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THE
P O E T R Y
OF
THE P E N T A T E U C H.

BY THE
REV. JOHN HOBART CAUNTER, B.D.

INCUMBENT MINISTER OF ST. PAUL'S CHAPEL, ST. MARYLEBONE;
AND DOMESTIC CHAPLAIN TO THE EARL OF THANET.

IN
TWO VOLUMES.

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THE
POETRY OF THE PENTATEUCH.

CHAPTER I.

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Character of Balaam's prophecies. Essentially different in style from the writings of Moses. Lowth's observations on the style of the Hebrew writings generally. Internal evidence of the prophecies attributed to Balaam being the compositions of that prophet. Probability that Balaam committed his prophecies to writing. Reasons assigned. The subjects of the Hebrew writings a natural cause of their sublimity.

FROM the view which has been already taken of Balaam's prophecies, I think it must be clear that they are among the finest specimens of poetry with which the Bible—that sacred depository of the sublimest efforts of human intellect, operating under the immediate influence of inspiration—is so abundantly enriched. These sacred poems, rising, as they do, out of the comparative darkness of a primitive age, when literature may be truly said to have had neither name nor exist-

ence, have been declared, by the unanimous voice of commentators, to exhibit the highest attributes by which such compositions are distinguished. They are pre-eminently elevated, filling the mind with the most delightful impressions, and the ear with the most exquisite harmony, which latter quality is even retained in the simple but energetic translation authorized by the Church of England. They differ, however, essentially in their poetical character from any similar writings of Moses ; and this circumstance is the strongest internal evidence of their authenticity. It shows them to have been emanations from a mind of totally different temperament, though, poetically considered, of similar organization, at least so far as it was under the direct influence of inspiration. The manner pursued in them is manifestly not identical with that of the Hebrew lawgiver ; and this gives them a high specific value, as original compositions of a primitive age, which has left to posterity few records of its rude but masculine genius. The style in these noble productions has more refinement than that of Moses, but less vigour—more eloquence, but less simplicity—more grace, but less grandeur—more variety, but less condensation. It is more artificial and redundant, but less comprehensive and exact—more glowingly picturesque, but less severely graphic ; and yet it possesses, in a very high degree, some of the qualities by which the style of Moses is especially distinguished. There are passages in which the condensation is singularly close ; and I know of nothing, even among

the Hebrew writings, which at times exhibits such a fund of meaning in so few words.

The following remarks of Bishop Lowth, with reference to Hebrew poetry generally,* will, I think, in most particulars, especially apply to the prophecies of Balaam:—"The great excellence of the poetic dialect,' as Aristotle most judiciously remarks, 'consists in perspicuity without meanness. Familiar terms and words in common use form a clear and perspicuous, but frequently a low style; unusual or foreign expressions give it an air of grandeur, but frequently render it obscure.'† Of those which he calls foreign, the principal force lies in the metaphor; but 'as the temperate and reasonable use of this figure enlivens a composition, so the frequent introduction of metaphors obscures it, and if they very commonly occur, it will be little better than an enigma.'‡ If the Hebrew poets be examined by the rules and precepts of this great philosopher and critic, it will readily be allowed that they have assiduously attended to the sublimity of their compositions by the abundance and splendour of their figures, though it may be doubted whether they might not have been more temperate in the use of them. For in those poems, at least, in which something of uncommon grandeur and sublimity is aimed at, there predominates a perpetual, I had almost said, a continued use of the metaphor, sometimes daringly introduced, sometimes rushing in with imminent hazard of propriety.

* See Sixth Prælection. † Poet. cap. 22. ‡ Ib.

A metaphor thus licentiously intruded is frequently continued to an immoderate extent. The orientals are attached to this style of composition; and many flights which our ears, too fastidious, perhaps, in these respects, will scarcely bear, must be allowed to the general freedom and boldness of these writers. But if we examine the sacred poems, and consider, at the same time, that a great degree of obscurity must result from the total oblivion in which many sources of their imagery must be involved; of which many examples may be found in the Song of Solomon, as well as in other parts of the sacred writings; we shall, I think, find cause to wonder, that in writings of so great antiquity, and in such an unlimited use of figurative expression, there should yet appear so much purity and perspicuity, both in sentiment and language. In order to explore the real cause of this remarkable fact, and to explain more accurately the genius of the parabolic style, I shall premise a few observations concerning the use of the metaphor in Hebrew poetry, which I trust will be sufficiently clear to those who peruse them with attention, and which I think, in general, are founded in truth.

“ In the first place, the Hebrew poets frequently make use of imagery borrowed from common life, and from objects well known and familiar. On this the perspicuity of figurative language will be found, in a great measure, to depend; for a principal use of metaphors is to illustrate the subject by a tacit comparison; but if, instead of familiar ideas, we introduce such as are new

and not perfectly understood ; if we endeavour to demonstrate what is plain by what is occult, instead of making a subject clearer, we render it more perplexed and difficult. To obviate this inconvenience, we must take care, not only to avoid the violent and too frequent use of metaphors, but also not to introduce such as are obscure and but slightly related. From these causes, and especially from the latter, arises the difficulty of the Latin satirist, Persius ; and but for the uncommon accuracy of the sacred poets in this respect, we should now be scarcely able to comprehend a single word of their productions.

“In the next place, the Hebrews not only deduce their metaphors from familiar or well-known objects, but preserve one constant track and manner in the use and accommodation of them to their subject. The parabolic, indeed, may be accounted a peculiar style, in which things moral, political, and divine, are marked and represented by comparisons implied or expressed, and adopted from sensible objects. As in common and plain language, therefore, certain words serve for signs of certain ideas, so, for the most part, in the parabolic style, certain natural images serve to illustrate certain ideas more abstruse and refined. This assertion, indeed, is not to be understood absolutely without exception ; but thus far, at least, we may affirm, that the sacred poets, in illustrating the same subject, make a much more constant use of the same imagery than other poets are accustomed to do ; and this practice has a surprising effect in preserving perspicuity.

“ I must observe, in the last place, that the Hebrews employ more freely and more daringly that imagery, in particular, which is borrowed from the most obvious and familiar objects, and the figurative effect of which is established and defined by general and constant use. This, as it renders a composition clear and luminous, even where there is the greatest danger of obscurity, so it shelters effectually the sacred poets from the imputation of exuberance, harshness, or bombast.”

I have already remarked upon the obvious difference of style betwixt the prophecies of Balaam and the poetical writings of Moses, which will at once ratify the conclusion that the former, no less than the latter, were really the productions of him whose name they bear, not only from their specific and inherent claims to originality, so distinctly marked upon the very face of them, but because they are quoted by the Hebrew lawgiver as the compositions of Balaam; declared to have been uttered by him; and it is unquestionable that they exhibit the strongest internal evidence of not having been produced by the writer of the Pentateuch. How Moses became acquainted with the precise words used by Balaam on the several occasions spoken of in the book of Numbers, may seem a question of some perplexity; but I think that at least a reasonable conjecture may be offered. It is more than probable that Balaam himself wrote an account of the extraordinary transactions recorded of him in the sacred history. It is scarcely to be imagined, that a man possessing such high

intellectual endowments as the son of Bosor evidently did, should have permitted so many remarkable transactions to have lapsed into the gulph of oblivion, being, as they were, distinguished by such miraculous circumstances, and maintaining, as he did, so prominent a position in a series of events expressly directed to their consummation by God, in opposition to the most powerful efforts of man. We know that they who are conscious of possessing extraordinary mental accomplishments, naturally feel a disposition to perpetuate the memory of them by some recorded evidence. The desire of perpetuity is a feeling so prevalent in the human heart, that we can scarcely find an exception to its moving the desire of signalizing, by some memento of its power, the higher operations of the intellect. We can, therefore, hardly suppose that the gifted bard of Mesopotamia should have been a great exception to the rule, and not have noted down events in his own extraordinary life, so calculated to fix upon him an enduring reputation. His prophecies bear with them all the marks of well-considered compositions.

To me, then, upon the whole, it appears a natural conclusion, and no less natural than satisfactory, that Balaam committed his prophecies to writing after he had delivered them, and not only so, but that he composed them according to the strictest rules of the poetic art then practised among the Hebrew races.

When Balaam was slain among the princes of Midian, who were attacked by Moses the

same year in which those notable predictions were delivered on the mountains of Moab, these exquisite productions probably fell into the hands of the conqueror, who, under the infallible guidance of inspiration, introduced them into his history, knowing, without the possibility of mistake, for his mind was directed by the spirit of omniscience, that they contained the oracles of divine revelation, and consequently of unerring truth. Thus may we at once reasonably account for the accuracy with which these prophetic songs appear in the Mosaic Scriptures, exhibiting, as they do, certain characteristics of style so widely different from those peculiar to the inspired author of the Pentateuch. The same may be said of the blessings pronounced by Isaac and Jacob, respectively, upon their sons: these were no doubt preserved by the posterities of those patriarchs, and are recorded by the sacred historian in the very terms employed by the persons who delivered them, since they bear full as strong marks of identical originality as the compositions of Balaam.

We can scarcely be surprised that the subjects which inspired the primitive bards, who figure so prominently in the Hebrew Scriptures, should have produced the richest fruits of the poetic art, allied, as poetry frequently is, with the most exalted aspirations of the human mind, and adapted, as it especially is, for the conservation of remarkable events. God and his attributes are the themes which those bards exclusively celebrate—the grandest that language can be employed to adorn, and to the

supreme dignity of which poetry so essentially belongs, as being the most elevated form of expressing lofty sentiments and sublime thoughts. The noblest epics which have elicited the poetic genius of different countries, have been based upon subjects either immediately connected with, or remotely allied to, religion. The authors of the Mahabarat and of the Ramayana, two Hindoo epics of high celebrity and extraordinary magnitude, extending each to several hundred thousand lines, of the Iliad and Odessy, of the Inferno, of the Jerusalem delivered, of Paradise Lost, and of Paradise Regained, have, either directly or consequentially, all made the Deity and his illimitable perfections the subjects of their immortal song. "Poetry," says Herder, "without God is a showy Papyrus without moisture; every system of morals without him is a mere parasitical plant. It makes a flowery display in fine words, and sends forth its branches hither and thither; nay, it insinuates itself into every weak spot and crevice of the human soul; but the sun rises, and it vanishes."

Sacred themes have inspired the greatest poets of almost every age, and of every civilized country where the true God has been adored, the doctrine of redemption promulgated, and the divine attributes avowed. Those sublime themes have called forth the highest intellectual endowments of man, of whom an old poet* has thus quaintly but eloquently sung—

* Sir John Davies, born 1570.

Oh, what is man, great Maker of mankind,
That thou to him so great respect dost bear ;
That thou adorn'st him with so bright a mind,
Mak'st him a king, and even an angel's peer.

Oh, what a lively life, what heavenly power,
What spreading virtue, what a sparkling fire,
How great, how plentiful, how rich a dower,
Dost thou within this dying flesh inspire !

Thou leav'st thy print in other works of thine,
But thy whole image thou in man hast writ ;
There cannot be a creature more divine,
Except, like thee, it should be infinite.

But it exceeds man's thought to think how high
God hath raised man, since God a man became ;
The angels do admire this mystery,
But are astonished when they view the same.

Nor hath he given these blessings for a day,
Nor made them on the body's life depend ;
The soul, though made in time, survives for aye,
And though it hath beginning, sees no end.

CHAPTER II.

Balaam's fourth prophecy.

LET us now consider Balaam's fourth prediction, certainly inferior to none of the preceding. So soon as this unholy man had delivered his third prophetic announcement, Balak was so highly exasperated that he ordered him to quit his dominions without delay. The king of Moab obviously thought that the bard of Pethor had, of his own free will, blessed the Israelites, and that he might have cursed them had he been so inclined, though Balaam had forewarned him not to expect that he should deliver anything but what the Deity really communicated and desired should be promulgated. Balak supposed that the true God of Israel was as easy to be propitiated by animal sacrifices, as the imaginary deities of Moab, and that, therefore, his disappointment arose solely from the treachery of the man whom he had engaged, at great cost of treasure, to execrate the dreaded enemies of Canaan, not from the latter's inability to act against the divine determination. Stung by disappointment, and without allowing himself time to reflect, or most

likely too impetuous to submit to the sober discipline of reflection, he at once declares his intention of withholding from his avaricious mercenary the rewards promised to his success in bringing destruction upon Israel, assuring him that it was his gracious intention to have elevated him to the highest civil dignities, but declaring with an impious taunt that the Lord whom he professed to serve, instead of rewarding him for his worship and service, had “kept him back from honour.” This was a covert impeachment of the divine justice, and went to insinuate the impolicy of serving a divinity who requited his worshippers with loss.

The severity of Balak’s disappointment is, perhaps, more forcibly exhibited by this sarcastic impiety than by the exasperation under which he manifestly laboured at the moment when he so peremptorily commanded Balaam to leave his dominions. So vehement is this indignation, that he does not merely in general terms order the prophet to quit his presence and depart at once from his territories but passionately bids him commence his journey with the least possible delay—“therefore now flee thou to thy place”—‘use the utmost expedition in quitting my territories, and withdrawing thyself from the presence of one who would have rewarded thee with kingly munificence.’ Balaam in his reply reminds the enraged sovereign, in the most emphatic terms, what he had declared upon first reaching his capital, that he had no power to act contrary to that omnipotent will which he was about to consult. “Spake I not also to

thy messengers which thou sentest unto me, saying, if Balak would give me his house-full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the commandment of the Lord, to do either good or bad of mine own mind; but what the Lord saith that will I speak?" 'I have, therefore, used no deception in this matter, but faithfully delivered the revelations made to me.'

The king of Moab appears to have been somewhat appeased by this just expostulation, as he listens without further interruption to the oracle which the prophet had yet to deliver. This was the most important of the whole series. We shall observe, that this remarkable prophecy was not distinguished, as those previously uttered had been, by the erection of seven altars, and the sacrifice of as many burnt-offerings. Balaam does not attempt to solemnize this prediction by the introduction of those rites of heathen superstition, which in three successive instances had turned out to be so utterly inefficacious in realizing the end for which they were ostensibly offered. There is a becoming solemnity in the manner of introducing this annunciation of Israel's political supremacy and spiritual distinction. Although now all hope of reward was cut off from the avaricious prophet, ere he departs from Moab a disappointed and degraded man, he once more proclaims the divine benediction upon that favoured people whom the Deity had determined to bless. Having engaged the king's attention, he said unto him—"Come, therefore, and I will advertise thee what this people shall

do unto thy people in the latter days. And he took up his parable and said :—

Balaam, the son of Beor, hath said,
 And the man whose eyes are open hath said ;
 He hath said, which heard the words of God,
 And knew the knowledge of the Most High,
 Which saw the vision of the Almighty,
 Falling into a trance, but having his eyes open :
 I shall see him, but not now ;
 I shall behold him, but not nigh :
 There shall come a Star out of Jacob,
 And a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel,
 And shall smite the corners of Moab,
 And destroy all the children of Sheth :
 And Edom shall be a possession,
 Seir also shall be a possession for his enemies,
 And Israel shall do valiantly :
 Out of Jacob shall come He that shall have dominion,
 And shall destroy him that remaineth of the city."

It will be seen that in the exordiums of all these prophetic songs, Balaam ingeniously contrives, by indirect implication, to let the king of Moab know, while the prophetic rapture was upon him, that the person whom the monarch had employed to curse Israel, was under the immediate control of the true God ; he, consequently, leads his royal patron to the inference not to be evaded, that, though endowed with the gift of prophecy, he was, nevertheless, unable to predict according to the dictates of any other will than that of Him who supplied the oracle. These communications are made to the Moabitish monarch each time in nearly equivalent terms, though these terms are differently arranged, except in the two latter prophecies, in which they almost exactly correspond. In the first and second, the corres-

pondency lies more in the spirit than in the expressions of the exordium; in the third and fourth, the expressions are nearly similar. These predictions are, in fact, classed in pairs. Thus the four inspired poems exhibit a general parallelism of construction and arrangement analogous to the specific and local parallelism of the clauses in which this artifice, peculiar to Hebrew poetry, occurs.

By the repetitions adopted by the prophetic bard, in the several introductions to his predictions, he each time confirms the truth of his previous statements; and yet, so little credulous was the heathen king, by whom he was employed to devote a whole people to destruction, that he either did not, or would not, believe what was thus solemnly delivered.

It appears hardly credible to a really pious mind, that Balaam, favoured as he was with a direct revelation from God himself, and seeing, as he must have done, how his own wicked designs were contravened by the infallible will of Him from whom no secrets are hid, and who is everlastingly dispensing good, should still have entertained designs directly obnoxious to his wrath, notwithstanding his many and great mercies. How grievously must the conscience of such a man have troubled him. He never could have said—he certainly never could have felt, that repose of mind, expressed by a somewhat quaint, but nevertheless eloquent writer, of a much later age.*

* Sir Thomas Browne.

“I thank God that (with joy I mention it) I was never afraid of hell, nor never grew pale at the description of that place: I have so fixed my contemplations on heaven, that I have almost forgot the idea of hell, and am afraid rather to lose the joys of the one, than endure the misery of the other—to be deprived of them is a perfect hell, and needs, methinks, no addition to complete our afflictions: that terrible term hath never detained me from sin, nor do I owe any good action to the name thereof. I fear God, yet am not afraid of him: his mercies make me ashamed of my sins, before his judgments afraid thereof. These are the forced and secondary methods of his wisdom, which he useth but as the last remedy and upon provocation; a course rather to deter the wicked, than incite the virtuous to his worship. I can hardly think there was ever any scared into heaven. They go the fairest way to heaven that would serve God without a hell. Other mercenaries that crouch unto him, in fear of hell, though they term themselves the servants, are indeed but the slaves of the Almighty.

“And, to be true, and speak my soul, when I survey the occurrences of my life, and call into account the finger of God, I can perceive nothing but an abyss and mass of mercies, either in general to mankind, or in particular to myself, and whether out of the prejudice of my affection, or an inverting and partial conceit of his mercies, I know not; but those which others term crosses, afflictions, judgments, misfortunes, to me, who inquire further into them than their

visible effects, they both appear, and in event have ever proved, the secret and dissembled favours of his affection. It is a singular piece of wisdom to apprehend truly and without passion the works of God; and so well to distinguish his justice and his mercy, as not to miscall those noble attributes: yet it is likewise an honest piece of logic, so to dispute and argue the proceedings of God, as to distinguish even his judgments into mercies. For God is merciful unto all, because better to the worst than the best deserve; and to say he punisheth none in this world, though it be a paradox, is no absurdity. To one that hath committed murder, if the judge should only ordain a fine, it were a madness to call this a punishment, and to repine at the sentence rather than admire the clemency of the judge. Thus, our offences being mortal, and deserving not only death, but damnation, if the goodness of God be content to traverse and pass them over with a loss, misfortune, or disease, what frenzy were it to term this a punishment, rather than an extremity of mercy, and to groan under the rod of his judgments, rather than admire the sceptre of his mercies! Therefore, to adore, honour, and admire him, is a debt of gratitude due from the obligation of our nature, states, and conditions; and with these thoughts, he that knows them best will not deny that I adore him. That I obtain heaven, and the bliss thereof, is accidental, and not the intended work of my devotion; it being a felicity I can neither think to deserve, nor scarce in modesty to expect. For those

two ends of us all, either as rewards or punishments, are mercifully ordained and disproportionably disposed unto our actions; the one being so far beyond our deserts, the other so infinitely below our demerits.”*

* *Religio Medici*, part. 1.

CHAPTER III.

Balaam's fourth prophecy, continued.

HAVING already explained the introduction of the third prophecy, which precisely, or very nearly so, corresponds with that of the one now to be examined, I shall proceed to the consideration of the prediction itself.

I shall see him, but not now :
I shall behold him, but not nigh.

In these two hemistichs, the parallelisms are not only strikingly obvious, but they are likewise singularly elegant and comprehensive, being at once gradational and constructive; a union of these forms not unfrequently occurring in the metrical portions of the Hebrew Scriptures. It will be seen that in the couplet just quoted the subjects of the verses are expressed in nearly equivalent terms, nevertheless that the parallel phrases in the last verse rise into greater force of meaning than those employed in the first; the immediate reference being to a more exalted object, the language consequently assumes a tone of greater elevation. Besides this, the structure of each hemistich, the euphonious collocation of the words, their relative position and emphasis, the elocutive

pauses, are all so exactly similar, that the two forms of parallelism just mentioned are clearly exhibited in this example. The entire of what follows, moreover, has so musical a rhythm that the ear is gratified with the most delicate harmony, no less than the mind, with its powerful meaning, if it be delivered with common attention to the laws of elocution, without which the best attuned verse will be scarcely more agreeable than the most barbarous. The whole passage, consisting of three pair of lines, is exquisitely tender and graceful, the gradational parallelism being maintained in the four latter hemistichs, which reach the highest elevation both of thought and of expression.

In the distich with which this prophecy opens, reference is manifestly made to the Messiah, though the passage is enveloped in such obscurity as materially tends to perplex the interpretation. A vast deal of learning has been displayed to little purpose in the endeavour to reduce to a certainty what, after all, must be left to conjecture, though, as it appears to me, some very satisfactory guesses have been made as to the meaning of this unusually intractable passage. According to the judgment of many eminent commentators, Christ is the person alluded to in the first and two following couplets of this prophecy, after the introduction. But the difficulty arises, as we shall presently see, from the circumstance of actions being ascribed to the person spoken of, which do not at all agree with the character of the Messiah.

In order to surmount this perplexing obstacle to such an interpretation, David is supposed to be the person primarily meant, and the Saviour secondarily; the one being the type of the other, the antitype being thus exhibited in the type; and the arguments in favour of this view of the question, seem very reasonable and conclusive. David was a temporal, Christ a spiritual conqueror. David established the possession of the earthly Canaan, Christ of the heavenly. David had perpetual conflicts with the powers and principalities of earth; Christ with the principalities and powers of hell. David therefore is the person primarily referred to by Balaam, and in him was involved the reference to that more distinguished character who was prefigured by him. Balaam probably did not understand the full meaning of his own prophecy, and alluding, as he did, to a personage who was to take our nature upon him in the fulness of time, a fact of which he was doubtless very imperfectly informed, he was unable to offer an elucidation of the mystery contained in the oracle which his own lips had delivered; those embarrassments, therefore, in which he has involved it, were, it may be presumed, the natural effect of his want of perception of its scope and tendency; for had he entertained a definite comprehension of these, we may reasonably infer that he would not have involved it in so much obscurity. So closely connected, however, was the advent of a Messiah with the settlement of the Israelites in Palestine, the theatre of his miracles and of that

great act of expiation by which he restored man to the privileges forfeited by transgression, that a prophetic reference to this advent was inseparable, so to speak, from the temporal settlement of the Jews,—mixed up as the promise to Abraham in Canaan was, with that promise made to Adam in paradise,—the latter being co-essential with, though preparatory to, the former.

The possession of Canaan by the seed of Abraham was necessary to the fulfilment of that dispensation of mercy, of which an assurance was given in the very curse that immediately followed transgression; consequently the bard of Pethor, in predicting this, was led by a natural and necessary sequence, to that coming upon earth of the Lord of glory, which was the assurance, that in addition to the earthly inheritance to be so shortly secured by the posterity of the righteous patriarch, a brighter inheritance, “incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away,” was reserved for them in heaven, and likewise for those who become the seed of Abraham, and therefore the Israel of God, by exercising that faith, bearing the imperishable record of good works, which was accounted to Abraham for righteousness.

I shall see him, but not now.

Here the future is used for the present, the original being,

I see him, but not now.

The whole couplet may be thus expounded :
‘ Looking through the darkness shrouding the

remote future, which I am permitted to investigate within certain limitations, I see him who is to exist afar off in the coming time. He is not actually before me, but appears to me in a vision, and though I do not observe him with my bodily, I do with my prophetic eye, which carries my perception into the distant future, where things to be realized at a remote period become actually present.

I shall behold him, but not nigh.

Although he is at a distance with respect to time, I nevertheless behold him as distinctly in that solemn vision of the future, which the spirit of inspiration raises before me, as if he were now really in my presence. Listen, therefore, to what I have to communicate respecting him, for he is one who shall be greatly signalized in Canaan:—

There shall come a star out of Jacob,
And a sceptre shall rise out of Israel,
And shall smite the comers of Moab,
And destroy all the children of Sheth;

that is, ‘an illustrious prince shall issue from the seed of Jacob; from him, in the fulness of time, shall proceed one still more illustrious, the former of whom shall destroy the Moabites, overcoming their territory from one corner to the other; that is, entirely subduing it, and exterminating the people; the latter, though of a pacific character, who will appear upon earth as the herald of glad tidings, not of sanguinary struggles for supremacy, shall, nevertheless,

obtain universal dominion. His will be an empire that shall extend beyond the boundaries of time, and be exercised both upon earth and in heaven.'

Balaam, as it appears to me, unconsciously prophesied of Him promised to the first transgressor—of Him who was to "bruise the serpent's head," and restore man to his forfeited inheritance;—a promise altogether unknown to the gentile, but cherished with anxious recollection by the more pious Hebrew.

Saviour of mankind, man, Emanuel,
 Who, sinless, died for sin; who vanquished hell;
 The first fruits of the grave; whose life did give
 Light to our darkness; in whose death we live:—
 Oh, strengthen thou my faith, convert my will
 That mine may thine obey; protect me still,
 So that the latter death may not devour
 My soul, sealed with thy seal. So, in the hour
 When thou whose body sanctified this tomb,
 Unjustly judged, a glorious judge shall come
 To judge the world with justice; by that sign
 I may be known and entertained for thine.

(George Sandys.)

This is the sceptre which the seer of Mesopotamia unwittingly predicted should rise out of Israel, and *overcome*, not destroy, as our version has it, "all the children of Seth." Seth being that son of Adam from whom all the human race, since the deluge, have sprung, the posterity of Cain and Abel having perished in that universal submersion of the world, the "children of Seth" will, by consequence, signify all mankind. The primitive righteousness in which the patriarch lived to whom allusion is here made, is universally allowed. "An apocryphal book, called the lesser Genesis, pre-

tends," says Calmet, "that when Seth was forty years old, he was rapt up into heaven by angels, and was there told of the crime the watchers or angels should commit; and the coming of the Saviour into the world; of which events he informed his parents, Adam and Eve. That the posterity of Seth continued for a thousand years after the creation of the world in the country just above Eden, where they lived in profound peace and quiet; but the devil being envious of their happiness and innocence, seduced them by the charms and beauty of the daughters of men; or, as Moses says, 'the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose.' Lastly, the same book tells us, that Seth, at the age of one hundred and ninety-one years, took to wife his own sister, called Azura. Epiphanius calls her Orea, and Irenæus, or rather the Gnostics in Irenæus, call her Norea."*

That Balaam was not a stranger to the common expectation of a Messiah among the seed of Jacob—of one who was to execute the covenant of reconciliation between an offended Creator and his erring creatures—might be presumed from several circumstances; though I am inclined to believe he really was ignorant of it, notwithstanding that he might have been generally acquainted with the God of Abraham, that patriarch having, it is probable, disseminated the principles of the pure primitive religion through Mesopotamia during his residence in Haran, a

* Iren. lib. i. cap. 34, ex Gnost. Syncell. Chronic. p. 10, ex parva Genesi.

town of that country in which his father Terah died. The prophet of Pethor who, in his early life, was no doubt a worshipper of the true God, as I have before stated, must have consequently been familiar with the patriarchal worship, and most probably exercised it piously in the early years of his life until his evil passions obtained the mastery over his spiritual appetite, and, being learned in the abstruse doctrines of the eastern sages, he adopted the more profitable profession of sorcery, because it brought him into that sort of reputation which furnished the means of gratifying his constitutional avarice. The temptations of gain were too mighty for him, and he threw off the restraint of a spiritual service, for the wages of a temporal; practising those arts which, in almost all ages of the world, have been productive of great gain. That as he was acquainted with the only wise God, he therefore might be presumed to have received some intimation of the expectations entertained by the Jews of a promised deliverer, though not a fact beyond controversy, is, nevertheless, it must be allowed, supported by strong presumptive evidence. He certainly was no stranger to the Jehovah of the Israelites, though he bowed to idols during the latter years of his life. The fact of his *knowledge*, at least, of the true God, may be considered as fully established from the circumstance recorded in the history of this remarkable personage, that on the first appearance of Balak's messengers. he sought the Lord, in order to ascertain if he might be permitted to undertake the journey. Here, then, was at once an

acknowledgment of a ruling and controlling Providence, and that the idols of the heathen were not the objects of Balaam's serious worship, even though he had offered to them external homage, a fact of which there is not only no proof, but much improbability. The idol to which he bowed was mammon—his avarice was his ruin; for this he bartered the salvation of his immortal soul. His knowledge of the patriarchal expectation grounded upon the terms of the condemnatory sentence pronounced upon our first parents and their tempter in Paradise, might, with sufficient show of reason, be presumed, from the very tenor of the prophecy now under our consideration.

Of the perplexed passage already quoted, a Jewish commentator of high repute, Rabbi Moses ben Maimon, gives the following paraphrase:—

I shall see him (David), but not now :
 I shall behold him (the Messiah), but not nigh.
 A star (David) shall come out of Jacob
 And a sceptre (the Messiah) shall rise out of Israel,
 And (David) shall smite the corners of Moab,
 And (the Messiah) destroy all the children of Seth.

If this be the true reading, which I am disposed to think it is, we cannot fail to be struck with the artificial construction of the whole passage, it being obviously made subservient to certain given laws of Hebrew verse, which are traceable throughout a large portion of the Bible. The alternations of reference to the agents pointed at under the symbols of a star and sceptre, are manifestly employed for the sake of maintaining the parallel clauses in their due harmony and

proportion; they at the same time preserve that unity of relation kept up throughout this section of the prophecy, which it would have lost if given according to the ordinary rules of metrical distribution. As the verses are now arranged, though the perfect consecution of sense is broken, the gradational parallelisms are beautifully observed, which was, no doubt, a specific object of the poet, who has, throughout these prophetic songs, shown an extreme attention to those artifices which are peculiar, and may be said to be exclusively confined to Hebrew poetry. It must, however, be admitted, that in these exquisite compositions of "the son of Bosor," beauty of structure is occasionally obtained at the sacrifice of perspicuity; nevertheless we are to bear in mind, that such an arrangement was probably perfectly intelligible to the Hebrews, for there can be no doubt that what is now read in their scriptures, though frequently obscure to us, presented no obscurity to them.

Unless those alternations of reference to David and to Christ are allowed to exist in the couplets alluded to,—a form of metrical construction, of which many examples, if not precisely similar, at least bearing the strongest affinity, might be produced from the poetical portions of the sacred writings,—the passage will be so encumbered with difficulties as to be scarcely intelligible. So interpreted, it is at once consistent and clear. We can neither apply it exclusively to David nor to Christ, because circumstances are predicted which, in the

issue, were only realized by the one, and likewise circumstances which were only consummated by the other. Issues are foretold altogether inapplicable to both conjointly, but belonging to each individually. David was a commander of armies and a temporal conqueror; the Messiah was a leader of pacific hosts, a vanquisher of passions, of prejudices, of sin, but not of armed warriors. David's was the sovereignty secured by conquest; Christ's a dominion of peace. David maintained a political, Christ a spiritual empire. The one presided over the temporal, the other over the eternal interests of men. The terms of the prophecy, therefore, will, as I have said, exclusively apply to neither, but disjunctively to both. The one was a type of the other, and thus the type and the antitype are not confounded, but so blended together in this prophetic song, that the association may be perfectly recognized, at the same time that the peculiar distinctions are plainly maintained. That in which they agreed is the more clearly manifested by that in which they differed, and the superiority of the spiritual over the temporal dominion is exhibited with a surprising delicacy of touch and singular force of contrast. The chief obscurity lies in the references being rather indicated than expressed, these being made obvious only by the results evidently belonging to them.

Supposing Balaam to have been acquainted with the general expectation of a Messiah by the Israelites, his notions of him would, it is reasonable to conclude, have been vague and

undefined; but if he were really not acquainted with this expectation, he merely delivered the divine oracle as communicated to him, without being aware of the object to whom it referred, and the want of perspicuity in this prediction gives great show of probability to such a presumption. Balaam might have been aware that he was proclaiming the future domination of some remarkable personage, by whom one more remarkable was adumbrated, without being informed of the specific characters of either more definitely than he has declared in the prophecy.

The images employed in it will be found singularly striking and discriminative.

There shall come a star out of Jacob.

A star denotes splendour. David was the wealthiest king of his time. He lived in great earthly pomp, and his court was distinguished for its magnificence. He wielded the mighty elements of temporal power. Although surpassed in all these particulars by his immediate successor Solomon, he might justly be compared to a star as diffusing the glories of his extensive jurisdiction over the nations whom he had subjugated. His alliance was courted and his influence dreaded. He was pre-eminently a star among the sovereigns of his time, and his reign certainly comprised the most important era of the political economy of the Jews, as he first established that complete supremacy in the land of Canaan, which the sovereigns who succeeded him maintained with various interrup-

tions and forfeitures, until the degraded remnant of the stock of Abraham fell under the galling dominion of Rome, which abridged their national independence, and accelerated their final dispersion. The star is an object eminently brilliant, and fixed in an elevation at once sublime and imposing; but clouds may pass over it and mar its brightness, storms may eclipse its splendour, and the very mists which exhale from the earth may shroud its lustre. The career of David, bright as it appeared, was overclouded with disaster. The splendours of his court were dimmed by domestic troubles and political vexations. The glories of his reign were overcast by the sad influence of his own unchaste passions. Sorrows overtook him, cares crowded upon him, rebellion disturbed his repose, and filial disobedience opened the flood-gates of sorrow upon his heart; nevertheless his reign was the most illustrious in the Hebrew annals. His conduct before he ascended the throne of Israel was that of a great and good man. Towards Saul, during that sovereign's life, he was forbearing and magnanimous, and at his death, treated his memory with honour instead of ignomy, ordering the Amalekite to be put to death who confessed that he had dispatched the Lord's anointed.* He avenged the death of Ishbosheth, Saul's son, who had disputed his claim to the throne, and having caused the murderers of that rash prince to be slain, expelled the Jebusites from Jerusalem, and took up his

* 2 Sam. i. 2—15.

abode in that sacred city. He defeated the Philistines, redeemed the ark of which they had obtained possession, brought it to Jerusalem, and deposited it "in his place, in the midst of the tabernacle that David had pitched for it."* Having freed his country from the Philistines, he subdued the Moabites, treating them with a severity for which we are neither perfectly acquainted with the motives, nor indeed with the circumstances of his persecution of this unhappy people. He subjugated all Syria, made an expedition as far as the Euphrates, and conquered the eastern Edomites in the valley of Salt. He next routed the Ammonites with great slaughter, finally took Rabbah, their capital, which he plundered, and subjected the inhabitants to the most grievous punishments. "He brought forth the people that were therein, and put them under saws and under harrows of iron, and under axes of iron, and made them pass through the brick-kiln; and thus did he unto all the cities of the children of Ammon."† These signal successes finally established him upon the throne of Israel, which he transmitted to his successor with an extent of dominion that well entitled him to be distinguished among the eminent of the earth.

The greatness of a sovereign is very much shown in the talents of those who are subordinate to him, and David had the wisdom to select men of the greatest abilities, who contributed mainly to the almost uninterrupted success of his arms.

* 2 Sam. vi. 17.

† Ibid. xii. 31.

Joab was one of the most eminent generals of his age, though he was, at the same time, imperious, cruel, and remorseless.

David was unquestionably a person of great capacity and courage, which were both strongly exhibited in the early part of his career. His devotion to God, though interrupted by occasional impulses of licentious passion, was sincere and ardent, and perhaps there is nowhere to be found a more beautiful example of resignation to the divine will than that afforded by this celebrated king upon the death of the child borne to him by the wife of Uriah the Hittite, whom he had so criminally seduced, and whose husband he had still more criminally abandoned to destruction, in order that he might espouse his guilty relict. The character of David, take it altogether, politically, morally, and spiritually, stands prominent among those of the most renowned Hebrew worthies. He was appropriately compared to a star by the prophet of Pethor, under all the circumstances of his chequered, but, nevertheless, illustrious life; and the comparison will bear a still closer application, when we consider that he went down to the grave in a mature old age, in the full hope of that joyful immortality to which he shall rise again at the last day, and, taking his place among the everlasting luminaries in heaven, shine in undimmed brightness there, through the endless duration of eternity.

It was from the race of David, we shall remember, that Scripture intimates the Messiah should spring. He is called emphatically "the

seed of David," because David was the first distinguished king of the Hebrews, and of the tribe of Judah, from which the Emmanuel was to proceed. Saul, having degraded himself by his multiplied follies, the crown was transferred to a more worthy object, who rendered himself illustrious by leading to victory the armies of the living God, and by signally chastising his enemies, the blasphemers of his sacred name.

Daniel has employed the figure of a star to denote persons raised to supreme authority. "And it waxed great, even to the host of heaven, and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground and stamped upon them."* St. John uses the same figure in the Revelations:† "The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches."

It is perfectly clear that this metaphor, as employed by the bard of Mesopotamia, applies literally to David, although it may, in a secondary sense, have an ulterior reference to the Messiah, the external splendour of David's reign being more appropriately adumbrated under the figure of a luminous orb, than the temporal homeliness of the Saviour's. The one was attended, through the greater part of his public life, with all the "pomp and circumstance" of worldly royalty; the other, throughout the entire period of his, "had not where to lay his head." The one wore the diadem of earthly sovereigns, glittering with gems, and displaying the rarest ingenuity of the craftsman; the other bore on his lacerated and bleeding

* Daniel viii. 10.

† Chapter i. 20.

brows a crown of thorns, less gorgeous, indeed, but far more glorious than the brightest coronet that ever encircled the temples of the greatest among mortal potentates.

Bishop Patrick supposes the star to refer exclusively to the Messiah, and in this supposition he is followed by a host of English divines, who have confided on the authority of his great name, without taking the trouble of examining for themselves. I cannot, however, think his reasoning conclusive. It is undoubtedly true, that the celebrated ancient Jewish paraphrasts, Onkelos and Jonathan, interpret it of the Messiah, but it is no less true that most of the modern Jewish commentators, among whom were some extremely learned men, interpret it of David, who reduced the Moabites to subjection, thus literally fulfilling this part of Balaam's notable prophecy.

"Some have thought," says Calmet,* "that Balaam foretold the appearance of that star which shone at the time of our Saviour's birth, and guided the magi into Judæa, to worship the person whose birth it declared. But this star did not come out of Jacob; and what is said there cannot apply to this star, which plainly points at a ruler, a conqueror, a great prince, in a word, the Messiah. The Jews were so well convinced of this, at the time of Jesus Christ and afterwards, that the famous impostor, *Bar-chaliba*, caused himself to be called *Bar-cocheba*, "son of the star," pretending to be the

* Dictionary of the Bible, art. Stars.

Messiah, which involved the Jews of Palestine in a revolt that completed the ruin of their unfortunate nation."

It will be observed that Calmet here says, the star "points at a ruler, a conqueror, a great prince, in a word, the Messiah." Now it is certain that David was *literally* the three first, and the Saviour only *metaphorically* so; Calmet, therefore, leaps to the conclusion without bearing in mind that what he here applies exclusively to Christ, will, with equal propriety and pertinency, apply to David, nay, with more truth and coherency, as I think I shall be able shortly to make appear.

"Christ was a star and a sceptre," says the Dean of Rochester, "that is, a God and a king, a divine and human being, whose kingdom of glory was in the heavens, and whose kingdom of grace was to be established upon earth. He was the illuminating God that came out of Jacob, and shed his glorious light upon the world, that mankind might see their way to heaven. He was the great king of holiness and truth that arose out of Israel, and has ruled, is ruling, and will rule in the strength and majesty of God."* Not only is this a straining of the prophecy beyond what is warranted by the context, but, to my apprehension, the poetic beauty of the passage is greatly abridged, if not entirely neutralized by this ingenious but inconclusive exposition. By applying both comparisons to the Messiah, they paralyze each other. Balaam

* Exposition of the Counsel of God, for the Redemption of the World, by the Very Rev. Robert Stevens, D.D. pp. 101, 102.

was too great a poet thus to multiply comparisons to the destruction of the symmetry of his composition, the beauty of which is now preserved by the nice discrimination shown in the application of the two metaphors, a star and a sceptre, individually to David and to Christ.

Dr. Stevens has given a mere exposition in general terms, partially contradicted by some of the details of the prediction, which cannot, under any ordinary laws of interpretation, be rendered directly and solely applicable to Christ. If both the metaphors of a star and sceptre refer to him, it will at once be evident that the clause immediately following must likewise refer to him; but by the universal consent of commentators, the destruction of the Moabites, as foretold in this prophecy, is to be referred solely and distinctly to David's conquest of that people, for "he smote Moab, and measured them with a line, casting them down to the ground; even with two lines measured he to put to death, and with one full line to keep alive; and so the Moabites became David's servants."* This eminent king and warrior, than whom none was more distinguished in the exterminating wars of that period, fulfilled the prophecy to the very letter, ravaging the country mentioned in it from the boundaries to the centre, and reducing the inhabitants to a state of the most servile dependence. It can, however, nowhere be said of the Messiah, either figuratively or literally, that he "smote the

* 2 Samuel viii. 2.

corners of Moab," for in his time the Moabites were, so to speak, an extinguished race—the memorial of them had departed; they had no longer any eminence among the kingdoms of the world: and, moreover, he came upon earth not to destroy, but to fulfil; not to smite, but to heal. His was not a dispensation of vindictive justice, but of beneficent mercy;—not a warfare of sanguinary conflicts with hostile arms, the dreadful issues of which are calamities, sufferings, and death; but a warfare for the establishment of universal peace in that world where "there is joy for evermore."

The sceptre, as applied to our blessed Redeemer, denotes simply dominion, without any of its ordinary concomitants of external splendour, the pompous appendages of royalty, and those gorgeous displays witnessed at the courts of temporal princes, by which their dignity is presumed to be supported, their political influence strengthened, and their popularity maintained. The sceptre shadows forth no such extraneous magnificence. It is merely an emblem of abstract supremacy, without its worldly accompaniments of power, or those outward exhibitions of regal pageantry, held to be indispensable for the due maintenance of sovereign dignity; and is therefore applied to the spiritual domination of the Saviour with no less discrimination than propriety. It is an extremely appropriate emblem of spiritual predominancy. A star, on the contrary, being an inferior luminary, is not an appropriate emblem of deity, who is alone and above all

things, and consequently degraded by any comparison which conveys the idea of something of its own kind superior to itself. A star is one of millions, equal in brightness and beauty, and is exceeded in all its attributes by celestial luminaries of a higher order. A sceptre, on the other hand, is nothing more than the outward and visible sign of dominion, and, in its mere abstract signification, as employed by the prophet, denotes simply power—that power which accompanies supremacy. The sceptre is a specific emblem, the star a general one; the latter justly applicable to David, who had his equals, the former much more justly applicable to Christ, who had no equal; ‘the one, while sovereign of Israel, living in vast splendour, but whose authority was, nevertheless, circumscribed; the other, though passing his life amid poverty and destitution, nevertheless exercising a dominion which shall finally pervade the earth, and be eternal in that world where “there shall be time no longer.”’

The metaphors employed by Balaam in the clauses we are now examining, and so frequently adopted by the Hebrew poets, were, no doubt, as Bishop Warburton has observed, taken from the hieroglyphics, which appear to have considerably influenced the language of eastern poetry, and very naturally so, when we remember the long term of Egyptian bondage from which Moses finally delivered his persecuted brethren.

Although accompanied with less external splendour, the sovereignty of Christ was to be

more complete and universal than that of David. "He was to have dominion from sea to sea," but this dominion was to be accompanied with no personal pomp. His sovereignty was to be over the hearts of men. It was to be a spiritual empire, not a social or political tyranny. This was fully realized during the Saviour's sojourn upon earth. His empire formed an interesting contrast with the domination exercised by the sovereigns of the world, some among whom, at the period of his incarnation, enjoyed a supremacy which extended over almost every region of the then discovered globe. How feeble, nevertheless, to the supremacy of him "whose wisdom ruleth over all."

"Of all the prophecies," says Stackhouse,* "which God, at this time, delivered from the mouth of Balaam, there is one of a more eminent and peculiar nature.

I shall see him, but not now;
I shall behold him, but not nigh:
There shall come a star out of Jacob,
And a sceptre shall rise out of Israel,
And shall smite the corners of Moab,
And destroy all the children of Sheth.

"All opinions agree in this, that Balaam here speaks of a king and conqueror; and, perhaps, in calling him a star, he accommodates himself to the long-established notion, that the appearance of comets denoted either the exaltation or destruction of kingdoms: but the great question is, of what king or conqueror it is that he speaks.

* History of the Bible, folio edit. 1742, vol. i. p. 502.

“Some* have applied the prophecy entirely to David, the most illustrious of the Jewish monarchs, who extended his conquests far and wide. Others† have applied it entirely to the Messiah, supposing that the metaphor of a star comports better with him and his celestial origin than with David, and that the main strokes of the prophecy resemble a heavenly more than an earthly conqueror. The matter, however, may be compromised, if we will but allow of a learned man’s observation,‡ namely, that the most remarkable prophecies in the Old Testament usually bear a two-fold sense ; one relating to the times before the Messiah, and the other either fulfilled in the person of the Messiah, or in the members of his body, the church, of which kind we may justly esteem the preceding prophecy. For though its primary aspect may be towards David, yet, whoever considers it attentively shall perceive that its ideas are too full to extend no farther, and must, therefore, in a secondary and more exalted sense, refer us to Christ, ‘whose kingdom ruleth over all,’ and ‘to whom all things are put in subjection under his feet.’

“In this sense, the generality of Jews, as well as Christians, have all along understood it, and it is no improbable conjecture, whatever some may think of it, that by the strength of this prophecy, kept upon record among the oriental archives, the magi of that country, at our

* See Le Clerc’s Commentary on Numbers xxiv.

† Patrick’s Com. *ibid.*

‡ Grotius on Matt. i. 22.

Saviour's nativity, were directed to Jerusalem, and inquired, 'Where is he that is born king of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.'* And upon a further supposition, that these very magi were descended from Balaam in a direct line, he might then, with propriety enough, pronounce of the Messiah, 'I shall see him,' that is, see him in my posterity, 'but not now; I shall behold him, but not nigh.' The supposition contained in the last paragraph of this quotation, was first broached by Origen in his exposition of the text; but his ingenious conjecture has been ably set aside by the learned Witsius.†

If we receive the interpretation of this difficult passage suggested by Moses ben Maimon, with whose view of it I implicitly concur, the corresponding clauses will stand thus:—

I shall see him (David) but not now!
 There shall come a star out of Jacob,
 And shall smite the corners of Moab.
 I shall behold him (the Messiah) but not nigh!
 And a sceptre shall rise out of Israel,
 And destroy (overcome) all the children of Sheth.

It should be clearly understood by the reader that similar dislocations of the sense by which its consecutive order is interrupted, is a thing of not unfrequent occurrence in the Hebrew scriptures. I might show many instances of this, but shall, however, content myself by producing one example from the great evangelical poet and prophet Isaiah,‡ in which the sense is

* Matt. ii, 2. † Miscel. Sacra. lib. i. cap. 16. ‡ Chap. xxxiv. 6.

intercepted for the sake of the metrical construction, which is that of alternate parallelism, as will be perceived by the extract, and presenting one of the most elegant specimens of artificial accommodation to the laws of versification to be found in the sacred writings, pregnant as they are with similar evidences of poetic expediency.

The sword of the Lord is filled with blood,
It is made fat with fatness,
And with the blood of lambs and goats,
With the fat of the kidneys of rams.

The corresponding or parallel lines are here the first and third, the second and fourth, which are consecutive as to the sense, as the following reading, in which this remains unbroken, will show:—

The sword of the Lord is filled with blood,
And with the blood of lambs and goats:
It is made fat with fatness,
With the fat of the kidneys of rams.

In the passage under discussion from Balaam's fourth prophecy there is a similar hyperbaton; the sense being, as I conceive, dislocated for the sake of maintaining the gradational parallelism, and what reader of taste will deny that as they now stand, the couplets are much more poetically disposed, than when reduced to two triplets, according to the direct succession of the corresponding parts. To the Hebrews, familiar of course with this mode of composition, the import was no less obvious than if the rela-

tive terms of the sentence had followed in their more natural order : we must not, therefore, impute obscurity to writers whose productions were, no doubt, perfectly intelligible to those for whose express information those productions were primarily designed.

In that portion of Balaam's fourth prediction upon which I have felt myself compelled to occupy the reader's attention at considerable length, the attributes of each person there spoken of are beautifully defined. David shall crush the political power of the Moabites, Christ shall finally overcome the religious prejudices of all mankind. The one event has passed; the other is to come. The one has been completely, the other only partially realized. The spiritual ruler was beheld, "but not nigh," for the ultimate effects of his dominion remain to be accomplished, though they are hourly progressing towards their consummation.

Herder's rendering is as follows:—

I see him, but he is not yet,
I behold him, but he is yet afar off.
There cometh a star out of Jacob,
A sceptre riseth out of Israel,
Which smiteth the corners of Moab,
And destroyeth his high fortresses.

The learned German observes* upon his own version of the last hemistich—"the fortresses are obviously in parallelism with the 'corners of Moab.' If the one signifies the fortified sum-

* Spirit of Hebrew Poetry, vol. ii. p. 177.

mits and angles of the mountains, then the other signifies the towers built on these, or the men who garrison them. ‘The children of Seth’ is a term that could have no meaning here, as distinguishing the family descent.” To this it may be replied, that there was no direct intention of distinguishing the family descent; at least, nothing appears in the words of the prophet to warrant such a conclusion. The phrase is merely used, as I apprehend, in a poetical sense, by way of synecdoche, to denote the whole human race—that Christ would subdue unto himself the entire posterity of Seth, from whose descendant, Noah, the whole world was peopled after the deluge, and that they should finally become “one fold under one shepherd, Jesus Christ the righteous.”

There is, as may be readily perceived by a close attention to the artificial but exquisitely refined texture of the passage, a remarkable significancy in thus referring to that good son of Adam, the forefather of the existing human race; placing their progenitor in prominent conjunction with David, at once the type and progenitor of Christ,—not, indeed, by direct generation, but by legal adoption,—and with his illustrious descendant, our blessed Redeemer, to whom all mankind are indebted for their birth to spiritual life, as to Seth for their birth to temporal life. Herder evidently did not perceive the alternations of reference in the parallelisms, which he considered to be simply gradational, not observing the hyperbaton, purposely

employed to render them so, each referring, as he concluded, to the same object. He accordingly, after Le Clerc, applies the whole passage to David, thus stunting, and thereby abridging it of its beautiful proportions. Besides having the large majority of commentators against him, his version gives so restricted an interpretation to the whole passage, as to deprive it of much of that copiousness of signification combined with uncommon condensation of language, which the exposition previously proposed would exhibit, and which is a distinguished characteristic, though certainly in a less degree than in some other examples that might be quoted from the early Hebrew poets, of these highly finished compositions.

I know not where I could refer for brighter specimens of poetical excellence than to the prophetic poems of Balaam, which, although they fall behind some of the prophecies of Isaiah, and some of the grander portions of Job, in that prodigious elevation of thought and exquisite adaptation of phrase for which those productions are so celebrated, nevertheless, frequently display the richest emanations of genius. It is hardly possible to conceive finer specimens of primitive poetry.

He shall smite the corners of Moab,

is to me an image at once felicitously expressive and eminently picturesque. It flashes upon the understanding in a flood of light. In the

corners of an edifice lies the chief strength ; if, therefore, these are destroyed, the whole structure must fall. Thus we cannot fail to perceive how eloquently significative the phrase is of that complete subjugation of the Moabites, by David, which subsequently ensued. What animation and force of colouring it imparts to a simple idea !

CHAPTER IV.

Balaam's fourth prophecy, continued.

HAVING mentioned David as the adopted progenitor as well as the type of Christ, I break off here to give the view of Dr. Macknight upon this subject, taken from his observations upon the genealogies of Joseph and Mary, as given by St. Matthew and St. Luke. "But," says that acute and laborious writer, "to show this opinion all the favour possible, namely, that Joseph had a legal as well as natural father, who were brothers by their mother, let us allow that Joseph had a legal father, whose pedigree is likewise given, and that, by the custom of the Jews, he might be called the son of his legal father. It will necessarily follow, on these suppositions, that we are altogether uncertain whether our Lord's mother, from whom alone he sprang, was a daughter of David, and consequently cannot prove that he had any other relation to David than that his mother was married to one of the descendants of that prince. Let the reader judge whether this fully comes up to the import of the passages of scripture, which tell us he was 'made of the seed of David' (Rom. i. 3), and that, 'according to the flesh, he was raised of the fruit of his loins' (Acts ii. 30). Upon the whole, this

important difficulty may be removed more happily, by supposing that Matthew gives Joseph's pedigree, and Luke, Mary's. For the words of the latter evangelist, properly pointed and translated, run thus : ' And Jesus himself, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed, the son of Joseph) the son of Heli.' He was the son of Joseph by common report, but in reality the son of Heli by his mother, who was Heli's daughter. We have a parallel example (Gen. xxxvi. 2), where Aholibamah's pedigree is thus deduced: *Aholibamah, the daughter of Anah, the daughter of Zibeon*. For since it appears, from verses 24, 25, that Anah was the son, not the daughter, of Zibeon, it is undeniable that Moses calls Aholibamah the daughter both of Anah and of Zibeon, as Luke calls Jesus the son both of Joseph and of Heli. And as Aholibamah is properly called the daughter of Zibeon, because she was his grand-daughter, so Jesus is fitly called the son of Heli, because he was his grand-son. In the mean time, the common pointing and construction of the passage may be retained consistently with the opinion I am contending for, because, though the words, *son of Heli*, should be referred to Joseph, they may imply no more but that Joseph was Heli's son-in-law, his son by marriage with his daughter Mary. The ancient Jews and Christians understood this passage in the one or other of these senses ; for the Talmudists commonly call Mary by the name of Heli's daughter.

“That Matthew should have deduced our

Lord's pedigree by enumerating the ancestors of Joseph, who was not his real father, may be accounted for on the supposition that he wrote posterior to Luke, who has given his real pedigree, and that he intended to remove the scruples of those who knew that the Messiah was to be the heir of David's crown. In this view, though Joseph was not Christ's real father, it was directly for the evangelist's purpose to derive his pedigree from David, and show that he was the eldest surviving branch of the posterity of that prince; because, this point established, it was well enough understood that Joseph, by marrying our Lord's mother, after he knew that she was with child of him, adopted him for his son, and raised him both to the dignity and privileges of David's heir. Accordingly, the genealogy is concluded in terms which imply this: 'Jacob begat Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus.' Joseph is not called the father of Jesus, but the husband of his mother Mary. To conclude; the privileges following this adoption will appear to be more essentially connected with it, if, as is probable, Joseph never had any child. For thus, the regal line of David's descendants by Solomon failing in Joseph, his rights were properly transferred to Jesus, his adopted son, who indeed was of the same family, though by another branch. Matthew, therefore, has deduced our Lord's political and royal pedigree with a view to prove his title to the kingdom of Israel, by virtue of the rights which he acquired through his adoption; whereas Luke explains his natural descent in the several successions

of those from whom he derived his human nature.”*

“It was necessary,” says Dr. Whitby,† “that the genealogy of Jesus should be deduced from Joseph, because it was so generally received by the Jews, that Jesus was the son of the carpenter (Matthew xiii. 55), the son of Joseph (John vi. 42), so that if Joseph had not been acknowledged to have been of the tribe of Judah and of the family of David, they would not have failed to have objected, this as a just prejudice against all Christ’s pretences to have been the Messiah; wherefore, the divine wisdom was pleased to direct this apostle to remove that stumbling-block. Secondly, it was also necessary, by reason of that received rule among the Jews, that *the family of the mother is not called a family*; and it was not fit that St. Matthew, in this matter, should recede from the constant rules and customs of that nation, the families being always preserved and continued in the males of Israel, and all their genealogies being reckoned from them.

“But still it may be said, that Joseph, being not the natural, but the reputed father of the holy Jesus, this cannot be sufficient to prove that Jesus came from the loins of David (Acts ii. 30), or was the fruit of his body according to the promise (Psalm cxxxii. 11). To this it is answered, that Joseph and Mary were of the same tribe and family, and therefore, by giving us the genealogy of Joseph, the apostle did, at

* Macknight’s Harmony of the Gospels, vol. i. pp. 294, 295.

† See Whitby’s Commentary, note on Matt. i. 16.

the same time, give us the genealogy of Mary, and consequently of Jesus the son of Mary, and show that he was of the seed of David. Hence, several of the ancients, inquiring why Jesus was conceived of a virgin espoused and not of one perfectly at liberty, say this was done that by the family of Joseph the family of Mary might be shown; and this will be made highly probable from scripture and from history. For although those words (Luke i. 27), ‘the angel Gabriel was sent to a virgin, espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin’s name was Mary,’ do not of themselves prove this, because it may be Joseph, and not the virgin, who is said to be of the house of David, yet may they also be translated thus: ‘to a virgin of the house of David, espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, and the virgin’s name was Mary.’ And this translation is confirmed from the following words of the angel to her: ‘thou shalt conceive in thy womb and bear a son, and the Lord shall give him the throne of his father David;’ she, therefore, who conceived this son must be of the house of David; and this is further proved from the taxation mentioned (Luke ii. 3—5). Whence it appears, first, that all went to be taxed, women as well as men, for ‘Joseph with his espoused wife, Mary, went up to be taxed,’ which troublesome journey she who was so near the time of her travail would not have taken, had it not been necessary. Secondly, that every one, men and women, went up to their own city to be taxed (verse 3). Thirdly, that Joseph went up to

Bethlehem, the city of David, to be taxed, 'because he was of the house and lineage of David' (verse 4). Since, therefore, Mary went up to Bethlehem with him to be taxed, she must have done it for the same reason, because she was of the same house and lineage. Add to this, that Domitian, having given out a command to destroy all that could be found of the house or family of David, some, descended from Judas, the brother of our Lord, were brought before him, as being of the family of David, which they freely owned."

I have been the more anxious to show, from such two high authorities upon all scriptural questions, the connexion, by descent, of Christ with David, as it gives singular pertinency to the prophecy of Balaam, which we have been examining. These persons are placed in significant juxtaposition, which, to my apprehension, is made clear in the Targum of Onkelos, although he applied the passage exclusively of the Messiah. It is beautifully and perspicuously rendered by that learned rabbi:—

I shall see him, but not now,
 I shall behold him, but he is not near.
 When a king shall rise from the house of Jacob,
 And the Messiah be anointed from the house of Israel,
 He shall slay the princes of Moab,
 And rule over all the children of men.

I think this upon the whole a very satisfactory exposition. The three next hemistichs of the prophecy obviously refer to David's conquests and the final settlement of the Israelites in Canaan.

And Edom shall be a possession,
 Seir also shall be a possession for his enemies ;
 And Israel shall do valiantly.

Under the name of Seir was comprehended the mountainous parts of Edom. It shall be a possession for the enemies of Moab, who are the Israelites. The meaning will consequently be, that those persons whom Balak had sent for Balaam to execrate, or rather their posterity, should not only obtain possession of the plains of Edom, but that even the mountains and strongholds should fall under their dominion ; in short, that there should not remain a single spot of land unsubdued.

The subjugation of the Edomites, who were a valiant and hardy race, descendants of Esau, was accomplished by David, thus fulfilling Isaac's prophecy, that Jacob should rule over Esau.* The Edomites were a warlike community, and though frequently reduced to subjection, as frequently threw off the yoke and re-asserted their independence. Amaziah, king of Judah, upon one occasion slew a thousand of their troops, and obliged ten thousand more to leap from a rock,† on which it is supposed stood Petra, a city of Arabia Petræa, and the capital of South Edom. This signal victory, nevertheless, though for the moment decisive, did not produce their permanent subjugation. It is certain, however, that David made himself master of their territory, as Balaam had predicted. “And he put garri- sons in Edom, *throughout all Edom* put he

* Genesis xxvii. 29.

† 2 Chron. xxv. 11, 12.

garrisons, and all they of Edom became David's servants; and the Lord preserved David whithersoever he went."*

It will be observed how dexterously the temporal conquests of David and the spiritual supremacy of Christ are brought together in this prophecy, which embraces at once the political economy of the Jews under their most eminent sovereign and lawgiver, the son of Jesse, and the religious economy introduced into the world by the still more eminent son of the virgin, both proceeding from that stock upon whom the mercenary prophet of Pethor had been commanded by his patron, the king of Moab, to imprecate an exterminating malediction.

And Israel shall do valiantly.

This part of the divine oracle was fully realized during the reign of Saul's immediate successor, who, as I have already said, vanquished the Edomites in several desperate engagements, finally making himself master of their whole territory. The bard continues to dwell with pertinacious eloquence upon the valour and prospective achievements of those sons of Abraham who were heirs of Canaan by promise, which must have been to Balak a bitter thing to hear, since he virtually commanded his own punishment in ordering a curse to be pronounced upon those whom God had determined to bless. Thus it is that wicked men frequently precipitate their own misery by the very means which

* 2 Samuel viii. 14.

they make use of to evade it. Balak, by seeking to bring a curse upon the Israelites, brought a blessing upon them, with disappointment and consequent anguish to himself. He in fact prepared the lash for his own scourging.

Out of Jacob shall come He that shall have dominion,
And shall destroy him that remaineth in the city.

This was literally fulfilled in David, who not only defeated the Edomites in open warfare, but likewise obtained possession of their cities, some of which he probably razed to the ground, and destroyed the inhabitants on account of some signal provocation. The first line of the concluding couplet, I should say, refers to Christ as well as to David, and so the Psalmist himself appears to have understood it, as he clearly had it in his mind in the seventy-second Psalm, in which he describes the universal dominion of the Messiah:—

He shall have dominion from sea to sea,
And from the river unto the ends of the earth.*

The majority of commentators are, I think, agreed in applying this prediction both to David and to Christ, the one being a type of the other; the type, therefore, and antitype are poetically approximated in this prophetic song, which, notwithstanding the occasional difficulties of interpretation it presents, undoubtedly contains some of the finest poetry of which language has been made the animated and effective vehicle. Those

* Verse 8.

beauties stand out in bold and prominent relief; and such persons as delight in the graces of verbal construction and of idiom peculiar to Hebrew poetry, to evolve which has employed the brightest minds of every Christian country, will find them far more abundant in the depositories of revelation than in any work which the uninspired wit of man has combined to produce. I shall conclude this chapter with Herder's version of this prophecy, in which I think he has, in some parts, greatly warped the sense.

Thus saith Balaam, the son of Beor,
 Thus saith the man whose eyes are open,
 He saith who heareth the words of God,
 And knoweth the knowledge of the Most High,
 Who saw the vision of the Almighty,
 Falling down, but with eyes open.

I see him, but he is not yet,
 I behold him, but he is yet afar off.
 There cometh a star out of Jacob,
 A sceptre riseth out of Israel,
 Which smiteth the corners of Moab,
 And destroyeth his high fortresses.
 Edom is his possession,
 The hostile Seir his conquest,
 Israel doth valiant deeds,
 Out of Jacob cometh a conqueror,
 And wasteth the remnant of the habitations.

CHAPTER V.

Balaam's prophecy on Amalek.

