying his new buildings, he ostentatiously said to one of his attendants, *Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?* No sooner had the king uttered these words, than a voice from heaven was heard to say, *O king Nebu-*

chadnezzar, to thee it is spoken: the kingdom is departed from thee. And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.

This dreadful sentence immediately took place, the king, for exalting himself above the state of men, being deprived of his senses, and reduced to the condition of a beast. He continued in this state for seven years, during which, agreeable to the interpretation of his dream, he lived abroad in the fields, eat grass like an ox, laid on the ground in the open air, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till at length *his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws.*

After Nebuchadnezzar had continued his appointed time in this sad and forlorn condition, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and God was pleased not only to restore him to his understanding and form, but likewise to his former state and dignity; for which he made this thankful acknowledgment: *Now I Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol, and honor the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those who walk in pride he is able to abase.*

Nebuchadnezzar lived but a very short time after being restored to his kingdom. The punishment he had undergone, which he knew to have been inflicted on him by the hand of Providence, was deeply impressed on his mind, and his time was spent in doing acts very different to those he had formerly practised. He died in the year of the world 3442, and before Christ, 562; after having reigned from the death of his father, according to the Babylonish account, forty-three years. He was certainly one of the greatest princes that had appeared in the East for many ages before him; and, according to Megasthenes, both for his enterprizes and performances, far excelled any other monarch of his time. The same historian informs us, that a little before his death, he foretold the coming of the Persians, and their subduing the kingdom of Babylon; but this he might gather from the prophet Daniel, and especially from the interpretations of his dreams.

CHAP. III.

Evil-Merodach, on the death of his father Nebuchadnezzar, succeeds him on the throne of Babylon. He is murdered by his relations, and succeeded by Neriglissar, who is conquered and slain by the king of the Medes. Laborosoarchad ascends the throne, and is murdered by his subjects, after reigning only nine months. He is succeeded by Belshazzar, supposed to be the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar. Cyrus, king of Persia, lays siege to Babylon. Belshazzar makes a great feast for his courtiers, and orders the vessels of gold and silver, which had belonged to the temple, to be used on the occasion. During the entertainment, there suddenly appears a hand writing on the wall, at which the king is greatly alarmed, and sending for Daniel, he gives an explanation of it, the substance of which portends the king's destruction. Cyrus takes the city of Babylon by surprize, and, in the confusion, Belshazzar is slain. He is succeeded by Darius, who manifests a particular esteem for Daniel. The people being jealous of the growing power of Daniel, form a conspiracy against his life. He is thrown into the den of lions, from whence he is miraculously delivered by the interposition of Providence. The Story of Susanna and the Elders.

ON the death of Nebuchadnezzar, his son Evil-Merodach succeeded to the throne of Babylon; immediately after which, he made some amends for his father's hard usage of Jehoiakim (the captive king of Judah) whom he not only released from his confinement which had lasted thirty-seven years, but likewise promoted him to great honors in his palace. The reign of this prince, however, was but short, for after being on the throne only two years, during which he led the most profligate and wicked life, he became so universally hated, that even his own relations conspired against him, and put him to death.

Evil-Merodach was succeeded by Neriglissar, his sister's husband, who had been one of the principal persons concerned in the conspiracy against his life. No sooner was he seated on the throne, than he made great preparations for waging war against the Medes, of which Cyaxares their king being apprized, he called in the assistance of his nephew Cyrus, who immediately went to

him with a body of thirty thousand Persians. Cyaxares, joining his own army with that brought by his nephew, made him general of the whole, and he immediately marched to give battle to Neriglissar. The forces of Cyrus were much more numerous than those of the king of Babylon, so that when the two armies engaged, victory soon declared itself in favor of Cyrus: the Babylonians were totally routed, their king, with great numbers of others, slain, and the rest of the troops obliged to save themselves by a precipitate flight.

On the death of Neriglissar, his son Laborosoarchad succeeded to the throne of Babylon. He was a prince naturally addicted to all manner of wickedness, cruelty* and injustice, for which he became so odious to his own subjects, that they conspired against him, and, after he had reigned only nine months, put him to death.

Laborosoarchad was succeeded by Belshazzar, the grandson of the great Nebuchadnezzar. In the first year of this prince's reign Daniel had his vision of the four beasts, † representing the four empires of the Chaldeans, Persians, Greeks and Romans; and in the third year he had the famous vision of the ram and he-goat, ‡ by the latter of which was signified Alexander the Great, and by the former Darius Codomannus, one of the Persian kings who were the successors of Cyrus.

Cyrus, encouraged by his late success against Neriglissar, resolved to invade the Babylonish dominions. He accordingly marched with his joint forces into the country, and after having obtained several conquests over Belshazzar's troops, he at length engaged the king himself in pitched battle, in which he proved equally victorious, and Belshazzar was reduced to the necessity of saving himself by flight. Cyrus pursued his victories, and marching his

* Among other acts of cruelty committed by this prince, the two following are particularly mentioned by Xenophon, viz. That the only son of one of his principal nobility, he slew at an hunting-match, to which he had invited him, for no other reason, but his throwing a dart with success at a wild beast, which himself had missed. And that he caused the son of another nobleman, to be castrated, for no other reason but because one of his concubines had commended him as being very handsome.

† See Dan. vii.

‡ Dan. viii.

army to Babylon, laid such close siege to the place, that Belshazzar was obliged to shut himself up within its walls. Some time after Cyrus had laid siege to Babylon, Belshazzar made a great feast for all his courtiers, on which occasion he ordered the vessels of gold and silver which his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple of Jerusalem, to be brought into the banqueting-house, that he and his princes, together with his wives and concubines, might drink out of them. This was accordingly done, and, to add to their profaneness, in their cups, they sang songs in praise of their respective idols.

Belshazzar so provoked God by this sacrilegious contempt of his holy worship, and the profanation of the vessels dedicated to his service, that he was pleased to put an immediate check to his mirth, by causing an hand to appear upon the wall, which, in three words, wrote the sentence of his condemnation. Belshazzar, who saw the hand that wrote, was so alarmed at this amazing prodigy, that he immediately sent for the most learned of his people to tell him the meaning of it; but notwithstanding the promised reward of purple vests and chains of gold to those who should discover it, they were so far from being able to give an interpretation of what was wrote, that they could not even read it.

This circumstance gave the king and his whole court great disturbance of mind, and put a total stop to their mirth. The queen dowager (wife of the late Nebuchadnezzar) hearing of the king's consternation, went into the banqueting-house, and told him, there was a man in his dominions named Daniel, whom his grandfather, for his extraordinary abilities in discovering strange things, had made master of the magicians, and that if he sent for him he would give an explanation of the words that so much perplexed him.

Belshazzar, anxious to know this terrible secret, immediately sent for Daniel, whom, on his arrival, he received very courteously, and made him the same offer of honors and presents he had done to his own magicians, provided he would explain the writing. Daniel modestly refused the offers made him; but having undertook to perform what was required, he told the king, that since he had not humbled himself, nor taken example by his grand-

father Nebuchadnezzar, who, for his pride, was chased from the conversation of men, and reduced to the state of a beast; but had lifted himself up against the Lord of heaven, and prophaned the holy vessels dedicated to his service, God, being provoked by these his crimes, had sent a hand to write upon the wall his condemnation in these words: **MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN**. He then proceeded to an explanation of their meaning, which he gave in words to this effect: “*Mene*, says he, which signifies “number, intimates, that the days, both of your life, and “of your reign, are numbered, or that you have but a “short time to live. *Tekel*, which signifies *weight*, intimates that you have been weighed in the balance of “God’s justice, and found too light; and *Upharsin*, “which signifies a *fragment*, intimates, that your kingdom shall be divided, and given to the Medes and “Persians.”

Belshazzar, having heard this dreadful sentence pronounced by Daniel, how unwelcome soever the interpretation was to himself, strictly fulfilled his promise, by causing him to be cloathed in purple, with a chain of gold about his neck, and to be proclaimed the third person in the kingdom; all which being immediately done, Daniel took his leave and departed.

It was but a very short time before Daniel’s prediction was strictly fulfilled; for that very night, whilst the king and his courtiers were still in the banqueting-house, the city was taken by surprize,* Belshazzar slain, and the kingdom translated to Cyaxares, whom the Scripture calls Darius the Mede.

Darius, from his very first accession to the throne, had a great esteem for Daniel, knowing him to be a person of extraordinary parts and learning, and long versed in affairs

* The manner in which this was done is related by Xenophon as follows: “That two deserters, named Gadata and Gobryas, having “assisted some of the Persian army to kill the guards and sieze upon “the place, they entered into the room where the king was, whom “they found standing up in a posture of defence, but that they soon “dispatched him,” whereby was fulfilled the prophecy of Jeremiah, *I will make drunk her princes and her wise men, her captains, and her rulers, and her mighty men; and they shall sleep a perpetual sleep, and not awake saith the king, whose name is the Lord of Hosts*. See Jeremiah li. 57.

of state. Having divided the whole empire into an hundred and twenty provinces, over which he set governors, and over these three presidents as the king's chief ministers, he made Daniel the first; which compliment, with other favors Darius heaped on him, so excited the envy of the other presidents and princes, that they resolved, if possible, to seek his destruction.

The enemies of Daniel could not find any fault with his public administration, he being perfectly just and faithful in all things that concerned the king. Concluding, therefore, that they would not be able to find any thing to accuse him of, except in case of religion, they resolved to lay a snare for him in that respect. But they had some difficulties to work through even in this project: they knew the king was not unacquainted with his great piety and zeal in the religion of his country, and that he stood so fair in the royal favor, that they dared not directly attack him. They, therefore, laid their plot another way, and that so artfully that it was morally impossible for the least idea to be conceived of their intentions. They persuaded the king to issue out a proclamation, that whosoever should ask any petition either of God or man, except of the king only, for the space of thirty days, should be thrown to the lions. The unwary king, not suspecting any fraud, but taking it as a testimony of their affection and loyalty to him on his accession to the throne, without any hesitation, consented to their request, and a decree was immediately made for that purpose.

Daniel was not insensible that this wicked decree was designed to ensnare him; but nevertheless he continued his usual course of paying his adorations to God three times every day, and that, not in a clandestine manner, but with his chamber window open towards Jerusalem. His enemies, who had laid this snare for him, were not forgetful to watch him diligently, and having caught him in the act of prayer, they went to Darius, before whom they accused Daniel of contempt and rebellion in disobeying his decree, at the same time desiring immediate execution of the sentence against him.

Darius now perceived that his easy compliance with a fallacious offer had led him into a mistake that was likely to prove fatal to his servant Daniel; and being vexed at

having suffered himself to be so imposed upon, he endeavored to have the decree reversed. But the grandees represented to him, that the royal decrees (according to the Medes and Persians) were unalterable, and that therefore the penalty that Daniel had incurred being irreversable, he must be thrown into the den of lions.

The king's weakness in this unjust act gave way to the solicitations of these wicked men; for though Daniel's piety and wisdom had recommended him greatly to his favor, yet he thought he could not in honor go back from his word, and therefore delivered Daniel into the hands of his enemies, but not without some glimmering hopes that the God whom he served continually, would, by some means or other, preserve him. *Thy God, said he, whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee.*

Daniel was no sooner delivered into the hands of his enemies, than they immediately hurried him away to the den of lions; and, having put him in among the beasts, they not only rolled a large stone to the mouth of the den, but had it sealed likewise with their own as well as the king's signet, that thereby they might prevent all possibility of his effecting an escape.

In the mean time the king retired to his palace very pensive, where he spent the night in great anxiety and uneasiness of mind for the fate of his favorite Daniel. Early the next morning he repaired to the den, whither he had no sooner arrived than, betwixt hope and despair, he, in a very melancholy tone, thus called to Daniel: *O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?* Daniel immediately replied, *O king, live for ever. My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt.*

Darius, overjoyed to find the person he so highly valued thus miraculously preserved, ordered him immediately to be taken out of the den, and at the same time commanded, that all his accusers, together with their wives and children, should be thrown into it; which being done, the lions instantly seized and tore them to pieces.

The Providence of God appearing so visibly in the preservation of Daniel, Darius issued the following proclamation, which he ordered to be dispersed throughout his dominions. *Peace be multiplied unto you. I make a decree that in every dominion of my kingdom men shall tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for he is the living God, and stedfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end.*

After this no farther attempt was made to injure Daniel in the king's favor. He enjoyed the office before allotted him without interruption, and employed his time in administering the strictest justice to the people, at the same time inflicting proper punishments on those who offended the laws, or were guilty of any distinguished wickedness; of which the following is a remarkable instance.

Among the great men that resided in Babylon was one Joacim, who took a wife named Susanna, a very beautiful woman in person, and one who, as well as her parents, lived a good and pious life. Joacim, being a very rich as well as good man, great numbers of the principal Jews resorted to his house, which was so large as to admit of every convenient accommodation, and adjoining to it was a very handsome and spacious garden. The king, for the more easy administration of justice in his capital, appointed two persons who were advanced in years, and known to be men of sagacity, to determine all disputes that should be brought before them by his subjects in that part of his dominions. These two judges or elders, took up their residence at Joacim's house, and thither the people resorted to have their respective controversies adjusted.

Susanna, Joacim's wife, was, as we have already observed, exceeding handsome, and her beauty struck such an impression on the minds of the two elders that they resolved, if possible, to gratify their wishes in the enjoyment of her. It was a custom with Susanna to take a walk every day about noon in her husband's garden, which being observed by the two elders, they laid a scheme for carrying their design into execution. One day, a little before the time that Susanna was accustomed to take this kind of recreation, the two elders went into the garden, and placed themselves in such a part of it that they could not be seen.

Soon after Susanna, accompanied by two of her maid servants, entered the place, and after walking for some time, the weather being exceeding hot, she resolved to bathe herself in a piece of water that was properly adapted for the purpose. In consequence of this resolution she bade her maids go home, and fetch her some oil and washing-balls, at the same time giving them a strict charge to fasten the doors of the garden after them when they went out, that no person whatever might gain admission till their return.

No sooner had Susanna's maids left the garden than the two elders immediately quitted their hiding places, and, going up to Susanna, addressed her as follows: *Behold, the garden doors are shut that no man can see us, and we are in love with thee; therefore consent unto us, and lie with us. If thou wilt not, we will bear witness against thee, that a young man was with thee; therefore consent unto us and lie with us.*

It is not to be wondered at that so strange and unexpected an address, (from men who might naturally have been supposed to be the last that would be guilty of such an attempt to violate the chastity of a virtuous woman, as well as one in such an elevated station of life, and who, indeed, might be justly called their protectress) should have greatly alarmed Susanna. For some time she stood silent, but at length, having a little recovered her spirits, and fetching a deep sigh, she spoke as follows: *I am straitened on every side: for if I do this thing it is death unto me; and if I do it not, I cannot escape your hands. It is better for me to fall into your hands, and not do it, than to sin in the sight of the Lord.*

Having returned this answer, Susanna gave a violent shriek, hoping thereby to alarm the servants of the house, and bring them to her assistance. This had the desired effect, but as soon as the servants appeared, the two elders accused their mistress of incontinency, at which they were greatly alarmed, knowing her to have ever been a very good and virtuous woman; but being fearful of contradicting what the elders had asserted, they made no attempt to interfere in their mistress's behalf, any otherwise than, by her desire, accompanying her to the house.

The next day, when there was a full assembly of people at Joacim's house, the two elders ordered Susanna to be

brought before them. Joacim was greatly alarmed on the occasion, but, being ever obedient to the commands of the elders, told his wife to attend. She accordingly went, accompanied not only by her husband, but likewise her father and mother, and all their kindred. As soon as she appeared before the elders, and in the presence of the whole assembly, they ordered her to be uncovered, she having at that time a veil over her face; which being done, they then laid their hands upon her head, and, addressing themselves to the heads of the assembly, laid against her the following accusation: "As we walked, said they, in the garden alone, this woman came in with two maids, and shut the garden door, and sent the maids away. Then a young man, who was there hid, came unto her, and lay with her. Then we that stood in a corner of the garden, seeing this wickedness, ran unto them. And when we saw them together, the man we could not hold: for he was stronger than we, and opened the door, and leaped out. But having taken this woman, we asked who the young man was, but she would not tell us. These things do we testify."

Notwithstanding the heinousness of this accusation, and its being against a person whose chastity was never yet disputed, yet the heads of the assembly gave credit to what the elders had asserted, and, after some deliberation, condemned Susanna to death. As soon as Susanna heard the dreadful sentence, she fell on her knees, and thus exclaimed: *O everlasting God, that knowest the secrets, and knowest all things before they be: thou knowest that they have borne false witness against me, and, behold I must die; whereas I never did such things as these men have maliciously invented against me.*

But all Susanna could say in her own defence was of no avail. The credit of the two base elders bore such an ascendancy among the people, that, agreeable to the sentence pronounced, they proceeded to conduct her to the place adapted for her execution. But the Lord was pleased to listen to her cries, and to stir up an advocate for her in the person of Daniel, who, meeting her on the way, exclaimed, with a loud voice, *I am clear from the blood of this woman.* The people, who paid great reverence to Daniel, being greatly surprized at this, asked him what he meant. To

which Daniel replied, *Are ye such fools, ye sons of Israel, that without examination or knowledge of the truth, ye have condemned a daughter of Israel? Return again to the place of judgment; for they have borne false witness against her.*

The people readily obeyed the directions of Daniel, and having returned to the place of trial, Daniel, by particular desire of the elders, was requested to make a strict examination into the affair for which Susanna had been condemned, that they might be satisfied either of her guilt or innocence. Daniel, taking upon him the task requested, ordered her two accusers to be placed in different apartments, which being done, he called for one of them, whom he charged with having pronounced a false judgment, condemned the innocent, and let the guilty go free. With respect to his accusation against Susanna, he asked him if he had ever seen her in the garden with a man as he had described, under what tree it was they were conversing. He answered under a mastick-tree. To which Daniel replied, *Very well; thou hast lied against thine own head; for even now the angel of God hath received the sentence of God to cut thee in two.*

This elder being now put aside, and the other brought before Daniel, he spoke to him as follows: *O thou seed of Canaan, and not of Judah, beauty hath deceived thee, and lust hath perverted thine heart. Thus have ye dealt with the daughter of Israel, and they for fear companied with you: but the daughter of Judah would not abide your wickedness. Now, therefore, tell me, under what tree didst thou take them companying together?* He answered, *under an holm tree.* Upon which Daniel said unto him, *Thou hast also lied against thine own head: for the angel of God waiteth with the sword to cut thee in two, that he may destroy thee.*

The whole assembly were now fully convinced of the iniquity of the two elders, and the innocence of Susanna; and therefore, after praising God for saving those that trust in him, they conducted them to the place designed for the execution of Susanna, and there put them to death, according to the law of Moses.* Thus, through the interposition

* That is, they stoned them to death; for it was a practice with the Jews, when any witness was found guilty of perjury, in capital of-

of Providence, by means of his servant Daniel, did the innocent escape and the guilty suffer. The parents of Susanna, (with Joacim, her husband, and, indeed all their kindred,) praised God for his Divine interposition in favor of their innocent daughter, who otherwise must have fallen a victim to the base contrivances of those from whom she had reason to expect the greatest protection. The whole assembly of the people likewise praised God on this occasion, and the reputation of Daniel was so far increased by it that he was ever after considered by the people as an immediate agent from God.

CHAP. IV.

The time of the Jews captivity being nearly expired, Daniel makes intercession with God for their restoration. He has a vision, in which he is assured that the Jews shall not only be delivered from their temporal, but likewise their spiritual, captivity. After the destruction of Babylon, Cyrus is made sole monarch over the Persian empire. He publishes a decree, in which he gives free liberty to the Jews to return to Jerusalem, and rebuild the city and temple. They accordingly depart, and having entered Judea, disperse themselves over the country, agreeable to their tribes and families. They rebuild the several cities that had been destroyed previous to their captivity. They all assemble at Jerusalem, and there celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. The people contribute largely towards defraying the expenses of rebuilding the temple. The foundation of the temple laid. The Samaritans offer their assistance, which being refused, they devise means for obstructing the execution of the work. Death and character of Daniel.

THE term of seventy years, which the prophet Jeremiah, by Divine direction, had stipulated for the captivity of the Jews, being now drawing towards a conclusion, Daniel thought it a duty to humble himself before God,

fences, to inflict the same punishment on the perjured evidence that the accused person, had they been found guilty, would have been subject to.

and to make his ardent supplications to him, that he would be pleased to remember his people, and grant them their liberty, that they might restore the city of Jerusalem, and his holy sanctuary, which had been so long destroyed.

The prayers of Daniel were heard, for that very night the angel Gabriel appeared to him, in a vision, with assurance not only of the deliverance of the Jews from their temporal captivity under the Babylonians, but also of a much greater redemption, which God would give his church, by delivering them from their spiritual captivity under sin and Satan; all which should be accomplished in the coming of the Messiah, the Son of God, and great Saviour of mankind.

A short time after Cyrus had reduced Babylon (which put an end to the Chaldean empire after it had continued two hundred and nine years from its first establishment by Nebonassar) he went into Persia, in order to pay a visit to his parents, who were still living. On his return through Media, he married the daughter and only child of his uncle Darius, with whom he was to have, by way of dower, the reversion of the kingdom of Media after his father's death. By this alliance Cyrus, in a short time, succeeded not only to the Babylonish empire, but likewise to the two additional kingdoms of Persia and Media; and from hence the whole extent of his dominions took the name of the Persian empire.

Cyrus had not been long in full possession of the Persian empire, before he published a decree, in which he gave free liberty to the Jews to return into their own country, and to rebuild the House of the Lord at Jerusalem.* The sacred vessels, which Nebuchadnezzar had

* It is very reasonable to suppose, that this decree, made by Cyrus in favor of the Jews, was, in a great measure, owing to the good offices of Daniel. After Cyrus had made himself master of the city of Babylon, he found Daniel to be an old minister of state, famed all over the east for his great wisdom, and, in many things, for a knowledge superior to the rest of mankind; and accordingly we find, that he not only employed him as such, but, upon settling the government of the whole empire, made him superintendant, or prime minister of state, over all the provinces into which his dominions were divided. In this station of life, Daniel must have been a person of great authority at court, and highly in the esteem of his prince; and therefore, as we find him earnest in his prayer to God for the restoration

taken out of the former building, and placed in the temple of his idol Bel, he ordered his treasurer to restore; and wrote recommendatory letters* to the governors of several provinces to give what assistance laid in their power towards the intended undertaking.

It is little to be wondered at, that such a decree should be highly pleasing to the Jews, who had been so long in a state of captivity. They accordingly assembled together from all parts of the kingdom of Babylon, to the number of forty-two thousand three hundred and sixty, which, to-

of his people, (Dan. ix.) it is reasonable to suppose he would be equally warm in his intercession for them to the king. To effect this, it is not improbable, that he might shew him those passages in Isaiah, which speak of him by name (an hundred and fifty years before he was born) as a great prince, a conqueror, the ruler of many nations, and the restorer of his people, by causing the temple to be rebuilt, and the city of Jerusalem to be re-inhabited. That Cyrus, indeed, had seen these passages is evident, not only from the testimony of Josephus, but from the recital that is made of them in the decree itself, (Ezra 1. 2.) and therefore what person could be so proper to shew them to him, and to recommend the accomplishment of them to his princely care, as Daniel, who had such great credit with the king, and so warm a concern for the restoration of Jerusalem?

* One of the recommendatory letters. directed to the governors of Syria, Josephus has recorded as follows:

“Cyrus, the king, to Sysina and Sarabasan, sendeth Greeting.

“Be it known unto you that I have given leave to all the Jews, that are in my dominions, to return into their own country, and there to rebuild their capital city, with the holy temple at Jerusalem, in the same place where it stood before. I have likewise sent my treasurer Mithridates and Zerubbabel, the governor of Judea, to superintend the building, and to see it raised sixty cubits upward from the ground, and as many over; the walls to be three rows of polished stone, and one of the wood of the country, together with an altar for sacrifices, and all this to be done at my charge.—It is my farther pleasure that they receive entire to themselves all the profits and revenues that were formerly enjoyed by their predecessors, and that they have an allowance paid them of 205,500 drachmas, in consideration of beasts for sacrifices, wine and oil, and 2,500 measures of wheat, in lieu of fine flour; and all this to be raised upon the tribute of Samaria; that the priests may offer up sacrifices according to the laws and ceremonies of Moses, and pray daily for the king and the royal family, and for the welfare and happiness of the Persian empire: and let no man presume to do any thing contrary to the tenor of this my royal will and proclamation, on pain of forfeiting both life and possessions.”

gether with their servants (who were seven thousand three hundred and thirty-seven more) amounted, in the whole, to 49,697 persons. These all belonged to the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin, and who had been made captives by Nebuchadnezzar. The ten tribes, who had been dispersed before by the kings of Assyria into various provinces, had the same privilege by this decree, of returning to their own country, which they did some time after; but the tribes of Judah and Benjamin went first, because the re-building the temple principally concerned them, as Jerusalem was within their dominions.

The chief leaders of those returning captives who went from Babylon were, Zerubbabel and Jeshua. The former of these, (whose Babylonish name was Sheshbazzar) was the son of Shealtiel, the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, who was kept so long captive in Babylon. Jeshua was the son of Jozadaek, the son of Seraiah, who was high-priest when Jerusalem was destroyed, and put to death by Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah in Syria; so that the former was descended from the regal, and the latter from the pontifical family, in a direct line. Zerubbabel was made governor of the land by a commission from Cyrus; Jeshua was appointed head of the priest-hood; and with them were joined several others, as assistants in settling all affairs both in church and state.

These regulations being made, the captives, headed by their leaders, left Babylon, in the first month of the Jewish sacred year called Nisan, which answers, in our calendar, to part of March and part of April. On their entrance into Judea they immediately dispersed themselves (according to their tribes and families) into different parts of the country, where they soon rebuilt the cities that had been destroyed, and cultivated the lands which had so long lain waste and desolate.

On the first day of the seventh month (which is called Tizri*) all the people from their several cities assembled

* The seventh month, called Tizri, answers in part to our September and October. The first day of this month was the beginning of the Jewish civil year, and on it was the Feast of Trumpets, which lasted two days, when all labor and business was suspended; and, while sacrifices were in use, the priests offered, in the name of the whole nation, a solemn sacrifice of a calf, two rams and seven lambs.

at Jerusalem, where they offered up sacrifices, made solemn prayers to God, and kept the several feasts appointed by the law of Moses. On the first of the month, which was the day of their arrival, they celebrated the Feast of the Trumpets. On the tenth was the great day of Expiation,* when the high-priest made atonement for the sins not only of himself, but all the people; and on the fifteenth began the Feast of Tabernacles, which lasted till the twenty-third.

All the Jews who assembled at Jerusalem continued there during the whole time of celebrating these feasts; and, in order to promote the restoration of God's worship in that place, contributed very liberally towards the rebuilding of the temple, the whole collection received by free-will offerings, (exclusive of an hundred vestments for the priests) amounting to sixty-one thousand drachms of

all of the same year, together with the flour and wine which usually accompanied such sacrifices.

* This was a very material solemnity used by the Jews, the ceremonies attending which were as follow: The high-priest, after having washed not only his hands and feet (as was usual in common sacrifices) but likewise his body, dressed himself in a plain linen garment like one of the priests, having neither his purple robe, ephod, or pectoral on, because he was going to expiate his own, as well as the people's sins. He first offered a bullock and a ram for his own sins and those of the other priests, putting his hand upon their heads, and confessing his own sins, and the sins of his house. He then received from the princes of the people two goats for a sin-offering, and a ram for a burnt-offering, to be offered in the name of all the people. It was determined by lots which of the two goats should be sacrificed, and which set at liberty; and therefore, after he had perfumed the Sanctuary with some burning incense, he took some of the blood of the bullock which he had sacrificed, and, dipping his finger in it, sprinkled it seven times between the ark and the veil, which separated the Holy of Holies from the body of the tabernacle or temple. After this he came out again, and having sacrificed the goat upon which the lot was fallen, he returned with some of its blood into the sanctuary, and there sprinkled it, in the same manner he had done before that of the bullock. Then coming out again he sprinkled both sides of the court with the blood of the goat, and proceeding to the altar of burnt-offerings, wet the four horns of it with the blood of the goat and bullock, and sprinkled it seven times with the same. After all these ceremonies were finished, the goat that was to be set at liberty (which was commonly called the Scape-Goat) was brought to the high-priest, who having put both his hands upon it, and confessed his own sins, as well as those of the people, delivered it to the persons

gold, and five thousand manas of silver.* Having made these contributions, the people returned to their respective cities, perfectly satisfied in their minds with the benefits they had received in attending those religious ceremonies, which, from their great offences, they had been so long deprived of enjoying.

The people of Jerusalem, having received so considerable a contribution towards rebuilding the temple of God, began immediately to convert it to the purposes for which it was designed. The first year was taken up in providing workmen, and preparing materials for carrying on the work, during which farther contributions were made towards defraying the expenses.

In the second month of the second year,† the foundation of the temple was laid, on which occasion the greater part of the people expressed their joy by the loudest acclamations. But while these were rejoicing at the laying of the foundation of the new temple, the old men, who had seen the glory of the first, wept at the remembrance of it. *And the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the House of the Lord was laid. But many of the priests and Levites, and chief of the fathers, who were ancient men that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice.*

The affliction these elders expressed on this occasion was not because this temple was like to prove far inferior

appointed to that office, who carried it into the wilderness and there left it. After this the high-priest washed himself again all over in the tabernacle, or temple, and putting on his pontifical dress, sacrificed two rams for a burnt-offering, one for himself, and the other for the people. He then concluded the whole with reading the law, and giving his blessing on the people, who all, on this occasion, behaved with great devotion, and returned home with a full persuasion and assurance that their sins were done away, and entirely expiated.

* Every drachm of gold is worth ten shillings of our money, and every mana of silver, nine pounds; so that the whole amounted to about 75,500*l.* of our money. From hence it is evident, that though the Jews were captives in Babylon, yet they were not in so poor a state as some may imagine. It is true they wrought for their lords and masters, but at the same time, some of them held very considerable offices at court, and others had liberty to trade, and get riches for themselves.

† This answers in part to our April and May.

to that of Solomon's with respect to its outward structure, but because it was to want those extraordinary marks of the Divine favor wherewith the other temple was honored. This temple was, no doubt, of the same dimensions with the other; but here was the sad difference which drew tears from the eyes of the elders: that, to all appearance, there was no hopes that the poor beginnings of the *latter temple* would ever be raised to the grandeur and magnificence of the former; the *one* had been built by the wisest and richest king, and constantly adorned by some one or other of his posterity; the *other* now begun was by a small company of exiles just restored from their captivity—the *one* built in a time of profound peace, and the greatest opulence; the *other*, in a time of common calamity and distress:—the *one* finished with the most costly stones and timber, wrought with exquisite art, and overlaid with vast quantities of gold; the *other* partly to be raised out of little better materials than what could be dug from the ruinous foundation of the old one.

But the occasion of their grief was not altogether this, that the materials and ornaments of the second temple were even as nothing *in comparison with the first* (Haggai ii. 3.) but that the Ark of the Covenant, and the mercy-seat, which was in it, the holy fire upon the altar, the Urim and Thummim, the Spirit of Prophecy, and the Shechinah, or Divine Presence, (the five great things for which the former temple was so renowned) were lost and gone never to be recovered.

This was certainly a just matter of lamentation to those who had seen these singular tokens of the Divine favor in the former temple, and a discouragement to their proceeding with the building of the present. But to mitigate their uneasiness on this head, the prophet Haggai was sent to inform them, that all these wants and defects would be abundantly repaired by the coming of the Messiah, the true Shechinah of the Divine Majesty, in the time of the second temple. *I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come; and I will fill this house with glory; and the glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of Hosts.* Haggai ii. 7. 9.

As soon as the Samaritans (who were planted in the several cities that formerly belonged to the inhabitants of

the kingdom of Israel, whom Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, had long before carried away captive, and in whose stead the Samaritans were placed) heard that the people of Jerusalem had begun to rebuild the temple, they sent deputies to Zerubbabel, the governor, desiring that they might be permitted to contribute towards the execution of the undertaking, alledging, that they worshipped the same God as did the people of Judah. *Let us build with you,* said they; *for we seek your God as ye do; and we do sacrifice unto him, since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assur, which brought us up hither.*

The governor Zerubbabel, having held a consultation with the chiefs of the families of Israel, they, after some little deliberation, resolved, by no means whatever to allow them any share in the work, being apprehensive that those who had been no better than idolaters (for at the same time that they had worshipped the true God, they also paid adoration to false ones) might have at the bottom some evil design in the offer of their services; and therefore, they absolutely refused them. *Ye have nothing to do with us,* said they, *to build an house unto our God; but we ourselves together will build unto the Lord God of Israel, as king Cyrus, the king of Persia, hath commanded us.*

This refusal so exasperated the Samaritans, that, from that very moment, they made it their constant endeavor, as much as in them lay, to impede the execution of the work. Though they could not alter the decree which Cyrus had made in favor of it, yet, by bribes, and underhand dealings with his ministers, they, in a great measure, retarded it, so that for several years, the building went on but slowly; and on the death of the prophet Daniel, (who was a powerful advocate for his countrymen at the Persian court) and the death of their great benefactor Cyrus,*

* It is generally agreed by historians, that Cyrus, at the time of his death, was about seventy years of age; but they differ greatly among themselves as to the manner of his death. Some are of opinion that he was taken in an engagement, and hanged; others, that he died of a wound, which he received in his thigh; and others, that he was killed in a battle with the people of Samos. Herodotus, Justin, and Valerius Maximus tell us, that, in his war against the Scythians, falling into an ambush, which queen Thomyris laid for him, he was taken prisoner, and, by her orders, beheaded.—The account Xenophon gives of him is, that he died peaceably in his bed, amidst his

which happened not long after, the work was quite stopped; nor was it resumed till the second year of the reign of Darius, the son of Hystaspes.

With respect to Daniel, it does not appear that he took any advantage of the edict which Cyrus made in favor of the Jews; and it is reasonable to suppose, that, as he did not return with them to Jerusalem, the king might require his continuance with him, and Daniel might the rather consent to it, as having thereby a better opportunity of befriending his countrymen upon any exigency. To this purpose it is highly probable, that he attended the Persian court, which, after the taking and defeating of Babylon, resided in summer at Shushan, and, in the winter, at Ecbatane. In the palace of Shushan, Daniel (as himself tells us, chap. viii. 1, &c.) had several visions. In this city (as we are informed by Josephus) he built a famous edifice, which was finished with such exquisite art, that it continued fresh and beautiful in his days; and in this city the common tradition is, that he died in the ninety-first year of his age; for even to this day (according to the accounts of some modern authors) the inhabitants of the place where he is said to have died, shew a monument, which they verily assert was erected to his memory.

But the greatest and most valuable monument Daniel left behind him was his writings, of which Josephus, the famous Jewish historian, gives the following character: “ He had (says he) this peculiar blessing attending him, “ that he lived in great reputation both with prince and “ people; and when he died, left an immortal memory be- “ hind him. His writings, which are still extant, and in “ common use, we keep as a sure pledge that he had a “ distinguished intimacy with God.—For, whereas other “ prophets were employed in foreboding calamities and ill “ news, which drew upon them disgrace from princes, and “ hatred from the people, Daniel, on the contrary, fore-

friends, and in his own country. There is, indeed, little reason to think, either that so wise a man as Cyrus should, in his advanced years, engage in so desperate an undertaking as the Scythian expedition is represented to have been; or that, had he died in Scythia, his mangled body could ever have been obtained out of the hands of those barbarians to be buried at Parsagueada in Persia, as most authors agree it was, and where, we are credibly informed, his monument was to be seen in the time of Alexander the Great.

“ told, in general, nothing but happy events, and what
“ was agreeable; so that the nature of his predictions was
“ such as gained him the good will of all, and such the
“ certainty of them, as gained him a ready credence with
“ all. This (as the historian remarks) may serve not only
“ to establish a veneration for the memory of a man,
“ whom God so highly honored, but to confound likewise
“ the impious doctrines of some who will not allow of any
“ over-ruling Providence interposing in the government
“ and preservation of the Universe, but will have the
“ whole course of sublunary things to be nothing more
“ than one continued jumble of contingencies. For when
“ I consider the prophecies of Daniel (says he) I am as-
“ tonished at the ignorance and irreligion of those people
“ who deny a Providence; for how should it happen that
“ things predicted in one age should be punctually ful-
“ filled in another, if, according to their opinion, all things
“ were left to the contingency of mere chance?”

CHAP. V.

Cambyses, succeeds Cyrus on the throne of Persia, and, in consequence of an application from the Samaritans, interrupts the building of the temple of Jerusalem. He dies, and is succeeded by Artaxerxes. To this prince the Samaritans present a remonstrance against the going on of the work at Jerusalem. He listens to it, and puts an entire stop to the building of the temple. Artaxerxes dies, and is succeeded by Darius, who not only confirms the decree of Cyrus for rebuilding the temple, but likewise grants one of his own for that purpose. The finishing and dedication of the temple. The Samaritans refuse to pay tribute-money to the temple, but are compelled to do it by order of Darius. Darius dies, and is succeeded by his son Xerxes, who confirms to the Jews all the privileges that had been granted them by his father Darius. He falls into contempt with his subjects, and is murdered by the captain of his guards. He is succeeded by his son Artaxerxes Longimanus, on whose accession great rejoicings are held for 180 days. He makes a grand entertainment on the occasion, during which he sends for his queen Vashti to shew her to the princes. She refuses to come, for which disobedience he divorces her, and marries a beautiful Hebrew woman named Hadassah, afterwards called Esther.

ON the death of Cyrus, the throne of Persia was filled by his son Cambyses, whom the Scripture calls Ahasuerus. Soon after his accession, the Samaritans (instead of applying themselves secretly to the ministers and officers of his court as they had done in the former reign) presented a petition to him openly, desiring that an immediate stop might be put to the rebuilding of the temple of Jerusalem. This petition, in some measure, answered their ends, for though they could not prevail on him to revoke his father's decree, yet, by the several discouragements which he put upon it through a variety of means, the main design was defeated, and very little was done during the time of his government. He died, after having reigned seven years and five months, and was (according to Josephus) buried in the city of Damascus, whither he had retired after having made a successful excursion against the Egyptians.

On the death of Cambyses, the throne of Persia fell to Artaxerxes, who was no sooner seated on it, than the Samaritans made still stronger solicitations than they had hitherto done, to prevent the rebuilding of the temple at Jerusalem. The heads of them, having assembled together, drew up a remonstrance, or memorial, which being signed by all the principal people, they presented it in great form to the king. The substance of this memorial was as follows: "We are to inform you, great and powerful Sir, that the Jews* transferred into Babylon, are returned to their former possessions, where they are occupied in the re-construction of their city, the ruins of which was the just punishment of their sedition. They are re-building the temple, establishing markets, and other places of commerce, and providing for their defence, by a general reparation of the walls of Jerusalem. If they are permitted to continue their operations, be assured, Sir, that no sooner will they be in a condition to command, than they will refuse to obey, for they are declared enemies to monarchical government. We consider it as the indispensable duty of faithful subjects to apprize you that they will disclaim allegiance to their lawful sovereign, and deny their proportionate contributions towards the requisite supplies of the state. We beseech you, Sir, to recur to the history of your predecessors, where you will find the Jews to be a generation who have ever been professed opposers to regal government; and that the daring crime of rebellion was the cause of laying in a state of desolation that city which they are now rebuilding. Should your majesty suffer them to proceed, it is more than probable, that all Syria and Palestine will be tempted to revolt, so that in a short time you will be excluded receiving any benefits from your territories on that side the river Euphrates."

Artaxerxes, after reading this remonstrance, retired for some time in order to consult the records of his ancestors,

* After the return from the captivity, the people in general came to be called Jews, because, though there were many Israelites among them, yet they chiefly consisted of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin; and though the edict of Cyrus gave permission to all to return when they pleased, yet the sacred writers take notice only of those who returned in a body from Babylon.

which having done, and found some circumstances to coincide with the purport of the remonstrance, he gave the Samaritans an answer to this effect: "In consequence of your address, I have caused the records of former times to be examined, and have found your observations respecting the city of Jerusalem, to be founded on good authority. The Jews appear ever to have been a vindictive, turbulent people, naturally disposed to rebellion, and their kings, in the last extreme, vexatious and tyrannical in the imposition of taxes. On these considerations, I command that you exert your utmost power to prevent the re-constructing of the temple; for, in proportion to the increase of power among these people will the spirit of sedition revive; and as they have revolted against former sovereigns, there is the greatest reason to apprehend that they will audaciously contend against the authority of the present government."

The Samaritans, highly pleased with the authority vested in them by this answer, immediately returned to Samaria, from whence, taking with them a considerable body of forces, they repaired to Jerusalem; and, having pursued the king's orders with the utmost rigor, a stop was put to any further proceeding in the work, in which state it remained till the second year of the reign of king Darius.

Artaxerxes enjoyed the throne of Persia but a very short time, for he paid the debt of nature before he had sat on it one year. He was succeeded by Darius, the son of Hystaspes, a prince who had always entertained the highest respect for the Jews, and who was the greatest patron they had after their return from the Babylonish captivity.

But before we proceed to relate the particulars that took place in favor of the Jews by means of this prince, it may not be improper to mention an incident that happened soon after his accession, the particulars of which we shall take from the celebrated Josephus.

Darius, a short time after he had ascended the throne, gave a superb entertainment to his principal officers, the princes and nobility of the Medes and Persians, and the governors of one hundred and twenty-seven provinces situated in that part of his dominions which lay between India and Ethiopia. To this entertainment he likewise in-

vited Zerubbabel, the leader of the captive Jews, who had been his intimate friend, and for whom he entertained the most distinguished respect.

When the entertainment was over, all the company retired, except Zerubbabel and two of the officers, who were the king's particular favorites. With these Darius entered into private conversation, which being continued for some time, the king told them that to him who could give the most satisfactory reply to the questions he should propose, he would grant the privilege of wearing purple, drinking out of a golden cup, riding in a chariot with a golden harness, wearing a silken tiara with a golden chain, possessing the place next inferior to himself in the council, and being considered as one of the blood royal. He then stated the questions as follow :

1. Is there any thing stronger than wine?
2. What can exceed the strength of kings?
3. What is superior to the power of women?
4. Can any thing surpass truth?

Having thus stated the questions, the king retired, first desiring Zerubbabel and the officers to weigh them in their minds, and to give him their sentiments, which, among the four, they thought the most powerful.

The next morning Darius, having summoned together a great number of his principal nobility, whom he made acquainted with what had passed over night, sent for Zerubbabel and the two officers, in order to report before the assembly, their sentiments on the questions he had asked.

The first who spoke was one of the officers, who urged for the superiority of wine, saying, "It disturbs the understanding, reduces the greatest sovereign to an equality with infancy, gives liberty to the slave, and makes the beggar equal to an emperor: it elevates and enlivens the hearts of the miserable, relieves every want, gives confidence to the villain, and puts him above the fear of kings: it causes men to disregard their dearest friends, and assault them with as much fury as they would shew towards their most deadly enemies. For these reasons I conceive the operation of wine to be the most powerful."

The next person that spoke was the second officer, who argued in favor of the power of kings. "It cannot be disputed (said he) that the Almighty has created man to be

so far master over all sublunary things as to apply them to whatever purposes his inclinations may direct. As all earthly creatures are subservient to men, so kings have an authority over men themselves. The sovereign of these sovereigns of the creation must be allowed an indisputable superiority. Subjects willingly expose themselves to the most imminent dangers of war, and even contend with nature herself, in obedience to the command of their prince, who takes to himself the whole honor and profit of victory. The husbandman, with unremitting toil, cultivates the earth; and his first duty is, to supply the king's stores with the produce of his grounds. Thus, while the people are fighting and working for him, the sovereign indulges himself in all the luxuries of abundance, security and ease: he sleeps surrounded by his guards, who dare not close their eyes while their master enjoys his repose; and no other concerns must interrupt that slavery of attendance to which they are indispensably bound. What power, then, can exceed that of the man to whom the public pays such implicit obedience?"

The two officers having thus delivered their sentiments, Zerubbabel next spoke, and his subject was on the power of women and truth. In defence of the first he argued as follows: "Neither the force of wine, nor the power of princes who bind the multitude in a common bond of allegiance, can be denied: but women have incontestably the superiority of these two. Before the king, the mother of the king existed: kings are the gifts of women: women are also the mothers and nurses of those by whom the vineyards are cultivated: they direct our domestic concerns, provide necessary and ornamental coverings for our bodies; and they are so absolutely necessary that we can neither be brought into existence, or support life without them. When a beautiful woman is before us we disregard gold and silver, or esteem them only as being the means of obtaining possession of the beloved object. The charms of women compel us to abandon our country, relations and dearest friends, and to attach ourselves wholly to them. When we have explored the sea and land for things most valuable and curious in nature, do we not congratulate ourselves in the opportunity of presenting our acquisitions to a favorite mistress? Frequently have I seen the king conde-

scend to receive a blow on the face from his concubine. She has taken the diadem from his head, and placed it on her own; and, dreading to give her offence, he has submitted to all her caprices, and yielded to her varying humors.”

Having said thus much in favor of women, to the great admiration of the whole assembly, Zerubbabel next proceeded to argue in favor of Truth, which he did as follows: “But neither women, nor kings, (said he) can be put in competition with the power of truth. Admitting the amazing magnitude of the earth, the elevation of the heavens, the astonishing rapidity of the sun’s motion, and that the whole is influenced only by Divine Providence, it must follow that the Almighty is just and true, and that the power of truth, against which nothing can ultimately prevail, supercedes every other power that can enter the conception of man. Truth alone is immutable and perfect, the advantages we derive from it are not subject to the vicissitudes of fortune, but are pure, irreproachable, and eternal.”

The whole assembly bestowed the most liberal acclamations on Zerubbabel, and universally acknowledged that he had proved truth to be the only blessing not liable to change or diminution. Darius, as a testimony of his entire satisfaction, told Zerubbabel he would perform his promise: “and, said he, in consideration of your superior understanding, you shall enjoy the first place in my esteem, be next in honor to myself, and be adopted a branch of the royal family.”—But to return.

On the death of Artaxerxes, the edict which he had issued, for putting a stop to the building of the temple, of course ceased; but notwithstanding this, the prophets Zechariah and Haggai* found some difficulty in per-

* Concerning these prophets we refer the reader to those books in the Bible, which bear their respective names. They are both thought to have been born at Babylon during the captivity, and both, with united zeal, encouraged the people to go on with the work of the temple. On the accession of Darius to the throne, Haggai in particular, by reproaching the people for their indolence and insensibility, by telling them that they were careful enough to lodge themselves very commodiously, while the House of the Lord lay buried in its ruins, and by putting them in mind that the calamities of drought and famine (wherewith God had afflicted them since their return from their captivity) were owing to their neglect in not repairing the

suading the people to resume the work. They were fearful that the interest of the Samaritans was no less powerful at the court of Darius, than it had been at that of his predecessor, and that they should consequently be soon interrupted by the royal mandate. These fears the two prophets endeavored to remove, and, by force of argument, at length prevailed on them to resume the work of building the temple. But it was not long before their implacable enemies the Samaritans betook themselves to their old practices, by endeavoring to possess Tatnai (whom Darius had made chief governor over the Provinces of Syria and Palestine) with a notion that what the Jews were doing was without authority, and would, in time, be productive of great injury to the king.

In consequence of this information Tatnai went to Jerusalem, and having called together the governor and elders of the Jews, he asked them under what sanction, or by whose authority, they were erecting so vast a building, it having rather the appearance of a castle than a temple; and wherefore the walls and gates of the city were made so strong? In answer to these questions, Zerubbabel the governor, and Jeshua the high-priest, addressed themselves to Tatnai in words nearly to this effect: They told him, "that they were the servants of the great God, to whose honor the former temple was built, and to his service dedicated, by the greatest, the happiest, and the wisest prince that ever sat on a throne: that it stood for many ages, till, by reason of the wickedness of their forefathers, the city, by God's permission, was taken by Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Chaldea; the temple pillaged and laid in ashes, and the people carried away captives into Babylon: that, when Cyrus came to be possessed of the throne of Persia and Babylon, he ordered, by his royal proclamation, the rebuilding of the temple, and the restoring of all the sacred vessels that had been taken away by Nebuchadnezzar, which accordingly were transported to Jerusalem, and laid up in the temple now erecting; that, by command of the

temple, he prevailed with them to set about the work in good earnest; so that, by virtue of these reproofs, and the encouragement they received from Darius after his accession to the throne of Persia, they brought the whole to a conclusion in a much shorter time than, in all probability, they would have otherwise done.

king, Abasser was sent to see the work expedited, and, accordingly, was present at the laying of the foundation; but that, ever since that time, by one artifice or other, their enemies had found means to obstruct and retard it; and that, for the truth of these allegations, they desired him to write to Darius, that, by consulting the public records, it might be known whether or not, what they had asserted was a just representation of facts."

Tatnai took their advice, and immediately wrote to the king, acquainting him with what had passed between him and the elders of the Jews. He likewise desired that search might be made into the public records, whether the Jews had really any such decree from Cyrus or not, and that, however it might be, his majesty would be pleased to signify his will and pleasure in what manner he would have him direct his conduct.

On the receipt of this letter, Darius gave immediate orders that the royal archives should be searched, which being done, a record was found to the following purport: "In the first year of the reign of king Cyrus, it was ordained, that the holy temple of Jerusalem should be rebuilt, the height to be sixty cubits, and the breadth of the same measure, and that an altar should be constructed within the edifice: that the walls should be formed by three ranges of polished marble, and one range of wood, the produce of the country; and that the sacred vessels taken into Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar be restored, and placed in such parts of the temple as they were formerly accustomed to be."

On the discovery of this record, Darius ordered a copy of it to be immediately taken, which being done, he enclosed it in a cover, on which he wrote an answer to Tatnai to this effect:

King Darius, to Tatnai, Governor over the Provinces of Syria and Palestine:

"I hereby transmit you a copy of a letter extracted from the records of Cyrus; and it is my royal will and command, that you strictly adhere to the directions contained therein."

This decree Darius confirmed by immediately issuing out one of his own,* in which he gave the Jews an assignment of his revenues in several of his provinces for whatever money they should want to go on with the work, and to provide them sacrifices for the service of the temple, that the priests, in their daily offices, might offer up prayers for the prosperity of the royal family. It was likewise ordained, in this decree, that whoever should make any attempt to interrupt the work, a part of his house should be pulled down, which being erected into a gallows, he should be immediately hanged on it. *Whoever, said he, shall alter this word, let timber be pulled down from his house, and being set up, let him be hanged thereon; and let his house be made a dunghill.*

In consequence of the publication of this decree, and the great care that was taken to have it fully put in execution, the work of the temple went on so very successfully, that, in the sixth year of Darius (according to the Jewish account) and on the third day of the twelfth month (which is called Adar, and answers in part to our February and March) the whole was finished, and its dedication celebrated by the priests and Levites, and all the people, with the greatest solemnity. By the next month, which was the month Nisan, the first in the Jewish year, the temple was made fit for the performance of every part of Divine service; and therefore, on the fourteenth day of that month was celebrated the feast of the Passover, the ceremonies attending which were performed in direct conformity with those observed previous to the destruction of the first temple. On this occasion seven days were spent in making oblations, after which the people dispersed, expressing their great joy and gladness of heart, in having the House of God restored, and that they might there praise his holy name for the great benefits and mercies he had been pleased to bestow on them.

The Samaritans (who were still the most implacable enemies to the Jews) valuing themselves on the alliance

* As Darius, the better to secure his title to the crown, had married two of the daughters of Cyrus, he thought himself concerned to do every thing which might tend to the honor of that great prince, and therefore more readily confirmed the decree which had been granted to the Jews by that monarch.

which they claimed to the Persians, and being a powerful and rich people, as well as of an haughty and malignant disposition, proved exceedingly vexatious to the Jews, and exerted their utmost endeavors to annoy and perplex them. By the decree of Cyrus, which was confirmed by that of Darius, the tribute of Samaria had been assigned towards the rebuilding of the temple, but the work being now finished, the Samaritans pretended that the end of this assignment was ceased, and therefore refused making any contributions towards defraying the expenses of the usual sacrifices.

These dissentions continuing, the Jews at length drew up a memorial of complaint against the Samaritans, and deputed Zerubbabel, with two others, to present it to Darius. This being done, and Darius paying proper attention to the complaint, he returned an answer by the deputies to this effect:

King Darius to Tangar and Sambaba, masters of our house at Samaria; Sadrack, Bobelon, and the other inhabitants of that country, greeting.

“ You stand accused by Zerubbabel, Ananias and Mar-
docheus, on the part of the Jews, of contempt of my
“ express commands, by withholding your contributions
“ towards defraying the expenses of sacrifices to be made
“ in the temple of Jerusalem, which has been erected by
“ my full express word and commands. I therefore strict-
“ ly enjoin you to supply them, from my treasury in
“ Samaria, with what they shall require for a due obser-
“ vation for their religious ceremonies, that they may offer
“ daily prayers and sacrifices for the favor of God, both
“ towards me and my subjects.”

This message put an effectual end to all contests between the Jews and Samaritans, the latter paying the tribute demanded for the services of the temple without farther opposition. And this is the last good office we find recorded in scripture that Darius did the Jews, he dying soon after universally lamented by his subjects.

The character given of this prince by the learned Dr. Prideaux, is as follows: “ He was (says he) a prince of
“ great wisdom, clemency and justice, and has the honor

“to be recorded in holy writ for a favorer of God’s people, a restorer of his temple at Jerusalem, and a promoter of his worship therein. For all this God was pleased to make him his instrument; and with respect to this I doubt not it was, that he blessed him with a numerous issue, a happy reign, and great prosperity.”

On the death of Darius, the throne of Persia was filled by his eldest son Xerxes, who, according to Josephus (for we have but little account of him in the sacred records) confirmed to the Jews all those privileges which had been granted them by his father, particularly that which assigned them the tribute of Samaria for the charge of the sacrifices that were to be offered in the temple of Jerusalem. This prince, however, reigned but a very short time, for having fallen into contempt with his own subjects, (though we are not particularly informed on what account) he was murdered by the captain of his guard, and succeeded on the throne by his son Artaxerxes Longimanus, whom the scripture calls Ahasuerus.

Ahasuerus, on some occasion or other, soon after his accession, appointed a solemn rejoicing in the city of Shushan,* which lasted one hundred and eighty days; at the expiration of which he made a great feast for all the princes and governors of his provinces, as did also his queen Vashti, in her own apartment, for the women of the best distinction in the city. This feast continued seven days, on the last of which the king, either through a frolic, or to shew his great affection for his queen, sent seven of his chamberlains to conduct her into his presence that he might shew her to the company, ordering at the same time that she should come with the royal diadem on her head.

* Cyrus, and the rest of the Persian kings, after the conquest of the Medes (whose country lay remote) settled their royal seat at Shushan, and made it the capital of Persia. It stood on the banks of the river Ulai, and was a place of such renown, that Strabo calls it, *a city most worthy to be praised*. Darius built here a most magnificent palace, which Aristotle calls *a wonderful palace, shining with gold, amber and ivory*. Nor is it altogether foreign to this purpose what is mentioned by the learned Dr Lightfoot, who says, that the outward gate of the eastern wall of the temple at Jerusalem was called *the gate of Shushan*, and had the figure of that city carved on it, in acknowledgment of the decree which Darius granted in that place, in order to permit and encourage the Jews to raise the buildings.

This order was so inconsistent with the usage of the Persians, and so little becoming the dignity and high station of a queen, that Vashti, rather than be made a public spectacle, adventured to disobey the king's commands. Ahasuerus was so incensed at this, that, after advising with his counsellors in what manner he should punish her for so public an affront, he came to this resolution, (which was afterwards passed into an irreversible decree) that, lest Vashti's ill example should encourage other women to contemn and disobey their husbands, she should be deposed from her royal dignity, and an order be issued out for making a collection of the fairest virgins in every province through the whole empire, that, out of them, one might be chosen, whom the king should like best, to be queen, instead of the disobedient and divorced Vashti.

There happened, at this time, to live at Shushan a certain Jew, of the tribe of Benjamin, named Mordecai. He was a descendant of those who had been carried captives to Babylon with Jehoiakim, king of Judah, and for some time had been one of the officers or principal attendants at the gate of the royal palace. Not having any children of his own he bred up Hadassah, his uncle's daughter, who, being a very beautiful young woman, among other virgins, was made choice of upon this occasion. As soon as she was taken to court, she was committed to the care of an eunuch, into whose custody these virgins were appointed to be placed, and, by her very engaging behavior, made herself so acceptable to him, that he assigned her the very best apartment in the house allotted for their habitation, and gave her a preference in other matters from all the rest who had been selected from different parts on this occasion.

It was the custom at this time, that every virgin, thus taken into the palace for the king's use, was to go through a course of purification, by sweet oils and perfumes, for a whole year; which, when Hadassah had done, and was, in every respect, properly prepared, she was conducted to the king's apartment, where she remained during the night. Ahasuerus was so highly delighted with her, that, intend-

ing to make her more than a concubine,* he kept her in his own palace, and, in a short time, set the royal diadem on her head, and made her his queen. The nuptials were celebrated with the greatest magnificence, and a splendid entertainment was made on the occasion, which, in honor to the new queen, was called Esther's Feast, the Persian name Esther being given her previous to the performance of the marriage ceremonies. The king, on this joyful occasion, presented his new queen with many valuable gifts, as he did also to many of the heads of the assembly; besides which he pardoned all his subjects who were in confinement for criminal offences, and granted a relaxation of tribute, for some time, in every province throughout his dominions.

* It appears that Ahasuerus had but one wife, at least but one in chief favor and esteem with him, though it is certain he could not fail of having a great number of secondary wives or concubines. The term concubine was given to all those taken from among the virgins (who had a separate house for themselves) and conducted to the king's bed, where, having passed the night, she returned no more to the virgins' apartments, but was, the next morning, received into the house of the concubines, and there treated with the same state and dignity as one of the king's wives. No man was permitted to marry either of these concubines during the life of the king; and, upon his demise, they generally fell to his successor.

CHAP. VI.

Mordecai, one of the king's officers, and a relation to queen Esther, discovers a plot formed against the life of Ahasuerus, upon which the conspirators are taken and hanged. Haman, the king's favorite, taking a disgust against Mordecai, endeavors to seek his life. Haman gives a false representation to the king of the Jews in his dominions, upon which he issues a decree, ordering them all, on a certain day, to be put to death. Mordecai, bewailing the fate of himself and countrymen, applies to Esther, beseeching her to intercede with the king in their behalf. The queen, at first, refuses to engage in the business, but, at length, promises to do it, though at the hazard of her life. She invites the king, with his favorite Haman, to a banquet. Haman shews farther indignation against Mordecai, and causes a gibbet to be erected fifty cubits high, intending that he should be hung on it the next morning. Haman is compelled to perform a servile office to Mordecai. The king and Haman attending at a second banquet made by the queen, she addresses herself to the king in favor of the Jews. The king, understanding the infamy of Haman, orders him to be hanged on the gallows he had erected for the execution of Mordecai, after which he promotes the latter to great honors. The decree which Ahasuerus made against the Jews is rendered ineffectual by the issuing out another, whereby the Jews are allowed to defend themselves against those who should attempt to injure them on the day appointed for the execution of the first decree. In consequence of this the Jews kill great numbers of their enemies, and hang the ten sons of Haman upon the same gallows on which their father suffered. The Jews, in memory of this deliverance, keep a feast, which they call the Feast of Lots.

PREVIOUS to Esther's first going to the Persian court, Mordecai had given her a strict charge not to discover that she was a Jew, lest the king should despise her for being a captive: this caution she carefully observed, by which not the least suspicion was conceived but that she was a native of the country. Mordecai also, for the same reason, concealed his being related to her, contenting himself with the employment* he had at court till a more favorable opportunity should present itself.

* It is the opinion of some that Mordecai was no more than a common porter at the gate of the palace; but nothing can be more im-

A short time after Ahasuerus had married Esther, Mordecai had the good fortune to discover a conspiracy, which two of the king's chamberlains were forming against his life; and which they had concerted in revenge for his having divorced Vashti. Mordecai communicated the discovery he had made to the queen, who acquainted the king with it, telling him at the same time from whom she had received the intelligence. In consequence of this the conspirators were apprehended, and being found guilty, after a proper examination, were put to death. But, though the whole affair was recorded in the Persian annals, yet Mordecai's services on this occasion, were, for the present, forgot, till his future merit, and some singular occurrences that afterwards took place, brought them to the king's recollection.

Among those about the king was one Haman, (a descendant of Agag, king of Amalek, in the time of Saul) who, by his insinuating mode of address, had so wrought himself in favor of the king, that all the servants at court were ordered to shew him the most distinguished reverence and respect. These orders were strictly obeyed by all except Mordecai, who, as Haman passed to and fro took no more notice of him than he did of the rest of those who were in the king's immediate service. This exasperated the proud Amalekite to the highest degree;* and being

probable, for Xenophon tells us, that Cyrus ordered all the great officers of state to attend at the gates of his palace; and therefore we may naturally conclude, that although this man was not the prime minister, yet his rank at court was a very high one. Herodotus, and many other Greek historians, confirm what is advanced by Xenophon; and, both in Turkey and China, even in the present age, according to all modern travellers, the great officers of state have apartments near the gate of the palace, where they wait till called for.

* We are told by Josephus, that Haman, taking notice of this singularity in Mordecai, asked him what countryman he was? and finding him to be a Jew, he broke out into a violent exclamation against the insolence of such a wretch, who, when all the natives of the free-born Persians made no hesitation at doing him the honor commanded by the king, should presume to disobey; and that, in this fit of rage, he took the desperate resolution, not only to be revenged on Mordecai, but to destroy the whole race of Jews in the Persian dominions. He might, indeed, be farther induced to carry his design into execution from recollecting that his ancestors, the Amalekites, had been formerly beaten out of the land, and exterminated by the Jews.

informed that Mordecai was a Jew, he formed the most horrid plot for indulging his resentment that could have been projected, being resolved, if possible, not only to destroy him, but all the Jews within the Persian dominions.

The base Haman, fearful lest some danger might attend so bold an undertaking, was very cautious how he proceeded on the business, and therefore called together his diviners, in order to find out which would be the most lucky day for carrying his design into execution. At this time, the method of divination practised in the east was, to cast lots. This was therefore accordingly done, and having first tried each month, and then each day in every month, they came at length to a determination that the thirteenth day of the twelfth month,* which is called Adar, would be the most fortunate for carrying his design into execution.

Haman, pleased with what the diviners had done, immediately went to the king, and, in a long harangue, endeavored in the most forcible manner he was able, to prejudice him against the Jews, and thereby effect his diabolical intentions. He told the king there was a certain people dispersed throughout his empire, who called themselves Jews, and who, having laws and ordinances of their own, despised all his edicts and injunctions; that, in short, their principles tended to the disturbance of the good order of his government, and the preservation of all uniformity: that, on these accounts, it was not consistent with the rules of policy to allow them any farther toleration; and therefore he proposed that they should be destroyed and extirpated out of the Persian empire; and, lest the loss of so many subjects should be thought to diminish the king's revenue, he proposed making up the defect out of his own private fortune. *If it please the king, said he, let it be written that they may be destroyed: I will pay ten thou-*

* It was in the first month of the year when the diviners began to cast lots, and the time for the execution of the Jews was, by these lots, not to take place till the last month of the year, which plainly shews, that *though the lot be cast into the lap, yet the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord*, Prov. xvi. 33. Hence, almost a whole year intervened between the design and the time appointed for its execution, which gave Mordecai the opportunity of making it known to the queen, that she might intercede, and thereby prevent the conspiracy taking place.

sand talents of silver into the hands of those that have the charge of the business, to bring it into the king's treasuries.

Abasuerus was so wrought on by this wretched and debased favorite, that no sooner had he heard this tale, than he gave immediate consent for all the Jews to be put to death within his dominions, and ordered his scribes to form a decree* for that purpose, to which he affixed his own signet. He sent copies of this decree by posts† to all the lieutenants and governors of provinces within his dominions, with strict charge that they should destroy, and cause to be killed, all the Jews, of whatever sex or condi-

* The decree itself, according to Josephus, was to this effect :

“The great King Artaxerxes, to the hundred and seven and twenty Governors of the Provinces, between India and Ethiopia, Greeting.

“Whereas it hath pleased God to give me the command of so many nations, and a dominion over the rest of the world, as large as I myself desire, I being resolved to do nothing, that may be tyrannical or grievous towards my people, and to bear a gentle and easy hand over them, with an eye more especially to the preservation of their peace and liberties, and to settle them in a state of tranquility and happiness, not to be shaken : All this I have taken into mature deliberation ; and, being given to understand by my trusty and well-beloved friend and counsellor, Haman, a person of a tried faith, prudence, and justice, and whom I esteem above all others, that there is a mixture of a sort of inhuman people among my subjects, that take upon them to govern by their own laws, and to prescribe ways to themselves, in contempt of public order and government ; men depraved both in their customs, and in their manners, and enemies not only to monarchy, but to the methods of our royal administration : This is therefore to will and require, that, upon notice given you, by Haman (who is to me as a father) of the persons intended by this my proclamation, you put all the said persons, men, women, and children, to the sword, without any commiseration or favor, in a strict pursuance of my decree. And it is my further command, that you put this in execution upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month of the present year, to make but one day's work of the destruction of all mine and your enemies, in order to a future peace and security of all our lives after.”

† The establishing of posts, by which letters are conveyed from one place to another, is of great antiquity, and according to Diodorus Siculus, was first brought into use by the Persian kings, though it is certain that its course was greatly interrupted in succeeding ages. It is, however, probable, that, during the reigns of the Persian kings, no letters were sent by what is *now* called the post, but such as were of a public nature, and in which the more immediate officers of government were chiefly entrusted.

tion, both young and old, that were any where within their jurisdiction, on the thirteenth day of the month Adar next ensuing.

It is little to be wondered at that the publication of this horrid decree should occasion an universal grief and lamentation among the Jews in all parts, particularly in the city of Shushan, from whence it was issued. Mordecai was so affected, that he put on sackcloth, covered his head with ashes, and went through the streets in this manner till he came to the gate of the palace, where he was obliged to stop, no man being permitted to pass it in such a dress. Intelligence of this coming to the ears of the queen (who was a stranger to the passing of the decree) she sent a messenger to Mordecai, begging him to lay aside that mournful habit, and put on other clothes, such as were consistent with his situation; but he told the messenger he could not comply with the queen's request till the cause of his melancholy appearance was removed. In consequence of this answer the queen sent Hatach, one of the king's eunuchs, to learn of Mordecai the reason of his taking on him such an appearance; on which he related the particulars of the king's order for the destruction of the Jews, and what a sum of money Haman had offered the king for the grant. He then gave Hatach a copy of the decree, desiring him to present it to the queen, and to intreat her immediately to use her utmost interest with the king to spare the lives of her people.

This message Hatach faithfully delivered to the queen, who immediately returned an answer to Mordecai, in which she excused herself from engaging in the affair for this reason, because an ordinance had been passed, inhibiting any person, whether man or woman, on pain of death, from approaching the king's presence without a special order. *All the king's servants (said she) and the people of the king's provinces, do know, that whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto the king into the inner court, who is not called, there is one law of his to put him to death, except such to whom the king shall hold out the golden sceptre, that he may live: but I have not been called to come in unto the king these thirty days.*

Mordecai, in his reply to this, told the queen that the decree extended to the whole Jewish nation, without any

exception; that if it came to be executed she must no more expect to escape than the rest; that God, very probably, had raised her to her present greatness on purpose that she might be the means of saving and protecting his people; but that if she neglected to do this, and their deliverance should come some other way, then would she and her father's house, by the righteous and just judgments of God, most certainly perish.

This message roused Esther, who immediately dispatched Hatach to Mordecai with this order and promise: that he, and all the Jews in Shushan, should fast three days (as she intended to do herself) and offer up their humble supplications to God, that he would prosper her in so hazardous an undertaking, at the expiration of which time, she would not fail to address the king, though at the hazard of her life.

This injunction being properly circulated by Mordecai, it was strictly observed by all the Jews in Shushan. Esther did the like, and failed not taking proper measures for fulfilling her engagement. On the third day she dressed herself in her royal apparel, and went to the king's apartment, where he was sitting upon his throne, in the inner part of the palace. As soon as she saw the king, whose countenance expressed displeasure, she immediately fainted away, and would have fallen to the ground had she not been supported by one of her maids who attended. The king, seeing her in this situation, descended from his throne, and raising her up, bade her be of good cheer. He then laid his golden sceptre on her neck (which was a mark of his affection) and after having embraced her, asked what request she had to make, telling her at the same time, that whatever it was he would grant it, though it should cost him half his kingdom. Upon this Esther told him all she desired at present was, that he (accompanied by Haman) would come to a banquet, which she had prepared for him. This invitation the king readily accepted, and the more so, on account of her having invited his favorite Haman, who, happening at this time not to be at court, the king sent for him, with orders not to fail attending the invitation of the queen.

When the entertainment was nearly over, with which the king expressed the highest satisfaction, he asked

Esther again, what request she had to make, repeating his former promises, that whatever it should be, he would grant it, though it were half his kingdom. The queen, not thinking this a proper time to open the secret to the king, told him that her desire at present was no more than that he and Haman would favor her again the next day with their company at a like entertainment, and that then she would not fail to disclose to him her request.

The distinguished honor conferred on Haman, in being the only person, except the king, invited to the queen's banquet, so increased his pride, that he expected nothing less than a respect and homage to be paid him as the second person in the kingdom. Nor were his expectations ill-founded, except in the person of Mordecai, who, as he passed him at the palace-gate, on his return, refused to pay him the least obedience. As soon as Haman got home, he recounted to his family the great esteem in which he was held, not only by the king, but likewise the queen, he having been at a banquet provided by the latter; that no other person accompanied the king on the occasion but himself; and that the next day he was to be present at a like invitation. He could not, however, forbear complaining of the affront and disrespect which Mordecai had put upon him: "But, said he, what pleasure is all this, so long as I see the hated Mordecai, who pays me no respect, sitting at the king's gate?" His friends and relations, joining with him in their resentment against Mordecai, advised him immediately to order a gibbet to be erected fifty cubits high, and the very next morning to go to the king, and obtain a grant from him, that Mordecai should be hanged on it. This advice was perfectly agreeable to Haman, who, imagining the king would not refuse his request, gave orders for the gibbet to be immediately erected.

But God was pleased to direct things in such a manner as totally to frustrate the design of the proud and cruel Haman; and when he went to court the next morning, he found matters turn out very different to what he had expected. It happened that the king that morning awoke much sooner than usual, and not being able to compose himself again to sleep, he called for the annals of his reign, and ordered a person who was then in waiting, to

read them to him. He accordingly obeyed the king's orders, and went on till he came to the passage which made mention of Mordecai's discovery of the treason of the two chamberlains; and when the king, upon enquiry, was given to understand, that the man, for so signal a service, had not received any reward,* he seemed exceeding angry, and asked who waited without. Being told Haman, (who had been some time waiting for admittance to get his ends obtained on Mordecai) he ordered him in, and immediately asked him this question: *What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honor?*

Haman, vainly supposing that himself was meant, gave the king this advice: *For the man, said he, whom the king delighteth to honor, let the royal apparel be brought which the king useth to wear, and the horse that the king rideth upon, and the crown royal† which is set upon his head: and let his apparel and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that they may array the man withal whom the king delighteth to honor, and bring him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaim before him, Thus shall it be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honor.*

No sooner had Haman delivered his advice, than the king, quite contrary to his expectations, bade him get the

* Josephus tells us, that when the clerk or secretary read the names of those who had done signal services to the king, he added what rewards had been bestowed upon them; and that as Ahasuerus was more than ordinarily attentive to what was read at this time, he could not help being surprized that Mordecai, who had discovered a dangerous conspiracy, and consequently prevented a revolution, had not been taken notice of. But it is in vain to enquire, why a man who had done so much for the safety of the king, should have been so long neglected; for it has often happened, that those who do most to serve the state are left unnoticed, while the meanest and most debased wretches shall have honors heaped upon them.

† Some commentators have objected to what is here said concerning the crown being set upon his head, because it is well known that it was death in Persia for any person except the king, to wear the crown, even for a single moment. To this it is answered, that the objection is founded on a misconstruction of the words; for the crown here alluded to was not the royal diadem worn by the kings, but only an ornament put upon the head of the horse. And that this is the sense of the words appears evident from the concurring testimonies of many ancient historians, and is confirmed by what has been written by Grotius, Le Clerc, bishop Patrick, and many others.

horse, apparel and diadem ready, and do just as he had said to Mordecai, charging him not to fail in the least part of it. *Make haste*, said he, *and take the apparel and the horse, as thou hast said, and do even so to Mordecai the Jew, that sitteth at the king's gate: let nothing fail of all that thou hast spoken.*

This cut the proud Haman to the heart, his thoughts having been wholly employed on his own advancement. But the king's word was a law, and he knew there was no disputing it. Being therefore obliged to comply, he attended Mordecai in the manner himself had prescribed, proclaiming as he led the horse through the streets of the city, *Thus shall it be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honor.*

When the irksome ceremony was over, Haman returned home, lamenting the disappointment and great mortification he had met with, in being forced to pay so signal an honor to his most hated enemy. But while he was relating this to his family, and they thereupon expressing some uneasy apprehensions, as if this was a very bad omen, one of the queen's chamberlains came to his house to hasten him to the banquet; and, having seen the gallows which had been set up the night before, he fully informed himself of the intent for which it was prepared.

When the king and Haman were set down to the entertainment, the king asked Esther again, what her request was, at the same time renewing his promise, that he would not fail to grant it her, even though it should extend to the half of his kingdom. Esther, rising from her seat, delivered her petition in words to this effect: "My petition, O king (said she) is for my own life, and the lives of my people, because there is a design laid against us, not to make us bond-men and bond-women (for then I should have been silent) but to slay and destroy all. If therefore I have found favor in thy sight, O king, let my life, and the lives of my people be given at my request."

The king no sooner heard Esther's petition, than he asked, with some commotion, who it was that durst do any such thing. *Who is he*, said he, *and where is he that durst presume in his heart to do so?* The queen replied, *The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman.* The king, rising up in a great passion, immediately left

the apartment, and retired into the garden, in order to give vent to his resentment. Haman, seeing his danger, took this opportunity of supplicating his life from the queen, which he did by falling prostrate on the bed* where she was sitting. At this juncture the king returned, and, finding the position Haman was in, he hastily exclaimed, *Will he force the queen also before me in the house?* The attendants without hearing this, entered the apartment, and immediately covered *Haman's face*, as a token of the king's indignation against him. The chamberlain, who had been sent to call Haman to the banquet, then informed the king of the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai, who had saved the king's life; upon which he gave immediate orders that he should be hanged thereon (which accordingly was done) and his whole estate given to the queen, who appointed Mordecai as her steward. At the same time she informed the king of her near relation to Mordecai, upon which he took him into his royal favor, advanced him to great power, riches and dignity in the empire, and made him keeper of the royal signet.

But though Haman was thus removed, yet the decree which he had procured for the destruction of the Jews remained still in force; nor could it be repealed, because the laws of the Medes and Persians were such, that whatever was written in the king's name, and signed with the royal signet, could not be reversed. The queen presented a second petition to the king, requesting that the decree might be cancelled; but this, for the reason already given, could not be complied with. All, therefore, that the king could do, was to grant the Jews, by another decree, such

* In all the eastern nations, even to this day, the people lean on a couch while they eat, and Esther being at that time in the same position, Haman took the opportunity of prostrating himself before her, and, according to the custom of the Persians, embraced her feet. It cannot be imagined that Haman could, at such a time, attempt to violate the chastity of the queen; but the resentment of Ahasuerus was then so great, that he laid hold of this circumstance in order to give a plausible color to what he intended to do. With respect to the covering of Haman's face, it was consistent with the practice of the people of the east from the most early ages of time; for when a criminal was brought before a judge, or his sovereign, to receive sentence, his face was always covered, lest the natural emotions of his grief should operate too strongly in his favor.

power to defend themselves against all who should assault them on the day when the former decree was to be executed, as might render it, in a great measure, ineffectual. To this purpose, a fresh edict* was drawn up in the third

* Copies of this edict, or decree, were written, and sent to all the provinces throughout the king's dominions; the substance of which, as related by Josephus, was as follows:

ARTAXERNES the Great King to his faithful Governors, greeting.

“It is too general a practice for men whose fortune hath been greater than their merit, to insult both their inferiors and benefactors, and extinguish, as far as in their power, all sense of gratitude and benevolence: they likewise pervert the power bestowed to the discredit of them who gave it; and this under such disguises as if God could not penetrate them. Nor is it any new matter for favorites by the misrepresentation of men and things, to gratify their private passions to the injury of their masters; and thus endanger the lives of honest men by their ill offices with the prince. This I declare not on the credit of report or history, but on perfect demonstration within my own knowledge. For the future, therefore, let no regard be paid to slanderous accusations, but let facts be carefully enquired into, and let full proof of the innocence or guilt of the party acquit or condemn him.

“You are not unacquainted with Haman's not being a Persian, but an Amalekite by extraction, nor how affectionately I have treated, and what honor done this man, having called, and regarded him as my father, ordering my subjects to obey him next to myself. Now his pride had induced him to depart from his duty, and prompted him to think of succeeding to the government, by the destruction of Mordecai, to whom I owe my life; and likewise to destroy the queen; the end of his plot being to usurp my authority, when his plans against the lives of my friends had succeeded.

“Wherefore as the designs of this man to destroy the Jews are notorious, I hereby certify, that, far from finding them seditious according to his report, I approve of them as a people worshipping that God to whom I and my family owe the possession and support of our dominions. These letters are therefore to command that you do not exercise, in full force, that severity on the Jews as commanded by Haman, whom, as a sacrifice to justice, I have caused to be executed on a gibbet before the gates of Shushan.

“And I further command that copies of these letters be transmitted throughout my dominions, that the Jews may enjoy their laws in peace; and that you afford them help against those who oppress them. And as the thirteenth day of the twelfth month (Adar) is fixed for the extirpation of these people, it is my will that you fix on this time as the moment of their deliverance; assured that this proceeding will satisfy my friends, and afford a cautionary example to future traitors. Be it further known to the parties herein con-

month, empowering the Jews, on the day appointed by Haman for their destruction, to gather themselves together, and whoever should make any attempt to interrupt or injure them, they should put to death. This edict was signed by the king, and copies of it went by post to the governors of every province throughout his dominions.

Soon after the king had put his royal signet to this decree, Mordecai came out of the palace dressed in the royal robe, gown and chain; the sight of whom gave the highest satisfaction to the Jews, who thereby imagined themselves safe, and that Haman's decree against them would prove of none effect. Those Jews, likewise, who resided in the different parts of the king's dominions, when they heard the contents of the king's last decree, were elated with joy, and some of the natives, thinking themselves in danger, underwent circumcision, supposing that might be a means of securing them should the Jews become predominant.

But the greater part of the Persians were resolved to abide by the decree of Haman, so that when the thirteenth day of Adar came, a war was commenced between them and the Jews throughout the whole Persian empire. As the rulers of the several provinces, and other officers of the king, well understood what power and credit Esther and Mordecai then had with him, they so favored the Jews in all parts, that, on that day, they slew, in the whole empire, seventy-five thousand persons; and in the city of Shushan, on that day and the succeeding one, eight hundred more. Among these were the ten sons of Haman, who, by a special order from the king, were hung on the gibbet that had been erected by their father, and on which himself was executed.

This put an end to all attempts of the Persians against the Jews, the latter of whom, in memory of their wonderful deliverance, afterwards kept a great festival on the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month Adar, which they called the *Days of Purim*, or *Feast of Lots*. Mordecai continued in great credit with the king and queen, and so

“cerned, in all our cities and towns, that military execution shall be
“the consequence of disobedience to these commands, of which all
“our subjects are to take notice; and the Jews shall be ready to
“avenge themselves on their enemies at the time appointed.”

directed public affairs, that the Jews lived happy and uninterrupted during the whole course of his administration.

The Feast of *Purim*, or *Lots* (which took its rise from the circumstances before related) is, to this very day, celebrated by the Jews with some peculiar ceremonies, the chief of which may be reduced to these three things, viz. *Reading*, *Resting* and *Feasting*. Previous to the *reading*, which is performed in the synagogue, and begins in the evening as soon as the stars appear, they make use of three forms of prayer. In the *first* of these they praise God for counting them worthy to attend Divine service: in the second they thank him for the miraculous preservation of their ancestors: and in the third they bless his holy name for having continued their lives to the celebration of another festival in commemoration of it. They then read over the whole history of Haman from the beginning to the end, but not out of any printed book (for that is not lawful) but from an Hebrew manuscript, written on parchment. There are five places in the text, wherein the reader raises his voice with all his might. When he comes to the place that mentions the names of the ten sons of Haman, he repeats them very quick, to shew that they were all soon destroyed; and every time that the name of Haman is pronounced, all the congregation, with great fury, strike against the benches of the synagogue with mallets they bring for that purpose. After the reading is finished they return home, and have a supper not of flesh, but of spoon-meat; and early the next morning they arise and return to the synagogue, where, after a passage read in Exodus, which makes mention of the war of Amalek, they begin again to read the book of Esther, with the same ceremonies as before; and then conclude the service with curses against Haman and his wife Zeresh, with blessings upon Mordecai and Esther, and with praises to God for having preserved his people.

The reason of this festival being kept two days together is this:—The Jews at Shushan had two days allowed them to revenge themselves of their enemies (Esther ix. 13.) but the rest of the Jews, in other parts of the kingdom, had but one. This at first caused some difference in their time of feasting; for the Jews, in all the distant parts, having done execution on their enemies on the thirteenth day, kept their rejoicing feast on the fourteenth; but the

Jews at Shushan, being engaged in this work both on the thirteenth and fourteenth days, kept their festival the fifteenth. When Mordecai, however, had made a record of this great deliverance, he sent letters to all the Jews throughout the king's dominions, to establish it as a standing ordinance among them, that both the fourteenth and fifteenth of the month Adar every year, should be kept as the days whereon the Jews rested from their enemies: and this is the reason why the festival, at the present time, continues for two days, though the former only is kept with great solemnity.

It may not be improper here to take some notice of the origin of the Jews' synagogues, the nature of their construction, and the mode of Divine service performed in them, not only at their first institution, but even the present time.

The learned are not a little divided concerning the rise and antiquity of the Jewish synagogues. Some contend that they were in use under the tabernacle and first temple, whilst others assert, that they had no being until the times of the captivity. The former, in behalf of their opinion, urge, that as in the wilderness, the court of the tabernacle could not contain the hundredth part of the worshippers of the God of Israel, and as, in the Promised Land, the temple was too far distant for devout persons of every tribe to resort to it every sabbath-day, there was a necessity for other places to be appointed for the service of God, that the sense of religion might not be extinguished and lost. To this purpose they observe, that the Levites were dispersed in several cities, and the prophets, and sons of the prophets settled in their respective colleges, that they might be ready at hand, upon all occasions, to expound the law and instruct the people in their duty, whenever they met together for that purpose. And therefore, we find the Shunamite's husband thus expostulating with his wife, *Wherefore wilt thou go to him to-day? It is neither new moon, nor Sabbath,* 2 Kings, iv. 23, which seems to imply, that at such stated seasons as these, the custom was, to resort to such teachers for instruction, and, if this was the custom, there must have been proper places appointed for their reception.

These are the principal arguments in favor of synagogues being used while the first temple was standing, but the

silence of scripture seems to be a strong confutation of them: for, had these places of religious worship been in use among the Jews before the captivity, we cannot conceive why there should not have been as frequent mention made of them in the Old Testament, as there is in the New. The common, therefore, and indeed the most probable opinion is, that there were no such things as synagogues built before the captivity of Babylon, and the destruction of the temple: that the Jews, seeing themselves carried away into a strange country, where they had no temple for Divine service, came to the resolution of building such houses as were afterwards called synagogues, there to be instructed in the law, and to worship the God of their fathers, in the best manner they could on every Sabbath-day; and that, upon their return, finding the great convenience of such kind of buildings, they erected the same in their own country as they had done before in the land of their captivity, and herein were followed by the rest of the Jews in all parts whither they were dispersed.

The synagogues were built sometimes within the city, and sometimes without, but always on some elevated spot. They were usually raised above any private house, because the Jews have a notion that it is a dishonor to God to have his house inferior, nay, so much as equal to those of men. Nearly in the center of the building is a desk, or pulpit, (made very probably in imitation of that we read Ezra made use of, Nehemiah, viii. 4,) from whence the book, or roll of the law, is read with great solemnity, and from whence both he that expounds it, or he that preaches to the congregation at any time, always delivers himself. At the upper end of the synagogue, opposite the entrance, is a chest, or press, in which is kept the book of the law, wrapped in a fine embroidered cloth; and, during the time of Divine service, the women are separated from the men, and seated in a gallery inclosed with lattices.

Every town wherein there were ten *Batalnim*, that is, ten persons of full age and free condition, always at leisure on week days as well as Sabbaths, to attend Divine service, was thought large enough to have a synagogue built in it. But, if ten such could not be found, it was thought not proper, because the Jewish notion was, that less than

such a number could not make a congregation, and, without a congregation, no part of the synagogue service could be performed.

But as their notion was farther, that any person, Gentile as well as Jew, might be permitted to erect a synagogue, because the holiness of the place (as they thought) consisted not so much in the fabric as in its being set apart to holy uses, it thence came to pass, that though there were but few at first, yet in process of time they became so numerous, that in our Saviour's time there was no town in Judah but what had one or more in it: that, in Tiberias, a city of Galilee, there were no less than twelve, and (if we may credit the Jews) four hundred and eighty in Jerusalem. The buildings were made much in the same manner as the bodies of our churches, and had over their doors or entrance the following inscription: *This is the gate of the Lord, the righteous shall enter into it.* And upon the walls within were these, or such like sentences: *Remember thy Creator. Keep thy foot when thou goest into the House of the Lord. Silence is commendable in the time of prayer. And prayers without attention, are like a body without a soul, &c.*

In the service of the synagogue, the first office was prayer. Their prayers at first were few, but have since greatly increased, which makes the service much longer than it was originally. What they reckon the most solemn part of their prayers, is that which they call *Shemonah Eshreth*, that is, the eighteen prayers, which, according to them, were composed and instituted by Ezra and the great synagogue; and, therefore, they enjoin all that are of age, of what sex or condition soever, either in private or public, to repeat them three times a day, and on every synagogue-day they offer them up, with the greatest solemnity, in their public assemblies.

That some Judgment may be formed of the merit of these prayers, we shall insert the first ten, which have been translated by a very learned hand, and placed in the same order as they stand in the Jewish liturgies. They are as follow:

I. Blessed be thou, O Lord, our God, the God of our Fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the great God, powerful and tremendous;

the High God, bountifully dispensing benefits; the Creator and Possessor of the Universe, who rememberest the good deeds of our fathers, and in thy love sendest a redeemer to those, who are descended from them, for thy name's sake, O king, our helper, our Saviour, and our shield. Blessed art thou, our Lord, who art the shield of Abraham.

II. Thou, O Lord, art powerful for ever. Thou raisest the dead to life, and art mighty to save. Thou sendest down the dew, stillest the winds, and makest the rain to come down upon the earth, and sustainest with thy beneficence all that live therein; and, of thy abundant mercy, makest the dead again to live. Thou helpest up those that fall; thou curest the sick; thou loosest them that are bound, and makest good thy word of truth to those, that sleep in the dust. Who is to be compared to thee, O thou Lord of Might? And who is like unto thee, O our king, who killest, and makest alive, and makest salvation to spring up, as the herb out of the field? Thou art faithful, to make the dead rise again to life. Blessed art thou, O God, who raisest the dead to life.

III. Thou art Holy, and thy name is Holy, and thy saints do praise thee every day. Selah. For a great king and an holy one art thou, O God. Blessed art thou, O Lord, God most holy.

IV. Thou of thy mercy, givest knowledge to men, and teachest them understanding; give graciously unto us knowledge, wisdom, and understanding. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who graciously givest knowledge unto men.

V. Bring us back, O our father, to the observance of thy law, and make us to adhere to thy precepts; and do thou, O our king, draw us near to thy worship, and convert us unto thee by perfect repentance in thy presence. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who vouchsafest to receive us by repentance.

VI. Be thou merciful to us, O our father, for we have sinned; pardon us, O our king, for we have transgressed against thee, for thou art a God, good and ready to pardon. Blessed art thou, O Lord most gracious, who multipliest thy mercies in the forgiveness of sins.

VII. Look, we beseech thee, upon our afflictions: Be thou on our side, in all our contentions; and plead thou

our cause in all our litigations; and make haste to redeem us with a perfect redemption, for thy name's sake: for thou art our God, our king, and a strong Redeemer. Blessed art thou, O Lord, the redeemer of Israel.

VIII. Heal us, O Lord, our God, and we shall be healed; save us, and we shall be saved; for thou art our praise. Bring unto us sound health, and a perfect remedy for all our infirmities, for all our griefs, and for all our wounds; for thou art a God, who healest, and art merciful. Blessed art thou, O Lord, our God, who curest the diseases of thy people Israel.

IX. Bless us, O Lord, our God, in every work of our hands, and bless unto us the seasons of the year, and give us the dew, and the rain to be a blessing unto us upon the face of all our land, and satisfy the world with thy blessings, and send down moisture upon every part of the earth, that is habitable. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who givest thy blessing to the years.

X. Convocate us together by the sound of the great trumpet, to the enjoyment of our liberty; and lift up thy ensigus to call together all of the captivity, from the four quarters of the earth, to our own land. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who gatherest together the exiles of the people of Israel.

These prayers, however, are but of the same nature that the Lord's prayer is in our public service, that is, the fundamental, and principal part; for, besides these, they have some prayers that go before, some that follow after, and others interspersed between them.

In the course of the service there are three things read, namely, the *Shema*, the *Law*, and the *Prophets*. The *Shema* consists of three portions of scripture: the first is, from the beginning of the fourth verse of the 6th chapter of Deuteronomy, to the end of the 9th verse: the second, from the beginning of the 13th verse of the xith chapter of Deuteronomy to the end of the 21st verse: and the third, from the beginning of the 37th verse of the xvth chapter of Numbers, to the end of the chapter. And because the first of these portions, in the Hebrew Bible, begins with the word *Shema*, that is, *Hear*, therefore the reading of the whole is called *the reading of the Shema*, which, next to their saying of the *Shemoneth-Eshreth*, or the

eighteen prayers, is reckoned the most solemn part of their religious service.

The five books of the Law were divided by Ezra into fifty-four sections, because in their *intercalated* years, there were fifty-four sabbaths, and therefore, a section being read every sabbath-day completed the whole in the space of a year; but when the year was not thus intercalated, those who had the direction of the synagogue worship, reduced the sections to the number of sabbaths, by joining too short ones, in several places, into one, because they held themselves obliged to have the whole law, from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Deuteronomy, read over, in this manner every year.

During the persecution of the Jews, in the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, when the reading of the law was prohibited, instead of the fifty-four sections of it, the Jews substituted fifty-four sections of the prophets, which were afterwards continued; so that when the reading of the law was restored by the Maccabees, the section which was read every sabbath, out of the law, served for the *first* lesson, and the section out of the prophets for the *second*; and this is the meaning of St. Paul's *standing up to preach after the reading of the law and the prophets* (Acts xiii. 16.) that is, after the reading of the *first* lesson out of the *law*, and the *second* lesson out of the *prophets*.

With the reading of the law and the prophets was always added an exposition of them: for, after the Hebrew language had ceased to be the mother tongue of the Jews, and the Chaldee grew into use instead of it, the custom of the synagogue was, that one should first read a part of the scriptures to the people in the Hebrew tongue, and then another interpret it into the Chaldee, which they better understood. And this appears to be the reason why these sections of scripture came to be divided into verses, viz. that by these means the reader might certainly know how much he was to read, and the interpreter how much he was to interpret at every interval.

The reading and expounding being over, any person of learning and knowledge in the scriptures might address himself to the people, upon what moral or divine subject he thought proper; only we may observe that this was a compliment usually paid to strangers, and therefore, when

St. Paul and his company arrived at Antioch in Persidia, and went into the place of Divine worship on the sabbath-day, *after the reading of the law and the prophets, the rulers of the synagogues sent unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on.* Acts xiii, 15.

The ministration of the synagogue-service (from what has been said) evidently appears not to have been confined to the sacerdotal order. The priests were consecrated only to the service of the temple, which was of a very different nature, consisting chiefly in the offering up of sacrifices and oblations; but to this in the synagogue any one who, by learning, appeared properly qualified, was readily admitted. Only, for the preservation of order, there were in every synagogue some fixed officers, whose business it was to take care that all religious duties were therein decently performed.

The first of this kind are those whom the scriptures of the New Testament call *Rulers of the Synagogue*: but how many of these belonged to each synagogue we cannot tell, only we may presume, that there were more than one, because they are mentioned in the plural number in respect of the same synagogue. Next to them (and perhaps one of them) was the minister of the synagogue, whose business it was to offer up to God the public prayers of the congregation; and being for this purpose delegated (as it were) by them to God, is therefore, in the Hebrew language, called *Sheliach Zibber*, i. e. the Angel of the Church, or congregation; from whence the name of the bishops of the seven churches mentioned in the revelations, is manifestly borrowed. Next to this angel of the church, were the deacons, and inferior ministers of the synagogue, called in Hebrew, *Chazanim*, or *Overseers*, who, under the rulers of the synagogue, had the charge and oversight of all things in it, and kept the books of the Holy Scriptures, the liturgies, and utensils, which they brought forth, and carried away again, as there was occasion: and next to these overseers was the interpreter, whose office it was to recite, in Chaldee, the lessons (as they were read in Hebrew) to the congregation; and, because a great deal of skill in both languages was requisite for such an undertaking, whenever the rulers of the synagogue found a person fit for this pur-

pose, they retained him by a salary, and thereby made him a standing minister among them.

The times appointed for synagogue-worship were thrice a week, exclusive of their holidays, whether fasts or festivals, and thrice on each of those days, viz. in the morning, in the afternoon, and at night. When, at any of these times, the blessing was to be given, if there was a priest present in the congregation, he always did the office; but if there was not a priest, then the Sheliach Zibber, who read the prayers, in a form of benediction made proper for him, dismissed the people.

We have only one thing more to observe on this subject, and that is, to answer a question which it is very natural for many to ask, namely, How it came to pass that the Jews, who were so prone to idolatry before the Babylonish Captivity, should be so strongly bent against it (even to a degree of extravagance) after that captivity was ended? This cannot be imputed to any other cause, but their having the law and the prophets read to them every week after that captivity, which they had not before. Previous to the captivity, they had no synagogues for public worship or instruction, nor any places to resort to for these purposes, but either the temple at Jerusalem, or the cities of the Levites. Their duty to God was little known among them, and his laws, in a manner wholly forgotten: and therefore, as occasions offered, they were easily drawn into all the superstitions and idolatrous practices of those heathen nations near which they lived. But when, after the Babylonish captivity, synagogues were erected in every city, to which they constantly resorted for public worship, and where, every week, they had the law *at first*, and *afterwards* both the law and the prophets read to them; and where, by sermons and exhortations, they were, at least every sabbath-day, instructed in their duty, and excited to the performance of it. This kept them in a thorough knowledge of God and his laws, as the comminations in the prophets (when once they came to be read among them) deterred them from transgressing against them; for (as the apostle says, 2 Tim. iii. 16. 17.) *all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in*

righteousness: that the man of God (or every man that resolves to be godly) may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

CHAP. VII.

Of the Person and Book of JOB.

AS we have not any direct account of the time in which this illustrious character lived, and as the relation is entirely of a detached nature, we could not with propriety introduce it in the preceding part of our history, and therefore have thought proper to insert it, in conformity to the compilers of the Bible, after the Book of Esther.

The Book of Job, from whence this history is taken, is divided into three very unequal parts. The first is the historical narration of the former prosperity of Job, and of the miseries with which he was afterwards afflicted: this is the subject of the two first chapters. The second part consists of the speeches between Job and his friends, which comprehends the principal body of the work. The last part, which begins at the seventh verse of the last chapter, is a short account of what followed after these conferences between Job and his friends, and which concludes the whole.

But before we proceed to relate the particulars of the life of this holy man, we must make some few observations on his descent, and the place of his residence, which have produced great controversy among the different writers on the subject.

It is the opinion of some that Job was descended from Nahor, the son of Terah, and brother of Abraham; while others will have him to be descended from Esau, and to be Jobab his great grandson. But, after all that can be said in defence of these suppositions, the most probable opinion is, that he was descended, in a direct line, from Abraham by his wife Keturah; for, by Keturah, the patriarch had several sons, whom he (being resolved to reserve the chief patrimony for Isaac) portioned out, and sent into the east

to seek their fortunes, so that most of them settled in Arabia; and that Job (if not all the rest) amassed great wealth, and became particularly respected, appears from what the author of his history records of him, namely, that, before his calamities came upon him, *he was the greatest of all the men of the east.*

But, with respect to the descent of Job, it is an undoubted matter of fact, that Abraham, by his wife Keturah, had a son, whose name was Shuah; and therefore when we read of Bildad the Shushite (Job ii. 11.) we may very reasonably suppose that he was a descendant of that family, who, living in the neighborhood of Uz, where Job resided, might, perhaps, think himself obliged, by the ties of consanguinity, to go and visit his relation in the day of distress.