HAVING now considered the four principal prophecies of Balaam, we come to the prediction pronounced upon Amalek. It is confined to a single couplet, and contains nothing very worthy of notice, in a poetical point of view; nevertheless it exhibits, like the longer prophecies, a certain metrical conformation not to be mistaken, and by which all Hebrew poetry is more or less distinguished. “And when he looked upon Amalek, he took up his parable and said:”—

Amalek was the first of the nations,
But his latter end shall be that he perish for ever.

There will be perceived a slight indication of antithetical parallelism in this couplet. Although the trace of it be not very distinct to a loose and general observer, it is nevertheless obvious to a more careful scrutiny; and then the significancy of the parallelism becomes at once perceptible. It is indeed true that the antithesis comprised in the two phrases the “*first* of the nations,” and “his *latter end*,” is not so direct and palpable, but it may possibly appear rather the effect of accident than of design; still, the force and comprehensiveness, the sententious strength and efficacy thus imparted to

the declaration in each verse of the couplet by this artificial opposition of the prominent phrases, would naturally lead to the conclusion that this could not have been a mere contingent or accidental beauty, especially emanating, as it did, from so accomplished a mind as that of the poet whose productions, though short and few in number, have immortalized the name of Balaam. Herder proposes much the same reading as our translators, but does not so clearly define the parallels:—

Amalek, the first among the nations,
His end shall be, to perish for ever.

Had he rendered it the beginning of the nations, which construction the original would have well borne, there would have been a clearer antithesis than in our authorized translation, and it would at the same time have heightened the sense. It does not do this, but, besides being feeble, relinquishes a poetical grace, preserved by the learned men who contributed to form our very literal, and therefore most admirable version; for the scrupulosity of those profound and pious scholars to give an exact transfusion of the original, caused them to exhibit many beauties of which they probably were scarcely conscious, and which would, it is more than likely, have otherwise been lost in the more ambitious desire of giving them greater prominence or greater brilliancy. As they have rendered this couplet respecting the origin and end of Amalek, there will be perceived, besides the antithesis in the phrases as already pointed out, a still further

contrast in the opposition of the tenses “ was ” and “ shall be,” not discriminated by Herder, though they are deserving of attention, as they harmonize so well with the whole structure of the couplet, which was, as I conceive, intended to bear the antithetical form of construction. This direct opposition in the terms of the parallel clauses is, I think, too perceptibly artificial not to have been the result of premeditation rather than of accident.

“ And when he looked upon Amalek, he took up his parable and said,”—that is, he cast his eyes towards that part of the country inhabited by the Amalekites, the most eminent people among the early settlers in Canaan. They are supposed by Herbelot to have descended from a son of Ham, named Amalek, but as he produces no authority to establish this opinion, it is to be received with that caution which it is always prudent to observe in the absence of direct proof, more especially where no data are afforded to sanction such a surmise. Although, however, the fact maintained by Herbelot remains unsubstantiated, the antiquity of the Amalekites may nevertheless be presumed from the words of Balaam, who designates them the first of the nations; by which he no doubt means to imply that they were not only the most ancient of the Canaanitish nations, but likewise the most powerful; and their power was sufficiently shown in the difficulty which the Israelites had in subduing them, as recorded in the seventeenth chapter of Exodus. Balaam, to the great mortification of his royal host, pre-

dicts of that ancient and powerful people, who had been the first to attack the Israelites after their miraculous escape from Egyptian bondage, and whom the latter defeated with great difficulty, but whom they were again so shortly to subdue,—

His latter end shall be that he perish for ever.

The subjugation of the Amalekites was commenced under Saul, nearly completed under David, and finally accomplished by the sons of Simeon, in the reign of Hezekiah, king of Judah.* Since the period of their complete extirpation from the land of Canaan, they have ceased to exist as a people, at least as a political community, and no traces of them has been now, for many centuries, discoverable. Like a stream absorbed by the sands of the desert, they are lost in the vast expanse of time, and “the place thereof knoweth them no more,” thus fulfilling the strong language of the prediction, “that he perish for ever.” The pleonasm here imparts additional solemnity to the close of the distich, although it is certain that the full sense would have been given to the concluding verse had the two last words been omitted; it would, nevertheless, have lost all that additional impressiveness now derived from a simple idea being enforced by the application of another, simple, but kindred, and thus becoming expanded into a complex idea, at once elevating the mind by dilating the thought. The simple notion of perishing is greatly enhanced by the

* 1 Chron. iv. 41—43.

equally simple, but still more solemn notion of unlimited duration being appended to it:—

And his latter end shall be that he perish for ever.

This prediction has been fully realized with reference to the Amalekites. They are now totally expunged from the records of time. History is altogether silent respecting them. They once had a place in her annals, but have no longer a political existence among the kingdoms and principalities of the earth. How are the mighty fallen! The land which they inhabited has, for untold generations, been under foreign domination, and there remains no vestige of their once acknowledged supremacy. As a nation, they have utterly and everlastingly perished. “And where,” asks Bishop Newton, “is the name or the nation of Amalek subsisting at this day? What history, what tradition concerning them is remaining anywhere? They are but just enough known and remembered, to show that what God had threatened he hath punctually fulfilled: ‘I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven, and his latter end shall be that he perish for ever.’” This prophecy has, in the lapse of ages, received the most complete confirmation; the nation of the Amalekites is no more.

I have already remarked upon the distich embracing this important prediction, which is very elegant, and though it certainly does not rise to that high elevation of eloquence shown in the more elaborate effusions of the same prophetic bard, already considered, still, as I have

endeavoured to show, the strong points of contrast render it not only very emphatic, but exceedingly expressive. That most ancient people, whose doom it pronounces—so ancient indeed that their origin cannot be determined with any thing like an approach to certainty, the first of the nations inhabiting that land of promise from which the divine decree had gone forth that they should be shortly expelled—shall have a speedy termination. The strong opposition of circumstance in the extreme antiquity of the Amalekites, and the complete dissolution eventually to overtake them as a nation, is sufficiently imposing to deserve notice. There is something no less dignified than solemn in the terms by which the idea of final destruction is conveyed. A vivid but saddening impression is left upon the mind by the very simple but no less forcible expressions employed to announce so fearful an issue. What an awful sentiment is produced by the words “for ever.” Whether it refer to joy or to sorrow, the image which it presents to the imagination is alike sublime.

In the Targum of Onkelos, the couplet referring to the annihilation of the Amalekites is very happily rendered, the parallelism being most faithfully preserved, though a different reading is given to the first clause. It may, however, be rather considered a close paraphrase than a literal translation:—

Amalek was the *beginning* of the wars with Israel,
Therefore his *end* shall be that he perish for ever.

This interpretation is approved by the Targum of Jerusalem, which gives the sense still more plainly in the first clause. "The Amalekites were the *first* people that made war against Israel. And in the *latter days* they shall make war against them." A different exposition is evidently suggested in both these passages from that supported by our version, but I quote these expositions chiefly for the sake of showing the presence of the antithetical parallelism, which, probably, without any immediate design of the paraphrasts, is preserved in both, though in the former much more clearly.

There is considerable difference of opinion among commentators, as to whether Balaam really alluded to the extreme antiquity of the people upon whom he was at this moment looking, and concerning whom he was uttering a most important prophecy, or whether he merely designed to charge them honourably with being the first among the nations of Canaan to attack the posterity of Abraham, lately delivered from Egyptian bondage, and in full march to take possession of the Holy Land. Notwithstanding the exposition given by the Targums of Onkelos and Jerusalem, I am inclined to think that he referred to the remote antiquity of this people, who are mentioned so early as the wars of Chedorlaomer,* so that they must have been a nation before the time of Abraham and of Lot, consequently much anterior to the Moabites and Edomites, or any of the nations descended

* Genesis xiv. 7.

from those patriarchs. Either interpretation may be received upon sufficient grounds of probability, for by neither is the metrical symmetry of the couplet disturbed.

The difficulty which opposes the certain interpretation of this passage arises from the circumstance of the Amalekites, alluded to by Balaam, not being very distinctly defined, there having been more than one people of this name.

“On the whole,” says the writer of the additions to Calmet’s Dictionary of the Bible,* “we seem to be warranted in suggesting; first, that there were more kinds of Amalekites than one. Secondly, that the tribe which Saul destroyed might not be very numerous at that time; and that the tract of country mentioned in relation to them, was that of their flight, not that of their possession, unless as rovers or bedouins. Thirdly, that they were turbulent and violent towards their neighbours, as formerly they had been towards the stragglers of Israel; which accounts why their neighbours were not displeased at their expulsion. Fourthly, that such being their character, they might have produced a war, giving recent cause of offence to Israel; though Scripture only mentions the fulfilment of an ancient prophecy. N.B. Perhaps there never had been peace between the two nations. Fifthly, that Agag, slain by Samuel, had been extremely cruel, which seems warranted by the expression, ‘as thy sword has made mothers childless:’ and therefore he met with no more than his just punishment in the death he received.

* See Taylor’s edition, art. Amalekites.

“We should, on this article, carefully distinguish the people called Amalekites (Genesis xiv. 7) from the tribe exterminated or expatriated by Saul (1 Samuel xiv. 48; xxx. 1; xxxvii. 8), in consequence of the anathema (Exodus xvii. 14); and apparently both these should be distinguished from the descendants of Eliphaz and Timnah. (Genesis xxxvi. 12.)

“Balaam says (Numbers xxiv. 20,) Amalek was the first or chief of the nations; that is, around the country within his view or ken: this agrees with the derivation from Melek, the king or ruler; query, king’s people.

“The Arab writers often mention and glory in their descent from Amalek: their historians, poets, commentators on the poets, and genealogists, all boast of this; and down to the very days of Mahomet, many families traced their descent from this progenitor, and prided themselves on the distinction.

“Probably the different tribes bearing this name might, in a geographical view, be thus arranged. First, Amalek, the ancient, (Genesis xiv. 7), where the phrase is remarkable, ‘all the country of the Amalekites,’ which implies a great extent. This people we may place near the Jordan. (Numbers xxiv. 20.)

“Second, a tribe in the region east of Egypt, between Egypt and Canaan. (Exodus xvii. 8; 1 Samuel xiv. &c.)

“Third, the descendants of Eliphaz.

“It was against the *second* of these that Moses and Joshua fought (Exodus xvii. 8—13),

against which tribe perpetual hostility was to be maintained. (verse 16, and 1 Samuel xv.)

“It was also, most probably, to the *ancient* Amalekites (No. 1) that Balaam alluded (Numbers xxiv. 20,) as having been ‘head of the peoples;’ for the descendants of Esau were very far from answering to this title; in fact, they were but just appearing as a tribe or family. Even at this day, the Arabs distinguish between families of pure Arab blood, and those of mixed descent; but they include the posterity of Ishmael among those of mixed descent, while they reckon the Amalekites, by parentage, as of pure blood. The posterity of Esau, therefore, could hardly claim privilege above that of Ishmael, either by antiquity or by importance. Neither is it any way likely, that the Amalekites of Esau’s family should extend their settlements to where we find those Amalekites (No. 2) which attacked Israel, at the very borders of Egypt, and on the shores of the Red Sea. Instead of *Maachatai* (Deuteronomy iii. 14; Joshua xii. 4, 5; xiii. 11—13), the Seventy read the kings of the Amalekites, which implies that this people had occupied very extensive territories. The same countries seem to be alluded to by David (Psalm lxxxiii. 7): he had already mentioned Edom, the Ishmaelites, Moab, &c., yet, distinct from these, he mentions Gebel, Ammon, and Amalek, consequently this Amalek was not of the descent of Esau or of Ishmael.

“The spies sent to explore the land of Canaan (Numbers xiii. 29), report that the Amalekites

inhabited the south ; which agrees exactly with that equivocation of David to Achish (1 Samuel xxvii.) David invaded the Amalekites (verse 8), but (verse 10) he says he went ‘against the south of Judah,’ the *south* of the Jerahmeelites, the *south* of the Kenites ; which indeed was very true, as he went against the Amalekites, who were south of all those places.

“D’Herbelot tells us, that the Mussulmen give the name of Amalekites to those giants which inhabited Palestine when the Israelites attacked it: they suppose that some of these even fled to Barbary ; and this agrees with the opinion of those who mention inscriptions found in Barbary, importing that the people who wrote them fled from Canaan, from the face of Joshua, son of Nun, the robber.”—*Vide Procopius de Bello Vandal and Reland, Pal.* p. 82.

CHAPTER VI.

Balaam's prophecy on the Kenites.

BALAAM now proceeds to take up his parable against the Kenites, saying, in a loftier strain of poetical rapture,

Strong is thy dwelling-place,
And thou puttest thy nest in a rock.
Nevertheless the Kenite shall be wasted
Until Asher shall carry thee away captive.

Who these Kenites were, is not determined, and, at this distance of time, it is impossible to solve an historical problem of much difficulty, which has engaged the investigation of the most distinguished men in the walks of Hebrew literature, who have still left it a question to be decided. We must then, under circumstances at best but discouraging, be satisfied with conjecture based upon reasonable assumption from analogous facts or inductive processes of reasoning. Though it is impossible absolutely to fix the identity of the people here spoken of by Balaam, there is sufficient in his description of them, brief as it is, to show their character, and to sanction the reasonable inferences of Calmet and others, who have followed him in this and similar arduous fields of inquiry. "The Kenites," says that learned man,* "were a people

*See Dictionary of the Bible, art. Kenites.

which dwelt west of the Red Sea, and extended themselves pretty far into Arabia Petraea. Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, and a priest of Midian, was a Kenite; and in Saul's time the Kenites were mingled with the Amalekites.* Although the Kenites were among those people whose lands God had promised to the descendants of Abraham, nevertheless, in consideration of Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, all of them who submitted to the Hebrews were suffered to live in their own country. The rest fled, in all probability, to the Edomites and Amalekites. The lands of the Kenites were in Judah's lot.

“ Balaam, when invited by Balak, king of Moab, to curse Israel, stood on a mountain, whence, addressing himself to the Kenites, he said,

Strong is thy dwelling-place,
And thou puttest thy nest in a rock.
Nevertheless the Kenite shall be wasted
Until Ashur shall carry thee away captive.

The Kenites dwelt in mountains and rocks almost inaccessible. Ken signifies a nest, a hole, a cave; and Kinnim, in Greek, may be translated Troglodytes (or Cavites.) The Kenites were carried into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar; they are not mentioned after the time of Saul; but they subsisted in a mingled state among the Edomites and other nations of Arabia Petraea.”†

* 1 Samuel xv. 6.

† See further Josephus Antiq. lib. 1.

Strong is thy dwelling-place,
And thou puttest thy nest in a rock.

Here is a poetical allusion to the name of this people, a thing common with the Hebrew bards, *ken* signifying a nest as already mentioned. It is eloquently expressive of the lofty site of their habitations, comparing the Kenites to eagles and similar birds of prey, which construct their eyries in inaccessible rocks. The eagle is known to be a bird of great strength and courage, resisting any attack upon its elevated dwelling-place with indomitable resolution. Indeed, it is always a perilous adventure to besiege these ferocious birds in their rocky fastnesses, where, upon the ledge of some gigantic cliff that beetles over the impetuous surge beneath, they stand upon such vantage-ground as places the bold adventurer who comes to the assault from below in a condition of no common hazard. Such were the people referred to by Balaam in the prophecy. They were hardy, bold, and resolute; capable of extreme endurance, inhabiting regions elevated and almost inaccessible. In defiance, however, of their lofty and unapproachable position, they shall be eventually reached by the strong arm of power, and involved in the fate of that people, of whom it had been just pronounced that they shall "perish for ever." By what means this should be effected, is not told, or even implied by the poet; but the result is, nevertheless, to be traced, for under Saul they were a very insignificant people,—supposing them to be the same whom Calmet has

described in the passage quoted from his Dictionary of the Bible,—so reduced in numbers and contemptible in power, that we nowhere find the Israelitish monarch engaged in active hostility against them. They were diminished to their comparative insignificance by the continued and sanguinary wars in which they had been engaged in conjunction with the nations of Canaan which had opposed, though unsuccessfully, those strangers, of whom it had been prophesied several generations previously, that they should become possessors of the land by promise. So that during the reign of Saul they were so utterly contemptible, as a political community, notwithstanding the singular advantages of locality which those mountainous districts inhabited by them commanded, as to be unworthy the hostile notice of that brave but intemperate sovereign.

The opening of the prophecy referring to the Kenites is remarkably elegant. The first hemistich stating a literal fact, in the simplest terms, is immediately followed by its corresponding member, stating likewise a literal fact, but in language eminently and exquisitely figurative. The first hemistich is a mere plain foundation, out of which the more ornate beauties of the superstructure rise into picturesque relief. Nothing can well convey a finer idea of the strength and security of those fortresses in the mountains which appear to have given shelter to the Kenites, being likewise garrisoned by them, than the image of an eagle placing its nest upon the top of a crag

beetling over a precipice, and so high above the roar of the foaming torrent or luxuriant valley beneath, as to defy the approach of any assailant, save such as should possess the wings of an eagle, or the superior sagacity of man that can overcome all impediments, except those which an almighty power wills not that he should surmount.

It is remarkable, in the compass of a short passage containing so few words, how complete is the poetical association. Every term is pregnant with meaning; ideas seem to crowd out of the words, and expand into the most harmonious combinations, as essences from a small vessel in which they have been confined, when the obstructing agent is removed. Here is a very favourable specimen of that condensation of language combined with the most luxuriant fertility of thought, which I have before remarked to be so kindred a feature of Hebrew poetry.

I can scarcely imagine a more felicitous example of graphic development, though the elements of the picture only are exhibited, out of which it finally rises in the most complete form upon the mind, than is presented in this short but comprehensive prediction. The ideas suggested are at once distinct and vivid, each bearing the seeds of others that seem to fructify and grow out of it, like the far-famed banyan-tree of the east, which throws out a forest from one stem, with an effect almost magical. I know of no poetry out of the Bible, in which this peculiar excellence is to be discovered in a

like degree. We have not only a lively idea of the character of the Kenites as a nation conveyed to us by their singular choice of habitation, but likewise their relative strength as a political community. They could not have been very numerous to have established their dwellings upon the summits of inaccessible rocks. This very circumstance denotes their character and social qualities; for the bold and hardy mountaineer is almost everywhere the same. He is a daring, simple, rugged child of nature, with few wants, and therefore few wishes, and whose freedom or political independence is secured by the almost inaccessible locality of his domestic habitation.

The Kenites were beyond doubt a brave and independent race, rendered robust as well by the peculiar circumstances inseparable from the situation which they had originally selected for their national settlement, as by their alienation from luxury and the enervating enjoyments within the reach of those who dwell in crowded cities or populous districts, where the vast influx of wealth not only solicits to enjoyment, but furnishes the means of securing it. They lived probably on plunder, when the scanty supplies of the mountains on which they had established their retreat fell short of their wants, which were naturally few and simple, though, notwithstanding, often supplied at great labour and peril. An image of complete security is suggested by the poet of uncommon strength of position, nevertheless one of proportionate peril, and exposed to perpetual vicissitude. A pic-

ture, combining many strong and emphatic details—those details branching from it rather as matters of inference than of recorded fact—is produced before the imagination, every shade of the tablet suggesting a corresponding and definite reality, and every tint being the reflection of some tangible image, all extraneous ornament being eliminated as injurious to the simple but severe design, whose Doric symmetry and uncomplexed majesty of proportion are so justly congruous to the sacred gravity of the subject, which the poet has selected to display the power of his genius. We are directly led to the severe life of the mountaineer—a life of unrelieved toil and stern vicissitude, he being the object of constant privation, and exposed to perpetual hazard, nevertheless, blessed in his natural protection from the inroads of more powerful foes, powerful by their number and warlike appointments;—we at once imagine the rigid but contented lot of those solitary highlanders, their fearlessness of subjugation, their resolution of resistance, together with all those natural appendages of locality, uniting the peculiar moral attributes which such a locality, by necessary consequence, imposes upon the inhabitants; and yet these people, amid all their security, are doomed, according to the declaration of the prophet, to be reached by the arm of human power:—

Nevertheless the Kenite shall be wasted
Until Ashur shall carry thee away captive.

In spite of the security of their position;—in

spite of their natural hardihood and extreme difficulty of approach, the Kenites shall suffer loss and gradual diminution in common with the other nations of Canaan, until they are finally made captive by the Assyrians, and driven into a foreign land, there to be merged and lost, at least so far as their existence as a political community was concerned, among strange races. The Kenites, like the Amalekites, were gradually wasted by repeated wars and subjugations, and ultimately became absorbed into other nations who had risen whilst they had declined in the scale of political power. A few centuries after the prediction of Balaam, they had no standing among the established communities of the world, they scarcely existed in name, and were finally swamped in the overwhelming stream of time. This has been the case with empires of more recent establishment, but likewise of far more extended dominion; for now the mighty supremacy of Rome has ceased to exert its gigantic influence over the world; it has become the mere marvel of history, where alone it will be perpetuated till years shall cease to be numbered, and the passing intervals of duration are swallowed up in the illimitable, indivisible, and never-ceasing progress of eternity.

Until Ashur shall carry thee away captive.

Here, by a common synecdoche, that son of Shem, named Ashur, who gave his name to the Assyrians, is put for the people deriving their

national designation from him. This passage, therefore, implies that the Kenites shall be reduced by degrees, until the period of their final overthrow by the king of Assyria's armies, by whom, together with the Israelites, they were eventually reduced to a state of the most degrading bondage.

How very elegant and expressive is the introduction of the synecdoche in this verse! it simplifies the idea without taking from its amplitude, as a mere symbol often realizes to the mind a complex event with far greater force than the employment of a literal but more diffuse description.

“The Assyrians and Babylonians,” says Dr. Adam Clarke,* “who carried away captive the ten tribes (2 Kings xvii. 6) and the Jews into Babylon (2 Kings xxv.) probably carried away the Kenites also. Indeed this seems pretty evident, as we find some Kenites mentioned among the Jews after their return from the Babylonish captivity (1 Chron. ii. 55.)” Dr. Dodd’s account of the Kenites is as follows:†—“Jethro, father-in-law of Moses, is called (Exod iii. 1) the priest of Midian, and in the first chapter of Judges (verse 16) the Kenite. We may infer, therefore, that the Midianites and the Kenites are the same; or, at least, that the Kenites were some of the tribes of Midian. The Midianites are said to be confederate with the Moabites in the beginning of the story, and one would naturally expect some notice to be taken

* See his note on the passage.

† See his note.

of them or their tribes in the course of the prophecies. Now of the Kenites, it appears, from Judges i. 16, that part followed Israel, but the greater part, we may presume, remained with the Midianites and Amalekites. We read (1 Sam. xv. 6,) that there were Kenites dwelling among the Amalekites, and so the Kenites are fitly mentioned here next after the Amalekites. Their situation is said to be strong and secure among the mountains:—

Strong is thy dwelling-place,
And thou puttest thy nest in a rock :

wherein is an allusion to the name, the same Hebrew word signifying a nest and a Kenite.

Nevertheless the Kenite shall be wasted
Until Ashur carry thee away captive.

The Amalekites were to be utterly destroyed, but the Kenites were to be carried away captive. And accordingly when Saul was sent by divine commission to destroy the Amalekites, he ordered the Kenites to depart from among them; for the kindness which some of them showed to Israel, their posterity was saved (1 Samuel xv. 6.) ‘And Saul said unto the Kenites, go, depart, get you down from among the Amalekites, lest I destroy you with them; for ye showed kindness to all the children of Israel when they came up out of Egypt. So the Kenites departed from among the Amalekites.’ This passage shows that they were wasted and reduced to a low condition, and as the kings of Assyria carried away captive not

only the Jews, but likewise the Syrians and several other nations (2 Kings xvi. 9; xix. 12, 13), it is highly probable that the Kenites shared the same fate with their neighbours, and were carried away by the same torrent, especially as we find some Kenites mentioned among the Jews after their return from captivity (1 Chron. ii. 55.)”* “What people are meant by the name Kenites,” says Bishop Patrick,† “is not clearly evident; for there were a people called Kenites who were part of the nation that inhabited the land of Canaan (Genesis xv. 19). These cannot be here intended; for they were too far off from this place. And as for the Kenites mentioned in Judges i. 16, and iv. 11, who dwelt among the Israelites when they came into Canaan, they had as yet no fixed state, but were with them in the wilderness. Therefore, it is likely they were some of the kindred of Jethro (originally derived from the same family that he was of) who remained in Midian, and adjoined so close to the country of the Amalekites, that they are said to dwell among them (1 Samuel xv. 6.)”

Alas! who shall live when God doeth this!

These words admit of two interpretations; either that the time shall be so remote as to be beyond the natural lives of any person then existing, or that the period in which this prediction shall be accomplished, will be so rife in disastrous events, that no one shall escape some deplorable visita-

* See likewise Bishop Newton on the passage. † See his note.

tion. We may readily conceive the confusion and terror which accompanies the overthrow of a country, the taking its people captive, the dismantling of cities, and the spreading of spoliation through the land. All this was eventually brought to pass in the desolations caused by the Assyrian armies in their dreadful career of conquest which terminated in the Babylonish captivity. The expressions of the passage just quoted are strong, and according to either interpretation given, convey a vivid idea of the calamities to be looked for, and which at a subsequent period fully realized the melancholy expectations to which the words of the prophet must have naturally given rise. The expression—

Alas! who shall live when God doeth this!

being not definite but equivocal, is a direct appeal to the imagination, which is set at work rather upon the probable than the real, and the evils to be expected at the period referred to in the prophecy, are anticipated in the fullest excess of their amount. The solemnity of the question, and the manner in which the sacred name of God is employed, not only add to this solemnity, but greatly enhance the awful impression which the question is calculated to convey. The calamities to be apprehended are of such a terrible nature, that those whom they are appointed to overtake will scarcely be able to survive the visitation. The divine power will be fearfully manifest.

Expressions which rather intimate than detail the accompaniments of all important events, are calculated to produce a much stronger effect by calling in the aid of the imagination to lend its colouring to those particulars, than mere literal descriptions, which formally state naked details without exciting any ulterior expectations, at once relieving the mind from the necessity of further exertion. The calamities to be inferred from the prophetic words—

Alas! who shall live when God doeth this!

are superlatively great, though not expressly enumerated; and whatever could be anticipated from them was fully effectuated in the event. Those expressions which imply the most momentous results, under whatever circumstances, always fill the mind with more lofty impressions of them, than when the particulars of such results are elaborately stated. This might be shown by a very simple example. Suppose I were describing the progress of an enemy, and were to say—They poured into the country from north to south, and *how fearful was the devastation which ensued!* No details could convey so awful a conviction of terrible havoc as the latter exclamation, because it would imply that the devastation was so great as to be indescribable; but the moment particulars are minutely entered upon, however horrible, the extent of the mischief being at once fully developed, this ascertained reality is far less dreadful than where an impression is left upon

the imagination that it is so terrible as to baffle the powers of language to express. The prophet evidently felt the force of this, and therefore sums up the prediction against the Kenites in one mighty exclamation of indefinite, but emphatic allusion to some future catastrophe, terminating in dreadful issues.

CHAPTER VII.

Conclusion of Balaam's prophecies.

AFTER having withdrawn his eyes from that part of the country where he had looked upon the Kenites, and foretold the end of that numerically small but hardy race, the prophet continued :—

And ships shall come from the coast of Chittim,
And shall afflict Asshur, and shall afflict Eber;
And he also shall perish for ever.

Bishop Patrick supposes the Greeks to be first intended by the word Chittim, and next, the Romans; each fulfilling the several portions of the prophecy. Both were the scourges of Asia.

Bishop Newton says, “Balaam might here mean either Greece or Italy, or both, the particular names of those countries being at that time, perhaps, unknown in the east; and the passage may be better understood of both, because Greece and Italy were alike the scourges of Asia.”

Chittim was a general name for the countries and islands in the Mediterranean sea, according to Bishop Newton; but Calmet contends that the word refers simply to Macedonia; it is, however, generally believed, upon the authority

of Josephus, that Chittim, to whose posterity this prophecy of Balaam undoubtedly refers, the son of Javan, the grandson of Noah, settled in Italy, as well as in Celicia, Macedonia, and Cyprus. Mr. Ainsworth, therefore, presumes that the prediction may imply both the troubles which befel the Assyrians and Jews by the Greeks and Seleucidæ, in the days of Antiochus. Although the passage is not without difficulty, the large majority of commentators concur in nearly the same interpretation.

And shall afflict Asshur.

It is well known to the readers of ancient history, that the Assyrians were conquered by Alexander of Macedon, familiarly known as Alexander the Great, whose extraordinary conquests placed him in the van of the heroes of antiquity. He subdued all the countries under the government of this people, overthrowing the Persian empire, to which the Chaldeans and Assyrians were tributary. With an army of only thirty-two thousand foot and five thousand horse, this youthful hero invaded Asia, at a period of his life when men of his birth and station were generally undergoing that initiatory discipline which was to give them an insight into the science of arms. In an incredibly short space of time he conquered all the provinces of Asia Minor, took the celebrated city of Tyre after an obstinate siege of seven months, and made himself master of Egypt, Media, Syria, and Persia. He spread his conquests over India,

invaded Scythia, visited the Indian ocean, and retired to Babylon, laden with the trophies of conquest, where he died, in the thirty-second year of his age, having eclipsed his glories by the magnitude of his excesses. He, therefore, above all the generals of Greece and Italy, might well be denominated, in the words of Bishop Newton, "the scourge of Asia." "The Romans, indeed," says Patrick, "afterwards overthrew the Greek empire; but we do not read that they made war against the Assyrians until the time of the emperor Trajan, who overthrew them, and reduced their country to a province of Rome."

And shall afflict Eber.

This probably refers to a people on the other side of the Euphrates. The prophet may, therefore, be understood to say,—‘He shall afflict the Assyrians and the nations bordering upon the Euphrates, who were either under their dominion or tributary to them: he would overthrow the Assyrians, their tributaries, and allies.’

If we pause to reflect upon the importance of those prophecies which have immortalized the name of Balaam, we cannot fail to be impressed with the very important issues to which they refer. They point to the distinguished conquests of the Israelites; their final settlement in the promised land; to the extirpation of the principal Canaanitish nations; to the spiritual dominion of Judah, at the coming of Shiloh

the Peace-maker, who by his one great act of expiation was to ratify the deliverance of mankind from the shackles of sin and death; to the abrasion of the Amalekites from the records of time; to the ultimate destruction of the Kenites, and of the Assyrians; and, in fact, to the final subjugation of Greece and Rome, which is evidently likewise implied in these remarkable and copious revelations from the fountain of all wisdom, communicated through a genius of the highest order, though a wicked man.

And he also shall perish for ever.

Not Ashur and Eber, but the empires of the conquerors of those countries, the Macedonian, Grecian, and Roman states, which in the issue signally came to pass. So that, in fact, the end of the conquerors and of the conquered was precisely similar.

Their end is that they are perished for ever.

In the prophetic portions of scripture, frequent allusions are made to the downfall of the Grecian and Roman empires; and when we consider what an extraordinary height of political eminence those states attained, notwithstanding the abominations of idolatry by which they were disgraced, we cannot fail to be struck with their present condition among the flourishing communities of the christian world, a memorial scarcely remaining of what they were in the zenith of their prosperity. This has been the natural consequence of those vile superstitions

which effeminated the minds of their people and prepared them for final subjection to a race, fighting under the christian banner, and directed by "that wisdom which is from above." To what are the kingdoms of a remoter antiquity reduced? —To the empty pageant of a name! They are become, in the language of the sublimest poet of his age, the lofty and inspired Isaiah, "A joy of wild asses, a pasture of flocks."

There is great solemnity in the conclusion of Balaam's prophecies, combined with a simplicity that cannot fail to point the attention to those subsequent issues which induced such remarkable political changes among the nations of the earth. He predicts that the conquerors of the Moabites and of the seed of Jacob shall in turn be expunged from the chronicles of human events, and that not a vestige shall ultimately remain of that power which subdued the world. How signally has this fearful consummation been realized! Where shall we find the mighty cities which once poured forth their myriads through a hundred gates, the fame of whose grandeur and extent amazed mankind? Where are now the lofty walls of imperial Babylon, in which guilt wore her garish robe in the broad eye of day, and of which the vengeance of Almighty God has now left scarcely a perceptible trace, the lion making his lair where once stood the palaces of her kings? Where are Nineveh the great, Thebes, Memphis, Persepolis, and other potent cities of the earth, and which spread the fame of their magnificence to its farthest limits?—With the things beyond

the flood! The names of Sesostris, Cambyzes, Cyrus; of Themistocles, Epaminondas, Alexander; of Pyrrhus, Hannibal, Mithridates; of Coriolanus, Pompey, Cæsar, together with those of a host of conquerors, are remembered but as designating the heroes of historical romance. The glory of empires sustained by these heroes has departed, and there remains a melancholy void in those parts of the globe where they once held undisputed supremacy. The empire of virtue, on the contrary, stands fast for ever, whilst that which is comprised in mere earthly dominion quickly vanishes:—the latter is the meteor of a season, the former an everlasting light:—

As some tall cliff that rears its awful form,
 Swells from the vale, and midway leaves the storm,
 Though round its breast the rolling clouds are spread,
 Eternal sunshine settles on its head.

How must Balak's soul have quailed under the unexpected announcement which he so unwittingly heard from the lips of his stipendiary prophet!—that the people whom he had expected to hear anathematized should rise into greater celebrity and power after their overthrow by the Assyrian armies, and exist as a political community in that land from which he sought to expel them by means of an agency which he imagined far more powerful than the force of arms, when those haughty subduers of the earth, beneath whose puissance they had been for a season prostrated, should have passed to the home of their fathers, and their empire into oblivion. How was the wickedness of Balak made to recoil upon himself in the disappoint-

ment which followed his flattering but base expectations! The very oracle from which he looked for an overwhelming anathema upon his foes, bore to his ear that blessing upon them which was to him a curse, and this was followed by the declaration of his own subjugation, included in that of the nations of Canaan. The warlike Amalekites were to yield their power to the predominancy of the sons of Israel. The Kenites, amid their mountain fastnesses, were to be subdued and absorbed into other races, and the fruitful country of his ancestors was to be delivered over to the hated but invincible Israelites. What an agonizing reflection to the sovereign of Moab, who, instead of the fiat of extermination against the natural enemies of his race, heard, from the mouth of his own hired mercenary, a sentence of benediction!

Herder translates Balaam's concluding prophecy as follows, breaking it into five hemistichs:—

Who shall live when God doeth this?
 Ships from Italia's coasts
 Bring down the pride of Asshur,
 And humble the pride of Eber:
 He also shall perish for ever.*

The reading of the second hemistich,

Ships from Italia's coasts,

is, to a certain extent, a limiting of the sense; nevertheless, here is high authority for the ap

* Spirit of Hebrew Poetry, vol. ii. p. 177.

plication of the word Chittim to the Roman state, in the climax of its prosperity, the greatest which history has recorded.

The Greek commonwealth eventually succumbed to the Roman, the gigantic power of the latter, after the gradual decline of centuries, falling under the Christian domination, subject to which, it still continues a dwarfed and crippled republic. If we look at this imperial city, when the palaces of the Cæsars were adorned with the spoils of conquest from the remotest shores of the then discovered world—when her voice gave laws to trembling millions, and her supremacy was acknowledged round the entire circle embraced by civilization—if we look at imperial Rome under the mild despotism of Cæsar Augustus, and now under the spiritual tyranny of a Christian Bishop, who claims a sovereign vicegerency upon earth over the very wills and affections of men, we shall behold the extremes of political glory and degradation—of temporal grandeur and religious subserviency. Rome is now sunk, both politically and morally, to the lowest line of social and spiritual humiliation. She is as bad as when under the dominion of paganism, being the stronghold of priestcraft, superstition, and error. She lies prostrate amid the mighty ruins of her former greatness, a gigantic skeleton, upon which the reptile progeny of corruption are continually quickening into baneful activity, and over which they are perpetually leaving the feculencies of their brief but revolting life.

I have dwelt the longer upon these latter

passages of Balaam's prophecies, because the historical allusions are involved in some perplexity, and it is impossible that any beauties of composition can become readily perceptible, unless those allusions be more or less understood; I have, therefore, been at some pains to explain them at length, in order that the poetical graces, which, though not so abundant as in the longer predictions, may be brought more directly to view, as well as those historical relations of which these latter predictions are the subjects. When the matter is not readily understood, many latent excellencies of composition will naturally escape attention, there not being sufficient stimulus produced to keep it alive, which must be the case where the sense baffles ordinary penetration. It necessarily, therefore, sometimes happens that numerous beauties are hidden beneath the obscurities occasionally existing in the Hebrew writings, not because the authors of them were deficient in that perspicuity which is almost universally the concomitant of true genius, but because, as I have elsewhere said, references are constantly made to customs but partially known, or which have altogether ceased to exist, so that those writers are really no further obscure than as the ignorance of the reader renders them so.

The last three prophecies of the seer of Mesopotamia certainly do not abound so much in those richer embellishments, distributed with such prolific luxuriance throughout the longer and more important predictions: still there is a

chaste and elegant, though unpretending plainness in the last, which is an admirable offset to the more ornate character of those preceding it, thus not only adding variety to the subjects, but at the same time showing the fertility of Balaam's genius, which, though exuberant in imagery, could, with ease, cast off those external graces of composition, and exhibit the severer simplicity of those more primitive bards, who abjured what they held to be the meretricious aids of ornament as inconcomitant with, or, at least, as not necessary to enhance the unpretending, but, nevertheless, imposing dignity of truth.

If we consider that those noble effusions of the most gifted minds must necessarily suffer a diminution of their splendour by being examined through the vehicle of a translation, we shall readily apprehend that the originals are among the finest productions of the human intellect, for it cannot be denied that, even in our common version of the Holy Scriptures, necessarily imperfect as all translations must be, the highest beauties of poetry are perceptible. They lie embedded in the richest ore, the stratum in which the hand of genius has deposited them, combining the elements of all that is elevated in thought and transcendent in wisdom. The lustre of those sublime compositions is indeed much abridged by the medium through which we behold it, still those master-pieces of the poetic art are brought before us in all their exquisite grace of outline and admirable symmetry

of proportion, though like gems seen through a veil, they may have lost some of that brightness in which they shine so luminously in their original setting. It cannot but happen that a transfusion of the productions of such remote and primitive times, from a very ancient and consequently very difficult language, must be attended with the loss of much of that specific beauty, which the Hebrew, above every other description of poetry, displays; nevertheless this will make the fact more evident, that in proportion as the translation abounds in poetic wealth must be the fruitfulness of the source whence it is derived; and as no translation can, by possibility, transfuse all the beauties of its original, the Hebrew writings must consequently be exuberant in beauties.

In what I have said of these extraordinary productions of the bard of Pethor, it has been my aim to convey information, and, at the same time, to improve the taste for Scripture reading, by showing that the sacred writings, even apart from their inspiration, are more worthy the study of the most refined and best instructed minds, than the noblest compositions of mere human genius to which the divine gift of inspiration has not been imparted. I have been anxious to show that the Hebrew scriptures, as containing the richest treasures of the poetic art, in addition to the solemn claim which they put forth as the revelations of an Almighty will, ought to be read with greater interest, not to say devotion, than any works of uninspired

men, however eloquent or sublime. So fruitful are the sources of enjoyment in the Bible, that I am persuaded no intelligent infidel could read that sacred book without admiration, and I do sincerely believe that any one, who merely took it up as a matter of amusement, would soon recur to it as a matter of duty. Once induce people to read their Bibles, even though it be only from the secondary motive of recreation, and you will end by rendering them wise unto salvation, for they will soon feel its spiritual influence affecting their hearts, even while its poetical graces are absorbing their minds. Devotion will follow admiration in most instances; I should, therefore, at any time, consider, that a great gain had been accomplished to the cause of religion, where the unbeliever could be induced to peruse the Holy Scriptures from whatever motive, except that of making them the subject of profane ridicule, or with the view of perverting their sacred meaning.

In the history of Balaam, a great moral lesson is taught. It exhibits the signal providence of God, and is, moreover, a remarkable illustration of the fact, that the evil petitions of men, when granted, will assuredly issue in their own injury. If we solicit the Almighty to accord what our consciences assure us he does not approve, we can have reasonably nothing to expect but evil from the divine acquiescence. Those portions of the sacred narrative to which I have directed the reader's attention in these pages

are fully deserving of his most serious regard ; and if what I have offered to his consideration shall be the means of exciting him to a more earnest study, not only of that narrative in particular, but of the sacred volume generally, I shall have abundant reason to bless God that my efforts in his behalf, and likewise for my own profit, have not been made in vain.

CHAPTER VIII.

A fragment from Micah attributed to Balaam. Reasons assigned. Critical and analytical exposition of the passage.

THERE is a fragment happily preserved by the prophet Micah, which there seems to be very little doubt was among the compositions of Balaam, as it shows all the characteristic features of his style. Why Moses omitted to introduce it, is a question not so easily answered, nevertheless, the strong internal evidence which it bears, from its kindred similarity to the prophecies of Balaam, of having emanated from the same mind, will, upon the authority of such names as those of Bishop Lowth and Bishop Butler, sufficiently justify its being classed with those productions, as, in point of composition, identical with them. Of this remarkable passage, Bishop Lowth observes:* “Among the prophecies of Balaam, I will also venture to class that most elegant poem, which is rescued from oblivion by the prophet Micah, (chapter vi. 6—8), and which, in matter and diction, in the structure, form and character of the composition, so admirably agrees with the other monuments

* Prælect. xviii.

of his fame, that it evidently appears to be a citation from the answer of Balaam to the king of the Moabites."

Wherewith shall I come before the Lord,
 And bow myself before the high God?
 Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings,
 With calves of a year old?
 Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams,
 Or with ten thousands of rivers of oil?
 Shall I give my first-born for my transgression,
 The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?
 He hath showed thee, O man, what is good;
 And what doth the Lord require of thee,
 But to do justly, and to love mercy,
 And to walk humbly with thy God?

Upon Bishop Lowth's authority, in which he has the concurrence of Bishop Butler, a high sanction, I shall proceed to examine this very beautiful specimen of ancient Hebrew poetry, as the production of the prophet of Pethor. The two learned men just named imagine it to have been uttered betwixt the first and second predictions in the order quoted by Moses, but I rather presume it to have been delivered after the fourth, when Balak had received full proof of the inefficacy of enchantments and burnt-offerings, and of the power of that God whom his enemies exclusively worshipped, and by whom they were so signally blessed. Having been three times disappointed, in a rage, he ordered the prophet instantly to quit his dominions. Balaam, however, pronounces a fourth prophecy, and immediately the king of Moab is, as it would seem, convinced that the unholy seer has acted under the influence of a controlling providence. He becomes reconciled to the pro-

phet, and asks him, with an earnest force of entreaty, what he can do to propitiate the God of Israel.

In this fragment, which, as Bishop Lowth conjectures, Micah* has preserved as the composition of Balaam, Balak appears to ask the questions contained in the sixth and seventh verses of the chapter in which they are found; to these Balaam replies in the eighth verse. Here is the poet's definition of a righteous man, whom he wishes to be like in his death. He enumerates the qualities necessary to constitute a man righteous; and it is the last end of a person fulfilling the character here drawn by him that he desires, in the first place, his should resemble. Though conscious of the wickedness of his own life, he is, notwithstanding, anxiously willing that his death should be like that of a good man, who had nothing to dread from his crimes, but every thing to hope for from his virtues.

There is extraordinary solemnity—a solemnity amounting to the highest sublimity—in the questions of the Moabitish king; they rise successively in force, until they at length attain the greatest elevation of grandeur:—

Wherewith shall I come before the Lord,
And bow myself before the high God?
Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings,
With calves of a year old?
Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams,
Or with ten thousands of rivers of oil?
Shall I give my first-born for my transgression,
The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

* See Micah vi. 6—8.

How do these solemn and earnest interrogations magnify the omnipotence of the Lord of Hosts! Here we find a heathen, and a wicked one too, so overwhelmed by his consciousness of the divine power, as to break out into a strain of fervent and lofty acknowledgment, expressing the most awful feelings towards that God whom he had so long scandalized, by offering his adoration to unsightly representations of mere human fabrication. He is not, however, animated with reverence towards the Lord Jehovah, but with terror, the invariable accompaniment of weak and superstitious minds. With what earnest excitement does he declare his ignorance how that august Being, whom he has hitherto failed to conciliate by becoming acts of devotion, is now to be approached. His apprehensions, indeed, are roused; nevertheless, no really devout feelings are awakened, for he still desires evil at the hands of God, whom, had he known him as he is, a God of mercy, of loving-kindness and of unerring truth, he would not have dared to approach, even with the expectation of a dispensation so opposed to his perfect attributes, as that of exterminating a righteous, for the temporal behoof of a depraved, people. ‘What,’ asks the royal Moabite, under the vexation of repeated disappointment, ‘are the means I can employ to obtain the favour which I so anxiously seek, and upon the consummation of which, my soul is bent,—an issue of the utmost importance to me, as it involves the ruin of my foes? Can you name any sacrifice, however great, however costly, however painful to me

to make, that will obtain for me the realization of those desires so dear to my heart? What shall render me an object of celestial benefaction? I am ready to purchase such a privilege at any cost. What is there I can offer to his most excellent majesty, to his awful omnipotence, who has placed my foes under his own guidance and protection? Shall I at once signalize my devotion and try to secure his almighty sanction, by slaughtering a holocaust upon the reeking altars of that temple where animal sacrifices are immolated to the mute god of my idolatry? Shall I present as an available expiation for my transgression, in having provoked eternal wrath, a sin-offering of my first-born, the heir and representative of my house? Is there anything I can give as an oblation sufficiently valuable for such a purpose, as obtaining at once the divine execration of my enemies, and the good will of Jehovah, whose power I have hitherto disregarded and despised?’

The whole of these interrogations, gradually rising in strength and fervour, until they close in a grand and solemn climax, are admirably significative of the state of Balak’s mind at this moment. They clearly develop the character of the man; his vast and irrepressible idea of omnipotence; his intense hatred of the Israelites; his readiness to make any sacrifice, however great, to obtain his impious ends; his selfishness; his fierce and unbending temperament; his ruthless hostility against those enemies to whom the land of Canaan had been promised for an inheritance. There is, how-

ever, amid the energetic declamation of the disappointed monarch, an outbreak of natural tenderness in the contrast most eloquently made betwixt the offering of his first-born son and the object of that offering;—these nevertheless, appearing light in his estimation, weighed against the intense desire by which his heart was engrossed, of propitiating so august a being as the omnipotent Jehovah, and thus rendering him favourable to his unholy purpose.

The particulars, it will be observed, enumerated by the king of Moab, are of the most valuable description; in those remote times flocks and herds being the most prized of a monarch's property. If, therefore, "thousands of rams" had, upon certain great occasions, been offered up in sacrifice, there must soon have been an end to the further propagation of the species. Utter ruin would have been the consequence of such immensely prodigal oblations. Oil was much used, not only in ordinary sacrifices, but likewise in most of those numerous rites prescribed in the heathen formularies, as well as for domestic purposes: it was consequently a staple commodity of high importance, and therefore of paramount value. Some of the rarer oils were worth nearly their weight in gold, as is the case even now; the *atar-gul*, commonly known under the corrupted title of *ottar* of roses, being commonly sold at three or four guineas the ounce, and this frequently in a deteriorated state, from the dishonest practices of traders.

It will be evident that the terms employed

by Balak, of “ thousands of rams ” and “ ten thousands of rivers of oil,” were mere poetical hyperboles, expressive generally of numbers and quantity. He meant simply to signify that no expense of treasure should be spared by him, if he might thereby accomplish his evil purpose. Whatever the Lord should require of him, even were it all his flocks and herds, all his royal stores, nay, even the heir of his house—he was ready to offer, in order to accomplish the destruction of his dreaded enemies.

The three couplets containing Balak’s questions to the son of Bosor, which rise gradually in force, although clothed in the vivid colours of poetical exaggeration, are, nevertheless, most solemnly impressive ; the disappointed monarch meaning no more than that he was perfectly ready to make any sacrifice, however great, to obtain the favour of the Most High. See in what beautiful gradation the members of the couplets advance above each other. In the first verse, the royal interlocutor mentions those burnt-offerings generally which were made of the inferior animals appointed for sacrifice. In the next, we have something more valuable, “ calves of a year old,” but without reference to number. Then follow “ thousands of rams,” which are immediately succeeded by “ ten thousands of rivers of oil,” and the climax closes with the mention of the royal first-born, the successor to regal dignities and dominion, as a sacrifice for parental transgression. All this is clearly not the effect of an accidental enumeration of objects with the view of expressing a simple

determination, but a beautiful selection of graduated expressions, chosen for the purpose of throwing over the passage the radiant hues, combined with the fervid eloquence, of poetry.

But it may be asked how Balak came to be so great a poet, when no records of his genius are found in the Bible, and there is consequently nothing to lead to such an assumption. To this it may be replied that Balaam did not record the very words uttered by Balak, but simply the spirit of them, to which he imparted the graces of his own gifted mind, casting them into that mould of epic grandeur, of which the sentiments rendered them so eminently susceptible. Under this supposition we lose nothing of the truth of the king of Moab's declarations, by having them invested with the prismatic tints of poetry. Balaam, no doubt, drew up a narrative of the whole transaction, throwing it into a poetic form, but adding really no fiction to enhance the interest it was well calculated to excite among the posterities of those whom it so especially concerned.

Looking at this remarkable passage as a metrical composition, it appears to me to present one of the finest specimens of climax to be found in the sacred writings, in which examples of the highest order abound. It is worthy of observation how pointedly the contrast is exhibited in the last clause:—

Shall I give my first-born for my transgression,
The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

An offering of the dearest object in time, for

the salvation of the dearest object in eternity! Here is a fine specimen of gradational parallelism, the noblest production of the body to be offered for the lapse of the soul,—the *loss* of the one for the *gain* of the other. In addition to all this, how delicately is the harmony of the rhythm preserved and how admirably do the sentiments correspond with the character of Balak. The “burnt-offerings,” the “calves of a year old,” “thousands of rams,” and “ten thousands of rivers of oil,” are each and all trifles in comparison with the first-born son, as an oblation propitiatory of divine favour. How solemnly and affectingly does the subject close! And yet the disposition of the Moabitish sovereign is the more truly depicted by this emphatic question, than if he had made the strongest asseverations of ready acquiescence. The very energy of the passage carries with it an earnestness of persuasion altogether irresistible. It appears to import, as I have before intimated, that, in order to obtain the fulfilment of his execrable purpose, the extermination of those whom God had so signally favoured, he was not only willing, but prepared to undergo any privation, even to the immolation of his first-born son,—a sentiment of truculent insensibility, which sufficiently characterizes the ruthless temperament of this sanguinary but pusillanimous prince. ‘Will this justify me,’ he seems to ask, ‘in the sight of God—of that God whom I have so long affected to despise, but of whose supremacy I have now had signal proof? will this render that Omnipotent and everlasting Being, who can annihilate the universe by a

mere impulse of his will, at once favourable to my desires and myself acceptable in his sight? for I am prepared, nay, willing, to purchase the accomplishment of my desire at any cost, especially if such a sacrifice will obtain not only the consummation of my wishes, but, at the same time, expiate the sin of those wishes.'

Here the character of Balak is, as it were, incidentally produced before us in all its native ferocity and heartlessness. He is made himself to proclaim it, whilst apparently offering to God the profane tribute of his praise; for such praise as his, was indeed a profanation. He must have been the most abandoned of men.

I have before observed that, as a composition, this fragment is eminently beautiful. Nothing can more strikingly show the elevated notion entertained by Balak of the Divinity, of whom the idols which he had been accustomed to worship were at once a mockery and a profanation. Looking at it, as a poetical effusion, of the highest and most sacred character, we cannot fail to discover that it is the production of a singularly gifted mind. There is great sublimity in the opening distich, produced by the finely discriminated but distinct gradation of the parallels. The first clause characterizes the Lord Jehovah, in whom all the attributes of Deity are combined, concentrated and sustained. In the second, the sense is heightened by a simple, but expressive additament. Jehovah is here called the "High God"—God over all, the All-wise, the Everlasting, the Omnipotent. The parallelism, though varied, retains a

close relation in the first and second verses of the couplet, advancing with dignified augmentation of force to the highest grandeur of expression, “come,” “bow myself,” “the Lord” and “most high God,” being the corresponding terms; but in which an evident gradation of meaning is observable, showing how strong was the impression of Deity upon the royal heathen’s mind; and this had been decidedly produced by the great manifestation of divine power exhibited through Balaam’s agency. There is an involuntary reverence signified in this passage, certainly not rising out of Balaam’s desire to act contrary to the divine will, but in spite of it.

Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings,
With calves of a year old?

In this question the idea of absolute reverence is nothing abated, but carried on. As if he had said ‘God is so august that I can make him no sufficient offering—that is, none worthy of his dignity. I therefore ask you, his prophet, how I am to approach him in a way likely to render him favourable to my earnest appeals? Shall it be with burnt-offerings? Do you think that these will secure his favour, or any sacrifice recorded in the heathen ritual, however magnificent or multiplied?’

Shall I give my first-born for my transgression,
The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

Here is a noble couplet; it is powerfully expressive of the feelings, which, at that moment,

agitated the monarch's heart, and is truly a magnificent termination to this fine extract, which is pregnant with the inspirations of true poetry. In each hemistich every expression is fervid, in the highest degree, imparting an impulse of force to that which follows it, until the vehement questions of the king terminate in a grand and impressive close. There is a solemn earnestness pervading the entire passage, which raises it to the fervour of the sublimest eloquence; at the same time that it is placed in prominent opposition to the calm sobriety, but terse significancy of the prophet's reply, which is full of the dignity of an inspired oracle.

This reply is at once definitive. It contains the true character of a man after God's own heart, the very reverse of what Balak was, implying that such a man will be ever favourably heard by Him to whom the humble appeals of the holy are never made in vain, and who had distinguished the profligate Balaam with the gift of prophecy. It succinctly, though at the same time most impressively, enumerates the few but important qualities of a righteous man, whom the unholy prophet desires to be like in his death. It is a noble piece of spiritual teaching, although it emanated from the lips of a profane and wicked instructor.

He hath showed thee, O man! what is good,
And what doth the Lord require of thee,
But to do justly, and to love mercy,
And to walk humbly with thy God?

“Here,” says Bishop Butler,* “is a good man

* See his Sermon on the character of Balaam.

expressly characterized as distinct from a dishonest and superstitious man. No words can more strongly exclude dishonesty and falseness of heart, than doing justice and loving mercy; and both these, as well as walking humbly with God, are put in opposition to those ceremonial methods of recommendation which Balak hoped might have served the turn. From hence appears what he meant by the righteous whose death he desired to die."

We see in this answer to the Moabitish king, how the seer of Mesopotamia acting in the capacity of an accredited agent of the most high God, who, for purposes inscrutable to us, sometimes causes wicked agents to become the secondary means of good results, humbles the pride of his royal patron, levelling his dignity to that of the lowest among those over whom he held dominion.

He hath showed thee, O man ! what is good.

In these words, besides the humiliation to which the haughty monarch is brought by the vicarious agent of a higher authority,—an authority at once omnipotent and eternal,—is contained a covert, indeed, but severe rebuke of the royal transgressor. Balak is here named simply as one of his species, not as a member of that species especially distinguished by the marks of earthly exaltation. He is humbled, therefore, at the same time that he is rebuked.

He hath showed thee, O man ! what is good.

As the Deity had made manifest to Balak his proper course of action, that monarch was, unquestionably, the more reprehensible in persisting in his wicked designs against the Israelites who were God's chosen people, and in not acting up to the light which had already penetrated his heart. That he was an irreligious man, as well as a cowardly and vindictive tyrant, may safely be inferred from the prophet's reproachful reply; for the qualities which Balaam expresses as essential to the character of a righteous man were the very reverse of those exhibited by Balak, throughout the whole of the scenes in which Balaam had been engaged with him. The royal delinquent clearly acted against his better convictions, as is fully implied by the verses immediately following his appeal to the prophet; he had, consequently, no cloak for his sin, having been sufficiently instructed, by the suggestions of his own conscience, in that which is good; for the conscience is a teacher which, though its lessons are only whispered in a "still small voice" to the heart, speaks with greater force of truth and of conviction than the wisest homilies, or the most impressive axioms of moral wisdom.

He hath showed thee, O man! what is good.
 And what doth the Lord require of thee,
 But to do justly, and to love merey,
 And to walk humbly with thy God?

This is a very simple exercise of spiritual discipline. All the requisites here enumerated, however, Balak had obviously failed to apply:

the mention of them, therefore, was, in truth, a severe reproach, as it showed at once that he was not the righteous man whom a performance of those solemn obligations constituted. The king of Moab had certainly not done justly in bringing the prophet of Pethor all the way from Mesopotamia for a selfish and criminal purpose; neither had he exhibited any love of mercy in desiring him to curse an innocent people; nor could he be said to "walk humbly with his God," in commanding Balaam to bring evil upon those whom that God had so signally protected. Nothing could be more opposed to the character here given of a righteous man than the sovereign of Moab, who had betrayed qualities the very reverse to those enumerated by the prophet, as constituting such a man. All those traits of disobedience and insubordination, manifested by Balak in his non-observance of the obligations declared by the seer as forming a character approved of God, are, by inference, applied to the person who had promised to advance him to honour. They were made to convey the strongest animadversion upon Balak's conduct, not expressed indeed, but too evidently implied to be misunderstood. And observe how poetically the several particulars of the quatrain are distributed; each quality expressed as indispensable to the character of a righteous man, rising in solemn force and emphasis, until, as in the couplets immediately preceding, the whole ends in a magnificent climax. This is a common mode among the Hebrews of terminating their sacred com-

positions, as it is always calculated to leave the strongest impression upon the mind. The practice of justice, the exhibition of mercy, and veneration for the Divinity, are the great constituents of such a person, as it was the object of Balaam to describe. Those qualities combine the entire sum of righteousness, and are far more efficacious in bringing him into favourable communion with God than whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices. The mind of such a man must be essentially spiritualized, and thus fitted for the intromission of every new accession of good. There is a most unpretending, but nevertheless truly sublime simplicity preserved throughout this fragment, which is prodigiously elevated, not by the language, but by the sentiments, though the former is chastely choice and significantly simple. In the first couplet of Balaam's reply the immediate opposition of man and God is eminently happy, there being unusual force in the antithesis; both are mentioned without any qualification, the one appearing in his abstract nature of weakness and dependence, the other in his inaccessible character of omnipotence and everlasting supremacy. The lines which follow are every way worthy of the lines that precede them. This splendid record of Balaam's genius, whatever may have been his character as a man, will place him, as a poet, upon a level with the greatest writers of antiquity.

CHAPTER IX.

Difference of style observable in the various poetic portions of the Pentateuch. How these portions were probably preserved and transmitted. Opinions concerning them. The variation of style no argument against their inspiration. Different compositions of the Pentateuch contrasted. Ezekiel's prophecy against Egypt.

I HAVE already spoken of the difference of style observable in the various poetical portions of the five books of Moses, clearly showing that those portions were not the composition of one man, but of the several parties to whom they are ascribed in the inspired volume. Although the great Hebrew lawgiver does not mention the writers of the parts quoted by him as having actually produced them, but seems rather to record these passages as conveying the sentiments of, or as the revelations made to those parties, as is commonly the case in historical compositions, not produced under the influence of inspiration, in which the supposed sentiments of the characters are given rather than the precise words in which they were delivered; nevertheless, the extreme variation of style and difference of poetical treatment, will sufficiently show, that certain portions of the Pentateuch, such as the blessings of Noah, Isaac, and Jacob, were actually the productions of those severally

represented as giving utterance to them; these extraordinary effluences of the divine mind, through the human, having, no doubt, been preserved in the early patriarchal families and handed down, pure and unalloyed by oral tradition, as has been the case with numerous productions of the Celtic bards in ages long subsequent, but still remote by comparison with our own times. In the earlier periods of the world, we may well imagine that all productions, whether poetical or otherwise, to which importance was attached, were kept with extreme care by the descendants of those who composed them, as evidences of ancestral distinction; since it is natural for men to be proud of any memorial by which their forefathers have obtained repute. Even though written records did not exist, there could be no great difficulty in preserving the occasional creations of genius which beamed like rays of glory through an atmosphere of comparatively intellectual darkness; and in proportion to their rarity was the facility of conservation. Moses could have no difficulty, in the character which he sustained among the Israelites, as a lawgiver divinely commissioned and inspired, in having access to whatever existed among the families over whom he held, not only a political but likewise a spiritual control, likely either to improve or adorn the history which he was composing for their behoof: for although he wrote the Pentateuch under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, this did not prevent the introduction of matter, though produced long anterior to the time of his writing, and likewise dictated—that is the

matter though not the words in which it had been preserved—by the same Spirit.

In consequence of several parts of the Pentateuch being evidently not the composition of Moses, as I have already shown, some learned men, among whom were Le Clerc and Simon, have questioned his claim to the authorship of those books, but their conjectures upon this subject are so futile, and have been so frequently and ably confuted, that I shall not stay to prove the fact against them here. Of late years, however, “the question of the originals of the Pentateuch has been discussed with great acumen, and much critical investigation. The result seems to be, not that those documents were composed or arranged *since* the days of Moses, (except so far as concerns Ezra’s revision for his edition,) but that they existed *before* Moses, were combined and regulated by him—perhaps, even, some of them translated from more ancient memoirs, preserved in the families of Shem, Abraham, and the Hebrew patriarchs. As these came from a considerable distance east of the Euphrates, the objections derived from that incident are completely obviated by this supposition; and the others dwindle into insignificance by our better acquaintance with the ancient history of persons and places.

“It may be taken, for instance, first, that the book of Genesis contains sundry repetitions, or double narratives of the same early events. Secondly, that these duplicate narratives, when closely compared, present characteristic differences of style. Thirdly, that these differences

are too considerable, and too distinct to admit of any other explanation than that of different originals taken into association.”*

We can easily understand that Moses had access to any oral or written records existing in his time among the tribes over which he had been appointed supreme ruler, but how he obtained possession of the prophecies of Balaam, an enemy to the Hebrew race, and holding no intercourse with them, may not appear so readily obvious. I have, however, already offered a conjecture.† Although this fact cannot now be positively ascertained, it is nevertheless probable, that the prophet himself, actuated perhaps by the desire of posthumous reputation, really wrote them, in order that the Jews, a people whom he certainly foresaw would eventually become possessors of the soil, from which the king of Moab sought to expel them, might in process of time be informed how favourably he had spoken of them in his prophetic announcements to his royal patron, though under a divine impulse which he could neither resist nor control. This conjecture, proposed in a preceding chapter, will sufficiently account for the circumstance of Moses having become possessed of these sublime compositions, which are doubtless introduced into his history precisely as they were composed by the gifted son of Bosor, the renowned seer of Mesopotamia. Of these sacred songs, containing the loftiest truths of inspiration, the beauties are clear and definite,

* See additions to Calmet's Dict. of the Bible, art. Pentateuch.