With respect to that part of the world in which Uz lay, various opinions have been started, according to the several families from whence Job is made to descend. But, on a fixed determination that he sprang from one of Keturah's sons, his habitation must be properly placed in that part of Arabia Deserta, which has to the north Mesopotamia and the river Euphrates; to the west, Syria, Palestine, and Idumæa; and to the south, the mountains of the Happy Arabia. This description is most substantially confirmed by what is related in the history itself, namely, that the Chaldeans and Sabeans plundered his estate, it being well known that those people were inhabitants of that part of the country.

At what exact period this great sufferer lived is likewise another matter which has occasioned great controversy among the learned, though there are several criterions by which these disputes may be removed. It is evident, that he was either predecessor, or at least cotemporary with Moses, from his mentioning, with the utmost abhorrence and detestation, the ancient idolatrous custom of paying Divine adoration to the sun, moon, and stars; and, which is a still greater proof, from his taking no manner of notice of the bondage of the Israelites under their cruel Egyptian task-masters, which was a circumstance of such moment and importance, that he would doubtless have expatiated thereon, had he not lived before that remarkable occurrence. It is evident, likewise,

that he lived in the days of the patriarchs from the length of his life; for he was about three-score years of age when God, for the trial of his faith and patience, first permitted Satan to persecute and torment him with the very worst of diseases, and he lived one hundred and forty years after being restored to his health and possessions; so that he was about two hundred years old at the time of his decease, which was a much longer period than several of the patriarchs could boast to have lived.

That Job lived before the law, may be gathered from his making not so much as one allusion to it through the whole course of his life, and from his offering such sacrifices in his own country as were not allowable, after the promulgation of the law, to be offered in any other place, but that *which the Lord hath chose in one of the tribes of Israel*; and that he lived after Jacob may be inferred from the character given him by his Divine master, viz. that for *uprightness*, and the fear of God, there was not *like unto him upon the earth*; which commendation could not be allowed to any, whilst Jacob, the favorite servant of God, was alive; nor can we suppose it proper to be given to any person even while Joseph lived, who, in moral virtues, and other excellencies, made as bright a figure as any person whatever in his time. Thus may the computation be reduced to a very narrow compass; and though it is exceeding difficult to point out the precise time, yet the general opinion is, that he lived in the time of the children of Israel's bondage, and therefore his birth may be placed about the time that Jacob went into Egypt, and the beginning of his afflictions in the year when Joseph died, at which last period of time he might justly deserve the very extraordinary character which God gave him, there not being any man alive, at that time, who, in virtue and integrity, could be compared with him.

Another matter that has occasioned some controversy among the learned is, who was the author of this book. It is supposed by some to have been written by Moses during his residence in Egypt, or else after he had fled from thence into the land of Midian, in order to encourage the Jews to bear up with fortitude and patience under their Egyptian bondage, and to induce them to put their whole trust and confidence in God, who would most certainly

deliver them in his own time and way. Others are inclined to think, that this sacred book was at first a plain and simple narrative, and that the materials were drawn up either by Job himself, or some of his friends or relations, and that afterwards it fell into the hands of Moses, who first translated it from the Arabic: that, in process of time, it was transmitted down to Solomon, and that from him, it is highly probable, it received the beautiful cast in which it now appears in the Hebrew language, the first part whereof, to the beginning of the third chapter (as St. Jerome assures us) is prose indeed, but from that to the forty-second chapter, it is all composed in heroic verse, in the same manner as those two celebrated poems, the *Iliad* of Homer, and the *Æneid* of Virgil.

But whoever was the author, whether Solomon, or any other inspired writer, certain it is, that he has exerted the beauty of his art to so great a degree, that whoever reads this historical book with the least attention will soon discern, that for the dignity and grandeur of its style, and the sublimity of its thoughts; for the spirit and energy of its diction; for the variety of its characters; for the beauty of its metaphors, similies and descriptions, there is no human composition to be met with in all the records of antiquity, that, upon a fair and impartial examination, can, in any degree, be put in competition with it.

Having said thus much by way of introduction, we shall now proceed to the history itself.

In what part of the world Job* was born cannot be ascertained, but the place of his residence is supposed to have been El-paran, in the land of Uz, otherwise called Ausitis, situated in the southern part of Arabia-Deserta. He was certainly a man of great piety and virtue, as well as renowned for his honorable descent. The Almighty

* There is not the least doubt but this is the same person who is called Jobab by Moses, in Gen. xxxvi. 33. As to the signification of the two terms, they both aptly and peculiarly belong to the same person. Jobab, in the original Hebrew, signifies a person who is free from all care and anxiety of mind, and in the possession of all sublimary enjoyments, which agrees with the former part of his character. The term Jobab, when contracted into Job, signifies a person overwhelmed with sorrow, which equally agrees with his character, when Satan had, by Divine permission, dominion over him, and plagued him with a long and uninterrupted series of misfortunes.

was pleased to bless him in so very singular a manner that his outward prosperity bore some degree of proportion to the perfections of his mind; for he not only bestowed on him a numerous issue, namely, seven sons and three daughters, but likewise great wealth, he being possessed of seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, and as many she-asses, which at that time were the riches of the country where he lived; and in short, such an extensive command had he, and such a grand retinue, that he had no superior at least, if he had any equal, throughout the whole compass of the east.

To this happiness Job had the additional pleasure of seeing his children live in the strictest bonds of affection towards each other; for the sons made it a constant practice to meet at each other's houses on their respective birth-days, at which times they made grand entertainments, and never failed inviting their sisters on the occasion.

As it was customary for these annual festivals to last seven successive days, their indulgent and pious father (who was ever anxious for the happiness of his children) took particular care, at the expiration of the week, to inform them, by a special messenger, that he expected they would prepare themselves, both by fasting and prayer, for the approaching sacrifice which he proposed to offer up to God in their behalf. When they were all assembled together, pursuant to their father's orders, he arose early the next morning (the most proper time, doubtless, for such an extraordinary act of devotion) and not only prayed to God to bless them, but offered a particular burnt-offering for each of them, being apprehensive that some one or other of them might, in an unguarded hour, and in the height of their mirth, have either said or done something that might reflect a dishonor on the holy religion they professed. And this was Job's constant practice at the close of their respective festivals.

But notwithstanding Job was possessed of such great and exemplary piety, yet it was not sufficient to save him from the most severe, though unjust accusations. As there was a time set apart for Job's sons to prepare themselves for their appearance before the Almighty in their father's house, so likewise there were days appointed for the Blessed Angels themselves to approach the throne of God,

and to lay before him an exact account of the administration of their respective commissions; and the devil, who is the most malicious and implacable enemy of mankind, embraced the favorable opportunity of intruding himself among them.* The Almighty, however, in an instant, discovering the impostor, called to him, and in order to convince him, that though he was a powerful and arbitrary spirit, he was, notwithstanding, in all respects, subject to him, insisted that he should give an account of himself, and of what business he had been upon. To which he made a faint reply, with such an apparent concern and uneasiness of mind, as sufficiently testified his awful apprehension of the Almighty, and the limitation of his power. “I have been, said he, taking a circuit round the habitable globe.” The Almighty then said unto Satan, *Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?* Satan, assuming his usual assurance, returned an answer to this effect: “Yes, I have. But what he does is purely the result of self-interest: it is not the pleasure he really takes in acting conformably to your commands, but the advantage which he is conscious to himself arises from his servile obedience. Have not you made him ample amends for all his trouble? Have you not protected both him and his family in such an extraordinary manner that no misfortune could possibly attend them? Whatever he undertakes is crowned with success; and have you not bestowed on him such an abundance that the country he lives in can scarcely contain his flocks and herds? I am very well assured, however, was you once to turn the scale, to exert your power to his disadvantage, and reduce him once to a lower state of life, he will then play the hypocrite no longer, but throw off the mask, and openly

* Though the grand accuser of mankind, as here represented, appeared in the presence of God the Father, in order to calumniate his most faithful servant, and one of the most righteous men then on the earth, yet his insolence cannot be said to be greater than it was afterwards, when he presented himself before God the Son in the wilderness, and assaulted him with a train of the most audacious temptations he ever practised. Both attempts, however, ended in his own confusion; and God’s infinite goodness was illustrated, in the most conspicuous manner, by the envy and malice of so implacable a spirit.

“disdain your over-ruling Providence: and therefore, notwithstanding all his boasted virtues, he has not the gratitude in him which you and the world imagine.”

The Almighty, being pleased to put the integrity of his servant Job to the test, and to set his exalted virtues in the fairest point of view, answered Satan as follows: *Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand.* As if he had said, “Since you have thus unjustly aspersed the man, who is perfectly guiltless, and will maintain his integrity to the last under the most abject poverty, with the same strictness and sincerity as he does now while under my protection, I will for once withhold my hand, and give you full power and authority to dispose of all his substance at your will and pleasure, but upon this express condition, that you presume not to touch his person.”

Satan, pleased with this unexpected commission, immediately withdrew, fully resolved to satiate his revenge on this favorite of the Almighty; nor was it long before an opportunity offered for carrying his design into execution. It happened soon after to be the birth-day of Job's eldest son, on which the whole family, according to custom, were assembled at his house, in order to indulge themselves in their accustomed gaiety, without restriction or reserve, and without the least apprehension of any danger. This was the critical conjuncture for Satan to enter upon his inhuman and merciless project, which he executed in the following manner.

In the first place he animated a clan of robbers to ravage that part of Job's land which lay nearest to them. These sons of violence instantly obeyed his orders, and Job soon received a very melancholy account of this his first misfortune in words to this effect: “As your oxen were plowing in the fields, and your asses were grazing in the adjacent meadows, the Sabeans have made an incursion on your territories, and carried away your substance along with them, having first put every person to the sword, in the most barbarous and inhuman manner, that were employed in your service, except myself, who by flight have escaped to bring you the unwelcome news of so sudden and unexpected a calamity.”

This messenger had but just finished his tale when a second arrived with the melancholy tidings that there had just happened a most violent storm of hail, rain, thunder and lightning, in the pastures where his sheep and oxen were inclosed; in which not only the cattle, but all the shepherds and herdsmen were destroyed, and that he was the sole surviving person to acquaint him with this fatal disaster.

No sooner had this second messenger done speaking than a third arrived, with news that the Chaldeans, another clan of robbers, had divided themselves into several parties, and made an inroad into a very material part of his territories; that they had not only driven away his camels, but had slain their keepers, and that himself only was preserved to bring him the melancholy intelligence.

Before this third messenger had quitted the apartment, a fourth came in with more fatal tidings than all the rest, informing him that, as his children were feasting according to their usual custom, in their elder brother's house, there arose such a whirlwind all on a sudden from the desert, that it took away the four corners of the house,* and laid

* Some atheistical critics have objected to this circumstance, and observed, with an air of contempt and ridicule, how inconsistent it is with the course of nature to suppose that the wind could smite the four corners of the house at the same time. In answer to this, we shall make it appear evident that it was a natural event, and that hurricanes of the like nature were frequent in the country where Job resided. The tempest, or storm, here spoken of, was one of those terrible whirlwinds which came from the wilderness, that is to say, from that part of it called, by way of eminence, Arabia-Deserta. Now it is to be observed that, by all the accounts of those who had travelled into this part of the world, these kind of winds whirl about in a circular form, like eddies in the sea, and therefore, without any miraculous operation, this might have a strong influence over every part of the house at one single blast. Besides, in an impetuous tempest, such as this doubtless was, and such as mariners too frequently meet with in some particular passages, they are perfectly at a loss to know from what part of the compass the wind blows, since, by its violence, it proceeds, to all outward appearance, from every quarter of the heavens at one and the same time. As these arguments, however, may not be sufficient to convince some unbelievers of the probability of such a circumstance, we shall refer them to a celebrated writer, who, it is very likely, may have a greater authority with them than Moses; and if we can produce the testimony of so great an author as Virgil to confirm what we have asserted, we may hope that they will acquiesce

it at once in ruins; and that not a single person escaped but himself to give an account of so dreadful a desolation.

Job heard the three first narrations without shewing the least discomposure of mind; but this last so ruffled him that, like a tender and indulgent parent, he expressed the inward anguish of his soul by his outward actions. In the first place he rent his mantle, then shaved his head, and at length fell prostrate on the ground. In all this, however, he did not answer Satan's expectations; for, notwithstanding this complication of calamities, these successive scenes of sorrow, yet he most devoutly paid his

in a point which they have hitherto considered as ridiculous and absurd. For this purpose we direct them to the first *Æneid* of Virgil, where they will find the description of a storm raised by *Æolus* the god of the winds, which is thus beautifully translated by the celebrated Mr Dryden:

Æolus, after having paid his compliments to the goddess to whom his speech is directed, proceeds to execute her commands as follows:

He said:—and hurled against the mountain-side,
 His quivering spear, and all the god applied.
 The raging winds rush through the hollow wound,
 And dance in air, and skim along the ground.
 Then settling on the sea, the surges sweep,
 Raise liquid mountains, and disclose the deep.
 North, South, East, West, with mixed confusion roar,
 And roll the foaming billows to the shore.
 The cables crack, the sailors' fearful cries }
 Ascend; and sable night involves the skies; }
 And heaven itself is ravished from their eyes. }
 Loud peals of thunder from the poles ensue,
 Then flashing fires the transient light renew:
 The face of things a frightful image bears,
 And present death in various forms appears.

Though this is certainly a sufficient evidence to confute those atheists who disbelieve the circumstance of the house of Job's son being rent at the four corners at the same time, yet it may not be improper to add the description given of whirlwinds, or hurricanes in this part of the world by the famous Mr Addison:

So, where our wide Numidian wastes extend,
 Sudden, the impetuous hurricanes descend,
 Wheel through the air, in circling eddies play,
 Tear up the sands, and sweep whole plains away.
 The helpless traveller, with wild surprize, }
 Sees the dry desert all around him rise, }
 And smothered in the dusty whirlwind dies. }

tribute of adoration to his God; and, to shew that he was perfectly resigned to all these severe marks of the Divine displeasure, addressed himself to him in words to this effect: "I am now, said he, but in the same state and condition I was when I first came into the world, and have lost no more than what I must have parted with, whenever it should please the Almighty to call me out of it. The Lord, though he hath bereaved me at present of all I had, yet he has taken from me nothing more than what, in his infinite goodness, he first bestowed upon me." *The Lord gave, and the Lord taketh away: blessed be the name of the Lord.*

Thus, notwithstanding Job was oppressed with such a load of miseries as no mortal, it might be imagined, could, with any degree of patience, have ever borne, yet he suffered not one indecent word to proceed from his mouth that tended in the least either to accuse the Almighty, or call his over-ruling Providence into question.

The former prosperity of Job, and the great change which thus took place, the learned Dr. Young has beautifully expressed in the following lines:

Thrice happy Job long lived in regal state,
 Nor saw the sumptuous east a prince so great;
 Whose worldly stores in such abundance flowed,
 Whose heart with such exalted virtue glowed:
 At length misfortunes take their turn to reign,
 And ill on ill succeed; a dreadful train!

A short time after Job was reduced to this deplorable situation, the holy angels going once again to attend God's throne, in order to give an account of their respective commissions, Satan likewise openly appeared amongst them, and presented himself as one equally ready and willing to be examined in regard to his past conduct. Not daring, however, to speak till spoken to, he waited till God demanded of him where he had been, and what he had done. To which he made a reply to this effect: "That he had lost no part of his time, but had taken a second circuit round the earth to find a favorable opportunity for the execution of his power." The Almighty then said to Satan, *Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a perfect and upright man, one that*

feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without a cause. As if he had said, “ You “ are now convinced that the character I gave of my “ servant Job was strictly just, and that you brought in “ your charge against him without the least grounds, since “ he still resolutely persists in the unwearied exercise of “ his exalted virtues; and maintains his integrity with the “ same strictness and sincerity as he did in his state of “ affluence and prosperity, notwithstanding my assent to “ those severe calamities which he has so undeservedly “ suffered.”

The answer returned to this by the malicious Satan was to the following effect: “ Your servant Job continues “ seemingly constant, ’tis true, and unmoved at present, “ neither is it any great matter of wonder or surprize that “ he does so; since any one may be said to be rich enough “ that enjoys a perfect state of health; and who would not “ sit down contented with the loss of his effects, and the “ lives of his children, if by those means he could pre- “ serve his own? Do but enlarge my commission, and let “ me touch him to the quick: let me but once lay my hand “ upon his body, and I will engage the hypocrite will be “ soon unmasked, and you will find that he will renounce “ your Providence, and ungratefully treat you for all your “ former benefactions.

The Almighty, well knowing that all Job’s other virtues would be, by his additional afflictions, still rendered more exemplary and illustrious, replied, *Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life.* Which was as much as to say, “ I now give you the same power over his person, as “ I did before over his family and effects: Inflict what “ distemper you think fit on him, but presume not to “ touch his life.”

No sooner had Satan obtained this new commission, than, withdrawing from the Divine presence more transported with pleasure than before, he went to pursue his mischievous purpose, and smote Job from head to foot with sore boils, or a fiery ulcer, whose malignant distemper was such an aggravation of his sorrow, that it obliged him to sit down on a dunghill, and lay hold of the

first thing that came to hand (which happened to be a potsherd) to scrape off the filth and corruption that issued from his blains.

Never was human nature more disguised than was poor Job's body in this loathsome condition. His skin was studded with filthy scabs and blotches, not arising from any peccant humor in his natural constitution, which medicines might correct, but inflicted by malicious policy, which raised them to the highest extremity of pain, that thereby he might, if possible, be induced to despair, and blaspheme his God. Nor were his pains short or intermitting, like fits and pangs, but of long continuance. And what greatly increased his misery was the nastiness of his distemper, which rendered him not only odious to himself, but loathsome to others; for not only his relations and friends abandoned him, but likewise his very menial servants, so that he was left destitute of all human assistance. Thus he, who but a short time before was the greatest man in his country, in whose presence the young men were afraid to appear, and before whom the aged stood up; to whom princes paid the greatest reverence, and nobles in humble silence admired, is now divested of all grandeur, sits mourning on a bed of dirt, and, instead of royal apparel, is covered with the most loathsome sores and ulcers. He, who was but the other day the delight of mankind, is now become the foulest of objects, and a very dunghill upon a dunghill. All keep at a frightful distance, and with horror behold him as a most loathsome monster.

To add, if it were possible, to the misery of Job, in this distressed state, his wife, from whom, more than all the world, he might reasonably expect the most comfortable assistance, instead of pitying him in his deplorable condition, treated him with the utmost scorn and contempt, and profanely reproached him in words to this effect: "Thou doating devotee, how I detest thy hypocrisy! How vain are all thy affected prayers! What, I beseech you, have they procured you, but one continued series of sorrows? Will you still seem perversely righteous? Be wise for once, and know your own interest. Bid defiance to him in whom you have put so

“much trust, and, by one resolute act, put a period to a life that is not worth preserving.”*

This blasphemous and perverse speech was, doubtless, no small aggravation to Job's agonizing pains; and notwithstanding her words cut him to the heart, yet he uttered no indecent expression, no murmur or complaint against God, on account of his extreme sufferings; but, on the contrary, not only severely reprimanded his evil counsellor, by telling her that she talked like a rash, thoughtless and foolish woman; but piously added thereto, that nothing ought ever to be taken ill at God's hands, and that the more good men received, the less reason had they to complain when they were visited by any sudden calamity. *Thou speakest, said he, as one of the foolish women speaketh: what! shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?*

In the parts adjacent to Job's territories dwelt three of his very intimate acquaintance, namely, Eliphaz the Tema-

* This unexpected attack from Job's wife, it may reasonably be supposed, took place at the instigation of the Tempter, who had, perhaps, assumed some agreeable form, and persuaded her, that the best way to put a period to her sorrows would be, to persuade her husband to blaspheme God: that there wanted nothing more to deprive him of life; for that the consequence of such an act of impiety would certainly produce his immediate dissolution. He might likewise add, that it was Job's secret sins that had brought so many, and such great calamities upon him: that the Almighty had showered down his vengeance upon him, in order to force him to discover his hypocrisy; and that, when he had so done, God would either deprive him entirely of life, or restore him to his former state of health. These instigations might work strongly with Job's wife, who is represented to have been a discreet and virtuous woman. If this was the case (as there is great reason to think it was) consequently the greater affliction must it be to Job to find that she believed him guilty of hypocrisy and dissimulation; and to hear her persuading him to what his soul abhorred, to dishonor God and his own integrity. To meet with reproach from those from whom we hope for comfort, must certainly be more piercing than even the most acute bodily pains. The Psalmist has most beautifully express the uneasiness and disquietude of his mind, when he once labored under the ungrateful deportment of one, whom we may reasonably suppose was as near and dear to him, as this woman was to Job. *It is not, says he, an open enemy that has done me this dishonor, for then I could have borne it; neither was it mine adversary that did magnify himself against me; for then peradventure I would have hid myself from him: but it was even thou, my companion, my guide, and mine own familiar friend.*

nite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite,* all persons of distinction, and universally admired for their profound wisdom. These three, hearing of their friend's sad calamity, left their respective seats, and meeting at a place appointed, went together the next day in order to condole with him, and, if possible, to alleviate his sorrows by their wholesome admonitions.

As soon as they came near the place, and saw their afflicted friend sitting on a dunghill in the most consummate misery, they were shocked to that degree, that they suddenly started back, and for some time stood aghast as if they had beheld a spectre. After a little recovering themselves, and again looking at him, they burst into tears, rent their garments, and threw dust into the air, which descending on their heads, expressed the confusion they were in, to find him so disfigured by his noisome boils, that they could scarcely be convinced he was the man they looked for. However, when they had taken a more perfect and nearer view of him, they sat down on the earth at some distance from him; and seeing him in so disconsolate a condition, they never offered, for seven days and nights successively, to utter one single word; nor did they make the attempt, till time (which occasions an alteration in all things) had caused some abatement of their friend's sorrow, as well as their own.

This distressed scene of Job and his three friends, at their first interview, is thus beautifully and concisely described by the celebrated Dr Young:

What now but deaths, and poverty and wrong,
The sword wide wasting, the reproachful tongue,
And spotted plagues that marked his limbs all o'er
So thick with pains, they wanted room for more?
A change so sad what mortal heart could bear?
Exhausted woe had left him nought to fear,
But gave him all to grief: low earth he prest,
Wept in the dust, and sorely smote his beast.

* It is the opinion of the Jewish doctors, and the Septuagint agree with them, that these three persons were kings, or chief rulers, and had the government of those parts of the country where they lived. It is likewise evident, from scripture, that they were men of illustrious birth, and that they were particularly distinguished, in that age, for their great wisdom and knowledge.

His friends around the deep affliction mourned,
 Felt all his pangs, and groan for groan returned;
 In anguish of their hearts their mantles rent,
 And seven long days in solemn silence spent.

When the seven melancholy days and nights were expired, Job, being overwhelmed with sorrow, and finding that his friends had been altogether silent, without administering the least ray of comfort, could no longer contain himself, but broke out into the most passionate complaints against the day of his birth, with fervent wishes for his deliverance from a life dragged on in pain and misery. These complaints and wishes are contained in the third chapter, the whole of which has been thus paraphrased by a very celebrated writer:

Curst be the day when first I viewed the light,
 And cursed again be that unfriendly night
 When first my form to mortal sight was shown,
 When first my birth to gladdening friends was known:
 Curst be the time with more than Stygian gloom,
 And death's dark shadows be its lonely doom.
 Let not the Almighty from his throne on high,
 On those void minutes cast a gracious eye;
 Let them receive an everlasting blot,
 From others lie unnoticed and forgot,
 Because they gave my birth no just restraint,
 Nor drew the veil o'er sorrow's sad complaint.
 Why died I not ere nature gave me sight,
 Or brought the struggling infant into light?
 Why did the breasts prevent my parting breath,
 Or knees oppose the giddy swoons of death?
 Then had I been by no sad woes oppressed,
 But in deep slumber took eternal rest;
 With kings and rulers long before expired,
 Who, sick of life, had to the dust retired.
 With princes, who in shining hoards excelled,
 Or births, which parents never yet beheld?
 There to disturb mankind the wicked cease,
 The weary rest, the troubled are at peace.
 The prisoners enjoy unbroken sleep,
 Still unoppressed, and still unused to weep.
 There fate alike to mortal race is just,
 There high, there low, lie mouldering in the dust.
 Why lives to weep the sadly tortured soul,
 To suck the dregs of life's unfriendly bowl?
 Why for too partial death does man complain,
 Why call so oft, and why so oft in vain?

Why 'mongst the sons of happiness is found,
 The wretch whom God with woes has hedged around?
 For swelling cares at first approach of morn,
 Like torrents rage, unable to be borne;
 And those which filled me oft with timorous dread,
 Like bursting thunders crackle o'er my head.
 Scarce happy days, or joyous times I knew,
 Or pleasure's landscapes opened to my view;
 When safety setting, robbed me of its right,
 And woe's pale eve brought on the shades of night.

Eliphaz the Temanite (who was the most able orator of Job's three friends) having listened, with no small concern, at his impatient, and as he thought, blasphemous execrations, could no longer refrain from speaking, and therefore, (together with his two companions) going close to the spot where he sat, admonished him for his conduct, in words to this effect:

“ We came, friend Job, to alleviate your sorrows, if possible, by condoling with you in the softest terms; but you have, contrary to our expectations, shewed your impatience and inquietude to so shameful a degree, and cast such audacious reflections on the Almighty (of whom you have always spoken till now with the most profound and reverential awe) that instead of pouring balm into your wounds, my language, perhaps, may, like the probe, only aggravate your pains for the present. But who can refrain from vindicating the Divine Justice, and using his best endeavors to set an erring friend in the right way? We readily acknowledge, that your wise instructions have given great relief to the afflicted, and made the feeble strong; that such as have mourned and been overwhelmed with sorrows, have found your friendly advice, like an healing balsam, mitigate their pains; that your pious exhortations have confirmed many in their constancy and resignation to the Divine will; but now, since it is your turn to undergo the sufferer's part, it visibly appears, by your unjustifiable murmurs and complaints, that it is much more easy to give good counsel than to receive it; to recommend the afflicting rod, than to bear it; you have now almost convinced us, that your views were all mean and mercenary, and that you served God in hopes only of some recompence or reward. Give but yourself the least time for reflection, and you will find that the innocent and virtuous were never plunged in

such an abyss of woes (like yours) as were beyond all hopes of cure: they never bear the marks of the Divine vengeance to so severe a degree. They are oftentimes chastised, indeed, and kindly corrected by the hand of Providence, but never totally destroyed. A truly upright person was never known to be undone beyond recovery, as you appear to be. He that delights to sow iniquity shall inevitably see a rueful harvest of destruction.

“ Though I would not boast of receiving any celestial intelligence, yet, to convince you still farther of your error, listen with patience to what I was secretly informed by an heavenly messenger.

“ One night, as I was lying on my bed, I saw a vision that struck me with a reverential horror: my hair stiffened, as it were, at the unusual apparition, and my joints trembled with a fear that was irresistible. And notwithstanding I saw plainly a corporeal substance stand before me, yet I cannot describe the form and shape distinctly it assumed, through the confusion and flutter which my spirits then were in. There was, for some time, a profound silence, but at length I heard a voice utter, with all the deliberation imaginable, words to this effect: Shall any finite creature (said he) dare to be more righteous than the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth? Shall any mortal man presume to vie with his Maker in regard to his purity and perfection? Since the Almighty charges even his angels with folly, and since the archangels themselves bow down and blush before him, shall a mere man contend with his Maker, and endeavor to justify his innocence and conduct before him? Shall a mere man, I say, act with such a consummate assurance, whose habitation is nothing more than a house of clay, and whose foundation is in the dust, and liable to be destroyed by the meanest insect? Thousands perish every day, and their fall excites no manner of wonder or regard. In vain they fly for succor to their immense riches and their extensive power; for, as they lived, so they die in their folly.

“ Correct, therefore, friend Job, thy rash discourse, and never more presume to reflect on or arraign the justice of thy Maker. Though some foolish persons, it is probable, may approve of your conduct, and start bold objections against heaven, on seeing you in this most melancholy and

deplorable condition; though my words, perhaps, may have no influence or effect over you, yet consult with the most pious, and such as are more distinguished for their wisdom than I dare pretend to be: enquire, I say, of whom you please, nay, even of an angel, if any one will condescend to converse with you, and you will find the purport of his answer to be this: that God, in his own due time and way, makes the wicked, and those who obstinately persist in an open violation of his commandments, feel with horror and amazement the weight of his Divine vengeance. This position is so true and certain, that I have foretold the destruction of the ungodly man, even whilst he seemed most secure of every temporal blessing that his heart could wish for: nay, I have predicted the downfall of his very children. Justice, I have observed, never fails, in process of time, to lay fast hold of them, and very seldom, if ever, suffers one to escape. The hungry leaped over their most thorny fences, and enjoyed the fruits of their labors. The spoilers came, and without mercy made incursions upon them, ransacked their habitations, and laid waste all their fruitful lands.

“ Though afflictions, it is true, spring not from the dust, neither are they to be ascribed to any earthly causes, which are the instruments only of the Almighty’s vengeance; yet mankind, when they have offended their Maker, as naturally meet with sorrow and distress, as the rivers fall into the ocean, or as the sparks mount upwards to the skies. This is the sad portion which injured heaven has assigned to the whole race of Adam, ever since his first transgression; and therefore Job, was your case my own, I would address myself with all humility to the throne of grace, adore God’s infinite perfections, and, in a word, fall prostrate before him, and sue for mercy: for his ways are dark and intricate, his secrets are past man’s finding out; his Providence, when least understood, is most merciful, and ever just, and keeps our thoughts in endless admiration. He hangs his clouds, and forms his rain-drops, in a mould unknown to us: he pours his waters in profusion on the hills; and in the vales, his softer, more prolific showers, by which the poor grow rich, and by which he wipes off the tears

from the mourner's cheek: whilst, on the other hand, he entangles the man of craft, defeats the evil-counsellor, and blasts his most deep concerted designs. He turns the statesman's art against himself, and countermines the politician's project: he often, by interposing mists, obscures their sight, makes them lose their way, and imagine it to be night when it is only noon-day. He guards the poor from the oppressor's wrongs, and secures the weak from those who would otherwise overpower them. No one, therefore, however injured, should despair, as there may be hopes justly entertained that God will save him, and stop the mouth of proud injustice.

“ Since then, friend Job, the man is happy that feels the smart of God's correcting hand, dont you despise it; imagine you are favored when you are chastened; let no desponding thoughts perplex your mind, for he that made the wound will make it whole: he will deliver you, in time, from all the numerous woes that now surround you, and change your scene of misery to joy: if you will but acquiesce, and persevere with patience, he will protect you with a paternal care, both in the day of famine and of battle. The poison of the most malignant tongue shall never blast your reputation, and you shall be secure, though all the adjacent countries shall be laid waste around you. You shall be fearless and undaunted when the wild beasts, half famished, quit their dens in quest of prey: the soil, however barren before, shall bring forth its fruits in plenty for your use, and wherever you are, nothing shall destroy them: wherever you pitch your tent, there shall you rest in safety; and when you settle your accounts, your substance will be found to answer all your expectations. Your offspring shall prove as numberless as the sands of the sea-shore, or blades of grass in the most verdant meadow, notwithstanding you are childless at present, and as destitute of all things as the trees are of leaves in the depth of winter. And when death, who is ever watchful, shall look for his harvest, and see you ripe with age, he shall cut down your bending stalk as gently as possible, and lay you low in the grave; just as the husbandman deposits his corn into the garner, when it is fit for gathering.

“These, friend Job, are indisputable truths. I have weighed them well, and know them to be such. Remember, therefore, what I have told you, and be assured that, from such reflections, there is not the least doubt but you will find immediate consolation.”

This warm discourse of Eliphaz was far from convincing Job that his conduct was so impeachable as his friend had represented. Instead of lamenting the execrations he had made on his birth-day, he endeavored to justify, and, as through the anguish of his soul, he then wished most devoutly for the day of his dissolution, and thereby a final period to his sorrows, so he now renewed that wish with equal fervency. The substance of the answer he made to Eliphaz, in vindication of his conduct, was to the following effect:

“Oh, (said he) that my grief was once thrown into a balance, and all my afflictions were weighed against it! Oh, that some less partial judge than yourself would determine my unhappy case, and pronounce whether my complaints bear any proportion to my agonizing pains! for then he would ingenuously acknowledge that the sands of the sea were but a trivial weight in comparison to the massy burthen under which I labor. Unutterable groans torment my soul; nor is it in the power of words to paint my woes. It is easy, indeed, for you, who are free from care and pain, who live in peace and plenty, not to murmur or repine. Is the wild ass displeased when he grazeth in the verdant meadow? Or does the ox low with discontent while he stands hovering over his fodder? But were you to feel the weight of my distress, your groans would be proportionate to mine; your sorrows would swell to as high a tide. Is there any one can take the least pleasure in unsavoury meats? What taste is there in the white of an egg? Who would not ask for a few grains of salt to render it a little less insipid? How much more justly then may I petition for something to make my bitter portion palatable? I, who am at present reduced to that excess of grief, that I have nothing to support me under such uncharitable imputations as yours are; imputations which my soul abhors. To such an amazing height are my troubles risen; such is the weight of my unutterable woe; my soul is driven to such an extremity, that I must

still implore the Divine goodness to grant me the request I so earnestly desire, to shew some bowels of compassion, and, in short, by one decisive stroke to let me enjoy death, which I now thirst after more than ever. I would extend my arms to bid him welcome, and hug the ghastly monarch to my bosom. His presence would support me under the most agonizing pains: the thoughts that my life was near at an end would appease my anguish: I would then shew an undaunted courage, and depart with joy, as being conscious that I have not been guilty of any known or wilful sin, whereby to draw down the vengeance of heaven on my devoted head. What is my strength, alas, and how absurd would it be for me to live in hopes of better days? What is my end? Where is my period set when I shall sigh no more? Oh, that the blow was struck! since to prolong my life is but an aggravation to my misery.

“ I was in hopes (continued Job) your friendly admonition would have relieved me, and once imagined that your discourses would have alleviated my sorrows; but, by your mistake of my distemper, instead of assuaging my grief, you have only inflamed it. Am I, think you, as insensible as the most impenetrable marble? Are all my muscles composed of brass, that I should not invoke death to ease me of my load of sorrow? Do not imagine, Eliphaz, that my reason is disturbed, that I am driven to despair, and totally regardless of what I say and do: yet, were that my most deplorable case, a friend should shew some pity and compassion for one in such distress as I am: and doubtless you would have been in some measure concerned for me, had you the fear of God before your eyes, or did you but once reflect, that he could cast you down, like me, with equal ease. My friends, I find, prove as deceitful as the stream of such brooks as are formed by the hasty rains, and blackened with the ice and snow which fall from the hills with a prodigious noise, and roll along the vales. They promise water, 'tis true; but as soon as summer comes they are dry; they are so perfectly vanished, that you can scarce discern the least footstep of the course in which they ran. The people of Tema and Sheba expected to have quenched their thirst at pleasure where once they observed such a confluence of water; but, alas, they were most shamefully disappointed, and blushed to think,

that they should be so weak as to build their hopes of succor on such precarious streams.* Just such are you, who, seeing my calamity, desert me. Why do you stare so, and thus gaze on me at a distance? Is it my disease that occasions this estrangement? Are you afraid that I shall infect you, that you seem in such a consternation? Are you apprehensive that I shall beg your charitable assistance under my present misfortunes? Did I ever implore you to relieve my wants? Did I ever desire to be delivered out of the hands of the oppressor at your expense? But notwithstanding this appeal, I would not have you imagine that I look down with an eye of contempt on any of your admonitions. No; I am ready and willing to listen to any charge that you may justly lay against me, and shall, with all imaginable sincerity and gratitude, be thankful for any better information. Truth, indeed, is irresistible, but all your reprehensions have no manner of influence or effect. All your pride and ambition is to play the orator; but in vain do you study the most artful terms to drive me into despair. Nay, you press hard upon me, who am too much dejected already, and altogether defenceless; in short, you devise counsel against your friend in the most barbarous and inhuman manner. Have I uttered any thing hitherto

* This is certainly a most beautiful similitude, or representation, of the treacherous and deceitful deportment Job conceived of his three friends.—Mr Addison says, Man is subject to innumerable pains and sorrows by the very condition of his system; and yet, as if nature had not sown evils enough in life, we are continually adding grief to grief, and aggravating the common calamity by our cruel treatment of each other. Every man's natural weight of affliction is still made more heavy by the envy, malice, treachery, or injustice of his neighbor. At the same time that the storm beats upon the whole species, we are falling foul of each other.—In the apocryphal treatise, entitled, *The Wisdom of the Son of Sirach*, we find the behavior of a treacherous and self-interested friend thus beautifully described: “If thou wouldst get (says he) a friend, prove him first, and be not hasty to credit him: for some man is a friend for his own occasion, and will not abide in the day of thy trouble; and there is a friend, who, being turned to enmity and strife, will discover thy reproach.” On this subject there is a very striking passage in Ovid, the translation of which runs thus:

Those, who the various gifts of fortune gain,
A thousand fawning, flattering friends obtain:
But if the goddess frown; those friends no more
Regard the idol they adored before.

that has deserved this severe treatment at your hands? I cannot think myself so blind, so partial to myself; I cannot imagine that my judgment is so debased, or that my taste is so bad and undistinguished, as not to perceive these your words are all misapplied, and will never be able to stand the test of impartial truth."

Here Job made a short pause, and then resumed his discourse in words to this effect: "Man's life, said he, has a determined period by the irrevocable and fixed decree of the Almighty: his days will expire at the appointed time like those of an hireling. Does not the weary peasant wish for the approach of evening, at which time he knows that his toil and fatigue will be over, and that at last he shall receive the fruits of his labor? Why then shall I be debarred from praying for rest and death, since life to me is a perfect burthen? I pass each tedious day in lingering woes, and, when night comes, that prompts all nature to rest, I find no mitigation of my sorrow. Even then, whilst others sleep, dark gloomy thoughts perplex my mind, and my griefs, if possible, become more outrageous than by day. A thousand times I turn from side to side, but all in vain; the tortures I endure are still unutterable.* With longing eyes I look for break of day;

* It is evident, from the description Job gives of his great uneasiness during the nights, that if he had any sleep, instead of its giving him any refreshment, it was of the most terrifying nature. Such sleep is occasioned by thick vapors, or gross fumes ascending from the stomach to the brain, which close, or lock up, the senses; and the stronger and thicker such fumes or vapors are, the more liable the person is to be terrified and disturbed. There are several reasons to be given why people in general are frequently perplexed in their sleep with disagreeable dreams. First, dreams are sometimes caused either by intemperate eating or drinking, or from the indisposition of the body through sickness or agonizing pains; and from hence more particularly did Job's shocking dreams arise. Secondly, there is a moral cause of dreams, the cares and disquietudes which a man meets with in the day frequently affecting his imagination in the night. Thirdly, there are diabolical dreams, and of such Job pathetically complains: *Thou scarest me with dreams, and terrifieth me through visions.* But it was the malicious Satan who made this addition to poor Job's punishment; and, by taking advantage of his deplorable state and condition, stirred the gross humors of his body up into his brains, out of which his fancy formed the most hideous apparitions.

but, when it comes, 'tis joyless all. My flesh is clothed with loathsome worms, and every limb I have is crusted over with putrefaction. Hopeless my days in quick succession move, just as the shuttle traverses the loom. In tender compassion, then, O Lord, to my incessant griefs, remember that life outflies the wind, which, when 'tis passed, can never be recalled. One frown of thine will at once crush me to atoms. I die at once, as one that's struck with lightning. As clouds, when once they are dissolved, can never more repair their lost connection; so he that

The nature and cause of dreams is beautifully described by the celebrated Mr Dryden, from whom it may not be improper to insert the two following passages:

All dreams, as in old Galen I have read,
 Are from repletion and complexion bred:
 From rising fumes of indigested food,
 And noxious humors that infect the blood.
 The yellow gall that in the stomach floats,
 Engenders various visionary thoughts.
 When choler overflows, then dreams are bred
 Of flames, and all the family of red;
 Red dragons, and red beasts in sleep we view;
 For humors are distinguished by their hue.
 From hence we dream of wars and warlike things,
 And wasps and hornets with their double wings.
 Choler adust congeals our blood with fear,
 Then black bulls toss us, and black devils tear.
 In sanguine, airy dreams, aloft we bound;
 With rheums oppressed, we sink in rivers drowned.
 More I could say, but thus conclude my theme;
 The dominating humor makes the dream.

In another place he says,

Dreams are but interludes, which fancy makes,
 When monarch reason sleeps, the mimic wakes:
 Compounds a medley of disjointed things,
 A court of cobblers, and a mob of kings:
 Light fumes are merry, grosser fumes are sad;
 Both are the reasonable soul run mad.
 And many monstrous forms in sleep we see,
 That neither were, nor are, nor e'er can be.
 Sometimes forgotten things long east behind,
 Rush forward in the brain, and come to mind.
 Sometimes we but rehearse a former play,
 The night restores our actions done by day,
 As hounds in sleep will open for their prey. }

once descends into the grave will never more resume his former vigor: he shall never more enjoy his former habitation, or visit his neighbors from the silent grave.

“ Since life, therefore, must one time or other cease, since death must come at last, I’ll not refrain from praying for compassion, for some repose and ease, or a release from life. As grief is bold, my cries shall give my sorrows vent: expostulations and complaints shall give some ease to my afflicted soul. Am I, O Lord, a wild impetuous flood, that thou art forced to watch me, and keep me thus in bounds? Am I a whale, a monster of the sea, that thou shouldst bind me thus in fetters? If wished-for death may not at once relieve me, yet I might hope, at least, from sleep to find some intermission: but if my eyes be ever closed in slumbers, even then such horrid visions stand before me, that I had rather die than bear the shock. As life, therefore, is an insufferable load, is loathsome, and the object of my detestation, let me alone to die. Why should I live thus long in lingering torments? Oh, what is man, that God should condescend to try his strength? Is he worthy of thy notice, or thy blow, that thou shouldst set thyself against him? Wilt thou engage thy power against a worm? Is poor, weak man a proper object of thy anger? Give me some little respite: give me, O Lord, some easy moments. Oh, spare a wretch that has not long to live. I acknowledge my guilt; I am overwhelmed with shame, and conscious, O thou observer of men, that I can make thee no manner of compensation. Can I implore thy aid in vain? I know that all thy chastisements are forced; that mercy is thy darling attribute. Why, then, hast thou set me as a mark against thee? If I am the peculiar object of thy displeasure, why dost thou not remove me out of thy sight? Fain would I lay my burthen down and die. O Lord, forgive the mighty debt of all my guilt, and, though my sins are great, remember mercy.”

The apologies and observations of Job in vindication of his conduct made very little, if any impression on his friends; for no sooner had he finished his complaints, than another of his visitors, namely, Bildad the Shuhite continued the dispute, and severely reprehended him in words to this effect: “ How long wilt thou break the bounds of patience: and how durst thou expostulate thus perversely

with thy maker? Canst thou impiously imagine that the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth will act with partiality, and pass too severe a sentence upon thee? Or that He, who wants nothing from thee, will deviate from the most exact rules of justice? Is it not reasonable to suppose that thy rebellious children had highly provoked the Divine Majesty, from the sudden and unforeseen vengeance which he took upon them? Is it not equally reasonable to think, that if (instead of murmuring and repining after this shameful and unwarrantable manner) thou wouldst, with a contrite heart, implore his grace and favor, acknowledge his perfect justice, and add but purity of heart to thy prayers, he would exert his power for thy support, and restore thy family to its pristine splendor? I am fully persuaded, that poor as thou art at present, thy substance would soon increase, and thou wouldst be as immensely rich as ever thou wast before these heavy calamities fell down with such weight upon thee. I do not, however, desire that thou shouldst entirely depend upon my word: No; take thy instructions from those who are gone before us; and make the strictest enquiries into the most authentic and most ancient histories, which will, doubtless, not only set thee right in this important debate, but will shew from repeated observations, for many ages, the truth of all these maxims which I have advanced. As a rush that rears its head in a watery meadow withers away for want of proper soil and moisture, and consequently requires not the hand of the mower to cut it down, whilst the lesser plants, that for a time envied its hasty growth, stand surprized at so sudden and unexpected an alteration; just so the beauty of an ungodly man is at once blasted, who has laid no solid foundation for its long continuance: who has neglected his God (without whose blessing no one can possibly prove long successful) who can with ease discern the most subtle hypocrite, and will most assuredly defeat his hopes, and prevent him from the attainment of that happiness he so eagerly pursues. He may, if he pleases, flatter himself, that all his undertakings will be crowned with success, but then his disappointment will only prove so much the greater; for the thing whereon he places his dependence is weaker than the spider's web. He may vainly imagine that his family is so illustrious and powerful that it will

support him; but he will find his house will sink, and frustrate all his expectations. He may possibly endeavor to strengthen it by repeated alliances, but he shall find even those but fruitless props: nay, farther, he may seem, to all outward appearance, not only in the eyes of the world, but in his own partial thoughts of himself, to be like a tree that spreads its fruitful branches over a fine garden; whose interweaving roots have twisted round the stones in solid ground, and whose lofty head raises itself above the most stately buildings: yet, when the Almighty is pleased to blast him, and pluck him up by the roots, his very name shall be forgotten, and not a soul shall recollect that such a person had resided in the place. No better than this is the pleasure that the wicked take in their most prosperous state; whilst others again shall shoot up in their stead, and flourish out of dust. It is a never-failing maxim that God will never reject the perfect man; nor can the wicked ever hope, with any good grounds, for his aid and assistance. From hence, friend Job, we may draw this certain conclusion; that thou art not strictly virtuous, since the Almighty is pleased to abandon thee to thy despair. If thou wilt not return to him, inevitable destruction is thy doom: but, on the other hand, if thou art convinced of thy evil ways, and art determined to amend, he will restore thee to thy former state of health and power, increase the number of thy friends, and multiply thy possessions to such a degree, that thy delight shall glow upon thy cheeks, and thou shalt burst out into joyful acclamations. Those who reviled thee, and cursed thy habitation, shall blush for shame; they shall be confounded to see thee restored to thy former state of peace and prosperity. In the mean time inevitable destruction shall efface the wicked man and all his impious progeny."

In the speech Job made in answer to Bildad, he acknowledged the former part of his discourse was well conducted; and, like a truly pious and devout man, adored the justice, unerring wisdom, and absolute power of the Almighty. He then, with all humility, acknowledged himself altogether incapable of disputing with his Maker, or justifying himself in his presence, and for that reason he relied wholly on his infinite mercy and goodness. However, he boldly asserted (in opposition to what his

two friends had maintained) that God, for wise and just ends, best known to himself, afflicted those who were strictly virtuous, and high in his favor, as well as those who were abandoned wretches and an abomination to his sight; and that, on the other hand, he permitted some who indulged themselves in all manner of vices, to meet with success in all their worldly undertakings, and flourish to the last moment of their lives. He then spoke to this effect: "As for my part, (said he) his afflicting rod has fallen with that weight upon me, that I am overawed, and durst not speak. If he will but withhold his terrors, and make allowances for human frailty, then will I speak my sentiments with freedom, and take my trial with undaunted courage: but that, alas, is not my happy case. He still exercises on me the rigor of his justice, for which reason I will yet complain as I have done before; since *that* alone is left to mitigate my sorrows." After mentioning the inexpressible torments under which he labored, Job concluded his discourse to Bildad, with imploring God to look down upon him with an eye of pity and compassion, and, if it were his Divine will, to assuage the anguish of his soul; which solicitations he expressed in words to this effect: "Give me (said he) most gracious God, some little respite, and interrupt my sorrows for one moment, before I am conducted to my silent tomb, to the dark shades of death, from whence I never shall return: a region, where it is as dark as can possibly be conceived, where day-light never enters, as here it does by turns; where no order in the least is ever kept; and where the walls, in short, are so fenced with solid darkness, that it is, as it were, all but one continued night."

As soon as Job had finished his reply to Bildad, his third friend and visitor, Zophar the Naamathite, interposed in the debate, and, with no small degree of warmth and resentment, addressed him in words to this effect: "Dost thou imagine, said he, because thy discourses are prolix, and thou makest use of a flow of words, that thou canst ever prevail upon us to declare thee innocent? Shall thy false allegations drown our reason, and oblige us to hold our peace? Shall we suffer thee, because thou laborst under a load of afflictions, to talk against God with insolence and presumption? Shalt thou treat us, who came

on purpose to condole with and instruct thee, with such insufferable pride? Shalt thou exalt thy own uprightness and integrity, and audaciously assert, that God himself can find out no just cause for his censure or condemnation of thy conduct? I humbly implore, however, the Divine Majesty, that he would condescend to convince thee of thy errors; that he would be pleased to interpose in this important debate, and confute thee with his own mouth; that he would expose to view the secret stores and depths of his unerring wisdom (which infinitely surpasses thy weak penetration) in those severe dispensations of his Divine Providence; and demonstrate to thee, beyond all contradiction, that, notwithstanding he should still add to thy afflictions, he would be infinitely just and gracious. Is it in thy power, thinkest thou, after all thy most profound researches, to account for the judgments of the Almighty? Canst thou, vain creature, entertain any adequate idea of the concealed views of his over-ruling Providence? If God should think fit to cut a whole nation from off the earth, or should shut up ten thousand miserable captives in dungeons; if he should, on the other hand, condescend to release them from their chains, or to ease a nation that is harassed and fatigued, who shall presume to start objections against his conduct, or to charge him with any act of injustice? For he knows the rashness and folly of mankind, and can expose their iniquitous practices, however secret and concealed: nay, he can discover the very thoughts of their guilty hearts, and reveal their errors. Notwithstanding thou mayest boast, indeed, of thy righteousness, and mayest vainly declare thyself innocent, and free from sin, yet he can discern the hypocrisy that lurks within thee; and if so, canst thou imagine, that he will stand unconcerned, and not punish or correct his creatures for the errors of their ways? Shall vain, despicable men, presume to censure or acquit the Almighty? If, then, thou wouldst act the part of a wise and prudent man, leave off these rash contentions with thy Maker, and betake thyself to prayer and supplications. If thou art guilty of any known sin, though ever so secret and concealed from the eyes of thy neighbor, chase it from thy heart: thou shalt then dissipate all thy fears, and blot out of thy remembrance all thy past misfortunes; or at least

thou shalt reflect on them as on waters only that are run away, and will no more return. The remainder of thy days shall prove more glorious than the sun in his meridian splendor, and more serene, and fairer than the morning. Notwithstanding any impending danger may threaten thee, thou shalt be fearless and secure, because there is hope that the Almighty will shelter and protect thee. Thy habitation shall be undisturbed, and when thou liest down to rest, no sudden alarms shall affright thee. Thy neighbors shall flock round about thee, court thy friendship; and make their applications to be sheltered under thy protection. It shall not, however, be thus with the wicked; they shall be overwhelmed with insufferable woes; they shall cry aloud for help, but no one shall relieve them; as a blast of air, all their hope shall vanish: and, as it is the Almighty that denounces war against them, who shall deliver them out of his hands?"

Zophar having concluded his harangue, Job resumed the argument, in which he endeavored to acquit himself of the accusation laid against him by Zophar. He charged all three of his visitors with a partial regard for their own wisdom, which was so depraved that it had not so much as taught them how to shew common pity and compassion for their neighbors in distress. He then intimated that he had no occasion to apply to them for instruction; but, that they ought rather to open their eyes, and be convinced of the fallacy so apparent in the last proposition of Zophar's, with respect to the inexpressible calamities of the ungodly; since it was obvious to sense that the wicked too frequently led a life of uninterrupted peace and tranquility. From hence he proceeded to shew the unerring wisdom and justice of God, in the government of all temporal affairs, and particularly in permitting some to be prosperous and happy, whilst others were overwhelmed with cares and troubles; in exalting one man, and humbling another, according as it seemed most meet to his own good will and pleasure. He then asserted that his own understanding was no ways inferior to those of his friends, who took, as he imagined, too great a freedom in their reprehensions; and assured them that God was far from being pleased with those who defended his Providence by laying down false and erroneous doctrines. After this, he begged of

God to grant some alleviation of his sorrows, since the life of man was but very short, and that too attended with a variety of troubles; and more especially, since, when death came, which must be quickly, there was no return from the grave; no yearly revival as there is in plants. He then mentioned himself as a remarkable instance of those calamities to which mankind are subject, and implored the Divine Majesty to look down with an eye of pity and compassion on the deplorable condition to which, from a state of affluence and ease, he was unhappily reduced.

When Job had finished his reply to Zophar's harangue, Eliphaz, the Temanite, resumed the controversy with much more warmth than he had spoken before, being somewhat exasperated that Job should think so highly of his own judgment, as to treat the exhortations of his friends with such visible marks of contempt. He charged Job with reflecting on the Almighty as partial and unjust; and asserted, that notwithstanding the ungodly might prove prosperous and successful for a time, yet God punishes them severely even in this life; for their evil consciences, like apparitions, haunted them wherever they went.

Job made a reply to Eliphaz with great warmth and resentment. He charged his friends with being perfectly inhuman and hard-hearted in tiring him with their repeated accusations of the same crime, especially as they were eye-witnesses of his deplorable circumstances: that he did not deserve the ill treatment he had met with, and that all their reproaches were not only barbarous, but unjust. He then made new and warm protestations of his innocent and inoffensive deportment towards his fellow-creatures, and his sincere affection, as well as reverential regard for his Maker: and, as God knew the truth of what he asserted, he appealed from their partial sentence to his awful tribunal for acquittance. He desired, as he had before done, to appear, as soon as possible, before the Almighty's tribunal, since his life, under such a complication of miseries, could not be of any long duration. He said, the reason of his continuing this request was, because his friends were very improper judges of his case, and had passed such a severe and partial sentence on his conduct, as no one that had the least share of humanity,

or regard for justice, could possibly approve. By way of conclusion, he called God to witness the truth of his assertion, that he was perfectly innocent, and that the grave, into which he was ready to drop, considering his unhappy circumstances, was the only thing for which he could sincerely wish.

Job and his three friends continued the debate, with great warmth, for a considerable time; till at length the latter, finding him firmly resolved to defend his cause, and maintain his innocence and integrity against all opposition, despairing of success, dropped the argument and sat silent. In the interim, a young man, named Elihu, a descendant of Nahor, the brother of Abraham, who had listened with great attention to the arguments which had taken place between Job and his friends, was highly displeased with what had been advanced by both parties. He was incensed against Job, for spending more time in vindication of his own innocence, than in the justification of the Almighty; and with his three friends, for condemning their antagonist as an abandoned wretch, and a most egregious hypocrite, without being able to maintain their charge. He had, however, such a command over his passions, that he did not offer to speak till he found Job had ended his defence, and his accusers were determined to drop the debate, because they were all his superiors in regard to years. But when he perceived that neither of the three had any reply to make, he could not contain himself any longer; and, therefore, addressed himself to them in words to this effect:

“ My own youth, and your long experience, have hitherto awed me so far, that I have not had courage or resolution enough to interpose my sentiments in this important affair; for I reflected within myself, that it was more modest and decent for one of my tender years to listen with attention, than to speak too boldly before my elders; to be instructed by such sages as you appear to be, than presume to dictate. I perceive, however, I was very much mistaken: man is but a very despicable creature, though grey with years, unless his mind be irradiated with celestial light. True knowledge and understanding proceed from the inspiration of the Almighty. Such as are in power and authority, and such as take upon themselves to be

the teachers of others, are not always, we find, men of the profoundest learning; neither do old men employ their years, at all times, so wisely, and so well, as to be able to distinguish in matters of importance as they ought. I therefore, beg the favor of you, for once, to lend an ear to what I have to offer, and I will speak my sentiments freely on the debate in hand. Though I am but a youth, it is true, yet do not look upon me as too bold and forward, since I have listened attentively for a long time to your repeated discourses on both sides the question. I have, moreover, weighed every argument that has been produced, and suffered you to go on without the least interruption, till you have made your researches as far as you could into the affair. And, upon mature deliberation, I think myself obliged to declare, that neither of you have, in the least, confuted Job, or advanced any thing to the purpose, in regard to his vindication of himself. Your charge against him, that he is obstinate and perverse, is insufficient; and your saying that you will sit still, and leave him entirely to the disposal of the Almighty, in expectation that his terrors will convince him, though your arguments cannot do it, is equally vain, and as little to the purpose. I must, therefore, take the liberty to tell you, that I think the arguments you have all produced are very weak and inconclusive; and as Job has not, as yet, directed any part of his discourse to me, so neither will I perplex and confound him with any of your injudicious replies, in order to correct his errors. I may very justly complain to all that at present stand round me, that I have waited a long time, to no purpose, in hopes of receiving instruction. Your stock, I find, is exhausted; you stand silent, as if you were all speechless: for which reason I have told you, that I will venture to pronounce my judgment in this weighty affair, and revive the debate. Indeed, it is high time for me so to do, since the constraint which I have hitherto put upon my lips has given me the most insufferable pain. The thoughts which lie pent up in my bosom, ferment within me like new-pressed wine in the vat, and I shall burst, unless they find some vent. I am compelled to speak, therefore, if it be only to ease my mind; for vessels that are full and working will break, unless they be opened. Whilst, then, I endeavor to shew

you your errors, I shall have regard only to the case, and not the person; and as flattery is not my habit, I shall not try to sooth you by any fulsome applause. I cannot, for my part, fawn upon you, or seem to stand in admiration of your wisdom, in hopes of gaining your approbation. Besides, were I to make use of such vile, such ungenerous artifices, I should be apprehensive, that he who created me, would immediately strike me dumb for acting with deceit, and playing the hypocrite in my heart."

"And now, O Job (continued Elihu) I flatter myself that what I have already premised is sufficient to engage your attention. Hear me with patience; for I am prepared to speak, if you are but equally inclined to hear. And you may depend upon my veracity in this particular, that I will not utter any words with my tongue, but what are the very dictates of my heart. My instructions shall be so plain and clear, that they shall not need any comment.

"Consider well, in the first place, that the structure of us both proceeded from the same model: both of us were formed of the same clay, and inspired with life by the same all-wise Creator. If, therefore, you are determined to defend your cause, you have now no one to contend with but your equal. You have several times seemed earnestly to desire that some impartial person would appear to plead, and argue the case freely with you. Now your wish is at last accomplished. I am the person that stands in his stead. I am your fellow-creature, and therefore you need be under no apprehensions of the contest being unequal. I am not clothed in majesty, as the Almighty is, to terrify and affright you, as you have more than once already complained: I am endowed with no superior power whereby to injure or oppress you. I shall not charge you, as your three friends have done over and over, with imaginary crimes, unknown to any one except God and yourself, but such unwarrantable speeches as with mine own ears I have heard you utter. You have said, more than once, I am pure and altogether faultless, and innocent, void of offence towards God and towards man. God, who, I lived in hopes, would mitigate my sorrows, is become my adversary. He seeks every occasion to afflict and torment me, and every the least offence unjustly provokes him. He detains me in prison as a most heinous malefactor, and sets a strong

guard over me, lest I should loose my bonds, and make my escape. These are your absurd and wild complaints, and from hence, as you are restless and impatient, you seek for relief.

“ Now, though it is impossible for me to detect your secret faults, and notwithstanding I am no ways inclined to follow the example of your three friends, and lay uncertain and unknown crimes to your charge, yet herein your rashness is very apparent; herein, doubtless, you are too arrogant and presumptuous. How durst you, who are but a man, a mere worm, a worthless creature, compare yourself with him who gave you your existence? Audacious man! how durst you enter into such an unequal conference? Would you confute your Maker? Will he lay his secret counsels open before you? Will he intrust you with the secret springs of Divine government? You should consider, that all his works, as they are his, are just and good, and where your reason is too shallow to comprehend his ways, there you should acquiesce and learn submission. Not that our knowledge of God’s works raises his envy in the least; for he not only endows us with wisdom in various ways, but gives us, indeed, a larger portion of it than we are willing sometimes to receive. Sometimes he conveys instruction to our minds by dreams, or visions of the night: when we fall into a deep sleep, or gentle slumber, and are free from all the cares and business of the day, then he whispers to the ear with a still voice, then he reveals his Divine will, and imprints it on the mind. The Almighty, however, does not shew his reasons for his conduct; this heavenly intercourse is not designed to expose the secrets of his Providence. Sometimes again the Almighty conveys instruction to a man’s mind by a much severer way. If it be his will and pleasure, sickness and pain shall break the strongest constitution, and lay the most blooming youth extended on his bed; in which languishing state and condition the rich meats, he before took great delight in, become nauseous and offensive. All on a sudden, he who moved with such an air, and appeared with such roseate cheeks, looks now all pale and ghastly: his bones, that were not to be seen before, now start through his very skin. His heart beats with pain, and there is scarce a single step between him and the grave. If, then, some person of more

than common knowledge, some Divine messenger be sent (which is another way whereby God conveys instruction to the mind) to persuade this sick man to amend his ways: If, I say, the afflicted person's mind, by the pious admonitions of such a messenger, be formed to virtue, then that messenger, being touched with pity and compassion for his misfortunes, shall pray to the Almighty that he would be pleased to extend his mercy towards him, saying, O Lord, spare his life, and though thou chastisest him, as he is truly penitent, do not totally destroy him. Let it be sufficient that thou didst afflict him, and that thy rod has had its due influence over him. The Almighty will then restore him to his former state of health and ease, and he shall become a new man both in body and mind: his bones shall be again clothed with flesh, and he shall look as healthful as when in the bloom of his life. He shall put up his humble supplications to the throne of grace, and the Almighty, being well pleased, will grant his request: he shall approach the temple of the Lord with gladness, and employ his grateful lips in hymns of praise. The Divine anger being thus appeased, the poor man will be acquitted, and God will admit him into his favor. Then will he confess to his neighbors (as a true penitent ought) all his former errors, and express himself in terms to this, or the like effect: "I have sinned, indeed, against the Almighty, and he has justly punished me for my offences: though I deserved, it is true, to feel the weight of his rod, yet, in mercy, he has spared my life, and kindly saved me from the grave into which I was sinking: nay, moreover, he has given me good grounds to hope, that I shall once more be restored to my former state of peace and plenty." Behold, in all these proceedings, how conspicuous is the great goodness of God, who, by such various means, condescends to instruct us, and bring us to repentance; to restrain us from our vicious courses, which had brought us to the brink of the grave; and to raise us once more to a perfect state of peace and tranquility.

"Weigh well, O Job, what I have hitherto said; for it may prove a concern to you of the last importance; and if I find you are disposed to listen with attention to what I have to add on the topic before us, I will gladly give you some farther instructions. Or, in case you have any

material objection to start against what I have advanced, I shall very readily give you a hearing. Speak freely; I will not, by any means, interrupt you; for I should rejoice, if you can duly acquit yourself, and demonstrate that you are that innocent and faultless person you have so often asserted yourself to be. But, on the other hand, if you have no exception to what I have said, and you still imagine that there is any force or weight in my arguments, still lend me an attentive ear, and I will endeavor to improve your knowledge."

Here Elihu made a long pause, in order to give Job the opportunity of raising any objections he might think proper to what he had advanced. Job, however, kept a profound silence, being conscious that Elihu had not said any thing but what was consistent with truth, and had pointed out the very article in which he was deficient. On this Elihu continued his discourse to Job, in which he reprimanded him more severely than before for indulging himself in such expressions as were unwarrantable, and sounded very harsh and ungrateful. He told him that, through his impatience, and the anxiety of his mind, he had complained, more than once, that the Almighty had not done him justice; and that he destroyed the righteous and the wicked without making any distinction; all which rash assertions he overthrew, from the awful consideration of the absolute sovereignty, power, wisdom, and goodness of the Almighty. And concluded with pointing out to him that manner of deportment and discourse, which, in his opinion, would much better become him than that which he had hitherto used.

Job still remaining silent, Elihu prosecuted his discourse, and in order to convince him that it was highly indecent to plead his own innocence and integrity before God, in that insolent manner he had done, he represented to him the infinite disproportion there was between man and his Maker, the latter of whom had such a paternal care and concern for all mankind, that it was evident he delighted not in their calamities, but administered relief when he found them injured or oppressed, provided they made their applications to him with that humility and submission as became them.

Here Elihu paused again, but Job still continuing silent, he resumed his discourse, in which he reprov'd him for having used such rash expressions that even himself could not justify, and came closer than ever to the point in debate. In the prosecution of his discourse he endeavored to shew, from the nature of the Divine Being, and the various methods of his over-ruling Providence, that, in case he had humbly submitted himself to God's chastisements, and bore them with patience and resignation, instead of insisting so presumptuously on his innocence and integrity, he would most assuredly have restored him to his former state of health and prosperity, for that he could exalt, or humble mankind, at his pleasure. He then concluded this part of his discourse with telling Job that he should have acquiesced, notwithstanding he could not account for the severity of his afflictions, which was the principal cause of his complaint; since mankind were incapable of comprehending even those works of God, which, almost every moment, were before their eyes.

The arguments used by Elihu were so forcible that Job had not a word to utter in his defence, upon which Elihu again resumed his discourse. In the latter part of his last harangue he had expatiated on God's Omnipotence in general, and in this he proceeded to speak in particular of his power, which was so conspicuous in his thunder and lightning, hail, rain and snow, and in divers other surprising works of nature. He then represented to Job that these were instruments, in God's hands, either for the reformation or punishment of mankind, and exhorted him to meditate seriously thereon, to confess his own weakness and ignorance with all due humility as became him, and to revere God's judgments; since it was the greatest arrogance and presumption that any man could be guilty of to make any attempt whatever to account for his Divine counsels. "He (said he) that attempts to do this will find the task insuperable: let him stretch his reason to the utmost pitch, he will soon find the mighty object will confound and distract him; his head, however steady, will turn giddy at such a height. Who can gaze on the sun with undazzled eyes, when the northern winds have swept away every cloud that could possibly obscure his lustre? Much less, who can pretend to look upon God, whose Majesty is most

awful; and which we should only admire at an humble distance? We ought not to search into the nature of it too far, or to gaze upon it with too curious an eye; for let us make ever such bold attempts, our finite wisdom can never grasp the infinite, incomprehensible mind. His power is so transcendent and boundless, his counsels so wise, and his decrees so just, that no one ought to ask a reason for his proceedings. Or, if he should be so idle and presumptuous, God, who is the Lord and Sovereign of the whole universe, is under no manner of obligation to give him the least account. This should make all mankind stand in awe of him; this should confute all their peevish arguments, and teach them to adore him; for the Almighty regards the meek and lowly, but despises him who is proud, and wise in his own conceit."

As soon as Elihu had finished his discourse, God was pleased to interpose as a judge (in condescension to Job's repeated request) to determine at once this long and important debate. From an opening cloud an awful voice was heard as loud and dreadful as a tempest, and the words were of such formation as to strike a most sensible impression on the silent and afflicted Job. In the first place God convinced him of his weakness and ignorance, and made him sensible that it was an act of presumption in any one, however righteous or intelligent, to pry with too much curiosity into his secret counsels: and in order to humble him still farther he set before his eyes a great variety of his wonderful works; the manner in which the earth and the heavens were created; the numberless and astonishing creatures that lived and moved, and had their being in the sea; but more especially shewed him how little he understood of those various meteors which are formed in the clouds. He then, after speaking of the admirable contexture of the beasts of the field and the birds of the air, proceeded to give several instances as demonstrations of his all-creating power; which he did in words to this effect:

"Presumptuous man! thou who art too curious, and wouldst pry, if thou couldst, into my secret counsels! Canst thou tell me when the wild-goats bring forth their young ones on the high and craggy rocks? Wast thou ever present, when any pregnant hind was bringing forth her

young? Or, didst thou ever lend her the least assistance in her struggles to discharge her burden? Knowest thou the months that complete the first conception? Or, canst thou keep an account for her of the precise time that she shall be delivered? Say, hast thou ever seen her bow herself? Wast thou ever witness of the agonizing pains, the sorrows she undergoes in the exclusion of her births? And notwithstanding all the difficulties that thus attend her, the young ones grow fat and strong without their nurse; for they range immediately through the open fields for their subsistence, and return no more to the mother-hind.—This instance of the Divine power may be thus paraphrased:

Knowest thou how many moons, by me assigned,
 Roll o'er the mountain-goat, and forest-hind,
 While pregnant they a mother's load sustain?
 They bend in anguish, and cast forth in pain.
 Hale are their young, from human frailties freed,
 Walk unsustained, and unassisted feed;
 They live at once, forsake the dam's warm side,
 Take the wide world, with nature for their guide;
 Bound o'er the lawn, or seek the distant glade,
 And find a home in each delightful shade.

“Tell me, Job, who imparted the whole sense of liberty to the wild-ass, that bravely disdains a master, and will not be controlled by rein or bit, as other creatures are? Who made that wide difference between him and them? As it was not my pleasure to lay any ignominious burthen on his back, so I assigned to him the spacious desert for his habitation, where he looks with disdain on those who frequent populous cities, and never feels, nor hears the driver's whip. He scorns to be confined within the meadows, but flies to the mountains, where he ranges lord of himself, and uncontrolled; where he finds pasturage sufficient for his daily subsistence.

Didst thou from service the wild-ass discharge,
 And break his bonds, and bid him live at large,
 Through the wide waste, his ample mansion, roam,
 And lose himself in his unbounded home?
 By nature's hand magnificently fed,
 His meal is on the range of mountains spread;
 As in pure air aloft he bounds along,
 He sees in distant smoke the city-throng;

Conscious of freedom, scorns the smothered train,
The threatening driver, and the servile rein.

“Thou, who wouldst willingly have all creatures subservient to thy will, go to the unicorn,* and try if thou canst prevail on him tamely to submit to thy directions. Will he not refuse thy crib, and proffered corn? Will he yield his neck ignobly to thy yoke? Canst thou make him, like thy oxen, go to the plough, or draw thy harrow over the vallies? Wilt thou, because his strength is great, depend on his doing the remainder of thy business in the field? Or wilt thou suffer him to bring thy harvest home, when it is gathered, and lay it in thy barns?

Will the unicorn, which knows no Lord but me,
Low at the crib, and ask an alms of thee?
Submit his unworn shoulder to the yoke,
Break the stiff elod, and o'er thy furrows smoke?
Since great his strength, go trust him, void of care,
Lay on his neck the toil of all the year;
Bid him bring home the seasons to thy doors,
And cast his load among the gathered stores.

“Who was it that dyed the peacock with such variegated colors? To whom is he indebted for his long, gaudy train?

How rich the peacock! what bright glories run
From plume to plume, and vary in the sun?
He proudly spreads them to the golden ray,
Gives all his colors, and adorns the day;
With conscious state the spacious round displays,
And slowly moves amid the waving blaze.

“Tell me, Job, who is it that assumes the honor to himself of forming the beauteous plumes of the ostrich? Or to whom is she indebted for her strong and spacious wings? Her inward qualities, however, are no ways answerable to her external beauty; for she has no forecast or contrivance in her. She never repairs to any solitary recesses

* That the unicorn mentioned here is the rhinoceros, there is not the least reason to doubt, because that animal is very common in Arabia, and has but one horn. It may be farther added, that it is a most fierce creature, and that there are no instances on record of any one of them having been ever thoroughly tamed.

in order to conceal her eggs, but drops them any where, regardless of the place, and leaves them, without the least thought or concern, exposed on the warm sands to be nourished by the sun, or perhaps trodden under foot by man or beast.* The careless, improvident bird has no natural tenderness or paternal regard for her offspring, but is hardened against them as if they were not hers; she is under no apprehensions of the danger to which they are exposed. But the reason of this negligence and careless deportment, is this, that I have not given her that prudence and discretion which I have conferred on other creatures. However, though I have imparted to her but a small share of understanding, I have yet given her so much as is requisite for her preservation; for when she exalts her neck, and tries the strength of her wings, she is so swift, that she dreads not her enemy; she scorneth the horse and his rider.

Who in the cruel Ostrich has subdued
 A parent's care, and fond inquietude!
 While far she flies, her scattered eggs are found
 Without an owner on the sandy ground;
 Cast out on fortune, they at mercy lie,
 And borrow life from an indulgent sky;
 Adopted by the sun, in blaze of day,
 They ripen under his prolific ray;
 Unmindful she, that some unhappy tread
 May crush her young in their neglected bed;
 What time she skims along the field with speed,
 She scorns the rider, and pursuing steed.

“ Who was it, Job, that gave the Horse that strength and courage so conspicuous in him above his fellow-brutes? Hast thou given him his confidence and his spirits? Is it thy thunder that clothes his stately neck? Or didst thou give him that majestic mane, whose flowing hairs, like forked lightning, wave in the wind, and dazzle the beholder's eye? Canst thou damp his hot blood, or make him spring away with fear as a grasshopper? When in

* Dr. Shaw tells us, that the Arabs, in their annual excursions, often meet with the nests of ostriches in which are great numbers of eggs. and they are left in so careless a manner in the road, covered over with sand, that travellers often tread upon them, and break them to pieces. He adds that the mothers are so unnatural, that they often eat their young, as soon as they are hatched.

the heat of battle he snorts, the fire and smoke that from his nostrils roll are terrible. Proud and pampered he paws the ground, tears up the grassy turf, and spurns the sand around him. He glories in his strength, and when he hears the alarms of those who come to oppose him, he leaps, he bounds, he forward springs to meet the foe, regardless of their instruments of war. At fear he mocketh: he runneth on the very points of naked swords: he maketh his passage through ranks of armed men; and neither the noise of arrows that come whizzing by his ears, nor the glittering spear nor shield dismay him. He seems to fly, and his swift motion shakes the solid earth; and when he hears the shrill music's sound, for joy he scarce believes it to be the trumpet's voice. But as the noise approaches, he neighs, he prances with delight, he snuffs the air, and hopes the promised battle.—This description of the horse is thus beautifully paraphrased by the celebrated Dr. Young:

Survey the warlike horse! Didst thou invest
 With thunder his robust, distended chest?
 No sense of fear his courage great, allays,
 'Tis dreadful to behold his nostrils blaze;
 To pace the vale he proudly takes delight,
 And triumphs in the fulness of his might;
 High-raised, he snuffs the battle from afar,
 And burns to plunge amid the raging war;
 And mocks at death, and throws his foam around,
 And in a storm of fury shakes the ground;
 How does his firm, his rising heart advance
 Full on the brandished sword, and shaken lance,
 While his fixed eye-balls meet the dazzling shield,
 Gaze, and return the lightning of the field!
 He sinks the sense of pain in generous pride,
 Nor feels the shaft that trembles in his side;
 But neighs to the shrill trumpet's dreadful blast,
 Till death—and when he groans, he groans his last.

“Observe the Hawk how she mounts upwards, and pursues her prey, swift as a ray of light. Didst thou stretch out her wings? Or didst thou instruct her, at the approach of winter, to repair to the southern parts of the earth for the enjoyment of a warmer climate?”

Who taught the Hawk to find, in seasons wise,
 Perpetual summer, and a change of skies?

When clouds deform the year, she mounts the wind,
 Shoots to the south, nor fears the storm behind:
 The sun returning, she returns again,
 Lives in his beams, and leaves ill days to men.

“Which of all the feathered train, like the eagle, can approach the sun? Is it to thee she is indebted for her strength or swiftness? Was it through thy wisdom or direction that she builds her nest where no mortal can reach it? She settles her abode on the summit of the highest rocks. Her fortress is kept in the midst of such craggy cliffs as are insuperably steep. There she towers, and looks down with a becoming pride on all the birds beneath. Such is the sharpness of her sight, that she surveys the distant vallies with a glance, and darts down, like a thunder-bolt, through the yielding air to truss her prey, which, when she has seized and torn to pieces, she carries to her young, who suck with greediness the blood; and, after a battle, wherever the dead carcasses lie, there is she to be found hovering over them.”

Though strong the Hawk, though practised well to fly,
 An Eagle drops her in a lower sky;
 An Eagle, when deserting human sight,
 She seeks the sun in her unwearied flight:
 Did thy command her yellow pinion lift
 So high in air, and seat her on the clift,
 Where far above thy world she dwells alone,
 And proudly makes the strength of rocks her own?
 Thence wide o'er nature takes her dread survey,
 And with a glance predestinates her prey;
 She feasts her young with blood, and hovering o'er
 The unslaughtered host, enjoys the promised gore.

These instances of the great and superior power of God over all his creatures roused the silent Job, who expressed his consciousness thereof, and acknowledged his own insignificance, in words to this effect: Behold! (said he) by thy heavenly light I am convinced that I am a miserable, wretched creature; that I am altogether unworthy of being admitted into thy awful presence. I am so confounded and amazed, that I know not how to withstand the force of thy resistless arguments, or to answer one single question which thou hast been pleased to state. And for that reason I am determined henceforth to hold my peace.

I am conscious to myself that the words which I have uttered already, though but few, are too many, and too evidently shew that I have been guilty of the highest presumption. I will, therefore, prostrate myself before thee, and revere thy goodness, but never murmur, or complain, as I have done, any more."

The Almighty, in order to humble Job still farther, and to shew him his weakness, as well as presumption, in attempting to contend with him, gave him two other instances of his superior and all creating power; which he did in describing the peculiar properties of the Behemoth, or River Horse, and the Leviathan, or Crocodile, both inhabitants of the river Nile in Egypt. These additional instances of the great wisdom, power and majesty of God shone so conspicuous, and set Job's errors before him in so strong a light, that he submitted himself with all due humility to his Maker, and made a frank confession of his faults in words to this effect:

"I am now, O Lord, fully convinced that thy wisdom is incomprehensible, and that thy power is as extensive as thy will: I am abundantly satisfied that nothing can prevent thee from completing thy designs; and that no art or compulsion can possibly defeat thy all-wise purposes. And as thou hadst reasons, best known to thyself, for humbling me, and laying my honor in the dust, so I am sensible, that if thou wert so pleased, thou hast power sufficient to place me in a much happier state and condition than I was in at first. As I am conscious to myself, that all thy reprehensions have been perfectly just, I readily acknowledge that I have been very ignorant, presumptuous, and foolish in talking after the manner I have done, of the various dispensations of thy Divine Providence. I have presumed, I freely confess, to discourse on subjects far above my comprehension; on such things as I ought humbly to admire, and not with pride and insolence to blame or censure.

"O let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak. I will never presume in future to account for thy handy-works, or to pry into the ways of thy Providence, which are dark and intricate: all I request is, that thou wilt condescend to instruct me, and let thy heavenly light dispel those thick shades of error that darken my understanding. I had, indeed, before entertained some faint and imperfect ideas

of thy greatness, wisdom, and power; but now those attributes are more clearly revealed to me by the appearance of thy awful Majesty. For which reason I am stung with remorse, and can scarce forgive myself for uttering my indecent complaints. I condemn myself for bearing thy afflicting rod with so much reluctance; for wishing, in my despair, so earnestly to die, and for surmising that the righteous were no longer the objects of thy favor or concern. I heartily repent of my arrogant discourses, and of the unjust accusations which I have brought against thy government. I am grieved that I have expressed so much impatience, under my afflictions, and that I have endeavored to justify myself against my God. All thy works are marvellous and incomprehensible!

Thou canst accomplish all things, Lord of Might,
 And every thought is naked to thy sight:
 But oh! thy ways are wonderful, and lye
 Beyond the deepest reach of mortal eye.
 Oft have I heard of thine Almighty power,
 But never saw thee till this dreadful hour:
 O'erwhelmed with shame the Lord of life I see,
 Abhor myself, and give my soul to thee:
 Nor shall my weakness tempt thy anger more;
 Man was not born to *question*, but *adore*."

This ingenuous confession was so pleasing to the Almighty, that his wrath was perfectly appeased, and he no more chastised Job; but directing his voice to Eliphaz, who was Job's severest accuser, spoke to him in words to this effect: "I am angry not only with thee, but thy two friends; for thou hast made a very unjust and partial construction of the afflictions which it was my pleasure to send upon Job, whom, though I do not pronounce absolutely guiltless, yet I acknowledge him to be my servant, and to have spoken of me with more wisdom than thou hast done, or any of thy companions. Take, therefore, unto thee seven bullocks and seven rams, and carry them to my servant Job, whom I constitute and ordain to be thy priest, to offer up as a burnt-offering in thy favor, and as a testimony of my absolute dominion over all my creatures. When thou hast so done he shall intercede for thee, and shall obtain thy pardon; for I have a great affection for him, and will be indulgent to thee and thy friends for his

sake. Take care that this command be obeyed without delay, lest my vengeance should fall with weight on your devoted heads; because, as I have before said, all of you have put an evil construction on my ways, and set my Providence in a very unfair and disadvantageous light, and would not hearken to my servant Job, notwithstanding he told you that your assertions were false and groundless."

Eliphaz and his two companions made their due submission to the Almighty, and entreated Job to be their intercessor. Job accordingly offered up his prayers to God in their behalf, which were graciously received, and the offenders, in consequence thereof, freely forgiven.

At the very instant that Job was discharging this charitable duty in behalf of his friends, the Lord was pleased to shew several extraordinary marks of his Divine favor; nor did he cease bestowing his bounties, till he had not only re-established him in his former state of health, but made him twice as rich as he was before his calamities were inflicted on him.

When Job's kindred and friends heard of his happy restoration, they went in throngs to testify their joy on the occasion. After having condoled with him, and expressed their sorrow on account of the losses and misfortunes he had met with, they congratulated him on his sudden and unexpected recovery; and as a testimony of their respect, each made him a present, the value of which was proportioned to their respective circumstances.

Thus was the Lord pleased to make the innocent Job miserable for a time in order to augment his happiness; for instead of seven thousand sheep and three thousand camels which were taken from him, he had soon after fourteen thousand of the former, and six thousand of the latter. He had a thousand yoke of oxen instead of five hundred, and his she asses were multiplied in proportion. His wife also became very fruitful, and brought him seven sons and three daughters, which was the very same in number with those he had lost.

In order to perpetuate the memory of so extraordinary a deliverance, Job called the eldest of his daughters *Jemima*, which signifies *the day*, because of the felicity he now enjoyed after he had been so long obscured in the dismal

night of affliction. His second daughter he called *Kesia*, which signifies *an aromatic spice*, in allusion to his having been released from his filthy ulcers. The youngest daughter he named *Keren-happuch*, which signifies *plenty restored*, or rather *the Horn of Varnish*, because God had wiped away the tears that had bedewed his cheeks. These three daughters were all remarkable for their personal accomplishments, there not being any in the whole country whose charms were so conspicuous; and their father did not (as the usual custom then was) endow them only with a small portion of his effects, but fixed them as coheirs with his sons, and appointed that they should have a proportionable share of his inheritance.

After this glorious turn of fortune, this happy restoration of himself and family, Job's years were augmented as well as his possessions. The Lord was pleased to add an hundred and forty years to those he had lived before his misfortunes; so that the good man had the satisfaction to see his numerous progeny to the fourth generation. At length, fully satisfied, and full ripe with hoary age, he dropped into the grave—nor wished to live a moment longer.

We shall conclude our History of the Life and Transactions of the pious Job with a short view of his character, as represented by a very late and eminent writer.

The character of Job, says he, affords us a spectacle worthy of the Deity himself to look upon, viz. that of a pious and good man, combating adversity; and, amongst other miseries of an extraordinary kind, vexed with the unjust suspicions and peevish accusations of his mistaken friends.

And here we find him using every argument that could be thought of in his own defence, to cure them, if possible, of their mistake, and to persuade them of his innocence; appealing to the general course of Providence, which, for the most part, deals out things promiscuously, and often involves the good and bad in the same common calamity; directing them to instances within their knowledge, of such who had been as wicked as they were great, and yet had lived a long course of years in prosperity, and died at last in peace, and were buried with great pomp; so that no visible judgment had overtaken them, either in their lives, or at their deaths.

When this view of Providence, so true and evident to experience, still wanted force to remove an obstinate error, he puts them in mind of the future judgment, which was the proper season of reward and punishment; and declares in the most solemn manner, his hopes of being acquitted there.

When all this would not do, but they still disbelieve and persecute him, he is driven to the last argument which a modest man would make use of, and appeals to his own public and private behavior in the whole course of his life: and upon this occasion he displays such a set of admirable virtues, shews the piety, prudence, the humanity of his conduct, in so amiable a light, with such a noble freedom, and, at the same time, such an air of truth, that it is a matter of doubt whether there be any thing of the kind more beautiful or instructive in all antiquity; or perhaps a finer picture of a wise and good man was never drawn. How prudent and upright in his decisions, as a magistrate or judge! How just and benevolent in his domestic character, as the father of a family! How untractable to all allurements of pleasure, in the height of his prosperity! and how sensible to the complaints and miseries of others! And, above all, how remarkably pious in his principles! How careful to build his virtue upon its own solid basis, religion, or the fear of God! But with all these great and excellent qualities, we cannot but take notice of some little mixture of alloy and imperfection. For a perfect character, however it may have existed in idea, it is certain never yet appeared above once upon the real stage of the world.

We must forgive this good man, therefore, the little passionate complaints which the extremity of his sufferings sometimes forced from him. His despair and weariness of life; his often wishing for death; his eagerness to come upon his trial; his earnest requests, and even expostulations with his judge, to bring him to it, or to acquaint him with the reasons at least of these severe inflictions. These and the like, it must be owned, appear as shades and blemishes in the character of this great man, and may argue somewhat of impatience, even in this heroic pattern of patience.

A great deal, however, might be said in his excuse: as, that his afflictions had something in them very astonishing,

and beyond the common measure; that the distempers of the body have oftentimes a natural tendency to produce black thoughts, and a despondency of mind: To which may be added, the rash censures and suspicions of his friends, as they affected his reputation, which, to a generous mind, is the most valuable thing in the world, next to his integrity: It is no wonder that a treatment so inhuman, so undeserved, so unexpected, should provoke to an extremity a person borne down already with the weight of his misfortunes.

These things might certainly be offered in excuse for the little blemishes which appear in the speeches and conduct of this great man. But after all, the best thing that can be pleaded in his behalf, and that which covers all his imperfections, is his own behavior upon this occasion, and his making no excuse at all for them; but as soon as ever he was brought to recollect his errors, immediately confessing them with great simplicity, and the most profound humility and contrition. *Then Job answered the Lord, and said, Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth: chap. xl. 3, 4. And again, I have uttered that I know not; things too wonderful for me, which I know not.—But now mine eye seeth thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes, chap. lxii. 3, &c.*

The easiness and favor with which this humble acknowledgment was accepted by the Supreme Judge, and the bountiful reward bestowed upon this good man, as a present earnest of a still greater to be expected by him hereafter, will teach us this very acceptable and important truth: how ready God is to pass by the little weaknesses of man, where there is a tried and resolute integrity, still bent upon the doing of his duty, and determined, whatever may befall him, to adhere to God in all his trials and temptations.

CHAP. VIII.

Ezra, a priest and scribe, obtains permission of Ahasuerus, king of Persia, to go, with some other Jews, to Jerusalem, and at the same time receives a commission, empowering him to make a reformation both in church and state. He accordingly goes thither, and begins to execute his commission by making a reform among the people relative to their marriages. Nehemiah, cup-bearer to Ahasuerus, is sent to Jerusalem, with a commission to rebuild the walls of the city. He is interrupted in the execution of his commission by Sanballat, an officer of the Moabites, and Tobiah, a popular man among the Ammonites, notwithstanding which he carries on the work with great success. Sanballat and Tobiah, concert several schemes for taking away Nehemiah's life, all of which prove abortive. Nehemiah, having finished the walls of Jerusalem, after surmounting a variety of difficulties, gives directions for the good order and government of the city. He suppresses the practice of usury among the people, and after obliging them to sign a covenant with him strictly to adhere to the laws of Moses, returns to the Persian court. During Nehemiah's absence from Jerusalem, the people relapse into their former corruptions, owing to the mismanagement of Eliashib the high-priest. Nehemiah goes again to Jerusalem, and turns Tobiah, the Ammonite, out of an apartment in the temple, which had been assigned him by Eliashib. He orders the payment of the tithes, and makes the people pay a more strict attention to the Sabbath. He dissolves unlawful marriages. His death.

HAVING made a long digression, in order to admit the life and transactions of Job, as related in the last chapter, we shall now resume our history of the Jews, which we shall prosecute with the most accurate circumspection from the last occurrence mentioned towards the close of the sixth chapter, namely, the punishment of the base and treacherous Haman, by means of Esther, the new queen of Ahasuerus, king of Persia.

In the seventh year of the reign of king Ahasuerus, Ezra, (a priest descended from Seraiah the high-priest, who was slain by Nebuchadnezzar, when he burnt the temple and city of Jerusalem) a man of great learning and well acquainted with the scriptures, and who had hitherto

continued in Babylon, with others of the captivity that had not yet returned, asked permission of Ahasuerus to go to Jerusalem, and to take with him as many people of his own nation as were willing to accompany him.

Ahasuerus not only complied with Ezra's request, but likewise gave him an ample commission to take with him what he should think necessary both for his journey thither and service there. He furnished him with money to buy cattle for sacrifice, provisions of corn, wine, oil and salt, and empowered him to draw from his public treasuries to the amount of one hundred talents of silver. He likewise granted to the priests, Levites, singers, porters, and Nethinims (or ministers of the House of God) an indemnity from all toll, tribute or custom; and empowered Ezra, at the same time, to appoint magistrates and Judges over the people, to do justice among them, and instruct those who knew not the law of God.

Ezra returned thanks to God for having been pleased to incline the king's heart not only to permit him to go to Jerusalem, but likewise to furnish him with the means of making such contributions to the temple as might promote and establish the true religion. *Blessed be the Lord God of our fathers (said he) who hath put such a thing as this in the king's heart, to beautify the House of the Lord which is in Jerusalem: and hath extended mercy unto me before the king and his counsellors, and before all the king's mighty princes.*

Having made every necessary preparation for so long a journey, Ezra left Babylon on the first day of the first month (which is called Nisan, and answers to about the middle of our March) accompanied by no less than one thousand four hundred and ninety-six of his countrymen. When he came to the river Ahava,* he made a halt, and

* This was a river in Assyria, and, very probably, that which ran along the Adiabene, where the river Diava, or Adiaava, is known to be, and on the banks of which Ptolemy places the city of Abane, or Aavane. Here, some imagine, was the country, which, in the second book of Kings (chap. xvii. 24.) is called Ava, from whence the king of Assyria removed the people called Avites into Palestine, and settled some of the captive Israelites in their stead. It was a common thing for those who travelled from Babylon to Jerusalem, in order to avoid the scorching heat of the desert Arabia, to direct their course north-

the people having erected tents according to his orders, they encamped there for three successive days. On the first day of their encampment, Ezra took an account of the number of those who accompanied him, and not finding any Levites or Nethinims among them, he sent Eliezer, and some others, to Iddo, who was chief of the Nethinims at Casiphia, requiring him to send with them some officers fit for the service of the Lord's house. Iddo readily obeyed Ezra's orders, furnishing the messengers with thirty-eight Levites, and two hundred and twenty Nethinims, all of whom they brought safe to the camp.

Ezra, considering the great charge of money and plate with which he was entrusted, and the dangers to which both he and his people might be exposed in their march, proclaimed a fast throughout the camp, to implore the Divine protection over them and their substance. He might, indeed, for asking, have had a convoy from the king, but recollecting he had told him that the hand of their God would be upon them, he thought proper to decline it, lest the king should think that what he had said was no more than mere boasting, and that he distrusted the power and favor of him, of whom he had spoken with such distinguished confidence.

Having thus implored the Divine protection, Ezra ordered the people to strike their tents, and prepare themselves for prosecuting their journey. This being done, he delivered by weight, to twelve of the priests, all the gold, silver and vessels, which the king and his counsellors had given him as an offering to the house of the Lord; strictly enjoining them to keep this treasure safe till they came to Jerusalem, and there to deliver it by weight to the chief of the priests and Levites, as they had received it of him.

Ezra and his company quitted the place of their encampment on the twelfth day after their leaving Babylon, and arrived safe at Jerusalem on the first day of the fifth

ward at first, and then, turning to the west, to pass through Syria into Palestine. But Ezra had a farther reason for taking the route he did; for, as he intended to get together as many Israelites as he could to carry with him to Jerusalem, he took his course this way, and made an halt in the country of Ava, or Ahava, from whence he might send emissaries into the Caspian mountains, to invite such Jews as were there to come and join him.

month, called Ab, (which answers to the middle of our July) so that they were exactly four months on their journey.

On their arrival at Jerusalem, they took three days to refresh themselves, and on the fourth the priests delivered the treasure* by weight into the house of the Lord, to those who were appointed to receive it, and a proper inventory was taken of the whole. They then offered up a burnt-offering of twelve bullocks for the twelve tribes, ninety-six rams, seventy-seven lambs, and twelve he-goats; after which, Ezra delivered the king's commission to the proper officers, who, in obedience thereto, furnished the people with all things necessary for the service of the temple.

Ezra had not been long at Jerusalem, before complaint was made to him by some of the heads of the Israelites, that not only the people, but likewise many of the priests and Levites, had intermixed with the descendants of the ancient inhabitants of the country, namely, the Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Amonites, &c. contrary to the express commands of their great legislator Moses. Ezra was greatly grieved at this intelligence, and expressed his sorrow by rending his mantle, and tearing off the hair from his head; and those who had any fear or concern on them, came to him, and bemoaned the transgression of those that had been captives, and were lately drawn into the commission of these wicked practices. Ezra continued in this melancholy situation till the time of evening sacrifice, when, falling on his knees, and spreading out his hands, he made a humble confession and prayer to God, in words to this effect: "Our transgressions (said he) O Lord, are so great, that I am ashamed to look up unto thee. We have been sinners from the beginning; for which thou didst deliver our kings and priests into the hands of the heathen kings. But thou hast shewed us favor in our captivity, and inclined the hearts of the kings of Persia to be merciful to us, and restore us to Jerusalem. And

* This treasure was of very considerable value. It consisted of a hundred talents of gold, six hundred and fifty of silver, and the silver vessels weighed an hundred talents; besides which, there were twenty basons of gold of a thousand drachms, and two vessels of such fine copper as to be little inferior to gold.

“ now, what shall we say for our ungrateful disobedience,
 “ in neglecting thy commands? Thou hast forbidden us to
 “ defile ourselves with the abominations of the people of
 “ the land, to marry their daughters, or partake of their
 “ wealth; and yet we have broke thy commandment, and
 “ made affinity with them. Thou mayest justly be angry
 “ with us, till thou hast consumed us: but thou, O Lord,
 “ art righteous, and hast preserved us to this day. Be-
 “ hold, we are before thee in our sins, and what can we
 “ say in justification of our conduct? *We have forsaken
 thy commandments, which thou hast commanded by thy ser-
 vants the prophets, saying, The land unto which ye go to
 possess it, is an unclean land with the filthiness of the
 people, with their abominations which have filled it from
 one end to the other with their uncleanness.*

As soon as Ezra had finished his confession, which he did in a flood of tears, the people expressed the sense they had of their transgressions by shedding tears likewise. This circumstance attracted the peculiar attention of one Shechaniah, a considerable person among the Jews, who in behalf of his countrymen, addressed Ezra, in words to this effect: “ We have (said he) sinned in taking stran-
 “ gers to our wives; yet, considering the disposition of the
 “ people to repent, there is hope in Israel, that God will
 “ be merciful. Let us, therefore, make a covenant with
 “ our God, to put away all the strange wives and their
 “ children, and do thou see that it be done as the law
 “ obligeth.”

This advice was readily approved of by Ezra, who immediately caused a proclamation to be made throughout the whole land, that the people should all assemble at Jerusalem within three days, on pain of being excommunicated, and all their possessions forfeited to the king. In consequence of this proclamation, the people assembled at the time appointed, when Ezra, placing himself in the midst of the multitude, addressed them as follows: *Ye have transgressed, and have taken strange wives to increase the trespass of Israel. Now, therefore, make confession unto the Lord God of your fathers, and do his pleasure: separate yourselves from the people of the land, and from the strange wives.*

The multitude promised to do as Ezra directed, but desired him to consider, that as the number of those who had transgressed was exceeding great, the work could not be accomplished in one day. They therefore proposed that their rulers should answer for them, and that all those who, in the several cities, had taken strange wives, should come at appointed times to Jerusalem, and bring with them the elders of every city to certify that they were all the guilty persons in that place; and so to proceed till the Lord was appeased. This proposition being approved of, commissioners were appointed to inspect into the affair, who, in the space of three months, made such accurate enquiries that this great enormity was removed, and a thorough reformation brought about among the people.

On the death of Zerubbabel (the governor of Judah and Jerusalem) the administration, both of civil and ecclesiastical affairs, devolved upon Ezra, who continued in that high office till the twentieth year of the reign of king Ahasuerus, when it fell into the hands of Nehemiah, a very religious and good man among those of the captivity, and who was a particular favorite with the king.