Vol. ii. pp. 7 and 8.

even though examined through the less distinct medium of a translation, in which the specific character of the composition is apt to be confounded with that of some other rendered by the same hand, from the sentiments of the different writers thus passing, as it were, through the alembick of one mind ; nevertheless, with such a mighty impediment to the detection of extreme peculiarity of style, and direct identifications of thought, the difference is so palpable that no translation can disguise it, and there is not a single passage introduced into the five books of Moses, as uttered by individuals bearing a prominent part in those inspired writings, which does not show its own peculiar marks of identity. The prophetic portions are especially distinguished by these notations of individuality. They all carry upon the very face of them the strongest internal evidence of being the compositions of those persons whose names are attached to them by the inspired penman ; and thus it will appear that the variety of poetry is as great, even in the Pentateuch, as in a ponderous volume of modern anthology. The ordinary readers of the Bible, taking it for granted that every word contained in those sections of it of which Moses is the acknowledged author, was penned by him at the dictation of the Holy Spirit, perceive not those obvious varieties which, though less perceptible through the veil of a translation, are still broadly prominent to critical scrutiny in the Mosaic scriptures. They, consequently, not only do not appreciate many of the kindred beauties in those writings, but at the same

time fail to detect some of the strongest marks of that authenticity which, while it proves their originality, confirms their inspiration.

It is plain that Moses, under divine direction, introduced into his narrative whatever he found recorded in the families of the patriarchs, likely to throw any light upon the sacred history of the period: this will at once account for the frequent changes of style manifest in his writings; which changes are acknowledged by all Hebrew scholars of any pretensions to critical discrimination. Where, for instance, can be found a greater contrast than the fragment in the fourth chapter of Genesis, so severely simple in its style, and condensed in its language, containing Lamech's address to his wives, in which there is the absence of all ornament, and the rich, highly metaphorical and sublimely elevated prophecies of Jacob? The one is rigidly literal, the other eminently figurative; the one is utterly unembellished, the other splendidly decorated; the one is altogether destitute of rhetorical aid, the other enriched with the most picturesque imagery. And yet the elements of true poetry are alike preserved in both. In truth, the ordinary forms of prose composition belong to neither. In the one, simplicity is the character; in the other, deep mystical representation: the one records a past fact, founding a simple argument upon it, embraced in a single proposition; the other proclaims things to be by means of glowing and stupendous images, which represent rather than specify the future event.

A scarcely less decided contrast may be traced in the simple predictions of Noah and the more florid but more refined and symmetrical prophecies of Balaam, in which, as I have endeavoured to show, the happiest appliances of poetic skill are exhibited. Although in the latter we discover the highest attainments of art employed to array the conceptions of a profound and original genius, yet, in the former, we cannot fail to trace the endowments of a very extraordinary mind. Noah was unquestionably no ordinary man, and even in the short fragment which Moses has preserved of his ability as a poet, we perceive the elements of excellence which satisfy us that had he devoted his mind to metrical composition, he would have attained no ordinary rank among the Hebrew bards. Short as the account of him is in the sacred history, enough is said to show that he was not only a good, but a wise man. He was distinguished by God from his birth, and selected by him for the restitution of the world after its submersion by the deluge. He “was a just man, and perfect in his generations.—Noah walked with God.” According to the testimony of St. Peter,* he was “a preacher of righteousness;” and the brief narrative of his life sufficiently shows that he was a “doer” of it. All these facts prove his wisdom as well as his goodness, and, as I have said before, the brief specimen of his talents as a poet recorded by Moses, confirms the presumptive testimony, to be gathered from his short history in the writings of that

* 2 Peter ii. 5.

inspired legislator, that he was a man in the highest degree intellectually as well as spiritually endowed. His malediction and blessings, however, though unquestionably showing an advance upon the severer and more inartificial production of his immediate progenitor Lamech, are decidedly inferior in the loftier inspirations of poetry to the subsequent benedictions of Isaac, which are again exceeded in the rare qualifications of poetical excellence by those of his immediate descendant Jacob, and the still more eloquent, though less varied, and, perhaps upon the whole, less sublime effusions of the bard of Pethor. So that as we advance into times less primitive, when social and political communion had begun to be extensively diffused, we find the Hebrew poetry casting off, to a considerable extent, its stern and homely simplicity, and adopting the decorative graces of more refined periods. The gradual advance towards a highly ornate style, still retaining that remarkable condensation of thought and vigorous conciseness of expression, together with that exact concinnity so peculiar and concurrent in all the Hebrew poetical writings of the sacred volume, is strikingly observable from the plain effusion of Lamech to the compositions of the Psalmist, and thence to those of the prophets; among which are to be found the sublimest productions of inspiration. It is, moreover, worthy of remark, that notwithstanding the refinement and greater display of ornament by which the Hebrew poetry is distinguished as its authors approached to a period of more general civiliza-

tion, the same characteristics are to be traced, in its earliest specimens, as distinguish the latest; and if we make allowances for the improvement of time and circumstance, we shall discover the same intellectual pre-eminence in the prophecies of Noah, as in those of Jacob and Moses. In the former, there is wonderful condensation. A vast array of thought is evolved by the judicious application of a few simple terms, and the most fervid images arise to the mind, although those images which the poet has embodied into words are perfectly unadorned by the ornaments of mere expression. They are, however, the parents of others, which seem to rise out of them, as beautifully tinted blossoms from the embryo bud.

Speaking of these glorious productions of the patriarchal ages, which are still the admiration of the most enlightened minds, Herder says: * "In Tyre, Sidon, or Carthage, in a warlike state of Cyclops and cannibals, such poems were never sung, such simply sublime and divine thoughts never produced, as in this country of agriculturists and herdsmen, amidst mountains which toil and industry alone could render productive. The poetess Deborah was a dweller in tents, beneath the palm-trees; the Psalmist David was a shepherd; Amos was the same; and in all the prophets, the simplicity of rural nature, in their language and imagery, is too obvious to be mistaken. Whoever will, then, may choose the poetry of re-

* Spirit of Hebrew Poetry, vol. ii. p. 124.

finement and luxurious pride, but that which human nature finds adapted to its most indispensable wants, which it requires for support in its greatest trials and for its earliest development, cordial sympathy, simplicity, and dignity, are found in their fullest abundance in the ancient mature thoughts of patriarchal instruction."

The causes of that advance in the graces of literary composition manifested even in the days of Jacob, and brought to high perfection under Moses, may be readily apprehended. They are to be sought in the social changes consequent upon the residence of Abraham's descendants, among a people then singularly distinguished for their wisdom and refinement in the arts of life. Egypt, from the earliest epoch of its recorded history, was a country celebrated for its progress in intellectual cultivation, being, at the time of the sojourn in Goshen of the twelve patriarchs who subsequently became heads of the twelve Jewish tribes, the most classical country of the world, renowned alike for social and political pre-eminence. It was raised to the highest celebrity under Joseph, to whom it was indebted for many wise laws and judicious regulations, both financial and agrarian, and famed for the attainments of its population, both in the profounder sciences and more elegant arts. Though the wisdom of which it boasted was of that esoterick character from which all other nations have, for the space of more than three thousand years, been debarred by that selfish jealousy of national distinction, which was in

those earlier periods of the world the bane of civil communication, and consequently of social enlargement—though this wisdom was confined almost exclusively to its own districts, being wrapped up in the cryptick web of hieroglyphicks, its renown was, nevertheless, spread to the furthest regions of the earth; and although India continues to dispute with Egypt the palm of supremacy in primitive wisdom, it is certain, that, at the earliest period of its dark and fabulous annals, the latter country was the glory of the nations, both in political and intellectual pre-eminence. In this populous and gifted land, the descendants of the righteous Abraham no doubt derived many signal advantages from the learning of the people among whom they had been so kindly permitted to settle under the government of a generous potentate, who gave them a district to dwell in, and extended to them the protection of his wise and liberal legislation; and when we consider the comparatively general mental culture of the Egyptians, though the profounder mysteries of their religion and philosophy, being of a character grossly mythick, were committed exclusively to the investigation and exposition of their priests, who were therefore called magi or wise men—for although the magi, so far as is now known of them, were a sect peculiar to Persia, I believe them to have had their origin in Egypt*

* “That the *mysteries*,” says Warburton,† “were invented, established and supported by lawgivers, may be seen from the place of their original, which was EGYPT.” “Now, in Egypt, all religious wor-

† See Divine Legation, book ii. sec. 4.

—we at once cease to wonder that the prophecies of Jacob, who had dwelt among this highly endowed race seventeen years when he delivered them, should far transcend those of his father, who had never obtained any advantages of literary acquirement but what the humble tents of his parent supplied. There was a vast difference between the gorgeous splendour of Pharaoh's court and the domestic simplicity of Abraham's nomadic habitation; the one abounding in magnificence, the other remarkable for the utter absence of it.

In contemplating those contrasts in the temporal condition of man, which the Deity has thought fit to establish in this world of preparation for a better, I am involuntarily led to a beautiful little poem of Phineas Fletcher, a poet born in the latter part of the sixteenth century, and cousin to the celebrated dramatist of the same name, entitled, "The Poor Man to the Scornful Rich Man." It is so exquisitely beautiful, and of so earnestly devout a character, that, although not immediately connected with the subject under discussion, the reader will, nevertheless, I think, derive gratification from perusing it.

ship being planned and established by statesmen, and directed to the ends of civil polity, we must conclude that the mysteries were originally invented by legislators. The sages who brought them out of Egypt and propagated them in Asia, in Greece, and Britain, were all kings or lawgivers; such as ZOROASTER, Inachus, Orpheus Melampus, Trophonius, Minos, Cinyras, Erectheus, and the Druids." It is well known that Zoroaster, king of Bactria, was the originator of the magian superstition among the Persians, which Warburton clearly concludes he brought out of Egypt.

If well thou view'st us with no squinted eye,
 No partial judgment, thou wilt quickly rate
 Thy wealth no richer than my poverty,
 My want no poorer than thy rich estate :
 Our ends and births alike ; in this, as I,
 Poor thou wert born, and poor again shalt die.

My little fills my little-wishing mind ;
 Thou, having more than much, yet seekest more :
 Who seeks, still wishes what he seeks to find ;
 Who wishes, wants ; and whoso wants, is poor ;
 Then this must follow of necessity,—
 Poor are thy riches, rich my poverty.

Though still thou gett'st, yet is thy want not spent,
 But, as thy wealth, so grows thy wealthy itch ;
 But with my little, I am much content—
 Content hath all ; and who hath all, is rich :
 Then this in reason thou must needs confess,
 If I have little, yet that thou hast less.

Whatever man possesses, God hath lent,
 And to his audit liable is ever,
 To reckon how, and when, and where he spent ;
 Then this thou braggest—thou art a great receiver.
 Little my debt, when little is my store,—
 The more thou hast, thy debt still grows the more.

But seeing God himself descended down
 To enrich the poor by his rich poverty ;
 His meat, his house, his grave, were not his own,
 Yet all is his from all eternity :
 Let me be like my head, whom I adore !
 Be thou great, wealthy,—I still base and poor.

This is one of those beautiful things which may claim a place beside the still brighter gems of Hebrew poetry. Although inferior, it is nevertheless of a rare order of excellence.

Having said so much of the political and intellectual supremacy of Egypt under the first Pharaohs, and indeed up to the time of the overthrow of that Pharaoh “ who knew not Joseph,” and his multitudinous army in the

Red Sea, and more especially as I am upon the subject of Hebrew poetry, I cannot refrain from quoting that magnificent prophecy of Ezekiel* against Egypt, which in the issue so signally came to pass.

Thus saith the Lord God ;

Behold, I am against thee, Pharaoh, king of Egypt :

The great dragon that lieth in the midst of his rivers, which hath said
My river is mine own, and I have made it for myself.

But I will put hooks in thy jaws,

And I will cause the fish of thy rivers to stick unto thy scales,

And I will bring thee up out of the midst of thy rivers,

And all the fish of thy rivers shall stick unto thy scales.

And I will leave thee thrown into the wilderness,

Thee and all the fish of thy rivers :

Thou shalt fall upon the open fields ;

Thou shalt not be brought together, nor gathered :

I have given thee for meat to the beasts of the field

And to the fowls of the heaven.

And all the inhabitants of Egypt shall know that I am the Lord,

Because they have been a staff of reed to the house of Israel.

When they took hold of thee by the hand,

Thou didst break, and rend all their shoulder :

And when they leaned upon thee, thou brakest,

And madest all their loins to be at a stand.

Therefore, thus saith the Lord God ;

Behold, I will bring a sword upon thee,

And cut off man and beast out of thee.

And the land of Egypt shall be desolate and waste ;

And they shall know that I am the Lord :

Because he hath said, the river is mine, and I have made it.

Behold, therefore, I am against thee, and against thy rivers,

And I will make the land of Egypt utterly waste and desolate,

From the tower of Syene even unto the border of Ethiopia.

No foot of man shall pass through it, nor foot of beast

Shall pass through it, neither shall it be inhabited forty years.

And I will make the land of Egypt desolate

In the midst of the countries that are desolate,

And her cities among the cities that are laid waste

Shall be desolate forty years :

And I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations,

And will disperse them through the countries.

Yet thus saith the Lord God ; at the end of forty years

Will I gather the Egyptians from the people whither they were scattered :

And I will bring again the captivity of Egypt,
And will cause them to return into the land of Pathros,
Into the land of their habitation ; and they shall be there a base kingdom.

It shall be the basest of the kingdoms ;

Neither shall it exalt itself any more above the nations,
For I will diminish them, that they shall no more rule over the nations.
And it shall be no more the confidence of the house of Israel,

Which bringeth their iniquity to remembrance,

When they shall look after them :

And they shall know that I am the Lord.

CHAPTER X.

*The prophetic ode in the thirty-second chapter of
Deuteronomy considered.*

THE next composition to which I shall direct the reader's attention, is the prophetic ode written by Moses, and contained in the thirty-second chapter of Deuteronomy. Of this sublime composition Bishop Lowth says†—"The exordium is singularly magnificent: the plan and conduct of the poem is just, natural, and well accommodated to the subject; for it is almost in the order of an historical narration. It embraces a variety of the sublimest subjects and sentiments; it displays the truth and justice of God, his paternal love, and his unfailing tenderness to his chosen people; and, on the other hand, their ungrateful and contumacious spirit. The ardour of divine indignation and the heavy denunciations of vengeance are afterwards expressed in a remarkable personification, which is scarcely to be paralleled from all the choicest treasures of the Muses. The fervour of wrath is however tempered with the milder beams of lenity and mercy, and ends at last in promises and consolation. The subject and

* Twenty-eighth Praelection.

style of this poem bear so exact a resemblance to the prophetic as well as to the lyric compositions of the Hebrews, that it unites all the force, energy, and boldness of the latter, with the exquisite variety and grandeur of imagery so peculiar to the former."

This praise from the first Hebrew scholar of his age and country, himself too a poet of a high order, will be fully borne out when we come to look at the poem in detail. It will then be seen how much persons have lost who, claiming to possess a refined taste for poetry, seek for the sublimest specimens of it only in heathen poets, and in the writings of those of our own country to whom posterity has given a place only second to names consecrated by the prolonged reputation of ages. I am in hopes to be able to show that no production of a heathen or christian pen can pretend to the most distant competition, in the higher aims of poetical excellence, with this transcendent composition of the Hebrew law-giver; and the only wonder is, how so many who are constantly reading it, fail to discover those beauties which,—as the sunbeams spread their glories round the entire circle of the horizon, filling the whole expanse of the mighty circumference,—absorb the mind of the reader, who has the taste to discriminate and the heart to feel, with their rich and resplendent lustre.

A number of versions have been made of this immortal ode, which may be pronounced the most perfect thing of its kind existing. It has suffered greatly from the carelessness of transcribers, no less than from the pretended im-

provements of translators, and I think, upon the whole, the authorized version of it has never been exceeded. Though it sometimes does not give a very clear sense, it is generally remarkably spirited and faithful. In this poem all the grand characteristics of Hebrew poetry are exhibited. Whoever wishes to satisfy himself concerning the true character and genius of its inspired author, let him read this sublime ode. "It consists of sentences, pointed, energetic, concise, and splendid; but the sentences are truly elevated and sublime, the language bright and animated, the expression and phraseology uncommon; while the mind of the poet never continues fixed to any single point, but glances continually from one object to another. These remarks are of such a nature that the diligent reader will apprehend them better by experience and his own observation, than by means of any commentary or explanation whatever."*

"I have yet to place before you," says Herder,† "the soul of Moses, severe, full of zeal, and borne down with anxiety, even to death, in his last glowing and poetical effusion. What his deeds, his institutions, his descriptions, and his other poems have produced, we shall inquire in the sequel; but in this poem, the images that surround you are the flaming mountain, the fiery and cloudy pillars which went before Israel, and in them the angel of the countenance of Jehovah."

* Lowth's 15th Prælec. † Spirit of Hebrew Poetry, vol. i. p. 279.

The following is our common Bible version
of this prophetic song, broken into hemistichs:—

Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak ;
 And hear, O earth, the words of my mouth.
 My doctrine shall drop as the rain,
 My speech shall distil as the dew,
 As the small rain upon the tender herb,
 And as the showers upon the grass :
 Because I will publish the name of the Lord :
 Ascribe ye greatness unto our God.
 He is the Rock, his work is perfect :
 For all his ways are judgment :
 A God of truth and without iniquity,
 Just and right is he.
 They have corrupted themselves,
 Their spot is not the spot of his children :
 They are a perverse and crooked generation.
 Do ye thus requite the Lord,
 O foolish people and unwise ?
 Is not he thy father that hath bought thee ?
 Hath he not made thee, and established thee ?
 Remember the days of old,
 Consider the years of many generations :
 Ask thy father, and he will show thee ;
 Thy elders, and they will tell thee.
 When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance,
 When he separated the sons of Adam,
 He set the bounds of the people
 According to the number of the children of Israel.
 For the Lord's portion is his people ;
 Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.
 He found him in a desert land,
 And in the waste howling wilderness ;
 He led him about, he instructed him,
 He kept him as the apple of his eye.
 As an eagle stirreth up her nest,
 Fluttereth over her young,
 Spreadeth abroad her wings ;
 Taketh them, beareth them on her wings ;
 So the Lord alone did lead him,
 And there was no strange god with him.
 He made him ride on the high places of the earth,
 That he might eat the increase of the fields ;
 And he made him to suck honey out of the rock,
 And oil out of the flinty rock ;
 Butter of kine, and milk of sheep,
 With fat of lambs, and rams of the breed of Bashan,

And goats, with the fat of kidneys of wheat;
 And thou didst drink the pure blood of the grape.
 But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked :
 Thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick,
 Thou art covered with fatness ;
 Then he forsook God which made him,
 And lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation.
 They provoked him to jealousy with strange gods,
 With abominations provoked they him to anger.
 They sacrificed unto devils, not to God ;
 To gods whom they knew not,
 To new gods that came newly up,
 Whom your fathers feared not.
 Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful,
 And hast forgotten God that formed thee.
 And when the Lord saw it, he abhorred them,
 Because of the provoking of his sons, and of his daughters.
 And he said, I will hide my face from them,
 I will see what their end shall be :
 For they are a very froward generation,
 Children in whom is no faith.
 They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God ;
 They have provoked me to anger with their vanities :
 And I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people ;
 I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.
 For a fire is kindled in mine anger,
 And shall burn unto the lowest hell,
 And shall consume the earth with her increase,
 And set on fire the foundations of the mountains.
 I will heap mischiefs upon them ;
 I will spend mine arrows upon them.
 They shall be burnt with hunger,
 And devoured with burning heat,
 And with bitter destruction :
 I will also send the teeth of beasts upon them,
 With the poison of serpents of the dust.
 The sword without, and terror within,
 Shall destroy both the young man and the virgin,
 The suckling also, with the man of gray hairs.
 I said I would scatter them into corners,
 I would make the remembrance of them to cease from among men :
 Were it not that I feared the wrath of the enemy,
 Lest their adversaries should behave themselves strangely,
 And lest they should say, our hand is high,
 And the Lord hath not done all this.
 For they are a nation void of counsel,
 Neither is there any understanding in them.
 O that they were wise,

That they understood this,
 That they would consider their latter end!
 How should one chase a thousand,
 And two put ten thousand to flight,
 Except their Rock had sold them,
 And the Lord had shut them up?
 For their rock is not as our Rock,
 Even our enemies themselves being judges.
 For their vine is of the vine of Sodom,
 And of the fields of Gomorrah :
 Their grapes are grapes of gall, their clusters are bitter.
 Their wine is the poison of dragons,
 And the cruel venom of asps.
 Is not this laid up in store with me,
 And sealed up among my treasures ?
 To me belongeth vengeance and recompense ;
 Their foot shall slide in due time :
 For the day of their calamity is at hand,
 And the things that shall come upon them make haste.
 For the Lord shall judge his people,
 And repent himself for his servants,
 When he seeth that their power is gone,
 And there is none shut up, or left.
 And he shall say, Where are their gods,
 Their rock in whom they trusted,
 Which did eat the fat of their sacrifices,
 And drank the wine of their drink-offerings?
 Let them rise up and help you,
 And be your protection.
 See now that I, even I, am he,
 And there is no god with me :
 I kill, and I make alive ;
 I wound, and I heal :
 Neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand.
 For I lift up my hand to heaven,
 And say, I live for ever.
 If I whet my glittering sword,
 And mine hand take hold on judgment ;
 I will render vengeance to mine enemies,
 And will reward them that hate me.
 I will make mine arrows drunk with blood,
 And my sword shall devour flesh ;
 And that with the blood of the slain and of the captives,
 From the beginning of revenges upon the enemy.
 Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people :
 For he will avenge the blood of his servants,
 And will render vengeance to his adversaries,
 And will be merciful unto his land and to his people.

CHAPTER XI.

The prophetic ode continued.

A CAREFUL perusal of this magnificent composition, if it be accompanied with even an ordinary perception of the beautiful, cannot fail to make manifest its rare qualities. The intellectual reader will detect in every verse some beauty worthy of the genius of a man, not only divinely inspired, but who has proved himself to be endowed with surprising powers of intellect, as his thanksgiving ode, after the passage of the Red Sea, sufficiently demonstrates.

The bard commences the sublime song which we are now to examine with a solemn obtestation, first to heaven, then to earth; the former to sanction what he is about to deliver, the latter to receive it as a communication from the source of eternal wisdom. The solemn grandeur of this invocation is worthy of the transcendent composition of which it forms a part; being the opening of a brief, indeed, but elegant and impressive exordium. The parallelism in this proemial couplet is better maintained by Herder than by our translators. He reads the passage,

Give ear, O ye heavens, to my speech;
Hear, O earth, the words of my mouth.

According to this distribution of the corres-

ponding terms, instead of the parallelism being strictly gradational, it is retrogradational, that is, it does not advance but recedes in force. 'Give ear' is a more emphatic expression than 'hear,' the one implying excess of attention, as if he had said, 'O ye blest inhabitants of heaven, deign to give your undivided notice,' the other signifying simply the ordinary act of listening;—the former is the superlative, the latter the positive of the same action. Thus it will appear that, although these expressions have a specific relation in sense, they exhibit altogether an inverse ratio of force.

Although at the first view the second pair of parallel terms may appear to be synonymous, a nearer scrutiny will nevertheless show them to be very different. The one set of terms is general, the other specific; and here the exquisite discrimination and elevated taste of the poet are singularly remarkable. In the first hemistich, the hosts of heaven are invoked to listen to his speech, generally, that is, without any particular specification;—in short, to the *import* of what he was about to deliver. The mere graces of human eloquence and the adornments of poetry could have no charm for the celestial ministrants, who saw no beauty in words specially adapted to the capacities of human agents, but without which the communications of divine wisdom could not be proclaimed. The heavenly powers then are besought to give ear to the sacred revelations which Moses had been inspired to proclaim to those upon earth, whose conversion from sin to holiness caused

joy even among their blessed communities. The inhabitants of earth, for whose immediate benefit this divine hymn was composed, are next called upon by its inspired author, to listen to "the words of his mouth." Moses had arrayed the heavenly truths which he was commissioned by the Holy Spirit of God to unfold, in language at once impressive and sublime. All the graces of poetry, of which he was so perfect a master, were employed to adorn those celestial communications. The most elegant and persuasive arts of rhetorick had been enlisted to give no less beauty than force to the oracles contained in this prophetic song. Its author, therefore, bids his hearers listen with the deepest interest, not only to its wisdom, but likewise to the expressions by which that wisdom is imparted, to mark the eloquence and poetic grandeur of the composition, as well as the infallible revelation which it promulgates; for this they could only receive through the words spoken, where as the principalities and powers of heaven needed no such vehicles of communication.

In applying the more emphatic term "give ear" to heaven, the poet's main object probably was merely to give its due effect to the parallelism. The solemnity of the invocation requiring that a word of greater emphasis should be employed in connection with the superior object "heaven" than with the inferior object "earth," it was used by the inspired bard without losing sight of the artifice by which he intended to embellish his solemn obtestation of both. The phrases are applied with a delicate perception

of effective adaptation. It is, indeed, true, that it did not require deeper attention in angels than in men to become acquainted with the subject of the poet's song, still it must be conceded that in a production in which the adornments of poetic eloquence were, without doubt, carefully considered, the more dignified expression better became the former than the latter, and was consequently so applied by Moses, as I conceive, because it more effectively advanced the structure of his verse and the expressive elegance of his phraseology, than if a different order of composition had been observed. We now cannot fail to recognise the skill of the writer, no less than the profound wisdom of the legislator ; and above all, the exalted inspiration of the prophet.

Bishop Lowth, who has thrown more light upon the intricate subject of Hebrew poetry and shown a more accurate perception of its beauties than any writer before him, has rendered with great felicity the quatrain, following the opening couplet of this song. He reads it as follows :—

My doctrine shall drop as the rain ;
 My language shall alight like the dew :
 As the small rain upon the tender herb ;
 And like the thick drops upon the grass.

In these lines there is an evident hyerbaton, though the alternation of the parallel clauses is not so distinctly preserved by our translators as by Bishop Lowth ; the former, it is probable, not being aware of the peculiar construction of this passage. The word “showers,” which they employ, does not appear to be parallel with

“dew,” although it really is so, while the “thick drops” used by Lowth have a very striking correspondency, showing a kindred, though not a synonymous sense. How justly and with what nice discernment are the two first hemistichs adapted to the two preceding clauses forming the invocation, which has been already considered, “doctrine” being in direct parallelism with the concluding terms of the first, and “language” with those of the second hemistich. As if the prophet had said—‘Give ear, O ye hosts of heaven, to my speech,’ that is, to the *doctrine* which Jehovah has commissioned me to proclaim; ‘and hear, O ye inhabitants of earth, the words of my mouth!—mark, and treasure up in your memories likewise the *language* in which I am about to deliver the oracles of God.’

Herder gives much the same reading as Bishop Lowth to the two first lines of the quatrain. Neither of these versions can scarcely be said to differ from that of our Bibles. The German rendering is—

My doctrine shall drop as the rain ;
My *words* shall distil as the dew.

I have already remarked that there is an obvious hyperbaton in the quatrain we are now examining. It will be observed that the strict consecution of sense, which is interrupted though without being obstructed by the parallelism, is traceable in the alternate lines: the clauses, therefore, disposed in their most natural order according to the immediate relation of the phrases, would stand thus:—

My doctrine shall drop as the rain—
 As the small rain upon the tender herb ;
 My language shall alight like the dew,
 And like the thick drops upon the grass.

Here are two comparisons bearing as strong an analogy of relation as apparently to render them almost identical, yet displaying so fine a distinction as clearly to exhibit their individuality ; the bard's "doctrine" being compared to rain, which fertilizes, and his "language" to dew, which not only fertilizes but adorns : for let any admirer of the beauties of nature look at a landscape through those thin mists formed by a rapid evaporation of the dews upon the herbage and trees, under the influence of the morning sun ; let him observe the sunbeams reflected in myriads of vivid and fantastic scintillations from *the thick drops upon the grass*, and verdant foliage of the landscape ;—let him notice the fresh and grateful verdure presented under the moist covering, which throws over it a rich transparent bloom, the vigorous life that everywhere prevails in the vegetable kingdom before him, the becoming drapery which appears to invest the whole scene, and he can scarcely fail to acknowledge the beauty no less than the fecundity derived from the refreshing dews of heaven.

I beg leave to direct the reader's attention to the admirable propriety of the terms in this eloquent passage, and he will, I am satisfied, at once perceive what a consummate master Moses was of the various resources of language, an acquirement which belongs exclusively to talent of the rarest order, for language being the vehicle of

communicating thought can only be rendered capable of placing it in its most favourable aspect by superior minds. This is one of the great triumphs of genius.

My doctrine shall *drop* as the rain ;
My language shall *alight* like the dew.

How felicitous are these comparisons and how beautifully distinguished ! My “doctrine,” he says, shall have the force of rain which falls direct to the earth by its own gravity ; it shall at once meet the perceptions of those who hear it, and produce the most beneficial effects. Like the dew that expands over the land in imperceptible vapour and gently settling upon the trees and herbage, gathers into “thick drops” which fructify while they adorn the landscape, my “language” shall fall agreeably upon the ear, carrying with encreased effect to the mind and heart those divine truths which my words are employed to convey.

The parallelisms in the distich are not gradational but cognate, in the strictest sense of the word ; they do not advance in force, but show, as it were, a kindred alliance : nevertheless, the corresponding terms, notwithstanding this closer relationship, are so elegantly varied as to impart the charm of variety in its most agreeable form, each phrase suggesting its own peculiar hues of thought, all these so beautifully melting into one harmonious whole as to leave a perfectly graphic impression upon the imagination, the entire meaning being seen as in a skilfully disposed picture. There is so equable a libration

of the clauses that they appear moulded upon the nicest prescripts of art, the presence of which is only perceptible from the consummate symmetry of arrangement displayed; they are adjusted with so near an equalization that the one seems in the reading a fine echo of the other, nor can this exact beauty of proportion well fail to arrest a critical scrutiny, whilst the poetical structure is too prominent to escape the most obtuse perception. Observe how the comparisons rise in the corresponding verses of the quatrain, that is, in the alternate lines:—

My doctrine shall drop as the rain,
As the *small* rain upon the tender herb.

‘My doctrine shall not only drop as the rain that descends in a rapid shower, and then passes, but as the small or *continuous* rain which falls upon the tender grass, supplying it with necessary and perpetual nourishment.’

My language shall alight like the dew,
Like the *thick* drops upon the grass.

‘My language shall not merely extend its influence like the dew which floats over the surface of the soil, falling gently upon the surrounding vegetation; but as the same dew when it has become condensed into “thick drops” imparts a germinating energy to the herbage on which it has descended, making its way to the roots and thus supplying them with the fructifying principle, so shall what I am about to deliver, clothed in the most captivating graces of expression, sink into the hearts of those who hear

it, and give a quickening impulse to that spiritual perception which else would lose its vital energy, and become insufficient to sustain the soul in its laborious flight to the everlasting beatitude of heaven.'

These comparisons are the more consistent from the well-known fact, that, in the east, during the prevalence of the periodical rains, which continue with scarcely any intermission for many weeks, the land only receives the necessary quantity of moisture for the harvest of invariable abundance that almost immediately ensues; in fact, this continuous rain, which seldom fails at these regular intervals of supply, after a long period of drought, is absolutely necessary to saturate the soil so long desiccated by the ardent rays of a tropical sun, over which for days together no cloud interposes its welcome shelter. The dews descending copiously during the night in those climes where the solar influence is often destructive, not only of vegetable but of animal life, alight upon the jungles, or eastern forests, and being gathered into "thick drops," are received in the broad foliage of the trees; being there accumulated, they fall upon the soil beneath, thus supplying the requisite aliment without which, during at least three fourths of the year, the vegetation must entirely cease.

The comparisons then employed by Moses, in a region under such different conditions of nature from those by which not only our own country but a large portion of the habitable world is governed, were particularly appro-

priate, and would, as a matter of course, be readily appreciated by those to whom they were addressed; upon their minds the impression of that influence, inseparable from the revelation he was about to promulgate in prophetic song, would be strong in proportion to their consciousness of the importance of those two agents of fecundity, rain and dew, in a climate where moisture was so absolutely essential to the common wants as well as to the more pressing necessities of the multitudinous population. Mr. Roberts, in his "Oriental Illustrations of Scripture,"* has a very good note on the passage now under examination.

"Oriental writers," he says, "often speak of beautiful language as *dropping* upon the hearers. The Hebrew has for 'prophecy' (Micah ii. 6,) the term *drop*. The same word is used for drops of rain, for tears, or for the dew dropping from flowers. When a man has received consolation from another, he says, 'his words were like rain upon the parched corn.' Of a beautiful speaker and an appropriate subject, it is said, 'Ah! his speech is like the honey rain, upon the *pandal* bower of sugar.'"

The Jerusalem Targum thus paraphrases the whole passage. "Let the doctrine of my law be as sweet upon the children of Israel as the rain, and the words of my mouth be received as the delectable dew; let it be as gentle showers refreshing the grass, and as the drops of the latter rain descending and watering the blades

* Page 129.

of corn in the month of march.” This is a good general sense, though the poetical construction is lost sight of by the Targumist, so much so that we are led to conclude the learned paraphrast did not perceive it, or if he did, he probably thought it secondary to the main object of the inspired author, and was, therefore, only desirous of enforcing the sense of what Moses had here written, not anxious to distinguish its peculiar graces of composition.

The couplet which follows closes the exordium of this magnificent ode :—

Because I will publish the name of the Lord :
Ascribe ye greatness unto our God.

Herder has given great dignity to this distich, merely by a slight variation of the principal term, and by repeating it in the second line :—

For I will publish the name of Jehovah—
Ascribe ye greatness to Jehovah, our God.

That is, ‘ ascribe all the attributes of perfection to the Deity, whom we, the Hebrews, worship, who is not, like the dumb divinities of the heathens, a monstrous fabrication of wood and stone, but the Almighty and everlasting Jehovah—“ the Lord of all power and might,” whom we the seed of Abraham are bound to adore. He has signally manifested his power, in delivering us from the hands of Pharaoh ; his might, in dividing the Red Sea, and overwhelming the hosts of that tyrannical potentate ; his love, in leading us through the wilderness to that promised land

of which the posterity of Jacob shall shortly take possession.'

The distinction here is remarkable. Moses does not desire his auditors to ascribe greatness to God, but to JEHOVAH, especially *their* God, because the heathens likewise ascribed greatness to the Divinity, but mistook him. They saw him through "the clouds and darkness" of superstition, which transformed him from an intangible essence into a palpable substance of repelling deformity. They symbolized his attributes under the monstrous types of human infirmity, thus degrading him to a level with the lowest objects of his vast creation. The inspired poet, therefore, does not demand a mere general acknowledgment of divine greatness, but a particular and solemn ascription of universal potency to that unerring Divinity of the Hebrews, "who is God, and none else," in contradistinction to the idols of the Canaanites, who were nothing but senseless matter. The Israelites had received abundant proofs of the omnipotence of Jehovah in the numerous miracles wrought for their deliverance, both in Egypt and in the wilderness, their entire march from the Red Sea to the borders of Canaan being one continued scene of providential interposition. Moses, therefore, simply called upon his countrymen who had but too often manifested a most intemperate proclivity to rebellion, to perform, in the present instance, an act of gratitude, in making public confession of the wonders wrought by the Deity in their behalf, that by ascribing greatness, or omnipotence, to Him

alone, they might at once proclaim the impotency of the factitious deities of Canaan, by the very act of showing the supremacy of Jehovah, they being contemptible in proportion as He was pre-eminent.

When the prophetic bard had declared,

My doctrine shall drop as the rain,
My speech shall distil as the dew,

in order to show why such an effect must result from what he is about to deliver, he at once proclaims the subject of his song,—

Because I will publish the name of the Lord;

That is, ‘I will tell of his infinite power, of his ineffable wisdom, of his eternal majesty. I will declare the marvellous acts of his providence in favour of Israel, his chosen. My song shall be of Him who alike governs heaven and earth, whose wisdom directs and sustains the universe; to whom the worship of his peculiar people, whom he has brought out of great tribulation, is so justly and so entirely due.’

The gifted bard was fairly justified in assuming the influence of his doctrine, the persuasiveness of his eloquence, and the marvellous effect of his poetry, when inspired by such a theme of imposing solemnity; and justly has he established his claim to the distinction which he here asserts.

‘I am about,’ he says, ‘to make the Lord Jehovah, who delivered you and myself out of that hard bondage to which we should have probably been subjected in the land of Egypt to

the end of time, the subject of my song; and, therefore, now call upon you, in consideration of what he has done for you in the place of your captivity and in the country of the heathen—

Ascribe ye greatness to Jehovah, our God.

Confess his omnipotence, his universal sovereignty, his abounding mercy, and make him the sole object of your worship.'

Here closes the exordium of this magnificent ode, though Dr. Hales considers that the introductory portion extends to the termination of the fifth verse. He observes that "this majestic vindication of the tutelar God of Israel with his chosen people consists of six parts. The first opens with an animated summons to the inhabitants of heaven and earth, to angels and men, or the whole rational creation to listen to the prophet's wholesome and refreshing discourse, contrasting the veracity and justice of God with the iniquity and ingratitude of his people. This forms the introduction to the whole poem, from the first verse to the end of the fifth."

I confess, to me it appears, that the introductory portion of this prophetic ode terminates with the fourth couplet; for in the fifth he enters upon the subject of the poem by contrasting the divine goodness with human ingratitude, which is the prominent feature of this extraordinary effusion of a most highly gifted mind.

It was the opinion of Josephus that the entire poem was composed in hexameter verse. His words are these:—"This was the form of political government which was left to us by Moses.

Moreover he had already delivered laws in writing in the fortieth year after he came out of Egypt, concerning which we will discourse in another book. But now, in the following days,—for he called them to assemble continually,—he delivered blessings to them, and curses upon those who should not live according to the laws, but should transgress the duties that were determined for them to observe. After this he read to them a prophetic song, which was composed in hexameter verse, and left it to them in the holy book; it contained a prediction of what was to come to pass afterwards. Agreeably whereto all things have happened all along, and do still happen to us; and wherein he has not at all deviated from the truth.”*

Although this affirmation of Josephus, so confidently made, namely, that the production of the Hebrew lawgiver to which he refers was written in hexameter verse, cannot be sustained, it is nevertheless a remarkable fact, that the third and fourth lines of the proem form together a perfect verse of this kind, as rendered in our version, as will be seen by marking the feet thus:—

My—doc | trine—shall—drop | as—the—rain; | my—speech | shall—
distil | as—the—dew.

This, it is true, does not form the ordinary classic hexameter, of which the first four feet may be either dactyls or spondees; the fifth foot being generally a dactyl, and the sixth invariably a spondee, as in the following line of Horace:—

* Ant. book iv. chap. 8.

Aut pro | desse vo | lunt, aut | delec | tare po | etæ.

The hexameter produced by our translators, no further corresponds with this metrical arrangement than as it forms a verse of six feet, these feet being anapæsts and iambuses; still it is certain that a perfect rhythm is established, and that the two clauses form a regularly metrical line. Although those learned men who completed our authorized translation of the Bible were probably, in this instance, not aware of having wrought out an hexameter; that very probability will, however, give us the stronger reason to infer that they were led into this symmetrical distribution of the phrases by the artificial and enphonious construction of the original.

CHAPTER XII.

The prophetic ode continued.

I IMAGINE the poem itself to commence with the following passage, which emphatically proclaims the divine attributes:—

He is the Rock, his work is perfect :
For all his ways are judgment :
A God of truth and without iniquity,
Just and right is he.

Maimonides observes,* that the word in the first hemistich of this passage translated rock, signifies fountain, origin, first cause ; he therefore reads the line—

He is the First Cause, his work is perfect.

The common reading, however, presents a congruous and sublime image, justly applicable to the Deity, whose truth is immutable and his attributes eternal.

“ The image of a rock,” says Herder,† “ so frequent in this piece as almost to lose its figurative character, was undoubtedly taken from Sinai and the rocks of Arabia, among which Israel had so long wandered. On Mount Sinai the covenant was made, and on the part

* More Nevochim, chap. xvi. † Spirit of Hebrew Poetry, vol. i. p. 280.

of God it was enduring as the everlasting rocks." He gives a very intelligible and elegant reading, in substance the same as our translators:—

He is a Rock, his work is perfect,
And all his dealings are right ;
A God of truth, without iniquity—
Sincere and righteous is he.

Father Houbigant proposes the following, rejecting with Maimonides the term rock, and giving an interpretation consentaneous with that of the learned rabbi :—

The works of the Creator are perfect,
For all his ways are regularly established.
He is a faithful God and immutable:
He is just and also unchangeable.

I do not, however, think that either this or Herder's version presents the stern but vigorous simplicity of our authorized translation. There is a colossal strength about it, which is rendered the more apparent by the employment of the most ordinary terms, and from the almost entire absence of embellishment, this occurring only in the first line, in which there is a striking similitude. The opening image is indeed one of gigantic dimensions, and none could have been more appropriately chosen from the vast or grand in nature. "God is the rock." This is a type of stability, power, and duration. It maintains its position, its qualities, its character, through the whole course of time, unchanged by circumstance, uninfluenced by revolutions, untouched by years. Storms pass over it, but it remains unmoved. The waves of the ocean

dash against, but do not upheave it. It stands firm and immoveable amid the lapse as well as amid the contingencies of ages and the ravages of decay, still fixed in the earth upon its own everlasting foundation, speaking relatively to finite things, and only to be subverted "when there shall be time no longer." God is all and much more than this type of him represents. He is omnipotent, unchangeable, eternal, perfect in goodness and truth, "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

It is but fair to state, in justification of Houbigant's interpretation, that the Septuagint, the Samaritan, Arabic, and Syriac versions, together with the Vulgate, concur in rendering the original word God, interpreted by our translators "rock." It appears to me to signify little, so far as the sense is concerned, whether the term "rock" or "the Creator" be employed, as they both signify the same thing, the one typically, the other literally, characterizing the Deity.

The ingenious reader cannot fail to perceive, that in each of the versions given of this passage the usual form of parallelism is shown to exist, but I think it must be allowed that the gradational advance of meaning is more distinctly shown in the first, which is the common English version, than in either of the other two, though both Houbigant and Herder were obviously aware of its existence. The phrases are much more happily varied than in Houbigant's version especially, being cognate but neither synonymous nor equivalent; they are more than either. The parallel terms in the first couplet

are “his work is perfect” and “his ways are judgment.” That is, ‘whatever he does necessarily partakes of his perfection, consequently cannot possibly be subject to any defect, the whole course of his providence being directed by the most infallible judgment, and by the most consummate wisdom.’ There is not then a repetition of the same thought in the first and second hemistichs; but the latter rises above the former in weight of importance, if not in force of signification. The former refers to God’s dispensations in time, the latter to the universal and abstract character of his providence. The one relates to his “works,” the other to his “ways,” that is, to his acts and will. Whatever he does is perfect, for it is the issue of an unerring and all-wise determination. In these two short hemistichs the *cause* and the *consequence* are exhibited with marvellous impressiveness and felicity of expression. God’s “works” are visible, his “ways” are invisible; yet both are always operating in the production of good. Thus it will appear that in these brief but expressive clauses the corresponding phrases rise in a beautiful ascent of emphasis, establishing that peculiar artifice of construction so common in the sacred writings.

In the second couplet, although the parallel terms are not so broadly obvious, they are, nevertheless, marked by correspondencies sufficiently manifest to show that the author had the idea of parallelism in his mind.

A God of truth and without iniquity;
Just and right is He.

The relative phrases in this distich are “a God of truth” and “just,” “without iniquity” and “right.” Now I think it can be shown that these expressions have a mutual relation of singular propriety,—all strikingly concurrent in working out the picture of divine perfection. The Almighty is ever faithful to his promises, consequently a “God of truth;” thus his erring creatures have the strongest guarantee they can desire for the fulfilment of those promises. He never deceives nor does an injury, because he is incapable of wrong, thus he is “without iniquity”—the very perfection of goodness. He is ever “just” in punishing, and “right” in rewarding, because he is both wise and unerring. With him error is impossible. His truth and goodness, his justice and infallibility constitute his perfection. The Godhead stands confessed in the vast beauty of his holiness, and in the consummate sublimity of his attributes. His dispensations are unfailing.

We see how the sense is heightened in the second hemistich, compared with that of the corresponding expressions in the first. God is *true*, but he is likewise *just*, for truth is the most valuable quality of justice. He promises rewards, but he likewise denounces punishments. He is a lover of good, but a hater of evil. His truth then is merged in his justice, which is the perfection of it. Love and terror are at once inspired by these contrasted attributes of mercy and justice. He is *true* to reward, *just* to punish, merciful to the good, inflexible to the wicked. The dread of suffering everlasting punishment

being generally greater than the hope of enjoying eternal reward—for the natural man is more prone to dread the punitive discipline of God than to feel delight in his dispensations of mercy, fear being the dominant feeling in the human heart;—it will hence be seen that more force is attached to the attribute of justice than to that of truth, because as I have before said, the latter is but an essential and germane quality of the former; this, therefore, takes the more prominent station above that which is united to it in inseparable alliance.

In the second pair of kindred terms, the word “right” in the last line has an emphasis and importance above the phrase “without iniquity” in the first. God is not only incapable of doing wrong, or of practising deception towards his creatures, but is unerring in his acts. Whatever he does must be “right.” Not only is he “without iniquity,” but he is incapable of being mistaken. The phrase in the first hemistich simply expresses a *negative* quality. The corresponding term in the last defines a *positive* and specific attribute. The Deity is “right” in rewarding, in dispensing mercies, in awarding penalties—right in all his dealings with his creatures, and this by a moral necessity—because he is incapable of *wrong*.

They have corrupted themselves,
Their spot is not the spot of his children;
They are a perverse and crooked generation.

This passage has very much perplexed the commentators; but Dr. Adam Clarke has so

ingenious, and, upon the whole, so satisfactory a note, that I cannot do better than extract it entire.

“This verse,” says he, “is variously understood. *They are corrupted, not his ; children of pollution ;* KENNICOTT. *They are corrupt ; they are not his children ; they are blotted ;* Houbigant. This is according to the Samaritan. The interpretation commonly given to these words is as unfounded as it is exceptionable : ‘God’s children have their spots, that is, their sins, but sin in them is not like sin in others ; in others, sin is exceedingly sinful, but God does not see the sins of his children as he sees the sins of his enemies, &c.’ Unfortunately for this bad doctrine, there is no foundation for it in the sacred text, which, though very obscure, may be thus translated :—*He (Israel) hath corrupted himself. They (the Israelites) are not his children ; they are spotted.* Coverdale renders the whole passage thus :—‘The froward and overthwart generation have marred themselves to himward, and are not his children, because of their deformity.’ This is the *sense* of the verse. Let it be observed that the word spot, which is *repeated* in our translation, occurs but once in the original, and the marginal reading is greatly to be preferred : *He hath corrupted to himself, that they are not his children ; that is their blot.* And because they had the blot of sin on them, because they were *spotted* with iniquity, and marked idolaters, therefore God renounces them. There may be here an allusion to the *marks* which the worshippers

of particular idols had on different parts of their bodies, especially on their foreheads; and as idolatry is the crime with which they are here charged, the spot or *mark* mentioned may refer to the mark or *stigma* of their idol. The different sects of idolaters in the east are distinguished by their sectarian marks, the stigma of their respective idols. These sectarian marks, particularly on the forehead, amount to nearly one hundred among the Hindoos, and especially among the two sects, the worshippers of SEEVA and the worshippers of VISHNOO. In many cases, these marks are renewed daily, for they account it irreligious to perform any sacred rite to their god without his mark on the forehead; the marks are generally horizontal and perpendicular lines, crescents, circles, leaves, eyes, &c., in red, black, white, and yellow. This very custom is referred to in Revelations (xx. 4), where the beast gives his mark to his followers, and it is very likely that Moses refers to such a custom among the idolatrous of his own day. This removes all the difficulty of the text. God's children have no *sinful spots*, because Christ saves them from their sins; and their motto or *mark* is, holiness to the Lord."

"Dr. Adam Clarke," says Mr. Roberts,* "is, I believe, correct in supposing this ('their spot is not the spot of his children') alludes to the mark which idolaters have on their forehead to show what deity they serve. The worshippers of Siva have a spot on the brow, in a line with the nose, made of the ashes of cow's dung. The

* Oriental Illustrations, p. 129.

followers of Vishnoo have yellow marks, others have vermillion, and some black."

These marks are renewed daily, and, in some instances, two or three times betwixt sunrise and sunset. They are repeated after every bath, which all pious Hindoos take once, twice, or even three times within the twenty-four hours. The sectarian marks, as the learned commentator calls them, are of necessity renewed after each lustration where they are desired to be retained, which is invariably the case among the higher castes. Being painted upon the forehead with a sacred pigment composed of ochre or vermillion and oil, which is but slightly adhesive, these marks of caste are readily effaced by the water; so that the idolatrous *stigma* or *spot* is repeatedly restored after such spiritual abrasion.

Bishop Kidder's paraphrase of this triplet, though somewhat feeble, affords, notwithstanding, a sufficiently clear interpretation. "They have sinned, and have been so far from imitating God, 'whose work is perfect, &c.' that they have been most unlike him, their crimes being of so high a nature, that they speak them to be not his peculiar people, but a perverse and crooked generation."

Houbigant reduces the triplet to a very elegant and comprehensive couplet, in which there is a remarkably beautiful example of gradational parallelism:—

They are corrupt; they are not his children:

They are blotted; a wicked and perverse generation.

‘They are not only “corrupt;” they are more than this, “they are blotted;” that is, completely corrupted. There is no soundness in them; they have altogether become abominable. They are not God’s children, but a wicked and perverse generation, for they could not be the one whilst they were the other.’ The parallel terms are certainly here marked with sufficient precision, whilst it is no less certain that, in our authorized translation, we can trace them but indistinctly. The ascent of force in the couplet just given is quite clear. The first phrase states corruption simply; the corresponding phrase implies entire feculency—“they are blotted” — covered with pollution. So, likewise, in the second pair of terms, not only are they not God’s children, but “a wicked and perverse generation.” By a very natural transposition of the members of the first clause a striking epanode might have been produced, as will be seen :—

They are not his children; they are corrupt,
They are blotted; a wicked and perverse generation.

In this arrangement, the two more prominent propositions commence and end the distich, the two subordinate being placed between them, the whole series forming an impressive climax. The couplet thus distributed begins with the Israelites’ estrangement from God, and ends with their complete perversity, the climax following thus—‘they are not God’s children, they are corrupt, they are covered with moral pollution, they are altogether perverse and abominable, in

consequence of their numerous and repeated idolatries.' The first is a negative, the last a positive declaration of wickedness. They are no longer the favoured offspring of him who delivered them from Egyptian bondage, but a community of ungrateful rebels; in short, they are *not* the one, because they *are* the other, the two middle members in this epanodistic arrangement showing how completely the degenerate Israelites were deserving of such an accusation. Herder's version is feeble, though the sense is clear:—

They only are no longer his children,
Their iniquity has turned them from him,
A faithless and perverse generation.

The poetical beauty is certainly not heightened in this transfusion of the original into a modern language; the learned German has, however, a good note. "This somewhat harsh arrangement of the words," he says, "is undoubtedly genuine, because a similar one occurs repeatedly (verses 17, 21), and it is, as it were, the soul of the piece. God remains their father, with unchanging faithfulness, but they only have forsaken him, and become, first, through unlikeness, and then, of necessity, no longer his children. They have first become ignorant of him, and he has then rejected them." Herder* has evidently followed the translation of Bishop Lowth,† who reads—"Their evil disposition hath corrupted his children, which are indeed

* Spirit of Hebrew Poetry, vol. i. p. 280.

† See Prælect. xv.

no longer his;” but says, in a note, “I have endeavoured, so far as I was able, to render perspicuous the Hebrew reading, but, after all, that which is adopted by the Seventy, the Samaritan, and the Syriac, is, perhaps, nearer the truth. ‘They are corrupted, they are not his (they are) sons of error, or blemish’—which is also partly confirmed by Aquila, the Vulgate, and Symmachus.”

Hence it is evident that Lowth, sanctioned by the versions above named, favours the rendering of father Houbigant, which is decidedly more poetical than his own or Herder’s. Although our translators have somewhat perplexed this passage, I think, nevertheless, they have shown that they were not insensible to its poetical beauty; and it strikes me that a narrower scrutiny of their interpretation will show that they have come nearer to the sense than seems to be generally apprehended. I certainly do not consider that the interpretation given by Dr. Adam Clarke as that commonly assumed is a just one; namely, “God’s children have their spots, that is, their sins, but sin in them is not like sin in others; in others, sin is exceeding sinful, but God does *not* see the sins of his children as he sees the sins of his enemies, &c.”

This is indeed a baneful doctrine, and one that may, in truth, be well characterized as *bad*. I entirely agree with the excellent commentator just named, that “spots” probably refer to the marks assumed by heathen worshippers, then as now, to designate their castes or sects. The most pious of those heathens were, no

doubt, for this is still their character, exceedingly scrupulous in renewing daily their sectarian marks, whenever these were defaced by accident or other causes. In persons so sadly misguided by the errors of a wild and intemperate superstition, this was in truth an act of piety, how-mistaken, since they considered it an obligation imposed upon them by their religion.

As the Israelites had corrupted themselves by practising the idolatries of those misguided heathens, and by other abominations which had provoked God's displeasure, Moses, alluding to the marks of religious distinction adopted by the gentile nations, says of his own countrymen,

Their spot is not the spot of his children;

that is, 'the mark by which their religion is distinguished from that of the idolater is no longer the mark by which those whom he had made his peculiar people may be recognized, because, having embraced the idolatries of the Gentiles, they have virtually assumed their mark or "spot," the notation of a worship which the Lord Jehovah not only does not approve but which had been interdicted by him to the seed of Abraham, under a denunciation of severe penalties.' According to this interpretation, which I believe to be the true one, the word *spot* is a mere metaphor, referring to a well-known heathen custom already explained, and the line in which it is found simply implies that the religious services of the Israelites, mixed as they frequently are with the impure rites of heathen superstition, are not the characteristics of that

pure and holy worship which it is the province of God's children to perform ; they, consequently, who have ceased to exhibit the characteristics by which his true worshippers may be distinguished are no longer the objects of his paternity or providential solicitude ;—their religious observances are not the religious observances of those who delight to honour him ;

Their spot is not the spot of his children.

Viewed in this light, I do not see that the passage varies much in sense from the Septuagint and Samaritan versions, whose interpretations Bishop Lowth approves. All three declare the same thing, the common version only in a somewhat different form, and certainly by much the most poetical. I must confess it appears to me, that a far more serious exception has been taken against the textual rendering of our translators, than is warranted by a fair view of the clause : to a superficial scrutiny, it may appear somewhat embarrassed, but a closer examination enables us to bring out a very intelligible meaning, garbed in the vesture of poetry, and carrying a corresponding impression to the mind of the pious and intellectual inquirer.

CHAPTER XIII.

The prophetic ode continued.

DR. HALES considers this poem really to begin here, the exordium continuing to the end of the fifth verse. Bishop Lowth, however, evidently did not think so, since he connects the last member of it with what immediately follows in the sixth, as we shall presently see. The common reading is as follows:—

Do ye thus requite the Lord,
O foolish people and unwise?
Is he not thy father that hath bought thee?
Hath he not made thee and established thee?

The poet here reproaches the Israelites with their atrocious ingratitude to God, by enumerating the manifold benefits which he had heaped upon them. They had “provoked his wrath and indignation against them” in various ways, and with various degrees of turpitude. They had formed an idol, the golden calf, in the wilderness and worshipped it with profane enthusiasm. They had murmured because there was a deficiency of water, and their Almighty benefactor wrought a miracle to relieve them. They had expressed intemperate dissatisfaction at being fed with manna, and God provided them

with “meat from heaven.” In the rebellion of Korah, they had provoked him to visit them with the earthquake and the pestilence. They blasphemed that divine guardian who had protected them through so many perils, and were plagued with fiery serpents, which caused a sad mortality among them. Even this dreadful infliction did not utterly subdue their rebellious spirit. They subsequently formed unholy alliances with the women of Midian, who seduced them to idolatry, and all the numerous vices consequent upon such a lax and depraved worship. Here was sufficient cause for the reproof of their lawgiver:—

Do ye thus requite the Lord,
O foolish people and unwise?

At first sight, this latter hemistich appears to be nothing more than an unmeaning pleonasm, “foolish” and “unwise” being, according to their commonly received acceptation, strictly synonymous terms; but in this clause the expressions are contrasted, not assimilated, the one signifying infirmity of heart, the other infirmity of mind in conjunction with it. Moses had just before called the Israelites a “perverse and crooked generation;” he immediately afterwards calls them “foolish and unwise.” These two latter terms are in direct parallelism with the two former. The Israelites were “perverse,” but not only so, they were “foolish;” that is, imprudently and recklessly wicked, in spite of their better convictions—reduced to the lowest state of moral infirmity, for foolishness, in the

sense here given, does not imply mental, but moral desuetude. They were crooked, warped, distorted, stubborn, and pertinacious, qualities which are the usual concomitants of a depraved heart; and “unwise,” without that strength of understanding which fortifies the soul to stand manfully against the assaults of sin, and to repel the weak solicitations of the flesh. Instead of resisting temptation, they courted it, thus sinking into depravity, and persisting in wickedness; the consequence of which was, that their hearts became the more corrupt, and their understandings the more obscure. Thus considered, the several terms employed to express the wickedness of God’s people, are beautifully varied, at the same time that they preserve the necessary poetical correspondency.

Bishop Lowth distributes the entire passage as follows :*—

Their evil disposition hath corrupted his children,
Which are indeed no longer his :
Perverse and crooked generation !
Will ye thus requite Jehovah,
Foolish people and unwise ?
Is he not thy Father and thy Redeemer ?
Did he not make thee, and form thee ?

“Foolishness,” says Cruden,† “is to be understood, not only according to its natural and literal meaning, for one who is an idiot or a very weak man, and for the discourses and notions of fools and madmen; but in the language of Scripture, especially in the book of Proverbs,

* See Fifteenth Prælection.

† Concordance, art. Fool.

fool is the usual character of the sinner, and folly and foolishness are put for sin. ‘My wounds stink and are corrupt through my foolishness,’ says David (Psalm xxxviii. 5.) And again, he says (Psalm lix. 5), ‘God, thou knowest my foolishness.’”

Thus, then, it will appear that expressions commonly held to be synonymous in the sacred writings have sometimes a wide distinction of meaning. Lowth’s translation of the following couplet is eminently happy:—

Is he not thy Father and thy Redeemer?
Did he not make thee and form thee?

In these lines, the reciprocal relation in the terms is very striking. As if the prophet had said, ‘Is he not thy FATHER who made thee, or endowed thee with temporal life—thy REDEEMER who formed, or prepared thee for spiritual life, when thou hadst been abandoned to spiritual death?’ The one applies to the physical, the other to the spiritual creation of man.

This I take to be the primary signification of these lines, but there is likewise a secondary sense in which they may be taken. Moses was reproaching the Israelites for their signal ingratitude to that omnipotent being, who had not only delivered them from Egyptian bondage, but guided them through those numerous perils by which they were beset in their journey to the land of promise. ‘Is it thus,’ he asks, ‘that you requite the author of your deliverance from the tyranny of Pharaoh—the Lord God of your creation, who first brought you into the world and ad-

vanced you to special privileges, making you his peculiar people, and exercising towards you the affection of a natural father ; who has raised you to the dignity of a mighty nation, framed for you wise laws, and proposed to you a system of legislation which shall render you the admiration of the world ? Has he not redeemed you from the despotism of the tyrant of Egypt, and raised you to especial distinction among the surrounding nations that shall fix upon you a perpetual pre-eminence ; and how have you requited these “ manifold and great mereies ? ” With the basest ingratitude !

“ Taking this poem as an example,” says Lowth,* “ the first general observation to which I would direct attention is, the sudden and frequent changes in the persons, and principally in the addresses and expostulations. In the exordium of this poem, Moses displays the truth and justice of Almighty God, most sacredly regarded in all his acts and counsels : whence he takes occasion to reprove the perfidy and wickedness of his ungrateful people ; at first, as if his censure were only pointed at the absent—

Their evil disposition hath corrupted his children,
Which are indeed no longer his :—

“ He then suddenly directs his discourse to themselves :—

Perverse and crooked generation !
Will ye thus requite Jehovah,
Foolish people and unwise ?
Is he not thy Father and thy Redeemer ?
Did he not make thee and form thee ?

* Fifteenth Praelection.

“ After his indignation has somewhat subsided, adverting to a remoter period, he beautifully enlarges upon the indulgence and more than paternal affection continually manifested by Almighty God towards the Israelites, from the time when he first chose them for his peculiar people ; and all this again without seeming directly to apply it to them. He afterwards admirably exaggerates the stupidity and barbarity of this ungrateful people, which exceeds that of the brutes themselves. Observe with what force the indignation of the prophet again breaks forth :—

But Jeshurun grew fat and resisted :
 Thou grewest fat, thou wast made thick,
 Thou wast covered with fat !
 And he deserted the God that made him,
 And despised the Rock of his salvation.

“ The abrupt transition in one short sentence to the Israelites, and back again, is wonderfully forcible and pointed, and excellently expressive of disgust and indignation. There is a passage of Virgil, which, though it be less animated, is certainly not unworthy of being compared with this of Moses ; it is that in which, by an ingenious apostrophe, he upbraids the traitor with his crime, and at the same time exonerates the king from the imputation of cruelty :—

By godlike Tullus doom'd the traitor dies :
 (And thou false Metius, dost too late repent
 Thy violated faith!) by furious steeds
 In pieces torn, his entrails strew the ground,
 And the low brambles drink his streaming blood.

“I might proceed and produce several examples in point from the same poem, and innumerable from other parts of the sacred writings, different from each other both in expression and form. These, however, are sufficient to demonstrate the force of this kind of composition in expressing the more vehement affections, and in marking those sudden emotions which distract the mind and divide its attention.”

Herder's view of the sixth verse and his note upon it are worthy of notice. He refers only to what I conceive to be the secondary sense.

Is this your requital to Jehovah,
O foolish people, and unwise ?
Is he not thy Father, he that hath bought thee ?
That hath made thee, and established thee ?

“Moses at this early period has here the expression which the prophets often use ; that God received Israel in Abraham as a child, prepared him as a people for himself, and gave him being as a father. Under Moses he bought him to himself out of Egypt as a bond-servant ; and has, therefore, the claim both of a master and of a father, as Moses here distinctly expresses it. How truly, also, is the distinction found in the spirit and the events of the different periods.”

Herder's translation does not differ from that of our Bibles, but his note shows that he would restrict the import of the passage, which is certainly susceptible of greater latitude of interpretation than he seems willing to accord to it ; for God not only rescued the posterity of Jacob from Egyptian bondage, but likewise advanced

them to the signal privileges of being his people. This, however, was but a secondary dispensation of his mercy, for he was besides not only their Creator but their Redeemer.

Remember the days of old,
Consider the years of many generations :
Ask thy father and he will show thee,
Thy elders and they will tell thee.