Nehemiah, from his office (which was that of cup-bearer* to the king) constantly resided in the palace of Shushan, and by his great familiarity with this prince, had frequent opportunities of doing acts of benevolence to his distressed countrymen. It happened one day that Nehemiah, seeing some people of Judah, who had been at Jerusalem, asked them some questions concerning their brethren in that city, as also with respect to the state of the place itself. They told him that the city was in a very miserable condition indeed, for that its walls† were broken down,

* This was a place of great honor and advantage in the Persian court, because of the privilege the person who enjoyed it had of being frequently in the king's presence, and thereby having the opportunity of obtaining such favors as he might have occasion to require at his hands. That it was a place of great advantage appears evident from Nehemiah's gaining those immense riches, which enabled him for so long a time (see Nehemiah v. 14. 19.) out of his own private purse, to live in his government with the greatest splendor, without applying to the people to discharge the expenses of so high an office.

† The commissions, which had hitherto been granted the Jews, were supposed to extend no farther than to the building of the temple,

and its gates burnt, so that the inhabitants lay open not only to the incursions and insults of their enemies, but likewise to the contempt and reproach of their neighbors.

This melancholy intelligence greatly affected Nehemiah, who, for some days, fasted and prayed in behalf of his distressed brethren at Jerusalem, acknowledging their faults, deprecating God's judgments, and humbly beseeching him that he would be pleased to favor the design which he had conceived of asking the king's permission to go to Jerusalem. "O Lord God of heaven (said he) that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him, and observe his commandments: let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, both night and day, for the children of Israel thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee: both I and my father's house have sinned. We have dealt very corruptly against thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which thou commandedst thy servant Moses. Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandedst thy servant Moses, saying, If ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the nations: but if ye turn unto me, and keep my commandments, and do them, though there were of you cast out into the uttermost parts, yet will I gather them from thence, and I will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set my name there. Now these are thy servants, and thy people, whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power, and by thy strong hand. O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name; and prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man."

Nehemiah's long course of mourning and pungent sorrow for the sad state of his countrymen at Jerusalem, had made such an alteration in his countenance, that when it came to his turn to wait on the king, he could not help taking notice of it, and therefore asked what was the cause of so strange an alteration. Nehemiah was at first struck

and their own private houses; and therefore the walls and gates of their city lay in the same ruinous condition in which they had been left after the destruction of the place by king Nebuchadnezzar.

with fear, but recollecting himself a little, and considering the great esteem in which he was held by the king, he frankly discovered to him the true cause of his grief. *Why* (said he) *should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire?* The king asked him what it was that he requested; upon which Nehemiah replied, *If it please the king, and if thy servant hath found favor in thy sight, that thou wouldest send me unto Judah, unto the place of my fathers' sepulchres, that I may build it.**

Ahasuerus, through the intercession of his queen, who was then sitting with him, readily granted Nehemiah's request, and at the same time gave him a full commission (as his governor of the province of Judea) to repair the walls of Jerusalem, to set up the gates, and fortify the city in the same manner as it was before it was dismantled and destroyed by the Babylonians; but upon this condition, that he should return at a certain time which he had stipulated. He likewise gave him letters to all the governors of the respective provinces in his dominions, commanding them to give him every necessary assistance in carrying on the work. He sent an order to Asaph, the keeper of the forests in that part of the country, to furnish him with whatever timber he might want, not only for the

* There is a concern due to one's own country, which cannot be extinguished by the pleasure or plenty of any other. It is natural to be deeply affected at the misfortunes or deaths of our nearest friends and relations, at what distance soever we are from them; nor can any prosperity in another country hinder or excuse a man for not being affected at the calamity that may befall his own. Nehemiah was in no mean station, when he was cup-bearer to Ahasuerus, and we may very reasonably believe, by the grace and bounty he shewed towards him, that he might have had any honor or preferment he would have demanded in that great and flourishing empire. But when that great king discerned that there was sorrow of heart in his countenance, and demanded the reason of it, he made no other answer than this, *the place of my fathers' sepulchres lieth waste*; and when the king so kindly invited him to ask some favor worthy of his royal bounty, he would require nothing else but, *Send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers' sepulchres, that I may build it.* A man of a generous spirit will naturally be inclined, if in his power, to give relief to his country, more especially when he is sensible that it is afflicted with a general calamity.

reparation of the towers and gates of the city, but for building himself an house to live in as governor of the place; and, to do him still more honor, he sent a guard of horse, under the command of some of the captains of his army, to conduct him safe to his government.

When Nehemiah arrived at Jerusalem, the people, attracted by the grandeur of his appearance, though not knowing his business, paid him the most distinguished respect. In the evening of the third day after his arrival, he went, accompanied by some few of his attendants, privately round the city to take a view of the walls, which he found in a very ruinous and deplorable condition. The next day he summoned together the heads of the people, who being assembled he addressed as follows: *Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire: come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach.** He then told them how gracious God had been to them in giving him instructions in this affair, and how favorable the king was in permitting him to come thither for their benefit. After this he produced his commission and letters for the purpose, which being read to them, their drooping spirits were so revived, that they joyfully and unanimously cried out, *Let us rise up and build.*

For the better and more speedy execution of the work, Nehemiah divided the people into several companies, and

* The speech which Josephus puts into the mouth of Nehemiah on this occasion, is to the following effect: “ You cannot but see and understand, you men of Judea, that we ourselves are, at this day, under the power and providence of the same Almighty and merciful God, that did so many things for our forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, out of a gracious regard to their piety and justice: and it is by the favor of that God, that I have now obtained leave from the king to enter upon the rebuilding of your wall, and the putting an end to the work of the temple that is yet unfinished. But taking this for granted, that you live among a sort of malicious and spiteful neighbors, who would do all that is to be done in nature, for the crossing of your design, when they come once to see you heartily intent upon the undertaking, I shall therefore recommend it to you, in the first place, resolutely and fearlessly to cast yourselves upon God, who will most certainly defeat all the practices of your enemies; and, in the next place, to ply your business day and night, without any intermission either of care or of labor, this being the proper season for it.”

assigned to each the quarter where they were to work, reserving to himself the reviewal and direction of the whole. But no sooner had they made the necessary preparations for beginning the work than Sanballat, an officer of the Moabites, and Tobiah, a man of note among the Ammonites (two bitter enemies to the Jewish nation) began to scoff and ridicule their undertaking, and to make them appear contemptible in the eyes of their natural enemies the Samaritans. Sanballat, in speaking of the work to the Samaritan army, said, *What do these feeble Jews mean? Will they fortify themselves? Will they sacrifice? Will they make an end in a day? Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned?* And to back him in this scornful address, Tobiah the Ammonite said, *Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall.*

As the work, however, advanced, they changed their note, and apprehending themselves in danger from the growing greatness of the Jews, they resolved, if possible, to put a stop to their farther progress. To this purpose they entered into a confederacy with some neighboring nations to come upon them by surprize, demolish their works, and put them all to the sword. But Nehemiah having notice of their horrid desigus, sent out scouts daily to observe their motions, and placed a guard well armed to defend and encourage the workmen. He likewise gave orders that each of the men should have their arms of defence near at hand, in case they should be suddenly attacked, while himself went often among them, encouraging them, by his precept and example, to trust in the Lord, and, in his speeches and exhortations, putting them frequently in mind, that (in case they were compelled to fight) it would be for the security of their wives, their brethren and children.

In this posture of defence did they continue for some time, when they were informed that Sanballat and his party, finding their design discovered, and the Jews prediction. This greatly lessened their fears, and they went on boldly with the work, but with such caution, that, to prevent any surprize, they wrought with their weapons by them; and because, by reason of the great length of the

wall they were obliged to be at some distance from each other, Nehemiah ordered a trumpeter always to attend, giving instructions to the people, that wherever they should hear the sound of the trumpet, immediately to repair to the spot, assuring them that however forcibly they might be attacked by the enemy, they need not to fear, for that the Lord was on their side, and would fight for them.

But while they were all busily employed in building the walls, there happened a kind of mutiny among the common people, which might have been of fatal consequence had it not been for the timely interposition of Nehemiah. The more wealthy among the Jews, taking advantage of the meaner sort, exacted a very heavy usury on such whose necessities obliged them to borrow money for the support of themselves and families. This oppression reduced them so low that they were obliged to mortgage their lands, vineyards, olive-yards and houses, to buy provisions, as also to pay the king's tribute; but that which most affected them was, they were even compelled to sell their children, and subject them to a state of bondage.

As soon as Nehemiah heard of these base proceedings, and the distresses of the common people, he was greatly afflicted, and resolved to remove so great an iniquity. To effect this, he called together a general assembly of the richer part of the Jews, to whom he set forth the nature of the offence they had committed, how great a breach it was of the Divine law, and how heavy an oppression it was on their brethren; what handle it might give their enemies to reproach them, and how much it might provoke the wrath of God against them all. Therefore, said he, *restore, I pray you, to them, even this day, their lands, their vineyards, their olive-yards, and their houses; also the hundredth part of the money, and of the corn, the wine, and the oil, that ye have exacted of them.*

The oppressive Jews, being thoroughly sensible of the justness of Nehemiah's accusations, promised to do as he directed. But this not satisfying him, he obliged them to take an oath strictly to observe it, and to prevent their violating the oath they had taken, he, by way of imprecation, shook the middle part of his vest saying, *So God shake out every man from his house and from his labor that performeth not this promise, even thus be he shaken out,*

and emptied. They all repeated their promise of obeying Nehemiah's orders, which having strictly done, the common people were satisfied, and prosecuted their work with great cheerfulness and diligence.

These usurers had a most excellent example before them against their base practices in the person of Nehemiah, who was so far from countenancing any manner of oppression, that he did not even accept the daily revenue of forty shekels of silver, and the constant furniture of his table with provisions; but remitted these, and all other advantages of his place, that might any way be troublesome and chargeable to the people. Nay, he not only refused the allowance which was due to him as governor, but, at his own charge, kept open house, entertaining every day at his table an hundred and fifty of the Jews and their rulers, besides strangers; for which he constantly allowed an ox, six fat sheep, and fowl in proportion, and, on every tenth day, a great plenty of wine. Besides this, he gave many rich presents to the temple, and, by his generous example, encouraged others, both princes and people, to do the like.

The successful management of Nehemiah in carrying on the building of the walls of Jerusalem so irritated Sanballat and his party, that, finding they could not attack him by open force, they had recourse to craft and stratagem, designing, if possible, to take away his life. To this purpose, under pretence of ending the difference between them in an amicable manner, they sent to invite him to a conference in a certain village in the plain of Ono, a place belonging to the tribe of Benjamin, designing, when they had him there, to do him a mischief. But Nehemiah, very probably suspecting their design, returned for answer, "that the work in which he was engaged required his personal attendance, and therefore he could not come." They repeated this message four times, and Nehemiah as often returned the same answer. At length Sanballat, perceiving that Nehemiah was too cautious to be ensnared by a general invitation, resolved to try him by a more personal expedient that should immediately concern him, and on pretence of clearing himself from an accusation of no less than treason, oblige him to come to him. He therefore the fifth time sent his servant to him with an open letter, the contents of which were to the following effect: "That it

was currently reported he was building the walls of Jerusalem only to make it a place of strength, to support his intended revolt; that, to this purpose, he had suborned false prophets to favor his design, and to encourage the people to choose him king; and that therefore, to stop the course of these rumors, (which, in a short time, would certainly come to the king's ears) he advised him to come to him, that they might confer together, and take such resolutions as might be thought necessary.

Nehemiah, knowing his own innocence, easily saw through this shallow contrivance, and being resolved to make an end of the work he had so successfully began and carried on, returned Sanballat a short and contemptuous answer to this effect: "That all the accusations he had laid against him were false, and the inventions only of his own wicked heart."

Sanballat, finding himself again disappointed, and resolved, if possible, to accomplish his ends, hit upon another project, which he endeavored to carry into execution. He had bribed to his interest one Shemaiah, the son of Delaiah the priest, a great favorite of Nehemiah. This person (according to the plot between him and Sanballat) pretended to the gift of prophecy; and therefore, when Nehemiah went one day to his house, he foretold that his enemies would make an attempt to murder him that very night, for which reason he advised him to go with him into the inner part of the temple, and to secure themselves by shutting the doors. But though Nehemiah did not apprehend the other's design, yet, through a sense of honor and religion, he positively declared, that whatsoever might be the consequence, he would not quit his station, because it would badly become a man in his character to seek for refuge when he saw danger approaching. *Should such a man as I (said he) flee? And who is there that being as I am, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in.*

Thus did this scheme likewise prove equally abortive with the rest; and though Nehemiah knew not at the time the design that was laid against him, yet he afterwards discovered the whole plot, and chastised Shemaiah for his perfidy in a manner he justly deserved.

These, and many other difficulties, the good Nehemiah had to contend with; but by God's assistance, he overcame them all, and in the space of fifty-two days, the whole work was completed.

Nehemiah had surmounted all the difficulties thrown in his way to impede the building of the walls, but he was still greatly perplexed, on account of the treachery of some of his own people. The princes of Judah, as they had all along done, held a correspondence with Tobiah, which he had so improved, that they gave him a particular account of every transaction that took place at Jerusalem; and swore to him they would continue so to do while it remained in their power. By these means Tobiah gained a strong party to his interest, and to such lengths did they carry their attachment to him, that they had the impudence to speak in commendation of him even in the presence of Nehemiah. This came to the ears of the vain Ammonite, who, on that account, looked with such contempt on Nehemiah, that he sent him several very insolent letters; but Nehemiah treated them all with disdain, well knowing that while he had God on his side he had no reason to be fearful of the threats of men.

Though Nehemiah was not any ways fearful of what his enemies could do to him, yet he thought it not impolitic to guard against any danger, that, from their treacherous and vile machinations, might arise either within or without the city. He therefore gave the charge of the gates to his brother Hanani,* and to Hananiah, marshal of his palace,† two men in whom he could confide, commanding

* Nehemiah made choice of these two men, not from partial views to his own kindred, but because he knew they would acquit themselves in their employment with a strict fidelity. Hanani had given proof of his zeal for God and his country, in taking a tedious journey from Jerusalem to Shushan, to inform Nehemiah of the sad state of the city, and to implore his assistance for the relief of it. And the reason why he put such trust and confidence in Hananiah was, because he was a very conscientious man, and acted upon religious principles, which would certainly keep him from those temptations of perfidy he might probably meet with in his absence, and against which, a man, destitute of the fear of God, could not have a sufficient defence.

† The house in which Nehemiah lived, during his residence at Jerusalem, might very justly be called a palace, because he lived

them not to suffer the gates to be opened till some time after sun-rising, to see them safe barred at night, and to set the watch, which should consist of settled house-keepers, who were known to be careful and diligent men. As a farther security to the city, Nehemiah observing that the number of its inhabitants was very disproportionate to so extensive a place, ordered that the principal people among the Jews throughout the kingdom, should make that their place of residence, and at the same time obliged the multitude to cast lots, whereby a tenth part of the whole were obliged to fix their habitations within the city and its suburbs.

After Nehemiah had made these regulations for the security of the city, he and the people made their free-will offerings for the work of the Lord. Nehemiah gave to the treasury one thousand drachms of gold, fifty basons, and five hundred and thirty priests' vestments. Some of the elders gave twenty thousand drachms of gold, and two thousand two hundred pieces of silver; and the rest of the people gave twenty thousand drachms of gold, two thousand pieces of silver and sixty-seven priests' garments.

The affairs of the Jews being brought to this happy situation, and good order established among them, Ezra, the learned and pious scribe and priest, at the request of the people, produced the Book of the Law, which the Lord, by Moses, had commanded the children of Israel strictly to observe. On this occasion a pulpit was erected in the street before the water-gate, in which Ezra placed himself, that he might be the better seen and heard by the people. As soon as he had opened the book, the people all stood up, and he having given thanks to God, they lifted up their heads and cried Amen; after which they bowed their heads, and worshipped the Lord with the most profound reverence. The company being divided into several parts, Ezra (assisted by thirteen priests) read and expounded the law to them, which they listened to with such attention and devotion, that, being thoroughly sensible of their past transgressions, they mourned and wept. But Ezra and his assistants comforted them, telling them, that was not a

there in great splendor, though wholly at his own expense, and, as the king's viceroy, there gave audience to the people.

time to mourn and weep, because it was the sabbath, and therefore a day holy to the Lord God: that they should, on the contrary, be cheerful, eat and drink of the best, and send part of their provision to the poor, for whom there was not any thing provided. *Go your way* (said he) *eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord.* The people, in obedience to Ezra's orders, immediately dispersed, and strictly performed all that he had commanded.

The next day they assembled again, as did also the elders, priests and Levites, in order to be farther instructed by Ezra in the knowledge of the law. In the course of his expounding it to them, it appeared that the children of Israel should dwell in booths during the time of celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles (which was now at hand) and that they should cause proclamation to be made in all other cities, as well as in Jerusalem, that the people should go forth and get olive-branches, pine-branches, myrtle-branches, palm-branches, and branches of other trees thick with leaves, to make booths, in which they were to reside during the celebration of the feast.

The people, who were now grown thoroughly sensible of the danger of transgressing the law, by woeful experience in their ancestors, previous to the day of the feast commencing, went out and brought branches to make themselves booths, which they did, some on the tops of their houses, others in their courts; some in the courts of the temple, and others in the streets. They kept the feast seven days, on each of which Ezra expounded some part or other of the laws of Moses; and the eighth day was held with a solemnity equal to any ever observed on a similar occasion.

A few days after the close of this feast, the Jews assembled again, but on a very different occasion. They appeared in sackcloth with earth upon their heads, fasting and mourning, confessing their own sins, and deprecating the judgments due to their fathers and their own iniquities. They then acknowledged the Omnipotence of God in creating and preserving all things; enumerated his gracious mercies to their fathers from the time of the covenant made with Abraham; recognizing the many and great instances

of his Providence in delivering them from their enemies and persecutors; and, deploring their fathers' and their own disobedience and rebellion, owned they were deservedly subject to very severe punishment. Finally, they made a covenant with the Lord that they would observe his laws as given by their great legislator Moses: and to oblige them to the more strict observance of this covenant, it was engrossed, and the princes, priests and Levites set their seals to it.

Nehemiah having settled the affairs both of church and state in Jerusalem, and fully executed the business on which he went, returned, according to his promise, to the court at Shushan, and was very cordially received by the king. He had not, however, been long at Shushan before the people at Jerusalem relapsed into their old corruptions, and grew very irregular, all which was owing to the misconduct of Eliashib the high-priest, who, having the charge of the treasury, and being allied, by marriage, to Tobiah, the great enemy of the Jews, had furnished him with an apartment in the temple, in the place where they were accustomed to lay the offerings, and other holy things, appointed for the discharge of religious worship. This intimacy between Eliashib and Tobiah, occasioned great mischief and confusion, for the people, by conversing with the heathens, soon broke the covenant they had so lately made, profaning the sabbath, and mixing in marriage with them.

As soon as Nehemiah heard of the people's apostacy, and the great misconduct of Eliashib, he obtained permission of the king to go again to Jerusalem, on his arrival at which place he found all things in the utmost disorder and confusion. He found the people were led away, and debauched in their principles, by a man who was an open enemy to them; and that an apartment in the House of God was adapted for one who was a declared enemy to his worship. This so inflamed the good Nehemiah, that he was resolved to put an end to such irregularities; but the corruption being grown general, he found himself under the necessity of using great caution in carrying his design into execution; for Tobiah had not only insinuated himself into the good opinion of the people in general, but

had likewise got over to his interest the principal part of their leaders.

The first step Nehemiah took towards bringing about a reformation among the people, and convincing them of their errors, was, by causing the book of the law to be publicly read in their hearing. Among other passages that particularly engaged the attention of the people, was one to this effect: "That the Ammonite and the Moabite should not come unto the congregation of God for ever, because they met not the children of Israel with refreshments of bread and water when they came out of Egypt, but hired Balaam against them to curse them, though God turned the curse into a blessing."

No sooner did the people who had transgressed hear this part of the law, than they became thoroughly sensible of their error, and shewed their readiness to reform by separating themselves from the mixed multitude. This gave Nehemiah a convenient opportunity of removing Tobiah, who was an Ammonite, from that apartment in the temple, which he had for some time occupied by the permission and indulgence of Eliashib. The law being positive, and the people, by his prudent conduct, well inclined to obey it, he threw Tobiah's furniture out of the sacred chamber, caused it to be cleansed, and the vessels, together with the offerings and incense, which had been removed the better to accommodate Tobiah, to be reinstated.

Amidst the variety of corruptions that had taken place among the people during Nehemiah's absence from Jerusalem was one, of which (being a constant frequenter of the public worship, and zealously anxious for its promotion) he could not avoid taking particular notice. This was, the neglect of carrying on the daily service of the House of God, in a proper and decent manner: for the tythes, which were to maintain the priests and other officers of the temple, in their respective stations, being either embezzled by Eliashib, or withheld by the laity, they were reduced to the necessity of leaving the temple, and flying into the country in order to obtain subsistence. To remedy this abuse, Nehemiah issued out a proclamation in the name of the king, ordering the people immediately to bring their tythes of corn, wine and oil, into the treasury

of the temple; which orders being strictly obeyed, Nehemiah appointed proper officers to receive and distribute them, recalled the absent priests, and restored all things to the same order in which he had left them at the time of his returning to Shushan.

The next grievance the pious Nehemiah had to remove was, the profanation of the Sabbath, on which day the Jews had, during his absence, done all manner of servile works, such as treading their wine-presses, and bringing their corn, wine, grapes, figs, and all kinds of burthens, into Jerusalem: they likewise suffered the Tyrians, and other strangers, to bring fish, and all kinds of wares, into the city, and to dispose of them by public sale in the same manner as on other days of the week. To remove this violent profanation Nehemiah assembled the people together, and warmly expostulated with them on their carrying on such irreligious practices. *What evil thing (said he) is this that ye do, and profane the Sabbath? Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the Sabbath.* Having said this, to shew them that he was determined to remove this evil, and to bring about a thorough reformation amongst them, he gave strict orders that, towards the evening, before the commencement of the sabbath, the city gates should be shut, and not opened till the sabbath was over; and that this injunction might be duly observed, he appointed some of his own servants* to guard the gates, and strictly prohibited any kinds of burthens whatever to be brought into the city during the time of public worship.

* From this it appears as if matters were come to such a pass that Nehemiah could not trust the common porters of the gates, and therefore appointed some of his own domestics, whom he knew would neither be careless nor corrupted, to see that the gates were kept shut, and all traffic prohibited. He, however, afterwards appointed the Levites to this office, because he not only thought that by virtue of their character they would meet with more deference and respect than his domestic servants, but because he resolved, when he should again leave Jerusalem (at which time he should be obliged to take his own servants with him) to have the watch continued, till the abominable custom of admitting dealers into the city on the sabbath-day should be quite annihilated.

The merchants and dealers (being unacquainted with Nehemiah's orders for preserving the sabbath) came, as usual, the preceding evening with their various articles for sale, but were greatly surprized to find the gates shut, so that they were obliged to take up their lodging without the walls of the city. This disappointment, however, did not check them from coming again on the evening preceding the next sabbath, upon which Nehemiah severely reprimanded them, telling them, if they offered to do so again he would have them taken into custody and punished. *Why* (said he) *lodge ye about the wall? if ye do so again, I will lay hands on you.* In consequence of this they quietly departed, nor did they make any farther attempt to bring their goods to the city for sale on the sabbath. But Nehemiah, suspecting they might, by some contrivance or other, endeavor to break through his orders, and repeat their former bad practices, took a more secure method to prevent it, by commanding the Levites to cleanse themselves, take up their station at the gates of the city, and guard it, that the sabbath day might be kept strict and holy. Thus with great care and difficulty, did this good man remove an evil that might have been of the most fatal consequences to the people, and once more established the true worship of the Lord in the city of Jerusalem.

We have already observed that Nehemiah, in order to convince the Jews of their transgressions, did, on his return from Shushan to Jerusalem, cause the Book of the Law to be read before the people, which expressly declared against their having any connection, or holding any conversation, with the Ammonites and Moabites; and that, in consequence thereof, those who had transgressed immediately separated themselves from the multitude. But the case of mixed marriages, which had been made between the Jews and other nations, had taken such deep root, that Nehemiah found it a difficult matter to eradicate it. He well knew that such alliances, in former ages, had betrayed the Israelites into idolatry and other abominations, and was anxiously desirous to prevent, if possible, the like consequences in future. Finding, therefore, among the Jews some that had married women of Ashdod, Ammon and Moab, whose children, he observed, spoke

neither the language of one parent or the other, he remonstrated with them on the impropriety of their marrying strange women, and pointed out the disagreeable consequences that must arise to their children, who would not only be induced to follow bad practices, but would, in time, entirely forget their native language. But the people, instead of paying a proper respect to Nehemiah's remonstrance, treated him with great indignity, insomuch that, in the height of his resentment, he was provoked to curse them. The people, however, still continued obstinate, upon which Nehemiah was so irritated, that he ordered some of them to be taken into custody, and compelled the rest to swear by the Lord that they should not themselves, nor suffer any of their descendants, ever after to intermarry with other nations, expostulating with them in words to this effect: "Did not Solomon, king of Israel, sin by doing these things? Though there was no king among the heathens like unto him, though he was beloved of his God, who made him king over all Israel, yet he was betrayed by strange women to commit idolatry. Is it reasonable, then, that we should imitate the example to do this great evil, to transgress against our God, in marrying strange wives?"

And to shew himself an impartial judge in his administration, Nehemiah made no distinction of quality or condition among those who continued to transgress, punishing all alike whom he found guilty. He gave an instance of this in the son of Joiada, the son of Eliashib the high-priest, who, having married the daughter of Sanballat the Horonite, and refusing to part with her, was, by Nehemiah's orders, expelled the city, and obliged to fly to his father-in-law in Samaria.

Having thus put a stop to illegal marriages, Nehemiah prayed to God to do justice on those who defiled the priesthood, and violated the covenant between the priests and Levites and the Lord. *Remember them* (said he) *O my God, because they have defiled the priesthood, and the covenant of the priesthood, and of the Levites.* He then proceeded to purge the place from all profanation of strangers, appointing the priests and Levites their several apartments and offices, setting out the wood for the offerings, and taking care of the first fruits.

This is the last act we find recorded of the good and pious Nehemiah. How long he lived after having made these reformations among the people, whether he continued in his place of governor, or whether he died in Judea or in Persia, we are not informed. Josephus says that he died in a very advanced age; and this appears exceeding probable, for, at the time when his book ends, he must have been, at least, seventy years of age. It is most likely that he continued in the government of Judea, till the time of his death, supporting his character by the most exemplary zeal for religion, and the good of his nation; at the same time preserving the dignity of his office with the most magnificent hospitality.

Notwithstanding the great care and pains Nehemiah had taken to work a reformation among the people, it was not long after his death before they relapsed into their old enormities; for which reason we find the prophet Malachi (the last under the law, and who must have lived in the time of Nehemiah) sent to reprove them for their iniquity and scandalous proceedings. Having first demonstrated to them the particular esteem God had to the house of Israel in preference to that of Esau,* he taxed them with their ingratitude and neglect of his worship, but more especially the priests, whom he charged with irreligious and profane approaches to the altar, with corrupting the covenant of Levi, and, by giving a bad example in themselves, having occasioned many to violate the laws of their great legislator Moses. After this, he threatened to judge them for all their sins, particularly for marrying with the heathens, and mocking God with their vain shews and pretences to re-

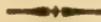
* In Malachi i. 3. it is said God hated Esau, and in other places, the word *hate* is used in a severer sense than is meant, or the original allows. It should be considered that the word, which here, and in other places, on the like occasion, is rendered *to hate*, signifies also to *love less*, or to *take less care* of a thing, and not to wish or do it any harm. And that it is thus to be taken here appears from St. Matthew, x. 37. where Our Saviour says, *He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me.* Therefore it is but reasonable to translate the words of the Apostle St. Paul, Rom. 1. 13, taken out of Malachi, i. 3. *I have loved Jacob more than Esau:* because God's dealing towards the Edomites does not shew any real hatred against them, but only that he favored them less than the descendants of Jacob.

ligion, whilst they were notoriously guilty of adultery, perjury, oppression and other vices. He charged them with sacrilege, in not having paid the tythes and offerings, which being a part of the law, and appropriated to the maintenance of the priests and Levites, could not be detained without manifest violence and injustice; for which he severely reproved them. He then gave them a hint of God's calling the Gentiles, promising the coming of the Messenger of the Covenant whom they all desired. *Then (says he) shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the the days of old, and as in former years.* To give some comfort to the good and pious, who persevered in their duty, and steadfastly believed God's word, he declared that God would not forget his promise to their fathers, but would, in his own good time, fulfil it; assuring them, that when that day should come, the proud, and all that had done wickedly, should be utterly extirpated; but those that had feared the Lord should enjoy prosperity and abundance. He then promised them victory in those days over all their enemies, whom they should trample as dust under their feet; and strictly enjoined them not to forget the law of Moses the servant of the Lord, which he gave him in Mount Horeb. At length, as a forerunner of the completion of all that he had promised concerning the coming of the Messiah, he concluded by telling them that the Lord would send Elias the prophet before the great and terrible day, the happy effect of which would be, the turning the hearts of the fathers to their children, and of the children to their fathers.

Malachi, who, as we have already observed, was the last of the prophets (and whose Book closes the Old Testament) certainly lived in the time of Nehemiah; but at what period either of them paid the debt of nature, we are not any where informed. From the time of Malachi, the prophetic spirit ceased, nor did any person afterwards appear, invested with Divine power, as of old, till the coming of John the Baptist, the great prophet and forerunner of Christ, the Redeemer of Mankind.

From the deaths of Nehemiah and Malachi, to the birth of our Saviour, are reckoned, by the nearest computations, four hundred years, during which time, various revolutions happened in the Jewish state, and the church of God

underwent very great and heavy persecutions, both from the Greeks and Romans; the particulars of which (having now done with the Sacred History) we must gather from the Apocryphal books of the Maccabees, Philo Judæus, Josephus, and other historians, in order to continue the series of History to the time of our Blessed Redeemer. But before we proceed to relate these particulars, we shall mention some things contained in the Old Testament, which, to prevent interrupting the thread of the History, could not with propriety be hitherto inserted.



CHAP. IX.

Containing some account of the Book of PSALMS; the PROVERBS of SOLOMON; the Book of ECCLESIASTES; and the SONG of SOLOMON.

IN the life of David we have taken notice, that he wrote a great number of songs, or spiritual hymns, and that, from his superior knowledge in music, he fixed tunes to many of them, which were played on the harp, an instrument invented by himself. We have also observed, in the life of the great and wise Solomon, that he composed a number of proverbs; (and there is no doubt but he was the author of the Book called *Ecclesiastes*) but we have not had the opportunity of properly noticing the excellencies of either of these great and distinguished compositions. We shall, therefore, make these the subject of the present chapter; beginning with

The Book of PSALMS.

This Book has always been accounted (by the church of God) amongst the rest of the Canonical Books of the Old Testament, as a rich jewel, whose price and value cannot be well conceived, much less fully expressed, either in writing, or by word of mouth. Some have called it, *the christian's garden of pleasure*, stored with most odoriferous flowers and exquisite fruits. Others have

termed it his *Magazine* and *Armory*, where he is furnished with arms of proof for all combats whatever. Others again, his *Exchequer* and *Treasury*, being filled with the choicest riches. Others have considered it as the Anatomy of a believer, an exquisite mirror of the inconceivable grace of God, and a perfect and full compendium of the Holy Bible; that is, of the law and gospel, and of the true knowledge of God, and of his pure worship. It contains many saving instructions concerning the existence of God, and of the Holy Trinity, the properties of the Divine nature, his eternal counsel, his holy word, and his wonderful works; but especially those of his beneficence and mercy towards his church, and of his just judgments upon the workers of iniquity.

In this book we read of the person and office of the Messiah, and of the extent and propagation of his kingdom throughout the nations of the world by the preaching of his gospel; as also concerning the sad and deplorable state of man under sin, of the nature and condition of regeneration, of true repentance, and of the love and fear of God. We likewise read of the nature of true faith, of trusting in *him* alone, and how we ought not to glory, but in *him*; of the certainty of salvation; of the continual war between the flesh and spirit, as also concerning the catholic church, gathered both from Jews and Gentiles; of ecclesiastical discipline; the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and of life eternal.

We find also in this book all manner of spiritual exercises of piety, as patterns and forms of praising the holy name of God; of giving thanks for the benefits received at his hands; of promises and vows in acknowledgment and gratitude for mercies received; of a great number of fervent and earnest prayers for whatever can concern the glory of God, and the interest of believers, as well in general as particular, especially in all manner of crosses, calamities and afflictions; with abundance of holy meditations, solid and powerful comforts, and efficacious arguments, to strengthen us in faith, patience, hope, and all other divine virtues and graces. Insomuch that we cannot conceive any condition in which a believer may be in this life, whether of prosperity, or adversity; of temptation, or

deliverance; of fighting, or victory; of health, or sickness, but he will find, in this Book, a suitable entertainment to it, to the quieting of his conscience, and to the advancement of his salvation.

And whereas, in the other Books of Holy Writ, God represents to us how he is pleased to speak to his church; in this he teaches us how we ought to speak to him, there being no counsel in time of difficulty, no support in affliction, no comfort in sorrow, no praises and elevations of joy, wherewith he doth not fill the hearts and mouths of his children in the meditation of these sacred poems, which by the efficacy of the Holy Spirit, accompanying the music and expressions of them, excite in their souls holy sallies and flights from their houses of clay, to the mansions of glory. In short, whatever hath been said of the efficacy of music, in exciting all the different passions and affections of man, assuaging grief, and appeasing anger, and all other troubles of the mind, may, in a more eminent manner, be attributed to the divine charms of David's mystical harp.

There is no evil spirit whom this music will not drive away; no grief over which it doth not triumph. Wherefore, every Christian, however eminent and prosperous his condition may be, ought to read and meditate this Book with great application, in order to accustom himself to the peculiar style and language of the Spirit of God, which is there made use of; being assured, that when he has once well relished the wonder-working efficacy and success of it, that it will be to his soul as a refreshing and reviving dew, which will make him flourishing and fruitful in all good works; and he will find no greater pleasure than in carrying it in his heart, mouth and hands, as an assured preservative, and never-failing antidote, against the malignant contagion of the world, and the general corruption that prevails throughout it. To this purpose also, the Book of Psalms is frequently recommended to us by the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament, as well as by our Saviour and his apostles in the New; and, by the special wisdom and goodness of God, it has been consigned to the church in the form of Hymns, or Songs, to make them the more taking, as well as more familiar, and thereby the more comprehensible to the meanest capacity.

The Jews have given this Book the title of *Telim*, which signifies *Hymns* or *Songs of Praise*; it being nothing else but a collection of Songs truly spiritual, which have been dictated by Divine inspiration, to teach us to praise and celebrate the name of the Lord. The Greek interpreters of the Old Testament have called it by the name of a Psalter or Psalms, which title the sacred penmen of the New Testament have likewise retained: but the Greek word peculiarly denotes those holy songs which were played with the fingers on stringed instruments, according to the practice of the Israelites, in the tabernacle and temple.

These holy hymns are commonly called *The Psalms of David*, because he was the author of the greatest part of them. The rest were composed by other prophets and men of God, as Moses, Asaph, &c. and it is supposed that the whole were put together (as they now appear) by Ezra, some time after the Babylonish captivity.

The Jews have divided the Book of Psalms into five parts: the first of which ends with the 41st psalm, and is concluded with *Amen and Amen*. The second part finishes with the 72d psalm, which also ends with *Amen and Amen*, and these words, *the prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended*. The third part ends with the 89th psalm, and is likewise concluded with *Amen and Amen*: the fourth with the 106th psalm, which closes with *Amen, praise ye the Lord*: and the fifth part with the 150th and last psalm, the conclusive verse of which is, *Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord*.

The PROVERBS of SOLOMON.

This Book contains a great number of most excellent sentences, penned by king Solomon, from the inspiration of the holy spirit (who had adorned him with an extraordinary wisdom as well in Divine as human matters) and which God, of his great goodness, was pleased should be preserved for the general and perpetual instruction of his church. It treats of the Divine and true wisdom; of the fear of God, and of the future felicity of man. In it we find many excellent lessons concerning our duty to God, to our neighbor, and to ourselves, in whatever state or condition we may be placed, together with considerable promises

of happiness in this world (provided we conduct ourselves as we ought to do) as well as in that which is to come. The whole is intermixed with warnings against all sorts of sins contrary to the tables of the law of God, and particularly against whoredom and adultery; so that this book may be justly accounted a fountain overflowing with saving instructions relative to all things that may tend to conduct and form us wise, religious, and well-pleasing to God, in any calling whatever, whether common or particular, public or private.

The Proverbs of Solomon, therefore, ought to be highly and carefully recommended to all Christians, as containing the most perfect and fullest moral instructions they can have, infinitely surpassing whatever the heathen philosophers, and wise men of the world, have been ever able to produce.

With respect to the collecting of all these sentences into one book, it seems that Solomon (as appears from the excellent introduction and preface comprized in the nine first chapters, which contain little else but the praises of the Divine Wisdom in general, and in particular of our Blessed Saviour, who is the word and eternal wisdom of the Father) penned them himself as far as the 24th chapter, and that the following chapters, from thence to the 29th, were collected and transcribed by the command of the good king Hezekiah, either out of Solomon's own memoirs, or those of some other person inspired with the holy spirit. The 30th chapter contains the words of Agur; and the last chapter consists of instructions given to Solomon by his mother, which he not only received and approved of, but also thought fit to transmit to the church of God, for the instruction of mankind in general.

Though this Book does not contain all the 3000 proverbs written by Solomon (as mentioned in 1 Kings iv. 32.) yet it has the sum and substance of them, and contains all that God was pleased should be consigned to the use and perpetual edification of the church throughout all ages.

The BOOK of ECCLESIASTES.

It is the general opinion of the learned that Solomon wrote this book towards the close of his life, after he had

repented of his apostacy from the true worship of God, to that of idols. In it he declares, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and before the whole church of God, the great sorrow and regret he had conceived for his life, most earnestly detesting it as mere vanity and vexation of spirit, incapable of affording any true peace, or solid content of mind, much less of leading him to the enjoyment of eternal salvation.

The chief aim and design of Solomon in forming this composition is, to conduct all others, by his example, to pursue such steps as may lead them to godliness and virtue, and not to place too much expectation on the pleasures of this world. To this purpose he first gives a description of the whole course of his life, and particularly of that part of it whereon he had strictly founded the greatest expectations of happiness. He then tells us that he had been a great observer of the lives and conversation of men, and had examined the principal things on which they had founded their chief pleasures and enjoyment, but that he had found them all to be vanity, and what only engaged men in prophaneness, and various kinds of sins. Furthermore, he declares, and positively asserts, that the world, its good things, pleasures, accidents, vicissitudes, orders and customs, being all vicious, or at least corrupt and tainted by the vanity sin has introduced into it; that because all things in it are short in their continuance, uncertain in their conduct, unequal in their tenor, and devoid of any durable felicity, a wise man must not place his hopes in them, or fix his heart upon them, so as passionately to desire the good things in it, or think to amend or avoid all its disorders and evils. On the contrary, that every man ought moderately to rejoice himself, without vexation or covetousness, but yet with care and diligence in his lawful calling, in the short and temporary enjoyment of the blessings he hath received from the liberal hand of God, conforming his motions of joy or sorrow according to the variety of accidents that happen in this life by the dispensation of the all-wise Providence of God, who governs and disposeth all things in this world as best pleaseth him; and that they are not at all subject to the uncertainty and hazard of chance, as some may falsely imagine. He concludes with exhorting all men to give up and resign them-

selves to God, by fearing him sincerely, obeying him faithfully, and by constantly applying themselves to all manner of good works; setting continually before their eyes (especially while they are young and healthy) the precariousness of this life, the unavoidable certainty of death, the terror of the just judgment of God, and the joys of eternity. So that this Book may, with great propriety, be called, *The Treasure of Maxims and instructions concerning the true felicity, and chief good of mankind in general.*

This Book is called in Hebrew *Kobeleth*, and in Greek, *Ecclesiastes*. The word *Kobeleth* comes from the root *Kahal*, which signifies, *to assemble*; so that the word implies, a person who calls or gathers others together on any particular occasion. Indeed, all men are, in their own nature, as poor sheep that are wandering and lost; but God sends his servants as so many shepherds to assemble and call them together from their strayings. There are some who imagine the word *Kobeleth* to have been one of the names given to Solomon, who was also called *Jediah* and *Lemuel*; and what inclines them to this opinion is, because the word, though it be of a feminine termination, is nevertheless joined to a masculine verb, *Amar Kobeleth*. The Greek word *Ecclesiastes* properly signifies a *preacher*; but this is not to be understood as if Solomon had publicly preached before the people, but because in this book he sets forth an excellent sermon, or homily, full of the most edifying instructions and exhortations. Others again understand by the word *Ecclesiastes*, one who, by a public discourse in the church, openly confesses the sins he hath committed, and testifies his sincere repentance, which undoubtedly was the custom of the Primitive Church.

The SONG of SOLOMON.

This Book is so called from its having been written by Solomon, who indited it from Divine inspiration. It is called, by way of excellence, the *Song of Songs*; because it is the highest and divinest strain of all the compositions made by that wise king, and is a kind of epithalamium, or nuptial poem, made on the spiritual marriage which Christ has been pleased to contract with his church. It is made in the form of a dialogue between Christ as the

bridegroom, and the Church as his spouse, under the type, or at least on occasion of the marriage consummated between king Solomon, and the daughter of Pharaoh king of Egypt; as was also the 45th psalm; and accordingly we sometimes find the friends and bridemen of the bridegroom, as well as the bridesmaids and companions of the bride, brought in as interlocutors in this holy and mystical poem.

By the friends of the bridegroom we may understand the good and holy prophets of the Old Testament, the Apostles of the New, and all faithful pastors and teachers of the church in general; and by the bride's companions we may understand all those who sincerely confess the name of Christ, and profess his true doctrine. Under the names of bridegroom and bride is here represented, in figured and allegorical expressions, the great and ardent love of Christ towards his spouse, which is the church, the great benefits she receives from him, and how vehemently the spouse, the Holy Church, doth languish and pant after her dearest bridegroom, till she be indissolubly and eternally united to him in heaven. In this book is also represented the condition and constitution of the church of God upon earth, her duties, virtues, blemishes and defects.

The Jewish Rabbies would not permit any person, who had not attained the age of thirty years, to read the three first chapters of Genesis, the beginning and end of Ezekiel, or this song of Solomon: and though, perhaps, there might have been too much superstition in this their prohibition, yet it is not without cause that we are carefully warned by the ancient doctors, as well of the Synagogue as of the Church, that a man must lay aside all sensual thoughts, and carnal affections, when he applies himself to the reading and meditating on this book; and that he who would wish to understand the deep mysteries therein contained to his edification and comfort, must come to it with a mature, settled, and enlightened judgment, and with spiritual thoughts and holy affections. For though the expressions here made use of are calculated to contract and cement chaste and holy marriages here on earth, and thereby serve to recommend the same; yet, because the Holy Spirit is pleased to represent to us (under these notions) such transcendent and adorable mysteries, we must have

an especial care not to profane or defile them by a carnal and corrupt interpretation.

He, therefore, who is earnestly desirous of edifying and profiting himself by this very excellent and Divine poem, must read it with great attention, and with a heart pure and undefiled; in which case he will not fail to meet with such illuminating instructions and surpassing comforts as will secure to him happiness here, and eternal felicity hereafter.

CHAP. X.

Darius Nothus succeeds Ahasuerus on the throne of Persia, but, dying soon, is succeeded by his son Arsaces. Cyrus, the younger brother of Arsaces, attempts to obtain the sovereignty, and for that purpose raises a very considerable army, but is defeated by Arsaces and himself slain. Johanan, the high-priest among the Jews, kills his brother Joshua in the temple, for which he is fined, and a tax levied upon the Jews on the occasion. Arsaces dies, and is succeeded on the throne of Persia by his son Ochus, who is poisoned by an Egyptian eunuch called Bagoas. He likewise poisons the son of Ochus, and places another of the same name on the throne, whom he intends destroying in like manner, but the king, discovering his design, obliges him to drink it himself, which puts a period to his life. Ochus assumes the name of Darius Codomannus, in whose reign a circumstance occurs very prejudicial to the Jews. Darius is defeated by Alexander, king of Macedon, commonly called Alexander the Great, and his mother, wife and children, made prisoners. Alexander lays siege to Tyre, and takes it by storm. He marches against Jerusalem, but is prevented from attacking it by means of Juddas the high-priest, to whom he pays reverence, and worships the name of the Lord. Darius is assassinated by one of his generals named Bessus, which circumstance occasions a dissolution of the Persian monarchy. Alexander dies, and the Grecian empire is divided among several of his generals, one of whom, named Ptolemy, takes Jerusalem by stratagem, and making the Jews captives, carries great numbers of them into Egypt, and other parts. He treats them with distinguished kindness, as does also his successor Ptolemy Philadelphus, who not only gives

them their liberty, but likewise many rich presents for the use of the temple. Ptolemy Philadelphus dies, and is succeeded by his son Euergetes. Onias, the high-priest, refuses to pay the annual tribute to Euergetes, who sends an ambassador to him with threats, in case he continues to refuse the payment. Onias remains obstinate, but, by the prudent management of his nephew Joseph, the king's rage is appeased, and the threatened consequences happily subverted. Ptolemy Philopater succeeds his father Euergetes, but soon dying with intemperance, is succeeded by his son Ptolemy Epiphanes. The Jews submit themselves to Antiochus, king of Asia, who grants them many singular privileges. The perfidy and death of Hyrcanus.

THE Almighty having been pleased to withdraw his prophets in the deaths of Nehemiah and Malachi, the Jews were left to govern themselves according to their own laws. This they did for some time, enjoying their religion without any interruption, and having high-priests, as their leaders; but they remained subject to the dominion of the Persians so long as that empire subsisted.

Artaxerxes (called in scripture Ahasuerus) who sat on the Persian throne in the time of Nehemiah and Malachi, died in the 49th year of his reign, greatly lamented by his subjects. His sons, who were numerous, disputed each their title to the throne, till at length Ochus, or Darius (commonly called Darius Nothus) prevailed, and was chosen king by the general approbation of the people. This prince, however, dying in a very short time after his accession, was succeeded by his son Arsaces, who ruled the whole empire of Persia, except lesser Asia, which was bequeathed by Darius to a younger son named Cyrus. Arsaces was born before his father was king, but his brother Cyrus after; for which reason the younger prince imagined he had the greater right to the government of the whole empire. To support his claims, he raised a numerous army of Persians in his government of Lesser Asia, and having procured the assistance of a body of auxiliary Grecians, he began his march to dispossess his brother of the crown. Arsaces met him with an army of 100,000 Persians, at the distance of about seventy miles from Babylon, when a desperate battle took place, which terminated in favor of Arsaces, the army of Cyrus being defeated and

himself slain. The Grecian auxiliaries, however, made an admirable retreat, under the conduct of their able and learned general Xenophon, whose narrative of that singular transaction is one of the finest pieces of ancient history with which the moderns are acquainted.

Arsaces, towards the latter end of his reign, made Bagoses, the chief commander of his forces, governor of Syria and Phœnicia, to the rulers of which the Jews had been subject ever since the death of Nehemiah, the last governor the kings of Persia sent to Jerusalem. At this time Johanan, the grandson of Eliashib, was high-priest, which office he had held with great reputation for several years. Bagoses, having a peculiar respect for Joshua, the brother of Johanan, resolved to remove the latter and place the former in his stead. He therefore invested him with sufficient authority for the purpose, upon which Joshua went to Jerusalem in order to take possession of the office. On his arrival there he attempted by force to get into the temple, which Johanan used his utmost endeavors to prevent. In the course of the scuffle it so happened that Johanan, having a superiority of strength, overpowered Joshua, and, in the height of his passion, slew him in the inner court of the temple. As soon as Bagoses heard of this, he immediately repaired to Jerusalem, and having taken a thorough cognizance of the fact, imposed a mulct on Johanan for the offence; besides which he obliged the priests to pay out of the public treasury the sum of fifty drachms for every lamb they should afterwards offer in their daily sacrifices.* Johanan held the priestly office till his death, and was succeeded by his son Jaddus.

On the death of Arsaces, his son Ochus, a very valiant and enterprising youth, succeeded to the throne of Persia. This prince subdued the Egyptians and Phœnicians who had revolted, destroyed all the fortified places, and carried away many of the people into captivity. Among these was an Egyptian eunuch named Bagoas, of whom Ochus grew so exceedingly fond that he heaped innumerable favors

* The payment of this tax lasted no longer than seven years; for on the death of Arsaces, the changes and revolutions, which then happened in the empire, made a change in the government of Syria, and the person who succeeded Bagoses in that province, no farther exacted it.

on him. The treacherous Bagoas, however, formed a conspiracy against the life of his benefactor, and at length effected his purpose by poisoning him in the 23d year of his reign. Not content with this, he, in a very short time after, poisoned his son Ochus, who succeeded him, and contrived to place another Ochus on the throne, who, it is imagined, was not in the least related to the royal family. It was not long, however, before he was displeased with this monarch also, and, as usual, had prepared a cup of poison for him; but the king discovered his intentions, and obliged him to drink it himself. Thus was his repeated treachery punished, and the law of retaliation properly exercised.