In this portion of his divine song, Moses bids the Israelites look back upon departed years, and tells them that they would at once perceive how liberally the mercies of their heavenly Father had been dealt out to them : ‘ cast, he says, a retrospective glance into the remote past and you will see how the divine blessings have been dispensed to your forefathers. The Almighty Jehovah promised an abundant posterity to Abraham, and renewed the promise to Jacob. How have these promises been realized ! He has multiplied your seed exceedingly until they have become as the stars of heaven for multitude. He has brought you out of great tribulation to that land “flowing with milk and honey” which he declared you shall inherit, and upon the possession of which you are now about to enter. Trace in your minds the time which has elapsed since the days of the patriarch Noah, regularly from generation to generation, and what will you discover ? What, but the transcendent mercy of God, and the signal ingratitude of man ! If you are unable to do this, consult the sages and elderly men among you who have devoted their lives to the acquisition of

knowledge, and they will instruct you in what it behoves you to know, the events of past periods in which the dispensations of your Almighty guardian have been so marvellously displayed. Your fathers, and the elders among your tribes who have had greater experience, will be able to tell you of things of which they have been eye witnesses, or which they have ascertained from authentic records, that will exhibit the divine goodness towards man in all its wonderful and illimitable perfection. I call upon you to direct your earnest thoughts to those merciful distributions of providence signalized towards your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, then extended to Joseph in Egypt, afterwards to the whole Hebrew tribes, during their sojourn in that idolatrous land, whence he finally brought them out with a miraculous deliverance, guarded, supported, and governed them in the wilderness. See how, from age to age, the loving-kindness of Jehovah, has distinguished his peculiar people among whom you are still numbered, and who are about to enter into that inheritance promised to the righteous son of Terah, the illustrious Abraham.

In the first two of these four hemistichs the parallelism evidently graduates.

Remember the *days* of old :
Consider the *years* of many generations.

Although the terms “days” and “years” alike refer to an indefinite period of past time, still it cannot be denied that the last clause gives a stronger impression of remoteness than that which

immediately precedes it : “ the days of old ” may imply a term not very long antecedent to the present, say a couple of centuries, or less ; “ the years of many generations,” on the contrary, at once suggest the idea of a vast flux of time, through many long and far distant intervals. The repetition of the same thought in terms correlative, indeed, but much more emphatic, imparts great additional force to the sentiment. It seems as if the author considered it of such importance that, not content with the first simple statement of it, he conceives it necessary to give it additional weight, by arraying it in a more amplified and luxuriant phraseology by which a double effect is obtained—that of giving it additional force, and likewise of casting around it the garb of poetical adornment. No one will deny that the pleonastical form of expression here used, carries with it much more impressiveness than would have been produced by the mere suggestion of reminiscence conveyed in the first line. The addition of the second greatly enhances the dignity of a reflection naturally grave and imposing. There is a solemnity in the climax which strikes deeply into the thoughts, rousing their latent energies and forcing them into active exercise.

The poet bids his hearers go back to the time when this numerous community, about to become a powerful nation, by enjoying the consummation of that promise which gave them the land of Canaan for an inheritance, was in its helpless infancy ;—when it was comprised in a few nomadic families who wandered about from

place to place living under tents upon the produce of their flocks—and see how the mighty Jehovah has advanced them to eminence among the political communities of the earth! By thus drawing their recollections to past events, he the more vividly brings home to their consciences the picture of their past and present ingratitude.

In the second distich a similar gradational parallelism will be traced as in the first, and with even greater distinctness.

Ask thy *father* and he will *show* thee;
Thy *elders* and they will *tell* thee.

No one can fail to perceive that in these hemistichs the words “father” and “show,” “elders” and “tell,” are respectively parallel, the corresponding terms in the second line having an increased effect of signification above those of the first.

Ask thy father and he will show thee,

says the Hebrew legislator, for he is a man of more experience than thou art, he will consequently impart to thee the results of his experience in the mercies of a superintending and beneficent providence. From him thou wilt learn what with a most reprehensible indifference thou hast not yet sought to know. He will *show* thee those things with which it behoves thee to be acquainted, and unfold to thee truths, which, as they will make thee wiser, ought to make thee better. He will bear testimony of the divine favour towards thy race

in “days of old,” no less than now. He will communicate to thee that information respecting God’s merciful benefactions in the families descended from him to whom the promise of a numerous posterity and bountiful inheritance was given, which his greater maturity of age and more enlarged opportunities have enabled him to acquire. When thou hast obtained all the information which thy *father* can impart to thee, upon this interesting subject, go to the *elders*, the men of wisdom, whose lives have been devoted to the acquisition of knowledge, to whom consequently the records of past times are familiar, and they will *tell* thee what their graver and more matured experience has imparted to them. They will unfold to thee the various events of past times, those signal manifestations of providential mercy which have been displayed for the benefit of your forefathers from age to age, and carry you back to those remote periods when God’s visible dispensations first distinguished the progenitors of our race.

In this view of the entire passage we shall trace a correspondency of sense, though not a parallelism of terms, in the alternate lines of the two couplets forming the seventh verse, according to our Bible division of this sublime canticle, as we shall see by a transposition of the second and third clauses.

Remember the days of old—
 Ask thy father and he will show thee :
 Consider the years of many generations,—
 (Ask) thy elders and they will tell thee.

As if he had said; ‘respecting the less remote times thy father will give thee every necessary information, but of those more primitive periods, the events of which are much less known though not less important, those learned sages who make the histories of by-gone ages their chief study, and devote their lives to the elaborate researches of wisdom—they will impart to you that profounder knowledge which is almost exclusively entrusted to them.’

It is surprising how clearly the specific references are observed throughout this extraordinary production. They are marked with a precision nowhere to be mistaken. There is not the least confusion in the adaptation of the terms, when once the reader has become familiar with the peculiar laws of distribution by which they are governed: notwithstanding the frequent artifices of construction traceable in the couplets, the subjects and agencies are appropriated with a distinct and exquisite discernment. Even where the direct order of the sense is interrupted for the sake of that peculiar arrangement, which the artifice of parallelism occasionally demands, the congruity is never marred,—the end of the broken thread at once meets the eye and is united, in most cases, to its corresponding part, without either difficulty or perplexity; and indeed where these are found, as they no doubt sometimes are, this oftener arises from our ignorance of customs and usages which have long since ceased to exist, and to which reference is frequently made in the sacred writ-

ings, than to any actual obscurity or perplexity in the writings themselves.

When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance,
When he separated the sons of Adam,
He set the bounds of the people
According to the number of the children of Israel.
For the Lord's portion is his people ;
Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.

It must be confessed that father Houbigant has given a more satisfactory interpretation of this somewhat confused passage than our translators. His version is—

When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance,
When he separated the sons of Adam,
Terminating the bounds of the people ;
Jacob was the portion of the Lord,
Israel the lot of his inheritance :
When the Lord divided his people
According to the number of the children of Israel.

“In which words,” he says, “Moses teaches that when God dispersed the rest of mankind upon the earth, having assigned them the bounds of the possessions which they had chosen, he reserved to himself Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance ; so many lots being assigned to them in the land of Canaan, and afterwards given them to possess, as there were sons of Israel, that is twelve ; which sense is most plain and no less consonant to the style of Moses than it is adapted to the meaning of the place. First, to the style of Moses, which, in this metrical writing, makes the latter clause correspond to the former. Secondly, to the meaning of the passage, for after, it is said, that

bounds were assigned to the people, the opposition requires it to be added, that the Lord received his own people, the Israelites, to himself; not everywhere dispersed like the rest, but assembled under his own peculiar dominion in the same country."

Patrick gives the words of the original this clear and simple interpretation.—"God made such a distribution to other people, particularly to the seven nations of Canaan, within such bounds and limits, as that there might be sufficient room for so numerous a people as the Israelites, when they came to take possession of that country."

The Septuagint renders the second distich as follows:—

He established the bounds of the nations
According to the number of the angels of God.

Upon which Bishop Warburton remarks:—"It is intelligible enough as referring to the old notion original to Egypt, the country where this translation was made. The Egyptians, as appears from Herodotus, Plato, and other ancient writers, were the first people who deified their kings, legislators, and public benefactors; who invented the doctrine that there were local tutelary deities, who had taken upon themselves or were entrusted with the care and protection of particular nations and people, and that the earth was first divided by its Creator among a number of inferior and subordinate divinities. This notion these verses refer to; and Justin Martyr tells us, that 'in the beginning God committed the government of the world to angels, who abusing their trust, were

degraded from their regency.' He might have learned thus much from this translation; he might have taken it from a worse place.'*"

I shall now endeavour to give a detailed exposition of the whole passage.

When the Most High divided the nations their inheritance.

The sense is here continued from the preceding verse, where the poet desires the Israelites to take a retrospective view into the very remote past, or "the years of many generations,"—that is, into times before they were a peculiar people, when the whole human race formed but one community—and they will find that even then God was not unmindful of their temporal felicity. The division of the inheritance here spoken of is supposed, by Dr. Kennicott, to have a reference to the distribution of territory made after the flood among the sons of Noah; the earth being divided by lot between his three sons; Asia falling to the share of Shem, Africa to that of Ham, and Europe to that of Japheth. The posterity of these patriarchs still continue to occupy those portions of the habitable world assigned to them through their progenitors, according to the divine command, after a previous decision by lot.

When God separated the sons of Adam, who, until the confounding of language at Babel were probably one people, without any distinction of classes or tribes,—for the descendants of the first patriarchs evidently lived together as one com-

* See Warburton's *Divine Legation*, vol. i. p. 101.

munity, although the “inheritance” was “divided” among the sons of Noah;—at the dispersion, the “sons of Adam,” (in other words, the immediate descendants of Noah, who, after the flood, was the great progenitor of the whole human race, which had, up to the confusion of tongues at Babel, formed but one vast, undivided family) were, from that period, scattered over different regions of the earth, forming various political communities, though under a mere incipient and consequently a very imperfect form of legislation; the posterities, nevertheless, of the three patriarchs, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, occupying those divisions of the earth which had been originally decided by lot under a divine sanction.

He set the bounds of the people
According to the number of the children of Israel;

that is, even at this remote period, God had prospectively settled the inheritance of his future people Israel. Their temporal destination was already decreed in the councils of the Most High. Although in these primitive times they had no existence as a nation, the mighty Jehovah, designing to distinguish that race from whom he had predetermined that the adorable Messiah should spring, when the three sons of Noah had their “inheritance” divided or portioned out to them, so distributed among the first settlers the land which he designed should be the future possession of Abraham’s seed, as to have a reserve for that people, whom it was his determination to signalize by peculiar

privileges; so that, in process of time, when the seed of Jacob came to assume possession of their covenanted inheritance, they found a sufficient extent of territory for every separate tribe. "God," says Bochart, "so distributed the earth among the several people that were therein, that he reserved, or in his counsel designed, such a part of the earth for the Israelites, who were then unborn, as he knew would afford a commodious habitation to a most numerous nation."

For the Lord's portion is his people;
Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.

The Lord constituted the Israelites his chosen people; he distinguished them in a remarkable manner during the whole period of their political existence. They were, in the language of their lawgiver, his "portion," for he had, in his merciful loving-kindness, made them exclusively his own. He selected them from all other communities of the earth, gave them laws for the administration of their national policy, selected them as the race from among whom the Emmanuel was to come into the world for the great purpose of human redemption, and finally settled them in the earthly Canaan which he had decreed they should possess from the beginning of time.

It is said, with reference to that God who had so liberally supplied the Israelites from the stores of his abundance, that

Jacob is the lot of his inheritance,

in allusion to the mode of surveying land in the east, where it was measured or divided by means of a cord, rendered lot by our translators. From this practice the metaphor is taken, and to this reference is likewise made in the sixteenth psalm.*

The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup:
Thou maintainest my lot.
The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places,
Yea, I have a goodly heritage.

The intention of Moses, in the couplet under our examination, evidently was to express the abounding love which the Deity had exhibited for the people whom he had so especially chosen, and which he manifested in his numerous dispensations of blessings towards them. They were signalized by him in the most remarkable manner, not only as being the race from which that seed of the woman was to spring who should "bruise the serpent's head," and thus "give freedom to them that were bound" under the penalties of a broken law, but likewise by the visible displays of divine mercy so conspicuously shown from the time of their memorable exodus, when Pharaoh and his host were drowned, to the period of their taking possession of the promised inheritance. In characterizing, therefore, God's loving-kindness towards his ungrateful countrymen, the enthusiastic poet rises into an emphatic hyperbole, and describes them as "the Lord's portion," and "the lot of his inheritance."

* Verses 5 and 6.

Having now, as I hope, made evident the meaning of the passage, which is not without its difficulties of interpretation, in consequence of the brevity of the several clauses composing it, I shall devote the remainder of this chapter to an exposition of its poetical structure. Of the three couplets of which it consists, the first and last exhibit the usual gradational parallelism in so marked a manner that it cannot escape observation. Of this, there is no indication whatever in the two middle clauses. These are confined between two pair of lines, in which this artifice is manifest, each referring, though under different shades of signification, to territorial possession; the entire passage thus presenting an epanodistic form of distribution. There is a beautiful proportion maintained in this arrangement, the two couplets in which the parallelism is present flanking the clauses in which it does not exist, each couplet being thus placed in skilful contrast with the same object, which serves as an agreeable offset to both. The parallelisms are preserved as well in Houbigant's as in our authorized translation, though that commentator breaks the passage into an additional hemistich, and inverts the order of the fourth. The parallel terms in the first distich are, "divided their inheritance" and "separated," "the nations" and "the sons of Adam." The first pair of terms refer to the same thing, the second to the same people. Their separation was the result of the division spoken of; the territory was "divided," in consequence of which they "separated." Here, then, is a distinction in the

phrases, which clearly discriminate the event and its immediate consequence. It cannot be denied that the second line of the couplet is more important than the first; it carries the subject to its issue. In the first, allusion is only made to the allotment of territory portioned out to the descendants of Noah after the deluge; but in the second, to that dispersion which converted his posterity into sundry communities, and from which the grand result of national legislation subsequently followed; so that the latter clause of the distich obviously rises above the former in importance of allusion, if not actually in force of signification.

The second pair of corresponding terms have not so much a gradation of sense as of emphasis. "Sons of Adam," is not only a more eloquent, but likewise a more poetical phrase than "nations;" besides, it comprehends the whole human race, whereas the latter phrase only embraces certain integral portions of it under one general term. In this view, it certainly exhibits an advanced force of meaning. It carries the thoughts back to the first great progenitor of man, who, whatever his frailty, was nevertheless a glorious and distinguished creature. Let those who are so fond of dwelling upon the utter worthlessness of humanity, in which, however fallen from its original purity, the divine image is not utterly extinct, remember, that God incarnate died to redeem it from the penalty of death eternal. "In his love and in his pity" he saved the lapsed posterity of Adam, because, though vastly degenerate, he still considered they were

worth the greatest sacrifice that could be made for them,—no less than that of God in the flesh.

In the concluding couplet, the parallel phrases are “the Lord’s portion” and “his inheritance,” “his people” and “Jacob.” The first pair of terms are mere poetical adaptations representing the Deity, as is frequently the case with the Hebrew poets, as having a “portion” and “inheritance” like his creatures, to whom these are temporal blessings altogether of a superlative kind. The more ample the temporal portion, the greater generally is the presumed temporal satisfaction, and however delusive such a presumption may, in most instances prove, yet the augmentation of such a boon is too commonly the great object of human endeavour. The entire passage, I need hardly say, is exceedingly poetical, representing the omnipotent and eternal Jehovah as taking delight in his people Israel, similar to that which persons are supposed to experience in the enjoyment of rich territorial possessions, one of the greatest temporal blessings, in the general estimation of men, which the Deity can confer. The impression is the stronger as it is effected through the prevailing passions of our weak ambition, the very failings of our nature being here made instrumental in rendering more vivid our perception of the divine attributes, and of his merciful dealings with the degenerate seed of a most righteous forefather. “Jacob,” the parallel term with “his people,” is a common synecdoche for the seed of Jacob, so that, in this one word, direct communication is given to us who his people are. They are the de-

scendants of him who was the immediate progenitor of the twelve tribes. Thus a number of ideas are conveyed at the same time that a specific statement is, as it were, given in one emphatic term. It is surprising of how many ideas a single word is made the vehicle, either directly or by inference in the sacred writings, in which there is no waste of language, though the pleonastic form of expression is so often adopted, and although it is commonly in the highest degree tropical.

The parallelism in this place is distinctly gradational, for in the first corresponding term a simple idea only is suggested, in the last a complex. Something more than his people is expressed by it; namely, that they are the descendants of Jacob. It is worthy of remark, that although the two clauses of the couplet express the same thing, the one does so in language perfectly simple, the other in language eminently figurative; the first term of the concluding hemistich being an elegant synecdoche, the second a descriptive metaphor, and the third an expressive image; JACOB signifying his numerous posterity, *lot* their near and privileged communion with God, and *inheritance* his hereditary connection, so to speak, with his chosen people. They belong to him by that indefeasible law of right which governs the universe. The divine rights are constantly represented by human symbols, because infinite as well as finite objects can be defined no other way. God is described as having an inheritance in the Hebrews, because they were everlastingly and unalienably his;

that is, so long as he might think fit to retain them in his keeping. They were

The lot of his inheritance,

as he had “divided” or separated them from the gentile nations, and made them his peculiar people. Herder is, I think, much more than usually successful in his rendering of this somewhat perplexed passage. I think he gives it clearness.

When the Almighty gave the nations their lands—
When he separated the children of men,
He limited the bounds of nations
That the numbers of Israel might have room;
For the portion of God is his people,
Jacob, the lot of his inheritance.

There is, it will be perceived, no essential difference betwixt this and the reading of our venerable translators, though it must be confessed that the former is decidedly more distinctly and clearly put.

CHAPTER XIV.

The prophetic ode continued.

THE two couplets which follow are admirably descriptive of God's august dispensations towards the children of Israel. The poet, by way of impressing the more strongly upon the minds of his hearers their uniform ingratitude towards Him, who had so mercifully sustained them through difficulties and trials as numerous as they were severe, refers back to the time when they were exposed to the perils of the desert:—

He found him in a desert land,
And in the waste howling wilderness ;
He led him about, he instructed him ;
He kept him as the apple of his eye.

In these lines, as I have already said, the divine guardianship of the Israelites is signified in terms of extreme beauty. It is a passage of great sublimity.

He found him in a desert land ;

in a region where the difficulty of obtaining the necessary supplies for a long and arduous journey was great, the produce being scanty ;

And in the waste howling wilderness,

where there was none ; where there were neither cornfields nor pastures, flocks nor herds ; where there was nothing to be seen but sterile plains, rugged rocks, and barren hills ; where the wells supplied only waters of bitterness, and fiery serpents impeded their march. Here God sustained the Israelites with so careful a regard to their necessities, that “ their raiment waxed not old, neither did their feet swell,” during forty years.* Here he produced water from the rock to assuage their thirst, when they clamourously demanded to be conducted back to the place of their former bondage, and manna to appease their hunger, even when they were ripe for rebellion. He led them about during two generations in that inhospitable region, supplying all their wants with fatherly care, continually working miracles in their behalf, subduing the nations who attempted to impede their progress towards that land of promise whither they were directing their march under his almighty guardianship and direction. Here he gave them those laws both ecclesiastical, moral, and civil, which were to furnish them with a system of legislation, and render them eventually “ wise unto salvation.” In this wilderness was proclaimed amid the thunders of Sinai, that code of wise institutes, the ceremonial part of which was annulled, but the essential or spiritual part of which was ratified and fulfilled by Christ, who showed its efficacy

* Deut. viii. 4.

by his own example, and thus "justified the ways of God to man."

In order to ascertain the valuable instruction which the Lord Jehovah gave to the Israelites in this waste and howling wilderness, for the benefit of all future generations, we have only to read with due attention the Mosaic history, and we shall at once see that those statutes which he commanded to be observed by the Abrahamic race, were not only the best adapted to their condition, but were so eminently wise, that they have formed the basis of every system of statism adopted by the civilized communities of the earth. They are the root of all law, the mainspring of all government, the source of all good polity. The glory of Athens and of Rome was alike founded upon the political wisdom which emanated from them, and the very essence of them was afterwards embraced in the famous code of Justinian. It was in these sagacious prescripts, emanating from the divine mind, that the Lord "instructed" the Israelites with the authority of a legislator and the tenderness of a father,—

He kept them as the apple of his eye.

He preserved them with the greatest care and loving-kindness.

Some idea of the character of that waste and howling wilderness in which God led, instructed, and kept his people, may be formed from Harmer's valuable observations on passages of Scripture. In the fourth volume of that work,*

* Page 125.

he says, “Irwin further describes the mountains of the desert of Thebais (Upper Egypt) as sometimes so steep and dangerous, as to induce even very bold and hardy travellers to avoid them by taking a large circuit; and that, for want of proper knowledge of the way, such a wrong path may be taken as may on a sudden bring them into the greatest dangers, while at other times a dreary waste may extend itself so prodigiously as to make it difficult, without assistance, to find the way to a proper outlet. All which shows us the meaning of those words of the song of Moses, Deuteronomy xxxii. 10:—

He led him about, he instructed him,
He kept him as the apple of his eye.

“Jehovah certainly instructed Israel in religion, by delivering to him his law in this wilderness; but it is not, I presume, of this kind of teaching that Moses speaks, as Bishop Patrick supposes, but God’s instructing Israel how to avoid the dangers of the journey, by leading the people about this and that precipitous hill, directing them to proper passes through the mountains, and guiding them through the intricacies of that difficult journey which might, and probably would, have confounded the most consummate Arab guides. They that could have safely enough conducted a small caravan of travellers through this desert, might have been very unequal to the task of directing such an enormous multitude, encumbered with cattle, women, children, and utensils. The passages of Irwin, that establish the observations I have

been making, follow here. ‘ At half-past eleven we resumed our march, and soon came to the foot of a prodigious hill, which we unexpectedly found we were to ascend. It was perpendicular, like the one we had passed some hours before ; but what rendered the access more difficult, the path which we were to tread was nearly right up and down. The captain of the robbers seeing the obstacles we had to overcome, wisely sent all his camels round the mountain where he knew there was a defile, and only accompanied us with the beast he rode. We luckily met with no accident in climbing this height.’ (page 325.) They afterwards descended, he tells us, into a valley, by a passage easy enough, and stopping to dine, at half-past five o’clock, they were joined by the Arabs, who had made an astonishing march to overtake them (page 326.) ‘ We soon quitted the dale, and ascended the high ground by the side of a mountain that overlooks it in this part. The path was narrow and perpendicular, and much resembled a ladder. To make it worse we preceded the robbers, and an ignorant guide among our people led us astray. Here we found ourselves in a pretty situation : we had kept the lower road on the side of the hill, instead of that towards the summit, until we could proceed no further ; we were now obliged to gain the heights, in order to recover the road, in performing which we drove our poor camels up such steeps that we had the greatest difficulty to climb after them. We were under the necessity of leaving them to themselves, as the danger of leading them through places, where

the least false step would have precipitated both man and beast into the unfathomable abyss below, was too critical to hazard. We hit at length upon the proper path, and were glad to find ourselves in the road of our unerring guides, the robbers, after having won every foot of the ground with real peril and fatigue.' (page 324.) Again. 'Our road, after leaving the valley lay over level ground. As it would be next to an impossibility to find the way over these stony flats, where the heavy foot of the camel leaves no impression, the different bands of robbers have heaped up stones at unequal distances, for their direction through this desert. We have derived great assistance from the robbers in this respect, who are our guides, when the marks either fail or are unintelligible to us.'

"The predatory Arabs were more successful guides to Mr. Irwin and his companions than those he brought with him from Ghinnah; but the march of Israel through deserts of the like nature, was through such an extent and variety of country, and in such circumstances, as to multitudes and incumbrances, as to make divine interposition necessary. The openings through the rocks seem to have been prepared by Him to whom all things from the beginning of the world were foreknown, with great wisdom and goodness, to enable them to accomplish this stupendous march."

Although our translators have rendered the two couplets comprised in the tenth verse of the chapter, containing the prophetic song of Moses, in the past tense, in the Hebrew they are

in the future—this *enallage*, as the rhetoricians call similar changes of the tenses, being adopted as a poetic grace. Bishop Lowth's remarks on this change are well deserving of attention.

“ In another point it must be confessed,” he says,* “ they differ from other writers, namely, when they intimate past events in the form of the future tense; and I must add that this is a matter of considerable difficulty. If we resort to the translators and commentators, so far are they from affording any solution, that they do not so much as notice it, accommodating, as much as possible, the form of the tenses to the subject and context, and explaining it rather according to their own opinions, than according to the rules of grammar, or any fixed and established principles. If, again, we apply to the grammarians, we shall find ourselves no less at a loss: they indeed remark the circumstance, but they neither explain the reason of it, nor yet are candid enough to make confession of their own ignorance. They endeavour to confuse their disciples by the use of a Greek term, and have always at hand a sort of inexplicable and mysterious *enallage*, or change of the tenses, with which, rather than say nothing, they attempt to evade a closer inquiry, as if the change were made by accident, and from no principle or motive; than which nothing can be conceived more absurd or impertinent. That these apparent anomalies, however, are not without their peculiar force and beauty, I have not a doubt;

* Fifteenth Praelection.

that many of them should cause difficulty and obscurity, considering the great antiquity of the Hebrew language, is not to be wondered at. Some light may, notwithstanding, be reflected upon the subject, by a careful attention to the state of the writer's mind, and by considering properly what ideas were likely to be prevalent in his imagination at the time of his writing. There is a remarkable instance of this form of construction in that very song of Moses to which we have been just alluding. After mentioning the divine dispensation by which the Israelites were distinguished as the chosen people of God, he proceeds to state with what love and tenderness the Almighty had cherished them, from the time in which he brought them from Egypt, led them by the hand through the wilderness, and, as it were, carried them in his bosom: all these, though past events, are expressed in the future tense.

He will find him in a desert land,
 In the vast and howling wilderness;
 He will lead him about, he will instruct him;
 He will keep him as the pupil of his eye.

“ You will readily judge whether this passage can admit of any other explication than that of Moses supposing himself present at the time when the Almighty selected the people of Israel for himself; and thence, as from an eminence, contemplating the consequences of that dispensation.”

As the Hebrew has no present tense, the past is always substituted, but as the *enallage* pecu-

liar to the original is a philological anomaly, and has no positive congeniality with our language, I think the pious persons to whom we are so infinitely indebted for their admirable translation of the Scriptures, did wisely in adopting that tense most expressive of the time to which the poem refers. Houbigant reads after the Samaritan :—

He sustained them in a desert land :
 He made him fat in a dry and sandy place :
 He was present with him ; he took care of him :
 He kept him as the apple of his eye.

Herder has given an extremely poetical turn to the third verse, as will be perceived by quoting his representation of the text :—

He found him in a desert land,
 In a waste and howling wilderness ;
 He took him in his arms and taught him ;
 He guarded him as the apple of his eye.

It will be seen that none of these versions differ materially in sense. They each characterize the merciful dealings of God with his chosen people, with only some slight variation of the terms, and this general agreement renders the interpretation much more easy than where the difference is wider, and the various readings less consentaneous. Of the poetical conformation of the couplets, I would observe that, in the first pair of lines, the gradational parallelism is very gracefully exhibited, and in the second there is an extremely beautiful climax, displaying, in language of the highest eloquence, God's love towards those whom he had so eminently

signalized with his favour, as that of a father towards his children. He is first represented as *leading* Jacob, in whom is comprehended that numerous posterity, which, on their departure from Egypt, amounted to six hundred thousand effective men, the women and children being probably more than four times that amount.

He led him about.

This is a phrase expressive of uncommon solicitude. The Lord directed the steps of his chosen with the anxiety of a parent desirous to secure the welfare and improvement of his offspring. Here is at once an exquisite picture of paternal tenderness and of divine compassion. God “led about” his favourite Jacob. He next “instructed” him—made him acquainted with the difficulties of the journey, that he might be the better able to overcome them. He “instructed” him further in all the practical wisdom of morality and the spiritual efficacy of religion.

He kept him as the apple of his eye,

protecting him from the perils by which he was perpetually beset in the wilderness; guarding him with a vigilance and tenderness which he could only exercise towards an object for whom he entertained a strong and abiding affection. Thus the climax closes with the fullest manifestation of divine love. God first *leads*, next *instructs*, and then *vigilantly guards*. And observe, with how appropriate a comparison the whole concludes:—

He kept him as the apple of his eye.

The watchfulness of Jehovah over the seed of Jacob amid the blinding and suffocating sands of the desert, is most fitly compared to the care which, in such a region of casualty and disaster, a person would naturally take of his eyes, so likely to be injured by the burning particles continually floating in the hot and stagnant air. The eye is one of the most delicate and finely constructed organs of the human frame, and there is none of which we are more anxious to preserve the natural powers. Nothing, therefore, could well convey a stronger impression of God's unfailing protection of the Israelites, than the idea of that anxiety which a person manifests for the preservation of his sight in localities where it is constantly exposed to the hazard of injury. He was as careful of his people as a prudent man is of the pupil of his eye.

In the two first lines of this passage there will be found a striking advance of sense, as I have already intimated.

He found him in a desert land—

in a land uncultivated, and from which nature consequently withheld her wonted supplies, nevertheless in a region not absolutely and entirely barren. "A desert land" does not necessarily imply complete sterility. It may be partially productive and distributed into districts, in some of which the hand of cultivation has bestowed its labours: still, compared with

more fruitful localities, it is a "desert land." The phrase, however, by no means conveys the notion of an utter absence of fecundity, for that soil may be pronounced barren which is only in a very limited degree productive. A barren country would not imply that nothing, but only that little was produced.

When the Israelites first commenced their march after their safe passage over the Red Sea, it does not appear that they suffered those privations to which they were exposed when they advanced into the heart of the wilderness. The further they proceeded the greater the difficulties and obstacles which presented themselves. They discovered neither water nor any means of subsistence, and must have consequently perished had not the Deity miraculously supplied their wants. One vast tract of apparently interminable waste lay before them, upon which the rays of a cloudless sun constantly fell, and which was seldom refreshed by the nourishing rain, or moistened by the genial dews of heaven. They had advanced beyond the desert land, and found themselves

In a waste howling wilderness.

Here the words imply all that can be supposed of sterility, repulsiveness, and desolation. The country was utterly arid, only fit to be made the habitation of wild beasts and creatures hostile to man. Here were no springs, no fruits, no grain, no cattle; it was a perilous and "howling wilderness," subject to those tropical hurricanes which appal the stoutest heart, and against

the frightful violence of which there is no security but in the divine protection. Here prowled the savage beast of prey, exposed to all those terrible pangs of hunger and thirst under which he met with no sympathy in the dreadful desolation around him, when driven by superior strength from the forests, where he had found a more favourable sanctuary and a better chance of sustenance. Here horrible reptiles, which it was death to approach, fixed their solitary abode, and from this scene of appalling abandonment there were no means of escape but those supplied by the divine mercy.

It will at once be seen that the “waste howling wilderness” from which vegetation was altogether banished, and in which nothing was heard but the “howlings” of the tropical storm and the still more dismal ululations of wild beasts, is a scene of far greater repulsiveness and desolation, than the “desert land” partially populated, and also partially cultivated. The border of the desert, though unlike a fruitful country, is still very different from the desert itself; the one, is a desert *land* supplying a stinted produce; the other, is a complete *waste* communicating none.

In the first hemistich of the couplet upon which I have been expatiating, the term desert characterizes the nature of the soil; it was uncultivated, unproductive, still not utterly sterile, not strictly and absolutely a *waste*. It was only relatively barren; that epithet, therefore, denoting sterility, was only here used in a comparative sense to represent how much less fruitful

the country bordering upon the wilderness was, than land in a more genial locality usually is. The corresponding phrase, however, in the next hemistich exhibits no such limitation; there no restriction is put upon the sense, but, on the contrary, the greatest latitude is given to it. The region there mentioned was not only a desert in the broadest sense of the term, but a tract utterly desolate and unproductive, surrounded by perils, forbidding the approach of the traveller, to whom it threatens suffering and death.

This distinction in the parallel expressions, shows not only the eminent skill, but likewise the surpassing taste of the poet; for instead of being mere clumsy repetitions, they are, in the highest degree, distinctive and forcible. They wonderfully heighten the effect of the description, bringing in all its minute details to the mind's eye the entire march of the children of Israel from the pass of Pihahiroth to the borders of Canaan, where their long and disastrous journey was to terminate in the occupation of their promised inheritance. We appear at once to see them fixing their different encampments, first, in the land upon the desert borders, then proceeding onward and encountering the severe and unexpected privations of the wilderness; without water, "hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them," until, from the top of Pisgah, Moses saw the prolific country of Palestine stretching before his anxious eye in all the magnificence of its fruitfulness, assuring that numerous community whom he had so ably

conducted to the termination of their march, that they should shortly enter into their temporal rest,—a type of that heavenly rest to which he was about to be summoned.

From what I have said respecting the “howling wilderness” mentioned by Moses in this sublime song, I would not have it inferred that the whole progress of the Israelites from Pihahiroth to Canaan was through a perfect desert, but only that *portions* of their long and perilous journey were through districts such as I have described. That they were exposed to those dreadful casualties by which travellers crossing deserts are so frequently overtaken is evident from the whole history of their progress, during which they must have been almost cut off, but for the divine interposition. They were saved from perishing by hunger and thirst only by the miraculous dispensations with which God in his mercy visited them in their extremity. It is, however, sufficient to justify the verbal distinctions of the text, that part of the Israelitish march was through a district so arid and barren as fully to bear out the designation of the “waste howling wilderness.”

One remarkable feature of this noble composition, in common with all the Hebrew poetical writings, is the extraordinary manner in which the poet suggests ideas to the mind without supplying the terms literally corresponding with those ideas, but by the mere skilful and felicitous contrasts of the descriptive phrases, by which thoughts are rather intimated than expressed. They seem to grow out of the words from the pecu-

liar mode of their disposition, as a sort of contingent or supervenient produce, continually super-inducing new and vivid images perfectly congenial to the subject, and enlivening it with the most harmonious combinations of decorative colouring. The expressions are often the mere seeds of thought, as in the prophecies of Noah, Isaac, and Jacob, which expand into a rich and luxuriant production. It is this power of causing the mind of the reader to work out its own conceptions from the seed cast upon the surface of it, and of putting it into a state of quick and healthy germination by its own inherent activity—it is this power of making the imagination assist in moulding the issues of wisdom, of becoming cognizant of its own untried strength, that renders the compositions of the early Hebrew poets, and of Moses more especially, so astonishingly effective. There is a latent power in them, in addition to what we actually feel during their perusal, which renders us sensible to the presence of genius, only approached by the contributors to those inspired and imperishable records in which are contained the words of eternal life, and of which the Mosaic Scriptures form so prominent and essential a part.

The tenth verse of this extraordinary poem—extraordinary alike for the genius displayed in it, as well as for the divine truths which it conveys—by a slight alteration in the distribution of the hemistichs, may be converted into a beautiful epanode, as will be seen by placing the second line last. :—

He found him in a desert land :
 He led him about, he instructed him,
 He kept him as the apple of his eye,
 In the waste howling wilderness.

The first hemistich and the last represent the wonderful exercise of divine mercy, the one in its *great*, the other in its *greater* extent of manifestation, both, nevertheless, exhibiting the same dispensation under different degrees of activity. The scene of God's most signal displays of loving-kindness to the seed of Abraham was the wilderness where they were exposed to peril, from which only the divine interposition could relieve them. To that sterile region, under somewhat different modifications, direct reference is made in the first and last verses of the quatrain, according to the epanodistic form of construction, while the middle clauses declare the character of God's beneficent dealings with his people. He had conducted them safely through the scene of temporal trial; he had protected them from the terrible dangers with which they were beset, by directing their progress, sustaining them in their marches, and suggesting their encampments. He not only gave them wise laws and appointed judicious governors to dispense these laws, but made them acquainted with the various passes, as Harmer seems to suppose, thus preventing them from falling into the hands of those predatory hordes who generally occupy the habitable parts of desert and inhospitable regions. He became their guardian and defender, protecting them

with constant and visible care, in a land not inhabited, save by foes, either brute or intelligent.

It will be seen that the middle clauses represent the divine mercies; the first and last the *place* in which they were dispensed. The distinction is striking, and by this arrangement the epanodos is rendered perfect. Although the inspired author has not so disposed the hemistichs in this passage, nevertheless, its susceptibility of such effect is one of the many proofs of latent power, which I have already mentioned, as distinguishing the poetry of the Pentateuch, and more especially that of the Hebrew lawgiver.

I think our translators have adhered more strictly to the sense, and have better maintained the gradational parallelism, than either Lowth or Herder. By retaining the copulative conjunction AND, they indicate that distinction required by the laws of parallel gradation between "the desert land" and "howling wilderness;" whereas Lowth and Herder manifestly represent them as synonymous, signifying precisely one and the same thing. In their versions there is not that gradation marked by our translators; the "desert land" of the former is the "waste howling wilderness," whereas, in reality, they are different localities of the same region; for God not only found the Israelites on the desert or border country, which was *generally* unfruitful, but likewise in the "waste howling wilderness," which was *entirely* so.

Houbigant's reading, notwithstanding that it is given upon the authority of the Samaritan copy, I cannot look upon as an improvement; it lacks the simplicity and elevation of our version.

The journey of the Israelites through the wilderness may be considered as an instructive type of the human pilgrimage, so exquisitely, though quaintly described by George Herbert.

I travel on, seeing the hill, where lay
 My expectation.
 A long it was and weary way.
 The gloomy cave of Desperation
 I left on the one and on the other side
 The rock of Pride.

And so I came to fancy's meadow, strew'd
 With many a flower:
 Fain would I here have made abode,
 But I was quicken'd by my hour.
 So to Care's copse I came, and there got through,
 With much ado.

That led me to the wild of Passion, which
 Some call the world;
 A wasted place, but sometimes rich.
 Here I was robb'd of all my gold,
 Save one good angel, which a friend had tied
 Close to my side.

At length I got unto the gladsome hill
 Where lay my hope,
 Where lay my heart; and climbing still,
 When I had gain'd the brow and top,
 A lake of brackish waters on the ground
 Was all I found.

With that abash'd and struck with many a sting
 Of swarming fears,
 I fell and cried, "Alas, my King!"
 Can both the way and end be tears?
 Yet taking heart, I rose, and then perceiv'd
 I was deceiv'd.

My hill was farther; so I shrunk away;
Yet heard a cry,
Just as I went,—“None goes that way
And lives:” if that be all, said I,
After so foul a journey death is fair,
And but a chair.

CHAPTER XV.

The prophetic ode continued.

THE next passage of this incomparable song is one of almost unexampled beauty, even in the Hebrew Scriptures where such examples abound. It is, besides, level to the comprehension and taste of the most ordinary mind, for it appears next to impossible that any reader of the slightest discernment should fail to distinguish its characteristic excellence.

As an eagle stirreth up her nest,
Fluttereth over her young,
Spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them,
Beareth them upon her wings;—
So the Lord alone did lead him,
And there was no strange god with him.

I know of nothing, even in the book of Job, that surpasses this passage for accuracy of illustration, and exquisite poetical adornment. It is an incomparable picture of divine tenderness towards human infirmity, realizing with marvellous vividness of imagery and irresistible truth of delineation, that merciful sustentation which God extends to his infirm creatures, whom he distinguishes as objects of his parental solicitude; it is a matchless picture of divine paternity. The eagle, great in power, supreme over all the

feathered tribes, which behold him with awe and cower at his approach; an emblem at once of strength and universal domination, appearing to the gazer from the earth beneath to soar to the very sun and hold communion with the inhabitants of those inaccessible heights to which the thoughts only of man can aspire;—this tremendous bird of prey, with all its fierce instincts, its terrible strength, its fearless courage and dreadful fatality of ferocious determination under aggression or provocation, is remarkable for its tenderness towards its offspring. Its *domestic* habits are singularly gentle. Its parental attention to its young is agreeably described in Mr. Wood's zoography.*

“The eagles,” writes Mr. Wood, “are accustomed to build their aeries in the cavities of some almost inaccessible rock, which is hardly to be ascended by the aid of ladders and grappling irons. As soon as the shepherds have discovered their retreat, they raise a little hut at the foot of the rock, where they screen themselves from the fury of these dangerous birds when they convey provisions to their young. The male carefully nourishes them for the space of three months, and the female is engaged in the same employment, until the young bird is capable of quitting the aerie: but when that period is completed, *they make him spring into the air and bear him up with their wings and talons when he is in danger of falling.* Whilst the young eagle continues in the aerie, the parents ravage

* Vol. i. pp. 381—383.

all the neighbouring country; they seize whatever falls in their way and bear it to their young. But the fields and woods supply them with their best game, for there they destroy pheasants, partridges, woodcocks, wild ducks, hares, and young fawns. The shepherds, at the very instant they perceive the old birds have left their aerie, plant their ladders and climb the rocks, as well as they are able, and then carry off what the eagles have conveyed to their offspring, and, in the room of what they take, leave the entrails of certain animals. But as this cannot be done so expeditiously as to prevent the young eagles from devouring part of their food, the shepherds must necessarily bring away what has been already mutilated; but in recompence for this disadvantage, what they thus take has a much finer flavour than anything the markets afford. When the young eagle has strength to fly, which requires a considerable time to attain, because he is deprived of the excellent food provided by his parental guardians and obliged to put up with what is very indifferent, the shepherds fasten him to the aerie, that the parent birds may continue to supply him with what they take, till the disagreeable task of providing for an offspring that perpetually fatigues them, obliges, first the male, and then the female to forsake him. The male transfers himself to a new situation, and the female shortly follows the track of her faithful mate; after which their tenderness for another progeny makes them forget the former, whom the shepherds leave in the

aerie to starve, unless they are compassionate enough to remove him." By this description of the domestic habits of the eagle it will be perceived how appropriate is the comparison used by Moses. "This admirable similitude," observes Dr. Hales, "so sublimely beautiful, and yet so simple and natural, of the parent eagle training his young nestlings to fly : first, 'stirring them up, or rousing them from the nest, then '*hovering* about them,' to watch and encourage their timid efforts ;* 'spreading abroad his wings,' to receive them when drooping, 'taking them up, carrying them on his shoulder,' to ease them, when wearied and exhausted by unusual efforts ; is probably painted from the life, with so much circumstantial imagery, from the scenes which Moses might have often witnessed in the deserts of Arabia Petraea. God himself had been pleased to employ this comparison, "I bare you on eagles' wings."

Dr. Hales, with a most judicious discernment, renders the fourth hemistich of this passage,—

Beareth them upon his shoulders ;

as it is clear the parent bird could not bear the new fledged eaglets upon its wings, since this would not only encumber its flight, but the violent motion would inevitably dislodge its inexperienced charge. The several clauses rise in a regular progression of perfective beauty ; until they attain the most consummate sym-

* Exodus xix. 4.

metry. There is the exactest harmony of proportion in every member of the passage which, under the image of the sovereign of the feathered tribes, symbolizes the divine paternity. First, the eagle rouses its offspring from the nest placed upon some inaccessible height, immediately over the foaming torrent, or the rock eternally lashed by the flowing and recoiling sea; next hovers over it; then spreads its pinions in order to assist its imperfect flight; finally taking it up and placing it between its wings. These several gradations of instinctive tenderness in the most powerful and most ferocious of birds, are beautifully noted, and altogether complete such a picture of parental solicitude, as fills the mind with one vast absorbing impression. No detailed description, however elaborately wrought, could have realized so faithful a representation of those attributes of mercy and loving-kindness which our Almighty Benefactor continually loves to display. Nothing can exceed the vividness of the several accessories presented to the imagination in this animated detail of the most touching animal instincts.

The phrase,

As an eagle stirreth up her nest,

is a mere metonymy, in which the term *nest* is used for what it contains, it being a common figure, as Bochart observes, for authors to put *continens pro contento*, the thing containing for the thing contained. He further observes, that this strong parental affection more especially

characterizes the black eagle, though it is more or less to be traced in the habits of the race generally ; and that description of eagle to which Bochart alludes was most probably a native of those mountainous parts of the region called by way of distinction the wilderness, in which the Hebrew lawgiver passed so large a portion of his life.

Bishop Lowth differs very little in his translation of this fine passage from our common version ; the difference substantively lies only in two words, but his change, though it does not at all affect the sense, is confessedly an improvement. He reads,—

As the eagle stirreth up her nest,
Fluttereth over her young ;
Expandeth her plumes ; taketh them,
Beareth them upon her wings ;
So the Lord, &c.

The substitution of “ plumes,” which is a complete equivalent for “ wings,” in order to avoid the close and literal repetition, is undeniably a substitution for the better, though I still prefer Dr. Hales’ application of the word *shoulders* as still more consonant to the sense of the context, and as giving a truer notion of the action represented. In this example it will appear that there is an equality observed in the distribution of the clauses, by which each clause bears a certain proportion to the other, so that the whole shows a relative adaptation of parts ; and although the parallelisms are less prominently traceable than is usual in passages where that

artifice is evidently designed to be exhibited, they are, nevertheless, to be detected, though rather in the kindred details of the picture than in direct correspondencies of expression. The image itself, by which the parallelism would be substantiated, is not indeed repeated, but the *attributes* or specific qualities of that image are consecutively introduced in the four hemistichs embraced in this magnificent example, each clause of the respective couplets having a correspondency with, and dependency upon one another, for their due effect in the regular sequence of concurrent actions. Without this close concurrency of the different members the whole passage would lose its beautiful harmony of association and delicate propriety of adjustment, and like a disorganized map be destitute of coherency.

Notwithstanding, however, the general connexion of the four hemistichs, in which the various parental instincts of the eagle are so admirably developed, there is nevertheless a more immediate conformity, or rather a more direct relationship between the first pair. They form a complete integral portion of a more complete whole, still depending upon the consentaneous clauses which follow for the perfect fulfilment of that delineation which they only in part realize. They describe the action of the eagle in its mood of incipient tenderness, covering her nest before her young ones have been taken out of it to commence their training for future flight.

The second pair of hemistichs represents what takes place when the yet undisciplined

offspring is preparing, under the tuition of its parent, to quit the precincts of its home. After it has left the nest, it mounts the shoulder of the stronger bird and takes its first flight. The two gradations of disciplinary treatment on the part of the parent eagle are accurately defined; the consummation depending upon their just and appropriate union. It is worth observing how strictly this distinction of parts is observed. Although the clauses severally rise in a marked progression, each distich is nevertheless complete in itself, the lines composing it having that mutual relation which brings them into positive though less distinct parallelism. It is really surprising to observe with what a severe adherence to the rules of art Moses seems to construct every line of his poem, and yet the art is nowhere an impediment to the introduction of beauties, but on the contrary is rendered ancillary to their due effect upon the reader's mind.

Herder's translation is—

As the eagle covers her nest around,
And hovers over her young,
Spreads her wings, takes them thereon
And bears them aloft upon her wings;
So did Jehovah lead him, himself alone,
There was no strange god with him.

The German version varies from ours only in the first verse; here the bard is made to represent the eagle as brooding over her young instead of rousing them, which makes the climax ascend from perfect quiescency to the extreme of activity. So exquisitely beautiful is this passage, and at the same time so intelligible—so

transparent, if the term may be allowed,—that it is next to impossible to give a feeble translation to it; and so little do either Lowth or Herder differ from our venerable translators in their reading of this portion of Moses' prophetic ode, that we may consider them all as giving essentially the same sense; their several variations being only in the accessories of the passage, not in its vital import.

The image of an eagle “stirring up her nest,” or rousing her young, and obliging them to quit it, in order to commence the discipline of volitation, is a very lively picture, and forcibly represents God's dealings with his people in Egypt, where, by a series of dreadful visitations upon the Egyptians, he compelled them to allow the posterity of Jacob to quit a country which he had so grievously afflicted. It was by “a mighty hand and a stretched out arm” that he wrought their deliverance. As the young eagles required to be roused from their nest, become foul with numerous deposits and various accumulations of animal matter, in order to induce them to quit so filthy a sanctuary; so the Israelites, until “stirred” by the voice of God, and compelled by the tyranny of Pharaoh, whom the Deity for his own wise purposes had permitted to afflict them, were reluctant to depart from a land where, under a milder and more equitable administration, their immediate forefathers had enjoyed undisturbed freedom.

So the Lord alone did lead him,
And there was no strange god with him.

“This,” observes Bishop Patrick, “is an exact resemblance of God’s tender care of his people Israel; whom he solicited by Moses and Aaron to aspire after their liberty, when they were oppressed in Egypt; just as an eagle excites her young ones, when they lie drowsy in the filth of their nests, to fly away; and as the eagle fluttereth over them, with her wings spread abroad, so God, by his spirit, moved the Israelites to be obedient to their deliverers out of Egypt. For Moses uses the very same word, when he speaks of the spirit of God ‘moving upon the waters.’ (Genesis i. 2.) And as the eagle carries her fainting young ones on her wings, so God supported them when they were weary, and upheld them in dangerous ways; insomuch, that he is said to carry them in his arms as a father doth his child. (Deuteronomy i. 31.)

And there was no strange god with him

to help or assist him; but by his almighty power alone they were protected and preserved; which made their sin the more heinous in sacrificing to other gods,* as if they had been their benefactors.”

In this concluding couplet, the subject of comparison is brought forward with great effect, and the whole concludes with a solemnity at once befitting the subject, and the prodigious but merciful exercise of divine power: God’s dealings with the Israelites is presented with extreme vividness and with a dignity becoming the occasion. After drawing a most animated

* Deut. xxxii. 17.

picture of parental tenderness, by which our strongest sympathies are excited, the poet tells us that thus God did cherish and protect his people:—

So the Lord *alone* did lead him,

because none else was able to do so. Who could have performed the miracles which he wrought for the deliverance of his chosen from Egyptian bondage, but “the Lord alone?” Those miracles were the work of omnipotence, and none but an omnipotent agent could have so signalized his marvellous power. The Egyptian magicians tried to imitate some of them, but this only confirmed their impotence, and proved to a demonstration, that the power was not in man, “whose breath is in his nostrils,” to accomplish such “wonders” as are the sole prerogative of Godhead. The little and apparently insignificant word *alone* is very emphatic in this passage. “It was God, and none else,” who performed those mighty deeds which caused the Egyptian monarch to tremble on his throne, and rendered every house throughout his extensive dominions a house of mourning. Though Moses was the ostensible instrument, it was the agency of the divinity which operated in these miraculous visitations of retribution upon a wicked king, and his licentious people. He not only did all these things for the deliverance of Israel, but preserved and conducted them by the marvellous agencies of his providence during their entire sojourn in the wilderness. It was the Lord alone who led them.

And there was no strange god with him.

Here is only an amplification of the same idea contained in the first clause of the distich. The Deity had no help, he was not assisted by any strange god, for his almighty power, in its undivided and indivisible plenitude, was sufficient to sustain his people. His superiority over the factitious divinities of Egypt was abundantly manifested. These were unable to protect their votaries from the sore ills which beset them in consequence of Pharaoh's stubborn resistance of the divine commands, whilst the God of Israel finally rescued the Israelites from the tyranny of that unfeeling despot. "O Lord God of hosts, who is a strong Lord like unto thee?"

It is worthy of observation with how subtle a skill the parallelism is produced in this couplet. It is made entirely to depend upon the word "alone," which greatly extends the sense. The Israelites had no other leader but God. Moses was only the instrument by whom he acted; his guidance was suggested by the Lord, who really led his people. The second clause is exegetical of the first, being a paraphrase of it: the same idea is carried out. If the first hemistich had run simply thus:—

So the Lord did lead him,

no parallelism could have been traced; but now the latter clause has an immediate and inseparable dependency upon the first, which it explains by a direct amplification of the first simple thought. So delicately is the poetical

distribution of terms sometimes conducted, that the artifice entirely escapes attention; we feel the latent and mysterious power, though we do not detect the cause by which it is governed until we come to apply the touchstone of dialectical and analytical scrutiny, which lays bare all the resources of art, and exhibits the means by which every poetical or rhetorical result is obtained.

It is abundantly evident, to my apprehension at least, from each verse of this sublime attestation of the genius of Moses, that it was composed with the severest and most scrupulous attention to the laws of metrical arrangement; for perhaps there cannot be mentioned, within the vast circle of literary production, a single composition exhibiting more decidedly a constant application of the highest resources of art.

He made him ride on the high places of the earth,
That he might eat the increase of the fields;
And he made him to suck honey out of the rock,
And oil out of the flinty rock.

Here is an enallage of tenses, by which a past tense is put for the future; showing that what was to be in the coming time, for the passage is evidently prophetic, was as clearly present to the mind of Moses, as if it were at that moment actually taking place. This form of speech is very common among the Hebrew poets, especially where what they are delivering is prophetic; and it is certainly much more impressive than if the future tense were em-

ployed. It brings at once before the mind the issues of the future, not as an expectation, but as a reality. It gives a positive existence to the prospective event, which the mere assurance of it, as an event to happen, does not produce. The declaration that a future thing actually *has been* given from the tongue of one delivering a divine oracle, is calculated to strike the mind and heart with much fuller force of conviction than the mere assurance that it *shall be*. In the one case, we feel the distant result to be positive; in the other, contingent. There is the vagueness of uncertainty hanging over our mental impressions, arising out of the latter form of declaration, which is dissipated by the former, representing, as it does, to the imagination, the prophetic perceptions of the inspired lawgiver, carried forward into futurity, and bringing that actually down to a period already past, which was only to be consummated at some distant advance of time. Thus it will appear that the form of expression adopted by the prophetic bard in this passage, is much more emphatic than if he had observed that order of the tenses which the subject appears literally to demand.

He made him ride on the high places of the earth ;

that is, when the posterity of Jacob, represented in their progenitor, shall have secured their promised settlement, they shall enjoy the most productive and secure possessions, for which they will be indebted to that divine guardian who “led them through the wilderness like a flock ;” for he will bring them triumphantly into

the land covenanted to their fathers, expelling the heathens before them, and “laying waste his dwelling-place;” he will cause those whom he has rescued from the tyranny of an idolatrous people to pass over Jordan, to subdue their numerous foes, and finally, after a succession of glorious conquests, to establish themselves in that country to which they shall eventually give a name, and where the sun of Christianity shall ultimately rise to enlighten the earth,—for there “the day spring from on high” shall appear “with healing in his wings,” — and snap asunder the chains of eternal death in which sin had bound every descendant of Adam.

That he might eat the increase of the fields ;

in other words, that he might enjoy the most complete territorial prosperity, having abundance of grain, of fruit and of every luxury produced by a prolific soil.

The whole land of Palestine is eminently fruitful, the earth being of the richest description. Dr. Shaw informs us that it rarely requires more than one pair of beeves to plough it.

“Moses speaks of Canaan as of the finest country in the world—‘a land flowing with milk and honey.’ Profane authors also speak of it much in the same manner. Hecatæus (Apud. Joseph. contr. Ap. p. 1049), who had been brought up with Alexander the Great, and who wrote in the time of Ptolemy I., mentions this country as very fruitful and well peopled, an excellent province, that bore all kinds of good fruit. Pliny

gives a similar description of it, and says Jerusalem was not only the most famous city of Judæa, but of the whole east. He describes the course of the Jordan, as of a delicious river; he speaks advantageously of the lake of Genesareth, of the balm of Judæa, its palm-trees, &c. Tacitus (*Hist. lib. xv. cap. 6*), Ammianus Marcellinus, and most of the ancients who have mentioned Canaan, have spoken of it with equal commendations. The Mohammedans speak of it extravagantly. They tell us, that besides the two principal cities of the country, Jerusalem and Jericho, this province had a thousand villages, each of which had many fine gardens. That the grapes were so large, that five men could hardly carry a cluster of them, and that five men might hide themselves in the shell of one pomegranate! That this country was anciently inhabited by giants of the race of Amalek.’’*

And he made him to suck honey out of the rock.

This line is very expressive of the extraordinary fruitfulness of the soil, it being so marvelously productive, that even in the most stony and barren portions of it, blossoms would expand and flowers spring up in such profusion, that the bees would be obliged to deposit their honey even in the clefts of rocks; thus showing that there should be no part of the blessed land where honey, as well as the most nutritious esculents and more elegant vegetable produc-

* Calmet's Dictionary of the Bible, art. Canaan.

tions of the earth, might not be obtained in the greatest profusion. “This rock-honey,” Patrick observes, “seems to be spoken of as the best of its kind, being joined with the finest wheat:—

He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat :
And with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee.*”

There is a passage in Virgil’s fourth Eclogue, describing the fruitfulness of the earth in the golden age, which so nearly resembles the second and third hemistichs of the thirteenth verse of this prophetic ode, as would almost lead to the belief that the Mantuan bard was not unacquainted with the Mosaic scriptures:—

Unlaboured harvests shall the fields adorn,
And clustered grapes shall blush on every thorn ;
The knotted oaks shall showers of honey weep,
And through the matted grass the liquid gold shall creep.†

Not only does Moses describe the stony parts of Palestine as being abundant in the richer productions of the soil, but that even the summits of the rocks should be covered with so fine a deposit of mould as to produce olive-trees in such plenty, that from them a sufficient supply of oil would be obtained for the inhabitants of the land. The olive-tree is found to thrive best in elevated localities which are rocky, and therefore unfavourable to general vegetation. This being a hardy shrub, it grows healthily where there is only a thin stratum of earth, fixing its roots within the interstices of the

* Psalm lxxxi. 16.

† Dryden’s translation.

rocks, which support it during the term of its hardy but luxuriant growth. It is surprising how well acquainted Moses appears to have been with the natural history, not only of the country in which he had so long sojourned, but likewise of that which the seed of Jacob were about to enter.

With reference to the poetical beauty and structure of the passage now under examination, I have a few remarks to make.

He made him *ride* upon the high places of the earth.

This is a fine metaphor, signifying that he should enter the country as a conqueror (the poet of course applies here to the posterity of Jacob collectively); he should “ride on the high places” as one who had gained them by conquest, asserting his supremacy and manifesting his power. He should not only “ride” on the level country, but over the lofty and more fruitful mountains, showing by this how general and absolute would be his dominion over the conquered land. Here he shall dwell and live deliciously, for the expression to “ride” signifies, as writes the prophet.*

I will make Ephraim to *ride*;
Judah shall plough, and Jacob shall break his clods;

that is, the people of Israel shall live in pleasure when Judah shall live laboriously.

The ideas of riding and walking are opposed in the line under notice, not in words, but the

* Hosea x. 11. See Dodd’s note.

one is suggested by the other, the former presenting a picture of acquired power and temporal means, rendered more vivid by the opposite of all this intimated in the latter, which, though only understood, is equally present to the reader's mind. Observe with how marked an emphasis universal empire over the vanquished land is displayed; for Jacob, that is, the Israelites, shall "ride on the high places," but as he must first possess himself of the plains before he can occupy the *high places*, this latter phrase will consequently imply both. Herder translates the couplet—

He bore him to the mountain heights,
And fed him with the fruits of the earth :

which has sufficient simplicity and perspicuity, but is inferior in copiousness of thought and amplitude of meaning to our common reading.

That he might eat the increase of the fields;

or, that he might take possession of the whole country, and enjoy the provisions of a land, in the figurative language of poesy, "flowing with milk and honey." It is astonishing how much may be inferred from these words. "The increase of the fields" signifies literally all that the land produces, and not only so, but it implies likewise that the Israelites shall enjoy those eminent territorial advantages which shall accrue to them from the possession of this extremely productive region.

He made him to suck honey out of the rock,
And oil out of the flinty rock.

A similar distinction of the terms will be observed to that which I have already so often pointed out. "Rock" and "flinty rock," do not sustain the same idea in this couplet; the first term applies to stony strata in the mountains, in which there is a great number of fissures and interstitial separations; the other to solid rocks, upon which there is a scanty deposit of earth, sufficient to sustain the growth of the olive-tree and other hardy plants. It is clear that a distinction was intended between the corresponding terms in these two hemistichs, and this at once occurs to the mind, as the only distinction which can reasonably exist; the first term applying to silicious strata, the other to compact masses of stone. I confess it seems to me that a more exact correspondency, and a more immediate cognation, would appear in the relative members of the distich, if the subject of each line were inserted thus:—

He made him to suck *oil* out of the rock,
And *honey* out of the flinty rock;

for it is well known to naturalists that olive-trees thrive better in a stony than in a marly or rich soil. Within the divisions of stony layers, so common in hilly localities, they fix their tenacious roots, which hold with amazing tenacity, and the plants in those situations are usually covered with an abundant supply of fruit.

The “rock,” then, of the sacred text, will apply most appropriately to the growth of olives, and the “flinty” or solid rock, in which there are numerous holes and indentations, to the labour of bees, which deposit their honey in such places of security as will best place it beyond the reach of the spoiler. I am satisfied that the two expressions were intended to represent different modifications of the same or nearly the same image, the difference only lying between congested, but unconcreted, and solid rock; that therefore the latter expression was designed by the inspired bard to rise in force of emphasis above the former, as we have already seen exemplified in the preceding couplets.

The words “to suck honey” are exceedingly emphatic, as they express extreme relish, thus presenting a vivid picture of luxurious enjoyment by the judicious use of one very simple but significant phrase. Moses does not merely say that the sons of Jacob shall obtain oil and honey, but that they shall have both in excessive abundance, and the fineness of the quality is implied by the manner in which they are represented as enjoying them. Thus, under the images of fecundity and of luxury suggested in this expressive couplet, the poet leads directly to the inference that the favoured seed of Abraham shall possess all the temporal blessings which one of the most fruitful regions of the earth should yield. Here is a specimen of painting by words, a faculty in which the Hebrew lawgiver was unrivalled, not approached by any thing out of the sacred writings.

Butter of kine, and milk of sheep,
 With fat of lambs, and rams of the breed of Bashan,
 And goats, with the fat of kidneys of wheat ;
 And thou didst drink the pure blood of the grape.

In these four hemistichs the picture of temporal prosperity is continued. The first clause is, as usual, distinguished by that accurate discrimination of objects and of circumstances which I have pointed out in other passages, and which so strongly marks the just perception and consummate genius of the author of this magnificent composition. Cows yield the best butter, ewes the richest milk ; the promised inheritance of the Israelites, therefore, is to furnish a plentiful supply of both. This infers likewise that it shall abound with flocks and herds. Observe how one consequence, though not stated, rises out of another. Those subjects are predicated which by consequence involve others. They could not have plenty of "butter of kine and milk of sheep" unless their flocks and herds were numerous, but they might nevertheless possess numerous flocks and herds without having abundance of butter and milk, for disease might be among their cattle, and various other casualties might frustrate the supply ; both, however, are positively implied in the lines as they now stand, since abundance of the produce of cattle necessarily supposes a number of kine and sheep bearing its proportion to that abundance. It is further to be remarked, that the poet does not simply say the country shall produce butter and milk in vast quantities, but signifies besides that it will yield the best of both, and this too in

a single hemistich, in which the expressions are beautifully contrasted and balanced with so exquisite a nicety of adjustment, even in our version, as to form a line perfectly metrical.

Butter | of kine | and milk | of sheep.

Here is a line most agreeably modulated, and no less expressive in the sense than musical in the sound. It consists of four feet, a pyrrhie and three iambuses. This distribution into feet was, no doubt, quite accidental on the part of our translators, they being led into it, as I have before observed, by the metrical arrangement of the original Hebrew.

With fat of lambs, and rams of the breed of Bashan,

that is, with the fat lambs of the flock, or, as it might have been rendered, the fatlings of lambs. By "rams of the breed of Bashan," we are to understand the finest that could be produced, for Bashan, says Reland, was esteemed one of the most fruitful countries in the world; its rich pastures, oaks, and fine cattle, are exceedingly commended.*

And goats, with the fat of kidneys of wheat.

Dr. Adam Clarke has an excellent note upon this verse. "Almost every person knows," says he, "that the kidney is enveloped in a coat of the purest fat in the body of the animal, for which several anatomical reasons might be given. As the kidney itself is to the abundantly

* Palæst. lib. 1.

surrounding fat, so is the germ of the grain to the lobes, or farinaceous parts. The expression may here be considered as a very strong and peculiarly happy figure to point out the finest wheat, containing the most healthy and vigorous germ, growing in a very large and nutritive grain; and consequently the whole figure points out a species of wheat equally excellent both for seed and bread. This beautiful metaphor seems to have escaped the notice of every commentator." This is a mistake: many commentators have noticed it, among whom I may mention Bishop Patrick, Bishop Kidder, and Dr. Hales. "Some of the greatest delicacies in India," says Mr. Forbes in his oriental memoirs, "are now made from the rolong flour, which is called the heart or kidney of the wheat." Herder translates this verse,

The fat kidneys of goats, and bread of wheat,

and observes, "I have departed here from the interpolation of the Hebrew, because the phrase 'fat of kidneys of wheat' seems to have no good sense, and the more natural sense is obvious. The detail of these fruits and eatables is proof, like everything else in it, of the unborrowed truth of this poem. After the people had been so long in the desert, these hills must seem an Elysium, and their fruits the food of Paradise."

It is very clear from this note that the German commentator was altogether insensible to the beauty of the metaphor which Dr. Adam Clarke has so happily analyzed.

The fat kidneys of goats,

is to my mind a very unsatisfactory rendering, since it gives a sense, as I apprehend, altogether beside the intention of Moses. He is evidently pointing to the best things of their respective kinds in the land of Canaan, namely, cows' butter, and sheep's milk, the fatlings of lambs, of rams, and of goats of the breed of Bashan, which were the finest breeds known, and wheat of the plumpest and most farinaceous grain. He did not refer to the *fat* of the animals, but to their *fatness*. What an absurd anomaly to talk of the Israelites eating fat and suet as one of the great privileged luxuries of their promised inheritance. This could have been neither a very flattering nor a very gratifying prediction. It would have betokened neither extraordinary prosperity nor abundance, whilst the phrase "bread of wheat" would have signified nothing more than an improvement in their condition, so far as the supply of the mere necessities of life was concerned, without at all provoking the inference of extreme territorial plenty; for their only eating wheaten bread would not imply this. Moses promised his countrymen something better than

The fat kidneys of goats, and bread of wheat.

He not only promised them flocks and herds in vast multitudes, and of the choicest breeds, but likewise the produce of those flocks and herds in the greatest quantity, and of the richest quality, the fattest of the former for domestic

consumption, besides corn of the finest grain, and grapes in such profusion, that the Israelites should drink the juice of them pure, and thus far more abundantly, without submitting it to the process of vinous fermentation, which limits the enjoyment of it; since suffering and personal injury invariably follow excess.

I am surprised that a mind so poetically constituted as Herder's should have overlooked the graphic beauty of the metaphor which he rejects as perverting the meaning, and have substituted a mere literal, but bald adjunct, in his severe and scrupulous desire to appropriate the relative terms, which sadly alters, and at the same time, in my judgment, greatly deteriorates the sense. It drags it down from its present sublime elevation to the most ordinary common place.

The expression "fat of kidneys of wheat" may be thus interpreted—wheat plump, rich and farinaceous, like the kidney fat, the finest and most nutritive in the animal body. I consider that, as in the passage now under consideration, it was manifestly the intention of Moses to describe every object in Canaan mentioned by him as the best of its kind; he signifies not only that the sheep, but likewise that the goats, were of the breed of Bashan, a district celebrated for its cattle of all denominations; for bulls of Bashan are mentioned by the Psalmist,—

Many bulls have compassed me;
Strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round.*

* Psalm xxii. 12.

This, though a mountainous district, was, nevertheless, extremely fertile, containing numerous valleys which supplied the richest pasture. The hill of Bashan, immortalized by the Psalmist, formed part of this fertile region:—

The hill of God is as the hill of Bashan,
An high hill, as the hill of Bashan.

Now it is well known that goats are invariably the inhabitants of hilly districts, and as every part of this region was fruitful, it is but natural to infer that the goats, as well as the sheep and oxen bred there, were the finest of their species. I am the more confirmed in the propriety of this reading, as it not only renders the passage more consistent, but rescues it from the charge of that defect which a diminution of beauty implies. All the other objects mentioned by the inspired bard are characterized by the highest order of excellence, I therefore conclude that the goats were likewise intended by him to be distinguished as the choicest of their kind.

And thou didst drink the pure blood of the grape.

This latter expression was made use of by Jacob in his prophetic benediction upon Judah, and from him Moses most probably borrowed it, as he employs it for a similar purpose, namely, to denote the fruitfulness of Palestine generally, where the vine should be cultivated with such success, that the new possessors of this productive land would drink the juice of the grape as plentifully as water.

The whole of this portion of the ode, from the

twelfth verse to the fifteenth inclusive, gives a most eloquent description of the fertility of that land which the Israelites were about to possess—a region abounding not only with all the necessities, but likewise with all the luxuries of life,—and thus the more fully projects to view the base ingratitude of the people, who had been so signally blessed when under the rebellious son of Nebat, a large portion of them, no less than ten of the tribes, abandoned the worship of the true God, and with daring impiety bowed before those dumb idols which Jeroboam so audaciously set up. In numerous instances this degenerate people, who had been so divinely protected and so eminently distinguished, threw off their allegiance to their God, and committed the most atrocious abominations, to which the prophet refers in terms of scornful reproach, comparing the abandoned seed of Jacob to the pampered beasts of the field.

It may be worth while to observe, before concluding this chapter, how dexterously the poet implies the vast abundance of the vinous produce of Palestine, by the judicious application of a single epithet:—

And thou didst drink the *pure* blood of the grape.

It is not said that they should drink wine, which is the blood of the grape in an artificial state, after it has undergone the necessary process of fermentation, but it is promised that they shall drink the juice of grapes pure, without mixture; a circumstance that much more strongly

indicates the prodigious abundance of this fruit, because a far greater quantity of its juice may be taken in the simple form than after it has undergone the action of spiritualization. A wide distinction, therefore, is to be made betwixt the expression as used by Moses, “the *pure* blood of the grape,” which implies the simple juice of this fruit, and the more general phrase “blood of the grape,” which unites the idea of that fermented luxury produced from it.

It will be noticed that the particulars here stated refer to the future condition of the Israelites in Canaan; the whole passage is prophetic. The same may be said of the fifth verse of the chapter—

They have corrupted themselves,
 Their spot is not the spot of his children :
 They are a perverse and crooked generation ;

which, though it may refer to the idolatries of the Israelites before their entrance into Canaan, in a secondary sense, points principally to their spiritual degeneracy after, when they reached the very acme of moral turpitude.

CHAPTER XVI.

The prophetic ode continued.

“THE third part of this prophetic song,” writes Dr. Hales, “to the end of the eighteenth verse, describes the usual but ungenerous effect of prosperity upon “Jeshurun,” or *righteous* Israel heretofore, in their adoption of the false gods of the neighbouring nations, and forgetfulness of the true God, their Creator and protector. This is expressed in the most animated and glowing apostrophes, or changes of person, in which this most highly wrought composition abounds; uniting all the fire and richness of oriental eloquence with the close and accurate reasoning of occidental composition.”

But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked :
Thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick,
Thou art covered with fatness ;
Then he forsook God which made him,
And lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation.

Upon the first line of this passage Dr. Dodd has the following note. “Israel is called Jeshurun both here and in chap. xxxiii. 5, 26, and Isaiah xliv. 2. The word may be derived either from Jeshur, righteousness, because they were a people professing righteousness, or governed by righteous laws; or from Shur, to see, because

they were favoured with divine manifestations. See Ainsworth. Vitringa and Venema prefer the first sense. Le Clerc and Calmet think that Jeshurun is a diminutive for Israel. The metaphor is taken from a pampered horse, which grows wanton and vicious with kindness and good keeping. The reader is to consider Moses here speaking as a prophet, of things future as past, which Venema thinks have a particular reference to the rebellion and ingratitude of the Israelites, from the time of Solomon down to the coming of the Saviour. Vitringa well observes that the Jews never so much dishonoured the rock of their salvation as when rejecting Jesus Christ. Houbigant observes upon this verse, that the confusion of persons and things evidently proves the order to be changed, which he would thus restore ; reading after the words—

*Thou didst drink the pure blood of the grape,
Thou art waxen fat, grown thick, and covered with fatness ;
Jacob hath eaten, and is filled,
Israel is made fat, and hath kicked ;
He hath forsaken God who made him ;
He hath despised the God of his salvation."*

“Why Israel is called Jeshurun,” says Patrick, “is not easy to resolve. Cocceius in his *Ultima Mosis*, sect. 973, derives it from Shur, which signifies to see, behold or descry. From whence in the future tense and the plural number comes Jeshuru, which by the addition of nun,* *paragogicum*, as they speak, makes

* Nun is here a paragogic particle.

Jeshurun, that is, 'the people who had the vision of God.' I know nothing more simple nor more probable than this, which highly aggravated their sin, who, having God so nigh unto them, (ver. 4, 7.) and their elders having had a sight of him (Exodus xxiv. 10,) was so ungrateful as to rebel against him and worship other gods."

Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked.

What can be more expressive of insensible ingratitude and fatuitous presumption than this most significant image! Israel is represented as enjoying all the temporal blessings of the promised land with that brutal indifference towards Him who bestowed those blessings, evinced by animals which have no better guide than their instincts in the manifestation of their feelings. As a vigorous steer which has been allowed to grow fat in rich pastures kicks at him who placed it there in the mere wantonness of unrestraint, so will the Israelites (for this is all said by way of anticipation, the prophetic afflatus now evidently swaying the mind of the poet) rebel against "the Lord that bought them" and do evil in his sight. How completely was this prospective announcement verified in the issue! the Israelites became at once presumptuous and dissolute.

Thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick,
Thou art covered with fatness.

Here the cognate comparisons multiply, as if the prophet was unable to abandon the thought

of Israel's disgraceful requital for God's manifold and great mercies. He seems to dwell upon their baseness, as if it was a predominating impression of his mind, gradually increasing the force of this one prevailing idea, which for the moment appears to have absorbed his whole thoughts. We shall perceive, that although the image of fatness is repeated in each clause of the passage, it is each time with additional emphasis.

Thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick ;

‘Not only art thou become fat, but the bulk of thy body is greatly increased, and this to such a degree, that

Thou art covered with fatness—

thou hast reached to such an excess of grossness that thy pampered appetites have made thee unmindful of anything but how thou mayest best gratify them. This has rendered thee selfish, presumptuous, and ungrateful.’

Thus the several comparisons gradually advance in effect of signification, without in the least abating their close cognation, the graduating force of each being, on the contrary, increased by it. This rapid duplication of the metaphor with its gradational adjunct, elevating it at every break of the sentence where the new impulse of emphasis is given, is among the most effective things to be found in this extraordinary poem, which so profusely abounds with them. It beautifully exhibits the excited state

of the prophet's mind. He was too indignant to ponder his words with his usual precision, though they were really "weighed in the balance of the sanctuary," or to seek for new images to illustrate his thoughts; but being engrossed by one prevailing idea, instead of multiplying comparisons, in the vehemence of his indignation he seizes upon a strong metaphor and amplifies it with prodigious energy until the resources of amplification are exhausted: he then arrives at the corollary of his proposition, that Israel having become pampered and mindful only of their own enjoyments, they would as a natural consequence forsake the Lord Jehovah, and lightly esteem the God of their salvation.

An old poet of our own country* has painted so just a picture of man's ingratitude, that I am sure the reader will not consider its insertion here out of place.

MAN'S INGRATITUDE.

A thankful heart hath earn'd one favour twice,
 But he that is ungrateful wants no vice :
 The beast that only lives the life of sense,
 Prone to his several actions and propense
 To what he does, without the advice of will,
 Guided by nature, that does nothing ill,
 In practic maxims proves it a thing hateful
 To accept a favour, and to live ungrateful :
 But man whose more diviner soul hath gain'd
 A higher step to reason ; nay attain'd
 A higher step than that, the light of grace,
 Comes short of them, and in that point more base
 Than they, most prompt and versed in that rude
 Unnatural and high sin, ingratitude.
 The stall-fed ox that is grown fat will know
 His careful feeder, and acknowledge too ;

* Francis Quarles.

The prouder courser will at length espy
 His master's bounty in his keeper's eye :
 The air-dividing falcon will requite
 Her falconer's pains with a well-pleasing flight :
 The generous spaniel loves his master's eye,
 And licks his fingers, though no meat be by :
 But man, ungrateful man, that's born and bred
 By heaven's immediate power ; maintained and fed
 By his providing hand ; observed, attended
 By his indulgent grace ; preserved, defended
 By his prevailing arm ; this man I say,
 Is more ungrateful, more obdure than they.
 By him we live and move, from him we have
 What blessings he can give, or we can crave ;
 Food for our hunger, dainties for our pleasure ;
 Trades for our business, pastimes for our leisure.
 In grief he is our joy ; in want, our wealth ;
 In bondage, freedom ; and in sickness, health ;
 In peace, our council ; and in war, our leader ;
 At sea, our pilot ; and in suits, our pleader ;
 In pain, our help ; in triumph, our renown ;
 In life, our comfort ; and in death, our crown.
 Yet man, O most ungrateful man, can ever
 Enjoy thy gift, but never mind the giver ;
 And like the swine, though pampered with enough,
 His eyes are never higher than the trough.
 We still receive ; our hearts we seldom lift
 To heaven, but drown the giver in the gift ;
 We taste the scollops and return the shells—
 Our sweet pomegranates want their silver bells ;
 We take the gift ; the hand that did present it
 We oft reward ; forget the friend that sent it.
 A blessing given to those will not disburse
 Some thanks, is little better than a curse.
 Great giver of all blessings, thou that art
 The Lord of gifts, give me a grateful heart ;
 O give me that, or keep thy favours from me !
 I wish no blessings with a vengeance to me.

The triplet exhibiting the insolence and ingratitude of Israel in the prophetic ode of Moses, is immediately followed by a couplet signifying their reckless abandonment of their Almighty Protector :—

Then he forsook God which made him,
And lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation.

The cause of Israel's spiritual alienation, as is but too generally the case now, appears to have been his seduction from God's worship by the idols of the world. That very prosperity to which the Deity had advanced him, and which ought to have rendered him a more worthy recipient of divine gifts, was, on the contrary, the cause of his wedding himself to the enticements of appetite, and repudiating that discipline and "spiritual discernment" which were required of him, in return for such numerous and signal dispensations. No sooner had the Israelites obtained undisturbed possession of Canaan, subsequently called Palestine, than their whole political history presents a confused scene of rebellions and of usurpations, its dark page being crowded with all the various violences of civil commotion, of social discord, and political disunion. They ultimately divided into two separate communities, conforming themselves to the abominations of idolatry, either positive or implied—worshipping idols made with hands, or those baser idols of sense which enlist the passions and enslave the heart; these latter services more immediately and more permanently provoking the divine indignation, than those offered to deities of wood and stone, which though more rationally degrading, are still the less positively guilty effects of ignorance and superstition. The Israelites abandoning themselves to the blandishments of this world; proud of their supremacy over the nations by whom they were im-

mediately surrounded; arrogant in consequence of their descent from him to whose righteousness they were so especially indebted for such munificent displays of the divine favour; possessing a fruitful country; and thus being affluent in earthly possessions, they became pampered, set their Almighty Benefactor at defiance, despised his ordinances, resisted his authority, and gave themselves up to the evil solicitations of their hearts' lusts.

First, Israel forsook God which made him, and then, as a natural consequence of such ungrateful depravity,

He lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation.

This was sadly consummated in the further progress of the Jewish polity. The degenerate seed of Jacob not only rebelled against their CREATOR, but at length "lightly esteemed" their REDEEMER. "He was despised and rejected" of them. "He came to his own, but his own received him not." "He was made the scorn of men." How completely did they realize the prophetic picture of the Psalmist—*

But in mine adversity they rejoiced,
And gathered themselves together :
Yea, the abjects gathered themselves together against me,
And I knew it not ;
They did tear me, and ceased not :
With hypocritical mockers in feasts,
They gnashed upon me with their teeth.

In the couplet of Moses' divine song which we have been considering, there might be produced not only a beautiful parallelism of construction,

* Psalm xxxv. 15, 16.

but likewise such a remarkable relation in the corresponding terms, as would bring out a fine example of cognate parallelism to the reader's view. If the couplet were disengaged from the metaphor with which the concluding line is now enriched, the passage might be rendered thus:—

And he forsook God which created him :
And he despised God which redeemed him.

Here we should have in combination an example of constructive and of cognate parallelism, the one rising out of the other, and the opposed terms mutually imparting a metrical cadence, this being nearly, if not precisely the same in both clauses.

I know not if the perfect simplicity and exact symmetrical proportion maintained in this mode of converting the original into English, would not more than countervail the significant metaphor with which the poet has graced the last hemistich of this passage. The Creator and Redeemer are seen in more immediate and obvious juxtaposition; the terms are distributed with a juster regard to the harmony of construction, besides which, they more directly assist and enforce each other.

The phrase "lightly esteemed" is a free and paraphrastic translation of the Hebrew; the implied negative expresses the strongest positive affirmation—he *lightly esteemed*, that is, he *greatly despised*. Phrases so used often become much more emphatic than when the declaration is literally and directly made; as when we say,

he is *anything but a good man*, it immediately forces the inference that he is *an extremely bad one*.

Bishop Patrick's note on the whole passage is eminently happy. "As there was a progress in the Israelites' insolent forgetfulness of God, expressed in three phrases, which may signify three degrees of their stupidity, 'waxen fat,' 'grown thick,' and 'covered with fatness;' so some observe as many degrees of their rebellion. First, they *kicked* against God, that is, they threw off the yoke of his laws and refused to observe them. Secondly, they *forsook* God and fell into idolatry. And lastly, they *lightly esteemed* the rock of their salvation. Where the Hebrew word nibbel signifies more than a light esteem; for if it comes from nebelah, a dead carcass, as some think it doth, it denotes the greatest abhorrence, nothing being so much abominated among the Jews as a dead carcass, the touching of which was the highest pollution. And thus Cocceius and Vitringa understand it, who observe that this was never so fulfilled as in their behaviour towards our Lord Christ, who was indeed the rock of their salvation, and so vilely used by them as if he had been the most loathsome man upon earth. So Vitringa expounds these words in his *Observ. Sacr. lib. 2, cap. 9, p. 173*—*instar flagitii tractavit rupem salutis suæ*. For this is a word used by God himself when he would express his utter detestation of Nineveh and his dealing with her according to her abominable wickedness;—'I will cast abominable filth upon thee, and make thee vile.' Nahum iii. 6. And

when he speaks of the disgrace he would put upon his own temple—Jeremiah xiv. 21. The Seventy, indeed, simply expound the word *he departed* ; but the last words they expound ‘from God his Saviour,’ as Onkelos also, ‘his most mighty Redeemer ;’ which in the most eminent sense is the Lord Jesus, for none brought such salvation to them and wrought such a redemption for them as he did, who is ‘the stone which God laid in Zion,’ Isaiah xxviii. 16. But instead of flying to him as men in danger do to a rock or strong fortress, they not only rejected him, but abused and put the highest indignities upon him.”

I think Herder, in his translation of verse fifteenth of the chapter we are examining, has greatly abated its beauty by cramping the triplet into a single distich, and thus considerably weakening the force of the climax. He reads—

Then Jeshurun waxed stout and rebelled ;
Thou wast too fat, too satiate, too full,
Thou didst forsake the God that made thee,
And lightly esteem the Rock of thy salvation.

Upon the term Jeshurun, Herder observes—
“This word is a title of fondness given to Israel in the character of a child ; a personification which runs through most of this piece.”

“Too satiate and too full,” are merely synonymous, and completely interrupt the beautiful gradation which our translation exhibits.

They provoked him to jealousy with strange gods,
With abominations provoked they him to anger.

The word “jealousy” in the first line of this couplet is used to express the divine displeasure, as in Psalm lxxix. 5:—

How long, Lord?
Wilt thou be angry for ever?
Shall thy jealousy burn like fire?

Moses now introduces against the sons of Jacob the specific charge of idolatry, and not only so, but infers likewise those abominations which are invariably consequential to it; for it is notorious that in all ages of the world the most revolting impurities have been continually committed in the heathen sanctuaries: these have always been the scenes of licentiousness too shocking for the public eye and therefore confined to the penetralia of those desecrated fanes. From such abominations the Israelites, after they had obtained quiet possession of the promised inheritance, were evidently not free, for in numerous instances, as their subsequent history sufficiently shows, “they walked after the law of a carnal commandment,” preferring the “beggary elements” of pagan superstition to the spiritual nourishment of religion “pure and undefiled before God;” and grievously did they suffer in the issue from the divine anger thus wantonly and ungratefully provoked. In our Saviour’s time the corruption of the Jews was notorious.

Josephus characterizes their chief priests and popular leaders “as profligate wretches, who having purchased their places by bribes or by acts of iniquity, maintained their ill-acquired authority by the most flagitious and abominable

crimes. Nor were the religious creeds of these men more pure: having espoused the principles of various sects, they suffered themselves to be led away by the prejudice and animosity of party,—though, as in the case of our Saviour, they would sometimes abandon them to promote some favourite measure,—and were commonly more intent on the gratification of private enmity, than studious of advancing the cause of religion, or promoting the public welfare. The subordinate or inferior members were infected with the corruption of the head: the priests and other ministers of religion were become dissolute and abandoned in the highest degree; while the common people, instigated by examples so depraved, rushed headlong into every kind of iniquity, and by their incessant seditions, robberies, and extortions, armed against themselves both the justice of God and the vengeance of men.”* “Their great men were to an incredible degree depraved in morals, many of them Sadducees in principle, and in practice the most profligate sensualists and debauchees: their atrocious and abandoned wickedness, as Josephus testifies, transcended all the enormities which the most corrupt age of the world had ever beheld.”†

After their settlement in Canaan, the Israelites, to a deplorable extent, joined in the idolatries of the heathen. Moloch, the idol of the Ammonites; Achad, a Syrian deity symbolizing the sun; Baal-Peor, an idol of the Moabites;

* Horne's Introduction, &c. vol. i. p. 180. † Ibid. p. 181.

Astarte, a goddess of the Sidonians; Baalberith, a divinity of the Shechemites, with many others, were worshipped by the Israelites. In the eighth chapter of Ezekiel, at the fourteenth verse, an account is given of Jewish women "weeping for Tammuz," an Egyptian divinity, and of men worshipping the sun. "Then he brought me to the door of the gate of the Lord's house which was toward the north; and behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz. Then said he unto me, hast thou seen this, O son of man? turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations than these. And he brought me into the inner court of the Lord's house, and behold, at the door of the temple of the Lord, between the porch and the altar, were about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the Lord, and their faces toward the east; and they worshipped the sun toward the east."

In fact the idolatries of the Jews were even more detestable than those of the heathen, because the latter had never been advanced to the privileges of a better dispensation; they confined themselves, moreover, to the idols worshipped by their respective communities, having been brought up in the belief that such a degraded service was the only effectual passport to a happy immortality; whereas those Israelites, who had proselyted from the true religion to one of false morality and the vilest superstition, acknowledged all the factitious divinities adored by the different communities of the gentile world. Among the former, therefore, there existed an

abominable intercommunity of worship with the various classes of pagans, who prostrated themselves before deities of wood and stone. Considered in this light the idolatries of the Israelites were, in the last degree, atrocious and insulting to the mighty majesty of heaven.

It can hardly escape notice that in the pair of lines,

They provoked him to jealousy with strange gods,
With abominations provoked they him to anger,—

a perfect epanode is produced, the two chief propositions severally beginning and ending the couplet, and the two inferior being shut in between them. The inversion in the last hemistich, forming the epanode, enhances the importance of the corresponding member of the clause preceding it, by the immediate proximity in which they are thus reciprocally placed, not only keeping up the impression of the iniquity practised by the posterity of Jacob, but strengthening it to the highest extreme before proceeding to the awful consequence of it, the terrible certainty of God's anger, which must always suppose grievous punishment.

Having briefly shown the deplorable state of spiritual degradation into which the Israelites sank after their settlement in Palestine—for the whole description is here prospective, being prophetically delivered—and this state of moral alienation, the schism of Jeroboam no doubt contributed greatly to induce, it is surprising to observe how completely the prophetic declaration of Moses was subsequently fulfilled.

They provoked him to jealousy with strange gods;
With abominations provoked they him to anger.

Independent of the epanodistic beauty of arrangement which this couplet displays, I do not think a finer example of gradational parallelism could be selected from any portion of the sacred writings. Herder's version of the passage is uncommonly felicitous, as it maintains the gradation in each parallel of the clauses. He renders it with excellent discernment:—

They *mored* his jealousy with strange gods;
With abominations they provoked him to anger.

I have already said that jealousy, as here employed, signifies the divine displeasure. "It imports," says Cruden,* "the hot displeasure and indignation of God, Psalm lxxix. 5; 1 Cor. x. 22." Observe then how beautifully the terms of each hemistich advance in strength of signification. First, we have the *displeasure* of the Lord opposed in the parallel line to his *anger*, that is, to his displeasure greatly aggravated, for the one is manifestly the excess of the other. The first is "moved," the last "provoked;" the former by the worship of "strange gods," the latter by the moral atrocities consequent upon such a profane worship. Can anything be more distinctly marked than these gradations of sense, heightening at every advance the emphatic charge against God's ungrateful and degenerate people.

I have already observed that this expressive

* Concordance, art. Jealousy.

couplet assumes the form of an epanode, but the beauty of this peculiar disposition of the members of each clause will be made more apparent by a few additional remarks. The first and last members of the distich, as now distributed, represent in very strong terms, under somewhat different modifications of phrase, the wrath of Jehovah at the revolt of the Israelites. These respectively commence and end the couplet, while the two dependant members, imputing their idolatry and the iniquity resulting from it, take the intermediate interval between them, as in the several former examples I have given of this figure. God's displeasure and anger take the most prominent place at the commencement and conclusion, because they are the causes of all the dreadful penalties awarded to sin. The idolatries of the Israelites and their accruing abominations would be matters of no moment whatever, if they did not provoke the divine indignation, that awful harbinger of woe and calamity to man. Thus it is, therefore, that the two members of the sentence expressive of this indignation take their positions in the van and rear of the distich, in order that they may first produce, and then leave the strongest impression upon the mind.

The sacred poet next proceeds to declare, in more direct terms, the idolatries to which he refers:—

They sacrificed unto devils, not to God;
To gods whom they knew not,
To new gods that came newly up,
Whom your fathers feared not.

Moses here declares with reference to the future, that the Israelites sacrificed to evil spirits who could not benefit them, as well as to dumb idols which could not serve them,—because these latter were formed from mere inert matter—and became thus disaffected to Jehovah, who eminently befriended them. Instead of offering homage to him who was their protector, and who had proved his willingness to defend them, they were seduced from their fealty to him, by the heathens, with whom they entered into domestic alliances, and persuaded to offer sacrifices to those malignant powers which delight in the destruction, as God does in the salvation, of mankind. The Israelites were altogether strangers to those mute divinities which they were induced to acknowledge, especially after the division of the tribes caused by the schism of Jeroboam, by those idolatrous races with whom they entered into impolitic confederacies. Many of the false gods worshipped by the Hebrew settlers in courteous imitation of their new allies, were idols of recent invention, which some of their pagan confederates had set “newly up” for their own worship, as if they imagined that by a multiplication of divinities they should likewise multiply their prospects of heavenly benefaction. Hence, no doubt, originated those pantheistic dogmas which have since taken so dominant a position in all systems of heathen divinity. Such, however, were not the deities which had been revered by the righteous forefathers of the Hebrews, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who acknowledged no god save the

Lord Jehovah, whom they served with an intensely devout and thankful affiance. Nothing could well exceed the difference betwixt the severe simplicity of the patriarchal worship, which, apart from the ceremonial services of the temple, continued under the Mosaic dispensation, although ultimately corrupted by pagan innovations, and that mixed order of religious service into which the descendants of Jacob declined after their settlement in Palestine, and which seems to have been greatly induced by their almost uninterrupted course of prosperity.

“The Israelites,” as Warburton* justly observes, “were most prone to idolatry in prosperous times, and generally returned to the God of their fathers in adversity, as appears from their whole history. Against this impotence of mind, they were more than once cautioned, before they entered into the land of blessings, that they might afterwards be left without excuse. ‘And it shall be,’ says Moses, ‘when the Lord thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities which thou buildedst not, and houses full of all good things which thou filledst not, and wells digged which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive-trees which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten and be full; then beware lest thou forget the Lord, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.

* Divine Legation of Moses, book v. sec. 2.

Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name. Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people which are round about you.* However, Moses himself lived to see an example of this perversity while they remained in the wilderness, for he says,—

But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked :
Thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick,
Thou art covered with fatness ;
Then he forsook God which made him,
And lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation.†

And the prophet Hosea assures us, that the day of prosperity was the constant season of idolatry:—

Israel is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself:
According to the multitude of his fruit he hath increased the altars ;
According to the goodness of his land they have made goodly images.‡

And again,—

According to their pasture, so were they filled ;
They were filled, and their heart was exalted ;
Therefore have they forgotten me.§

“This, therefore, is a clear proof that their defection from the God of Israel was not any doubt of his goodness or of his power, but a wanton abuse of his blessings. Had they questioned the truth of the law, their behaviour had been otherwise: they would have adhered to it in times of prosperity, and would have left it in

* Deut. vi. 10, et seq.; and chapter viii. 11, et seq.

† Deut. xxxii. 15. ‡ Hosea x. 1. § Hosea xiii. 6.

adversity and trouble. This the deists would do well to consider."

We shall perceive in the quatrain comprised in the seventeenth verse of the poem now under examination, that, as usual, the terms ascend gradually to a climax. The gradations are of the most delicate description. First, the Israelites are represented as sacrificing to evil spirits; that is, to beings at least capable of independent agency, everlastingly separated from the author of all good, and possessing certain powers, though these were only powers of mischief;—next, "to gods whom they knew not"—to heathen divinities of whose powers and influences they were utterly ignorant, whom their ancestors had never recognized, and whom, therefore, their sons could not have been taught to serve; then,

To new gods that came newly up ;

to idols newly invented by the heathen, to blocks of stone and stocks of wood formed into monstrous shapes, for such were usually their local deities, according to the capricious suggestions of superstition, without any experience of benefit from a worship which could produce nothing but disappointment and disgrace. Finally, to gods

Whom their fathers feared not,

because they feared and offered homage to the only wise God—and likewise because those commentitious divinities were subjects of loathing rather than of reverence, being made, as they frequently were. the objects of rites posi-

tively abhorrent to humanity. The degenerate posterity, therefore, of those patriarchs with whom the God of Jeshurun condescended to enter into a most holy covenant, had not the example of those ancestors to plead in extenuation of their aggravated wickedness. Thus are the different degrees of imputed iniquity marked in the idolatries of the degenerate descendants from a righteous forefather. The “new gods” served by the Israelites in Palestine were evil in the fullest sense; besides this, they were really unknown to them, and not only so, but they were the inventions and fabrications of men,—such as were utterly despised by the more holy progenitors of the Hebrews, who knew them to be senseless abominations, lumps of monstrous deformity, disgusting misappropriations of matter.

The nice but manifest gradations of meaning in this noble quatrain have been admirably observed by Herder; his rendering is extremely happy:—

They sacrificed to *demons*, not to God;
To *idols*, of whom they had no knowledge;
To new *gods*, that were newly invented,
Before whom your fathers trembled not.

Here the several terms rise in beautiful progression, imparting at once distinctness, grace, and force, to the whole passage. The idea of trembling, in the last hemistich, is perfectly consonant to idol worship; and here a just distinction is drawn betwixt the homage paid to the true God and the servile adoration of the

terrified idolater. The latter “trembles” before the dumb divinity whom he professes to serve, fears him as an avenger of whom he stands in continual dread, and whom he is constantly approaching with piaculary offerings of propitiation, apprehending his inflictions rather than confiding in his beneficence. On the contrary, the pious worshipper of the only wise God approaches him with confidence in his mercy, and with reliance upon his love; he fears indeed the loss of that love, but while he fears, pours out his heart before him, and receives the assurance of his benefactions. He is not the slave of wild and gloomy terrors, for he adores the Deity whom he serves, and “there is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment. He that feareth, therefore, is not made perfect in love.”*

Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful,
And hast forgotten God that formed thee.

I cannot but concur with Houbigant in reading the first clause,

Of the Creator that begat thee thou art not unmindful,

for he has unquestionably the sanction of nearly all the best commentators. In this couplet, I think we may trace a decided reference to God the Father and to God the Son, under separate and distinct agencies, though acting in that mysterious union of personality in which they have existed from all eternity.

* 1 John iv. 18.

The Creator that begat thee ;

in consequence of whose predetermined purpose man was brought into existence; begotten of God through the immediate agency of his son, for "all things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made."* God was the first or determining cause of man's creation, Christ was the secondary or operative cause. These two divine subsistencies, co-eternal together and co-equal, determined man's existence and formed him; the whole and supreme Godhead being the agent in the first, that is, in determining that man should exist; the second person in this everlasting but mysterious hypostasis being the immediate agent in the work of formation; so that the work was conceived and perfected by the co-existing Triad constituting the almighty and everlasting God. God the Father was the remote but absolute, God the Son the immediate and active, God the Holy Ghost the spiritualizing and completing, cause of man's formation; man was therefore begotten by the perfect, undivided Godhead.

The word *begotten*, in this verse, must be used in a restricted sense; namely, that Deity in the abstract, was the origin of man's existence, not the producing instrument of it. That this is the interpretation required will be sufficiently evident from the latter clause of the couplet:—

And hast forgotten God that *formed* thee ;

where *formed* is placed in opposition to *begat*,

* John i. 3.

the one implying passive determination, the other active agency. I think the distinction is very clear, and was designed by the prophetic bard. We owe our creation to God—that eternal and omnipotent Being from whose almighty will all things have proceeded. In this sense he may be said to have begotten us, since he was the first and only cause of our being begotten, but man’s actual formation was the positive work of the Son; and thus in the passage before us the Israelites are reproached with forgetfulness, not only of Him from whom they originally derived their creation to life temporal, but likewise of Him to whom they were indebted for their restoration, under certain moral prescriptions, to life eternal.

If this should appear a forcing of the passage beyond the limits of fair or admissible interpretation, I would beg the reader to consider the following argument. It is admitted on all hands that the expectation of the promised Emmanuel, who was to “bruise the serpent’s head,” and thus cancel the penalty denounced against transgression, was familiar to the Hebrews under the Abrahamic dispensation; and, through the patriarchs, from Abraham to Jacob, was transmitted to their descendants. “Abraham rejoiced to see Christ’s day, he saw it and was glad.” Of this we have the assurance of Christ himself.* Isaac and Jacob were no less spiritually imbued with the hopes of a consummation in futurity, that should restore to them a paradise

* See John viii, 56.

eternal in the heavens forfeited by the transgression in Eden. That this expectation, couched indeed under an obscure prophecy and distinguished through the mists of a cryptical but nevertheless positive revelation, was preserved in Egypt among the Hebrew inhabitants of Goshen, even amid the extremest hardships of their bondage, we need no further testimony than the typical reference to Christ's expiatory sacrifice in the passover, instituted on the eve of their deliverance from Egyptian tyranny; so minutely symbolizing in its sad but expressive details that memorable immolation upon Mount Calvary which has delivered man from a spiritual slavery, of which the Egyptian servitude may be considered a clear and intended symbol. Moses then being in direct intercourse with God, and the second person in the sacred Trinity being the vehicle of that intercourse—for the supreme abstract divinity, in the full plenitude of his almighty perfections, "no man hath seen nor can see," there being no possible access to his visible presence—it is altogether beyond reasonable supposition that Moses should have been ignorant of circumstances upon which the only hope of salvation to man was grounded. He had been distinguished by several personal communications with the author at once of man's creation and redemption; what then so natural as that he should refer to that mysterious union of personality in the Godhead, to which not only the Israelites were so largely and so especially indebted, but from which the brightest prospects of immortality

are derived to man, when he was giving a prophetic representation of their revolt from that God who had been so faithfully served by their forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Though to them only were the promises given, to their descendants was the consummation manifested. He refers to the divine mercy in redeeming them, as well as to the divine love in creating them, in order that the vile ingratitude of his favoured people should be made to appear in the strongest light.

The doctrine of expiation for sin by the sacrifice of a Saviour, was to be traced from the very fall of man; for though in consequence of that infraction of a divine law man was condemned to the penalty of death, nevertheless a merciful provision was made by which he might escape it, and still ascend to the throne of his Creator's glory. "A secret reprieve, kept hid, indeed, from the early world, passed along with the sentence of condemnation. So that they who never received their due in this world, would still be kept in existence, till they had received it in the next; such being in no other sense sufferers by the administration of an unequal providence, than in being ignorant of the reparation which attended them. For we learn from Sacred Writ, what the principles of natural reason do not impeach, that the DEATH of Christ had a retrospect from the FALL of Adam; and that REDEMPTION was, from the first, amongst the principal ingredients in God's moral government of man."*

* Divine Legation, book vii. chap. 1.

Before I proceed to the next passage of this divine song, I beg leave to recal the reader's attention to the poetical structure of the verse last quoted:—

Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful,
And hast forgotten God that formed thee.

Here is manifestly an epanodistic distribution of the several members of the two clauses. This is, as I conceive, a beautiful specimen, and so naturally does the order seem to run, notwithstanding the inversion in the first line, that the presence of any thing like artifice is not detected. The idea of God's omnipotence in determining the existence of man and of his love in creating him, respectively end and commence the couplet. The first idea of that supreme power, with whose mere volition active creation is identical, elevates the mind to a feeling of sublime devotion; this impression being strengthened by the picture of divine love with which the couplet terminates, as it were, reproducing the first idea and combining it with the last, whilst the intermediate notions of disregard and forgetfulness in man come fitly between those benign exhibitions of supremacy and beneficence in God. The picture of unmindfulness of infinite mercy on the part of those who had been so long recipients of it, so generally shown by the Israelites after their settlement in Canaan, projects their ingratitude into greater prominence by its immediate apposition with God's providential agency, and by being enclosed between the dominant illustrations of his

almighty power and infinite love. The poetical arrangement in these two lines is calculated to give the greatest possible force to the several members of this admirably constructed couplet.

Besides the epanode present in the couplet under notice, the gradational parallelism is likewise most favourably exhibited. The advancing force in the corresponding phrases is obvious. In the first two the passive determination is opposed to the active energy; the act of formation in the second clause rises above the notion of predetermined existence intimated in the first: disregard is heightened into utter forgetfulness, the one in fact the cause, the other the effect; for the latter is but too commonly a consequence of the former. Thus it will be observed that the phrases though correspondent and kindred, have an identic import of their own, those in the concluding clause carrying a more extended scope of signification than those in the one preceding. Bishop Patrick interprets the last line—

And hast forgotten God that formed thee,

“ into a kingdom of priests, making the Israelites his peculiar people;” but I do not conceive that this interpretation is warranted by the context; it moreover entirely overturns the poetical conformation of the passage. Bishop Patrick was, doubtless, a great, good, and learned man,—an excellent commentator, a most exemplary christian, but certainly, and I do not say this to his disparagement, no poet.

CHAPTER XVII.

The prophetic ode continued.

THE inspired bard next proceeds to exhibit the consequences of the Israelites' defalcations, which were in truth deplorable :—

And when the Lord saw it, he abhorred them,
Because of the provoking of his sons and of his daughters.

The interesting image of paternity is still kept up, Jeshurun being a disobedient and refractory son, God a just but chastening father; for his temporal punishments are invariably dispensations of mercy. His abhorrence of their wickedness whom he had so eminently exalted above all the other nations of the earth was but a prelude to the judgments about to overtake them. He had borne with them long, and at length they provoked his extremest indignation. In the wilderness he had visited them with his chastisements, but, upon their repentance, had invariably delivered them and restored them to his favour. They had received abundant experience of the merciful dealing of his providence; still they were neither won to obedience by his loving-kindness. nor

awed by his punitive discipline from the perpetration of crime. When at length the Deity, who had been to them such a kind and compassionate father, saw their hardened depravity in deserting him for the idols of the heathen, he in his indignation abandoned them ;—he left them to the consequences of that depravity ;—he abhorred them. The result was that they were defeated by numerous enemies and borne into the most odious captivity, where they endured greater privations than their forefathers did during the extremities of their Egyptian servitude. They were finally split into factions, and made war upon each other with the most inhuman determination. They suffered all the evils of dissension and political animosity. The disease of leprosy became so common among them as to be a social curse. They were subjected to wicked rulers, and made to feel the miserable consequences of corrupt legislation. They were frequently vanquished by the neighbouring nations, and exposed to the hard vicissitudes of subjugation.

For a period of near three hundred years the Jewish history presents little else but alternate scenes of oppression and deliverance, as will be seen in Judges, from the second to the seventeenth chapter. The degenerate descendants of Abraham were subsequently governed by tyrannical kings, and frequently brought to the verge of destruction. They became at length captives in a strange land, and remembering the fertile plains from which they had been driven, they sat down and wept by the waters of

Babylon, hanging their harps upon the willows in token of their utter despondency and destitution.

Not only were the men of Israel seduced from the worship of the true God after their entrance into Canaan, but the women likewise were distinguished for their idolatries; and to this Moses evidently alludes in the verse,—

Because of the provoking of his sons and of his *daughters*.

In this clause the iniquity of God's favoured people is represented the more heinous under the affecting allegory of ungrateful children, revolting from an indulgent parent, and provoking his severe but just correction. The idolatries of the Jewish women were notorious, and are not only referred to by Ezekiel, quoted in a former chapter,* but likewise by the prophet Jeremiah, in the following passage. “Then all the men which knew that their wives had burned incense unto other gods, and all the women that stood by, a great multitude, even all the people that dwelt in the land of Egypt, in Pathros, answered Jeremiah.”†

Herder's translation of this passage is extremely judicious:—

This Jehovah saw, and cast away in anger
Those who were his sons and daughters.

He withdrew his paternal guardianship, and gave them up to their own hearts' lusts. No punishment could be more grievous, for being abandoned by that omnipotent being who had

* Vol. II. page 249.

† Chapter xlv. verse 15.

delivered them from Egyptian bondage, it was morally impossible that they should go rightly. Having provoked their ruler and guardian to withhold from them his unfailing protection they were left to their own guidance, the issue of which was a multiplication of temporal evil, in every shape and in every variety.

The greatest penalty which the Deity can inflict upon man in this world, is the withdrawal of his grace. In fact, this is at once to resign him into the power of that terrible adversary, who will be sure to take advantage of such abandonment, and "bring him into captivity to the law of sin."

In tracing the political history of the Jews we cannot fail to see, that in proportion as their spiritual lapses were greater or less, their national prosperity was raised or depressed. The Almighty invariably marked their moral obliquities with visible manifestations of his displeasure; still this does not appear to have opened their eyes to the enormity of rising in hostility against him, and of provoking the severe visitations of his wrath.

The couplet which declares the divine displeasure against Israel, conveys a vivid idea not only of its excess, but of its universality. It embraced the whole population, for even women are expressly included, as given over to the extreme operation of almighty wrath. The great cause of God's anger against them, was their idolatries, including the most obscene rites, in which the women evidently acted as conspicuous a part as the men. Maimonides

justly observes,* that the word in the original Hebrew, rendered by our translators “the provoking,” is only applied to God when it refers to the idolatries of his chosen people.

How much stronger is the impression of divine displeasure rendered by the image of a father exercising the severities of his chastening indignation towards his disobedient children ; not towards his sons only, but towards his daughters also, and exposing those weak vessels to the terrible operations of his wrath. It further shows, with the most vivid force of representation, how complete throughout the whole land of Canaan was the spiritual desuetude of the people, God’s whole family, both sons and daughters, raised by him to the highest pitch of temporal prosperity and glory, having revolted from him and, rejecting his benign paternity, offered their fealty to objects which had no power to appreciate it,—to idols of wood and stone, the work of men’s hands.

They have mouths, but they speak not ;
Eyes have they, but they see not ;
They have ears, but they hear not ;
Neither is there any breath in their mouths.
They that make them are like unto them :
So is every one that trusteth in them.†

The reader will bear in mind that throughout this poem the past tense is constantly used for the future, so that those events are declared to be past which are actually to come ; such is the form of expression assumed by the language of prophecy in the Hebrew scriptures.

* More Nevachim, chap. 36. † Psalm cxxxv. 16—18.

The poet now proclaims God's determination respecting his incorrigible people in terms of tremendous import :—

And he said, I will hide my face from them,
I will see what their end shall be :
For they are a very froward generation,
Children in whom is no faith.

“I will hide my face from them” is expressive of utter abandonment, as if the indignant Jehovah had said, ‘I will now let this depraved people reap the harvest of their own perverse and froward conduct; I will not again interfere to protect them as I have hitherto done: I will no longer allow myself to become an eye-witness of their abominations, which are as unfit for me to behold as for them to commit. I will pour out my indignation upon them; I will not only withhold from them my tender paternity, but leave them to the consequences of their own rash behaviour.’ And how signally was this threat fulfilled in the days of their pride, when they were given up to spoliation and massacre; when robbers prowled through their cities, wild beasts entered their villages, and murderers infested their country!

The miseries which overtook them are described by Ezekiel with great but fearful sublimity.*

My face will I turn also from them, and they shall pollute my secret place :

For the robbers shall enter into it, and defile it.

Make a chain : for the land is full of bloody crimes, and the city is full of violence.

* Chap. vii. verse 22 to the end.

Wherefore I will bring the worst of the heathen, and they shall possess their houses :

I will also make the pomp of the strong to cease ;
And their holy places shall be defiled.

Destruction cometh ; and they shall seek peace, and there shall be none.

Mischief shall come upon mischief, and rumour shall be upon rumour ;

Then shall they seek a vision of the prophet ;

But the law shall perish from the priest, and counsel from the ancients.
The king shall mourn, and the prince shall be clothed with desolation,
And the hands of the people of the land shall be troubled :

I will do unto them after their way, and according to their deserts will I judge them ;

And they shall know that I am the Lord.

Here is an awful confirmation of the prophetic announcement of Moses. God not only brought all these calamities upon his rebellious people, but he likewise withdrew the Shechinah—that celestial glory which represented his presence—from his temple, constantly desecrated to the vilest uses. Even in our Saviour's time we find cattle stalled in the outer court of the sanctuary, which formed part of the consecrated edifice. This court was made a scene of public traffic.

I will see what their end shall be ;

that is, I will determine the disasters which shall come upon them, and these shall issue in dreadful civil commotions, the most terrible political convulsions, and in the final subversion of their constitution. All this in due time was sadly realized, and has been recorded in the sacred scriptures for the benefit of mankind in all succeeding ages of the world ; for as Bishop Warburton justly observes,* “ without question,

* Divine Legation, appendix to book 3.

the exceeding perversity and unworthiness of this people was recorded in sacred story, as for other uses to us unknown, so for this, to obviate that egregious folly, both of Jews and gentiles, in supposing that the Israelites were thus distinguished, or represented to be thus distinguished, as the peculiar favourites of heaven; an absurdity which all who attended to the nature of the God of Israel could confute, and which the Jewish history amply exposes."

The dreadful calamities which finally overtook the Jews at the subversion of their polity may be conceived from this one fact alone, that during the siege of Jerusalem by Titus, a million and a half of souls are said to have perished in a single year, and the besieged were crucified in such multitudes before the walls of that once holy city, that at length the Roman soldiers could not find wood for crosses to continue this inhuman pastime.

In the first couplet of the passage last quoted the two ideas of "hiding the face" and "seeing" are so opposed, as mutually to enhance their force. God threatens to hide his face from the Israelites, but still to keep a vigilant watch over their career of iniquity.

I will *hide my face* from them,
I will *see* what their end shall be.

The terms in the last clause are strengthened by their contrast with those of the first. God does not simply mark his people's progress in sin, but he does so under the influence of that exasperation against them which their vices

have caused. On the other hand, he does not merely hide his face from them, but likewise takes cognizance of their evil courses; resolved that their iniquities shall ultimately issue in the subversion of their state, and their dispersion through all parts of the civilized earth.

For they are a very froward generation;
Children in whom is no faith.

Observe what is the effect here of keeping up the image of paternity and filiation; the former exhibiting all the anxiety and solicitude of that relation, the latter the ingratitude of those who so wickedly sustained the character of this abused correlative. The iniquity of these

Children in whom is no faith,

is rendered the more prominent by the near relationship in which they are represented as placed to God. As the children of such a father—the chosen people of such a God,—the perverseness and infidelity of the Jews are infinitely heightened. They are not described generally as *persons* in whom is no faith, but as *children* who had abandoned their spiritual and almighty Parent, and given themselves up, as an inspired author subsequently said, “to strong delusion to believe a lie.”* They continually broke their covenant with Jehovah, as the book of Judges, and indeed their whole history, up to the period of their dispersion after the taking of Jerusalem, sufficiently testifies.

* 2 Thessalonians ii. 11.

It is surprising how skilfully Moses has selected and adapted his images, in order to give a powerful picture of Hebrew ingratitude, and this he does by placing in full contrast the relationship betwixt God and the Israelites as parent and children; showing how recklessly they had relinquished the service of such a father that of heathen idols, which revolt from him plunged them into all kinds of licentiousness.

The figure called by rhetoricians anthropopathy, a description of metaphor by which the physical attributes of the creature are ascribed to the Creator, is very happily introduced in this passage; and this, though a mere poetical expedient, was absolutely necessary in the present instance, in order to maintain, in their full force of application, those relations of paternity and filiation, under which figures the poet, represents God's kindness towards the Israelites and their criminal provocations of his anger. The Deity is made to say,

I will hide my face from them,
I will see what their end shall be:

in which he is presented to us with the physical attributes of man.

The employment of this figure is common with the Hebrew writers, especially where they are anxious to place in an unusually strong light the visible and active agencies of the Most High, whether for the illustration of his mercy, or of his justice.

They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God ;
 They have provoked me to anger with their vanities :
 And I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a
 people ;
 I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.

Here again direct allusion is made to the idolatries of the Jews. They moved the divine indignation, by offering their homage to things which were not only without the attributes of divinity, but which did not even possess those of humanity. This was in truth sufficient to excite the severest displeasure of him who had not only shown his paternal regard for the unworthy descendants of the righteous Abraham, but had elevated them to great political eminence above the nations of the earth, and did not abandon them to the natural consequences of their own iniquity until this had so far transcended the limits of his mercy, that to leave them without chastisement would have been an absolute impeachment of his justice.

In the passage last quoted, because God's rebellious people had provoked his wrath by offering their homage to "that which was not God," he threatens through his prophet to requite them, by making their own wickedness recoil upon themselves ; sin being the root from which the vintage of suffering is invariably gathered. He consequently caused them to endure the sad penalties of a general infraction of his laws from those who "were not a people;"—for the threat now uttered by the oracular voice of Moses was eventually consummated under circumstances the most deplorable that can well be imagined,

when they became subject to the gentiles whom they always characterized as foolish, but who ultimately triumphed over them and completely subverted their constitution. They were first delivered over to the Assyrians, Chaldeans, and other nations who worshipped "that which is not God" and were therefore not acknowledged by him as his people; and finally subjugated by the Romans, who when this prophetic record was delivered had no political existence. How far does the intense vision of prophecy project into the long, dim vista of future time! The Jews at length saw the gentiles, with whom they refused to have communion, retaliating upon them their proud contempt, and advanced to that dignity in the divine estimation from which they had been degraded. Those gentiles whom they, in the acme of their vain-glory, had affected to despise, were taken into covenant with God, received from him the "adoption and the glory" of which the Jews had been deprived, these latter being cast off as an abominable branch to wither and perish in their own corruption, or to lie spiritually dead upon the weedy fallows of time, until the christian temple shall receive them into the privileges, promises, and glory of its most holy worship.

It certainly does seem strange that the prophetic announcement of Moses should have had no influence in deterring the Israelites from those moral pollutions which he now foretold they would fall into, and which eventually accumulated upon them all the consequences, and many much more awful, detailed by the prophets.

They sinned recklessly and desperately, and therefore richly deserved the evils which befel them. They provoked the displeasure of their heavenly father, and were consequently obliged to pay the full penalty attached to such audacious provocation. What a grievous affliction must it have been to this proud nation when in aftertimes they beheld the barbarous gentiles, for such the arrogant Jews always declared them to be,—those communities whom they had affected to scorn as unworthy of receiving the common ministrations of humanity,—exalted to the dignity which they had forfeited, and bestowing upon them even a fuller measure of contempt than they, even in the extreme height of their prosperity, had meted out to those whom they marked with the opprobrious designation of “the uncircumcised.” God could hardly have dealt a heavier punishment to a nation of their proud and arrogant spirit.

We shall perceive that the quatrain, in which this exaltation of the gentiles and debasement of the Jews is signified, consists of two pair of lines, in which the parallelisms are both subsequent and alternate ; that is, the clauses make a good sense as they stand and are in parallelism, or they will form an hyberbaton with alternate correspondencies of relation. In the first couplet the gradational parallelism is too manifest to escape the most obtuse perception.

They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God ;
 They have provoked me to anger with their vanities.

In each line of this distich provocation is ex-

pressed; in the first clause, however, it is more feeble than in the last. In the one, God's jealousy* or *displeasure* is *moved*, in the other, his *anger* is *provoked*. God's displeasure is "moved" by the idolatries of the Israelites; his anger is "provoked" by their vanities—that is, by the vices consequent upon those idolatries. The word "vanities" in this passage evidently refers to their worship of idols, which were "vain things"—things that could not profit the worshipper, though it was pretended that they were endued with the attributes of omnipotence; they were consequently "lying vanities," "deceitful wonders." The gradation of sense is clearly perceptible; so is it likewise in the second couplet, in which two of the phrases employed are the same as in the foregoing; but the concluding terms of each line are remarkably discriminated, as we shall presently see.

I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people;
I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.

The gentiles were certainly not a people in the same sense the Israelites were; that is, a peculiar people—a people of God. Thus the former are designated as "not a people,"—not a people advanced to the distinction of being especially under divine protection, as a civil and religious community, as were the descendants of that patriarch whose faith "was counted to him for righteousness." In this sense then the heathens were unquestionably not a people—not

* For the scripture sense of jealousy, see vol. ii. page 247.

a community divinely sanctioned and sustained. The Assyrians and Chaldeans, however, by whom the Israelites were subsequently overcome, though “not a people of God,” were, nevertheless, nations “foolish” in the estimation of the Jews, less on account of their multiplied enormities, than because God had not advanced them to the same spiritual privileges with themselves.

The word “foolish” in this clause signifies wickedness generally, and often the extremity of wickedness is comprehended within the meaning of this term,—infidelity for instance.

The fool hath said in his heart,
There is no God.*

“A foolish nation,” therefore, will signify a people who knew not God, and were abandoned to all the moral consequences of such a state. It is a strange perversity in the human character, that the errors men condemn in others, they are most ready to exhibit in their own conduct; a fact everywhere exemplified in the history of the Jews, who, though they affected to despise the gentiles on account of their idolatries, still made themselves conspicuous for those very offences which they reprobated in their heathen neighbours.

The beauty of the quatrain which we have been considering, will be found greatly to consist in the correspondency of the alternate clauses, which, besides being in perfect paral-

* Psalm xiv. 1.

lelism with one another, preserve a beautiful order in the sense. In the first clause this, as will be perceived, bears an exact reciprocation with the third, and in the second with the fourth, thus :—

They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God,
And I will move them to jealousy with those which are not
a people :

They have provoked me to anger with their vanities ;
And I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.

Here are two distinct couplets forming a complete sense as the clauses are now distributed, and in direct parallelism with each other, there being an evident parallelism of the couplets as well as of the clauses, the latter couplet being exegetical of the former, the sense of the last however rising above that of the first ; though the advance of force by which it is distinguished is not so great as in other examples which have been produced, still, I trust, that it has been plainly shown to exist. The strong antithetical import of the phrases in both divisions of the quatrain is worthy of notice—they have moved *ME*, the infallible God, to jealousy ; and I will move *them*, fallible and sinful *men*. The prodigious contrast between the being offended, and the persons offending, cannot but strike the mind by this skilful and very appropriate disposition of the two subjects of these clauses, the predicates of each following with like force of opposed effect. The expressions “ that which is not God,” and “ those which are not a people,” involve an antithesis like those in the preceding members of their respective clauses, characteriz-

ing by inference stronger than direct affirmation, the utter impotency of the heathen idols and the consequent fatuity of their worshippers ; since, if the former were not God, which their votaries declared them to be, they were nothing,—only inert matter ; for there can be no neutral ground embraced in the idea of divinity. It is perfection or nothing. Omnipotence and impotence cannot have any imaginable relationship—not even the most remote. There are no gradations in divine perfection ; it is complete, total, universal. It is impossible there should exist any sympathy between this and its direct opposite—the one, therefore, cannot be the other.

Those idols venerated by pagan worshippers, not being God, they were utterly worthless—the very reverse of God, as there are no degrees in the notion of abstract, infallible, universal supremacy. That not being divine which claimed to be so, must be vile in proportion to the fallacy of such claim, and thus altogether abominable. The complete worthlessness of those idols could not have been well characterized in stronger terms than Moses has here employed. The assumption by inference having the effect of the most positive declaration ; nay, the negatives in both lines are, in my judgment, more strongly declarative of the total impotency of the heathen divinities, and the absolute alienation of their worshippers from the true God, than the most detailed specifications would have been. The former were “not God,” the latter “not a people,” but aliens from him. In the subsequent half of the quatrain, the corresponding

expressions “vanities” and “a foolish nation” are exceedingly significant, rising with a beautiful progression of emphasis, the former referring, as already stated, to the sin of idolatry and its consequences; the latter to the degraded condition of idolaters. Vanity in scripture is often put for lying—a vice greatly fomented by idolatry, as says the Psalmist, with his own peculiar eloquence—

How long will ye love vanity and seek after leasing?

and I can testify from personal observation during a residence of several years in a heathen country,* that this infirmity is so universal as to be held in no disrepute; on the contrary, it is generally commended.

Foolishness is frequently used by the Hebrew writers, as I have before stated, for sin in the abstract. David says, in the sixty-ninth Psalm,

O God, thou knowest my foolishness; (that is, my wickedness;) And my sins are not hid from thee.

Thus it will be perceived with what a nice gradation the phrases rise in importance of signification, advancing from cause to effect, both of which are inferred with great force in each couplet of the passage before us. With Herder's translation and note I shall conclude this chapter.

They moved me to jealousy with their no-god,
They provoked me to anger with their idols:
I also will move their jealousy with a no-people,
With a foolish nation will I provoke their anger.

* Hindostan.

“ The idiomatic form of expression, children, no-children ; God, no-god : nation, no-nation ; or, not-nation, runs through the whole piece, and is entirely in the spirit of the lawgiver. The organization which he formed was for him the only one ; all other nations were to him no nations, not organized states, but uncivilized hordes. ”*

* Spirit of Hebrew Poetry, vol. i, p. 283.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The prophetic ode continued.

THE poet now proceeds to declare in the strongest terms which language can convey, those terrible dispensations of retributory justice with which God was resolved to visit the rebellious Israelites in the very climax of their profligacy. It must not be forgotten that the whole reference is here prospective; Moses is delivering the divine revelations, and therefore speaks with the unerring tongue of a prophet of the true, infallible, and eternal Jehovah.

For a fire is kindled in mine anger,
And shall burn unto the lowest hell,
And shall consume the earth with her increase,
And set on fire the foundations of the mountains.

The expressions employed in this passage are among the most emphatic which language can supply. They realize a truly appalling picture of desolation. Fire is the most terrible agent of destruction known; and is a sublime symbol of God's desolating power, when he determines to visit countries with that retribution which their enormities have provoked. What can so vividly depict the prodigious and astounding effects of his chastisements as the image of fire being

kindled by the breath of his mouth, and by the terrible blast of his vengeance (and let us remember the vengeance of God is not a fugitive passion but an immutable principle,—a necessary attribute of his justice) excited to such fearful, such vital energy of combustion as to burn even to the lowest abyss—that is, to the very foundations of the earth, through the centre of this solid but combustible globe; whence it should burst forth and spread over the whole surface and circumference, consuming everything upon it, and overthrowing the most stupendous monuments of human ingenuity; for the verse—

And set on fire the foundations of the mountains,

literally signifies ‘and shall subvert their strongest fortresses,’ in which allusion is evidently made to the destruction of Jerusalem under Titus.

Of the dreadful destruction of the Jews during the siege of their capital, a full account is given by Josephus, in the sixth and seventh books of his Jewish war. After the city had fallen into the hands of Titus, the historian relates that “as soon as the army had no more people to slay or to plunder, because there remained none to be the objects of their fury (for they would not have spared any, had there remained any other such work to be done), Cæsar gave orders that they should now demolish the entire city and temple, but should leave as many of the towers standing as were of the greatest eminency, that is, Phasaclus and Hippicus and

Mariamne, and so much of the wall as enclosed the city on the west side. This wall was spared in order to afford a camp for such as were to lie in garrison, as were the towers also spared, in order to demonstrate to posterity what kind of city it was, and how well fortified, which the Roman valour had subdued; but for all the rest of the wall, it was so thoroughly laid even with the ground by those who dug it up to the foundation, that there was nothing left to make those who came thither believe it had ever been inhabited. This was the end which Jerusalem came to by the madness of those who were for innovations; a city otherwise of great magnificence, and of mighty fame among all mankind.”*

The destruction of the temple is thus given by the same historian:—“ And now two of the legions had completed their banks on the eighth day of the month Lous.† Whereupon Titus gave orders that the battering-rams should be brought, and set over against the western edifice of the inner temple; for, before these were brought, the firmest of all the other engines had battered the wall for six days together without ceasing, without making any impression upon it; but the vast largeness and strong connexion of the stones were superior to that engine and to the other battering-rams also. Other Romans did, indeed, undermine the foundations of the northern gate, and after a world of pains,

* Jewish War, book vii. chap. 1.

† The eleventh month of the Jewish civil year, which answers to our July.

removed the outermost stones ; yet was the gate still upheld by the inner stones, and remained unhurt, till the workmen, despairing of all such attempts by engines and crows, brought their ladders to the cloisters. Now the Jews did not interrupt them in so doing ; but when they were gotten up, they fell upon them, and fought with them ; some of them they thrust down, and threw them backward headlong ; others they met and slew : they also beat many of those who went down the ladders again, and slew them with their swords before they could bring their shields to protect them ; nay, some of the ladders they threw down from above, when they were full of armed men : a great slaughter was made of the Jews also at the same time, while those that bore the ensigns fought hard for them, as deeming it a terrible thing, and what would tend to their great shame, if they permitted them to be stolen away. Yet did the Jews at length get possession of these ensigns, and destroyed those who had gone up the ladders, while the rest were so intimidated by what those suffered who were slain, that they retired, although not one of the Romans died without having done good service before his death. Of the seditious those who had fought bravely in former battles did so now, as besides them did Eleazar, the brother's son of Simon the Tyrant. But when Titus perceived that his endeavours to spare a foreign temple turned to the damage of his soldiers, and made them be killed, he gave order to set the gates on fire."