Ochus, having thus removed the base and treacherous Bagoas, and being thoroughly established on the throne of Persia, took upon himself the name of Darius Codomannus, which he retained during the remainder of his life.

Some time after Darius Codomannus had been seated on the Persian throne, an accident happened which put the Jewish state into great disorder and confusion, and had liked to have proved fatal to it. Manasseh, brother to Jaddus the high-priest, and colleague with him, having married Nicasa, the daughter of Sanballat, (the old enemy of the Jews) the elders of Jerusalem, wisely foreseeing the fatal consequence of such marriages, and reflecting that they had been, in a great measure, the cause of their late captivity, and other judgments sent among them, demanded of Manasseh that he should either dismiss his wife, or never more approach the altar. His brother the high-priest concurred in this demand, and in conjunction with the elders, insisted on it he should no longer officiate as a priest unless he complied with their request.

In consequence of this, Manasseh repaired to his father-in-law Sanballat, who was chief ruler of the Samaritans,*

* The Samaritans were originally the Cutheans, and such others of the eastern nations, as Esarhaddon, king of Babylon, had planted there, after reducing the Israelites, and carrying them away captives. When the temple was built on Mount Gerezim, at the instigation of Sanballat, Samaria became a common refuge for all refractory Jews, and this mixture of inhabitants produced, in a short time, a change in religion. The Samaritans had, for a long time, worshipped the God of Israel in conjunction with the idols of the east from whence they

and who constantly resided at Samaria, the capital of the country. Manasseh told Sanballat all that had passed at Jerusalem, and declared, that though he passionately loved his daughter, yet he was unwilling for her sake to be deprived of the priesthood, which was a native honor, and in the highest esteem among the Jews. Sanballat, in order to ease the mind of his son-in-law on this head, told him that if he would but continue his affection to his daughter, and keep her as his wife, he would not only secure him in his then station, but would raise him to the rank of high-priest, establish him as a prince of the country, and build him a temple on Mount Gerezim equal to that at Jerusalem; all which should be performed by the power and permission of Darius. Manasseh, relying on these promises, remained with his father-in-law, the consequence of which was, that many of the priests, as well as common people at Jerusalem, who had engaged in these forbidden marriages, resorted to Samaria, and placed themselves under his protection. Their removal, indeed, was far from being against their interest, for Sanballat, to encourage his ambitious son-in-law, furnished them with houses, lands, stock and money, which afterwards occasioned great mutiny and disorder in the Jewish state.

came; but when once the Jewish worship came to be settled among them, and the Book of the Law of Moses to be read publicly, they conformed themselves wholly to the worship of the true God, and, in their performance of this, were as exact as the Jews themselves. The Jews, however, looking on them as apostates, hated them to such a degree as to avoid all manner of converse and connection with them. This hatred first began from the malice which the Samaritans expressed against the Jews both in the rebuilding of their temple, and in the reparation of the walls of their city under the management of the good Nehemiah. It was afterwards greatly increased by the apostacy of Manasseh, in his setting up an altar and temple in opposition to those at Jerusalem; and it was all along kept up on account of some particular tenets, wherein the two nations materially disagreed. The Samaritans received no other Scriptures than the five books of Moses; they rejected all traditions, adhered only to the written word itself, and maintained that Mount Gerezim, on which their temple was built, was the only proper place for the worship of God; and from this variety of causes ensued all the hatred and virulence which afterwards took place between the Jews and Samaritans, the particulars of which will appear in the course of our history.

About this time the territories of Darius Codomannus were invaded by the Grecians under the command of Philip, king of Macedon, who was chosen generalissimo of the confederate armies of Greece; but being treacherously murdered by Pausanias, one of his principal officers, he was succeeded by his son Alexander, afterwards known by the name of Alexander the Great. This prince, though but twenty years of age, took the command of the Grecian army, and passing the Hellespont at the head of 30,000 foot, and 5000 horse, engaged the Persians on the banks of the Granicus, and, notwithstanding they were greatly superior in number, obtained a complete victory.

As soon as Darius heard of the defeat of his army by Alexander he immediately assembled his forces, fully resolved to give the Macedonians battle, and, if possible, prevent them from committing any farther ravages in his territories. He accordingly marched at the head of his troops beyond the Euphrates, and encamped on the side of Mount Taurus in Cilicia. This was agreeable news to Sanballat, who assured his son-in-law Manasseh, that on the king's return he would ratify all he had promised, having no doubt but Darius would obtain a complete conquest over the Macedonians. In this, however, he happened to be mistaken, for though Alexander's army was very inferior in number to that of the Persians, the latter were totally routed, Darius's mother, wife and children taken prisoners, and he obliged to save himself by a precipitate flight.

Alexander, encouraged by this success, marched directly into Syria, took Damascus and Sidon, and laid siege to Tyre. From hence he wrote letters to Jaddus the high-priest at Jerusalem, desiring the assistance he had heretofore given to Darius, and demanding that he would supply his army with necessaries, which should be punctually paid for. The high-priest returned for answer, that he had sworn not to take up arms against Darius, and that he would keep his oath inviolable as long as he lived. This answer enraged Alexander, who vowed revenge against the high-priest as soon as he should have reduced the place he was then besieging.

When Sanballat understood that Alexander lay before Tyre, he immediately revolted from Darius, and went

over to him with eight thousand men he had assembled together out of his own province. Alexander received him with great respect, and bade him speak his mind to him without the least restraint, as he would be ready to grant any reasonable request he might ask. This gave Sanballat a favorable opportunity of executing the design he had projected. He told him he had a son-in-law named Manasseh, who was brother to Jaddus the high-priest of the Jews; and that he was following him with a great concourse of people, in order to ask his permission to erect a temple in that province for the performance of Divine worship. He intimated at the same time how much Alexander's interest was concerned in this permission, as the Jews, who were very numerous, might, if refused, be as troublesome to him, as they had heretofore been to the Syrians. Alexander readily granted Sanballat's request, upon which he gave orders for the immediate erecting of the temple on Mount Gerezim, appointed his son-in-law to be high-priest, and ordered that his descendants by his daughter should succeed to that honor.

In the mean time, Alexander carried on the siege of Tyre, and after the expiration of seven months took it by storm. The temple which he had given Sanballat permission to build was now completed, and Manasseh was appointed high-priest, but his father-in-law did not live long to see him enjoy that honor, for in about two months after, he paid the debt of nature.

As soon as Alexander had made a conquest of Tyre, he marched at the head of his victorious army towards Jerusalem, fully resolved to punish the high-priest for disobeying his commands. Jaddus being apprized of Alexander's intentions, and that he was marching with all haste to Jerusalem, was greatly alarmed, and knowing how incapable he was to make any resistance against so powerful an invader, ordered prayers and sacrifices to be offered up for the general prosperity and safety of the people. On the following night it was revealed to Jaddus in a dream, that he should adorn the city with garlands and flowers, open the gates, and let the people who should be dressed in white, go out to meet Alexander, himself and the other priests preceding in their proper habits.

When Jaddus awoke he was so highly pleased with what had been revealed to him in his dream, that having in the morning told the citizens what had passed, he proceeded to make the necessary preparations for meeting the king. As soon as he understood that Alexander was near at hand, he, with the priests and people, left the city, and went to a place called Sapha, that is, *the place of prospect*, from its being so elevated as to command an uninterrupted view of the city and temple. The army of Alexander made no doubt of soon obtaining a conquest, and flattered themselves with reaping great advantages by plundering the city; but in this they soon found themselves mistaken, things taking a very different turn from what they expected. As soon as Alexander saw the people walking in white, the priests in silk robes, and the high-priest in purple embroidered with gold, wearing his mitre, and having on his forehead a golden plate with the name of God on it, he advanced alone, paid homage to the inscription by falling on his knees, and complimented the high-priest. So unexpected a circumstance greatly surprized the Jews, who gathered in crouds, and proclaimed the praise of Alexander. The princes and great men of Persia, were likewise astonished at the behavior of Alexander on this occasion, one of whom, named Parmenio, asked him how it happened, that he, whom almost every man worshipped, should pay such adoration to a priest of the Jews? The reply that Alexander made to this was, "That he did not pay that adoration to him, but to the God whose high-priest he was: that while he was at Dion in Macedonia, and deliberating with himself in what manner he should carry on the war with Persia, that very person, and in that very habit, appeared to him in a dream, encouraging him to pass boldly over into Asia, and not to doubt of success, because God would be his guide in the expedition, and give him the empire of the Persians; and, therefore, he was assured from hence, that he made the then war, under the direction of that God, to whom, in the person of the high-priest, he paid adoration." Having said this, he very kindly embraced Jaddus, and the other priests escorting him into the city, he went into the temple, and there offered up sacrifices to God. At the conclusion of this ceremony, Jaddus shewed him a prophe-

cy of Daniel, which predicted the overthrow of the Persian empire by a Grecian king. This Alexander applied to himself, and was firmly convinced in his own mind that he was the person whom God had appointed for so great a work. Pleased with this reflection, he offered to grant the people whatever immunities the high-priest should desire; upon which Jaddus told him, that they wished only to enjoy their own laws, and to possess the same privileges as their brethren did in Media and Babylon; that, according to the Mosaic law, they neither sowed nor plowed every seventh year, and, therefore, they should esteem it a very high favor if he would be pleased to remit the tribute of that year. Alexander readily complied with this request; and having confirmed the Jews in the enjoyment of all their privileges, particularly that of living under, and according to their own laws, he took a friendly leave of the high-priest, and departed.

Alexander, having left the city of Jerusalem, visited several other places in its neighborhood, at all of which he was received by the people with great testimonies of friendship and submission. The Samaritans who dwelt at Sichem, at the foot of Mount Gerezim, and were apostates from the Jewish religion, hearing how kindly Alexander had treated the people of Jerusalem, resolved to take advantage of it by telling him that they were Jews likewise. It was a common practice with them to assert this, or deny it, as best suited their interest or convenience. When at any time they observed the affairs of the Jews in a prosperous condition, they boasted that they were of their nation, and descended from Manasseh and Ephraim; but when they thought it was their interest to say the contrary, they would not fail to affirm, and even swear, that they had not the least relation to them. Resolved, however, to claim affinity on the present occasion, in order to answer their intended purposes, they went with great eagerness as far as the territories of Jerusalem to meet Alexander, whom they no sooner saw than they expressed their satisfaction by the loudest acclamations. Alexander commended their zeal, upon which the Samaritans (or Sichemites) humbly intreated him to visit their temple, and honor their city with his presence. The king told them that he was then hastening to Egypt, but that

when he returned, if his affairs would permit, he would not fail to comply with their desires. They then requested that he would grant them an exemption from all taxes in every seventh year, because they, as well as the Jews, neither tilled nor reaped that year. Alexander then asked them if they were Jews, upon which they told him they were Hebrews, and that the Phœnicians called them Sichemites. The king then dismissed them with this answer: "The favor you ask I have granted to the Jews; and when I return, and am better informed, I shall indulge you in whatever may be thought reasonable."

Alexander, having conquered Egypt, regulated all things there to his satisfaction, and given orders for building the city of Alexandria, departed thence about spring to go with the utmost expedition into the east in pursuit of Darius. In his way through Palestine he was informed that the Samaritans, in a general insurrection, had killed Andromachus, the governor of Syria and Palestine, who going to Samaria to settle some affairs of a public nature, the inhabitants set fire to the house, and he perished in the flames. This base action greatly incensed Alexander against the Samaritans, because he had a particular regard for Andromachus. He, therefore, ordered all those to be executed who were any ways concerned in the murder: the rest he banished from Samaria, and settled a colony of Macedonians in their stead. The remaining part of their lands he gave to the Jews, and exempted them from the payment of the seventh year's tribute. Those who were banished from Samaria retired to Sichem at the foot of Mount Gerezim, which thereby became the capital of the Samaritans; and, lest eight thousand men of their nation (who had been brought over to him by Sanballat, and had accompanied him ever since the siege of Tyre) should, if sent back into their own country, renew the spirit of rebellion therein, he sent them into Thebais, the most remote province of Egypt, and there assigned them lands for the support of themselves and families.

Alexander, having penetrated into Palestine, passed the Euphrates and Tigris, and in the plains of Arbula again gave the Persians a total defeat; the consequence of which was, that Babylon, Susa and Persepolis opened their gates to the conqueror. The last of these cities, which

was then the first in the universe, he ordered to be burnt, merely to please a Grecian courtesan, named **Thais**.

After this third defeat, **Darius** fled towards **Media**, in hopes of raising such a force in this and the northern provinces of the empire, which still acknowledged subjection to him, as might enable him once more to try his fortune. He accordingly proceeded as far as **Ecbatane**, the capital of **Media**, where he gathered together the broken remains of his army, to which he added some new levies, and with these flattered himself with being able once more to engage the conqueror.

In the mean time, **Alexander**, having spent the winter at **Babylon** and **Persepolis**, took the field to go in search of **Darius**, who, on receiving notice of his march, left **Ecbatane**, with a design of retreating into **Bactria**, there to fortify himself, and make some addition to his forces; but he soon changed his mind, stopped short, and determined once more to hazard a battle, though his army at that time consisted only of forty thousand men.

While **Darius** was employed in making the necessary preparations for giving battle to **Alexander**, a scheme was concerted between **Bessus** the governor of **Bactria**, and **Narbazanes**, another great man of **Persia**, for taking away his life. These two, having suddenly seized the king, loaded him with chains, put him into a covered chariot, and fled towards **Bactria**, taking him with them. Their design was, if **Alexander** pursued them, to purchase their own security by delivering **Darius** up to his enemy; if not, to kill him, take possession of the kingdom, and renew the war.

On the eighth day after their departure **Alexander** arrived at **Ecbatane**, and hearing what the traitors had done to **Darius**, he made all the haste he could to rescue the unfortunate king out of their hands. After several days march he at length came up with them, and the conspirators finding themselves closely pressed did what they could to compel **Darius** to get on horseback, and save himself with them; but he refusing to comply, they stabbed him in several places, and left him expiring in the chariot. He was quite dead when **Alexander** came up, who, when he saw his corpse, could not forbear shedding tears at so melancholy a spectacle. Having thrown his cloak over the

body, he ordered it to be wrapped therein, and conveyed to his wife Sisygambis at Shushan, that he might have a royal interment, and be buried in the sepulchres of the kings of Persia.

Thus died Darius Codomannus, after having possessed the throne of Persia only six years. And thus (according to the prophecies of Daniel) was an end put to the Persian monarchy, after it had subsisted for the space of 208 years.

Alexander, having obtained an entire conquest over the Persian empire, carried his arms into India, where he subdued one Porus, a very powerful monarch of that country; and, indeed, so successful was he in all his enterprizes, that he made himself master of the greatest part of the then known world. He afterwards married Statira, the eldest daughter of the unfortunate Darius, and obliged his officers to intermarry with Persian ladies. Returning to Babylon, elated by vanity, and intoxicated with success, he gave himself up to all manner of debaucheries, and at length fell a martyr to excessive drinking* in the year of the world 3681, in the 33d year of his age, and 12th of his reign.†

* The particular circumstances which occasioned the death of this prince are thus related. One day, after he had been offering up sacrifices for the many victories he had obtained, he made an entertainment for his friends, at which he drank very hard, and continued the debauch till late at night, when he and his company were invited, by a physician of Thessalia, to go with him, and drink a little more at his house. Alexander accepted the offer, and as there were twenty in company, he first drank to each of them in their order, and then called for the Herculean cup, which is said to have been so large as to contain six quarts. This vessel being filled, the king drank to one of the company named Prodeas, a Macedonian, and having emptied it, he some time after pledged him again in the same, drinking the like quantity; but immediately after the second cup, he dropped from his seat, and then fell into a violent fever, of which he soon died, after a reign of twelve years, six of which he governed as king of Macedon, and six as monarch of Asia.

† We are told by Diodorus Siculus that Aridæus, the brother of Alexander, was charged with the care of carrying his body from Babylon to Alexandria, and that he employed two years in making preparations for the removal of it, during which time a great contention arose with respect to the place to which it should be carried for interment. There had been a prophecy current, intimating that the place where Alexander should be buried would flourish and become very prosperous: the governors, therefore, of the cities and provinces

On the death of Alexander, the Grecian or Macedonian empire (for so the whole was called which Alexander had conquered) was divided among the chief commanders of his army, he not having, previous to his death, appointed any person in particular to succeed him in the sovereignty. These respective officers, not satisfied with their different allotments, continued at war with each other for some years, in the course of which great numbers of people were sacrificed, and many capital cities utterly destroyed. At length the number of these governors or princes was reduced to four, who unanimously agreed to make a partition of the whole among themselves, and to divide it into four kingdoms.

In this division Antiochus took the sovereignty of Asia; Seleucus that of Babylon and the bordering countries; Cassander reigned over Macedon; and Ptolemy, the son of Lagus, king of Egypt, succeeded to the sovereignty of his father's dominions.

Ptolemy had not long taken possession of Egypt, before he became restless, and was anxious for making some additions to his territories. He was desirous of making himself master of the provinces of Syria, Phœnicia and Judea, thinking they would be an excellent barrier to his dominions. The first step he took towards effecting this was, to attempt to bribe Laomedon, one of the late Alexander's captains (who, it is probable, was made governor of Syria and the adjacent countries after the death of Andromachus) with a prodigious sum of money if he would quietly deliver them into his hands. Laomedon rejected this offer with disdain, upon which Ptolemy sent Nicanor, one of his captains, with an army into Syria, while himself invaded Phœnicia; and having vanquished Laomedon, and taken him prisoner, he soon accomplished his wishes, by making himself master of the provinces of Syria, Phœnicia and Judea.

disputed with each other who should have the honor and advantage of disposing of the body. A proposal was made for its being carried to Aigui in Macedonia, where generally the kings of that country were buried; but this was overruled by the Egyptians. His body was, therefore, first deposited at Memphis, but afterwards removed to Alexandria. It is said to have been laid in a coffin made of solid gold, and that it was embalmed in honey.

Not only the inhabitants of Jerusalem, but likewise all the Jews throughout Judea, stood out against Ptolemy, and, on account of the oath they had taken to Laomedon, refused to submit to his authority. In consequence of this Ptolemy marched with a considerable army into Judea, and having got possession of the principal places in the country, at length laid siege to Jerusalem. The city being strongly fortified, the inhabitants held out for some time, and might have rendered all the efforts of Ptolemy abortive, had it not been for their observance of the sabbath, which, at this time, they kept so strict, that they thought it a breach of their law even to defend themselves on that day. As soon as Ptolemy understood this, he took advantage of it by storming the place on the very next sabbath, and in the assault took it, there not being any of the people who would defend the walls against him. Having possessed himself of the place, and put a proper garrison in it, he took an hundred thousand of the Jews captives with him into Egypt. At first he treated them with some severity, but reflecting on the fidelity they had shewn to their former governors, he employed them in his army and garrisons, and granted them the same privilege in Alexandria which were enjoyed by the Macedonians; whereupon the whole nation of the Jews became subject to the power and dominion of the king of Egypt.

About this time Onias, the high-priest of Jerusalem, died, and was succeeded by his son Simon, who, from his great piety and holiness of life, was distinguished by the title of *Simon the Just*. He continued in the priestly office only nine years, and was succeeded by his brother Eleazar, his son Onias being at that time only a minor.

On the death of Ptolemy, king of Egypt, his son Ptolemy Philadelphus succeeded to the throne. He was a man naturally of a very tender and humane disposition, as also a very great encourager of learning. His father had erected a Museum, or College for learned men, in the city of Alexandria, in which was a library that contained no less than 400,000 volumes, and Ptolemy Philadelphus had no sooner succeeded to the throne than he resolved to make all the improvements he could to what his father had begun. To this purpose, hearing that the Jews had among them a famous book, called *the Book of their law*, he thought it

well deserved a place in his collection. He therefore wrote to Eleazar the high-priest, requesting him to obtain an authentic copy of it, and because it was written in a language he did not understand, he desired him to obtain a competent number of learned men to translate it from the Hebrew tongue into that of the Greek. Eleazar strictly complied with the king's commands, and from the joint labors of the LXX, or rather LXXII translators, (for the king's orders were that he should chuse six of the most learned out of each tribe) the work was soon completed, and that version has ever since been distinguished by the name of the *Septuagint*.

Ptolemy, having got this business executed, next directed his attention towards the captive Jews. He issued out a proclamation, ordering all those who had been made prisoners during his father's reign, as well as those who had fallen into captivity before, and subsequent to that period, to be immediately set at liberty. He likewise ordered them to be furnished, at his own expense, with all kinds of necessaries for their journey to Jerusalem, and, at their departure, gave them many valuable presents for the use of the temple.

Ptolemy Philadelphus, after reigning over Egypt thirty-eight years, paid the debt of nature in the sixty-third year of his age, and was succeeded by his son Euergetes.

About this time also died Eleazar the high-priest, who was succeeded by his nephew Onias, son to Simon the Just. He was, in many respects, quite the reverse of his father, and of so mean and covetous a disposition that he refused the usual tribute of twenty talents which his predecessors had annually paid to the kings of Egypt. Ptolemy Euergetes was so irritated at the conduct of Onias, that he sent one Athenion, an officer of his court, to Jerusalem, to demand the full payment of the money, threatening, in case of refusal, to send an army into Judea, and dispossess them of their country.

The Jews were exceeding terrified when they heard of this message; but Onias, whose ruling passion was the love of money, took no notice of it, being fully resolved to abide the consequences. These would certainly, on this occasion, have been very fatal to the Jews, had it not been for the timely interposition of Onias's nephew named Joseph,

a young man of very great reputation, and particularly distinguished for his prudence, justice and sanctity of life.

As soon as Joseph heard of the message sent to his uncle by Euergetes, and of the people's great consternation in consequence thereof, he immediately repaired to Onias, and severely upbraided him with his disregard to the welfare of the public, to whom he owed his promotion. He told him, that for the sake of a little money, he had exposed the whole nation to the most imminent danger, and that, unless he went to the Egyptians, and by a timely application to the king, endeavored to appease his wrath, the most dreadful consequences would certainly ensue.

Onias peremptorily refused following the directions of his nephew, upon which Joseph offered, with his permission, to go in his stead. This being granted, he immediately assembled the people in the temple, telling them he would wait on the king, and that he hoped his uncle's remissness would not be productive of any ill consequence. The people, who had a universal respect for Joseph, were highly pleased at this intelligence, and earnestly besought him to set about the business. In consequence of this, Joseph invited Athenion, the king's commissioner, to his house, where he entertained him in the most splendid manner for several days, and at his departure presented him with many valuable gifts, telling him, he would follow in a very short time, and that he would give his master full satisfaction with respect to the business on which he had sent him.

The graceful manner and deportment of Joseph so wrought upon Athenion, that when he came to give the king a report of his embassy he mentioned his name with the highest respect; and when he told Euergetes of his intentions to come and wait upon him himself, he set forth his character with so much advantage, that the king anxiously expressed his desire to see him.

In the mean time Joseph sent to his friends in Samaria, telling them the business on which he was going, and requesting them to assist him with money that he might be enabled to purchase equipages, horses, carriages, plate, &c. necessary for the journey. This being readily complied with, and all things ready, Joseph set out for Alexandria, where the Egyptian court was at that time kept. On his

way he fell in with some of the princes and nobles of Syria and Phœnicia, who were going to the king to purchase his revenue, which was annually sold to the best bidder. With these Joseph joined company, and having learned, from their discourse, of what value the revenues were, he made use of that intelligence afterwards both to his own and the king's advantage.

When Joseph arrived at Alexandria he found the king was gone to Memphis. He therefore immediately set out for that place, in the way to which he had the good fortune to meet the king, the queen and Athenion, all in the same chariot, returning to Alexandria. As soon as Athenion saw Joseph, he told the king that was the young man of whom he had so highly spoken; upon which Euergetes took him into his carriage, and mentioned how ill he had been treated by Onias the high-priest. Joseph replied, "An old man is a second time a child: impute nothing to Onias beyond what his age will excuse; for us who have youth, and the power of our faculties, we will give proof of our dutiful attachment." The king was so pleased with this answer, and conceived so high an opinion of Joseph, that, on their arrival at Alexandria, he gave orders that he should be lodged in the palace, and that he should be every day entertained at his table.

The day being come for farming out the revenues to the best bidder, the Syrian and Phœnician noblemen, whom Joseph had accompanied in his way to Alexandria, endeavored to undervalue them, offering no more than eight thousand talents for all the duties of Cœlo-Syria, Phœnicia, Judea and Samaria. Joseph, having learnt from the conversation that passed between him and the nobles while on their journey, the real value of the revenues, boldly offered double the sum. This highly pleased the king, who asked him what security he could give. Joseph told him his securities were undoubted; upon which the king ordered him to name them. Joseph replied, he had no doubt but that his majesty and the queen would be mutually bound for his security. The king, from the high opinion he entertained of Joseph, immediately admitted him as receiver-general of all those provinces, a circumstance which greatly mortified those whose intentions

were to have purchased the farming of the revenues at an under value.

The first step Joseph took after being appointed to this high office was, to satisfy the king for his uncle's arrears, which he did by borrowing five hundred talents of some of the principal people in Alexandria. Having adjusted this matter, he requested of the king that he might have a guard of two thousand men to support him in the collection of the duties, which being granted, he left Alexandria, and proceeded towards Syria to execute his office. On his arrival at a place called Askalon, the people not only refused to pay the tribute, but highly insulted him; whereupon he punished twenty of the ringleaders, and raised a thousand talents from their forfeited estates, which he sent to the king, with an account of his proceedings. This so pleased the king that he left him wholly to his own conduct; and the rest of the Syrians, terrified by the example of their brethren, paid their taxes without the least hesitation.

In this situation did Joseph continue for the space of twenty-two years, when the respective provinces that paid tribute to the kings of Egypt being taken by Antiochus the Great, king of Asia, he was removed from his office, though, from the revolutions that afterwards occurred, he was reinstated.

On the death of Ptolemy Euergetes, his son Philopater (not without some suspicion of having poisoned his father) ascended to the throne of Egypt. He was a man entirely given up to his lusts and voluptuous delights, drinking, gaming, and lasciviousness being the whole employment of his life. By his intemperance and debaucheries he soon wore out a strong constitution, and died unlamented by his subjects, leaving the crown to his son Ptolemy Epiphanes.

As soon as Antiochus the Great heard of the death of Philopater king of Egypt, he resolved to take advantage of the young king's inability to oppose him, and marching with an army into Cælo-Syria and Palestine, soon made himself master of those provinces. The Egyptians, however, under the command of Scapas their general, endeavored to regain them, and had actually got Jerusalem into their possession; but on the approach of Antiochus in

person the Jews, (having been but ill treated by Scapas, who was of a very avaricious and tyrannical disposition) cheerfully submitted to him, and his army having entered the city, they assisted him in reducing the citadel, in which a strong garrison had been left by Scapas. In acknowledgment for these services, Antiochus, by a public edict, granted the Jews many singular privileges which had been denied them by the kings of Egypt, and in particular that of living according to the ancient laws and religion of their country.

Some time after this the Romans, who were professed enemies to Antiochus, having become exceeding formidable, he was desirous of having his armies at liberty to oppose them. To effect this he made a peace with Ptolemy Epiphanes, and giving him his daughter Cleopatra in marriage, he resigned by way of dowry, the provinces of Cælo-Syria and Palestine. By these means Judea reverted to the Egyptian crown, upon which Joseph, the nephew of Onias the high-priest, was reinstated in the office of collecting the king's revenues in those provinces.

Soon after Antiochus had left Judea in order to oppose the Romans, Ptolemy had a son by his wife Cleopatra, on which occasion it was necessary for Joseph (among the other great officers of state) to congratulate the king and queen, and to make them the usual presents. Joseph was now far advanced in years, and as a journey from Jerusalem was too fatiguing for him, he resolved to send one of his sons in his stead. He accordingly assembled them together, and severally asked them which would chuse to engage in the business. The eldest positively refused, and the next apologized, by saying he was totally unacquainted with the customs and ceremonies of a court. At length it was resolved, as well by the approbation of Joseph, as the rest of the children, that Hyrcanus* should

* The birth of this young man was attended with some very singular circumstances, the particulars of which are these: As Joseph's occasions, in his less advanced years, frequently called him to Alexandria, one night, while he was at supper with his royal master, he fell desperately in love with a beautiful damsel, who, among others, was dancing for the amusement of the king. Not being able to master his inordinate passion, he communicated his affection for the damsel to his brother Solimius (who accompanied him in his journey,

be sent, who, though the youngest, was, from his superior and distinguished abilities, best qualified for such a negotiation.

This matter being adjusted, Joseph asked his son what he thought would be sufficient to defray the expenses of his embassy, and to purchase the necessary presents for the king and queen. Hyrcanus told him ten talents, and recommended that instead of sending the presents from Judea, they should be purchased at Alexandria, and that he would give him letters of credit on Arion (the person in that city to whom Joseph remitted the money gathered in Syria to be deposited in the royal treasury) for that purpose. "I would not (said he) recommend the sending from this place any presents to the king; but write to your agent at Alexandria to furnish me with the proper gifts."

Joseph complied with his son's request, and by these means the latter obtained an unlimited credit on his agent in that city. As soon, therefore, as he arrived at Alexandria, he immediately went to Arion, and, instead of ten talents, demanded a thousand. Surprized at so considerable a demand, Arion refused complying with his request, "saying, What! do you want to waste it in luxury? No, Sir, your father's fortune was made by industry, and you would do well to follow his example. I will give you only ten talents, and those I will see expended in the presents you are to make."

and had with him a daughter that was marriageable) desiring him, if possible, to procure him the enjoyment of her, but in as secret a manner as he could on account of the sin, as well as disgrace, that would attend such an act. Solimius promised to comply with his request, but instead of the damsel of whom he was so much enamored, he conveyed his own daughter into Joseph's bed, and, the next morning, as secretly conveyed her away, so that his brother did not discover the deception. This was repeated several nights, when Joseph growing more and more enamored of his fair, though unknown partner, one day complained to his brother of his hard fate, in being prohibited by the laws of his religion, to marry the woman he loved. On this Solimius discovered to him the whole affair, telling him that, instead of the admired dancer, he had put his own daughter to bed to him, thinking it less criminal to deceive his own child, than to suffer him to join himself to a strange woman, which their law strictly forbade. The great surprize of this discovery, and the singular instance of Solimius's affection for his brother, so wrought on the mind of Joseph, that he immediately made the young woman his wife, and of her, the next year, was born Hyrcanus.

This abrupt reply highly offended Hyrcanus, who, for some time expostulated with him, but finding him continue absolute in not complying with his demand, he, by his superiority of power in consequence of his father's authority, had him committed to prison. The wife of Arion, who was on good terms with the queen, informed her of the treatment her husband had received from Hyrcanus, and the queen related the whole particulars to the king. In consequence of this the king sent a message to Hyrcanus, expressing his astonishment at his conduct, and ordering him immediately to attend and clear himself of the charge alledged against him. Hyrcanus desired the messenger to tell his master that he could not wait on him till he was furnished with the presents (the means of doing which were denied him by Arion) which his father had ordered as a testimony of his duty and gratitude; and that, with regard to punishing a refractory servant, he thought himself justified; for the ill example of an inferior might at length reach the king himself, and where authority was despised, the precedent might be dangerous.

When the king received this answer, instead of being offended with Hyrcanus, he highly applauded him for the dignity of his sentiments; and Arion, finding he had no reason to expect favor or protection from the king, compounded for his liberty, by paying Hyrcanus the thousand talents he had demanded.

As soon as Hyrcanus had got the money, he purchased of the merchants at Alexandria one hundred beautiful boys, and the like number of girls, at the price of a talent each; having done which, and put them in a proper place of security, he repaired to the court, and was graciously received by the king. The next day he, with many other persons of distinction, was invited to dine at the royal table, upon which the master of the ceremonies, on account of the youth of Hyrcanus, placed him at the bottom of the table. That part of the company that sat next to Hyrcanus, looking upon him with contempt, resolved to shew their disrespect by unanimously agreeing to lay their bones on his plate, desiring, at the same time, Tryphon, the king's jester, to ridicule him. This Tryphon attempted to do, by desiring the king to notice the circumstance, saying, at the same time, that so had Hyrcanus's father picked the

bones of all Syria. The king, smiling, asked Hyrcanus how he came by so many bones. "Sir, replied he, (looking stedfastly on the company) dogs eat bones as well as meat; but men put the bones aside." This answer highly pleased the king, and instead of the laugh being thrown on Hyrcanus, it fell on Tryphon and the company present.

The next day Hyrcanus privately enquired of the servants what their masters intended to present to the king on the birth of the prince; to which some said twelve talents, and others more or less, while Hyrcanus seemed to be uneasy that it was out of his power to give more than five. This pretension of poverty was highly pleasing to the servants, who failed not to tell their masters of it, thinking the youth would be disgraced in the king's opinion by the smallness of his present; but they soon found themselves mistaken. On the following day, which was the time appointed for making the presents, the highest gift was twenty talents, except that made by Hyrcanus, who presented the hundred boys to the king, and the hundred girls to the queen, who had all a talent in each hand; so that in this article he expended four hundred talents. This gift astonished not only the king, but all the company present; exclusive of which Hyrcanus gave many valuable presents to the courtiers and great officers of state, and the remainder of the money he had received from Arion he converted to his own private use.

The distinguished liberality of Hyrcanus so wrought on the king and queen that he became the greatest favorite at court; and of this he took a base advantage by converting his interest and influence to the injury of his father. Pretending to the king that Joseph, from his great age and imbecility, was incapable of discharging the office with which he was entrusted, he obtained a commission to be the collector of the royal revenues in all the country beyond the river Jordan. As soon as his brothers heard in what a base manner he had acted, they were so enraged that (with their father's connivance at least, if not direct approbation) they resolved to way-lay him, and cut him off on his return. This resolution they attempted to put in execution, but the guards who attended him proved too strong in the assault, and two of his brothers were killed.

When Hyrcanus arrived at Jerusalem his father would not see him, nor would any of his old acquaintance take the least notice of him; so that finding himself universally despised for his perfidy, he left Jerusalem, passed the river Jordan, and entered upon the execution of his office.

On the death of Joseph (which happened a short time after Hyrcanus had, by his iniquity, supplanted him) a war commenced between him and his surviving brothers about the paternal estate, which, for some time, disturbed the peace of the Jews at Jerusalem. As the high-priest, however, and the generality of the people, sided with the brothers, Hyrcanus was again forced to retreat beyond the Jordan, where he lived in a strong castle* till the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, who, threatening to punish him according to his deserts, to avoid the consequences, he fell upon his own sword, and put a period to his existence.

* Josephus tells us that the walls of this castle were of white stone, with figures of various animals curiously carved on them. A deep ditch, or fish-pond, was dug round the castle, and in a mountain opposite to it passages were cut several furlongs in length, but, for security sake, only wide enough at the mouth for one man to enter at a time. Within the castle were lodging, dining-rooms, and other places of entertainment, with stately buildings, courts, gardens and fountains. It was situated on the borders of Arabia and Judea beyond Jordan, near the land of the Essebonites, and received the name of Tyre.

CHAP. XI.

Seleucus Philopater succeeds Antiochus the Great on the throne of Syria. He at first favors the Jews, but afterwards sends his treasurer Heliodorus to plunder the temple at Jerusalem, who is prevented from executing his design by the sudden appearance of a number of angels. Heliodorus poisons Seleucus in hopes of gaining the crown, but is disappointed by means of Eumenes, king of Pergamus and his brother, who place Antiochus Epiphanes (son of Antiochus the Great) on the Syrian throne. Great bribery and corruption among the Jewish high-priests. Antiochus exercises singular cruelty on the Jews, profanes the temple, and plunders it. Apollonius, the general of Antiochus's forces, is sent to besiege Jerusalem, which he takes, and massacres great numbers of the inhabitants. Antiochus compels the Jews to renounce their religion, in endeavoring to avoid which many are cruelly put to death. The melancholy story of Solomon's and her seven sons, who, after suffering the most severe torments, at length die martyrs for the sake of their religion.

ON the death of Antiochus the Great,* his son Seleucus Philopater succeeded him on the throne of Syria, to which, at that time, was annexed Judea and the other adjacent provinces. For some time after his accession he treated the Jews with the most distinguished respect, and, at his own expense, supplied them with all things necessary for the service of the temple. At length, however, he greatly altered in his disposition, and attempted to commit depredations on the very place to which he had been so great a benefactor. Being informed by one Simon, of the tribe of Benjamin, that there were great riches in the tem-

* The death of this prince was untimely, and occasioned by the following circumstance. Being greatly distressed for want of money, and hearing that there was considerable treasure in the temple of Jupiter Belus, situated in the province of Elymais, he went thither, attacked the temple in the night, and plundered it of all its riches. This so enraged the people of the country, that, hastily assembling together, they fell on Antiochus, and not only slew him, but all that were with him. He was a prince possessed of great humanity and beneficence, and conducted himself with that valor, prudence, and strictness of justice, that made him deservedly obtain the title of *Antiochus the Great*.

ple, he sent Heliodorus, his treasurer, with a strong body of forces, to plunder it, ordering him to bring all he could find to him at Antioch.

Heliodorus, having received these orders from the king, immediately repaired to Jerusalem, in order to carry them into execution. On his arrival thither, without hesitation, he went into the temple, but on his entering the sacred treasury (his guards standing at the door) he was suddenly stopped by the appearance of angels, who seemed to be on horseback, armed to defend the place against his sacrilegious intentions.* The infidel general was so alarmed at this unexpected sight, that he immediately fell speechless on the ground, which being observed by his attendants, they put him on a litter, and carried him without the temple. He remained totally senseless for some time, upon which some of his friends besought Onias the high-priest to intercede in his behalf, by praying to God to restore him to his senses and life, he appearing to be divested of both. Onias, being fearful lest Seleucus should imagine that some treachery had been done to Heliodorus by the Jews, complied with their request, and offered up a sacrifice for the restoration of his health. While the high-priest was performing this service, the same young men, in the same clothing, appeared before Heliodorus, saying, "Give Onias the high-priest great thanks, insomuch, as for his sake, the Lord hath granted thee life. And seeing that

* The manner in which the Author of the Book of Maccabees relates this circumstance is as follows: In speaking of Heliodorus attempting to enter the treasury of the temple, he says, "As he was there, with his guard about the treasury, the Lord of Spirits, and the prince of all power, caused a great apparition, so that all who presumed to go in with him, were astonished at the power of God, and fainted, and were sore afraid. For there appeared unto them an horse with a terrible rider upon him, and adorned with a very fair covering, and he ran fiercely, and smote at Heliodorus with his forefeet, and it seemed that he that sat upon the horse had complete harness of gold. Moreover, two other young men appeared before him, notable in strength, excellent in beauty, and comely in apparel, who stood by him on either side, and scourged him continually, and gave him many sore stripes. And Heliodorus fell suddenly unto the ground, and was compassed with great darkness; but they that were with him took him up, and put him into a litter, being unable to help himself with his weapons: and manifestly they acknowledged the power of God." See 2 Macc. iii. 24, &c.

“thou hast been scourged from heaven, declare unto all men the mighty power of God.” Having said this they instantly disappeared.

Heliodorus being thoroughly convinced of the impropriety and wickedness of his conduct, together with the obligation he lay under to Onias, offered up a sacrifice to the Lord for his sins; having done which, and, as a mark of acknowledgment to Onias, saluted him, he left Jerusalem, and, with his forces, returned home.

As soon as Heliodorus arrived at Antioch, he not only testified to the king, but likewise to all the people, the works of the great God which he had seen at Jerusalem, and related to them all the particulars that had passed during his stay at that place. Seleucus, being still desirous of accomplishing his ends, and thinking Heliodorus had failed from want of courage, asked him whom he thought the most proper to send in his stead. To which Heliodorus replied, “If thou hast any enemy, or traitor, send him thither, and thou shalt receive him well scourged, if he escape with his life: for in that place, no doubt, there is an especial power of God. For he that dwelleth in heaven hath his eye on that place, and defendeth it, and he beateth and destroyeth them that come to hurt it.”

Some time after this Heliodorus, being desirous of obtaining the sovereignty to himself, poisoned his master Seleucus, in hopes of succeeding him;* but at the instigation of Eumenes, king of Pergamus, in conjunction with his brother Attalus, the design of Heliodorus was obstructed and rendered of none effect, those two, by their elevated situations, and powerful interest, placing on the throne Antiochus, surnamed Epiphanes, another son of the late Antiochus the Great.

This prince was, in disposition, quite the reverse of his father, being haughty, tyrannical and cruel. He was the greatest persecutor the Jews ever had, and during his reign great numbers of them were, by his baseness, put to death. Soon after his accession, being in great want of money to discharge an heavy tribute he had to pay the

* About this time died Ptolemy Epiphanes, king of Egypt, who left two sons, named Philometer and Physcon, the former of whom succeeded him on the throne.

Romans, he deposed Onias the high-priest, a man of the most singular humanity and piety, and, for three hundred and sixty talents, (which he engaged to pay annually) sold it to his brother Jason. But, as Jason had supplanted Onias, so his brother Menelaus, being sent to Antioch with his tribute money, for three hundred talents more than Jason had given, purchased the priesthood, and had him, in like manner, deposed; upon which Jason withdrew to the country of the Ammonites, where he continued some time in expectation that fortune would produce an advantageous turn in his favor.

Thus did Menelaus obtain the priesthood of his brother Jason, but being afterwards summoned to appear before the king at Antioch for non-payment of the money, he relinquished it to another brother named Lysimachus. Soon after this, repenting of his tameness in delivering up the office of high-priest, he sold many of the sacred vessels to recover it; and, lest Onias, (who was withdrawn to Daphne, a place not far from Antioch) should again obtain the priesthood, he caused him to be murdered by Andronicus, to whom he gave a considerable reward for executing the business. This assassin, however, soon met with the punishment he merited, for Antiochus hearing of what he had done, ordered him to be apprehended, led to the place where he had murdered Onias, and there put to death. In the mean time the Jews, mutinying against Lysimachus, slew him at Jerusalem; after which they deputed three proper persons to go to the king at Antioch, and lay an accusation before him against Menelaus. But such was the bribery of the Syrian court, and such the artifices of Menelaus, who was the contriver of all these mischiefs, that he acquitted himself before the king, and, instead of receiving punishment himself, procured the three persons, who came from Jerusalem to accuse him, to be condemned and executed.

Some time after this, Antiochus was engaged in a war with the Egyptians, during which a false rumor was spread throughout Palestine, that he was dead. Jason, (who had artfully obtained the high-priesthood from his brother Onias, had been supplanted by his brother Menelaus, and retired into the country of the Ammonites) hearing of this intelligence, thought it a convenient oppor-

tunity for him to attempt regaining the office of high-priest, for which purpose he marched, at the head of a thousand men, to Jerusalem. He soon made himself master of the city, and obliged Menelaus to secure himself by flying to the castle, after which he acted all manner of cruelties on his fellow-citizens, and put to death, without mercy, all he met with whom he took to be his adversaries. Having done this, and knowing the citadel too strong to be reduced, he made a hasty retreat into the country of the Ammonites; soon after which he was, by Aretas king of Arabia, cast into prison, from whence he made his escape, and fled from one city to another, till at length he died at Lacedemon.

As soon as Antiochus heard of the rupture that had taken place at Jerusalem, he left Egypt and marched into Judea, being fearful lest the whole of the Jewish nation might become refractory and revolt. In his way he was informed that the Jews, having received intelligence of his death, had made great rejoicings on the occasion. This circumstance so enraged him against those people, that hastening to Jerusalem, he immediately laid siege to the place, and taking it by storm, put to death, in the space of three days, no less than 40,000 people, making the like number captives, and selling them for slaves to the inhabitants of the neighboring kingdoms.

Not satisfied with this, Antiochus, accompanied by the traitor Menelaus, profanely entered the sacred temple, from whence he took away many golden vessels, and rich donatives that had been presented by former kings, the value of which amounted to about one thousand eight hundred talents. With this plunder Antiochus returned to Antioch, leaving behind him one Philip, a Phrygian (a man, if possible, more barbarous and inhuman than himself) as governor of Judea. He also appointed Andronicus (another person no less cruel in his disposition) to be governor of Samaria; and Menelaus (who was worse than all the rest) he fixed in the office of high-priest, that he might be a constant terror to the poor Jews who resided at Jerusalem.*

* The Author of the Books of Maccabees (2 Macc. v. 2. 3.) tells us, that about this time there were seen at Jerusalem, for forty days

This was but the beginning of Antiochus's cruelty towards the Jews, for soon after his return to Antioch, he sent Apollonius, one of his generals, with an army of 22,000 men to Jerusalem, with orders to kill all the young and robust men he found in the city, and to sell the women and children for slaves, leaving only the more aged to inhabit the place. When Apollonius came before the city, he remained without it several days, not making any attempt to attack it, from whence the Jews, who had some disagreeable apprehensions on his arrival, thought themselves secure. In this, however, they soon found themselves mistaken, for while they were at their devotions on the Sabbath, Apollonius entered the city, massacred great numbers of the inhabitants, plundered the place, led away the women and children captives, and obliged many to fly to caves and deserts to secure themselves from the general destruction.

A short time after this (and while Apollonius was still at Jerusalem) Antiochus sent one Athenæus, a man well versed in all the ceremonies of the Grecian idolatry, to Jerusalem, with orders that the people, not only in that city, but throughout the whole land of Judea, should renounce their ancient rites and usages, and universally conform themselves to the religion of the Greeks. These orders Athenæus, with the assistance of Apollonius, put in full execution. No sooner did he arrive at Jerusalem, than all sacrifices to the God of Israel were laid aside, and the rites of the Jewish religion totally suppressed. The temple was dedicated to Jupiter Olympas (the principal idol of the Greeks) whose image was placed on the Altar of Burnt-Offerings, and all the people were obliged to sacrifice to it on pain of death. Those who met in caves, and other secret places to keep the Sabbath, were, if discovered, burnt. The Book of the law was first torn, and then committed to the flames: the circumcision of infants was prohibited; and such women as were accused of having circumcised their children, were first publicly led

together, strange sights in the air of horsemen and footmen, armed with shields, spears, and swords, and in great companies fighting against, and charging each other, as in battle array; which foreboded those calamities of war and desolation that soon after happened, not only in Jerusalem, but in most parts of Judea.

about the city with their infants hanging at their breasts, and then thrown headlong from the highest part of the walls, so that the greater number of them, with their innocent offsprings, suffered miserable deaths.

As these severities were practised to make the Jews renounce their religion, so the like were used to make them embrace the worship of the heathens. In all the cities throughout Judea, altars, groves, and chapels for idols were set up, and officers sent, once every month, to compel the people, on pain of being put to the torture or death, to offer victims to the different idols of the Grecians, and to eat of the flesh of swine, and of other unclean beasts, that were, at those times, sacrificed. In short, no manner of cruelty was omitted to make the poor Jews, in the first instance, renounce their own religion, and, in the second, embrace the idolatry of the Greeks.

But, though, in the course of this terrible persecution, many of these wretched people yielded to violence, yet there were some who chose rather to die, than to forsake the law of their God. Among the latter of these, one of the most memorable note was Eleazar, a principal doctor of the law, of the family of the priests, and much esteemed by many of the friends of Antiochus, on account of his great age and character. This good man, refusing to renounce his religion, or comply with any idolatrous maxims, was brought before the king (who was seated in state, attended by his counsellors and governors, and protected by an armed guard) to answer for his obstinacy. As soon as Antiochus saw Eleazar, he addressed him in words to this effect: “I desire thee, reverend old man, before I proceed to extremities, to save thy life by consenting to eat the flesh of swine. I respect thy age and grey hairs, and am astonished that thou shouldest persevere in the Jewish superstition, after a length of years that might have taught thee more wisdom. It is strange to me, that men should be so unjust to themselves, and so ungrateful to nature, as to deny themselves the enjoyment of those innocent gratifications which her bounty has provided. For what reason shouldest thou refrain from the taste of the flesh of swine, which is the most delicate of all food, and seems to have been bestowed upon us by heaven, in the fulness of its bounty? This

“conduct in others might seem to carry its excuse with it;
 “but in a man of thy discernment it is the height of folly
 “to draw down a certain judgment on thy own head, by
 “despising my authority, through an idle irreligious pre-
 “judice. Let me, then, persuade thee to open thine eyes,
 “awake from thy dream, and free thyself from a bondage
 “which arises from a ridiculous singularity of opinion.
 “Shall I hope that this expostulation may urge thee to
 “have a proper regard to thyself, by accepting that kind-
 “ness which I offer in compassion to thy age? I think it
 “ought: for though thy reason may not be convinced of
 “the absurdity of the opinion thou hast entertained, yet
 “thou mightest allow, that if there be a Divine Being
 “which requires the observance of thy religion, that
 “Being has goodness sufficient to pardon the breach of
 “his laws, when the offence does not arise from an act
 “of the will, but is the effect of absolute and irresistible
 “compulsion.”