"And now the soldiers had already put fire to

the gates, and the silver that was over them quickly carried the flames to the wood within, whence it spread and caught hold of the cloisters. When the Jews perceived themselves surrounded by flames, their minds and bodies became at once depressed, and they were so astounded that none of them attempted either to quench the fire, or defend himself, but stood silent spectators of the scene. They did not, however, so grieve at the loss of what the fire was now consuming, as to be rendered wiser from experience. It only served to whet their animosity against the Romans. The fire continued during that and the subsequent day, for the soldiers were not able to burn the cloisters entire, but only piecemeal.”*

“On the next day, Titus commanded part of his army to quench the fire. Assembling six of his chief officers, he asked what they would advise should be done with reference to the holy sanctuary. Some advised its demolition, others advised its being saved, and converted into a citadel, but Titus determined to spare it as a signal memorial of his triumph, and as an honour to his clemency. In accordance with this determination he ordered the fire to be quenched.

The next day Titus retired into the tower of Antonia, and resolved to storm the temple on the following morning, and to invest the sacred building with his whole army. But as for the temple God had long before doomed

it to the flames; and now that fatal day was come according to the revolution of ages. It was the tenth day of the month Lous, upon which it had been before burnt by the king of Babylon, although these flames were occasioned by the Jews themselves; upon Titus retiring the seditious lay still for a while, and then again attacked the Romans, when they who guarded the temple fought with those who were quenching the fire which was burning in the inner court. These Romans, however put the Jews to flight, and followed them to the very walls of the temple. At this period one of the soldiers, without orders, urged by a sort of divine enthusiasm, snatched a fragment from the burning materials, and being raised by a companion, set fire to a window of gold, which opened upon a passage leading to the apartments on the north side of the sanctuary. As the flames ascended the Jews raised a great shout, and ran together to prevent their spreading. Now they heeded not their own lives, nor were restrained by any considerations of personal safety, since that holy edifice was about to perish which they had been appointed to guard.

“And now a person ran to Titus, who was reposing in his tent after the last battle, and told him of the fire; upon which he rose and hastened to the temple in order to see it extinguished. He was followed by all his chief officers and several of his legions, who raised a great clamour. Titus, calling to the soldiers who were fighting with a loud voice, made a

signal with his right hand for them to extinguish the flames, but they could not hear him in consequence of the noise, neither did they attend to his signal, some being engaged in actual conflict, and others excited with passion. The legions which had followed him, crowding into the temple, many were trampled to death, both Jews and Romans perishing in miserable confusion. As for the seditious, they were everywhere repulsed and slain; while numbers of the defenceless citizens being weak and unarmed, were inhumanly slaughtered wherever they were caught. The altar was surrounded with heaps of slain, and the steps which led to it were covered with their blood, the dead bodies continually rolling down upon the pavement beneath.

“And when Titus saw that he could not restrain the fury of the soldiers, as the fire had not reached the holy place, he entered and found it to be nothing inferior to what the Jews had stated concerning it. As the flames had not reached the interior, though burning the chambers around it, Titus, supposing the building might still be saved, endeavoured to persuade the soldiers to quench the fire, but to no purpose. The hope of plunder induced many to proceed under the idea that the inner apartments were filled with treasure, seeing that all the ornaments were of gold. As Titus was endeavouring to restrain the fury of his troops, a soldier threw fire upon the hinges of the gate. Immediately the flames issued from the holy place and obliged the emperor to retire, followed by his officers. The building was now shortly

fired in every part, and thus destroyed without the command or approbation of Titus.”*

Thus, then, was the temple destroyed by fire, fulfilling in ages, so long subsequent, the prophecy of the Jewish lawgiver, that a “fire should be kindled in God’s anger, and burn unto the lowest hell, and consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains.” Is not all this strikingly coincident with the singular fact related by Ammianus Marcellinus, that when the apostate Julian commanded the Jewish temple to be rebuilt, dreadful balls of fire burst out with an overwhelming irruption near the foundations, which threw down the walls, scorched the workmen, and rendered the place so inaccessible, that they desisted from any further attempt to rebuild them.

If we take the four hemistichs composing the twenty-second verse of this magnificent ode, according to the division of our Bible, in their most literal sense, we shall find that, as a burst of poetical eloquence, they rise to the highest altitude of sublimity. The whole picture presented is stupendous. It embraces the entire circle of nature within the mighty span of its desolation. Not only is the lowest abyss reached;—so are likewise the highest mountains. The desolating agent rushes from the depths beneath to the heights above, destroying, in its overwhelming course of devastation, every intermediate object, consuming the very earth

* Jewish War, book vi. chap. 4.

with her increase, and scattering over her entire surface the direful elements of ruin. In this passage, as in the preceding, an hyperbaton may, I think, be traced, there being a more immediate affinity betwixt the alternate than the consecutive lines, as we shall instantly see by transposing them:—

For a fire is kindled in mine anger,
And shall consume the earth with her increase;
And shall burn unto the lowest hell,
And set on fire the foundations of the mountains.

There will be perceived a beautiful example of antithetical parallelism in the latter couplet, according to this arrangement:—

And shall burn unto the *lowest hell*,
And set on fire the foundations of *the mountains*.

Here extreme depth and height are evidently contrasted, and with prodigious effect. The fire of divine wrath reaching from the centre to the highest accessible points of the habitable globe. Observe, too, how admirably the proprieties of expression are considered:—

Shall *burn* unto the lowest hell,
And *set on fire* the foundations of the mountains;

in which the different action of fire downwards and upwards is discriminated with extraordinary accuracy of perception. In burning to the centre, its progress is continuous and indiscriminately progressive, but upon the surface, it is communicated from one object to another: it sweeps along and is propelled forward by

accessory agencies, such as wind, currents of air, and certain atmospheric influences. The ideas therefore of “burning” and “setting on fire” are kept quite distinct, and the terms adapted with exquisite congruity to the two objects which they are introduced to illustrate. To *burn*, is actually to *consume*; to *set on fire*, is the preliminary work of that destructive agent—for fire must be communicated before it can consume—the expressions, therefore, though showing the parallel of relation, are not identical.

I will heap mischiefs upon them;
I will spend mine arrows upon them.

Here is a gradational parallelism, but most poetically carried out of the usual order of this artifice of construction, it being exhibited, not in the terms, but in the sense; the corresponding expressions, nevertheless, having a strong reciprocal cognation. The first phrase is almost literal, the second entirely metaphorical, the latter amplifying, by the figurative process, the simple idea conveyed in the former. Let us see how powerfully the *excess* of affliction is depicted in both clauses. In the first clause, God is represented as saying,

I will *heap* mischiefs upon them;

that is, ‘I will accumulate calamities upon them to such a degree, that they shall be finally crushed beneath the burthen of their afflictions. These shall be heaped upon them until they can bear no more.’

I will *spend* mine arrows upon them.

‘ As they have dared to defy my power and provoke my wrath, I will exhaust the quiver of my vengeance upon these degenerate descendants of my once beloved people, and they shall cease to stand towards me in the endearing relation of children. I will cast them off, and force them to “ drink of the cup of my indignation.” ’

There will be observed, in these two hemistichs, an exquisite distinction in the terms, both being significative of superlative judgments, yet each representing them under different forms of expression, the paramount idea however, which is that of God’s judicial visitation, being dominant in both. The one conveys to the mind an impression of the divine determination in nearly literal terms of great comprehensiveness, the other producing precisely the same effect by an image of singular energy; *e. g.*

I will *heap mischiefs* upon them;
I will *spend mine arrows* upon them.

Both these phrases evidently imply punishment in its greatest excess. The “ mischiefs ” will amount to an enormous aggregate, and the “ arrows ” shall continue to be discharged until the quiver of divine wrath is exhausted. Nothing can be more tremendous than these denunciations. How skilfully, too, are the two antagonist ideas of accumulation and exhaustion opposed in this passage, each giving force to the other, and combining to heighten the principal object, namely, God’s retributory dispensations. The very opposition of the terms gives greater vividness to the one prevailing

impression, which it was evidently the poet's express intention to convey. The *empty* quiver is an exquisite image, throwing out into bolder and more prominent relief the *heaped* calamities to which those plagues, symbolized by the arrows of almighty vengeance, are a terrible and appalling supplement. The judgments of Jehovah are frequently compared to arrows in Scripture, as in Job, chapter vi. 4 :—

For the arrows of the Almighty are within me,
The poison whereof drinketh up my spirit.

Homer makes use of the same metaphor in describing the pestilence which visited the Grecian camp.* It must be admitted that the passage is an exceedingly fine one, reaching nearly to the sublimity of the Hebrew :—

Thus Chryses prayed; the favouring power attends,
And from Olympus' lofty tops descends.
Bent was his bow the Grecian hearts to wound;
Fierce as he moved, his silver shafts resound;—
The fleet in view, he twang'd his deadly bow,
And hissing fly the feather'd fates below.
On mules and dogs the infection first began,
And last the vengeful arrows fix'd in man.

Herder has been much more feeble than is usual with him in his rendering of this fine couplet, in which the Hebrew poet has exhibited the highest resources of his art. The learned German, though differing from our translators but in a single word, has, however, by that difference, greatly attenuated the masculine vigour

* Iliad, book i. verse 43, et seq.

of the second line, as it stands in our Bible, by having overlooked the antithetical structure of the original, in which its beauty much consists:—

I will heap up afflictions upon them,
And my arrows will I *send* upon them.

How tame is this beautiful image rendered by the word “send;” and not only so, but the antagonist ideas before pointed out not being traceable, one of the greatest charms of the passage is at once effaced. I confess it appears to me that, by a very inconsiderable inversion of the members in the last hemistich, a graceful improvement might have been made, without in the slightest degree abridging the spirit of the original. I would read,

I will heap mischiefs upon them,—
Upon them I will spend mine arrows.

This trifling change, besides giving an epanodistic turn to the couplet, obviates the recurrence of the same termination, which strikes the ear as somewhat ungraceful. The last clause, moreover, would thus conclude with that word which represents, with such terrific effect, the severity of providential judgments, and which, in this sublime song, may be said to be the keystone of the poetic arch thrown so grandly over the prophetic denunciation of God’s chastisements. When these are threatened by the sacred writers, they invariably employ terms of terrible energy. Thus Ezekiel*—

* Chap. xxxviii. ver. 18—23.

And it shall come to pass at the same time
 When Gog shall come against the land of Israel,
 Saith the Lord God, that my fury shall come up in my face.
 For in my jealousy and in the fire of my wrath have I spoken,
 Surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel;
 So that the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the heaven,
 And the beasts of the field, and all creeping things that creep upon the earth,
 And all the men that are upon the face of the earth,
 Shall shake at my presence, and the mountains shall be thrown down,
 And the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground.
 And I will call for a sword against him throughout all my mountains,
 Saith the Lord God: every man's sword shall be against his brother.
 And I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood;
 And I will rain upon him, and upon his bands,
 And upon the many people that are with him,
 An overflowing rain, and great hail-stones, fire, and brimstone.
 Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself;
 And I will be known in the eyes of many nations,
 And they shall know that I am the Lord.

This whole passage is full of tremendous sublimity; but Moses rises to equal elevation in the fearful enumeration of God's judgments given in his prophetic ode, which are thus continued:—

They shall be burnt with hunger,
 And devoured with burning heat,
 And with bitter destruction:
 I will also send the teeth of beasts upon them,
 With the poison of serpents of the dust.

In the opening triplet there is a fine climax—they shall first be tormented with hunger, then parched with thirst, which shall be followed with destruction of the most agonizing description, for this is the natural issue of both. Here the arrows of divine wrath are shown as in active operation, and sadly fatal is the execution wrought by them. The phrase “burnt with hunger” is, I think, of questionable pro-

priety, notwithstanding that it is vindicated by Bishop Patrick,* who writes, “and first he threatens a famine, with which he says they should be burnt, either because those judgments are compared to fire, verse 22, or because extreme hunger parches the inward parts, and makes the visage as black as a coal, as Jeremiah speaks, Lamentations iv. 8.” Why I object to the expression as it now stands in our Bible, is because it breaks the beautiful continuity of the climax; the terms do not graduate as in Herder’s version, which I think is extremely happy, excepting only the first pair of lines, and these I have already shown to be weakened by his having overlooked the contrasted relation of the phrases in each clause. I give his translation of the twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth verses entire:—

I will heap up afflictions upon them,
And my arrows will I send upon them;
Consumed with hunger, and burned with heat,
Devoured with bitter destruction,
I will send upon them the teeth of wild beasts,
With the poison of serpents from the dust.

The arrangement of these three couplets is manifestly epanodistic, an artifice of which Moses appears to have been very fond, as he frequently resorts to it. The first two lines of this passage contain the divine threats of vengeance, the two middle displaying the fulfilment of those threatenings; and while the Israelites suffer from these awful dispensations. ulterior

* See his note on the verse.

judgments are again threatened. In this distribution of the several clauses, it will be seen that the commencing and concluding couplets respectively convey God's terrible denunciations of punishment, the middle couplet describing the actual operation of the menaced woes. In our authorized translation this elegant artifice of arrangement is less obvious than in Herder's, who has managed it with great address, borne out, no doubt, by the consentaneous structure of the original Hebrew. The gradations of phrase in the central distich are marked with great precision by the German translator, who has selected the corresponding terms with great judgment. "Consumed with hunger" intimates the gradual but painful progress of the woes first threatened; "burned with heat" shows a more active agency and a more rapid progress; "devoured with bitter destruction" at once gives out the full force of the climax—that voracious activity in destroying displayed by the hungry beast of prey. I confess Herder's version of the four latter lines of this passage strikes me as being extremely spirited. Bishop Lowth gives quite a different interpretation to the second member of the third clause, as disposed by the German commentator. He reads,*

I will spend mine arrows upon them.
 They shall be eaten up with hunger, *a prey unto birds*,
 And to bitter destruction!
 I will also send the teeth of beasts upon them,
 With the poison of the reptiles of the earth.

* See his Twenty-first Praelection.

In this rendering it will at once be perceived that the climax present in Herder's and in our common version is interrupted; thus the progressive force and towering energy of the passage are greatly abated. It is indeed true that the *modes* of destruction are in a degree extended by Lowth, and there is a climax of those modes, though retarded by the intervention of a hemistich, which breaks the rapid gradation of sense in the different objects consecutively named; still even here the natural progression is somewhat disturbed by the priority being given to *birds*; beasts always taking precedence of birds, fish, and reptiles, in the conventional order of nature, at least according to the common classification of zoographers. I certainly cannot think that Bishop Lowth has exercised his usual discrimination and taste in the order here observed, as it clearly interrupts the more perfect gradation of the terms, substituting an imperfect climax for one of great strength and beauty. Neither, in my judgment, is "eaten up" so appropriate or so elegant a term as "devoured." Although both these metaphoric signs are of precisely the same import, the one nevertheless presents to the mind the *detailed*, the other the *general* action. "Eating up" brings immediately before the imagination the process of mastication among carnivorous creatures in all its revolting details, realizing the repulsive picture of tearing and mangling prey; *devouring* comes with a softened aspect: we are directed more to the metaphoric than to the literal meaning, and only dwell upon the

general action, or rather the *effect* of the general action; whereas, in the former phrase, the mind abandons the metaphor, being as it were forced from it by the strong images obtruded upon our thoughts, and clings with a shrinking unwillingness to the literal meaning.

I think the original would have justified Herder in translating the third line—

Consumed with hunger, and burned with *thirst*;

for the introduction of this latter correlative seems to be demanded; besides, the context appears incomplete as it now stands, and would be rendered complete by the change proposed. “Burned with heat” is a mere redundancy, for it is clear the degenerate Israelites could not be burned with *cold*; on the contrary, “burned with thirst,” besides carrying out the natural relation to the other member of the same hemistich, advances the climax and greatly heightens the picture of God’s active justice. Thirst is the consequence of hunger, it is likewise not only aggravated but produced by heat; so that being “burned with heat,” under the influence of hunger, the sufferer must of necessity be parched with thirst. The context therefore, as it appears to me, requires the employment of this latter image of suffering, not only as it is an unfailing concomitant of hunger, but as necessary to supply the proper gradation of terms to complete the climax. In addition to this, thirst invariably accompanies fevers, calentures, and those diseases peculiar to tropical climates; as therefore it indicates the presence of those dis-

cases, being combined with the peculiar diagnostics of each, it may by an easy synecdoche be put to represent them all. These were the arrows discharged from the quiver of divine wrath. What tremendous severity of retribution is here displayed! Amid such contingencies and dangers, who can wonder at the brevity of human life!—a subject which Quarles has touched upon with singular pathos and great poetic fervour.

Behold
 How short a span
 Was long enough, of old,
 To measure out the life of man!
 In those well-tempered days his time was then
 Surveyed, cast up, and found but threescore years and ten.

Alas!
 And what is that?
 They come, and slide, and pass,
 Before my pen can tell thee what.
 The posts of Time are swift, which having run
 Their seven short stages o'er, their short-liv'd task is done.

Our days
 Begun, we lend
 To sleep, to antic plays
 And toys, until the first stage end:
 Twelve waning moons, twice five times told, we give
 To unrecovered loss——we rather breathe than live.

We spend
 A ten years' breath,
 Before we apprehend
 What 'tis to live, or fear a death:
 Our childish dreams are filled with painted joys,
 Which please our sense awhile, and, waking, prove but toys.

How vain,
 How wretched is
 Poor man, that doth remain
 A slave to such a state as this!
 His days are short, at longest; few, at most;
 They are but bad, at best; yet lavished out, or lost.

They be
 The secret springs
 That make our minutes flee
 On wheels more swift than eagles' wings :
 Our life's a clock, and every gasp of breath
 Breathes forth a warning grief, till time shall strike a death.

How soon
 Our new-born light
 Attains to full-aged noon !
 And this, how soon to grey-haired night !
 We spring, we bud, we blossom, and we blast
 Ere we can count our days,—our days they flee so fast.

They end
 When scarce begun ;
 And, ere we apprehend
 That we begin to live, our life is done :
 Man count thy days ; and if they fly too fast
 For thy dull thoughts to count, count every day thy last.

I take this to be one of the most exquisite things of its kind in the English language ; it is full of the chastest sobriety of feeling and elevation of thought.

I now return to the prophetic ode of Moses.

The sword without,
 And terror within,
 Shall destroy both the young man and the virgin,
 The suckling also with the man of gray hairs.

“ Sometimes,” says Bishop Jebb, “ by a peculiar artifice of construction, the third line forms a continuous sense with the first, and the fourth with the second. Of this variety a striking example occurs in Bishop Lowth’s nineteenth prælection : its distinguishing feature, however, is not there sufficiently noted.” After quoting the forty-second verse of Moses’ prophetic song,

he quotes the twenty-fifth verse, which he exhibits as an alternate quatrain as follows :—

From without the sword shall destroy ;
And in the inmost apartments terror :
Both the young man and the virgin ;
The suckling with the man of gray hairs.

“The youths and virgins, led out of doors by the vigour and buoyancy natural at their time of life, fall victims to the sword in the streets of the city; while infancy and old age, confined by helplessness and decrepitude to the inner chambers of the house, perish there by fear, before the sword can reach them.” If we take the verses in that order which the sense suggests, we shall see how this picture is completed :—

From without the sword shall destroy
Both the young man and the virgin ;
And in the inmost apartments terror—
The suckling with the man of gray hairs.

In this quatrain how universal and complete is the destruction indicated ! Youth and robust strength, helpless infancy, and declining age alike become victims to the sword of the slayer and the dagger of the assassin. Not only in the streets is this work of carnage carried on, but the sanctuaries of private life are invaded, and their apartments made the scene of the most cruel butcheries. Young and old of either sex are united in one common ruin ; no place, however sacred, is secure from the profane intrusion of those sanguinary ministers of death, who spread the carnage of the sword without and its terror

within. How fully was all this brought to pass in after-times, when the holy Zion was beleaguered by the Roman armies, and when it might have been truly said, applying the words of Jeremiah, "the people were cast out into the streets of Jerusalem because of the famine and the sword, and there was none to bury them."* Then was accomplished the prediction of Moses in an age so long antecedent, with all its details of horror and of ruthless devastation. This prophecy is generally applied by commentators to events long prior to the siege of Jerusalem, but I conceive the scope of the prediction embraces the whole series of disasters which befel the Jews from their entrance into Palestine, until the final dissolution of their government, when God's chastisements had fallen heavily upon them, and there no longer remained, to use the grand image of the poet, one arrow in the quiver of almighty wrath.

It will be evident by the slightest attention to the passage of the ode last quoted, that had the clauses been distributed according to the consecutive order of the sense, as the reader will immediately perceive by transposing them, the antithetical parallelism now present in the first, and the cognate parallelism present in the second distich, would have been completely destroyed. The hyperbaton was, no doubt, employed here for the sake of making these beautiful parallelisms apparent. In the last distich of the quatrain there is an extremely

* Chap. xiv. 16.

happy epanodistic arrangement of the members of the two clauses,—

Shall destroy both the young man and the virgin,
The suckling also with the man of gray hairs.

In this disposition of the several objects enumerated, it will be observed that they do not follow in due order, but are diverted into a more artificial distribution. It is not said, as would have been done according to the natural succession of those objects—

Both the young man with the man of gray hairs,
The suckling and the virgin,

but the two weaker are placed between the two stronger, “the young man” and “the man with gray hairs” respectively commencing and ending the distich, while the “suckling” and “virgin” occupy the middle station of protection and security; this artificial position of the terms alone, without any additional aid of words, impressing upon the mind their respective characteristics of masculine strength on the one hand, from manhood to old age, and on the other of feminine weakness from infancy to puberty. It may indeed be truly said, that the same thing would have existed had the several objects in the two lines taken their proper order, thus—

Both the young man with the man of gray hairs,
The suckling and the virgin ;

as here the two extremes of weakness, helpless infancy and impotent age, take the middle

station, and robust youth of either sex, the two extremities of the distich. This, however, is a far less agreeable arrangement than the other, because woman naturally claims the protection of her stronger correlative, and the picture of security is much more accordant with our human prepossessions and sympathies, where infancy and womanhood are flanked by man in youth, under the defence of his active strength; and man in age, under the shield of that moral influence which is often a much better security. Besides, we always associate with woman the idea of weakness; we look upon her as a being wanting a human protector, and this feeling is confirmed in the passage before us. The arrangement therefore which Moses has chosen, is, in my judgment, much more touching and much more true than if he had placed the objects enumerated according to their more direct succession.

I shall conclude this chapter with a noble extract from the Lamentations* of Jeremiah, in which that eloquent prophet has stupendously worked out the picture of desolation so vigorously sketched by Moses.

How hath the Lord covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in his
anger,

And cast down from heaven unto the earth the beauty of Israel,

And remembered not his footstool in the day of his anger !

The Lord hath swallowed up all the habitations of Jacob, and hath
not pitied :

He hath thrown down in his wrath the strong holds of the daughter of
Judah ;

He hath brought them down to the ground :

* Chap. ii. 1—8.

He hath polluted the kingdom and the princes thereof.
 He hath cut off in his fierce anger all the horn of Israel :
 He hath drawn back his right hand from before the enemy,
 And he burned against Jacob like a flaming fire, which devoureth
 round about.

He hath bent his bow like an enemy :
 He stood with his right hand as an adversary,
 And slew all that were pleasant to the eye
 In the tabernacle of the daughter of Zion :
 He poured out his fury like fire.

The Lord was as an enemy : he hath swallowed up Israel,
 He hath swallowed up all her palaces : he hath destroyed his strong
 holds,
 And hath increased in the daughter of Judah mourning and lamen-
 tation.
 And he hath violently taken away his tabernacle, as if it were of a
 garden :

He hath destroyed his places of the assembly :
 The Lord hath caused the solemn feasts and sabbaths to be forgotten in
 Zion,
 And hath despised in the indignation of his anger the king and the
 priests.
 The Lord hath cast off his altar, he hath abhorred his sanctuary,
 He hath given up into the hand of the enemy the walls of her palaces ;
 They have made a noise in the house of the Lord, as in the day of a
 solemn feast.

CHAPTER XIX.

The prophetic ode continued.

THE measure of calamity is not filled up, the arrows of almighty vengeance are not yet exhausted. The poet continues his strain of prophetic retribution on the ungrateful and disobedient Israelites:—

I said, I would scatter them into corners,
I would make the remembrance of them to cease from among men.

In this passage we have the idea excited of consternation prevailing to such an extent among the unhappy inhabitants of Judæa, that they should hide themselves in the most secret and inaccessible places from the presence of a desolating enemy who would cause so complete a destruction, that scarcely any memorial of them should remain—that they should be all but exterminated. It is worthy of remark how skilfully Moses varies the subjects of his descriptions, and yet keeps them all in strict dependency upon each other, never rupturing the harmonious concatenation of parts, so as to disturb the integral unity. In several preceding clauses, we have seen the *arrows* in full operation. The various inflictions to be dealt upon God's disobedient people are declared

in the previous passage with fearful distinctness and earnestness of expression. In the couplet last quoted, the effects of those visitations are presented. Great terror and consternation seize upon the revolted inhabitants of the land—upon those who inherited it by promise; the degenerate descendants of that righteous forefather to whom this promise was made,—causing them to run to the gloomy recesses of forests and of caverns; having less dread of wild beasts than of enemies of their own kind. God would have at once extirpated them but for the reasons expressed in the two couplets next to be considered: the time, however, finally arrived when their social joys were banished; when their constitution was subverted and they were dispersed among the nations, no longer a people favoured of Jehovah, and proposing laws to the whole world.

To that condition of things which followed the destruction of their capital, the prophet, I think, here incidentally points; and how fully have his denunciations of future temporal retribution been realized in the subsequent history of this remarkable people! Even now they may be said to be “scattered into corners,” for in every civilized country, they are rather tolerated than admitted among its community to the privileges of citizens. They possess not the immunities of the native born, but are looked upon as aliens, and the brand of scorn, though no longer of persecution, is yet upon them. The threat of an irritated and outraged God, uttered upwards of three thousand years ago, is still in operation. The remembrance of the sons

of Jacob, as a nation pre-eminently distinguished for spiritual privileges and political power, has ceased from among men.

Those awful consequences which followed the revolt of the Jews from that Deity who had so marvellously befriended them, have been detailed, with appalling minuteness, by Josephus, in his Jewish war, to which I again refer.* The calamities which befel them during the memorable siege of Jerusalem by Titus, are such as to show us, with the most convincing force of demonstration, how fearful a thing it is “to fall into the hands of the living God.”

“But as for the more wealthy, it proved the same thing to them whether they quitted or remained in the city; for all such persons were put to death under the pretence that they were going to desert, but it was in reality in order that the robbers might obtain what they possessed. The frenzy of the seditious did also increase with their famine, and both these miseries were daily aggravated; for there was no corn seen anywhere, but the robbers immediately searched for it in private houses: if they found any, they tormented the owners for having denied that they possessed it; and if they found none, they tormented them the more under the idea that it was somewhere concealed. Whether they really had any or not, the robbers presumed, from the appearance of their unhappy victims, who, if they were in tolerably good condition, they at once concluded to be in no want of food, but if

* The unlearned reader is referred to Whiston's translation.

they appeared lean and ill favoured, their tyrants made no further search, thinking it useless to kill persons whom they imagined must evidently soon die from want of nourishment. There were indeed many who sold all that they had for one measure of grain, the richer of wheat, the poorer of barley. This being done, they shut themselves up in the innermost apartments of their houses to eat what they had thus obtained. Some devoured without grinding it, in consequence of their extreme hunger, others converted it into bread, according as necessity or fear dictated. No table was spread for a regular meal, but the unhappy wretches snatched the bread out of the fire half baked, and devoured it voraciously.

“It was in truth a sight to draw tears from our eyes, to see that while the stronger had more food than they required, the weaker were everywhere lamenting the want of it. But famine overmasters all other passions, and it is destructive of nothing so much as of modesty. Now what ought to have been revered was despised; so much so that children tore the food from their fathers’ mouths as they were eating it; but what was still more pitiable, mothers were seen to do this to their helpless babes. When, moreover, those most dear to them were perishing before their eyes, they were not ashamed to deprive them of that which might have preserved their tender lives. While, however, they obtained food in this unnatural way, they were observed by the seditious, who rushed in upon them, and took from them by force what they

themselves had by force obtained. For when those robbers saw any house shut up, it was to them a signal that the inhabitants had procured food; upon which they broke open the doors, and, entering, tore what they were eating from their very throats. The men who held their food fast were beaten, and if the women concealed the grain they had obtained, the hair was torn from their heads for so doing. There was no commiseration shown either to the young or to the aged, but infants were lifted from the ground, as they clung to the meat they were so anxious to devour, and dashed down upon the floor. They however exercised the greatest cruelties towards those who had opposed their entrance, and had succeeded in swallowing what the intruders had determined to seize, acting as if they had been unjustly defrauded of their rights. They likewise applied terrible torments to discover where food was concealed. Men were obliged to endure tortures terrible to name, in order to extort confession of a hidden loaf, or of a handful of barley-meal, and this was done when their tormentors were not themselves hungry, for such conduct would have been less cruel had necessity compelled them to exercise it. All this villany, however, was perpetrated in order to keep up the frenzy of excitement, and to secure provisions for the time when they might require them. These wicked men went also to meet those who had left the city secretly by night and had reached the Roman guards, in order to gather wild herbs. When the latter imagined they had escaped the enemy

with their treasure, their dissolute and unnatural countrymen took from them what they had obtained at such hazard; nor would they restore to them the least portion, though urged with the most solemn entreaties, but told the unhappy sufferers they ought to be satisfied that they were not put to death as well as spoiled.

“Such were the afflictions which the common people suffered from those tyrants, while the more opulent were brought before them: some, being accused of devising treacherous plots, were put to death; others were charged with an attempt to betray the city into the hands of the Romans; while false witnesses were suborned to testify that they had come to the resolution of deserting to the enemy. He who had been utterly despoiled by Simon was sent to John, and those who had been plundered by John were sent to Simon, who robbed them of what the other had left. Thus they drank the blood of the citizens, and divided their corpses between them, so that although ambition caused them to contend for supremacy, yet did they perfectly agree in their vicious practices.”*

Nothing can exceed in magnitude of horror the frightful details of the Jewish historian above quoted, who shows with a distinctness perfectly appalling, the terrible consummation of prophecy which, for many generations previously and under the strongest images, had represented those awful issues.

* Jewish War, book v. chap. 10.

After the couplet last quoted from the ode, God is declared as giving the reason why he did not utterly exterminate the rebellious seed of Abraham from “the lot of their inheritance” and “scatter them into corners,” where “the teeth of wild beasts would have been upon them, and the poison of serpents of the dust, “to destroy them utterly” from the face of the whole earth.

I said, I would scatter them into corners,
 I would make the remembrance of them to cease from among men :
 Were it not that I feared the wrath of the enemy,
 Lest their adversaries should behave themselves strangely,
 And lest they should say, our hand is high,
 And the Lord hath not done all this.
 For they are a nation void of counsel,
 Neither is there any understanding in them.

Nothing can more strongly depict the amazing presumption of the Jews than this passage. It shows how fully they deserved the extreme severity of divine wrath, although they were spared from absolute extermination. For this, two reasons are assigned. God did not extirpate the degenerate seed of Abraham, because he would not give the heathen the opportunity to exult, and, in their triumph over those whom he had so long visibly protected, to blaspheme his holy name ;—lest, moreover, they should ascribe to their own factitious divinities, hewn from the senseless rock or carved from the unconscious trunk, those fearful issues which were the result of his own almighty and infallible will.

The second reason assigned by God for sparing the Israelites is, lest the arrogant gentiles

should boast that they, and not God, were the cause of Israel's melancholy discomfiture and desolation. Notwithstanding the manifold miscarriages of his people, it is evident that God was unwilling to desert them. He was still reluctant so to abase them as to give their enemies occasion to exult in their distress ; nor was it until they had, by a long course of almost unparalleled profligacy, matured themselves for that terrible harvest of retribution which they were forced by the arm of almighty justice to reap, that they were given over to the sword of the destroyer.

The heathen who knew not the Lord Jehovah, and therefore acknowledged none of his dispensations, would not hesitate to attribute all the reverses which happened to the Jews, not to the wickedness of that ungrateful race, but to their own superior valour and conduct—not to the chastening discipline of Him who alone can award punishment or dispense blessings, but to their own political foresight and practical wisdom ; the Deity therefore was unwilling to supply food for the arrogance of those presumptuous idolaters, by putting the yoke of immediate and hard servitude upon the necks of the revolted Jews. These, it is true, had offered him the grossest provocation ; but the gentiles, who were numerically so much more powerful, were still not to be elevated upon the ruin of his once privileged children ; these latter therefore were to be grievously punished, not annihilated, lest the idolaters should find cause to triumph, and continue their abominations with the greater confidence of impunity. The

chastisements of the Israelites thus fell far short of their deserts. The employment of the word "feared" in the third line, is manifestly nothing more than an appropriation of that description of metaphor, called anthropopathy, and which I have before explained,* imputing the passions of man to God. It is of common occurrence in the Hebrew scriptures. I need hardly say to a reader of ordinary perception that it is altogether impossible God should fear man, but such ascription of human passions and affections to the Divinity often tends to present to the imagination a far more vivid picture of his judgments, or of his mercies, than if such strong aids to the effect of descriptive poetry were omitted. These and similar artifices of composition are agreeable upon another account; they act upon the sympathies with a direct influence, by bringing God, as it were, present to us, in a tangible shape, and placing our humanity, if I may so speak, in immediate contact with his divinity. It fills our minds with more definite conceptions of his stupendous agencies; it depicts before them, under a seemingly palpable shape, that mysterious and ineffable Being who is "himself alone," existing everywhere, yet visible nowhere, filling heaven and earth, the universe, and all space, yet undiscovered and unknown, but in his attributes; thus awakening a more positive perception of the solemn relations existing between Creator and creature, than if the holy scriptures only represented

* See vol. ii. p. 274.

the almighty arbiter of our destinies, as he truly is, an omnipotent Agent, without parts or passions, sensible to no emotions, an infinitely pervading and intransitive spirit, everlasting, omnipresent, unrevealable to human sense, and inaccessible by human comprehension.

The appropriation to the Deity of such terms as tend to fix within us definite notions of him in his prominent attributes of justice and of love, do not at all derogate from his transcendent dignity; on the contrary, they sustain it. While we appear to see, by the vividness of the picture offered to our mental scrutiny, the very process of God's beneficent and judicial dispensations in the actions represented, our reason is sufficiently guarded to prevent its falling a dupe to the beautiful illusion. Our impressions are strengthened at the same time that our knowledge is not imposed upon. We feel that such terms cannot be literally applied to God, but in their strong metaphorical signification they seem to realize his presence under such an aspect of celestial majesty and glory as we can entertain a sensible notion of, no less than appreciate and comprehend. This, however it may fall short, as it infinitely does, of his unimaginable perfections, nevertheless tends to produce such a sensible perception of those perfections as is calculated to render us fearful of his judgments, obedient to his precepts, and affectionately grateful for his numerous benefactions of loving-kindness.

As the clauses embraced in the twenty-seventh and following verse of this ode may be

liable to misinterpretation by a hasty or indifferent reader, I will here give a brief paraphrase of the entire passage. After describing the plagues which Jehovah will bring upon the posterity of Jacob,—the pangs of hunger and thirst, the multiplication of beasts of prey and of venomous serpents in the land inhabited by them, for their punishment and partial destruction,—the poet represents God as saying:—‘ I would immediately visit this ungrateful and rebellious race with complete extirpation, but that it would give the heathen an opportunity of triumphing in their fall, and, in the excess of their presumptuous arrogance, afford occasion to them of boasting that it was their valour and military conduct which had brought such complete ruin upon their foes, not the interposition of my avenging arm. I will not thus allow the idolaters cause to set up a vain-glorious triumph; I forbear therefore to exterminate my alienated people, lest their pagan foes should proclaim a false conquest over them, and say, we have accomplished their destruction and not the God in whom they once trusted. But for this I certainly would have swept the descendants of Israel from the face of the earth, for they have become so wicked a community that the very councils in which their learned and chief men preside, sanction their profligacy by imposing no check upon them. They are in fact so desperately licentious, that their understanding is tainted by the moral contagion of their vices, and being without the guidance of well-regulated thoughts, and no longer under

the discipline of a discreetly organized judgment, they run heedlessly on to their own destruction.'

Herder's translation of these verses is clear and comprehensive:—

I had almost said, I will destroy them,
And blot out their name among men ;
Had I not feared the pride of the enemy,
That their oppressors would mistake it
And say, 'our own high hand
And not Jehovah hath done this.'
For they are a nation void of counsel ;
There is no understanding in them.

The learned German seems to refer, in the concluding couplet, not to the Jews but to the heathen: the subsequent context positively contradicts such an interpretation, as the Jews are immediately addressed—

O that they were wise,
That they understood this,
That they would consider their latter end !

Here it is manifest that the Jews and not the gentiles are addressed.

The passage on which I have been now dwelling, contains at the close a parallelism of great elegance and significancy. The verses immediately preceding are exceedingly vigorous, strongly contrasting the august majesty of Jehovah with the impotent arrogance of the heathen, the whole ending in a pair of very emphatic lines, exhibiting the Jews as reduced to a state of moral degradation still lower than their pagan and presumptuous neighbours :—

For they (the Jews) are a nation void of counsel,
Neither is there any understanding in them.

The latter clause, it will be observed, rises here with a marked gradation of force; the Jews are a nation void of counsel, abandoned to the delusions of passion, infirm of judgment, wanting in discretion, and therefore readily led to do wrong. They follow the fond suggestions of their own depraved hearts, forsaking the guidance of Him who could alone direct them wisely, and thus, as a necessary consequence, act wickedly.

Neither is there any understanding in them;

the result of which is, that being directed by their passions rather than by their reason, they have sunk into the lowest state of moral degradation: their understanding has been so brought into subjection under the tyranny of sin that it has ceased to be a safe guide; not only are their *hearts* corrupt, but their *minds* are likewise in a condition of total depravity; they are altogether become abominable; in sum, the *whole man* is under the dominion of evil.

That this couplet must apply to the Jews will be evident by connecting it with the preceding passage of the context, in which they are expressly referred to beyond the possibility of question, thus—

I said, I would scatter them into corners,
I would make the remembrance of them to cease from among men:
For they are a nation void of counsel,
Neither is there any understanding in them.

Here the sense follows in its natural order, not being disturbed by the interposition either of

any subsidiary or extraneous object. The present arrangement, however, was, no doubt, adopted by the inspired bard, for a purpose. It is clearly epanodistic, and it will be readily perceived that, though the position of the several couplets is perfectly natural, and that no inversions or other artifices are employed to effect this construction, the epanode is nevertheless present. This is produced simply by the two central couplets forming a parenthesis, dependent upon the first pair of lines, but interrupting the immediate succession of sense by diverting it from the Jews to the heathen. In the first distich and in the last, as they now stand in the ode, reference is made to the Jews, both pointing out their extreme degeneracy; the first by inference in declaring their *desert* of punishment; the last specially by stating the *cause* of their deserving it. The two middle couplets, of which the subject is secondary, or rather subsidiary to the first and last, are placed between them, thus bringing into direct juxtaposition the moral desuetude both of Jews and heathens. It is very skilfully managed, and the more skilful from the apparent absence of all art. Thus it is, that by tracing the prescriptive artifices of structure, so common in the Hebrew writings, we are frequently enabled to unravel perplexities, and evolve the obvious interpretation. The metrical construction adopted by the inspired bards, whose compositions are collected in Holy Writ, often serve as a clue to guide us out of the labyrinth of obscurity in which so many portions of those compo-

sitions appear to be involved, only because the peculiar resources of their art, of which they made constant use, are either not contemplated or not understood by the general readers of Scripture. I therefore think that a proper understanding of the poetry of the Bible will throw more light upon the difficulties of the prophetic portions of that divine book, which are nearly all poetical, than studying the best commentaries ever written, which often contain the most extravagant speculations, especially where obscurity gives latitude for the exercise of an enthusiastic but ill-governed fancy.

Before I bring this chapter to a conclusion, I would direct the reader's attention to the figure employed in the fifth line, "Our hand is high." It has great force of signification: indeed it may be said, almost without a metaphor, to teem with meaning. Our "hand," that is, our power, is not like the power of men, but like that of God, mighty to destroy. This the heathen felt no shame in saying, for nothing could exceed their arrogance, and the Deity was unwilling to give them any additional cause to display it; he well knew how capable they were of manifesting the loftiest presumption. To him their haughty pride was no secret. They were in the habit of magnifying the power of those idols which their own hands had fashioned, and of assuming for them an equality with him who created the material out of which they were constructed; thus extolling their own might in magnifying that of their gods. They claimed for themselves that sufficiency of power which

belongs alone to Omnipotence, assuming in their own persons the capability of doing what the Deity only could accomplish. They were at all times ready to maintain that "their hand was high," and for this reason it was that the mighty Jehovah levelled them with the dust, frequently heaping upon them the most dreadful calamities. It is no wonder then that he forbore to exterminate his people Israel, lest their foes should not only triumph over them, but declare their own power to have been the cause of such triumph.

We have a common expression in use among us at this day, which approaches very near to the signification of that employed in the sacred text, and probably was originally adopted from it, for it has all the character of an oriental idiom. How often do we hear it said in common parlance, when a person boasts of something which he has accomplished out of the ordinary course of achievement, or when he assumes the character of potential influence—"he carries it *with a high hand*," implying the assumption of superiority far above what is found generally to exist in the ordinary relationship betwixt man and man.

CHAPTER XX.

The prophetic ode continued.

IN what follows we have a remarkable example of that abrupt change of person so often observable in the Hebrew writings, especially in the poetical sections of them. The poet had, to the end of the passage quoted in the last chapter, represented the Deity as personally declaring his determination to visit the Israelites with terrible penalties as a just and reasonable punishment for their manifold offences. He now suddenly breaks off and speaks in his own person, apostrophizing his degenerate countrymen with great tenderness.

O that they were wise,
That they understood this,
That they would consider their latter end !
How should one chase a thousand,
And two put ten thousand to flight,
Except their Rock had sold them,
And the Lord had shut them up ?
For their rock is not as our Rock,
Even our enemies themselves being judges.

There is considerable artifice of construction in the whole of these very pathetic lines, there

being a remarkable conformity in the hemistichs generally, besides a separate but close correspondence in several of the members.

O that they were wise,
That they understood this,
That they would consider their latter end !

Moses, in terms of the tenderest reproach, laments the perverseness of his countrymen, who, in spite of the numerous warnings they had received, would not take heed to their ways and turn their thoughts to that advancing future when the divine judgments were so awfully threatened; as if he had said, ‘oh, that this perverse people would take warning by the chastisements to which they have already been subjected for their numerous defalcations and revolts, and carry their thoughts forward into the latter times—that is, into remote ages to come, when the prophecy which I have just delivered shall be consummated. Such a timely consideration would, perhaps, awe their stubborn hearts and bring them back to their former affiance in the divine love.’

The gradations of sense in this triplet cannot escape observation—

O that they were wise,

that they had the requisite prudence to direct their minds to this subject, that they would think more of the future than of the present, and ponder the dreadful consequences of sin, rather than the animal gratification which it procures, the

one being infinitely permanent, the other in the highest degree transitory.

That they understood this.

They must first apply their minds to apprehend before they can understand it ; they must become “wise” before they could relieve themselves, with God’s grace, from their foolishness ; they must acquire wisdom to think before they can have sagacity to understand:—they must do the one before they could be in a condition to do the other. Having acquired this understanding, a third process of the mind is demanded from them—that they would *consider*. Until they had arrived at a perfect understanding of the subject, they could not tell what would result from it. They were first then to apply their mental faculties to a right appreciation of divine judgments, and having acquired a just comprehension of their object and tendency, to consider future consequences. There is, in this triplet, a series of three dependant clauses, rising gradually in the order of climax, as will be perceived from the explanation just given. How much more expressive and forcible is this arrangement than that of Herder, who has thrown the passage into a single distich, in which the parallelism is exceedingly feeble and indistinct:—

O ! that they were wise to understand this,
That they would consider their latter end.

In this arrangement of the clauses, there is much

less coherency of parts, because the ascending scale of sense is broken, and their immediate dependency consequently interrupted. "Oh! that they were *wise*,"—that they would exercise their reflective faculties! "that they would *understand*"—that they would thus produce the *fruits* of wisdom! "that they would *consider*"—that they would properly appropriate the results of this acquisition of wisdom, and *consider* or reflect upon the future issues of a determined persistency in provocation. Here the ascending scale is perfect, and the steps are beautifully progressive. Herder's couplet is graceful but no thing more; it lacks the dignity, the impressiveness, the correct marks of proportion, and exact correspondency of parts maintained in the triplet, as given by our translators.

The term "wisdom" is often used in scripture to express experience, as in Job xii. 12.

With the *ancient* is wisdom;
And in *length of days*, understanding;

thus showing that knowledge is the result of experience. In this view of the term Moses may be supposed to have said in the passage just examined, 'oh! that the experience of God's judicial acts towards my rebellious countrymen would cause them to think seriously of the future and not provoke him to greater severities.'

The poet seems to dwell with solemn earnestness upon the reflection that caused him anguish of heart, for the visitations which he

foresaw must fall upon the perverse and degenerate Jews. There is an exquisite pathos in his thus accumulating additional strength to the thought as it advances in the progress of completion within the matrix of his own prolific mind. It places Moses before us, moreover, in an amiable and affecting light. The anxieties of his heart, and the perturbations of his spirit become clearly revealed to us—his extreme solicitude for the people whom he had been divinely appointed to govern; his wisdom as a lawgiver, and his virtue as a man, are at once recognized in this brief but emphatic manifestation of his social affections.

The term “latter end” in the last clause of the triplet is commonly understood to signify death, but the context by no means warrants such a construction, for the prophet is distinctly referring to a future period, when the judgments of an avenging Deity shall fall upon the alienated Jews—alienated from the divine compassion and mercy in consequence of their multiplied enormities; he, therefore, expresses a wish that the present generation would take warning from his prophetic declaration of God’s determination to visit them with extreme severity in the latter days, when their iniquity shall be full;—that they would turn their attention to those times when that dispensation under which they will have been so long distinguished as a peculiar people, shall be superseded by one of more eminent dignity and perfection; when that “day star from on high,” obscurely promised in the earthly paradise and subsequently

adumbrated in the temple sacrifices, shall visit the world "in the fulness of the Godhead bodily," and restore them and all their gentile brethren to those privileges which both had equally lost in Adam.

'Oh that this evil generation would consider those times,' exclaims Moses, under an impulse of prophetic rapture, 'when the mercies of Jehovah shall be fully developed, after he has displayed upon them the visitations of his wrath; when they shall behold the advent of the promised deliverer of whom it had been solemnly declared by God himself, that he should "bruise the serpent's head," and thus release mankind from the curse provoked by the temptation of that all but omnipotent enemy.'

It is evident that, in this predictive ode, Moses glances through the whole period of the Jewish economy, from the time at which he was then speaking, to the great period of human signalization, when that visible triumph over death and hell was obtained upon the cross, which has sealed to man the covenant of salvation, ratified by the sacrifice of the divine Redeemer. The Jewish lawgiver refers to this period with a solemnity suited to its importance. He merely alludes to it in general terms, as if it were a subject too well understood, and at the same time of too sacred a character to need any detailed specification. The very indefiniteness of the allusion to the great expiatory sacrifice upon Mount Calvary for human dereliction, imparts a character of grave dignity to the passage, precisely adapted to the sublimity of such a theme

The reference, faint though it may seem, is on that account the more touching. Every expression is strikingly appropriate, the whole passage embracing one fervid but natural desire, for what could be more so than that he should wish his unrighteous countrymen would direct their thoughts to that great act of omnipotent love, which should restore them from death to life eternal, as a means of withdrawing them from the perilous condition of sin. He then declares in a strain of strong but magnificent hyperbole, what would be the effect of a prudent consideration of those better times when the seal should be finally fixed to the grand covenant of mercy.

How should one chase a thousand,
And two put ten thousand to flight,
Except their Rock had sold them,
And the Lord had shut them up?

“That is,” as Dodd* judiciously observes, “would they but wisely reflect and be moved by the terror of these punishments upon their posterity, to a different conduct, how flourishing should be their estate at home, how victorious their arms abroad! The sacred writer adds, ‘how certainly should they do this, if their Rock had not sold them;’ that is, if their Creator had not entirely given them up, and abandoned his protection of them.” The two first hemistichs are, however, understood by a great number of commentators as not referring to the Israelites, but to their enemies. Houbigant understands the passage thus: “for how comes it to pass that one should chase a thousand (one enemy a

* See his note on the passage.

thousand Israelites), and two put ten thousand to flight, unless because that God will deliver them (into the hands of their foes),—unless because the Lord will shut them up;” that is, so straiten them that they must fall an easy prey to their conquerors.

Bishop Patrick, Dr. Hales, Dr. Adam Clarke, with various commentators, both ancient and modern, adopt this interpretation, but I confess Dr. Dodd’s reading appears to me more concurrent, with the scope of the context where Moses at once recalls to the minds of his countrymen their former glorious victories over the gentiles, and signifies that their future conquests should be greater, if they would only so comport themselves as to secure a continuance of heavenly aid; for nothing could reduce them to a state of heathen subjugation but their abandonment by that august being who had protected them from the tyranny of pagan conquerors. No advantage could be obtained over men who had hitherto fought under his direction, unless he gave them up to the sword of their enemies. Thus Moses draws an implied contrast betwixt their former prowess when God’s right arm got them the victory, and their state of deplorable desuetude when his aid should be withheld from them; at the same time intimating, that if they would only duly consider the divine mercies already vouchsafed, and act up to the dictates of a pious gratitude, they would still, as formerly, discomfit their idolatrous foes, and maintain that supremacy, which, under the direction of an all-wise Providence, they were about to

establish, previously to the coming of the latter times, in the land of Canaan.

In the first pair of hemistichs, we shall observe the common gradational parallelism marked with more than usual distinctness:—

How should one chase a thousand,
And two put ten thousand to flight.

In the first hemistich, the idea is simply that of *pursuit*; in the second it is amplified into *rout*. Much more comparatively is done by the *two* mentioned in the second clause than by the *one* in the first. The “one” only pursues; this is the commencing step to the issue accomplished by the “two.” Being put to flight implies previous resistance; so that the enemy is represented as first pursued, then overtaken, then put to rout. These three actions, therefore, are comprehended in the result of the pursuit mentioned in the first verse. There is a marked distinction and an evident advance of force in the terms, and most skilfully are the relative combinations of power discriminated. We perceive, moreover, even a mathematical accuracy in the increased power derived from the union of two separate forces; for it is clear that if one man would be able to discomfit a thousand foes, two men, under precisely the same circumstances, would be more than a match for two thousand; the combined efforts of the two single forces more than doubling their integral power when not in combination, the proportion of force increasing by such combination in a greater ratio than as from one to two. The uniting of these two single quan-

tities would form an aggregate of power more than double the sum of the divided quantities, and, it might happen, in the proportion of two to ten. What I mean is, that if one singly would be equal to a thousand, the two united might be equal to ten thousand. This increase of ratio betwixt a single and doubled force, shows that Moses was not altogether unacquainted with the science of geometrical proportions. The laws by which these are governed, though sufficiently recondite, and only open to the man of science, had not, it is to be presumed, escaped the penetrating research of him who was instructed in all the far-famed wisdom of the Egyptians, then the most learned people upon earth. Indeed every verse of this incomparable production, which has developed the great genius of its author, exhibits the elements of profound and varied wisdom.

In the two latter clauses of the thirtieth verse, there will be perceived an advance in the sense by comparing the last line with the first. This is very happily shown by Herder, who has well preserved the parallelism:—

Is it not, that their *Rock* hath *forsaken* them,
That *JEHOVAH* hath *given* them *for a prey*?

His interpretation, however, of the two preceding lines, refers them to the heathen, not to the Jews; but whichever reading we adopt, the argument of Moses is substantially the same. According to one interpretation, the poet is made to express his anxious wish that the Jews would only consider what should happen to

them hereafter—that one should chase a thousand and two put ten thousand to flight, but for their great provocations which would cause God to give them over to the enemy and shut them up so as to prevent their escape. According to the other view of the passage, Moses asks ‘how it should happen that one of the heathen will eventually discomfit a thousand Jews, and two ten thousand?’ To this he replies, ‘the cause is to be sought in the latter having provoked God to abandon them to the foe.’ The conclusion from both these interpretations is the same, namely, that the delinquencies of the Jews shall awaken the active justice of heaven: for whether their wickedness should prevent them from vanquishing the heathen, or cause their discomfiture by them,—in either case, the punishment of God’s rebellious people is declared; so that both views of this verse substantively realize the same end.

Although in our translation the parallelism in the two last clauses is less obvious than in Herder’s version, it is nevertheless sufficiently so to be traced.

Except their Rock had sold them,
And the Lord had shut them up.

It is clear that the parallel terms in these hemistichs, as our translators have rendered them, present a greater amplification of sense in the last line than in the first.

Except their Rock had sold them,

implies, unless their Creator had allowed them to fall into the hands of the enemy—had *for-saken* them, as Herder reads, abandoned them to their foes by withholding his aid from them.

And the Lord had shut them up ;

that is, cut off from them all means of escape, so that when once in the power of the enemy, they would be entirely at their mercy. Thus the parallel term which concludes the first clause, implies their being given over to the foe ; that which concludes the second, their complete subjugation. Here is evidently a progressive action in the course of completion in the first hemistich, brought to its consummation in the second. The distinction is certainly more clearly projected to the reader's view in Herder's than in our common version. Jehovah, as he gives it, the parallel to Rock, much better shows the gradational advance than the word Lord as we have it in our Bible, the former expressing the supreme Godhead under that mysterious designation which a Jew never ventures to utter without the most solemn feelings of awe. Rock signifies the Creator, or a distinct agency in the sacred Trinity ; Jehovah, the united Three in One, so that the gradation of sense need not be made more apparent.

For their rock is not as our Rock,
Even our enemies themselves being judges.

In this distich, the impotency of the gentile divinities is happily contrasted with the omnipotence of the God of Israel, to whose mighty

and august power the heathens themselves had frequently borne testimony.* The pagan deities are here called their rock, as Patrick observes, "because they relied on them for safety." Still the proof of their inferiority, as Moses argues, is sufficiently established in the fact, that their worshippers had magnified the power of the Lord Jehovah. The argument was a very strong one. The poet moreover makes direct allusion in this verse to the future idolatries of his countrymen, which he shows to be the more abominable, inasmuch as the gentiles themselves have borne testimony that their idol divinities whom the degenerate seed of Abraham shall be induced to worship, are not the true God "who brought them out of Egypt with a mighty hand and a stretched out arm"—a fact acknowledged even by the votaries of those unconscious deities whom the Israelites will be won to serve. "For these enemies," observes Dodd, "were often forced to acknowledge the over-ruling power of Jehovah controlling all their designs and all the efforts of their gods, though they considered him only as the local tutelary God of the Jews. Perhaps the reader will think the whole clause from verse 28 not improperly connected thus: 'Oh that they were wise! then they would understand this! they would understand what should happen to them hereafter! how one should chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, if it was not because their Creator had sold them, and the Lord had shut

* Numbers xxiii. 19—22. 1 Samuel iv. 7, 8. Daniel iii. 29.

them up. For, not as our God is their god, even our enemies being judges.’”

Moses, thus making the testimony of the heathen to operate against his countrymen in a matter which the former must be supposed to approve, is the strongest argument he could have advanced against the criminality of the latter. They are not only incidentally but positively condemned by the very persons who had seduced them to apostatize from the God of their fathers, and who, therefore, it might be presumed, approved of their conduct. They were condemned by those who had corrupted them, not indeed in direct terms, but indirectly, through their praise of that august Being whom the “perverse” seed of Jacob had abandoned.

The term rock is frequently used in Scripture as a symbol of the Divinity, denoting that his attributes are everlasting, like that most enduring thing in time, to compare infinite with finite, the rock embedded in the ocean, or fixed upon the everlasting hills. “The name of rock,” says Cruden,* “is given to God by way of metaphor, because God is the strength, the refuge, and the asylum of his people, as the rocks were in those places whither the people retired in case of an unforeseen attack or irruption of the enemy, as in Psalm xviii. 31.

For who is God save the Lord?
Or who is a rock save our God?”

There is something extremely imposing in the

* Concordance, art. Rock.

use of the metaphor in this place. Moses does not degrade the sacred name of the divinity by placing it in immediate apposition with that of heathen deities, neither does he say,

For their God is not as our God,

which would be apparently claiming for the idols of the Canaanites a rank and importance equal to that of the God of Israel—it would be virtually placing them upon an equality; but he cloaks the sublime image of omnipotence under a metaphor, thus generalizing the idea of divinity into the more diffuse and ordinary notion of his mere attribute of power. A *quality* of the being, not the Almighty infinite himself, is thus brought before the mind; as if he had said, ‘their affiance is not ours—the rebellious Israelites who abandon Jehovah cannot have the same security as we who trust in him; the power and protection on which they rely for the consummation of the brightest hopes of their humanity is very different from that upon which we have been accustomed to repose our confidence. We have established our faith upon one who is able to realize our highest expectations, while the heathens and those among my degenerate countrymen who have become their religious allies and members of their worshipping assemblies, have confided in mere imaginary powers, which can neither hear their appeals, nor help them in their necessities.’ The mode of allusion to him “with whom is terrible majesty,” is, in the extreme sense of the terms, impressive and poetical, bringing the divine

power with greater effect to the imagination, by an emblematical representation of it, than if it had been literally defined—the symbol, by the mere force of association, generating new objects of reflection, while the literal description would have confined it to a single, grand, indeed, but definite idea. Now there is a contrast suggested between the power of the heathen divinities and that of the true God; whereas, had the former been honoured with the divine designation, it would have appeared to be assuming for them a co-equality in those perfections which belong alone to him. The passage is managed with consummate skill and with no less effect. It will be observed that two trains of thought present themselves, that which belongs to the representative agent, and that which belongs to the thing represented, namely, God;—the qualities of the one being in every respect superlative for a material and therefore finite object, greatly heightening our impressions of the illimitable and ineffable qualities of the other. How admirably, too, does the metaphor harmonize with the preceding clauses, in which the idea of relative power is predominant, expressed by the one chasing a thousand, and two putting ten thousand to flight. The whole passage is full of poetry.

CHAPTER XXI.

The prophetic ode continued.

THE inspired bard goes on in a strain of prodigious fervor to depict the mournful degradation of his countrymen, still bringing the future backward to the present, as was commonly the case with the Hebrew prophets.

For their vine is of the vine of Sodom,
And of the fields of Gomorrah :
Their grapes are grapes of gall, their clusters are bitter :
Their wine is the poison of dragons,
And the cruel venom of asps.

It is well known to the reader of scripture that Sodom was the capital of Pentapolis, which signifies the country of five cities. These five cities were Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboim, and Zoar ; all of which, with the exception of Zoar, whither Lot fled, were destroyed in that fiery inundation which effectuated the divine vengeance upon the inhabitants of those sinks of profligacy. The country round was at that time eminently fruitful, producing most of the luxuries as well as necessities of life in prodigal abundance. In consequence of the overthrow of these five cities, the whole aspect of the district was changed. After the burning of Sodom,

the plain was overflowed by the river Jordan, forming a lake known at present by the name of the lake Asphaltites, or the Dead Sea, so called in later times from the vulgar error, that no animal can live in it. The waters of this lake are asserted by Galen* to be so strongly impregnated with salt, that if any be thrown into it, the water will scarcely dissolve it. The story of the famous apples of Sodom is well known, and furnished Milton with the ideas so forcibly brought out in the following extract from his sublime poem of *Paradise Lost* :—

Greedily they pluckt
The fruitage, fair to sight, like that which grew
Near that bituminous lake, where Sodom flam'd :
This more delusive, not the touch but taste
Deceiv'd ; they, fondly thinking to allay
Their appetite with gust, instead of fruit
Chew'd bitter ashes, which the offended taste
With spattering noise rejected.

Volney's account of the present state of this district cannot fail to be interesting.

“The south of Syria, that is, the hollow through which the Jordan flows, is a country of volcanos ; the bituminous and sulphureous sources of the lake Asphaltites, the lava, the pumice-stones thrown upon its banks, and the hot baths of Tabaria, demonstrate that this valley has been the seat of a subterraneous fire which is not yet extinguished. Clouds of smoke are often observed to issue from the lake, and new crevices to be formed upon its banks. If conjectures in such cases were not too liable to

* *De Simpl. medic. Facult. lib. iv. cap. 19.*

error, we might suspect that the whole valley has been formed only by a violent sinking of a country which formerly poured the Jordan into the Mediterranean. It appears certain, at least, that the catastrophe of five cities destroyed by fire, must have been occasioned by the eruption of a volcano then burning. Strabo expressly says, that "the tradition of the inhabitants of the country, (that is, of the Jews themselves,) was, that formerly the valley of the lake was peopled by thirteen flourishing cities, and that they were swallowed up by a volcano." This account seems to be confirmed by the quantities of ruins still found by travellers on the western border. These eruptions have ceased long since, but earthquakes which usually succeed them, still continue to be felt at intervals in this country. The coast in general is subject to them, and history gives us many examples of earthquakes, which have changed the face of Antioch, Laodicea, Tripoli, Berytus, Tyre, Sidon, &c. In our time, in the year 1759, there happened one which caused the greatest ravages. It is said to have destroyed in the valley of Balbec, upwards of twenty thousand persons, a loss which has never been repaired. For three months the shock of it terrified the inhabitants of Lebanon so much, as to make them abandon their houses and dwell under tents."*

For their vine is of the vine of Sodom,
And of the fields of Gomorrah.

* Volney's Travels, vol. i. p. 303.

The Israelites are here compared to a vine which is of rapid growth and very fruitful ; but the poet declares that those sons of Jacob who had multiplied to such an extent as to be “as the sand on the sea-shore for multitude,” were no longer the produce of that vine “which the Lord had planted,” but of one whose fruits were bitter, like the produce of the Dead Sea shore. Nothing can exceed in strength of asperity the terms employed to denote the moral odiousness into which the Israelites subsequently lapsed. Sodom was a city doomed to destruction in consequence of the atrocious profligacy of its citizens. The fields of Gomorrah were converted into a sterile and blasted wilderness surrounding the Dead Sea, where everything wore the aspect of death.

Their grapes are grapes of gall.

This and the comparisons which follow give the strongest possible impression of the moral degradation into which the profligate Israelites subsequently fell at the period contemplated by the prophet. The whole of this is a metaphorical picture, representing the spiritual desuetude of Jacob's posterity, the impression being, no doubt, current in the days of Moses, that the district of the original Pentapolis was a region whose fruits were, as Tacitus* describes them, *acra et inania velut in cinerem venescunt*.

The actions of the Israelites are fitly characterized by these images of “grapes of gall,” and

* Hist. lib. v. cap. 6.

“bitter clusters.” Their conduct was not only worthless but distasteful—they were in the highest degree wicked. The usual advance of force is observable in the triplet comprising the thirty-second verse of the ode. In the first hemistich the notion simply of a vine is conveyed;—a vine, however, of bad quality, for it is the vine of SODOM. Next, the idea of the prolific character of this vine is suggested; it is of the fields of GOMORRAH,—a vine spreading over a vast extent of surface, covering whole fields; those fields, however, being upon a land visited with divine vengeance,—a blasted and accursed region. Then follows the quality of the productions of this vine; they are gall, “their clusters are bitter,” unfit for use, and only fit to be cast upon the dunghills.