The king having ended his speech, Eleazar entreated
 permission to make a reply; which being granted, he
 spoke to the following purpose, in the presence of the
 whole assembly: “It is proper that your majesty should
 “be informed, that we who are firmly persuaded that the
 “law given us by God, should be in all things strictly
 “obeyed, have no conception that any force or necessity
 “can operate so strongly as to allow us to dispense with
 “any part of this law. You have hinted that our law is
 “not Divine: admitting that to be a fact, Sir, yet it ought
 “to be fully binding on us, in all cases whatsoever, while
 “we think it so. Your majesty will not, therefore, sup-
 “pose that if we should be base enough to defile our-
 “selves by eating unclean meats, the crime would be
 “deemed either trifling or pardonable. Whether the in-
 “stance in which a man offends be greater or less, the
 “insolence of the culprit is the same, whatever the fact
 “be. You have insinuated, Sir, that our religion is be-
 “neath the notice of philosophers, and men of reason;
 “but permit me to say that it is the perfection of all
 “philosophy; since it instructs us in the arts of temper-
 “ance, and directs us to conquer our passionate desires
 “for sublunary pleasures. It enjoins us to the practice of
 “fortitude, and recommends the cheerful submission to

“ pain. It prescribes rules of rigid justice, and commands
“ us to worship only that Almighty Being, to whom alone
“ reverence can be due. Wherefore we must not presume
“ to eat unclean and prohibited food; for we are con-
“ vinced that God, the author of nature, paid a proper at-
“ tention to it; and that the institution of this law, so far
“ from being a grievance, was an act of benevolence; that
“ forbidden things are prejudicial to our souls, and those
“ only on which we are permitted to feed are useful to us.
“ It is, therefore, the highest cruelty to compel us to a
“ violation of our law, and to eat those things which are
“ forbidden because they are of a noxious quality. But,
“ Sir, you shall never thus triumph over me. I scorn the
“ idea of violating the solemn oaths and sacred engage-
“ ments, by which our forefathers have bound themselves
“ and their descendants to the observance of this law. I
“ will not submit, though you command my eyes to be
“ plucked out, and my body burnt. Age hath not yet so
“ impaired my intellectual or corporeal faculties, but that
“ my reason is still vigorous on the call of duty and re-
“ ligion. If you are offended with this reply, prepare
“ your instruments of torture, and encrease the heat of
“ your furnace: but, old as I am, I will never violate the
“ laws of God and my country to save my life. I will
“ not desert the law in which I have been instructed; I
“ will never abjure that temperance, the best of virtues,
“ which teaches us to conquer our appetites: I will not
“ disgrace my philosophy, nor bring a stain on the order
“ of priesthood, and the study of the law. I will maintain
“ my soul unspotted as my fore-fathers, and remain un-
“ daunted to death, under all the torments you can inflict.”

Eleazar, having made this magnanimous reply to the speech of the tyrant, the soldiers dragged him to the place of execution. Having stripped off his clothes, they bound him, and whipped him till the skin parted from his flesh; an officer on each side him, crying, “ Obey the king’s orders.” Eleazar seemed perfectly unmoved by their severity, and stood with his eyes elevated towards heaven, till his flesh was torn from his bones, and the blood streamed to the ground. At length, unable to bear his pangs, he dropped down: but though his body was thus reduced, he appeared to possess his mind in full perfection. On this,

one of the soldiers stamped on his belly, to oblige him to rise: but, he bore all his sufferings with such an unexampled courage, that even those who inflicted them were astonished at such extraordinary magnanimity of soul in so old and infirm a body.

But some of his tormentors, though servants of the king, pitying his age, and recollecting their former acquaintance with him, addressed him as follows: Why, "Eleazar, wilt thou submit to endure such variety of torment without any cause? Consent that we put before thee clean and lawful meat, when thou mayest pretend to eat swine's flesh, agreeable to the king's order, and thus save thy life without violating the law." To this, Eleazar replied: "Let it not be said that we, who are children of Abraham, can behave in so artful and pusillanimous a manner as only to pretend to do an unbecoming action. It would be strange conduct in me, who have hitherto obeyed the laws of truth, and preserved an unspotted character, to set an evil example to others, by denying my principles in my old age; to drag out the remainder of life at the expense of dissimulation, and become an object of the public contempt for my pusillanimity." His tormentors observing his resolution, and finding that their offered mercy had no effect on him, conducted him to the fire, on which they threw him, cruelly tormenting him, and poured scalding liquor upon his nostrils as he burnt. When his flesh was almost separated from his bones, he lifted up his eyes towards heaven, and said, "O God, thou art witness to the torments I suffer, and that I prefer death by fire, in obedience to thy law, rather than a continuance of life by the transgression of it. Have mercy, therefore, O God, on thy people, and let my death expiate their crimes. Accept my life for theirs, and let my blood operate as a purifying sacrifice." Having said this, the good old man soon after resigned his soul into the hands of him who gave it.

The next instance of religious fortitude was displayed in the persons of the heroine Solomona and her seven sons, who, for refusing to renounce their religion and embrace idolatry, were, by order of Antiochus, brought from their habitations to the city of Antioch, in order to receive punishment for disobeying the king's commands. Anti-

ochus, pretending pity to their youth, and respect to their family (which was noble) used all the arguments he could to persuade them to renounce their religion, and embrace that of the Grecians, promising them great rewards and promotions if they complied, but at the same time threatening them with the severest punishments if they remained obstinate. Having said this, he ordered a variety of instruments for torture (which had been provided on the occasion) to be shewn them, thinking to terrify them into compliance, with the sad prospect of what, should they refuse, they were likely to suffer. But all these instruments and engines of death could no more terrify, than the allurements of the tyrant could persuade them: inspired with a truly holy zeal and celestial bravery, they unanimously declared their obedience to the law of God, and the precepts which he delivered by Moses, assuring him that his cruelty could not hurt them: that all the effect their pains could have would be to secure to them the glorious rewards due to unshaken patience and injured virtue. They then apprized him of what a material difference there would be in the issue of his conduct between him and them; for by the murder of so many innocent men he would arm the Divine vengeance against him, and for the temporal pains which he inflicted on them would subject himself to everlasting torments.

The constancy and zeal of these brave youths (who were greatly encouraged by their aged and pious parent) so enraged the tyrant, that he gave orders for the executioners to bring the eldest to torture. They accordingly stripped off his clothes, bound his hands and arms, and placed him in a posture for receiving the scourge. This he endured with the most astonishing patience, insomuch that the executioners, finding themselves more wearied in inflicting this punishment than he was in receiving it, gave over, unloosed him, and then bound him on the wheel. The noble youth being then extended, with his bones broken, and joints dislocated, he reproached his tormentor in these words: "O execrable tyrant, and persecutor of the innocent! Thou dost not treat me thus inhumanly for any breach either of Divine or human laws, but for my zeal to God, and his holy ordinances." The soldiers then (compassionating the distress of the youth) advised

him to save his life by complying with the king's commands; to whom he replied, "You may exercise your cruelty on my body, but you cannot torture my mind; that is out of your power; and I will convince you, by this trial upon my person, that it is the peculiar glory of the Hebrew nation to be invincibly firm in their sufferings for virtue and a good conscience." The executioners then extended his body still more, and to increase his punishment made a fire by the wheel, over which they turned him till his body was quite parched with the heat. But this additional torture the brave youth bore with such magnanimity, as if the fire had only served to refine him into a creature immortal. At length, nature being exhausted, he gave up the ghost, first taking a final farewell of his brethren in these words: "Be sure you follow my example, and desert me not in this noble conflict. Shame the tyrant with your sufferings, and die gloriously in the service of God, who will humble this bloody monster with punishments as uncommon and amazing as is his own pride and cruelty."

The elder brother being thus dispatched, the second was immediately brought on the tragical stage, where, being asked whether he would eat of their sacrificed meat, he, with an undaunted courage, and without the least hesitation, boldly refused. In consequence of this the executioners (by the king's orders) with pincers drew off all the flesh from the muscles of his neck to the chin, and all the hair and skin off his face and head. In this dreadful condition he remained for some time, till finding nature nearly exhausted, he took leave of the cruel Antiochus, and the world, in words to this effect: "How welcome is death in any shape to him that suffers for truth and religion! The pleasure of an innocent mind, and the comfort of a clear conscience, soften my sufferings, and support my spirits, whilst thou (addressing himself to Antiochus) art racked with the cutting apprehensions of a guilty mind. Thy cruelties I suffer with more pleasure than thou canst execute them; for thy own heart must tell thee that thou dost wickedly in punishing the innocent for asserting the truth, and persevering in the worship and love of God, for which, be assured, thou wilt not escape the terrible vengeance of a just and angry God."

The third brother was so far from being daunted at the sight of what the others had endured, that, when he was brought on the stage, and pressed by the tyrant to take warning by their deaths, he, in a stern manner, replied, "The same father and mother brought us into the world, and the same master formed our minds with the same principles: think not, therefore, that I will, by any pusillanimous retreat, endeavor to evade thy cruelty, and desert the glorious cause of suffering for our religion. Lose no time, for I come prepared to suffer, not to make speeches." This resolute answer so enraged the haughty tyrant, that he thought to make his torments much more severe than what had been inflicted on his two elder brothers: he therefore commanded the executioners to place his hands and feet in the screws, where, with a sudden and violent wrench, they immediately dislocated all the joints of his fingers and toes. This done, they continued to draw the engine yet higher, till they had twisted his legs, arms and shoulder bones out of their sockets; but finding him still to survive all these distortions, they drew off the skin at the ends of his fingers, and flayed him from the very crown of his head. Not content with having mangled his body in this merciless manner, they dragged him to the wheel, where they so violently distended him, that the blood gushed from all parts of his body. At length, nature being nearly exhausted, the heroic youth closed the bloody scene with the following dreadful prognostic of the tyrant's fate: "O wicked and most inhuman of all tyrants! we suffer thus for the love of God and his most just law; but thou, who art the cause of all this injustice and cruelty, shalt suffer endless torments."

The fourth brother being brought on the stage, was exhorted by Antiochus to consider and avoid the inevitable destruction which he saw preparing for him. But he, resolving not to stain the honor of his family, and disgrace the cause of religion by any pusillanimous act, replied, "The sight of all your tortures, in their dismal appearances, cannot so fright me, as to make me derogate from the noble example of my brethren. Let thy tortures be as extravagant as thy malice and cruelty can invent, they shall only serve to prove me a branch of the

“ same stock, and animated with the very same soul with
 “ those whose blood thy impious hands have spilt.” The
 barbarous Antiochus was so incensed at this, that he or-
 dered the executioners immediately to cut out his tongue.
 But the pious youth, not in the least terrified at these or-
 ders, cried out, “ Here it is ready for thy wicked execu-
 “ tioners to exercise their cruelty upon: But know, thou
 “ tyrant, that by depriving me of the use of this organ of
 “ speech thou canst not make my reason dumb. O that
 “ I might, to glorify God, lose my life by inches! But as
 “ for thee, guilt and vengeance will soon overtake thee,
 “ who cuttest out this inoffensive tongue that hath been
 “ employed in making melody, and singing praises to
 “ God, who formed it for that purpose.” After saying
 this, the executioners cut out his tongue, and tied it to the
 trunk of his body, which being at length exhausted with
 pain, and mangled in the most miserable manner, he gave
 up the ghost.

Excessive torments having thus finished the life of the
 fourth brother, the fifth, eager to have his share in this
 honorable conflict, boldly stepped forward uncalled for,
 and offering himself to the torture, addressed Antiochus
 as follows: “ Thou seest, most inhuman tyrant, I wait
 “ not your tedious orders, but voluntarily offer myself to
 “ the trial, and dare thy cruelty in defence of my faith.
 “ The sooner thou dispatchest me, the sooner will *my*
 “ *happiness* be complete, and *thy iniquities* make thee
 “ ripe for vengeance. Tell me, thou devourer of mankind,
 “ what could provoke thee to torment and murder the in-
 “ nocent? Is it a crime to serve that God that created the
 “ world? And shall we not worship him by whom we live,
 “ and who hath instituted the methods by which we are
 “ to regulate our lives? In this we defy thy tortures, and
 “ despise thy punishments, which will translate *us* to a
 “ happy eternity, and *thee* to endless torments.” Having
 said this, the soldiers bound him to the wheel, and drawing
 the screws strait, they at once dislocated the joints of his
 limbs and back, so that he was twisted round the wheel.
 In this dreadful situation he remained for some time, till
 at length, being almost strangled, he, previous to his de-
 parture, took leave of his cruel persecutor in words to this
 effect: “ Little dost thou imagine, most execrable tyrant,

“ the benefit thy cruelty procures to us ; for the more thou
“ ragest against us in these unheard-of tortures, the more
“ acceptable thou renderest us unto God. This momentary
“ pain will procure us everlasting rest, and every torture
“ only furnishes us with the opportunity of exercising and
“ shewing our patience.”

The sixth brother being brought forward, the tyrant asked him whether he would accept of the terms of deliverance? To which the brave youth replied, “ Though
“ I am inferior in years to my brothers, who have suffered
“ before me, yet is my soul equal in magnanimity to theirs ;
“ and as we were nourished and educated together in the
“ fear of God, we ought to persist in the same to death.
“ Think not, therefore, to terrify or persuade me to relinquish the glorious cause of religion by the apprehension
“ or fears of torture, for I am ready to suffer as they have
“ done ; and know, that God will support me in the defence of a good conscience under the greatest pains thou
“ canst inflict.” Antiochus, finding him thus resolute, ordered the executioners to fasten him to the wheel, which being done, and the greater part of his bones broken, they then placed fire under him ; not satisfied with which, the soldiers, by the king’s command, heated spits and spears red hot, and thrust them into his back and sides till his bowels and entrails were nearly consumed. In this extremity of pain, he had yet strength enough to address himself to his persecutor as follows : “ O glorious conflict, in
“ which so many brethren have engaged for their religion,
“ and all come off with conquest ! I will bear my brethren
“ company in so noble a death, and add to the number of
“ plagues due to thee, O wicked inventor of artful cruelty,
“ and implacable foe of all that adhere to the true religion !
“ Six of us have now baffled thy malice and rage ; for I
“ must needs account thee baffled, who hast, without success, attempted to force us from our duty. Thy fires,
“ methinks, are cool, thy racks easy, and thy guards no
“ longer tormentors and executioners, but defenders and
“ promoters of our law and its honor, since they assist us
“ in giving testimony to it, and contribute to the triumphs
“ of the religion they are not able to suppress.” Having said this, just as he was ready to expire, they took him

from the wheel, and throwing him into a cauldron of boiling liquor, finally closed his existence.

And now the seventh, and youngest, brother appeared, whom, when the tyrant saw fettered and pinioned, though he had been so implacably outrageous against the rest, his hard heart began a little to relent: wherefore, calling him up to the throne where he sat, he began to try him with soft words and fair means. "You have seen (said he) young man, the miserable end to which your brothers have, by their obstinacy, brought themselves, and which will be your fate in a few minutes, if, by their example, you do not become wiser. But I hope better things from you; and, as an encouragement, I make you a generous offer of my esteem and friendship, and promise, in case of your obedience, to promote you to places both of honor and profit." Then addressing himself to the mother of these brave youths (who had hitherto been a witness of her children's sufferings) with a seeming compassion for her loss, he entreated her to prevail upon her child, in pity to herself at least, to be obedient to his commands, that thereby she might not be totally divested of all her family. But she, worthy of the honor of being mother to such godly heroes, thus spoke to her son in the Hebrew language: "In pity to me, my son, and in honor of thy family, despise the temptations of the tyrant, and defy his threats. Look up with hope to that God who made the world, and can deliver thee from thy cruel persecutors. Bravely imitate thy religious brethren, who have suffered the worst of deaths for their conscience-sake: fear not the tortures this heathen can inflict; and be assured that in the day of mercy, which this tyrant will never see, I shall receive you all in celestial embraces." The godly youth having, with great attention, heard the admonition of his pious mother, on a sudden cried out, "Well then, unbind me, and let me apply myself to the king and his friends about the throne." Antiochus, thinking, from this request, he was going to make a conquest of the youth, ordered him immediately to be unloosed; which being done, he ran hastily to the side of the cauldron, (which was near the king) and thus boldly addressed him: "Most impious tyrant! Hast thou received from the hand of God a kingdom, and so many wordly

“ blessings, and yet, without the least shame or remorse,
 “ canst murder the advocates and servants of him who
 “ thus advanced thee? Is this the requital thou makest to
 “ a bountiful God, to rack and torture those who worship
 “ him, and for no other reason but because they worship
 “ him as he himself has directed; Be well assured this
 “ wickedness will not be forgotten, nor go unpunished:
 “ justice will pursue thee, and in the mean time lay up in
 “ store for thee torments and fires, not like thine here,
 “ which quickly consume the body, and put an end to pain,
 “ but such as shall be a store of fire, and pains inexhausti-
 “ ble. Canst thou call thyself a man, thou more than
 “ savage brute, and yet have no regard, no relenting for
 “ these most exquisite and studied torments, which thou
 “ inflictest on those who have the same nature, the same
 “ tender sense of sufferings with thyself? Is it possible a
 “ creature of like matter and form should take delight in
 “ mangling, burning, flaying, scourging, and killing his
 “ fellow-creatures? Yet such thou dost; but as thou art
 “ unlike us in disposition, so wilt thou be unlike us in thy
 “ fate and portion. For we who die to gratify thy malice
 “ have done our duty, and shall find favor and happiness
 “ with God; but thou, who hast put us on the truth of our
 “ religion with so much causeless pain, such undeserved
 “ deaths, shalt howl forever in despair, and be plagued
 “ with the bitter reproaches of this sad day’s transactions.
 “ So dreadful, so infamous is thy case, so blessed, so
 “ glorious my martyred brethren; from whose honors and
 “ rewards think not that either flattery or fear shall exclude
 “ me: for know, I aspire to an equality with the best of
 “ them, and think it long till we meet again in the same
 “ sufferings here, and in the same bliss hereafter.” Having
 said this, he threw himself into the cauldron, and almost
 instantly expired.

And now, to close this bloody tragedy, the soldiers ap-
 proached to sieze the godly matron in order to execution;
 but she prevented all attempts upon her person, and, with-
 out any force, threw herself into the fire, defeating the
 tyrant’s rage and violence, disappointing all his wicked
 contrivances, and exerting a most noble faith and con-
 stancy. Thus ended this doleful, yet glorious day, with
 the death of the victorious Solomona, who triumphed in

the sharpest agonies of her sons' and her own sufferings; and thus did the whole of this pious family, through a sea of the most exquisite pains, wade to the port of eternal rest!

Thus the afflicted innocent expire,
 Calm in their sufferings, cheerful in the fire;
 Expecting, for a momentary pain,
 Eternal joys, and everlasting gain.
 While the tyrannic, and the wicked, find
 A tortured body, and tormented mind;
 And when their vile atrocious lives they close,
 A hell of horrors, and eternal woes.

We shall close our account of this dreadful and melancholy scene, with some few observations and reflections made on the subject by that celebrated Jewish Historian Josephus. After relating the particulars of the sufferings of each, he proceeds as follows:

How great, how interesting was the sight of such a company, encouraging each other to persevere, their joint voices making an harmonious concert! Thus did they animate each other: "Remember, brothers, we are engaged in the same cause: let us die like brethren, in defence of our God, and his law. The three brave Assyrian youths defied the furnace of the king of Babylon: let us imitate their glorious example."

When religion and conscience are at stake, it becomes us to despise fear, and act with resolution. One of the brethren said, "Courage brother!" A second cried, "Persevere!" A third exclaimed, "Remember your ancestors, Abraham, who consented to sacrifice his son; and Isaac, who cheerfully submitted to become that sacrifice." They then mutually supported each other, saying, "Let us gladly consecrate our souls to God: the lives which he has lent us, restore, and yield up our bodies in defence of our holy law. Wherefore should we fear those who only destroy the body? Our fear should be rather for the everlasting loss of our souls, which cannot happen to those who strictly adhere to the truth. Therefore let us arm ourselves with fortitude; so, in death, shall we be gladly received by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and our constancy will be applauded by all our pious ancestors."

As they were separately led to execution, those who remained encouraged the preceding, saying, "Remember, brother, how thou shouldest behave; disgrace not those who have preceded, or those who are to follow thee." Encouragement like this must have been very animating: the relationship of brother must have had its influence. The reader will conceive the power of that affection placed by Providence in the hearts of those who derive themselves from the same father, are born of the same mother, suck the same breast, are brought up at one table, taught by the same master, and educated in the same religion. Such was the affection and endearments between these brothers, and, of course, the encouragement and advice they gave each other could not fail of having its proper weight: for they were educated in the same faith, and taught to practice the same virtues; and their mutual virtue must have been increased by their mutual esteem; for natural esteem is always improved by an union in goodness, and a mutual zeal for God's service; so that the more religious each of these was, the more he would love each of his brethren, and become more worthy of their love. In this instance we may observe how passion was conquered by reason; for though the tender regard they entertained for each other was heightened by every consideration of birth, affinity, education, acquaintance, and personal merit, yet all these considerations were outweighed by the superior one of religion; so that, in so noble a cause, the tortures and deaths of such near relations, instead of pain, gave satisfaction to the survivors, who became undisturbed spectators of the gloomy tragedy.

Animated by exhortation, they were induced to despise pain, and subdue fraternal affection. Thus were their minds more ennobled than birth could make them. Not one of these youths gave signs of fear, or shrunk at the approach of death, in all its terrors, but advanced to meet the racks and fire, as men who were running the race of mortality, and impatient which should first reach the goal. As our hands, feet, and other members, move according to the direction of the soul, so these heroic youths moved towards death, as if actuated by one common soul. Divine constellation of consenting brothers! As the world, created in seven days, conveys an idea of the perfect majesty, and

goodness of God, thus do these seven martyrs, by their courage and constancy, afford us an example that ought to banish the fear of death. But, alas! we fall short of their pattern, though we cannot read or hear of the extremity of their sufferings, without the utmost agitation of mind.

What torment can exceed that of fire, which instantly pierces and consumes? Yet these valiant champions resolutely endured the severest torments. But to increase our wonder, and lessen that idea of magnanimity which men think their peculiar characteristic, let us produce the case of the woman, who gave glorious proofs of the sovereignty of reason over the passions; one whose sufferings were more severe than those of the parties before mentioned. The variety and extremity of a mother's pains, in viewing the death of her seven sons, is scarcely to be comprehended. She must have been seven times murdered. The natural affections of parents are centered in the welfare of their children. This is evident even among beasts, who evince even a tenderness for their young, equal to that among men. But why need we mention beasts, when all nature is full of this passion for their offspring? The bees, though busy in building their cells, are careful to guard their hives; and when invaded by the drones, protect their young ones by their stings, which serve them as weapons of defence.

The mother of our heroic youths was so true a daughter of Abraham, that even her tenderness for her own children could not tempt her to violate her duty. So laudable was her zeal, that when the preservation and advancement of her sons was put in competition with religion, she wisely preferred the latter, obeyed God rather than the king, and wished them heavenly prosperity, rather than temporal. How shall we describe that tender paternal passion, that fondness for the offspring, that impresses on them the same features of body, and frequently the same disposition of mind? It would be hard to paint the concern they feel for any distress that attends these dearer parts of themselves; particularly that of mothers, whose natural fondness makes them still more susceptible of what affects their children, than fathers are. This mother had still more affection for her children than mothers commonly

have: her love was augmented by seven painful births: and every fresh pang she suffered gave new force to that affection she felt for those for whom she bore those pangs.

Notwithstanding this, the love of God outweighed all present views of her children's interest. She never loved them so tenderly as when they were giving proof of their constancy in the truth: they were wise, courageous, affectionate, and so dutiful as to die in support of the law, in obedience to their mother; while she, disdaining to let her tenderness operate too forcibly, or her reason be shaken by the torments they bore, exhorted them separately and jointly, to shew their zeal for religion by despising sufferings and death.

Hail nature, thou common mother! Hail the love of parents! Hail the sympathetic feelings of maternal love! Behold a miracle: seven children separately racked and burnt in their mother's presence; yet her piety is unsubdued by the sight. She saw the flesh of her children broiling, the joints of their hands, and faces torn off, and trembling on the ground; the skins of their hands and feet stripped, and thrown at her feet: all this she saw unmoved. The agonies she now bore for her children must be greater than those of child-birth, and proved her the noblest of her sex. Her expiring first-born moved her not: the languishing look of the second, and the groans of the third, she appeared not to feel. Not a tear did she drop at the cutting off of hands and heads, nor when the bodies of those dearer parts of herself were heaped around her. The last accents of her offspring, amidst their dying pains, were grateful to her ear. Though nature pleaded forcibly, she disdained to yield; and when urged to save a tender offspring, she gave them up to torment, in full hopes of their future happiness. She proved herself a true daughter of Abraham, by possessing his faith and magnanimity. Hail, mother of a family, and zealous for religion and law! Great was thy patience and courage; thou envy of thine own sex, and wonder of ours! As the ark of Noah, which contained the surviving part of the living world, rode in triumph over the waters of the flood; so thou, when tossed on the waves of passion, and driven by the winds of adversity, being sustained by thy zeal for religion, didst bravely outride the storm.

From the whole of Solomona's conduct in this tragical scene, it evidently appears that well-guided reason will have a complete dominion over the passions, however powerful. This is certainly the case with human nature in general, since we find that not only men, but even a woman could thus conquer all the common feelings, and defy the most exquisite torture.

Had this woman possessed the least weakness of temper, it is probable that she would have exclaimed to the following effect: "Unhappy wretch that I am, so lately blessed with seven sons, but now bereft of them all! O unprofitable child-bearing! O lost cares of nursing children destined to the fires, racks, and torments! Fruitless are my pains, fruitless my anxious days and nights, and lost is all the care of their education! Never more shall I behold my beloved children, never rejoice in their marriage, nor be happy in descendants of the second and third generation! Yet once was I happy in the number and virtue of my sons; but am now a forlorn widow, without one child to comfort my declining years, or to lay my weary head in the grave."

But so far was this admirable woman from thus complaining, or wishing her children to live, that they would have afflicted her if they had not died with glory. Her firm mind considered their extinction from this life as but a passage to a life immortal: she, therefore, entreated them to complete her joy, by sacrificing their lives in defence of their religion. Illustrious mother! who, when she was seized with her sons, and was a witness of the torture and death of the good and pious Eleazar, engaged heartily in the glorious cause, and encouraged her children in an address, in the Hebrew language, to the following effect: "Behold, my sons, how glorious this conflict! If you should be called to suffer the same, behave with cheerfulness and courage, considering what an honor will thereby redound to our people, and the laws of our ancestors. It will be a disgrace to your youth and vigor if you sink under your trials, when a man, almost worn out by age and infirmities, hath already borne such extreme torture, from a sense of duty. Reflect, my dear children, what life is, and of whom you received it. It was the gift of God, and has been continued by his providence; and it

“is your duty to resign it at his pleasure. Surely you
“would not decline any pain for Him, in obedience to
“whom Abraham was ready to sacrifice his son, the
“promised father of our people: nor did Isaac decline the
“weapon that was uplifted to divest him of life. The in-
“nocent and fearless Daniel was cast into the lions’ den,
“and the three children into the fiery furnace. A proper
“sense of their duty to God, made them resolute to suffer
“for his sake; and you should be willing to bear equal
“sufferings, since you hold the same faith. Those who
“have a genuine sense of religion, will not decline any
“sufferings in which the sacred cause shall engage them.”

Thus were these seven children encouraged by their mother, who shewed them how just it was to die, rather than violate the law of God, particularly when an eternal residence with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in the realms of unending bliss, would be the assured consequence of their magnanimous and religious perseverance.

When the soldiers were about to seize and execute the mother, she prevented them by throwing herself into the fire. Venerable matron, who thus defeated the tyrant’s rage, standing like a firm building supported by seven pillars! Glorious mother! whose patience was sustained by an unshaken faith in God, and assured hopes of future recompence. Not brighter shines the moon in the firmament, encircled by the stars, than does she in giving to, and receiving light from her seven sons, in the presence of God, in the celestial mansions. Her sons were truly of the faithful race of Abraham. Could one draw a picture of the whole scene, and every circumstance be fairly painted, our passions must be deeply engaged, and we should be struck with horror at the sight of the mother and children expiring under such horrid torments. Were a monument to be erected to their memory, the inscription on it should be to this effect: “Here lie interred an old mother and her
“seven brave sons, murdered by a tyrant, who, in vain,
“attempted to destroy the constitution of the Jews: for
“these champions resisting, committed their cause to God,
“and persevered, in despite of torments and death, to
“assert the rights of their religion and country.” In fact, the contest was divine: patience was put to its full proof, virtue adjudged the prize, and immortal bliss was the re-

ward of the conquerors. The sons disdained not the combat, and the mother embraced the conflict. The tyrant was their adversary, the world the spectators, and religion the victor. Who could have beheld, who can hear of this glorious enterprize, without paying the tribute of praise and astonishment? The tyrant and his abettors were amazed at that patience and fortitude which supported the sufferers; and, inhuman as they were, revered that piety they could not subdue.

To what has been said on this melancholy subject, we shall add some farther exhortations made by the heroic mother to her sons at the time they were about to suffer. “ Reflect (said she) on the conduct of your mother, who long lived a pure virgin. I wandered not from my father’s house, nor did the serpent, which tempted Eve, seduce me. In conjugal fidelity to your father, I passed the prime of my life. This father died happy in the general esteem, when you had attained the years of maturity. He was blessed in his children, and happily missed the wretchedness of seeing them torn from him. During his life, great pains were taken in your religious educations, to furnish you with principles proper to sustain this important trial. The law and prophets were taught you by him, who described the examples of their patience and virtue. He told you of Abel, who was murdered by his brother Cain; of Isaac, who was intended for a burnt-offering; of Joseph imprisoned for his chastity, and of the zeal of Phineas, for the law of God. He often reminded you of that Providence by which God protects his people, and which is thus celebrated by Isaiah: “ When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee; and when through the rivers they shall not overflow thee. When thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.” While children he taught you the song of David, “ Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth them out of them all.” He instructed you in that maxim of Solomon, which intimates that wisdom is a tree of life to them that retain it. He quickened your faith by that of Ezekiel, hinting that the dry bones should live; and taught you the song of Moses, who (speaking in a Divine character) says, “ I kill, and

“I make alive;” and who, in pronouncing the law, says, “Through this thing ye shall prolong your days in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it.”

O glorious, rather than melancholy, day, when the barbarous Antiochus kindled his flames, and, with more than savage rage, heated his cauldrons, and bound to the torture the seven children of this daughter of Abraham! When he tore out their tongues, and put out their eyes with the most malicious and wanton cruelty! The justice of God, however, did, (as will hereafter appear) and always will, punish the authors of such barbarities. But the tyranny and cruelty of this monster were only the means of removing these pious sons and their mother from a mortal life to a state of bliss eternal: they were no doubt, after their sufferings in this life, admitted into the company of their righteous forefathers, and their souls received by the Almighty, to whom they trusted them, into a pure and immortal state. To that God be given all honor and praise, for ever and ever, *Amen.*

CHAP. XII.

The Jews are relieved from their persecutions under Antiochus Epiphanes by means of Mattathias, the chief of the family of the Maccabees. He puts to death an apostate Jew, kills Apelles, one of Antiochus's generals, and takes up arms in defence of his religion and country. He destroys all idolatrous worship, and, after having acted the parts of a good man, and a brave general, dies, and appoints Judas Maccabees his successor. Judas engages Apollonius, the governor of Samaria, whom he defeats and kills. He overcomes the army of Antiochus in several engagements, makes himself master of the whole country of Judea, and purifies the temple of Jerusalem. Antiochus Epiphanes dies a miserable death, and is succeeded by his son Antiochus Eupater, who, being a minor, is kept for some time under the tuition of Lysias, the chief governor of Syria. Judas Maccabees, and his brother Jonathan, perform many singular acts of valor. Their brother Joseph is defeated by the Syrians at Jamnia. Judas makes a peace with Antiochus Eupater, which being soon broke by the people of Joppa, Judas revenges the insult. He engages Timotheus, whom he vanquishes, and returns in triumph to Jerusalem. He lays siege to the fortress of Acra, foils Antiochus's army, and his brother Eleazar kills the royal elephant. Judas is besieged in Jerusalem, but is happily relieved by an unexpected incident. The miserable death of Menelaus the high-priest of Jerusalem.

THE poor Jews labored, for a considerable time, under the most inexpressible persecutions from the cruel Antiochus, till at length they were rescued, under the Divine Providence, by means of the gallant family of the Maccabees. The chief of these was Mattathias, a priest, the son of John, the son of Simeon, the son of Asmonæus (from whom the family received the name of Asmoneans) who, with his five sons, John, Simon, Judas, Eleazar and Jonathan, fled from Jerusalem, and took up their residence in Modin, a small place belonging to the tribe of Dan, in the mountains of Media.

Mattathias and his sons continued in this retreat for some time, bemoaning the hard fate of their religion and country. But at length the tyrant's restless malice found them out, upon which he dispatched Apelles, one of his

military officers, with a body of soldiers, to oblige them, as well as all the rest who resided in that part of the country, to renounce their religion, and to sacrifice and burn incense in honor of the Grecian idols.

When Apelles arrived at Modin, he immediately summoned the people together, told them the nature of his business, and represented the consequences that would ensue should they refuse to obey the king's commands. He more particularly addressed himself to Mattathias, telling him, that from his advanced years, it would best become him to set the example, which, there was no doubt, would have a proper influence on the rest. He at the same time promised him, that in case he followed his advice, he should be taken into the number of the king's friends, and be promoted to great honor and riches. Mattathias, with a loud voice, and in the hearing of all the people, told Apelles, that no consideration whatever should induce him, or any of the family, to forsake the law of their God; that the examples of those who had apostatized were no rule to him, nor the commands of the greatest monarch of any validity, when they were sent to oblige him to embrace idolatry.

While Mattathias was thus speaking, he beheld a Jew of the place presenting himself at the heathen altar, in order to sacrifice according to the king's injunctions. Not being able to contain himself at so horrid a sight, he hastily ran to the apostate, and, with a zeal equal to that of Phineas, slew him with his own hand; after which, turning to the king's commissioner, he, with the assistance of his sons, and some others who were with them, dispatched him likewise, as also the guard that attended him. He then overturned the altars, pulled down the idols that were in the place, and, calling out to his countrymen, said, "Let him that loves his religion follow me."

Having said this, Mattathias, (accompanied by his five sons, and great numbers of the people, who were encouraged, by his example, firmly to adhere to their religion) left Modin, and retired into the mountains, in order to make the best defence they could against the emissaries of the cruel Antiochus. The officers belonging to Antiochus, who were at Jerusalem, hearing of this, took a party of soldiers from the garrison, and pursued them,

fully resolved either to reduce them to obedience, or make their lives pay for their obstinacy. The people who accompanied Mattathias, instead of keeping in one body, dispersed themselves in different parts, though at such a distance that, if occasion offered, they might be easily assembled together. The emissaries of Antiochus, knowing in what a scrupulous manner the Jews observed the sabbath, took advantage of it by attacking them on that day. This answered the purpose, for they not making the least attempt to defend themselves, great numbers were killed, and the rest were obliged to save themselves by flying to Mattathias, who having a greater number with him than Antiochus's officers chose to attack, they retreated and returned to Jerusalem. Mattathias, however, and the chief of his followers, finding to what danger they might be subject in consequence of their religious observance of the sabbath, made a decree (which was confirmed by all the priests and elders among them) that, whenever they were again attacked on the sabbath-day, it should be lawful for them to fight for their lives, and to defend themselves in the best manner they could; which rule the Jews ever after observed without the least remorse.

Mattathias continued in the mountains for some time, during which great numbers of the Jews resorted to him, many of whom were men of the most tried courage, and well experienced in military discipline. Encouraged by this, Mattathias, after forming the people into a small army, which he divided into a certain number of bodies, and appointed a leader over each, left the mountains, and going round the cities of Judah, pulled down the heathen altars, re-established the true worship, caused the children to be circumcised, cut off all apostates that fell in his way, and destroyed all, wherever he went, who endeavored to establish the worship of idolatry.

Thus did Mattathias act the part of a good man, and a prudent general, for about the space of a year, when, finding from his great age and natural infirmities, his end approaching, he called together his five sons, and (according to Josephus) addressed them as follows: " My life is drawing to the close; but, ere I leave you, I charge you to be firm in the cause I have asserted. Remember my advice, and follow it. Maintain the laws and rights of

“ your country, and, if possible, restore order to a nation
“ almost buried in confusion: nor associate with those
“ who have betrayed it. Disgrace not your father; but,
“ despising all dangers, risk your lives when your country
“ deserves it, and rest assured that a restoration to your
“ former liberty will be the recompence that God will
“ bestow. It is true that our bodies are mortal; but great
“ actions immortalize our memories; and to such actions I
“ would have you aspire. I most earnestly advise you to
“ concord with each other, and consider how the abilities
“ of each may best promote the interest of you all. For
“ instance; Simon has a depth of judgment; let him be
“ your counsellor. Judas is distinguished for his valor
“ and military skill, appoint him your general. On the
“ whole, attend to what you have in view, and rely on the
“ support of all men of honor and virtue.”

Mattathias, having concluded his address to his sons, dismissed them, with prayers to God that he would be please to grant them success in their attempts to relieve their countrymen from the cruel persecutions of their enemies. Soon after this the good old man paid the debt of nature, and was buried in the sepulchres of his forefathers at Modin, all the faithful of Israel making great lamentation for the loss of so valuable a member.

After the death of Mattathias, his son Judas (surnamed Maccabeus) agreeable to his father's advice, and the unanimous approbation of his brethren, took upon himself the command of the forces, which office he soon gave sufficient proofs of his being able properly to discharge. The first thing he did was to go into the several cities of Judea (in the same manner his father had done) and destroy all the utensils and implements he could find which were used in idolatrous worship. He slew all the idolaters and apostate Jews that fell in his way, rescued the true worshippers of God from the hands of their oppressors, and, for their better security in future, fortified their towns, rebuilt their fortresses, and placed such garrisons in them as he thought sufficient to repel the force of the enemy.

These proceedings being made known to the Syrian court, Antiochus sent orders to Apollonius, his governor in Samaria, to raise what forces he could, and march immediately against Judas. Apollonius obeyed the king's

orders, but his attempt, happily for the Jews, proved not only fruitless, but destructive. Judas, being apprized of his intentions, got his forces together, and prepared them, in the best manner he could, for battle, encouraging them to persevere in the opposition they were about to make, not only for the security of their own lives, but for the preservation of their descendants, and, above all, for their laws and religion.

Animated by this advice, the forces under Judas marched with great expedition to meet those under Apollonius; the consequence of which was that a desperate battle ensued, in which, by the distinguished intrepidity of the Jews, the Samaritan army was soon routed, great numbers killed, and the rest put to flight. The brave Judas finding Apollonius detached from his army, engaged him in single combat, and by his great courage and prowess, soon dispatched him, took away his sword, among other spoils, and, as a memento of this signal victory, generally made use of it in his future encounters.

The news of this defeat soon reached the ears of Seron, the deputy-governor of some part of Cælo-Syria, who in consequence thereof, and the farther information he had received that reinforcements were certainly going over to Judas, gathered together what forces were under his command, and resolved to give him battle. For this purpose he marched with his army as far as Bethron, a village in Judea, where he encamped his forces, and where he was joined by a great number of those renegado Jews, who had readily submitted to the injunction of Antiochus. In the mean time Judas made the necessary preparations to engage Seron, but finding his soldiers appeared discouraged from the superior number of the enemy, he endeavored to remove their fears by addressing himself to them in words to this effect: "Brother soldiers, depend not on yourselves, but on God, for victory: confidence in him is superior to that in multitudes of men. The history of our ancestors confirms this truth, who, with small numbers, have routed thousands in defence of their religion, freedom, laws, and families. Truth must prevail, and innocence shall remain unconquered." Having said this, he led his people to the battle, in which they fought with such courage and resolution, that Seron, the general of the

Syrian army, was soon killed, and his forces routed and put to flight, each man consulting only his own safety. The number of the enemy that fell in the battle was about eight thousand, and those who escaped fled for security into the country of the Philistines.

When Antiochus heard of these two defeats, he was so enraged, that he vowed vengeance on the Jews, to obtain which he raised a powerful army in Greece and other parts, being resolved to invade Judea the next spring. Finding, however, on examination, that his treasures fell very short of defraying the expenses of so great an army (his tributes being much diminished by the frequent revolts and commotions in his own dominions) he thought it most prudent for himself first to make an expedition into Persia, and there to levy a tribute which might be sufficient to carry on the war against the Jews. But before he went on this expedition, he constituted his favorite Lysias governor of all the country from the Euphrates to Egypt, leaving with him one half of the forces, with orders, during his absence, to send an army into Judea, utterly to destroy the city of Jerusalem, to extirpate the Jews, and settle strangers in the country.

Antiochus, having adjusted these matters, set out for Persia, leaving Lysias to manage all public affairs during his absence. Lysias, the better to execute his master's commands, sent three eminent commanders (namely, Ptolemy-Macron, Nicanor and Gorgias) to manage the war against the Jews, who, with an army of 40,000 foot, and 7,000 horse, encamped at Emmaus,* a small village about eight miles from Jerusalem. During their stay here, their army was greatly increased by the additional troops of the Syrians, renegado Jews, and other neighboring nations, with whom went several merchants to buy slaves, being thoroughly convinced in their minds that the Jews would be certainly defeated.

* This village lay to the west of Jerusalem, and was honored with Our Saviour's presence after his resurrection. See Luke xxiv. 13. It contained many hot baths, from whence it received its name; (the word Emmaus, which comes from the Hebrew Chamath, signifying *baths of hot water*) and these were very beneficial to those who had occasion to use them.

In the mean time Judas Maccabeus was far from being idle. Having gathered together what forces he could, he marched with them to Mizpeh (the city of Jerusalem being at this time in the hands of the heathens) where he encamped with a full resolution of giving the enemy battle. Here he made a long harangue to his people, telling them not to trust in their own strength, but to implore the protection of heaven by prayer and fasting, in which case there was not the least doubt but all their endeavors to oppose the enemy would be crowned with success. The people obeyed his directions, after which he divided them into regiments, troops and companies; and in order to animate them to persevere in the undertaking in which they had engaged, he addressed them in words to this effect: “ My fellow soldiers and companions! We shall never
“ again have such an opportunity of shewing our bravery
“ in the defence of our country, and the contempt of all
“ dangers, as we have now before us; for upon the issue of
“ tomorrow’s combat depends not only our liberty, but all
“ the comforts and advantages that attend it; and, over and
“ above the blessings of such a freedom, our very religion
“ lies at stake with it too, and we cannot secure the one
“ but by preserving the other. Bethink yourselves well,
“ therefore, what it is you are to contend for, and you will
“ find it to be no less than the sum and substance of
“ the greatest happiness you ever enjoyed, that is to say,
“ the peaceable possession of your ancient laws, rites, and
“ discipline. Now whether you will rather chuse to perish
“ with infamy, and to involve the miserable remainder of
“ your countrymen in the same ruin, or to venture one
“ generous push for the redemption of yourselves and
“ your friends, that’s the question. Death is the same
“ thing to the coward that it is to the valiant man, and as
“ certain to the one as the other; but there is a great dif-
“ ference, in point of honor and everlasting fame, between
“ a gallant man, who falls in vindication of his religion,
“ liberties, laws, and country, and a scoundrel that
“ abandons all for fear of losing a life which he cannot
“ save at last. Take these things into your thoughts, and
“ make this use of the meditation. You have nothing to
“ trust to but God’s Providence, and your concurring re-
“ solutions, and, at the worst, while we contend for victo-

“ry we can never fail of glory.” This speech had the desired effect, the people unanimously declaring they would part with the last drop of their blood in defence of their religion and country.

Judas, soon after this, understanding that Gorgias was detached from the combined army with five thousand foot, and a thousand horse, in order to surprize his camp by night, resolved to be before-hand with him, and to countertermine his plot, by another of the like kind. He therefore quitted his camp, and marching a roundabout way to that of the enemy, he fell upon them (while Gorgias, with a part of his forces were absent) so unexpectedly and with such resolution that they were thrown into the utmost disorder. They at first made what attempts they were able to defend themselves, but they were soon defeated, and three thousand slain on the spot. The rest were glad to save themselves by a precipitate flight, leaving Judas and his gallant troops masters of their camp.

In the mean time Gorgias arriving at the Jewish camp, and finding it empty, concluded from thence that Judas had fled into the mountains for fear, and therefore went thither in pursuit of him. After searching some time in vain, he turned back, and marched towards his own camp, in the way to which he was informed that it had been entered and burnt; that the main army was broken and fled, and that Judas was ready in the plains to give him a warm reception. This intelligence had such an effect on Gorgias's troops, that they threw down their arms and fled, which being observed by Judas he immediately pursued them, and killed great numbers, so that the whole amounted to about nine thousand. Returning, with his victorious army, from the pursuit, he entered the enemy's camp, where he found abundance of rich plunder, which, as an encouragement to the troops, he divided amongst them; and the next day (which was the sabbath) he kept with great devotion, rejoicing and praising God for assisting them in conquering their enemies.

A few days after this, Judas, having received intelligence that Timotheus, governor of the country beyond Jordan, and Bacchides, another officer in those parts, were drawing forces together in order to attack him, he marched directly against them; and such was his success in this

enterprize that he totally defeated the enemy, slew above twenty thousand, and obliged the rest to save themselves by a precipitate flight. This conquest was of the most singular advantage to Judas, his troops being furnished with a great abundance of warlike instruments, and other things necessary for prosecuting the war, which the enemy, to save themselves, were glad to leave behind.

The great success of Judas so mortified Lysias (whom Antiochus, when he went upon his expedition into Persia had constituted chief governor of all the country from the Euphrates to Egypt) that the next year he entered Judea with an army of sixty thousand foot and five thousand horse, and encamped at Bethsura, a strong place lying to the south of Jerusalem, near the confines of Idumæa. Judas, undismayed by the superior number of the enemy, advanced against them with only ten thousand men, and having offered up prayers for success, he attacked the enemy, forced their lines, and killed upwards of five thousand on the spot. The army of Lysias was so irritated at this disaster, that they told their commander they were determined either to conquer or die; but Lysias, considering this only as a mark of despair, instead of continuing the battle, sounded a retreat, and withdrew his forces to Antioch, in hopes, by making a considerable addition to them, of being successful at some future period.

Animated by these successes, Judas, after encouraging his adherents to rely on the continued protection of God, proposed marching to Jerusalem, and attempting once more to possess themselves of their ancient city, and, should their endeavors be crowned with success, to offer up sacrifices, and cleanse the temple, so that they might again restore the worship of the God of Israel. This proposition being readily and cheerfully agreed to, he immediately marched against Jerusalem, whither he had no sooner arrived than the heathens (being intimidated at the astonishing conquests already obtained by Judas) deserted the place, suffering him and his men to enter it without the least interruption.

When Judas entered the city he found the gates destroyed, the temple abandoned, and weeds overspreading the courts; so that they wept at the deplorable situation of the place. He immediately ordered his people to cleanse

it, and to purge it of those profanations with which, for some time, it had been defiled. This being done, he furnished it with utensils, vessels, a candlestick, a table, and an altar of incense, all of pure gold. He likewise made new doors to it, and put up veils and hangings on the walls. The altar, which had been profaned by sacrifices and burnt-offerings to idols, was also removed, and a new one, of unhewn stone, (agreeable to the directions of Moses) placed in its stead, lighted tapers were put in the candlestick, incense offered on the altar, shew-bread placed on the table, and burnt-offerings made, on the fifth of the month Chisleu (which answers to about the twentieth of our November) just three years after the temple had been profaned by the cruel and abandoned Antiochus. Judas continued this festival eight days, with sacrifices, rejoicing and feasting, while the air resounded with thanksgivings and praises from the people, who, during the whole time, were indulged in all reasonable gratifications. The public joy was so great on this restoration of their law and religion, that an anniversary of eight days celebration was appointed to be held ever after. This festival was called *The Feast of Lights*, in allusion to that light which Providence was pleased once more to bestow on the children of Israel.

At the time Apollonius made himself master of Jerusalem, in order the better to secure the place, he erected a fortress on Mount Acra, a remarkable eminence situated on the north side of the temple. This fortress (which was still occupied by the heathens) commanding one of the principal ways that led to the city, the enemy took advantage of it by annoying all those who went that way to attend Divine service. Judas immediately set about means to remove this inconvenience, which he did by first blocking up the fortress; but finding he could not conveniently spare such a number of men as was necessary for that purpose, he caused the outer part of the temple to be fortified with strong walls and high towers, in which he placed a sufficient garrison both to defend it, and protect those who went up to worship.

No sooner did the neighboring nations understand that the Jews had recovered the city and temple of Jerusalem, and restored the true worship of God, than their hatred was raised to the most violent degree against them, and

they resolved, if possible, by forming a general confederacy, to extirpate the whole Jewish nation. As soon as Judas was apprized of their intentions, he took every means he could project for rendering their designs abortive. He well knew the Idumeans were the most bitter enemies to the Jews, and, therefore, as a guard against them, he first fortified Bethsura, after which he not only declared war against them, but likewise all the other nations that had confederated together; and such was his success (as will hereafter appear) that in most of the engagements that took place between him and the enemy, the latter were defeated with great loss, and their efforts to reduce the Jews, rendered ineffectual.

During these transactions, Antiochus was employed in his expedition into Persia, in order to raise money for carrying on the war against the Jews. This expedition, however, instead of being attended with success, proved his bane, and robbed him of that life, which, from his natural cruelty and baseness of heart, was of little value. Having received information that in the city of Elymais (a very opulent place in that part of the country, called Ancient Persia) was a temple that contained immense riches, he marched thither with his army, with a resolution of not only plundering the temple, but likewise the most wealthy inhabitants of the city. The people of the adjoining country having received intimation of Antiochus's intentions, immediately gathered from all parts, and joining those of the city, met Antiochus, whom they attacked with such success, that he was glad to desist from attempting to execute his design, and retreated with his army to Ecbatane in Media.

While Antiochus was at Ecbatane, he received intelligence of the ill success of his arms in Judea, and of the Jews having possessed themselves of the city of Jerusalem, destroying the altars and images he had erected, and restoring the original worship in the temple. Irritated at this information he immediately left Media, and hastened towards home, with a determined resolution totally to extirpate the whole nation. But no sooner had he formed this barbarous resolution and was hastening with all speed to execute it, than the judgments of God overtook him, he being suddenly seized with such violent and racking pains

in all his inward parts that it was out of the power of medicine to give him the least relief.

Notwithstanding the great torments Antiochus underwent from this affliction, yet it did not interrupt him from his intentions of persecuting the Jews: he still vowed the most bitter revenge against them, and was still resolved to carry his designs into execution. For this purpose he ordered his charioteer to double his speed, which he accordingly did; but, by the rapidity of the motion the chariot was overturned, and Antiochus received so much hurt from the fall, that he was unable to proceed any farther, and therefore stopped at Tabæ, a little town on the confines of Persia.

While Antiochus was at Tabæ he suffered the most exquisite torments that can be conceived, not only in his body, but likewise his mind. A most nauseous and filthy ulcer broke out in his private parts, from whence continually flowed an innumerable quantity of vermin, and the stench proceeding from it was so great that neither those who attended him, nor even himself could well bear it; and in this condition did he lie languishing and rotting till he died. The torments of his mind were no less perplexing than those of his body. When, through mere fatigue, he was somewhat inclined to rest, he was sure to be interrupted by the appearance of spectres and apparitions, whom he imagined reproached and stung his conscience with accusations of the evil deeds of which he had been guilty. Being at length made sensible, by the severity of his afflictions, that they were all directed by the hand of God as a punishment for his plundering and profaning the temple at Jerusalem, and for his hatred and cruelty to the Jews who worshipped there, he made an ample confession of his crimes, with many solemn promises of his future amendment should he recover. But this repentance came too late; and therefore, after having languished for some time in this wretched and deplorable condition, and under these horrid torments both of body and mind, he at length, being half consumed with the rottenness of his ulcer, gave up the ghost, after an inglorious reign of eleven years. His body was removed from Tabæ to Antioch, and there interred in the sepulchre of his ancestors.

Thus died the cruel and wicked Antiochus Epiphanes, and thus was fulfilled the prediction of the innocent Solomona and her seven sons, who, during their sufferings, had threatened, or rather foretold, that, *through the judgment of God, he should receive a just punishment for his pride; and that when he should call upon God in his distress, he would not answer.*

On the death of Antiochus Epiphanes, his son Antiochus Eupater succeeded to the Syrian throne, at which time he was nine years of age. His father, a short time before his death, had appointed a confidential friend, named Philip, (who was then with him at Tabæ) to be regent of the kingdom during his son's minority, and had given him a strict charge to see him educated in such a manner, that he might be able, as soon as possible, to take the government into his own hands.

Philip faithfully promised to pay a strict attention to the commands of his dying master; and for that purpose, immediately after his death, repaired to Antioch. But on his arrival there, he found his office usurped by another; for Lysias (whom the king had left governor in chief during his absence) having heard of the death of Epiphanes, placed his son Antiochus (who was then immediately under his protection) on the throne, and assumed to himself the tuition of his person and government of his kingdom, which he determined to preserve in opposition to the will of the late king in favor of Philip. The latter, knowing himself too weak to engage in a contest with Lysias, gave up his claim, and retired into Egypt, not without some hopes that a future opportunity would present itself, when he might be enabled to obtain that right of which he was now divested by a superiority of power.

The Jews reaped little advantage by the death of Antiochus Epiphanes, for his son and successor, by the direction of Lysias, resolved to carry on the war against them with great severity. In this he was materially assisted by the confederate nations that had threatened to extirpate the whole race of Israël, and who had began to execute their design by putting to death great numbers of the Jews in different parts.

As soon as Judas Maccabeus heard that the people of the different nations round Judea, had commenced their

intended persecution of the Jews, he resolved to take all possible measures to stop their proceedings. For this purpose he first marched against the Idumeans (whom he knew to be the most forward in the conspiracy) and having entered that part of their country called Acrabatena, immediately fell on them, and was so successful, that in two different battles, no less than 40,000 were slain on the spot, and the rest obliged to save themselves by a hasty retreat into the more interior parts of the country.

Animated by this success, Judas passed the river Jordan, and went into the land of the Ammonites, where he defeated those people in several engagements, slew great numbers of them, took several principal places (particularly a large town called Johazar, situated at the foot of the mountains of Gilead) and then returned, with his victorious army, in triumph to Jerusalem.

As soon as Lysias heard of the great success of Judas Maccabeus, he sent his general, Timotheus, with a very considerable army, to take possession of Judea. Judas, being apprized of this, immediately left Jerusalem, and marched with his forces to give him battle. No sooner were the two armies met, than an engagement took place, in which the troops of Judas, though greatly inferior in number to those under Timotheus, acted with such bravery and resolution, that the Syrian army was totally defeated, no less than 20,500 foot, and 600 horse, being slain on the spot. Timotheus was reduced to the necessity of flying for safety to Gazara, a city in the tribe of Ephraim, of which his brother Chereas was governor. Thither Judas pursued him, and laying siege to the place, at the expiration of five days, made himself master of it. Timotheus, to avoid being taken, concealed himself in a ditch, but being discovered by some of Judas's troops, and taken out of it, he was, with his brother Chereas, and one Apolophanes, a captain of the Syrian forces, put to death; after which Judas, having placed a proper garrison in the city, returned to Jerusalem.

During these transactions, the heathen nations about Galaad, fell upon those Jews who resided in the land of Tob, which lay to the east of Gilead. They slew no less than 1000 men, took all their goods as spoil, and carried away their wives and children into captivity. In conse-

quence of this, most of those Jews, who resided in the adjoining parts, quitted their habitations, and, for safety, retired to a strong fortress in Gilcad, called Dothema, with a resolution of defending themselves against the enemy, or perishing in the attempt. As soon as the heathens understood this, they immediately assembled together, and placed themselves under the command of Timotheus (the successor, and most probably the son of Timotheus who was slain at Gazara) in order to besiege them; while the inhabitants of Tyre, Sidon, Ptolemais, and other parts, were laying schemes for destroying all the Jews who resided in the country of Galilee.

The poor Jews, in these different parts, being in the most imminent danger, respectively sent messengers to Judas Maccabeus, requesting him to come with all expedition to their assistance, as they must otherwise inevitably perish by the hands of their implacable enemies. Judas, not knowing how to act in this critical juncture of affairs, consulted the Sanhedrim,* or general council of the na-

* The Sanhedrim, or general council of the Jewish nation, consisted of seventy senators, who assembled together, at fixed times, in order to determine the most important affairs of their church and state. The high-priest was the settled president, and for that reason called Nasi, or prince of the Sanhedrim: in his absence there was a deputy called Abbeth-din, which signifies *Father of the House of Judgment*; as also a sub-deputy called Chacam, i. e. *the Wife*; but all the rest had the common name of Elders or Senators.

These senators were taken partly from among the priests and Levites, and partly out of the number of the inferior judges, who formed what they called the Lesser Sanhedrim. They were all to be men of untainted birth, good learning, and profound knowledge in the law, both written and traditional. All eunuchs, and such as had any bodily deformity, were excluded from the Sanhedrim; as also usurers, gamblers, and such as made a gain of their fruits in the sabbatical year. In short, those only were to be admitted members of this council, who were of mature age, had competent fortunes, and were comely in their persons.

The room in which this council met was a rotunda, half of which was built without the temple, and half within. The Nasi, or prince of the council, set upon a throne, elevated above the rest, at the upper end of the room, having his deputy on his right-hand, and his sub-deputy on the left. The senators were ranged in order on each side, and by them sat the secretaries, who were three in number. One of these secretaries kept a register of such as were absolved, the second had the care of those who were condemned to die, and the third registered the several pleadings of all contending parties.

tion, and by their advice, divided his army into three parties. With the first, which consisted of eight thousand men, he, accompanied by his brother Jonathan, marched for the relief of the Gileadites. His brother Simon, who was appointed to the command of the second division, which consisted of three thousand, was sent into Galilee;

The authority of the great Sanhedrim was very extensive. The council decided all causes brought before them by way of appeal from the inferior courts. The right of judging, in capital cases, belonged to this court only, nor could sentence of death be pronounced in any other place. In short, all private controversies of difficult discussion, all matters relating to religion, and all important affairs of state, were submitted to the determination of this august assembly, from whose sentence no appeal could be made.

The formality to be observed in bringing a law-suit before the Sanhedrim is thus described by Maimonides: The business (says he) "was first to be examined in the inferior courts; but if it could not be decided there, the judges sent to Jerusalem to consult the Judgment Chamber that sat upon the mount of the temple. From this tribunal they proceeded to that which sat at the temple-gate; and, if the matter was not determined there, they came at last to the Great Council-Chamber, which was held in one of the apartments belonging to the temple; and this last council determined with so much justice and authority, that there were no divisions seen during all the time that the sacred temple lasted."

According to the Jewish Doctors great caution was taken by this tribunal in passing the sentence of death upon criminals; and such was the lenity used by them that, even after condemnation, if any circumstances appeared favorable in behalf of the culprit, he escaped the punishment allotted him. The manner in which they describe the nature of these proceedings, is as follows: "After the witnesses were heard (say they) and the matter in question decided, the judge put off the sentence till the next morning. The members of the Sanhedrim then went home, eat but little, drank no wine, and met again, two and two, in order to weigh all the particulars of the trial. The next morning he that had given his opinion for condemning of the criminal had power to revoke it, but he who had once given his opinion for absolving him, could not alter his mind. As soon as the judge had pronounced sentence, the malefactor was conducted to the place of execution, while an herald on horseback proclaimed as he went along, "Such an one is condemned for such a crime; but if any one can say any thing in his behalf, let him now speak." If it happened that any one came to the gate of the court of the temple, the door-keeper gave intimation to the herald to bring back the prisoner, while two judges were appointed to hear what his friend had to say in his behalf, and to consider whether there was any thing material in it. If there was, the crim-

and the rest were left at Jerusalem, under the command of Joseph, for the defence of the city and its environs. Judas, before he left Jerusalem, gave a strict charge to his brother Joseph, not to attempt any enterprize against the enemy, but to stand wholly on the defensive till he and his brother Jonathan should return from their expedition.

When Judas and his brother Jonathan arrived in the land of Gilead, they received intelligence that a great number of Jews were imprisoned at Bassora, a town belonging to the Edomites, and that it was the intention of the enemy to put them to death as soon as they should possess themselves of the fortress of Dothema, where many other Jews had fled to secure themselves from the common danger. In consequence of this information, Judas marched with all expedition to Bassora, and arriving there sooner than was expected, fell upon the enemy before they could have time to make any kind of defence. He slew all the males, and took all their spoils, having done which, he released the distressed Jews, set the town on fire, and then marched towards Dothema. On his arrival there, which was early in the morning (having marched his forces all night) he found Timotheus had already begun to storm the place; upon which he immediately attacked him with all his forces, and that with such success, that the Syrians were totally routed, and no

“inal was set at liberty, but if not he underwent the sentence that had been pronounced against him.”

It has been a matter of great controversy among the learned at what time this Sanhedrim, or Great Council of the Jewish nation, was first instituted, some of the Jewish Doctors tracing it as far back as the time of Moses. But on a circumspect view of the arguments on both sides the question, it evidently appears not to have commenced till the time of the Maccabees, and that either Judas or his brother Jonathan was the institutor of it. The most substantial authority for this supposition is, that there are not any footsteps to be found, either in sacred or profane history, of such an assembly previous to the time of the Maccabees, when we read of it as being the Senate of the Nation, and that it grew into great power, which it preserved many years after. It was the highest court during our Saviour's ministry, and matters of the highest importance were committed to their determination. In this state it continued for some time after, till at length, by the final destruction of Jerusalem, and the dispersion of the Jewish nation, the very name and authority of that senate, was, in a short time, entirely lost.

less than 8000 slain on the spot. Judas, after returning from the pursuit of the enemy, set his brethren at liberty, and then marched his army from place to place where he understood that a great number of Jews were imprisoned, whom he released, and treated their persecutors in the same manner he had done those of Bassora. Having thus reduced the principal places in Gilead, and rescued a great number of his brethren, who must otherwise have fallen victims to the malice and rage of the enemy, he returned with his victorious army in triumph to Jerusalem.

When Judas and his brother Jonathan arrived at Jerusalem, they received a very disagreeable piece of intelligence, which arose from the misconduct of Joseph, who had been left there with the remainder of the army to secure the place. Hearing of the great successes of his brothers in Gilead, and animated thereat, he, contrary to the orders that had been given him, led forth his forces on an ill-projected expedition against Jamnia, a sea-port on the Mediterranean, thinking to take the place. But Gorgias, who commanded in those parts for the king of Syria, and who had under him a very considerable army, attacked Joseph so forcibly that his troops were thrown into the utmost disorder, two thousand were killed on the spot, and he, with the rest, obliged to save themselves by flight, and return with all expedition to Jerusalem.

In the mean time Simon was no less successful in Galilee than his brothers Judas and Jonathan had been in Gilead. He defeated the enemy in several encounters, drove them out of the country, and pursued them with great slaughter as far as the very gates of Ptolemais. In his way to, and at all the places he reduced, he gathered together the Jews, men, women and children, whom, on his return, he left in different parts of Judea, to occupy those places which had been desolated by the enemy, during the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes.

When Lysias (the chief commander of the Syrian forces, and at this time regent of the kingdom) heard of the great success of Judas and his brothers Jonathan and Simon, he vowed revenge against the Jews, and immediately raising an army of eighty thousand men, marched towards Jerusalem, in order to give Judas battle, and, if possible, make himself master of the city. In his way

thither, coming to Bethsura, he thought it necessary to take that place first, and therefore laid siege to it; but while he was on this business, Judas (who had heard of his intentions and situation) marched against him, and immediately attacking his army killed no less than eleven thousand foot, sixteen hundred horse, and put the rest to flight. Lysias, with great difficulty, escaped to Antioch, from whence, considering the distracted state of his affairs, and despairing of being able to raise fresh recruits, he sent terms of accommodation to Judas and his people. By these terms, which were readily accepted, the decree of Antiochus Epiphanes, obliging the Jews to conform to the customs and maxims of the Greeks, was rescinded, and the Jews were permitted to live according to their own laws and religion.

This peace, however, was of very short duration, for though it received the royal sanction, being ratified by Antiochus himself, yet it was greatly disapproved of by the governors of the several neighboring places round Antioch. The people about Joppa were the first that broke it, by drowning in the sea two hundred of the Jews who lived among them in that city. As soon as Judas heard of this cruelty and perfidy, he executed a severe revenge, for falling on them by night, he destroyed their shipping, and such as escaped the fire, he put to the sword. Hearing likewise that the people of Joppa had very ill treated the Jews in that place, he set fire to the town, and not a single ship that then lay there escaped the flames.

Among those governors who were dissatisfied with the peace made between Lysias and the Jews, was Timotheus, who was so irritated that he assembled together an army of 120,000 foot and 2,500 horse, with a resolution of going into Gilead, and destroying all the Jews who resided in that country. Judas, being informed of the design of Timotheus, immediately marched against him, and having defeated a strong party of wandering Arabs in his way and made peace with them, he first laid siege to the city of Caspis (which was formerly called Hesbon, and belonged to the tribe of Reuben) and soon making himself master of it, slew the inhabitants and reduced the place to ashes. From thence he proceeded to Caraca, where Timotheus had left a garrison of ten thousand men, and having

proved equally successful there, he put all to the sword. At length he came up with Timotheus at a place called Raphon, and immediately giving him battle, slew thirty thousand men, and took him prisoner. He, however, gave him both his life and liberty on these conditions, namely, that he should immediately release all the Jews, who were captives in any places under his jurisdiction. Judas, understanding that the forces of Timotheus who had fled for safety had taken shelter in Carniön, a city in Arabia, he pursued them thither, and having soon made himself master of the place, slew no less than 25,000, so that Timotheus was totally disabled from making any farther attempts against the Jews in any of those parts of the country over which he had the command.

In this expedition Judas exercised the like good policy his brother Simon had done after his conquests in Galilee. All the Jews whom he rescued from the hands of the enemy he took with him, and on his return into the land of Judea, left them to inhabit and fortify such cities as were not already sufficiently peopled. Judas, on his return home, was obliged to pass through Ephron, a large city in the hands of Lysias, and defended by a very strong garrison. On his arrival there the people refused to open the gates, upon which he immediately assaulted the place, and having, in a short time, taken it by storm, he put all the males, amounting to about 25,000, to the sword, took their spoils, and reduced the city to ashes.

Encouraged by these repeated successes, Judas resolved to carry the war into the Southern parts of Idumea, and therefore marched with his army into that part of the country. The first place of which he possessed himself in this expedition was Hebron, the metropolis, from whence he went into the land of the Philistines, and laid siege to Azotus, formerly called Ashdod.

The inhabitants stood out for some time, but were at length reduced, and great numbers of them put to the sword; after which Judas pulled down all the heathen altars, burnt their carved images, and totally demolished the place. Having done the like to all the other cities in that part of the country of which he had made himself master, he returned to Jerusalem, his victorious army

being laden with abundance of rich spoils which they had taken from the enemy.

But notwithstanding these great successes, yet Judas could not, strictly speaking, yet call himself master of Jerusalem. The citadel, or fortress of Acra, still held out for the king of Syria, and the garrison, which consisted of Macedonians and renegado Jews, was very troublesome to such as resorted to the temple. To remove these inconveniences, Judas thought it advisable to attempt the reduction of the place: He therefore having prepared proper engines and machines for the better executing his design, forcibly attacked it and proved so successful as greatly to straiten the enemy, though he could not so far reduce them as to make himself master of the place.

In the mean time the besieged found means to informing Antiochus of their distress, and to request that he would either immediately come himself, or send some proper person, to their assistance. Antiochus faithfully promised to relieve them himself, and for that purpose raised a very powerful army, consisting of 110,000 foot, 20,000 horse, 3000 armed chariots, and thirty-two elephants with castles on their backs full of archers.

With this formidable army Antiochus marched to the relief of the fortress of Acra, in his way to which he laid siege to Bethsura, not doubting but he should easily reduce the inhabitants to obedience. In this first enterprize, however, he found himself greatly mistaken, for the people, being resolute, defeated all his efforts, and burnt and destroyed his battering engines, so that he spent a great deal of time to very little purpose.

While Antiochus was before Bethsura, Judas was pressing the siege of Acra with all his might; but being fearful lest the Bethsurians should be forced to submit to the superior force of the enemy, he relinquished the siege, and marched with his army to their assistance. His intent was, to surprize the king's forces, and therefore marching in the night he fell upon one quarter of the enemy in the dark, killed four thousand, and then retreated without sustaining any loss.

Early the next morning Antiochus left Bethsura, and having marched within sight of Judas's army, encamped near a place called Bethzachariah. Here he directed his

troops to arrange themselves in proper order for battle; but the narrowness of the place obliged them to go in files, one elephant preceding a thousand foot and five hundred horse; while the other troops ascended the hills under the command of officers of the most experienced valor. When they came to the open part where Judas's army was encamped, and which was on an eminence, they began the attack with the loudest acclamations, so that the vallies re-echoed with the noise. This, however, did not in the least intimidate Judas and his men, who immediately fell with great fierceness on the enemy, and at the first attack killed six hundred of the king's best troops. During the engagement Eleazar (a brother of Judas) observing one of the elephants more richly caparisoned than the rest, and presuming it was the king who rode the beast, resolved to make one bold stroke, by which he might not only deliver his country, but gain to himself immortal honor. To effect this he forced himself through the guards, killed several of his opponents, and getting under the king's elephant stuck his spear into its belly, so that the creature fell down dead, which proved fatal to Eleazar, for before he could get from under the beast he dropped, and crushed him to death.

Judas, however, finding the number too great for him, withdrew from the fight, and made a safe retreat to Jerusalem. Antiochus followed with one part of his army, leaving the other to carry on the siege of Bethsura, the inhabitants of which, seeing no prospect of relief from their friends, were at length forced to surrender, but on condition that they should not be treated with any violence. The general of Antiochus's forces agreed to this, and preserved his engagement, as far as saving their lives, but he drove them naked from the town, and placed some of his own people in their stead.

The king's forces having reduced Bethsura marched towards Jerusalem, in order to join the party under Antiochus, and assist him in the reduction of that city. When the whole army appeared before the place, Judas was alarmed from the great superiority of their number, and as the most proper place of security, retired with his friends into the temple. They obstinately defended the place for some time, and counter-worked every attack

made by the enemy; but the people were greatly distressed for want of bread. It happened to be the time when the Jews by their laws, could neither plow nor sow; so that in this distress many people abandoned the place for want of provisions, and the rest must have inevitably been compelled to surrender had they not been relieved by the following very fortunate and unexpected incident.

While Antiochus, and Lysias his general, were carrying on the siege of Jerusalem, they received advice that Philip (whom Antiochus Epiphanes had constituted regent of the kingdom, and guardian to his son) had made himself master of Antioch, and taken upon him the government of the Syrian empire. In consequence of this information the king and Lysias unanimously resolved to abandon the siege, and march with all expedition to attack Philip. The king, however, thought it advisable to keep their intentions so secret, that neither officers nor soldiers should be able to form an idea of their design; to effect which the king bade Lysias represent to them the great strength of the place, and how tedious a business it would be to take it: that corn grew scarce; that the king was wanted in another place, and the best way would be to yield to the people the use of their religion and laws, which being all they contended for, the king might depart at his pleasure.

This proposal being universally approved of by the army, Antiochus sent a messenger to offer peace to the besieged on the most honorable terms, which being accepted, they left the temple, and the accommodation between them was ratified by oath. But when Antiochus came to see the strength of the fortifications belonging to the temple, he (contrary to the articles he had sworn to) caused them to be all pulled down and demolished; after which he set out on his return to Syria. On his arrival at Antioch he found the information he had received at Jerusalem but too true, Philip having possessed himself of the imperial city, and assumed the government. He immediately attacked him with all his forces, and in a short time totally routed his army, slew great numbers of his men, and put the rest to flight. Philip himself fell among the slain; so that Antiochus, having now no other

opponent, he easily re-possessed himself in the government of the empire.

While Antiochus and Lysias were carrying on the siege of Jerusalem, Menelaus, the high-priest, was very busy in offering his services against his own people, and even went so far as to offer up prayers for the success of Antiochus's army. But Lysias, discovering his hypocrisy, cautioned the king against his villainous designs and practices, and accused him of being the author and fomentor of the Jewish war. In consequence of this accusation, Menelaus was seized, and being condemned to die, he was carried to Berhæa, a town in Syria, where he was thrown headlong from the top of a high tower, and dashed to pieces. After his death Antiochus conferred the office of high-priest on one Alcimus, a man no less depraved in principles than the wicked Menelaus.

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END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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Solomon places the Ark of God, and the Tabernacle, in the Temple. His solemn dedication of the temple, and prayer on the occasion. God appears to Solomon a second time in a dream. Solomon offers Hiram, king of Tyre, twenty cities, which he refuses to accept. He builds cities, and subdues the Hittites, Amorites, &c. Sends ships to Ophir, which bring from thence great quantities of gold. Receives a visit from the Queen of Sheba, who admires his wisdom, and, on her departure, makes him many valuable presents. His great riches. He is deluded by strange women, and falls into idolatry. God raises up against him Hadad and Rezon, and declares to Jeroboam, by the prophet Abijah, that he shall reign over ten tribes. Jeroboam flies into Egypt. Death of Solomon.

CHAPTER II.—FROM PAGE 94, TO PAGE 112.

Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, succeeds to the government. He refuses the advice of his father's counsellors: upon which ten of the tribes revolt, and make Jeroboam king. Jeroboam seduces the people into idolatry. His hand suddenly withereth, but is restored at the instigation of a prophet. The same prophet, for his disobedience, is slain by a lion. Jeroboam's wickedness, and the death of his son Abijah. Shishak, king of Egypt, besieges Jerusalem, and plunders the temple. Death of Rehoboam. Abijah, the son of Rehoboam, succeeds to the government of Judah. He obtains a considerable victory over Jeroboam, but soon after dies. He is succeeded by his son Asa, a very good prince, who, after gaining a victory over the king of Arabia, makes a thorough reformation

in religion. Death of Asa. Of the different kings who governed the ten tribes during the reigns of Rehoboam, Abijam and Asa.

CHAPTER III.—FROM PAGE 112, TO PAGE 149.

Jehoshaphat succeeds to the government of Judah, and endeavors to extirpate idolatry. The wicked reign of Ahab, king of Israel. The prophet Elijah foretels a famine, which accordingly comes to pass. The manner of his living in exile, and his interview with Ahab. His contest with the priests of Baal, whom he orders to be put to death. He flies on account of the threats of Queen Jezebel, and appoints Elisha to the prophetic office in his stead. Ahab defeats Benhadad twice, and at length makes a dishonorable peace with him. Queen Jezebel procures the murder of Naboth, a citizen of Jezreel, for which God threatens Ahab and his posterity. Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, assists Ahab in the siege of Ramoth-Gilead, where Ahab is slain by an arrow. Jehoshaphat's wise government, prosperity and death. He is succeeded by his son Jehoram, who turns out a bloody prince, lives detestably, and dies unlamented. The wicked and inglorious reign of Ahaziah king of Israel. The prophet Elijah is translated into heaven, in the presence of his servant Elisha, who succeeds him in the prophetic office. Comparison between the prophet Elijah, John the Baptist, and our Blessed Redeemer.

CHAPTER IV.—FROM PAGE 149, TO PAGE 177.

Jehoram, king of Israel, makes war against Mesha, king of Moab, in which he is assisted by Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, and the king of Edom. The confederate princes obtain a victory, on which the king of Moab, in a fit of despair, sacrifices his eldest son on the walls of his own city. The prophet Elisha performs several singular miracles. Benhadad, king of Syria, lays siege to Samaria, the capital of Jehoram's dominions. The siege is miraculously raised. Benhadad is put to death by his servant Hazael, who succeeds him in the government of Syria. The prophet Elisha anoints Jehu king of Israel. Jehu kills Jehoram king of Israel, and Ahaziah, king of Judah. Causes Jezebel, the wife of Ahab, to be put to death. Destroys the princes of the blood, the relations of Ahaziah, and the priests and temple of Baal. Jehu, towards the close of his reign, falls into idolatry, for which God suffers him to be punished by Hazael, king of Syria. He dies, and is succeeded by his son Jehoahaz, who follows his father's steps in idolatry; and, after an unhappy reign of seventeen

years, pays the debt of nature. Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab, the late king of Israel, and widow of Jehoram king of Judah, conspires the destruction of the line of David. Jehoshaphat, the son of Azariah king of Judah, is preserved by Jehoiada the high-priest, and proclaimed king of Jerusalem. Athaliah is put to death by order of Jehoiada, through whose means Jehoshaphat is established on the throne of Judah.

CHAPTER V.—FROM PAGE 177, TO PAGE 187.

Jehoshaphat reigns well during the life of his uncle Jehoiada. He collects money to repair the temple. He suffers the people to forsake the true worship of God, for which he is greatly distressed by Hazael king of Syria. He is afflicted with a most violent distemper, and at length assassinated by two of his domestics. Amaziah, his son, succeeds him in the government, and punishes the two men that murdered his father. He engages the Edomites, obtains a complete victory, and puts to death 10,000 men whom he had taken prisoners. He falls into idolatry, is vanquished by Joash king of Israel, and afterwards murdered by his own subjects. Joash pays a visit to the prophet Elisha, who bestows on him his blessing, and assures him of victory over his enemies. Death of Elisha. A dead man, by being placed in Elisha's tomb, and touching his body, is restored to life. Joash engages the king of Syria, and obtains a victory three different times. He dies, and is succeeded by his son Jeroboam, who enlarges the kingdom of Israel, and after whose death an inter-regnum takes place of twenty-two years.

CHAPTER VI.—FROM PAGE 187, TO PAGE 195.

Containing the most material incidents recorded in the Life and Transactions of the Prophet Jonah.

CHAPTER VII.—FROM PAGE 195, TO PAGE 204.

Uzziah, king of Judah, begins his reign piously, and proves victorious over his enemies. He conquers the Philistines and Arabians, and having subdued the Ammonites makes them become his tributaries. He repairs the walls of Jerusalem, and adds several new fortifications to them. He usurps the sacerdotal office, for which he is struck with a severe leprosy. He languishes under his disorder for some years, and then dies, leaving the throne to his son Jotham. Some account of the prophets Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, and Isaiah.

CHAPTER VIII.—FROM PAGE 204, TO PAGE 218.

Zachariah is made king of Israel, after the throne had been vacant twenty-two years. He is murdered by Shallum, who usurps the throne. Shallum is put to death by Menahem, the general of the forces, who succeeds him in the government. Menahem, after reigning ten years, dies, and is succeeded by his son Pekahiah. This prince is murdered by Pekah, the general of his forces, who usurps the government, and after a reign of twenty years, is murdered by Hoshea, who succeeds him, and under whose government the Israelitish kingdom is destroyed by Shalmaneser, king of Assyria. The story of Tobit and Tobias.

CHAPTER IX.—FROM PAGE 218, TO PAGE 238.

Jotham, the son and successor of Uzziah, reigns prosperously over Judah for sixteen years, and then dies. He is succeeded by his son Ahaz, who is a very wicked prince, and, instead of reforming the people, promotes idolatry. Rezen, king of Syria, and Pekah, king of Israel, invade his territories, and greatly perplex him. He makes a league with the king of Assyria, and becomes tributary to him. He orders the temple of Jerusalem to be shut up, suppresses the true worship of God, and supplies its place with the idolatrous worship of the Syrians. He dies, and, for his impieties, is refused interment in the royal sepulchres. He is succeeded by his son Hezekiah, who renews the passover, destroys idolatry, and restores the worship of the temple. His sickness and remarkable recovery. He forms an alliance with the king of Babylon. Makes a truce with Sennacherib, king of Assyria. Receives an haughty and threatening message from him, at which he is greatly alarmed, but is comforted by the prophet Isaiah, who assures him that no danger shall ensue. Sennacherib marches against Jerusalem with a design of totally destroying it, but is prevented by the Divine interposition, the greater part of his army being destroyed in one night by an angel. Death of Hezekiah.

CHAPTER X.—FROM PAGE 238, TO PAGE 250.

Manasseh succeeds to the government of Judah after the death of Hezekiah. He reigns wickedly, and gives all the encouragement in his power towards advancing idolatry. He is attacked by Esarhaddon, king of Assyria, who, after obtaining a complete victory, carries him prisoner to Babylon. He repents for his past conduct, is set at liberty, and returns to Jerusalem. He removes idolatry, and restores the true reli-

gion. He dies, and is succeeded by his son Ammon, who, after a reign of only two years, is murdered by some of his domestics. Josiah, when only eight years of age, succeeds to the throne of Judah. He destroys idolatry, and makes a thorough reformation in religion. He gives orders for repairing the temple. Hilkiah, the high-priest, finds the book of the law of Moses, and presents it in great form to Josiah. The king on reading it, and finding the heavy curses denounced against a wicked people, is greatly afflicted. He consults the prophetess Huldah, from whom he receives some consolation. He calls an assembly of the people, and after causing the Book of the law of God to be distinctly read to them, makes a covenant for the strict observance of every thing contained in it. He makes a farther reformation in his kingdom, and keeps the Passover with great strictness and solemnity. He engages the Egyptian army under Necho, and being slain, is universally lamented by the people.

CHAPTER XI.—FROM PAGE 250, TO PAGE 264.

Jehoahaz succeeds to the government of Judah after the death of his father Josiah. He is deposed by Pharaoh Necho, king of Egypt, who puts him in prison, where he continues the remainder of his life. He is succeeded by his brother Eliakim, whose name, by order of Necho, is changed to that of Jehoiakim. He reigns wickedly, and puts to death the prophet Urijah. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, invades Jerusalem, conquers it, and takes Jehoiakim prisoner, but afterwards releases him. Jeremiah upbraids the people with their disobedience, and prophecies their captivity, for which he is obliged to conceal himself to avoid their resentment. He employs one Baruch to write a copy of his prophecies, and read them to the people in the temple. Jehoiakim, being informed of this, sends for the book, and, after hearing a part of it read, destroys it, ordering the prophet and his amanuensis to be taken into custody. Jehoiakim refuses any longer to pay tribute to Nebuchadnezzar, who, in consequence thereof, sends an army against him. He is taken prisoner by the Babylonians, and put to death. He is succeeded by his son Jehoiachin, who, after a reign of only three months, is taken prisoner by Nebuchadnezzar, and sent to Babylon. Zedekiah is made king of Judah in his stead. He is advised by Jeremiah to live in obedience to the king of Babylon, for which the prophet is grossly abused. Jeremiah prophecies the destruction of Babylon, and Ezekiel that of Jerusalem.

CHAPTER XII.—FROM PAGE 264, TO PAGE 275.

The Siege of Bethulia, with the singular exploit of Judith a widow lady, who cut off the head of Holofernes, a general of the Assyrian army, and thereby prevented the city from falling into the hands of the enemy.

CHAPTER XIII.—FROM PAGE 275, TO PAGE 285.

Zedekiah, king of Judah, enters into a confederacy with the king of Egypt. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Assyria, lays siege to Jerusalem. Ezekiel and Jeremiah, prophesy the destruction of that city. Zedekiah, fearful of Nebuchadnezzar's army, pretends to reform, and proclaims a Manumission, or free liberty, to all Hebrew servants; but, on the king of Egypt coming to his assistance, he withdraws the proclamation. The prophet Jeremiah is thrown into a dismal dungeon, from whence he is released at the instigation of Ebed-Melech, one of the king's eunuchs. Jeremiah's last interview with Zedekiah. The city of Jerusalem taken by Nebuchadnezzar. Zedekiah's sons put to death before his face, himself made a prisoner, and, after having his eyes put out, sent in chains to Babylon. The city of Jerusalem, together with the temple, plundered and burnt. Many of the nobility and priests put to death, by order of Nebuchadnezzar. The prophet Jeremiah is treated with great respect, being permitted either to stay in his own country, or go with the rest of the captives to Babylon. He chuses the former, and receives letters of recommendation from Nebuchadnezzar to Gedaliah, who is appointed governor over the people left in the country of Judah.

BOOK IV.

CHAPTER I.—FROM PAGE 285, TO PAGE 293.

Gedaliah, who was appointed governor of Judea after the reduction of Jerusalem and the captivity of the people, takes up his residence at Mizpah. Ishmael, the son of Nethaniah, a person of royal descent, forms a conspiracy against him, and kills him. He likewise puts to death the greater part of the Jews and Chaldeans in Mizpah, together with fourscore Israelites, who were going into the town to offer presents to Gedaliah. Being fearful that his cruelty will be revenged by the captains of Judah, he flies for security into the land of the Ammonites. The Jews who are left after his escape retreat, contrary to the advice of Jeremiah, whom they take with them into Egypt. They fall into idolatry, for which the

prophet severely reproveth them. Account of the farther prophecies both of Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

CHAPTER II.—FROM PAGE 293, TO PAGE 304.

Daniel, with his three friends, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, are distinguished for their proficiency in learning at Babylon, whither they were carried captives by Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel tells the king his dream, and the interpretation thereof. His three friends are thrown into a fiery furnace for refusing to worship an image set up by Nebuchadnezzar. They are miraculously delivered without receiving the least hurt, and afterwards advanced to great honors by the king. Nebuchadnezzar conquers Egypt, and destroys many of the Jews who had retreated thither after the murder of Gedaliah, governor of Judah, making the rest his captives, and carrying them to Babylon. He has another remarkable dream, which is interpreted by Daniel. He grows proud and arrogant, for which he undergoes a most remarkable punishment, being deprived of his senses, and reduced to the condition of a beast. He continues in this state for seven years, at the expiration of which he is restored to his senses, and reinstated in his former majesty. His death and character.

CHAPTER III.—FROM PAGE 304, TO PAGE 314.

Evil-Merodach, on the death of his father Nebuchadnezzar, succeeds him on the throne of Babylon. He is murdered by his relations, and succeeded by Neriglissar, who is conquered and slain by the king of the Medes. Laborosoarchad ascends the throne, and is murdered by his subjects, after reigning only nine months. He is succeeded by Belshazzar, supposed to be the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar. Cyrus, king of Persia, lays siege to Babylon. Belshazzar makes a great feast for his courtiers, and orders the vessels of gold and silver, which had belonged to the temple, to be used on the occasion. During the entertainment, there suddenly appears a hand writing on the wall, at which the king is greatly alarmed, and sending for Daniel, he gives an explanation of it, the substance of which portends the king's destruction. Cyrus takes the city of Babylon by surprize, and, in the confusion, Belshazzar is slain. He is succeeded by Darius, who manifests a particular esteem for Daniel. The people being jealous of the growing power of Daniel, form a conspiracy against his life. He is thrown into a den of lions, from whence he is miraculously delivered by the interposition of Providence. The Story of Susanna and the Elders.

CHAPTER IV.—FROM PAGE 314, TO PAGE 324.

The time of the Jews' captivity being nearly expired, Daniel makes intercession with God for their restoration. He has a vision, in which he is assured that the Jews shall not only be delivered from their temporal, but likewise their spiritual, captivity. After the destruction of Babylon, Cyrus is made sole monarch over the Persian empire. He publishes a decree, in which he gives free liberty to the Jews to return to Jerusalem, and rebuild the city and temple. They accordingly depart, and having entered Judea, disperse themselves over the country, agreeable to their tribes and families. They rebuild the several cities that had been destroyed previous to their captivity. They all assemble at Jerusalem, and there celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. The people contribute largely towards defraying the expenses of rebuilding the temple. The foundation of the temple laid. The Samaritans offer their assistance, which being refused, they devise means for obstructing the execution of the work. Death and character of Daniel.

CHAPTER V.—FROM PAGE 324, TO PAGE 337.

Cambyses, succeeds Cyrus on the throne of Persia, and, in consequence of an application from the Samaritans, interrupts the building of the temple of Jerusalem. He dies, and is succeeded by Artaxerxes. To this prince the Samaritans present a remonstrance against the going on of the work at Jerusalem. He listens to it, and puts an entire stop to the building of the temple. Artaxerxes dies, and is succeeded by Darius, who not only confirms the decree of Cyrus for rebuilding the temple, but likewise grants one of his own for that purpose. The finishing and dedication of the temple. The Samaritans refuse to pay tribute-money to the temple, but are compelled to do it by order of Darius. Darius dies, and is succeeded by his son Xerxes, who confirms to the Jews all the privileges that had been granted them by his father Darius. He falls into contempt with his subjects, and is murdered by the captain of his guards. He is succeeded by his son Artaxerxes Longimanus, on whose accession great rejoicings are held for 180 days. He makes a grand entertainment on the occasion, during which he sends for his queen Vashti to shew her to the princes. She refuses to come, for which disobedience he divorces her, and marries a beautiful Hebrew woman named Hadassah, afterwards called Esther.

CHAPTER VI.—FROM PAGE 337, TO PAGE 358.

Mordecai, one of the king's officers, and a relation to queen Esther, discovers a plot formed against the life of Ahasuerus, upon which the conspirators are taken and hanged. Haman, the king's favorite, taking a disgust against Mordecai, endeavors to seek his life. Haman gives a false representation to the king of the Jews in his dominions, upon which he issues a decree, ordering them all, on a certain day, to be put to death. Mordecai, bewailing the fate of himself and countrymen, applies to Esther, beseeching her to intercede with the king in their behalf. The queen, at first, refuses to engage in the business, but, at length, promises to do it, though at the hazard of her life. She invites the king, with his favorite Haman, to a banquet. Haman shews farther indignation against Mordecai, and causes a gibbet to be erected fifty cubits high, intending that he should be hung on it the next morning. Haman is compelled to perform a servile office to Mordecai. The king and Haman attending at a second banquet made by the queen, she addresses herself to the king in favor of the Jews. The king, understanding the infamy of Haman, orders him to be hanged on the gallows he had erected for the execution of Mordecai, after which he promotes the latter to great honors. The decree which Ahasuerus made against the Jews is rendered ineffectual by the issuing out another, whereby the Jews are allowed to defend themselves against those who should attempt to injure them on the day appointed for the execution of the first decree. In consequence of this the Jews kill great numbers of their enemies, and hang the ten sons of Haman upon the same gallows on which their father suffered. The Jews, in memory of this deliverance, keep a feast, which they call the Feast of Lots.

CHAPTER VII.—FROM PAGE 358, TO PAGE 408.

Of the Person and Book of Job.

CHAPTER VIII.—FROM PAGE 408, TO PAGE 431.

Ezra, a priest and scribe, obtains permission of Ahasuerus, king of Persia, to go, with some other Jews, to Jerusalem, and at the same time receives a commission, empowering him to make a reformation both in church and state. He accordingly goes thither, and begins to execute his commission by making a reform among the people relative to their marriages. Nehemiah, cup-bearer to Ahasuerus, is sent to Jerusalem, with a commission to rebuild the walls of the city. He is interrupted in the execution of his commission by Sanballat,

an officer of the Moabites, and Tobiah, a popular man among the Ammonites, notwithstanding which he carries on the work with great success. Sanballat and Tobiah, concert several schemes for taking away Nehemiah's life, all of which prove abortive. Nehemiah, having finished the walls of Jerusalem, after surmounting a variety of difficulties, gives directions for the good order and government of the city. He suppresses the practice of usury among the people, and after obliging them to sign a covenant with him strictly to adhere to the laws of Moses, returns to the Persian court. During Nehemiah's absence from Jerusalem, the people relapse into their former corruptions, owing to the mismanagement of Eliashib the high-priest. Nehemiah goes again to Jerusalem, and turns Tobiah, the Ammonite, out of an apartment in the temple, which had been assigned him by Eliashib. He orders the payment of the tithes, and makes the people pay a more strict attention to the Sabbath. He dissolves unlawful marriages. His death.

CHAPTER IX.—FROM PAGE 431, TO PAGE 439.

Containing some account of the Book of Psalms; the Proverbs of Solomon; the Book of Ecclesiastes; and the Song of Solomon.

CHAPTER X.—FROM PAGE 439, TO PAGE 462.

Darius Nothus succeeds Ahasuerus on the throne of Persia, but, dying soon, is succeeded by his son Arsaces. Cyrus, the younger brother of Arsaces, attempts to obtain the sovereignty, and for that purpose raises a very considerable army, but is defeated by Arsaces and himself slain. Johanan, the high-priest among the Jews, kills his brother Joshua in the temple, for which he is fined, and a tax levied upon the Jews on the occasion. Arsaces dies, and is succeeded on the throne of Persia by his son Ochus, who is poisoned by an Egyptian eunuch called Bagoas. He likewise poisons the son of Ochus, and places another of the same name on the throne, whom he intends destroying in like manner, but the king, discovering his design, obliges him to drink it himself, which puts a period to his life. Ochus assumes the name of Darius Codomannus, in whose reign a circumstance occurs very prejudicial to the Jews. Darius is defeated by Alexander, king of Macedon, commonly called Alexander the Great, and his mother, wife and children, made prisoners. Alexander lays siege to Tyre, and takes it by storm. He marches against Jerusalem, but is prevented from attacking it by means of Juddas the high-

priest, to whom he pays reverence, and worships the name of the Lord. Darius is assassinated by one of his generals named Bessus, which circumstance occasions a dissolution of the Persian monarchy. Alexander dies, and the Grecian empire is divided among several of his generals, one of whom, named Ptolemy, takes Jerusalem by stratagem, and making the Jews captives, carries great numbers of them into Egypt, and other parts. He treats them with distinguished kindness, as does also his successor Ptolemy Philadelphus, who not only gives them their liberty, but likewise many rich presents for the use of the temple. Ptolemy Philadelphus dies, and is succeeded by his son Euergetes. Onias, the high-priest, refuses to pay the annual tribute to Euergetes, who sends an ambassador to him with threats, in case he continues to refuse the payment. Onias remains obstinate, but, by the prudent management of his nephew Joseph, the king's rage is appeased, and the threatened consequences happily subverted. Ptolemy Philopater succeeds his father Euergetes, but soon dying with intemperance, is succeeded by his son Ptolemy Epiphanes. The Jews submit themselves to Antiochus, king of Asia, who grants them many singular privileges. The perfidy and death of Hyrcanus.

CHAPTER XI.—FROM PAGE 462, TO PAGE 487.

Seleucus Philopater succeeds Antiochus the Great on the throne of Syria. He at first favors the Jews, but afterwards sends his treasurer Heliodorus to plunder the temple at Jerusalem, who is prevented from executing his design by the sudden appearance of a number of angels. Heliodorus poisons Seleucus in hopes of gaining the crown, but is disappointed by means of Eumenes, king of Pergamus, and his brother, who place Antiochus Epiphanes (son of Antiochus the Great) on the Syrian throne. Great bribery and corruption among the Jewish high-priests. Antiochus exercises singular cruelty on the Jews, profanes the temple, and plunders it. Apollonius, the general of Antiochus's forces, is sent to besiege Jerusalem, which he takes, and massacres great numbers of the inhabitants. Antiochus compels the Jews to renounce their religion, in endeavoring to avoid which many are cruelly put to death. The melancholy story of Solomona and her seven sons, who, after suffering the most severe torments, at length die martyrs for the sake of their religion.

CHAPTER XII.—FROM PAGE 487, TO PAGE 510.

The Jews are relieved from their persecutions under Antiochus Epiphanes by means of Mattathias, the chief of the family of the Maccabees. He puts to death an apostate Jew, kills Apelles, one of Antiochus's generals, and takes up arms in defence of his religion and country. He destroys all idolatrous worship, and, after having acted the parts of a good man, and a brave general, dies, and appoints Judas Maccabeus his successor. Judas engages Apollonius, the governor of Samaria, whom he defeats and kills. He overcomes the army of Antiochus in several engagements, makes himself master of the whole country of Judea, and purifies the temple of Jerusalem. Antiochus Epiphanes dies a miserable death, and is succeeded by his son Antiochus Eupater, who, being a minor, is kept for some time under the tuition of Lysias, the chief governor of Syria. Judas Maccabeus, and his brother Jonathan, perform many singular acts of valor. Their brother Joseph is defeated by the Syrians at Jamnia. Judas makes a peace with Antiochus Eupater, which being soon broke by the people of Joppa, Judas revenges the insult. He engages Timotheus, whom he vanquishes, and returns in triumph to Jerusalem. He lays siege to the fortress of Aera, foils Antiochus's army, and his brother Eleazar kills the royal elephant. Judas is besieged in Jerusalem, but is happily relieved by an unexpected incident. The miserable death of Menelaus the high-priest of Jerusalem.