There is something exceedingly impressive in these progressive representations of Hebrew delinquency, showing with a vivid earnestness of delineation, the utter degradation into which the Israelites would fall. Every hemistich contains a complete picture, each rising in pointed severity of truth, and enhanced by the rich poetical array in which they are severally adorned.

Their wine is the poison of dragons,
And the cruel venom of asps.

In this couplet the terms advance with increased intensity; they are the strongest of which language can be conceived susceptible. Nothing could exceed the depravity of that people whom God had honoured with exclusive distinction, but whom he was about to abandon to the ter-

rible consequences of their criminal propensities. These the poet could compare to nothing more justly than to the poison of dragons, to the poison of creatures in the highest degree venomous and disgusting to behold—creatures whose bodies are the receptacles of a most dreadful agent of destruction.

The word “dragons” seems to be used in this passage for venomous serpents generally; thus signifying that the conduct of that highly favoured people, whom God had delivered from the misery of Egyptian tyranny, was to the last degree odious: not only was their wine, that is, their whole conduct, full of iniquity which spread with terrible rapidity throughout the land, causing a moral fatality just as the poison of serpents infects and inflames the body, but their wickedness resembled the still more deadly venom of asps, a poison so potential in its operation as to be suddenly and invariably fatal.

The asp is a kind of serpent whose venom is of such prodigious activity, that as it penetrates, it almost instantly kills: like that of the rattle-snake, it defies all remedies. This creature, which is very small, usually lies convolved in a circle with its head in the centre; this, when disturbed, it raises like the umbilicus of a shield, whence its name asp, from *ασπις*, the Greek word for shield. It is often mentioned in scripture; the most remarkable instance is in Psalm lviii. 4:—

They are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear;
Which will not hearken to the voice of charmers,
Charming never so wisely.

It is affirmed of the asp that it stops its ears with its tail, to prevent its hearing. In order the more satisfactorily to explain this passage, bearing so strongly as it does upon the subject before us, some commentators are of opinion, that there is a sort of asp really deaf, which is the most dangerous of its kind, and that the Psalmist here speaks of it.*

Mr. Roberts has some interesting observations on this passage, which are well worthy of attention. "The *kuravan*, or snake-charmer, may be found in every village, and some who have gained great fame actually live by the art. Occasionally they travel about the district to exhibit their skill. In a basket they have several serpents, which they place on the ground. The *kuravan* then commences playing on his instrument, and talking to the reptiles, at which they creep out and begin to mantle about, with their heads erect and their hoods distended. After this he puts his arm to them, which they affect to bite, and sometimes leave the marks of their teeth.

"From close observation, I am convinced that all these serpents thus exhibited have their poisonous fangs extracted, and the Psalmist seems to have had his eyes on that when he says, 'break their teeth.' Living animals have been repeatedly offered to the man for his serpents to bite, but he would never allow it; because he knew no harm would ensue.

"It is however granted that some of these

* See Bochart de animal Sacr. part ii, lib. 3 cap. 6.

men may believe in the power of their charms, and there can be no doubt that serpents in their wild state are affected by the influence of music. One of these men once went to a friend of mine with his serpents, and charmed them before him. After some time, the gentleman said, ‘I have a cobra-capella in a cage, can you charm him?’ ‘Oh yes,’ replied the charmer. The serpent was let out of the cage, and the man began his incantations and charms; the reptile fastened on his arm, and he was dead before night.

“The following is said to be a most potent charm for all poisonous serpents:—*Suttellam, pande, keere, soolavea, karudan-varan, orou, vattami, kiddantha, pamba, valliya, vuttakal, vaya*; which means, ‘O serpent, who art coiled in the path, get out of my way; for around thee are the mongoos, the porcupine; and the kite in his circles is ready to take thee.’ The mongoos is in shape and size much like the English weazel. The porcupine is also a great enemy to the serpent. The kite, before he pounces upon his prey, flies round in circles, and then drops like a stone; he seizes the reptile with his talons just behind the head, carries it up into the air, and bills it in the head till it expires.

“But there are also charmers for bears, tigers, elephants, and other fierce animals. A party having to go through forests or deserts, to a distant country, generally contrive to have some one among them possessed of that art. A servant of mine joined himself to a company who were going from Batticaloa to Colombo.

There was a magician, who walked in front, who had acquired great fame as a charmer of serpents and other wild animals. After a few days they saw a large elephant, and the charmer said 'fear not.' The animal continued to approach, and my servant thought it expedient to decamp and climb a tree. The others also began to retire; but the old man remained on the spot repeating his charms. At length the elephant took him in his proboscis, and laid him gently on the ground; then lopped off the charmer's head, arms, and legs, and crushed the lifeless body flat upon the earth.

"By the power of charms, the magicians pretend to have influence over ghosts, beasts, fire, wind, and water."*

Some commentators imagine that the word "dragon" in the first line of the last couplet refers to the gecko, a venomous lizard, most commonly found in Egypt; and this supposition appears the more likely from the repelling form of this creature, and the uncommon malignity of its venom. Moses, no doubt, became acquainted with it in Egypt, where it may be said to be common. An account of this singular but repulsive reptile cannot be out of place here.

"Of all the oviparous quadrupeds," says the Count de la Cépède, "this is the first which contains a deadly poison. Nature, in this instance, appears to act against herself. In a lizard, whose species is but too prolific, she exalts a corrosive liquor to such a degree as to carry

* Oriental Illustrations of Scripture, pp. 335—337.

corruption and dissolution among all animals into which this active humour may penetrate: one might say, she prepares in the gecko only death and annihilation. This deadly lizard, which deserves all our attention on account of its dangerous properties, has some resemblance to theameleon; its head, almost triangular, is large in comparison with its body; the eyes are very large; the tongue flat, covered with small scales, and the end is rounded. The teeth are sharp and so strong, that, according to Bontius, they are able to make impressions on the hardest substances—even on steel. The gecko is almost entirely covered with little warts, more or less rising; the under part of the thighs is furnished with a row of tubercles, raised and grooved; the feet are remarkable for oval scales, more or less hollowed in the middle, as large as the under surface of the toes themselves, and regularly disposed one over another, like the slates on the roof of a house. The tail of the gecko is commonly rather longer than the body, though sometimes not so long; it is round, thin, and covered with rings or circular bands, formed of several rows of very small scales. The colour of the gecko is a clear green, spotted with brilliant red. The name gecko imitates the cry of this animal, which is heard especially before rain. It is found in Egypt, India, Amboyna, and the Moluccas. It inhabits by choice the crevices of half rotten trees as well as humid places. It is sometimes met with in houses, where it occasions great alarm, and where every exertion is used to destroy it speedily. Bontius

writes that its bite is so venomous that, if the part bitten is not cut away or burned, death ensues in a few hours."

The following is the account of Bontius:—
 "This creature, which is not only found in Brazil, but also in the Isle of Java, belonging to the East Indies, and which, by our people, is called gecko, from its constant cry, is properly an Indian salamander. It is about a foot long; its skin is of a pale or sea-green colour, with red spots. The head is not unlike that of a tortoise, with a strait mouth. The eyes are very large, starting out of the head, with long and small eye-apples (eye-balls.) The tail is distinguished by several white rings. Its teeth are so sharp, as to make an impression even on steel. Each of its four legs has crooked claws, armed at the ends with nails. Its gait is very slow, but wherever it fastens it is not easily removed. It dwells commonly upon rotten trees, or among the ruins of old houses and churches. It oftentimes settles near the bedsteads, which makes the Moors sometimes pull down their huts. Its constant cry is gecko; but before it begins, it makes a kind of hissing noise. The sting* of this creature is so venomous that the wound proves mortal, unless it be immediately burnt with a hot iron or cut off. The blood is of a palish colour, resembling poison itself."

"The Javanese used to dip their arrows into the blood of this creature; and those who deal

* It has no sting—it bites.

in poison among them—an art much esteemed in Java by both sexes—hang it up, with a string tied to the tail, on the ceiling, by which means, it being exasperated to the highest pitch, sends forth a yellow liquor out of its mouth, which they gather in small pots set underneath, and afterwards coagulate into a body in the sun. This they continue for several months together, by giving daily food to the creature. It is unquestionably the strongest poison in the world. The urine of this animal is of so corrosive a quality, that it not only raises blisters wherever it touches the skin, but turns the flesh black and causes a gangrene. The inhabitants of the East Indies say that the best remedy against this poison is the curcumie root. Such a gecko had got within the body of the wall of the church in the Receif, which obliged us to have a great hole made in the said wall to dislodge it from thence.”*

After rain the gecko quits its retreat; its motion is not very quick; it catches ants and worms. The eggs of this reptile are oval, and commonly as large as a hazel-nut. The female covers them carefully with a slight shelter of earth, and the heat of the sun hatches them. The Jesuit mathematicians, sent into the East Indies by Louis the Fourteenth, have described a lizard in the kingdom of Siam, named tokaie, which is evidently the same as the gecko. That which they examined exceeded one foot

* See Churchill's *Voyages*, vol. ii. p. 12.

in length to the end of the tail. The name of tokaie, like that of gecko, is an imitation of sounds made by the creature.

Hasselquist writes thus concerning the gecko. "It is very common at Cairo, as well in the houses as without. The venom of this animal has a singularity, in that it issues from the balls of its toes. It seeks all places and things where salt has been employed; and where it has walked over them, this dangerous venom marks the track. In the month of July 1750, I saw two women and a girl at Cairo, who narrowly escaped death from having eaten cheese upon which this animal had shed its venom. I had another occasion at Cairo of being convinced of the sharpness of its venom, as it ran off the hand of a man who was endeavouring to catch it; his hand was instantly covered with red inflamed pustules, attended by a sensation like that which is caused by the stinging of a nettle. It croaks at night almost like a frog."

This reptile yields in malignity to few of the most deadly serpents. Foskall, the Danish naturalist, says of it, "The gecko is called in Egypt Abu Burs, Father of Leprosy, that is extremely leprous: at Aleppo simply Burs, Leprosy. It is frequent in the houses at Cairo; wanders about in summer weather; has much the same squeak as a weasel; is not much seen in winter, but hides itself in the roofs of houses and re-appears in the middle of March. If the tail be separated from the living animal, it will give signs of life and motion half an hour afterwards. They say this lizard hunts and lives on

poultry. Its name is said to be derived from its properties; for if it drops any of its spittle on salt intended for the table, it would produce a leprosy on any man who should partake of it; for this reason they carefully put away salt, or keep an onion by it, which the lizard cannot bear. Others think that its name is taken from the resemblance of its colour to that of a leper.”*

It is remarkable that notwithstanding the ample accounts furnished of this reptile, there is no evidence whether it has the fang teeth of venomous serpents, or whether being imbued with venom throughout, it poisons by contact,—by its exudations, its saliva, and not otherwise. Bontius speaks of its bite or *sting*. It has recently been ascertained that the *ornithorinchus paradoxus* of New Holland possesses a venom, emitted from the spurs with which nature has furnished it.

From hence I think it will appear no unreasonable conjecture that Moses had this venomous lizard in his mind when he used the term “dragon” in his prophetic song, to characterize the excessive depravity of his countrymen. I imagine the reader must have already perceived the extreme vigour of the expressions employed by the inspired poet in the passage last introduced from this divine ode. Every term has its own specific force of signification, which it imparts to the accumulated energy of the whole clause.

* See Fragments to Calmet’s Dictionary of the Bible.

For their vine is of the vine of Sodom,
And of the fields of Gomorrah.

This perhaps would have been better rendered—it would at least have given a higher poetical turn to the passage by making the correspondency between the clauses more complete—thus,—

For of the vine of Sodom is their vine,
Their grapes are of the fields of Gomorrah.

Not only does this arrangement of the hemistichs produce an elegant epanode, but it brings out the images with greater clearness and definitively confirms the parallelism. It gives further a much more distinct gradation of sense, which was, as I apprehend, the poet's express intention. He was desirous of throwing all the power of his muse into this emphatic passage, and he has certainly succeeded marvellously. In the first line he implies the general character of the *vine*; signifying the moral corruptions of the Hebrews, their extreme degeneracy and social degradation. 'You are corrupt' he says 'like the citizens of Sodom, who were overwhelmed in a storm of fire from heaven for their crying enormities. The extremity of their punishment may therefore suppose the severity of yours.' In the second hemistich allusion is made to the *deeds* of the Israelites, their "grapes" or their *fruits* are from the fields of Gomorrah, then a sterile and blasted region, which produced nothing but the most depraved vegetation. Their *stock* is like that of a *people* altogether stained with the vilest moral pollu-

tions, whom God had consequently visited with terrible chastisement ; their *conduct* is like the *produce* of barren and desolate regions which have been marked by the dreadful judgments of heaven.

A direct and individual importance is given to each parallel term of the distich, the “vine” and the “grapes” having a separate as well as a united relation, representing as it were cause and effect, the one distinguishing the agents, the other their acts. The “vine of Sodom” and “the fields of Gomorrah,” though reciprocal, are likewise distinct accessories in the picture, —the one referring to the *inhabitants*, the other to the *country*. So far the terms are in the highest degree figurative ; next follows a clearer development of the truth by the employment of a more simple metaphor.

Their grapes are gall.

To this point the expressions have been gradually advancing, and the whole of what follows to the termination of the climax, is exegetical of the first and second clauses, and brings out the complete representation of depravity, traced upon the imagination of the poet, with a variety of detail so perfect and consentaneous that the reader’s mind is filled with the magnificent and luminous distribution of the poetical accidents. Not only are their grapes “gall,” offensive to the taste, but the *entire clusters* are so—there is a *total* corruption. Their juice is like “the poison of dragons ;” of animals whose venom produces frightful erup-

tious over the whole body, and loathsome leprosy ; nay, more than this, it may be compared to the “venom of asps,” a description of serpent, the bite of which is invariably fatal, causing death under grievous torment. Thus the climax closes with the most appalling issue that can rise to the thoughts.

Their wine is the poison of dragons,
And the cruel venom of asps.

I need not stop to point out the gradational parallelism, it must be obvious to the most indifferent reader ; venom being the deadliest description of poison, and asps among the most fatal of serpents.

Is not this laid up in store with me,
And sealed up among my treasures ?

Here there is an abrupt change of person, a similar instance of which has been already noticed. From the twenty-ninth to the thirty-fourth verse, Moses speaks in his own person ; here the Lord is again introduced as speaking. This and the next verse of the ode contain the second reason of the subsequent punishment of the Jews ; a reason rising out of the decrees of God as the first rose out of their depravity, figuratively expressed in the thirty-second and thirty-third verses of this incomparable canticle.

“This,” says God, (by which we are to understand, as the learned Cocceius has well observed, not what precedes but what follows)—“this my vengeance, the time destined for the overthrow of a republic whose citizens are so depraved ;

this time, *is it not laid up in store with me?* Let not, therefore, these obstinate Jews think that my justice will suffer them to pass unpunished, and that because the sentence against their iniquity is deferred, therefore it never will be executed." The phrase "sealed up among my treasures," is an allusion to deeds which are signed and sealed, though not presently executed, but kept safely and secretly in a cabinet, (see Job xiv. 17,) and the meaning is, that the time of God's future vengeance, though fixed and determined in his own mind, is yet preserved with him as a profound secret, known only to himself.*

Herder's rendering is very elegant, and he has managed to keep clear of obscurity.

Have I not already my secret counsel,
Sealed and laid up in my treasures !

This would likewise imply God's determination to visit his rebellious people with his vengeance when the measure of their iniquity shall be full ; but I think our common version gives rather a greater amplification of meaning than Herder's—

Is not this laid up in store with me,
And sealed up among my treasures ?

"That is," says Bishop Kidder, "is not this vengeance with which I now threaten them, though they flatter themselves in their present impunity, reserved for them, and kept in store for them, against the time when their iniquities

* See Dodd's note.

shall be full and shall require it?" As if God had said—"is not my secret determination taken with reference to this rebellious people, though not immediately to be manifested, like a deed regularly signed, sealed, and properly prepared to be executed, laid up in a cabinet until the time when it shall be required for final execution."

It is curious to observe how extremely varied are the metaphors employed in this divine poem. They display extraordinary knowledge on the part of Moses; nature, art and science, being alike at his command, and made the sources of those illustrations suggested by his rich and exuberant fancy. The lines really present a sublime thought. 'Is not this my determination to visit with a terrible retribution the rebellious seed of Jacob, sealed up among the treasures of my unerring wisdom, which comprehend all things past, present, and to come; like a legislative document upon which the safety of a whole country depends, laid by until the time for its execution arrives.' What an idea does this suggest of the awful folly of provoking God's wrath, which is ever ready to fall at its appointed period; and though he forbear to strike for the moment, this is no proof of human security, especially where continued provocation has been given. The intimation of divine anger is wrapped up in this passage within the extremely narrow compass of a metaphor, and yet so clearly evolved, that the minuteness of the compass to which it is limited, only adds to its force when released, and cast at once

with its full weight of conviction upon the mind, as confined air when allowed to escape, makes a feebler or louder report according to its compression, or, in other words, according to the dimensions of the space which it previously occupied.

God's vengeance is not only "laid up in store," but "sealed among his treasures," as marked for use when occasion shall call for it. This implies that it is sure to be employed: there is only a question of time. It does not lie undistinguished among the treasures of the Almighty, but has the divine *seal* appended to it, showing that it is an instrument positively fitted and prepared for the moment when it shall be brought into action, by the measure of human delinquency being full. All these delicate shades of relation have a peculiar significancy and poetical grace, which could only have resulted from the most gifted mind.

To me belongeth vengeance, and recompense;
 Their foot shall slide in due time:
 For the day of their calamity is at hand,
 And the things that shall come upon them make haste.

In the first clause, the Deity is represented as proclaiming his two great attributes of justice and mercy, which may be said to form the sum of his perfections; all his other qualities being embraced within the mighty operation of these two. It is evident that none but a God, "to whom vengeance belongeth," could inflict such punishment for human delinquency as would be unerringly just and exemplary. It is equally

evident that none but that infallible God, who is the abstract and essence of love, could recompense without the possibility of doing wrong. In the passage just quoted, his loving mercy is coupled with his vindictive justice, to show that the one is never exercised without the presence of the other. Both exist in the same omnipotent will, and both are ever ready to be put into active force. Every exercise of a divine attribute has benefit for its end, and therefore, however severely the sterner may fall, it is always tempered by the milder; for the vengeance of God is not the vengeance of man, a ruthless desire of returning evil for evil, but a timely and salutary correction of error for the sake of educing good. Such vengeance only belongeth to the Deity. He vindicates his insulted majesty; he punishes the violations of his holy laws, because such violations tend to produce positive mischief, which his chastisements correct. These latter are inflicted without those emotions of pain or of pleasure peculiar to humanity; for he has no pleasure in punishing, but delighteth in mercy. His punishments have only good for their object; nay, it is impossible that anything but this should result from them, as it must, by a moral necessity, be the issue of a discipline imposed by an infallible will: the infliction, therefore, of God's justice is as much a general boon as the exercise of his mercy, the former in fact merges in the latter, since both conduce to the production of benefit.

Men exercise vengeance from mere personal motives to gratify a fierce and unruly passion;

God exercises it from precisely the same motive which actuates the operations of his love—the consummation of human welfare. With him vengeance is not a mutable passion but an immutable principle, and every principle of action by which a perfect and infallible Being is governed, must issue in universal good.

Their foot shall slide in due time.

We here find two very strong metaphors employed—"Their *foot* shall *slide*." This refers to the presumptuous confidence of the Israelites, who, when they shall once plant their feet, that is, literally, obtain permanent possession of the promised land, will consider themselves secure; nevertheless, says the voice of Jehovah, 'let them stand as firm as they may in their imagined security, "their foot shall slide" into the pit which they will heedlessly dig for themselves.' In this brief sentence the opposite notions of arrogant confidence, and of perilous insecurity, are finely suggested. The first idea presented by the foot is that of standing, and the action of standing implies firmness. The seed of Abraham once settled in their destined inheritance, the earthly Canaan, shall imagine themselves secure. The next idea of the foot *sliding* represents the vain folly of such presumptive security, and that however arrogantly a man may assure himself that he *stands*, he should, nevertheless, "take heed lest he fall." Thus the Deity signifies, through the mouth of his accredited minister,

that his degenerate people, in spite of their reliance upon their own stability, would lapse into mischief and its concurrent miseries, "in due time"—that is, so soon as he should see fit to bring about such an issue. I know not how a sadder or more vivid impression of the moral condition of the Israelites could well have been conveyed than by thus forcibly symbolizing their certain and near approximation to judgment. The intervention of a possibility in their behalf is not once suggested. The vengeance of Jehovah is not proclaimed in the passage we are considering, as a casualty, but as an awful certainty; not as an event that *may*, but that *will* actually take place. How prominently is the moral everywhere worked out in this sublime production of the Hebrew muse! Sin is invariably followed by punishment, righteousness by reward. Such are the fundamental principles of the divine dispensations. These momentous truths are not conveyed by the Jewish lawgiver in a grave and laboured homily, but communicated in a series of vivid and forcible illustrations, representing rather than demonstrating the result, and the more intense conviction arises from that which is thus exhibited than from that which is actually proved.

It frequently happens that the image of a truth conveyed to the mind through the feelings has a greater effect in awakening conviction than the dry logical process of demonstration; for we often believe implicitly what is not proved, and no less frequently do not feel con-

vinced of matters capable of being reduced almost to demonstrative certainty; and for this reason, because we may not fully comprehend the inductive perplexities by which the proof is reached, when we may be made readily sensible of the vivid and impressive power with which the truth is illustrated. Thus it will not uncommonly happen that representative proof, if I may so call it, will produce stronger conviction than demonstrative. Conviction may, I think, be more generally said to be attained through the senses adjunctively, than through the reason abstractedly, especially where the former are made the vehicles of communicating to the latter the facts upon which our conviction is based.

For the day of their calamity is at hand,
And the things that shall come upon them make haste.

The gradational parallelism in this couplet stands out too prominently to be overlooked by the most superficial reader. The sense in both clauses is much the same, but beautifully advanced in the second line, in which it is given with far greater amplitude of signification. The first clause simply states the fact,—

For the day of their calamity is at hand.

Here we have a general definite idea of approaching calamity.

And the things that shall come upon them make haste.

In this line the one general idea is broken into

many—"the things that shall come upon them"—many things declaratory of God's displeasure, and in their union constituting the calamity threatened, shall overtake them, and that speedily;—these "things" are already on their mission; they "make haste" to fulfil Jehovah's immutable decree, and to overtake the guilty. All this is fearfully impressive. It implies at once the earnestness of the divine determination, and the excess of his approaching judgments. The indefinite manner in which these are declared only heightens the presumption of their severity. The Israelites are warned not of the coming of a single calamity, but of a plurality of what are called accidents by the unphilosophical and unwise; yet which are all determined in the eternal decrees of him who, in the plenitude of his providential agency, directs all things to their issues. They are warned of national, not of individual bereavements. If there had existed cause for the apprehension of only one general calamity, there might not have been so much reason for the anticipation of evil in a careless and licentious people who were daily revolting from the worship of their Creator, and offering it to his creature; but when "things," *evil* things,—that is, retributory penalties—were threatened as in their immediate and certain progress of visitation, there was, one would imagine, much more than sufficient to arrest the most thoughtless in his career of recklessness and turn him "from the ways of Satan unto God."

The entire passage may be thus interpreted: 'To me belong the attributes both of judgment and of mercy, which I exercise according to the determinations of my immutable will, that can neither err nor produce evil; for this cannot issue from a perfect purpose, nor from an equally perfect agency. Although my degenerate people Israel imagine that they are standing firm, and continue to sin in their presumptuous security, they shall find, nevertheless, that they will slide and fall into those mischiefs which they have been so long provoking; for the time of their punishment is approaching, and the miseries about to overtake them are already on the wing. They shall shortly feel the full weight of my indignation, which they have so arrogantly dared to excite.'

This proclamation of God's purpose was eventually brought into active operation when the wretched descendants of the righteous patriarch fell a prey to the Chaldeans and Babylonians, which was followed by a course of events alternating from dark to bright, and from happy to sorrowful, until their nation was overwhelmed by the Roman power, and they became wanderers upon the face of the whole earth.

Although this was the ultimate issue of their aggravated enormities, the mercy of Jehovah was nevertheless often signally displayed in their favour, for recompense, as the inspired bard justly declares, belongeth to him as well as vengeance. He often interposed in their behalf, discomfited the pagan armies, as in the

instance of the Assyrian hosts led against them by Sennacherib, and destroyed, as is reasonably imagined, by that pestilential blast of the desert called the Simoom. The divine interference is exquisitely touched upon in the concluding verses of this sublime song.

CHAPTER XXII.

The prophetic ode continued.

“THE sixth and last part of this song,” says Dr. Hales, “rehearses the consolation of Israel, and the signal punishment of their foes. It begins with God’s expostulation with his people when reduced to their lowest state of desolation, referring them for relief, ironically, to the vain idols in which they had trusted, and to which they had sacrificed: and by an admirable contrast, describing his own self-existence as ‘living for evermore,’ and his sole and exclusive power ‘to kill’ and ‘to make alive,’ to ‘wound’ and to ‘heal.’ Hence the captivity is called the *wound* of Israel, which is to be *healed* at the restoration of Israel (Isaiah xxx. 26); while his power to ‘kill’ or destroy his adversaries, as a mighty warrior with ‘sword and arrows,’ or the miseries of war, forms the conclusion of it.”

For the Lord shall judge his people,
And repent himself for his servants,
When he seeth that their power is gone,
And there is none shut up, or left.

After the operation of divine justice shall have been completed, the attribute of mercy shall be displayed; for to God and to him alone belong

“vengeance and recompense.” This is a notable illustration of that consoling declaration of the Psalmist,—

Neither will he keep his anger for ever.*

When he has reduced his disobedient people to the lowest abasement and to the most humiliating state of suffering; when he has given them over to the enemy, who shall reduce them to a hard bondage,—a bondage far worse than that of Egypt, from which he had so mercifully delivered them—he will restrain the severity of his wrath, and commence towards them a more benignant exercise of his beneficent providence. He will cast back upon their enemies the miseries which they shall have heaped upon his people, and again visit the latter with his superabounding mercies. And how completely has the first been accomplished! Where are now the Chaldeans, the Assyrians, the men of Nineveh? Where are Babylon the mighty, and Rome the magnificent?—the one an almost untraceable ruin, where the lion and tiger skulk to their solitary and stern repose; the other an insignificant principality, where superstition maintains her supremacy among a degenerate race of citizens, who bow to the empty shadow of power, and do homage to a fictitious representative of our blessed Redeemer. The full accomplishment of the latter part of this prophetic announcement is still to be looked for, when the solemn declaration of prophecy shall be fulfilled: “There shall

* Psalm ciii. 9.

be one fold under one shepherd, Jesus Christ the righteous"—when, in the magnificent language of the poetic Habakkuk, (chap. ii. 14),

The earth shall be filled with the knowledge
Of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

So extensive was the prophetic perception of Moses, that he was enabled at one view to look through the whole extent of the Jewish history from the origin of that polity to its termination; and not only so, but his prescient eye reached to those remote times, the issues of which are yet to be accomplished, but at which he glanced with a fervour of spirit that excited a sublimity of eloquence befitting so glorious a theme of exultation, as the restoration of God's outcast people, and the final establishment of Christ's kingdom upon earth.

In the pair of distichs commencing the last division of this sublime song, there will be traced two very favourable examples of parallelism strictly cognate:—

The Lord shall *judge* his *people*,
And *repent* himself for his *servants*.

He will relax from the severity of his justice towards those whom he had exalted to the distinction of being his people, and extend his mercy towards them, although they had forfeited the high privileges he had originally conferred upon them, and been reduced from the condition of children under the care of an indulgent but unerring father, to that of servants under a severe yet just master. Having re-

nounced their evil ways, and returned to his worship and service, he determines to spare them from the further severities of his wrath and restore them to his favour. I confess there appears to me an evident reference in this passage to the period of Jewish conversion when “the one fold under one shepherd,” spoken of by the apostle, will extend through all countries and embrace all people. In the distich just quoted, the corresponding terms of the parallelism are rather kindred than gradational; they scarcely advance in force, and though they vary somewhat in meaning, they represent the same dispensation of divine mercy; this couplet, therefore, presents a legitimate cognate parallelism.

When he seeth that their power is gone,
And there is none shut up or left;

that is, when he seeth their constitution is utterly destroyed, and they have no longer a territory—that they have neither fortresses nor fortified cities whither they can repair for security against an unsparing enemy, and within the walls of which they might still contend for that political eminence which they had so long enjoyed under the patriarchs, their lawgiver, their kings, their judges, and subordinate rulers;—that neither have they remaining any armies by which they might dispute in the open field that right of inheritance promised to Abraham, and afterwards ratified to them under the immediate successors of Moses.

When he seeth that their *power* is *gone*,
And there is none *shut up* or *left*.

The corresponding phrases in this couplet, like those of the last, are equivalent or kindred merely. The ideas have much the same force in both hemistichs, though differently clothed in each, and become strengthened by the varied hues of thought which are cast over them. Besides the parallelisms in this passage, an elegant hyperbaton may be traced, by transposing the second and third clauses, *e. g.*

The Lord shall judge his people
When he seeth that their power is gone,
And repent himself for his servants,
(When he seeth) there is none shut up or left.

According to the collocation of the several members of this passage by the inspired bard, the two dominant ideas of God's mercy and of Israel's destitution are kept perfectly distinct; a mode of arrangement exactly consistent with the dignity of the august dispenser of mercy, and with the moral humiliation of those who dared to rise up in audacious hostility against that almighty deliverer, who had rescued them from the tyranny of Pharaoh, and eventually brought them triumphantly into the promised possession. Moses therefore has imparted great elevation to the quatrain by so disposing its members as to maintain the parallelisms; thus drawing a marked line of division betwixt the two contrasted subjects in each couplet; namely, the merciful agency of Jehovah, and the utter desolation of those upon whom it is here solemnly

declared by the poet that he will eventually exercise it. Although the passage is extremely elegant, when so disposed as to bring out the natural succession of the sense, as I have shown by the arrangement of the clauses last made, that arrangement, nevertheless, is far inferior in impressiveness and vivid effect to the artificial distribution adopted by Moses.

And he shall say, where are their gods,
 Their rock in whom they trusted,
 Which did eat the fat of their sacrifices,
 And drank the wine of their drink-offerings?
 Let them rise up and help you,
 And be your protection.

Moses now represents the Almighty as rebuking in a tone of bitter irony, as a salutary reflection upon their folly, the criminality of the Israelites in having withdrawn themselves from his service, and offered their worship to the idols of Canaan, which, as they had learned by sad experience, were unable to serve them in their troubles, or protect them from the miseries by which they were surrounded. All this manifestly refers to the future condition of the Jews. 'Where,' he asks, 'are those pretended deities whom they choose to endow with my attributes, and to whom they offer their sacrifices of beasts and oblations of wine? Let those unsightly images of wood and stone, "that have mouths but speak not," to which they have bowed in idolatrous homage, descend from their pedestals to the assistance of you, my once favoured people, and afford you that protection, which you have by this time learned that I alone am able to bestow.'

The irony in these lines, though extremely bitter, is, nevertheless, introduced with great propriety at the moment, when the balance of divine justice is about to decline from its steady libration of fixed retribution, and lean to the scale of mercy.

The reproof which it conveys is not only exceedingly pertinent but admirably calculated to leave a lively impression, pointing, as it did, to the manifest impotency of those fabricated divinities worshipped among the Israelites in solemn mockery of the true God, by bidding the idolatrous descendants of Abraham call upon their idols for protection and succour in their wretched state of moral declension and of social misery; thus making them feel the utter incompetency of those dumb images to bestow it.

There is something very affecting in the picture of complete destitution here presented. The remnant of the seed of Jacob are reduced to so pitiful a condition as to be unable to raise an army for their defence; without even a city to take refuge in against the exterminating hostility of their numerous and implacable foes. In such a state of deplorable desuetude, they are called upon with a taunt of severe reproach by that merciful protector whom they had so long outraged by disobedience and apostacy to apply to the gods of the heathen, which had sufficiently shown that as they could not hear so neither could they help their worshippers. A people so circumstanced, with no other hope of heavenly benefaction than that to be expected from insensible idols, were indeed in a condition of

spiritual bereavement, such as can scarcely be imagined ; with no trust for mercy, for consolation, for benefit, but in deities of wood and stone, or in those still more abominable idols, their lusts and evil passions. A state of complete destitution could not be more vividly pictured than is here conveyed by inference to the reader's mind. It is evident that had not God opened the arms of his mercy to receive the wretched posterity of Jacob there remained for them no prospect but that of speedy extermination — there could have been no hope for them henceforth and for ever. He did not desire that they should be “swept with the besom of destruction” from the land of the living, but interposed in their behalf, notwithstanding their many and crying enormities ; and they even now exist as a great national monument of his mercy, to be gathered at some future time into the fold of the heavenly shepherd.

The figure anthropopathy, in which human qualities are applied to the Deity, is here again employed with most happy effect. The taunt which the poet represents the Almighty as casting at the miserable remnant of Abraham's seed, does not at all convey the idea of that malicious mockery which accompanies successful revenge, but that of a chastening providence ; showing by a well-timed reproach the folly of trusting to those things which God abhors, but which man is notwithstanding so disposed to worship. The ironical form in which the reproach is conveyed, renders it indeed the more pointed though not the more cruel : and its object being

mild, rather than severe reproof; it was, in truth, a kind,—by no means a harsh punishment. This mode of censure was, above all other methods, likely to direct the thoughts of the hearers to the absolute fatuity of a community highly civilized and intelligent, which had once known the true God, and had been signalized by such exclusive marks of favour as to be exalted to the dignity of being especially his people, revolting from his worship to offer it to senseless matter, and giving full licence to the solicitations of their own depraved appetites. The taunt employed by Jehovah to remind them of their apostacy brings into much stronger relief the extreme folly of this unworthy people.

The reader will always bear in mind that this is a representation of what was to be in the future time, not what had actually taken place.

In the six hemistichs last quoted a clear and, as I think, beautiful epanode may be traced, and this without any recourse to artifice—without the transposition of a single member, or resorting to the aid of inversion, the mode by which this figure is almost invariably produced.

And he shall say, where are their gods,
 Their rock in whom they trusted,
 Which did eat the fat of their sacrifices,
 And drank the wine of their drink-offerings?
 Let them rise up and help you,
 And be your protection.

The above arrangement of the clauses will sufficiently develope the epanode. The two first refer to the heathen gods, the impotence of which, though not positively expressed, is

implied; being comprehended in the reference made to gods which had not been able to deliver those who trusted in them from the miseries to which they had been so grievously subjected. The two concluding hemistichs confirm the inference suggested in the two first; and thus the same idea intimated in the first and fully evolved in the last pair of lines, is left upon the mind in its complete development at the conclusion. Meanwhile the subordinate parts of the representation, the detail of idolatrous worship and specific acts of homage to those impotent divinities are comprised in the two central clauses. Nothing can be more skilful and effective than this arrangement, especially as the object of the poet manifestly was to convey the strongest possible impression of the heinousness of the Israelites' revolt from the God of their fathers—the beneficent and almighty Jehovah,—whom they had such weighty reasons for serving faithfully. I need not add another word to show the vast but exquisite skill of the Jewish lawgiver in disposing of the strong points of his sublime composition to the best advantage.

See now that I, even I, am he,
And there is no god with me :
I kill, and I make alive ;
I wound, and I heal :
Neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand.
For I lift up my hand to heaven,
And say, I live for ever.

The Deity is represented in these lines as proclaiming his power in terms of prodigious

sublimity. We seem to hear the voice of the eternal One, and the impression is proportionably solemn.

See now that I, even I, am he.

The repetition in this hemistich has exceeding force ; as if the Lord Jehovah had said, ‘observe now that I, not the false deities to whom the idolatrous heathen render homage, but the incomprehensible, incommunicable I AM, the one God, almighty, infinite, eternal ; I alone am he who is entitled to and can repay your fealty ; for

There is no god with me :

I am inaccessible in my supreme and abstract character of the sole, all perfect Godhead, though accessible in my attributes to every living soul who seeks me earnestly. I am he that dwelleth alone in that august might and majesty “which no man can aspire unto;” to whom only belong universal power and unlimited supremacy.’

From Bishop Patrick’s note on the text it will be observed that a more extended and very important interpretation has been given to it. “The words in the Hebrew,” says that able commentator, “being I, I am he, the author of the Old Nitzacon was sensible that we christians might hence observe that there are two who are here called God, the Father and the Son ; and therefore takes care to inform his readers, that there are not two first principles of things ; which, as no christian is so foolish as to affirm, so their

own authors have acknowledged more persons than one, here called God. Thus Jonathan, in his paraphrase, plainly supposes another person in the Divinity, whom he calls the Word, when he thus explains this verse. ‘When the Word of the Lord shall reveal himself to redeem his people, he shall say to all people, I am He that have been, and am, and shall be,* and by my word kill and make alive. I have smote the people of Israel, and I will heal them in the end of the days.’ Which makes these words a plain prophecy of the Messiah, and him to be God. And so the Jerusalem Targum: ‘See that I now am he in my Word, and there is no god besides me! I am he who kill the living in this world, and raise the dead in the world to come.’”

Into the merits of this interpretation I do not enter, but it cannot be denied that the whole passage is sublimely declarative of God’s mercy and justice. Upon this latter attribute let us hear George Herbert, a poet born in the latter end of Queen Elizabeth’s reign.

JUSTICE.

Oh dreadful justice! what a fright and terror
 Wast thou of old,
 When sin and error
 Did show and shape thy looks to me,
 And through their glass discolour thee!
 He that did but look up, was proud and bold.

The dishes of thy balance seemed to gape
 Like two great pits;
 The beam and scape
 Did like some torturing engine show:
 Thy hand above did burn and glow,
 Daunting the stoutest hearts, the proudest wits.

* See Rev. i. 8.

But now that Christ's pure veil presents the sight

I see no fears :

Thy hand is white,

Thy scales like buckets, which attend

And interchangeably descend,

Lifting to heaven from this well of tears.

For where before that thou didst call on me,

Now still I touch

And harp on thee.

God's promises have made thee mine :

Why should I justice now decline ?

Against me there is none, but for me much.

The presence of divine justice, and the certainty that it neither slumbers nor sleeps, is emphatically declared in the second distich of the passage last quoted from the prophetic ode of Moses.

I kill, and I make alive ;

I wound, and I heal.

Here the literal and metaphorical expressions unite to form an extremely beautiful anticlimax. Death and salvation, chastening and restoration, either from mental or bodily anguish, are alike the issues of God's immutable determination. Not only is he able to destroy and to save, to inflict punishment and dispense blessings, but when the terrible visitations of his providence are in actual course of operation, it is sufficiently obvious to human experience that—

Neither is there any that can deliver out of his hand.

All these manifestations of admitted supremacy are placed in effective contrast with the miserable and utter impotency of those monstrous deformities worshipped by the gentile nations. The opposition between complete plenitude and

absolute nullity of power—in short, between the God of Abraham and the God of the gentiles,—while it brings out in a more impressive shape the utter inanity of the one, exhibits more forcibly by extreme contrast the fulness of perfection—the incalculable infinitude of the other. It will be evident that the poet did not represent God as declaring his omnipotence in order merely to convince the Israelites of a fact of which they were ignorant, for they had received too many stupendous proofs of it from the days of Abraham to those of Moses inclusive; and had they doubted the simple declaration of that lawgiver, though made under the influence of inspiration, would not, it is likely, have brought them out of their delusion: but his object clearly was to recal to their minds that of which indeed they were sufficiently assured, but which, notwithstanding, had failed to dispose them to the practice of holy living; namely, that the God who had delivered them from Egyptian slavery, could alone release them from those miseries in which their future delinquencies should involve them, and restore them to the privileges which they would in consequence forfeit. Doubtless, the intention likewise was, to assure his alienated people of final deliverance from the melancholy consequences of their future various crimes upon their earnest repentance, and to point to those ultimate hopes which all classes and conditions of men are encouraged to entertain—that beyond the boundaries of time there is a reward for the righteous which the “graven images” of the idolater are

unable to communicate, but which He alone can bestow who fills heaven and earth.

In the two hemistichs last quoted there is an evident parallelism of construction :—

I kill, and I make alive ;
I wound, and I heal.

In each of these lines the emphatic words are placed in precisely the same position, there being an exact correspondency and equality between the propositions. There is, moreover, a delicate flow of harmony, which cannot fail to make itself perceptible to a well-tuned ear.

It will be at once seen, with reference to the descriptive effect of this and the preceding distich, that the terms employed to characterize the divine attributes, are singularly appropriate and emphatical. I may add to what I have already observed on this part of the subject, that the employment of the two personal pronouns, and the latter indefinitely, I am HE, is singularly significative. ‘I am that only Being which has no equal, who is alone indescribable and incomprehensible.’ The reference is to something which has no similitude ; to an almighty agent, like to nothing but itself ;—I am HE,—the only immutable Being, always existing, always acting, known only to himself, because alone omniscient ; infinite in all his attributes, and therefore not to be fully apprehended by anything inferior to himself, no language being equal to inspire any adequate conception of Him ; an essence the most subtile, refined and intelligent, pervading all things, and to which

all things are subject, still perfectly abstract and inaccessible. I am HE—the illimitable, the incomprehensible, ever the same, “with whom is no variableness, nor shadow of turning;” “one God, world without end.” Past and future with Him combine, as it were, but one everlasting present, for where there are no divisions of duration, there can be neither past nor future. These are only relative terms in time. Everything is eternally passing in the omniscient mind. It is everlastingly *present* to it. “He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.” With Him the “yesterday” has not past! With Him the “for ever” is not to come. He pervades eternity, past as well as present; future as well as past; space as well as infinite duration. He is, in fine, “the almighty, everlasting God.”

I think it cannot fail to be perceived that there is great sublimity in this employment of the personal pronoun without any specification of its relative subject, but with a grand though indefinite application, upon which the imagination instantly fixes with that awe and fulness of apprehension which so vast an object is calculated to inspire. Then follows the positive assertion of undivided supremacy:—

And there is no god with me.

‘I am single and alone in my indivisible but hypostatical unity;—the divinities worshipped by idolatrous nations are not associated with me; they are nothing—I am all things.’ The ineffable Godhead does not condescend to dis-

parage the gods of the heathen, that would be far beneath his infinite dignity, but he proves their impotency by his own supremacy, of whom they are the very opposite:—‘They are weak—I am mighty,—

I kill, and I make alive;
I wound, and I heal.’

There was no occasion to offer any other evidence of omnipotence, for the power of giving life and of taking it away is the greatest imaginable proof of its belonging to that almighty Agent, who alone can do both; since life is the greatest boon of heaven to man, and its extinction the fullest evidence of that power which communicated it. The two extreme evidences of divine agency here stated, are the capability of bestowing and of extinguishing life, both qualities essential to God and peculiar to him alone. Next comes the exhibition of his bland dispensation of mercy, displayed in chastening and consoling, in bruising and in healing. If he wounds, he heals; and as he cannot do the one, so neither can he do the other, without having good for his object. This, in fact, is the invariable issue of either and of both: for if we provoke his chastisements, they fall upon us in consequence of our own delinquencies; but even while the wound is being inflicted, the remedy is prepared to heal it, which we have only to apply and the cure is certain. All the terms referred to in the two hemistichs last quoted are singularly expressive of mighty and august attributes:—

Neither is there any that can deliver out of his hand,

either for good or for ill. This is the sufficient consolation of the righteous, the never-failing terror of the wicked. There is no rescue from the judicial determinations of Providence; there is no abduction from the vigilance of divine love or from the tenderness of divine compassion. There is no evading the justice, nor superseding the mercy of God. "He is about our path, and about our bed, and spieth out all our ways." How beautifully does the Psalmist express the ubiquity of the Godhead!

Whither shall I go from thy spirit?
Or, whither shall I flee from thy presence?
If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there:
If I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.
If I take the wings of the morning,
And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;
Even there shall thy hand lead me,
And thy right hand shall hold me.
If I say, surely the darkness shall cover me;
Even the night shall be light about me.
Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee;
But the night shineth as the day:
The darkness and the light are both alike to thee.*

The two clauses forming the fortieth verse of the poem under examination, are more than usually solemn. There is a ponderous power of effect in them which absolutely fills the mind with awe.

For I lift up my hand to heaven,
And say, I live for ever.

The action expressed in the first line alludes

* Psalm cxxxix. 7—13.

to the usual manner of taking oaths among the Jews, which was by lifting the hand to heaven, as may be proved from the fourteenth chapter of Genesis. “ I have lift up mine hand unto the Lord, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take from a thread even to a shoe-latchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich: save only that which the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men which went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their portion.”

The poet represents that august master whom he served as confirming by oath, or at least by an action in which an oath is implied, the attestation of his omnipotence. The form of adjuration is the most solemn imaginable, and though no such assurance on the part of a Being at once infinite and unerring, was needed to convince even the faithless Israelites of that power which had already guided them through the Red Sea and the less perilous waters of Jordan; still the mere representation of the Deity as engaged in so solemn a deed, tends greatly to strengthen the impression of all which had preceded it. The figure before spoken of, in which human passions are ascribed to divine agencies, is here again employed with impressive effect. God is exhibited as performing the most solemn act of man—as confirming by an oath his everlasting supremacy—as swearing by himself that he is infinite and eternal.

This whole passage, like that which precedes it, forms a fine epanode.

See now that I, even I, am he,
 And there is no god with me :
 I kill, and I make alive ;
 I wound, and I heal :
 Neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand.
 For I lift up my hand to heaven,
 And say, I live for ever.

It will be seen at a single glance that the first and last pair of hemistichs contain propositions which have a direct and mutual relation. They each alike refer to the divine supremacy. In the first distich, this is declared simply; in the last, it is ratified by an oath: while the specifications of the qualities of his two great attributes, justice and mercy, to which is added the third attribute of power, are confined between them. In the opening clauses the idea of omnipotence is broadly developed, and in the concluding ones it is confirmed in the strongest manner.

I cannot persuade myself to concur with Bishop Patrick, followed though he is by the respectable and pious editors of D'Oyly and Mant's Bible, that the words—

For I lift up my hand to heaven,
 And say, I live for ever,

refer to the succeeding clauses. I consider the sense as complete, and to terminate with the epanode, declarative of God's eternity and self-existence. I see no reason why it should be extended to the next verse, for to me there

is something much more sublime in that solemn adjuration confirmatory of the divinity of Jehovah, than in his swearing by heaven that he will take vengeance upon his enemies. The latter is an image altogether repulsive to the notion which we naturally entertain of Deity; it conveys the idea of revenge in its worst sense, as a fierce irruption of passion, which is a human imperfection; not as forming a part of God's corrective discipline, with which passion can neither be combined nor associated. God's awful declaration in the subsequent clause, that he "will whet his sword," at once presents to our imaginations a picture of the divine Justiciary, acting in his august capacity of almighty arbiter and dispenser of punishment for human delinquency; but swearing by heaven, thus using a most solemn and vehement oath, that he will "whet his sword," at once banishes the sacred impression, and brings the supreme Majesty on High before our contemplations under the unbecoming and revolting image of a human avenger, who delights not in mercy but in sacrifice. The gifted bard has acted with a wiser discretion and with a purer taste in not derogating from the dignity of the Godhead, while he applies to him with exquisite aptitude of illustration, under the most expressive metaphors, the habitudes, actions, and feelings of men. All these, however, are but symbols of those attributes of Jehovah brought into operation, in his dealings with his apostate people; they are merely significative of those acts of his ineffable providence which could not

be depicted by the literal forms of speech, and therefore such metaphorical aids were had recourse to in order to render more vivid the impressions of eternal justice and mercy, as they always exist in the sublimest combination with Him "whose wisdom ruleth over all."

If I whet my glittering sword,
And mine hand take hold on judgment ;
I will rend vengeance to mine enemies,
And will reward them that hate me.
I will make mine arrows drunk with blood,
And my sword shall devour flesh ;
And that with the blood of the slain and of the captives,
From the beginning of revenges upon the enemy.

Now are uttered the awful denunciations of almighty wrath upon those enemies by whom the Israelites had been afflicted, and by whom likewise their God had been defied. Retribution shall overtake them : they are sons of Belial, and deserve no further forbearance. The terms used in these two verses, being the forty-first and forty-second of the ode, are of tremendous import : they are the strongest which the subject could suggest or language furnish, admirably characterizing the stupendous severity of divine chastisements, where these have been long and wantonly provoked. Moses exhibits the omnipotent governor of the universe declaring that should he be challenged to prepare himself for the infliction of condign punishment upon the impious and refractory heathen—if he once commence the application of his retributory penalties, nothing shall stay his arm, but he will direct them to their most fatal con-

summation. The full measure of his vengeance that is, of his judicial dispensations, shall be dealt out to them. He will requite them according to the heinousness of their offences, which have placed them beyond the extreme limitations of his forgiveness. He will make so terrible a slaughter among them, that not even the captives shall be spared. The arrows of his warriors shall be steeped in blood, and their swords sated with carnage. All this shall come upon the enemies of Israel and of Jehovah from the moment that the omnipotent arbiter of wrong shall commence the exercise of his "revenges." What could have been a more gratifying assurance to the Israelites than this, after the prophetic announcement of such grievous miseries as were to accrue to their own race; nevertheless, neither the menace of punishment to themselves, nor of retribution upon their foes, had the effect of inducing them to propitiate that clemency which was ever ready to be accorded, rather than provoke the chastisements which followed. I know not if a passage of more stupendous sublimity could be selected from the rich and varied mass of Hebrew poetry than that comprised in the two verses last quoted. They are terribly magnificent, and awfully impressive, filling the imagination with the most gigantic conceptions of God's illimitable power and august majesty.

In the first hemistich the preparatory action of vengeance is finely brought out. The line is extremely grand:—

If I whet my glittering sword.

Nothing can exceed this in prodigious strength, and let me say vital force of illustration. The action of whetting the sword not only shows that it was drawn for use, and that it was about to be employed with extraordinary activity. It indicates in the strongest manner the extent and severity of that execution which should eventually fall upon the enemies of God and of Israel; it is a silent but awful intimation of desolation and of death.

And mine hand take hold on judgment.

Here is an advance from the preparatory action to the actual infliction. The image of the 'hand taking hold on judgment' is obviously significative of God dealing out his punishments. He holds in his hand the rod that scourges his enemies and the sword that slays them, exercising this with unerring fatality should he determine to pour upon those who have provoked it the full measure of his anger.

In the couplet which immediately follows this awful picture of the divine determination, the metaphors are dropped and literal terms employed; God declares his intention without disguise, should provocation compel him to use the "glittering sword," whetted for vengeance. These literal expressions contrast very beautifully with the figurative ones in the preceding clauses, bringing out the literal allusions couched under them with vigorous and terrifying distinctness. 'I will then do all,' he seems to say, 'that the preparatory action of whetting my sword implies; I will execute a full and terrible

retribution on my enemies; I will requite to the extreme measure of their deserving them that hate me, and have evinced their hatred by worshipping other gods beside me, and seducing my people to mock me with their idolatries and to commit those abominations consequential to such a debasing worship. So prodigious shall be the slaughter of that iniquitous people, if I am provoked to use the prepared instrument of justice, that the expression of it in simple terms will convey no adequate conception of its tremendous extent and unsparing severity.'

I will make mine arrows drunk with blood.

Now the poet passes again from the literal to the figurative, greatly heightening the vividness of his descriptions by these effective transitions. The variety of his style and of his verbal adaptations appears almost endless. In the first line of the second quatrain the figure is of uncommon force. The Deity there intimates that his arrows shall be steeped in the gore of so many victims that they shall be absolutely drunk or saturated with it. "Drunk" in this clause implies the immense quantity of blood that shall be shed, and a stronger or more powerfully illustrative metaphor could not have been selected from the copious vocabularies of language.

And my sword shall devour flesh.

Here we have the correlative term "devour," a metaphor equally forcible with the preceding. They both imply excess. As if the almighty

speaker had said—‘ My sword shall destroy flesh with such eagerness and despatch, that it shall actually appear to devour it: It shall operate with all the terrible violence and rapacity of a beast of prey, which slaughters and destroys with equal celerity.’ The concluding line of the second quatrain—

From the beginning of revenges upon the enemy,

has been variously rendered. As it now stands in our Bible, the sense is not certainly readily obvious, and the reading is rejected by a large majority of commentators. I take it simply to signify that ‘ from the moment I begin to execute punishment upon the enemy, I will proceed to its consummation in the manner I have threatened.’ The interpretation suggested by Parkhurst is I think generally embraced. He reads, and it is no doubt a good meaning,—

From the hairy head of the enemy ;

to which there is a passage in the sixty-eighth Psalm* perfectly parallel:—

But God shall wound the head of his enemies,
And the hairy scalp of such an one as goeth on still in his
trespasses.

In each of the two quatrains forming the forty-first and forty-second verses of the ode, there will be observed a similar hyperbaton, as in the twenty-fifth verse already noted,† which

* Verse 21.

† Vol. ii. page 304.

will be immediately perceived by transposing the lines in the consecutive order required by the sense :—

If I whet my glittering sword,
I will render vengeance to mine enemies ;
If mine hand take hold on judgment,
I will reward them that hate me.

The hyperbaton in this quatrain has not, so far as I know, been noticed by commentators, and it certainly is not quite so obvious as in the succeeding passage, as we shall presently see, still I think it clearly exists. The whetting of the glittering sword is naturally followed by vengeance upon the enemy; the exercise of judgment is the requital to those enemies for their hatred. The second and fourth lines, according to the above arrangement, have an immediate and direct reference to the first and third respectively. The sense, moreover, is more clearly evolved by this distribution of the members than in the order in which they stand in the poem; nevertheless, the order there observed is certainly more poetical and more effective, nor can the sense be mistaken, at the same time that the energy is greater. There is a parallelism in the lines, which have a manifest correspondency. “If I whet,” and “if my hand,” &c.; here the *contingent* action, that is, the action depending upon the turn of events, is alike expressed in both these hemistichs; but in the next two clauses, “I will render,” “I will reward,” &c., the action expressed is *positive*; so that the relation of the several lines is

thus more strongly and strikingly marked. Two classes of actions, therefore, the contingent and the positive, are represented in the clauses, and these are so disposed that those containing the corresponding propositions immediately follow each other, thus forming two parallel couplets, which is not only a more graceful but likewise a more impressive arrangement. I have no doubt that the hyperbaton was intended in this passage, as well as in the following, where it cannot be disputed, as will be at once obvious by transposing the second and third hemistichs as in the preceding example:—

I will make mine arrows drunk with blood,
And that with the blood of the slain and of the captives ;
And my sword shall devour flesh
From the hairy scalp of the enemy.

I have adopted Parkhurst's reading of the last line in this place, in order to put the sense of the passage more clearly before the reader's eye. I need offer no argument to show that this is the proper distribution of the clauses to render them concurrent with the sense. The mode of arrangement, however, adopted by the poet, may be defended upon reasonable grounds. By the judicious use of the figure above named he brings the strongest images of the two couplets, and the weaker ones respectively into immediate apposition, thereby imparting greater prominency to both. When they are separated, the force of their united impression is decidedly weakened. Those instruments of stern justice, the "arrows" and the "sword," are placed together, and then the objects upon

which they are to operate. Thus are the two ideas kept distinct, and thereby rendered the more active upon the imagination. The distribution of the corresponding members in these two quatrains evinces consummate dexterity of arrangement.

Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people :
 For he will avenge the blood of his servants,
 And will render vengeance to his adversaries,
 And will be merciful unto his land, and to his people.

The conclusion of the poem is an eloquent burst of exultation, calling both on Jews and gentiles, at their blending together, after so long a segregation, "one fold under one shepherd," to rejoice at God's dealings with both:—

Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people ;

that is, ' Rejoice, O ye gentiles, together with his peculiar people; ye shall ultimately be each objects of his merciful dispensations, for both shall become one church under the great Bishop of souls, Jesus Christ, the righteous.

He will avenge the blood of his servants ;

that is, as Venema and others understand it, the blood of his holy apostles.

And will render vengeance to his adversaries ;

"to all such," says Bishop Patrick, "as oppose the blessed union of Jews and gentiles in one church and faith; and first to the Jews, who set themselves against it, more than any others (being mad with the apostles for preaching to

the gentiles), and then to the Romans, who persecuted all those who embraced christianity."

And will be merciful unto his land, and to his people,

by means of that expiatory sacrifice which will purge the land from its defilements and reconcile the everlasting Father to his offending children, who shall be finally one people with the gentiles. As in this clause "his land" signifies the whole world, so "his people" must likewise signify its entire population. The poem consequently terminates with a beautiful allusion to that eventual consummation of prophecy, when the Redeemer's kingdom shall be universally established upon earth, when men of every kindred and tongue and nation and clime shall unite in the same form of adoration to God, through Christ; and, after the pains of this life ended, rise to that life of immortal fruition where "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away,"—

Where the prisoners rest together;
And hear not the voice of the oppressor.*

There is a decided epanode in the concluding verse of the ode. The first line expresses the exultation of the Jews and gentiles, the two middle lines referring to that retribution and vengeance which shall eventually overtake the persecutors of his servants, and the despisers of his worship. The distinction between avenging

* Job iii. 18.

and taking vengeance is exquisitely discriminated in the second and third clauses:—

For he will *avenge* the blood of his servants,
And will *render vengeance* to his adversaries.

He will visit with a just retribution the murderers of his holy apostles and zealous ministers, the christian martyrs; but the whole weight of his almighty wrath shall fall upon those who obstruct the conversion of souls to him,—who dare to oppose the progress of the christian dispensation.

Theodoret's observations upon this verse are much to the purpose. "The gentiles and the Jews, the people of God, might well rejoice together; for there were, even amongst the Jews, many myriads who believed in Christ the Lord, as well as by far the greater part of the gentile world. But the heathens were indebted to the Jewish believers for their knowledge, and received the principles and precepts of the christian institution solely from them; for the holy apostles were Jews. The prophet, therefore, enjoying a clear view of this great period, exults—

Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people;

that is, with the believing Jews."

Herder's version from the thirty-sixth verse to the end differs much from the generally received interpretation; though I do not embrace it, I give it, because he is not without authorities for the exposition he adopts.

Jehovah is now the judge of his people ;
 It repents him that they are his children ;
 He seeth that their power is departed,
 That nothing is left to them more.
 He asks them where are now their gods,
 The guardian god in whom they trusted ?
 Which did eat the fat of their sacrifices ;
 And drank the wine of their drink-offerings ?
 Let them now rise up and help you ;
 Let them now be your protection.
 See now that I, even I, am he,
 And there are no gods with me.
 I am he that killeth and maketh alive,
 I am he that woundeth and healeth,
 And none can deliver out of mine hand.

For I lift my hand to heaven,
 And say, I am the living one,
 From eternity to eternity.
 If I whet my glittering sword,
 And my hand take hold on judgment,
 I will render vengeance to mine enemies,
 And will reward them that hate me ;
 I will make mine arrows drunk with blood,
 My sword shall satiate itself with flesh,
 The blood of the slain and of the captives,
 With the head of the chief of my enemy.
 Rejoice, ye gentiles, now his people,
 He will avenge the blood of his servants,
 And render vengeance to his enemies,
 And purify his land and people.

Upon the first verse of this portion of the poem, Herder says: " Those translations which take these lines in a favourable sense, have the context plainly against them. The curse proceeds and continues to the end of the poem. The blessing first begins in the next chapter. It is indeed a fearful consideration, that God must thus forget the father in the judge, and yet feel that they are his children." This is quite in accordance with the general spirit of Herder's expositions; he always manifests a desire to bring the early prophecies within the nearest

limitations, and is unwilling to see the occasional extent of their application. On the clause—

And I will reward them that hate me,

he observes—“ I can understand these words only as still referring to the Jewish nation, once his children, now his open enemies, on whom God avenges himself.

He rejects them, and takes the gentiles for his people.” On the concluding line—

And purify his land and people,

he says—“ The last line is obscure to my mind, because the connecting particle in the Hebrew is wanting before the word people. It would seem as if it were wished to read as a blessing what was meant as a curse, though the blessing properly follows in a separate chapter. The gentiles are here summoned, as now the people of God, to witness the divine judgment upon Israel. He avenges the blood of his servants upon this people, and purifies the land from sin. I will not decide whether in relation to the last word we should read *and* or *from* his people. This chapter ends like the last of the prophets. The nation is cast forth and banished from the land.”

CHAPTER XXIII.

The benedictions of Moses on the twelve tribes considered.

THE last of the poetical portions of the Pentateuch is found in the thirty-third chapter of Deuteronomy, containing what may be called the dying benediction of Moses upon the children of Israel.

Of the prophetic ode just considered it may be remarked that it relates to the posterity of Jacob collectively and generally—the following benedictions refer to the tribes severally and separately.

“And this is the blessing, wherewith Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death. And he said,”*

The Lord came from Sinai,
And rose up from Seir unto them ;
He shined forth from mount Paran,
And he came with ten thousands of saints :
From his right hand went a fiery law for them.
Yea, he loved the people ;
All his saints are in thy hand :
And they sat down at thy feet ;
Every one shall receive of thy words. .
Moses commanded us a law,
Even the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob.
And he was king in Jeshurun,
When the heads of the people
And the tribes of Israel were gathered together.

* Dent. xxxiii. 1—8.

The obscurities in this exordium are not few, nor are these by any means inconsiderable; they fortunately, however, happen to occur in that part of the poem, namely the proemial or introductory portion, which is by much the least important; but, notwithstanding the perplexities presented even here, I think the several passages may be rendered sufficiently intelligible. I shall do my best to effect this desirable object without apprehension of discouragement.

The Lord came from Sinai.

The poet begins very naturally and with great solemnity to remind the Israelites of that memorable and august event of which he had been made the medium of communication to them,—the delivery of the law from Mount Sinai. Upon this event their very existence as a nation depended, and likewise their social and political superiority over the many warlike races by whom they were surrounded. Here the promulgation of that merciful covenant, which raised them to the superior dignity of God's peculiar people, took place amid grand manifestations of power. Then, in the sublime language of the Psalmist,*

The voice of thy thunder was in the heaven :
 The lightnings lightened the world :
 The earth trembled and shook.
 Thy way is in the sea,
 And thy path in the great waters,
 And thy footsteps are not known.
 Thou leddest thy people like a flock
 By the hand of Moses and Aaron.

* Psalm lxxvii. 18, ad fin.

From Sinai God proclaimed his law to the seed of Abraham with a solemnity so awful that, although so recently the objects of a miraculous deliverance, they trembled at his presence, and shrank with terror from the stupendous displays of his providential agency. As this act of grace especially signalized the Jews as a race separated from the rest of mankind, it was an event to which their recollections could not be so appropriately called, as at the period when their inspired lawgiver and beloved leader, about to be withdrawn from them for ever, was on the eve of pouring out his prophetic spirit upon them. It was the object of the poet, no doubt, to recal to the minds of his hearers the wonderful exemplifications of almighty beneficence in their behalf; he therefore naturally directs their attention to a circumstance the most magnificent in visible splendour, and the first in actual importance—the delivery from Mount Sinai of that law by which they were henceforward to be governed.

And rose up from Seir unto them;
He shined forth from mount Paran.

The exact locality of Seir has been the cause of difficulty in the first line of this extract; but if we suppose that Seir and Paran formed part of the same ridge of mountains as Sinai, the three hemistichs in which these places are severally mentioned will form only a gradual amplification of the one grand picture of the marvellous display of God's glory at the delivery of the law. This probably took place several times

and was, it may be presumed, more or less manifested during the whole period that Moses abode in the mount ; he consequently here alludes to those particular intervals when it was the more signally exhibited ; for the time occupied in the completion of this merciful dispensation was a protracted term of several weeks, Moses having been twice absent in the mount forty days.

There is a parallel passage in the song of Deborah, of extreme beauty, referring undoubtedly to the same event.

Lord, when thou wentest out of Seir,
When thou marchedst out of the field of Edom,
The earth trembled, and the heavens dropped,
The clouds also dropped water.
The mountains melted from before the Lord,
Even that Sinai from before the Lord God of Israel.*

In the several places mentioned by Moses, at different periods during his sojourn in the mount eighty days, God displayed his incomparable glory in thunders and lightning, accompanied probably by other atmospheric phenomena, which the Israelites had not been accustomed to behold, for such are peculiar to desert tracts ;—"there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud ; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled."† The all-wise Benefactor gave to them the law by his servant Moses, amid the most sublime attestation of his omnipotence, exciting the terror of those who beheld.

* Judges v. 4—6.

† Exodus xix. 16.

And he came with ten thousands of saints.

That is, as I understand, with the pious Dr. Mede, with a multitude of the heavenly host which attended him when the law was delivered. A large definite number is frequently used in scripture to express an indefinite multitude, and I take it to be so in this place. Moses giving a general description of what had occurred upon that occasion forty years previously, of which therefore a large proportion of the Israelites whom he then addressed could not have been eye-witnesses, represents the Deity, accompanied by myriads of celestial ministrants, as visibly present. This is a grand poetical sketch of an event at once extraordinary and memorable in Jewish history, so worthy too of remembrance by that highly favoured people. I take it to be nothing more than a representation adapted to human perceptions, of a circumstance beyond the limitation of words to pourtray in all its stupendous magnificence of detail.

From his right hand went a fiery law for them ;

that is, said simply what is here expressed metaphorically, ‘he delivered his law amid fire and smoke,’ or as the Jerusalem Targum justly expounds it—‘he stretched his right hand out of the midst of flames of fire, and gave the law unto his people.’

“By the conclusion of this verse,” says Bishop Patrick,* “it is apparent that the former part

* See his note on the passage.

of it belongs entirely to God's mercy unto the children of Israel, upon whom he bestowed his law in most illustrious tokens of his presence; which makes it highly probable that his 'rising up from Seir and shining from Mount Paran,' belongs to the same matter, that is, the cloud wherein he descended on Sinai, with a vast host of angels, extended itself so far as to cover the neighbouring mountains of Seir and Paran."

The imagery throughout this passage is exceedingly imposing. The Deity appears descending from heaven upon Mount Sinai; then his glory shining like a radiant sun on Mount Seir and Mount Paran, extending from Sinai to those hills, and covering the circumjacent country with its awful splendour. Here, accompanied by countless multitudes of beatified spirits, he promulgates the terms of that covenant which was to guide the Jews until the ceremonial part of it should be abrogated by a superior dispensation, proclaimed to the world by Him who "holds the keys of hell and of death," who came into the world to sustain his triumph over sin, and restore man to the privileges he had forfeited by transgression. I cannot conceive that a more animated picture could have been given of this eminent event—an event at once attesting the glory and beneficent providence of God towards a people who, in the issue so basely requited his love by abandoning his worship for the idols of the heathen, and becoming the slaves of their lusts, instead of continuing righteous before him.

Yea, he loved the people ;
 All his saints are in thy hand :
 And they sat down at thy feet ;
 Every one shall receive of thy words.

The prophet now reminds the Israelites how visibly God had displayed his love towards them in first rescuing them from the oppressive tyranny of Pharaoh, then in promulgating for their observance a law, and finally in leading them safely through the wilderness, where they were beset with perils, and bringing them to the borders of that land of promise of which they were now about to take possession. This is very adroitly managed. The poet never fails, when the opportunity offers, to recal, incidently as it were, to the mind of his hearers the manifold exhibitions of divine love, thereby making their ingratitude appear in the more odious light. In proportion as God was merciful they were base in alienating themselves from his worship, and Moses shows this baseness on their part the more vividly by making the numerous benefactions of Jehovah so prominent a feature of this noble song.

All his saints are in thy hand.

The enallage, or change of person, in this hemistich, so common in the Hebrew writings, was no doubt employed merely as a poetical adornment. In the original it has a peculiar grace and effect which are not, because they cannot be, communicated in a translation. Kennicott, Houbigant, Durell and others get rid of the enallage altogether by continuing

the pronoun in the same person, which is certainly more agreeable to an English ear.

Moses calls the Israelites God's *saints* in reference to the nineteenth chapter of Exodus, in which he says,* they shall be "a holy nation." It is clear that by the word "saints" in the clause under notice is not meant the superior sanctity of Jacob's posterity, but their eminent distinction, being advanced by the Almighty to a condition of social and political superiority over all other people; they are his saints—that privileged seed of Abraham who were to inherit the promises. They are "in his hand." He has a special desire to protect them. He is still mindful of his covenant with them and will assuredly fulfil it, for he is a God of truth, and "his word standeth fast for ever."

And they sat down at thy feet ;

that is, this people whom God had determined to befriend have promised submission to his will and implicit obedience to his law. They are pictured by the gifted bard as pupils sitting at the feet of their teacher listening to his instructions; which may refer to the multitude assembling at the foot of Mount Sinai to hear the promulgation of that system of legislation which was to be the fundamental stamina of all political and moral codes in every civilized country throughout all time; and this the Levitical law has certainly been from the period of its

* Ver. 6.

proclamation by Moses to the present hour. St. Paul describes himself as brought up at the feet of Gamaliel.* “It was,” says Pseud-Ambrosius, “the tradition of the synagogue to dispute sitting; the seniors in dignity, in chairs; the next to them on benches, and the last on the pavement upon mats.” “For the disciples,” says Buxtorf, “sat at the feet of their masters,” and therefore, by way of advice to others to become disciples of their wise men, they used to say ‘put thyself in the dust of their feet;’ accordingly we find Mary sitting at the feet of Jesus.† “If the same mode of sitting prevailed in Judæa anciently, in respect of master and scholars, as prevails now in the east, the phrase, ‘they sat down at his feet,’ is very descriptive and accurate, for the master is seated on a carpet spread on the ground, with his books before him, and around him, at a little distance beyond his books, sit his scholars in a circle attending to his instructions.”‡ The same form of expression is used in the east at this day, but only in reference to great saints and teachers. “He had his holiness at the feet of the gooroo (a learned priest,) or his learning at the feet of the philosopher.”§ To those who know how few changes have taken place in oriental customs since the most primitive times, it will appear but a reasonable conclusion that the same mode of teaching existed in the days of Moses as in those of Gamaliel; and to show the

* Acts xxii. 3.

† See Whitby’s note on Acts xxii. 3. ‡ Fragments to Calmet, p. 101.

§ See Roberts’ Oriental Illustrations, p. 579.

value of ancient modes of instruction, that plan introduced into England by Dr. Bell, called the Madras system, and now so universally adopted in our national schools, was the common form of teaching throughout Hindostan when the people of this island were no better than a race of uncivilized barbarians. When Britain was under the domination of, and a slave to, druidical tyranny and immersed in barbarism, which is the unfailing handmaid of ignorance, Hindostan had her national schools, regulated upon the supposed system of Dr. Bell, but which he only transferred to Europe from that now neglected and degraded country.

Every one shall receive of thy words.

That is, all God's people shall partake of the blessings of the divine law declared from "the mountain that burned with fire," and which they "sat down at his feet to hear." There is a quiet grace in the four clauses contained in the second verse of the introduction to the several benedictions which follow it, that contrasts very strikingly with the sublimer objects alluded to in those lines that precede them. The fact of God's love to his people is strongly enforced and the picture of paternal guardianship beautifully brought out, being skilfully relieved by the subordinate, though scarcely less important, feature of a heavenly benefactor in the act of teaching his anxious disciples, gathered round him to receive that wisdom which he is ever ready to communicate to all who are willing to receive

it. "They sit," as Herder justly observes, "at the feet of their father, who teaches and admonishes them as children."

In the exordium of this poem there appear no artifices of construction; the whole is extremely simple, combining sublimity with elegance.

The correctness of the common reading has been disputed by some commentators, among whom are Houbigant, Kennicott, Durell, Herder, and others of less note; but I confess their emendations do not appear to me to give so good a sense generally, or to retain so effectually the poetical character of the passage. Dr. Kennicott renders the first two verses of the exordium as follows:—

Jehovah came from SINAI,
And he arose upon them from SEIR;
He shone forth from Mount PARAN,
And he came from MERIBAH-KADESH:
From his right hand a fire shone forth upon them.
Truly, he loved his people,
And he blessed all his saints:
For they fell down at his feet
And they received of his words.

It will be observed that the phrase in our common version translated "ten thousand of saints," Dr. Kennicott, who is followed by Herder, reads as the name of a place. This, no doubt, gives a clear and consistent sense, but it certainly subtracts greatly from the grandeur of the general representation, communicating a poverty and tameness to the whole passage. The common reading, moreover, is so well supported; it is, besides, so much more consonant to the whole description of which it forms an essential part.

and above all so much more poetical, that I should be extremely reluctant to relinquish it even upon such respectable authority, supported though it is by the concurrence of Dr. Adam Clarke. Herder's version,* though differing from Kennicott's, is certainly more spirited.

Jehovah came from Sinai,
Went forth to them from Seir,
Shone forth from Mount Paran.
He came from mountains of Kadesh ;
And round him was radiant fire.
How greatly doth he love the tribes !
All the pomp of his glory is around him,
And every one at thy feet
Received thy commandment.

He has the following note on the words

And round him was radiant fire.

“ That the common construction of the term here as a *fiery law* is harsh, every one is sensible, and here too it does not suit the context. God comes (verses two and three) as a teacher of the people, while the tribes sit at his feet to learn of him. Moses becomes their teacher, and his law is the utterance of the mouth of the Most High, a far more dignified image than when God is represented as bringing it in his hand. I prefer rather to consider the radiant glory of the right hand in the third verse, as placed in contrast with the expression described in the second, and pomp and majesty distinguished from grace. Habakkuk explains the image and interprets it by radiant fire shooting rays.

* Spirit of Heb. Poet. vol. ii. page 155.

In later times those images were converted into the *διαταγαι αγγελων*, the ranks and orders of angels, and this illustrates their meaning."

On the line,

And every one at thy feet,

the same writer observes; "how fine a contrast have we here of fearful majesty and condescending grace! Only Moses could have thus spoken of the giving of the law. The word used in the third verse means plainly not angels, but the assembled tribes which had been already named, and are again referred to in the fifth verse. They sit at the feet of their father who teaches and admonishes them as children. The notion of angels teaching is a later rabbinical interpretation."

I am not persuaded by this reasoning to embrace the learned German's exposition; it is plausible but inconclusive. It appears to me quite evident that, in the fifth clause, reference is distinctly made to the circumstance of the mount burning with fire at the declaration of the law. The whole context, as I conceive, warrants no other conclusion.

Moses commanded us a law,
Even the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob.
And he was king in Jeshurun,
When the heads of the people
And the tribes of Israel were gathered together.

Houbigant encloses the first two lines of this passage in brackets, as he thinks them entirely out of place where they now are, and supposes that they originally commenced the poem.

Dr. Kennicott, following father Houbigant, has shown the great inconsistency of making Moses the speaker of the words as they now stand in our version, and has pointed out the probable origin of the insertion of his name in the original MSS. from which our version was rendered into English.

He supposes that the term *Mosheh*, Moses, was inserted by the transcriber in the fourth verse of the text as now divided, in mistake for *mor-ashah*, inheritance; that he, perceiving his mistake, introduced the proper term but did not erase the other which thus became an interpolation. Kennicott therefore suggests that the word which he conceives to be thus thrust into the text should be omitted, because, as he contends, it is improbable that Moses would have here introduced his own name, thus not only interrupting the natural connexion of the context, but likewise creating a difficulty in the sense; for, he observes, if the word, as it now stands be admitted as the true reading, then the term king in the third line following must apply to Moses and not to God, which cannot be.*

“Aware of the difficulty which the common reading involves, Jonathan and the author of the Jerusalem Targum put these words into the mouth of the children of Israel.” ‘The children of Israel said, Moses commanded,’ &c. Indeed the word Moses cannot be retained in the text with any propriety, but on the supposition that Moses taught the Israelites this song, with a view that they might sing or repeat it in their

* See Dr. Kennicott's first Dissertation, p. 422.

own person. But I think still that it would be better if omitted, because the sense is much clearer without it. The Lord mentioned in the second verse will then be the leading subject throughout this ode. The law will appear to have more authority when said to have been commanded by God. It will be more agreeable both to the character and manner of Moses, to attribute the command of the law to God, and Moses cannot, with equal propriety as God, be made the subject of the fifth verse.”*

Herder differs little from our translators. He reads—

Moses enjoined on us the law,
A heritage of the congregation of Jacob,
For he was king of Israel.
All the heads of the people assembled,
And the tribes of Israel.

and observes—“thus was Israel to learn respect and reverence for the law as a divine economy, freely adopted as the instructive lore of divine wisdom and truth. Moses was their king, but only among the assembled chiefs of the nation, and therefore in a free state. In this character also, he uttered his last words, and at the same time connected with them the reverence which he gave to the Divine Being, the dignity and love.”†

I confess the arguments of Dr. Kennicott appear to me quite conclusive against the propriety of the name of the great Hebrew legislator being introduced where it now stands in the introduction to the benedictions which follow. These

* See Dodd's note.

† Spirit of Heb. Poet. p. 156.

were evidently intended to celebrate the mercies of Jehovah to the children of Israel, and to point at those glorious manifestations of his power in favour of that perpetually erring and ungrateful people. They may be said to have been his valedictory blessing ; they were, as Bishop Lowth has elegantly termed them, “ the song of the dying swan ;” for immediately after Moses had recited this poem to his assembled countrymen, he ascended to the top of Pisgah, where, having cast his eyes over the fertile plains of the future Palestine, which lay out stretched before him, and which were to be the theatre of Israel’s glory and of her shame, he rendered up his soul to the God who gave it, in sight of the promised inheritance destined to be the sacred locality, where was eventually to be consummated that merciful covenant of grace which has rescued man from the bondage of corruption, and restored him to the freedom of sanctification, and its consequent issue — salvation through Christ. Not only does it appear improbable that Moses, at a time of such affecting solemnity, would have referred to his own temporal distinction, engrossed as his mind no doubt then was by the glory and manifold mercies of the Deity ; but it cannot be truly said of him that he was king in Jeshurun. Saul was the first legal king of Israel, elected by the people, which election was confirmed by God ; and though Moses was their lawgiver and ruler, under the same sanction as Saul was their king, he, nevertheless, had not the supreme sway, for he associated Aaron with him in the government, and

by the advice of his father-in-law Jethro, prince and priest of Midian, appointed an oligarchy of elders, or superior judges, to carry on the affairs of state established under his direction. He and Aaron were the directive, they the executive, machine of government. It is a fact placed beyond controversy that the Israelites had no national sovereign until Saul. Their first form of constitution was the patriarchal, in which every father acted as chief in his own family. In Egypt they were governed by elders. After being delivered from their oppressive captivity in that country, they were subject to rulers as Moses and Joshua; they then fell under the dominion of judges or magistrates who exercised authority over them, from the death of Joshua to the accession of Saul inclusive, for a period of three hundred and thirty-nine years. This office was not hereditary but elective. Saul was the first king, and from his time the form of government among the Israelites was monarchical, until their polity was finally subverted by the Roman armies. Thus it will appear that Moses was not king in Jeshurun, though invested with supreme power. The authority too which he enjoyed, though supreme, was, nevertheless, extremely limited, as will appear from the turbulent conduct of the Israelites, during the whole period of their sojourn in the wilderness, where, but for the divine interference, it is evident that he would have been quite unable to control their mutinous spirit.

And he was king in Jeshurun.

Bishop Patrick vindicates the reference here to Moses thus—"Or, *for he was king*, that is, under God, the supreme ruler and governor of Israel; and therefore, in his name, and by his authority, required them to observe these laws." But to this it may be replied that the observation cannot be restricted to Moses, since it applies equally to all sovereigns, for every king rules under the authority of God the supreme director and governor. Mr. Thorndike, in his review of the rights of the church, observes,* "that the Israelites being made a free people, by the act of God bringing them out of Egypt, and entitling them to the land of Canaan upon the covenant of the law, had Moses not only for their prophet and their priest, (for by him Aaron and his successors were put into the priesthood, the tabernacle and all belonging to it consecrated), but also for their king, their lawgiver, their judge, and commander-in-chief of their forces under God, if not rather God by Moses. For we find that after Moses' decease, either God, by some extraordinary signification of his will and pleasure, stirred up some man in his stead for the time, or, if there was none such, ruled their proceedings himself, by Urim and Thummim, answering their demands, and directing what to do, and what course to follow, in all the public affairs that concerned the state of that people. Whereupon, when they required Samuel to make them a king, he declared it was not Samuel but himself whom they had

* Page 68.

rejected, because they had rejected him whom God had immediately set over them in his own stead, by whose death the power returned to God as at the beginning.”

By the expression of Mr. Thorndike, that Moses was the commander of their forces *under God, if not God by Moses*, he clearly implies that he was supreme, as he calls him king in the passage immediately preceding, though only in a secondary sense, God being their king in a primary sense; and in the clause under notice, the word king can only apply to God, he being the subject of the whole exordium of the poem: upon any other understanding of it, its unity is completely broken, and its concinnity marred. The whole difficulty is at once removed by adopting Dr. Kennicott's suggestion.* Dr. Durell has a good note on this much-contested passage. “It is not agreed among critics to whom these words are to be referred. Selden and Grotius make them relate to Moses, the last antecedent, as it stands in our text; but although this may be more agreeable to grammar, allowing that the word Moses is not an interpolation, it is not so agreeable to scripture. We do not find that Moses was ever crowned, that he ever had the title of king, or ever enjoyed, properly speaking, any one royal prerogative: the contrary is rather strongly intimated (chap. xvii. 14, 1 Samuel viii. 5—7, &c. xii. 19,) and as to those who consider the passage as a prophecy of the kingdom of Judah, or of that of the Messiah,

* See vol. ii. p. 414.

they seem not to have sufficiently attended to the scope of this song. It cannot, I think, be doubted, from the context, that this alludes to the institution of the theocracy, which happened about the time of the delivery of the law; whence, as it is most probable that God, who is frequently called king, should have the title given him on this occasion; so, likewise, it is impossible that Moses should now take it to himself for the first time, for the reasons above given."

In the Arabic version a very clear interpretation is given to the disputed clause,

Moses commanded us a law,

Instead of omitting the word Moses, as Dr. Kennicott recommends, by shifting it to the end the natural sequence of the sense is not only preserved, but additional perspicuity is imparted to it. The reading in that version, and I think an extremely judicious one, is—

He enjoined us a law by Moses.

This entirely gets rid of the difficulty, and agrees perfectly with the context, besides imparting greater clearness to the line itself. The words

When the heads of the people
And the tribes of Israel were gathered together,

seem to refer to the solemn assembly of the elders, who were convened to deliberate on God's message, when he proposed to be their king, and to the answer given by them and the

rest of the people. (See Deut. xviii. 16, and Exodus xix. 7, 8.)*

With reference to the poetical merits of the proem of this ode, it may be remarked that there is an entire absence of the usual resources of art employed by Moses so largely in other parts of his writings of a similar kind. Parallelisms and other ornamental artifices of construction are abandoned. He restricts himself to simple but picturesque expressions, to plain but vigorous metaphors, and to a severe condensation of style. He hurries from object to object, with rapidity and vehemence. His extreme earnestness elevates his song to the highest point of sublimity. Every word makes its own individual impression, and often, even where we do not actually *see* the beauty, we *feel* it strongly. There is no aim at greatness, but this is attained by the mere force of the author's genius, which predominates, I had almost said, undetected, for we are made sensible of it rather through our impressions than by its perception under critical scrutiny. The testimony of Bishop Lowth will be sufficient to establish the claim of this exordium to the highest poetical merit. "But," says he, at the end of his eighteenth prælection, "if we proceed to other parts of the sacred history, examples of the highest characteristics of poetry will not be wanting; and among the first of these is that cygnean song of Moses, as it may properly be called. I do not speak of the prophetic ode, which has frequently been

* See Dodd's note.

distinguished by that title, but of the last blessing of that divine prophet, in which are predicted the future fortunes of the Israelites:—

Jehovah came from Sinai,
And rose up unto them from Seir.

“ The prophecy is evidently of the same nature with that of Jacob: both in the exordium and conclusion it is exquisitely sublime.”

CHAPTER XXIV.

The benedictions on Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah.

THE poet now enters upon the benediction of the twelve tribes, commencing, as Jacob had previously done, with the first-born Reuben, he being the lineal representative of the patriarch by whom he was begotten; thus blessing the tribes through their several original heads.

Let Reuben live, and not die;
And let not his men be few.

The first clause in this distich agrees well with Jacob's prophecy, that Reuben should not excel. It strongly supports the inference of former undeserving, promising to his descendants life indeed, but only this, in consequence of the atrocity of that patriarch, and the forfeiture of his birthright by his unnatural incest. His posterity were to live, but not to be distinguished, except for their rebellions, of which disposition they had already given sufficient evidence, Dathan, Abiram, and On, being of this tribe.

The words of this prophetic blessing appear to me, as Houbigant supposes, merely to promise that the Reubenites shall continue to exist as a distinct community, notwithstanding the disgrace and crimes of their ancestor; beyond this no expectations are raised, for I think

there can be little doubt that the second clause refers to Simeon, for reasons which I shall presently give, merely observing by the way that both these tribes being comparatively unimportant, they are each dismissed in a single line.

The phrase "live, and not die," applied to Reuben, is a Hebrew form of expression, not uncommon in scripture, the union of the negative and affirmative greatly strengthening the latter, and was probably, moreover, made use of by Moses for the purpose of adding grace to the clause, imparting to it rhythm as well as symmetry. We find the same thing, only the order inverted, in the first verse of the thirty-eighth chapter of Isaiah: "Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die and not live;" likewise in the seventeenth verse of the hundred and eighteenth Psalm:—

I shall not die,
But live, and declare the works of the Lord.

Although these expressions are decidedly pleonastic, they unquestionably add both beauty and force to the idea which they are made the vehicles of communicating. They are not mere vain repetitions, but positive poetical adornments.

The brevity of this benediction on Reuben's descendants may be sufficiently accounted for from the fact that their great progenitor, Jacob, had degraded his eldest son on account of his licentiousness, and involved his posterity in his disgrace, by transferring the privileges of primogeniture to Judah; Moses therefore merely

assures them, in confirmation of Jacob's prophecy, that they shall not be exterminated from among the tribes of Israel; thus implying their insignificance as a political body, by the narrow limitations of his blessing.

And let not his men be few.

Houbigant, whom Durell follows, renders this hemistich thus:—

And let Simeon be few in number.

The negative participle is not found in the Hebrew: it is an interpolation by our translators; the prophecy, therefore, as it stands, will particularly apply to Simeon, whose posterity were so diminished after their departure from Egypt, when they amounted to upwards of fifty-nine thousand men, that within forty years from that period they were reduced to little more than twenty-two thousand, in consequence of their repeated impieties. This finally became the most inconsiderable of all the tribes, in point of numbers, though not in distinction, for most of the scribes are supposed to have been from the posterity of Simeon, so that his descendants were distinguished for their learning, and that influence which learning communicates, though not for their numerical strength. It will be observed, that the line in which the Simeonites are presumed to be referred to, does not imply any absence of civil or political eminence, but only of a numerous race; it therefore more strictly applies to the descendants of Simeon than to those of Reuben.

Why Moses should have omitted Simeon in a series of prophecies, relating separately and distinctly to the twelve tribes, it is difficult to conceive; for surely the cruelty practised by that patriarch upon the Shechemites, under extreme provocation, would scarcely, in a rude age when similar methods of retaliation were deemed laudable acts of revenge, be considered more criminal than the incest of Reuben. Besides, he was not more culpable than Levi, who participated in the same crime; and Levi is distinguished by Moses above many other sons of Jacob who had not been participators in any such enormity, for upon him he pours out the longest blessing of all, save that afterwards pronounced upon Joseph. It is moreover expressly stated, both by Josephus* and Philo,† that Moses blessed all the tribes. The name of Simeon is retained in the Alexandrian manuscript, the most ancient and valuable extant, likewise in the Complutensian and Aldine editions of the Septuagint; and seeming, as it does, to belong to the true sense of the passage, we are, I think, fully justified in believing that it should have a place in the text. As the words now stand, they have far less coherency than when the name of Simeon is added, as Durell proposes, thus:—

Let Reuben live, and not die;
And let Simeon be few in number.

After the settlement of the Israelites in the

* Ant. book iv. chap. 8.

† Vit. Mos. lib. iii.

land of promise, the tribe of Simeon received for its portion only a district dismembered from the tribe of Judah, and some lands of which they took forcible possession in the desert of Gedor, and in the mountains of Seir.*

Herder supposes that Moses omitted Simeon in these benedictions, because he had no land which he could apportion to that tribe; but this does not appear a sufficient reason for so invidious an omission, since an act of this kind on the part of their venerated lawgiver, must have been one of superlative degradation, it being a mark of exclusive disgrace. Besides, it cannot be probable that Moses intended to degrade the Simeonites at a moment especially when he was pouring out his last valedictory blessings upon the assembled Israelites, separately and collectively. Why he should have selected Simeon in particular for so signal a mark of implicative odium, can be accounted for on no reasonable grounds of probability. It is far more consistent with the whole spirit and bearing of the context to believe that Simeon was included in the last solemn address of the inspired bard to his countrymen. “The Targum of Jerusalem and the Rabbins, followed by some ancient fathers, believe that the greater part of the scribes and men learned in the law were of the tribe of Simeon: and these being dispersed throughout Israel, produced the accomplishment of Jacob’s prophecy.

“It is likely that Jacob meant the dispersion

* 1 Chron. iv. 39—42.

of Simeon and Levi as an evil and a degradation, but Providence overruled it to be an honour: so Levi had the priesthood, and Simeon had the learning or writing-authority of Israel, whereby both these tribes were honourably dispersed among the nations.”*

Hear, Lord, the voice of Judah,
And bring him unto his people:
Let his hands be sufficient for him;
And be thou an help to him from his enemies.

“ This benediction,” observes Bishop Sherlock, in his dissertation on the blessing of Judah, “ cannot relate to the time when it was given, for then Judah’s ‘ hands’ were very ‘ sufficient for him,’ this being by far the greatest of the twelve tribes (see Numbers i. and xxvi.); and there was more reason to put up this petition for several other tribes than for Judah. It is to be referred, therefore, to the prophecy of Jacob, and to the continuance of the sceptre of Judah, after the destruction of the other tribes. Judah, in the time of Moses, consisted of seventy-four thousand, reckoning only those of twenty years old and upwards (Numbers ii. 4.) But on the return from Babylon, Judah, with Benjamin, the Levites, and the remnant of Israel, made only forty-two thousand, three hundred and sixty (Ezra ii. 64); and they were in so weak a state that Sanballat, in great scorn, said, ‘ What do these feeble Jews?’ (Nehemiah iv. 2.) Now Moses, in the spirit of prophecy, seeing the desolation of all the

* Calmet’s Dictionary, art. Simeon.

tribes; seeing the tribes of the children of Israel carried away by the Assyrians, the people of Judah by the Babylonians; seeing that Judah should return weak, harassed, and scarcely able to maintain himself in his own country, conceives for him this prophetic prayer,—

Hear, Lord, the voice of Judah,
And bring him unto his people:
Let his hands be sufficient for him;
And be thou an help to him from his enemies."

The race of Judah was the most powerful of the twelve tribes. On the degradation of Reuben the first-born, who had forfeited the privileges of primogeniture, Simeon and Levi were passed by, on account of their cruelty in destroying the Shechemites, and the alienated claims of the heirship were transferred to the fourth son, so that this patriarch became, through his descendants, the most distinguished of the heads of the twelve races. The blessing pronounced by Jacob upon Judah declared that the sovereign dominion should not pass from his descendants; and not only so, but that the Peace-maker, or Messiah, should proceed from them. The crown consequently passed from the tribe of Benjamin (Saul, the first king, being of this tribe,) into that of Judah, from which David sprang, and continued in the posterity of that monarch until the Babylonish captivity. And although after the release of the Israelites from their odious thralldom, this tribe did not reign, it gave the sceptre to those who had the chief

authority, and may, in fact, be said to have united in itself the whole Hebrew nation, thenceforth known under the designation of Jews, or descendants of Judah.

This tribe maintained its religious integrity, notwithstanding the defection of the ten tribes who gave themselves up to idolatry, and eventually received the sad punishment of their iniquities. The posterity of Judah were certainly signalized above those of his brethren, first in giving birth to David, the greatest prince of his time, besides being an eminent type of Christ, and finally to the august antitype, God in the flesh, who quitted the throne of his glory, and both in the form and nature of a descendant of Judah, expiated upon the cross the sins of the whole human race.

After the revolt of the ten tribes under the wicked son of Nebat, Judah was distinguished from Israel as the kingdom governed by the immediate descendants of David, in opposition to the latter, which was the kingdom of Samaria, established by the defection of Jeroboam. In the tribe of Judah the religion of the Hebrews was preserved; the offices of the priests were performed at Jerusalem, together with the various legal rites and ceremonies of the temple worship prescribed by their formularies, without any admixture of pagan abominations; while, on the contrary, the creed of their forefathers was abandoned by the other kindred races, who gave themselves up to idolatry, and to the most licentious excesses.

Hear, Lord, the voice of Judah,
And bring him unto his people ;

that is, as the Targum of Onkelos paraphrases it, “ hear his prayer when he goes forth to battle, and permit him to return in safety to his own people.” They are, perhaps, here called God’s people especially, because the entire Hebrew nation was ultimately to derive its name from this patriarch. Such a conjecture is, at least, reasonable.

Let his hands be sufficient for him.

In other words, may he have always a military force sufficiently numerous and efficient to be prepared against surprise, to repel the aggressions of his foes, and maintain his supremacy.

And be thou an help to him from his enemies.

May those enemies never prevail against him under thy divine protection ! And how completely this was eventually fulfilled may be seen in the stand made by this tribe, united with that of Benjamin, against the combined force of the ten others, after the revolt of Jeroboam.

Houbigant supposes that this prophecy refers immediately to the Messiah. He contends that it cannot properly be applied to Judah as a tribe ; “ these words, therefore,” he concludes, “ entirely belong to that Judah concerning whom Jacob says,

Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise ;

which Judah, Moses desires to come to his

people, that is, to come into the world and hold communion with men."

Dr. Adam Clarke seems to concur with this view of the learned priest of the oratory. "This blessing," he observes,* "has a striking affinity with that which this tribe received from Jacob (Genesis xlix. 9); and both may refer to our blessed Lord, who has conquered our deadly foes by his death, and whose *praying* posterity ever prevail through his might." Of the poetry of this passage, I may say at once, that though it is not characterized by the sublimity of certain parts of the exordium already considered, and of some passages which follow, it is, nevertheless, extremely elegant. The picture which it lays before the imagination is that of an affectionate father leading a beloved son through difficulties and dangers, and bringing him home to his family unharmed. It paints in simple, but affecting colours, the divine pater-nity, while it signalizes, at the same time, that filial reverence which has awakened the paternal love. And the preservation of the temple worship in this tribe, uncontaminated by the innovations of idolatry and other heathen rites, sufficiently justifies this representation of the dying prophet.

The beauty of the first couplet is exhibited, not by resorting to the more artificial appliances of poetry,—not by a skilful combination of images, the bold appropriation of strong and striking metaphors, the employment of nicely-

* See his note on Deut. xxxiii. 7.

selected phrases ; but it consists merely in its simple and unpretending pathos, and the easy grace with which the figurative is blended with the literal. The general effect is, moreover, greatly heightened by the extreme plainness of the expressions, except in the third clause, where a very significant metaphor is introduced, which, however, does not disturb the bland impression of divine love so affectingly produced, by intruding unexpected and startling thoughts. The whole is sweetly appropriate to the subject ; though eminently simple, it is powerfully expressive. It brings a tangible combination of pleasing images before the mind, most agreeably realizing to the contemplations the tender alliances of father and offspring, while it refers to those higher relations betwixt Creator and creature so exquisitely exemplified in various parts of the sacred writings.

Let his hands be sufficient for him,

is a happy illustrative image, as if the poet had said, ‘ may his power be sufficient, through thee, O Jehovah, to protect him from violence ;’ the hand is an expressive emblem of power, it being the *instrument* by which its most obvious effects are produced ; it is the effective agent in all manner of operations, the executive member, in short, by which the vast designs of men are accomplished. The plain fact suggested in this clause is, that the hands of Judah should be rendered of sufficient strength to protect his body from assault or aggres-

sion of any kind;—the simple image unfolding the chain of ideas which it is employed to represent of the valour and pre-eminency of this patriarch's descendants. It is a short, but beautiful representative allegory, bearing the key to its own interpretation. The concluding line happily depicts God's merciful intervention, where it is properly sought, and its effectual protection against all external agencies. Herder's version of this benediction is extremely elegant, scarcely differing in sense from that of our translators, which cannot well be surpassed.

Hear, O Jehovah, the voice of Judah,
And bring him unto his people,
His arm will contend bravely,
And, when his enemies oppress him,
Thou wilt be his salvation.*

* Spirit of Hebrew Poetry, vol. ii. p. 156.

CHAPTER XXV.

The benediction upon Levi.

HERE follows the benediction upon Levi, which is far more extensive and important than that pronounced by Jacob upon this patriarch ; that was general, while this is particular, referring to matters connected with this tribe of which their more distinguished ancestor appears to have had no foresight. It is full of the finest poetry. Moses seems to have thrown into it the highest energy of his muse, being himself a descendant of Levi. “ And of Levi he said,”

Let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy holy one,
Whom thou didst prove at Massah,
And with whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah ;
Who said unto his father and to his mother,
I have not seen him ;
Neither did he acknowledge his brethren,
Nor knew his own children :
For they have observed thy word,
And kept thy covenant.
They shall teach Jacob thy judgments,
And Israel thy law :
They shall put incense before thee,
And whole burnt-sacrifice upon thine altar.
Bless, Lord, his substance,
And accept the work of his hands :
Smite through the loins of them that rise against him,
And of them that hate him, that they rise not again.

It had been predicted by the venerable Jacob on the eve of his death that this tribe should be scattered in Israel, which they accordingly

were, having no separate share in the division of the promised inheritance, but a certain number of cities with lands attached in the portions of other tribes. Of these cities the number was forty-eight ; thirteen were bestowed upon the priests, and six set apart as cities of refuge.* Notwithstanding that the posterity of Levi had no distinct allotment, ample amends was made to them by the dignities to which they were advanced. They were selected expressly for the service of the sanctuary. From them the priesthood were chosen. No ecclesiastical office was held out of their community. They were thus elevated above all the other tribes in civil distinction. They received all the tithes, first-fruits, offerings ; and certain portions of the animal sacrifices were theirs by official right. While actually employed in the temple, they were supported by the daily oblations or from the stock-provisions, of which there was a constant supply. The general occupation of the Levites was to wait upon the priests during their daily ministrations in the sanctuary, furnishing them with wood and water, and the various matters required for the sacrifices. They formed the temple quires, chanted the services to the accompaniment of musical instruments, studied and expounded the law, and from them, secondary or inferior magistrates were generally elected. They were at all times subordinate to the priests, to whom they gave the tenth of their tithes, these being looked

* Numbers xxxv.

upon as the first-fruits, which they were to offer unto the Lord.*

Let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy holy one,
Whom thou didst prove at Massah,
And with whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah.

What the Thummim and the Urim were, is still a matter to be settled by the learned. They are said, however, by Josephus, (and his opinion is, I believe, now almost universally received,) to have been the precious stones upon the breastplate of the high priest, through which the divine communications were received. Whatever they might have been, they unquestionably were the medium through which revelations from on high were made to the accredited ministers of Jehovah. In the first clause of this couplet, the terms Thummim and Urim are put by way of metonymy for the whole priesthood, which are called God's, because especially appointed by him out of, and to be continued in, this tribe. He says, 'let the priesthood be with Aaron, thy holy one, and let the power of receiving and proclaiming thy revelations be not only with him, but with all the high priests after him, of whom he is the general representative.'† The "holy one" is likewise used as a synecdoche for all such as are made holy, or consecrated to the priesthood, or to the sacred offices of the sanctuary, so that in this one short clause

* Numbers xviii. 21—21.

† Those who wish to see the subject of Urim and Thummim treated at large, are referred to Dr. Spencer's dissertation on this very perplexed and difficult question, and to his celebrated work *De legibus Hebræorum ritualibus*, likewise to Josephus, *Antiq.* book iii. chap. 8.

there are two strong rhetorical figures very happily applied.

Whom thou didst prove at Massah,
And with whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah.

In this pair of lines the gradational parallelism is exhibited with its usual grace and effect. The meaning of "Massah," as appears from the margin* of our Bible, is *temptation*; of "Meribah," *chiding* or *strife*. The first I apprehend to refer to the tribe of Levi, in common with the Israelites generally, *tempting* God to chastise them; the second, to their *chiding* or *striving with* Moses, and thus provoking the divine punishment by rebelling against God through his minister. Nevertheless, although the anger of the Lord had been kindled at Massah and Meribah, the Almighty did not withdraw his favour from the tribe of Levi to which Moses and Aaron belonged, but continued the priesthood in it, probably at the supplication of the former now made, it may be said, with his dying breath. The gradation of sense in the two clauses is evident, "prove," having a strength of import below, "strive," the former referring to the simple provocation of the Israelites, the latter to its more active aggravation; while the corresponding proper names Massah and Meribah maintain a precisely similar distinction. It is worthy of notice that the last clause has a perfect rhythm, and may be divided into regular feet forming a complete pentameter verse.

* See Exodus xvii. 7.

And—with—whom | thou—didst—strive | at—the—wa | ters—of |
 Me—ri—bah.

The feet here presented are four anapests and a pyrrhic, the first three, as in the divisions above made and likewise in the last division, containing two short syllables and a long one, the fourth division being composed of two short syllables. The melody of this line cannot escape the most unmusical ear, and this is no doubt the consequence of its metrical conformation, evidently not intended by our translators, who were carried unconsciously into the rhythmical arrangement by the agreeable flow and exact prosodical construction of the original Hebrew. The accidental division of this line into feet decidedly, as I conceive, shows the effect of metre in advancing the poetical interest of any passage in which the elements of poetry are positively present. A perfect eurythmy is necessary to complete the enjoyment of all poetry, consequently much of the exquisite beauty of the Hebrew depending upon this must be lost in our translation, although much is unquestionably retained.

Who said unto his father and to his mother,
 I have not seen him;
 Neither did he acknowledge his brethren,
 Nor knew his own children :
 For they have observed thy word,
 And kept thy covenant.

The first four hemistichs of this quotation are supposed to refer to the impartial execution of judgment by the Levites upon the worshippers of

the golden calf, as related in Exodus.* “Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, who is on the Lord’s side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him. And he said unto them, thus saith the Lord God of Israel, put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour. And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men.” Here the Levites became the instruments of divine retribution upon those who had desecrated their worship, and violated the ordinances of Jehovah; this they executed without respect to persons, disregarding all social and kindred ties, except those of father and mother, having only the vindication of God’s insulted majesty in view.

Who said unto his father and to his mother,
I have not seen him.

The sense is by no means evident in this latter line, nor do the commentators generally remove the perplexity in which it is involved. The meaning appears to be, ‘I have not regarded him,’ that is, them, the feminine being merged in the more important gender. He did not regard even the expostulations of father or mother in the execution of a sacred duty; no-

* Chap. xxxii. 26—28.

thing swayed him from his holy purpose. The Levites were acting in God's cause, and no earthly obligations could cancel those which are paramount to all sublunary interests, the services which are demanded from us towards him who has brought us to life, and rescued us from death.

Herder's rendering is very intelligible, and I think he has hit upon the right sense.

And he said to his father and to his mother,
I know ye not,
And remembered not his brethren,
Nor acknowledged his children.*

According to this interpretation, Aaron is made the representative of the Levites, and they therefore, in his person, are exhibited as being the instruments of God, and as inflicting punishment so equitably as to be deaf to the appeals of either paternal or maternal solicitude, and to disregard all other kindred claims, as appears from the passage in Numbers just quoted. This is, I have no doubt, the meaning of the clause, which is not to be taken in a strictly literal sense, the whole being a poetical hyperbole to strengthen the impression of the severe impartiality exercised by the Levites in performing the divine commission to punish, communicated through Moses. The enallage of number, the singular being put for the plural in the second line, which creates the difficulty in our translation, is dexterously avoided by Herder in the above passage, and that which immediately succeeds; this latter he renders—

* Spirit of Hebrew Poetry, vol. ii. p. 157.

So shall they also keep thy word,
 And observe thy covenant,
 Shall teach Jacob thy judgments,
 And Israel thy law.
 They shall burn incense before thee,
 And sacrifices upon thine altar.

“The construction,” he observes, “which I have given to this verse in the translation, imparts to it, as I think, dignity and clearness. The word in the singular refers to Aaron, the following plural to the Levites, who were bound to imitate his noble example of impartiality in giving judgment of faithful adherence to God their rightful Lord.”* Moses in this benediction appears to me to take more than ordinary care to justify God’s favour towards his own tribe, upon whom their great progenitor Jacob had pronounced a very limited, and not a very encouraging, blessing; and this he does by showing their activity in vindicating God’s insulted dignity upon the occasion alluded to. It is clear, to my apprehension, that throughout the whole of this prophetic blessing upon Levi, the descendants of that vindictive patriarch are spoken of both indirectly, through their representative Aaron, and directly in their own persons collectively; the introduction of Aaron being intended to give greater effect to the benediction, by thus making an implied reference to the first establishment of the priesthood in that tribe, it being instituted in his family, the most eminent among them;—and comprehending in this reference, by a covert inference, disguised indeed, but sufficiently prominent, all the

* Spirit of Hebrew Poetry, vol. ii. p. 157.

privileges which should accrue to the Levites—who were really, according to Jacob's prediction, to be "divided in Jacob, and scattered in Israel,"—as the persons trusted with the ministrations of the temple. The inspired bard brings before the mind, at one view, a number of most interesting and important particulars; the lapses and recovery of Aaron, the ingratitude of the Israelites generally, in which the Levites bore an equal share at Massah and at Kadesh, where the water was called Meribah, because the children of Israel strove with the Lord.* The transition from the praise of Aaron to the duties of the tribe of which he was so distinguished a member, is, as Herder justly remarks, extremely beautiful. It was natural that Moses should make some allusion to a worthy and affectionate brother,—both worthy and affectionate, notwithstanding his occasional displays of infirmity,—who had quitted the world before him, and left him alone to struggle with the difficulties of government, aggravated by the incessant disorders and tumultuous spirit of those over whom God had appointed him to rule.

That Moses entertained great affection for his elder brother seems to be implied in the whole course of his history. The manner in which he introduces him in this benediction is extremely delicate and affecting. He exhibits his stern and uncompromising dignity in performing the divine will in one remarkable instance

* Numbers xx. 12, 13.

at least, though he had erred in many, describing him as disregarding all kindred affinities, applying personally to Aaron what referred literally to the tribe of which he had been so eminent an individual.

As this prophecy was intended to refer exclusively to the Levites, Moses, as it would seem, took the opportunity of introducing, incidentally as it were, his brother Aaron, by way, it may be presumed, of offering an affectionate tribute to the memory of one still dear to his heart, using his name as a symbol, or adumbration of the whole tribe, of which he was the spiritual head, and therefore its most proper representative. The terms used in the passage under examination, to characterise the conduct of the Levites in revenging upon the Israelites generally the indignity offered to God, by the worship of the golden calf, are among the strongest that could have been found. These ministers of divine wrath are represented, by a strong poetical figure, as disregarding even the entreaties of their own parents, or the still more affecting appeals of their own children, in their zeal to vindicate the insulted majesty of Jehovah. Although Aaron had grievously sinned in permitting the worship of the golden calf, the offence, though great, was no doubt less heinous on this account, that he had been compelled by his riotous countrymen to do what, probably in his heart, he disapproved ; but, urged by the apprehension of violence from that seditious people, he found it expedient to acquiesce in a breach of covenant, which he had not the courage to resist. When, however, the

hour of retribution came, he showed that he was not at all backward to sanction and assist in the severe punishment which followed at the hands of the Levites.

For they have observed thy word,
And kept thy covenant.

The Levites do not appear to have been involved in the guilt of idolatry equally with the other tribes, by comparison with whom they were strictly observant of the word and covenant of God, though some among them, as Korah, and even Aaron's own sons, had been distinguished exceptions,—distinguished in the worst sense; the former having been swallowed by an earthquake for sedition, and the latter struck dead by lightning, for offering incense in the tabernacle with strange or ordinary fire, instead of that which had been miraculously lighted upon the altar of burnt-offerings.

In the two hemistichs above quoted the gradational parallelism is manifest, both lines giving nearly the same sense, the latter, however, clearly rising with an advance of force above the former. “Word” in the first clause implies precept or command generally; but “covenant” is a compact of mutual obligation, the violation of which is one of the most signal of moral offences.

They shall teach Jacob thy judgments,
And Israel thy law :
They shall put incense before thee,
And whole burnt-sacrifice upon thine altar.

The office of instructing the people was committed to the Levites. They were to unfold to them the divine judgments and to dispense justice. As I have said before, the judges and inferior magistrates were generally elected out of this tribe. The Levites, moreover, were interpreters of the civil, as well as expounders of the sacred and of the ecclesiastical law, having received their commission from God himself to unfold the "mystery of godliness." As to them the administration of justice was generally committed, they not only taught the sons of Jacob the divine judgments, as Moses expresses it, but likewise awarded human punishments for civil and social delinquencies, and these punishments having been administered under the sanction of Jehovah, might, literally and in a primary sense, be called his judgments. Whenever, therefore, any misunderstanding of the law, whether ecclesiastical, moral, or civil, gave rise to dispute, these were settled by the Levites, who were the referees in all such cases, and their decisions final. They were in fact the legal oracles. The exposition of the Mosaic or Levitical canon, as it was afterwards called, because it contains principally the laws and regulations relating to the priests, the Levites, and the sacrifices, was likewise entrusted to them, though this was more especially confided to the priests, the prophets, and their disciples; these latter, however, with few exceptions, were either priests or Levites; it might, therefore, be truly said of this tribe—

They shall teach Jacob thy judgments,
And Israel thy law.

This distich evidently refers to the Levites generally; that which follows, to the priests in particular, who, it will be remembered, were invariably from the tribe of Levi, thus the distinction betwixt priest and Levite is clearly kept in view.

They shall put incense before thee,
And whole burnt-sacrifice upon thine altar.

“The ordinary priests served immediately at the altar, offered the sacrifices, killed and skinned them, and poured their blood at the foot of the altar. They kept up a perpetual fire on the altar of burnt-sacrifices, and in the lamps of the golden candlestick in the sanctuary. They kneaded the loaves of shew-bread, baked them, offered them on the golden altar in the sanctuary, and changed them every sabbath-day. Every day, night and morning, a priest, appointed by casting of lots at the beginning of the week, brought into the sanctuary a smoking censer of incense, and set it on the golden table, otherwise called the altar of perfumes.

“The priests were not suffered to offer incense to the Lord with strange fire; that is, with any fire but what was taken from the altar of burnt-sacrifices; (Leviticus x. 1, 2), God chastised Nadab and Abihu with severity for having failed herein. The priests and Levites waited by the week, and by the quarter, in the temple. They began their week on the sabbath, and ended it on the next sabbath (2 Kings xi. 5—7.) Moses

had fixed the age at which they were to enter on the sacred ministry, at twenty-five or thirty years, and they were to end it at fifty.” *

The distinctions here declared by Moses were continued in the tribe of Levi, without any diminution, for several centuries; and although, in process of time, they were abated in some respects, yet even up to the period of the dissolution of their national constitution, this tribe retained the chief influence in spiritual matters, and even in the civil administration.

In the distich last quoted, as well as in that which immediately precedes it, we shall detect the parallelism of gradation.

They shall teach Jacob thy judgments,
And Israel thy law :
They shall put incense before thee,
And whole burnt-sacrifice upon thine altar.

In the first two clauses the artifice spoken of is so apparent that the most heedless reader can hardly fail to observe it. It will be perceived that Jacob is put first, as is almost invariably the case in the corresponding passages, where these names occur; and the exceptions are, where an anticlimax is intended. The name of dignity, that is Israel, except in the instances just stated, is always used last, as in the present example; thus giving its due gradation of force to the parallelism. There will be noticed a marked distinction betwixt the words “judgments” and “law.” The second pair of parallel terms in this verse, the tenth

* Calmet’s Dictionary, art. Priests.

of the chapter in which they occur, the one referring to judicial judgments, that is, to God's punitive dispensations, the consequences of sin; the other, to the law delivered from Mount Sinai—that is, to the civil and moral government of the Deity, from which the issues of righteousness are to be educed. The two thus combine the entire method of Providence—the distribution of punishment to sin and of reward to righteousness; being the great cardinal divisions of providential agency. The latter, the distribution of reward, naturally takes the precedence in order of importance, though named last by the poet.

Thus the Levites were not only civil, but spiritual teachers—not only ministers of justice, but the depositaries and dispensers of spiritual wisdom; so that the phrases, although parallel, are by no means synonymous, those in the latter hemistich having a marked advance of signification. The same will be observed in the couplet which follows—

They shall put incense before thee,
And whole burnt-sacrifice upon thine altar.

Both these lines refer to the ceremonials of the temple worship; the first to bloodless oblations, the second to animal sacrifices. The two things here specified are, doubtless, meant to include the numerous rites prescribed by the Jewish formularies, and performed in the sanctuary; the least and the greatest only are mentioned—all the rest being embraced within

these two extremes. The expressions are beautifully varied and extremely significant.

They shall put incense *before thee*,

that is, in thy presence. The act of offering incense was inferior to that of offering the holocaust, or sacrifice of burnt-offering ; the first is said to be placed *before God*, the other to be burnt *upon his altar*. Here is a broad distinction, and such as gives great force to the parallelism. In the first clause the lesser oblation is offered, in the second the greater : the first only in the presence of God, that is, in the sanctuary ; the second upon his altar. The one is a preliminary oblation,—

They shall put incense before thee ;

the other a plenary sacrifice,—

And whole burnt-sacrifice upon thine altar.

Every day the priests burnt incense in the temple, morning and evening. So soon as the ministering priest entered the sanctuary, he threw the sacred perfume on the fire in his censer, which had been miraculously kindled, in order that the vapour thus exhaled should rise before him and exclude from his view the ark and propitiatory ;—those hallowed objects upon which the eyes of the multitude were not permitted to gaze.

In the Jewish temple two lambs were daily sacrificed as burnt-offerings upon the brazen altar, one in the morning, the other in the eve-

ning; the first *before* all other sacrifices, the second *after* all. The offering representative of that great expiatory sacrifice of "the lamb without spot," subsequently slain for the sins of the whole world, was undoubtedly alluded to by Moses, in recording the temple services of the Levitical priesthood. In conclusion, then, it may be remarked that the couplet last quoted, by means of the parallelism which it is made to exhibit, comprehends the whole ceremonial duties of the priesthood, as the one preceding it does the civil duties of the Levites; the one referring to the judicial, the other to the sacerdotal office.

Bless, Lord, his substance,
And accept the work of his hands :
Smite through the loins of them that rise against him,
And of them that hate him, that they rise not again.

Dr. Adam Clarke's note on the first clause of this verse is excellent. "The blessing of God to the tribe of Levi was peculiarly necessary, because they had no inheritance among the children of Israel, and lived more immediately than others upon the providence of God. Yet, as they lived by the offerings of the people and the tithes, the increase of their substance necessarily implied the increase of the people at large; the more fruitful the land was, the more abundant would the tithes of the Levites be; and thus, in the increased fertility of the land, the substance of Levi would be blessed."

And accept the work of his hands.

This is simply, ‘may the ministrations of the priests and Levites be performed at all times in such a manner as shall be acceptable in thy sight;—may they never fail in their spiritual duties towards thee.’

Smite through the loins of them that rise against him.

‘Execute thy judgments upon them who oppose thy ministers in their sacred vocation, and thus sin against thee. Such are the enemies, not only of religion, but of all virtue; they hate thy ministers because they hate thee, and are enemies to the strict but salutary morality which thou enjoimest; smite thou them, therefore, that they rise not again.’ Dur̄ell renders the latter part of the benediction thus:—

Bless, Lord, his forces,
And accept the work of his hands,
Smite through the loins of them that rise against him,
And let not his enemies rise up again.

And the following is his summary of the whole prophecy:—“Moses having finished that part of his prayer which related to Judah, enters rapidly on a new subject, and offers his petitions in behalf of his own tribe. He begins by intreating the Almighty that the sacerdotal office might continue in this tribe, in which he had been pleased to appoint it; notwithstanding that they, together with the rest of Israel, had twice very remarkably displeased him through their disobedience and want of faith. But, as they had manifested great zeal for the service

of the Lord on another remarkable occasion, and had duly punished all offenders without the least respect of persons, he prays that it might still be their province for the future, both to administer justice and to offer sacrifices ; and though they were exempted from war, yet, as the time would come when this tribe would produce some of the greatest champions whom Israel ever saw, he implores God would grant them success equal to their valour, and assist them in making an entire conquest of those enemies who would endeavour to reduce the Jewish nation to their yoke.”

Herder does not differ essentially from Durell ; he reads,—

Bless, O Jehovah, their power ;
Accept the work of their hands.
Strike down him that riseth against them,
And him that hateth them, that he rise not again.

I have already taken occasion to speak of the poetical beauties of this benediction ; they are great and paramount. I will now endeavour to point out the most prominent. I must, therefore, recapitulate. In the first clause—

Let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy holy one,

two rhetorical figures, as I have already remarked, are employed with considerable effect, the metonymy and synecdoche, the one in the words “Thummim and Urim,” which are employed to express the entire Levitical priesthood, and the other embraced in the term “holy

one," referring to Aaron, who is made to represent the tribe, of which he was so distinguished a member, a *part* being used for the *whole*, a common artifice in poetical writing; as if the poet had said—'may the sacerdotal office continue in the tribe of Levi, of which Aaron, the high-priest by divine appointment, was so bright an ornament both in his general piety and virtue.' It is astonishing what a prodigious quantity of meaning is contained in this one line. It is like a seed in the vegetable economy, from which a number of leaves, blossoms, and fruits, are generated, in that mysterious mechanism producing germination, betwixt the first bursting of the pellicle in the earth to the attainment of its maturity of formation as a prolific plant. Every word in the line is the nucleus of a train of thoughts which rise out of it, as incense from the sacred censer. Like the sybil leaves, they are capable of being expanded, by the process of logical solution, into rich and copious truths. When the film is removed, the chrysalis exhibits all the exquisite symmetry of animal organization, with the inexplicable beauty of life, motion, and volition; so when the wand of interpretation has lifted the veil of obscurity cast over the words of the inspired bard, truth appears in all the luxuriance of her perfection, as a star from its shroud of vapour which the wind has dispersed. The opening line of the blessing upon Levi has wonderful force of signification; then follows an elegant parallelism of gradation, which is followed by a climax in the four subsequent clauses

of extreme beauty, the subject of the ninth verse being represented as *disregarding* his parents, *refusing to acknowledge* his brethren, and *disowning* or *casting off* his children; each action expressed in the several hemistichs progressively rising in strength. Next follow three consecutive couplets, in each of which the gradational parallelism is shown to be present with equal clearness, though it is most skilfully varied in each pair of lines. In these the obedience of the Levites to the divine ordinances is declared, and the civil and sacerdotal duties which they shall be ultimately called upon to fulfil proclaimed as to continue in that tribe, until they shall be superseded by the spiritual obligations of a higher dispensation, in which the Levitical shall finally merge.

I may observe here how delicate a symmetry, though there be not an exact harmony of proportion, is observed in the four pair of lines quoted at the bottom of the page; they being severally composed of a long and short line, so nearly equalized in length and quantity in each couplet, as to convey to the ear, if read aloud, all but a perfectly metrical euphony. This I think will be immediately perceived by repeating the clauses with a proper attention to the pauses and emphatic terms.

Who said unto his father and to his mother,
 I have not seen him :
 Neither did he acknowledge his brethren,
 Nor knew his own children :
 For they have observed thy word,
 And kept thy covenant.
 They shall teach Jacob thy judgments,
 And Israel thy law.

A very little contrivance, with scarcely any change, might convert these hemistichs into regular verses. Even as they now stand, it is surprising how nearly the same cadence is produced in the long and short lines of this passage. I have no doubt, in the original, if the quantities of syllables could be ascertained, that the conformity and rhythm would be found perfect. The enallage of number in the fifth line, is a usage consistent with the condensed form of Hebrew writing, and though it seems harsh in our language, and often throws a veil of obscurity over the sense, the reason of its use may nevertheless be perceived. It imparts energy to the description, by the rapidity of the transition from one object to another. In the present example, much greater force of impression is given to the objects represented, by the abrupt change of the personal pronoun; “he” and “they” being thus placed, as it were, in verbal opposition, the former under a figure, the latter literally; *he* referring to Aaron, as the representative of the tribe of Levi, the individual standing personally for the whole race, and *they* to the posterity of Levi collectively.

The blessing concludes with an earnest appeal to heaven that the temporal prosperity of this tribe may be maintained by him from whom cometh every good and perfect gift, and that their ministrations, whether in the sanctuary or in the civil courts, may be acceptable to him; the poet in concluding the couplet evoking judgment upon the enemies of God and of his religion. “Smite through the loins,” is a phrase

of wonderful extent of signification ; the loins being those parts of the body in which the chief strength lies, the least injury received in them at once depriving the person so injured of all physical capability. "Smite him through the loins," is equivalent to saying, deprive him of all capacity of exertion, for any serious mischief sustained there disables the sufferer from using his nether limbs, thus rendering him comparatively helpless. The giant becomes a dwarf in strength, and the mighty man an object of compassion even to the feeble. The expression is extremely comprehensive, filling the mind, at the same time exciting the admiration, with a clear and vigorous image.

CHAPTER XXVI.

The benediction on Benjamin.

WE now come to the benediction upon Benjamin, the youngest son of Jacob, which has a more extensive application than that pronounced by his venerable ancestor, and gives a much more favourable view of the descendants of this patriarch who, after Joseph, was the favourite son of his father, though both the prophecies were alike realized in the issue. They refer to different periods; there is consequently no discrepancy between them. “And of Benjamin he said—

The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by him;
And the Lord shall cover him all the day long,
And he shall dwell between his shoulders.

The words “beloved of the Lord,” have caused much perplexity to the commentators. It appears to me that they have both a primary and secondary application. They are here, as I conceive, first applied to Benjamin personally, the favourite child of his father, “beloved of the Lord” no less than of his parent because he was a good and dutiful son. Thus the phrase might have its primary reference to Benjamin personally on account of his filial and other virtues,

and its secondary reference to the tribe generally for reasons immediately to be explained. We shall observe, all the way through these benedictions as well as through those of Jacob, that the patriarchs themselves who were the heads of the twelve tribes, are personally distinguished, though the main subjects of the blessings were their several posterities. These heads are brought directly before us at the very moment the future condition of their descendants is being predicted. We are made to look at the one through the other. The one is in fact the type of the many, the other the many so adumbrated. We thus appear to see the former on the bright speculum placed before us by the magic wand of the prophetic bard, through the long vista of the past, at the moment we are looking through the still longer and dimmer vista of the future at their vastly multiplied posterity.

The expression which has thus perplexed the commentators will, as I conceive, exhibit its own interpretation, if applied to Benjamin, as I have ventured to suggest, then to the tribe of which he was the head; for not only was he extremely beloved by his natural as well as by his heavenly father, but likewise by Joseph, that good brother, who would hardly have signalized him so greatly above his kindred had he not been at once a son and brother of rare merit. We shall remember that when Joseph entertained his brethren, "Benjamin's mess was five times as much as any of theirs;"*

* Genesis xliii. 34.

and afterwards when he distributed gifts among them, before their departure from Egypt to bring their families down to that country, "to all of them he gave each man changes of raiment: but to Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver (a large sum in those days) and five changes of raiment."*

There is, in my judgment, a most affecting interest excited in identifying the patriarchs individually with their descendants collectively; thus specifically characterizing each by a reference to its original head, that head stamping on each tribe, by a sort of reflex agency, its own peculiar and cognate identity. Great veneration was always entertained by the Jews for those distinguished forefathers who gave names to their several races, and this was certainly as strong in the days of Moses as it has been at any subsequent period.

The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by him.

The latter words of this clause, "shall dwell in safety by him," are supposed to refer particularly to the circumstance of the temple, the habitation of divine holiness, being situated in this tribe, Mount Moriah, upon which that sacred edifice was built, forming part of the portion of their inheritance. The words may likewise refer to the extraordinary valour of this tribe as the prophecy of Jacob had previously done, thus producing a close correspondence between them; inferring that they would

* Genesis xlv. 22.

protect from desecration the temple, placed in that part of the Holy Land to which they had a prescriptive right of possession, and thus "the beloved of the Lord would dwell in safety by him," that is, by the sanctuary in which the divine presence should rest, being immediately under divine protection; so that Benjamin would defend the sanctuary from violation, and the sanctuary, being the habitation of God's presence, would protect him. It is certain that the Benjamites were the most warlike of the whole community of Israel, as may be sufficiently seen in the twentieth chapter of Judges. The clause is generally interpreted as declaring the protection which God would extend to this tribe in future generations. After the schism of Jeroboam in which the Benjamites did not partake, they were associated with Judah and may be said to have merged in that tribe, for politically the two races became one, forming the kingdom of Judah, in contradistinction to that of Israel, united under the ten revolted tribes. The valour of Benjamin's posterity was mainly instrumental in preserving the independence of the former government against the united force of the large majority of their alienated kindred. That unnatural disassociation, caused by the revolt of the son of Nebat, was the proximate cause of all the disasters which afterwards befel the Hebrew nation, so clearly pointed at in that fine prophetic ode, forming the thirty-second chapter of Deuteronomy. It was a separation fatal to the future prosperity of Israel.

And the Lord shall cover him all the day long.

‘The temple, being in the portion of Benjamin, he shall have the benefit of the visible presence of God continually near him, the Shechinah or divine glory being perpetually over the propitiatory in the Holy of Holies. Thus shall he be peculiarly favoured in being under the immediate influence of that visible manifestation of Deity which God has condescended to display in the edifice dedicated to his honour and worship. This propinquity to the celestial dwelling-place upon earth, and the consequent protection afforded by it to Benjamin, shall continue all the day long, or so long as the Mosaic dispensation shall last, that is, until it shall be superseded by the christian.’ Mount Moriah, in which the temple was afterwards built, formed part of the portion of Benjamin.

And he shall dwell between his shoulders;

or in his country, as the Targum of Onkelos expounds the words. “It being in the temple and the temple in the tribe of Benjamin, where it stood upon Mount Moriah, as the head of a man doth upon his shoulders, as Dr. Lightfoot glosses in his Temple Service, p. 245, edit. 1.” (See Patrick’s note.)

“It cannot be doubted,” observes Durell, “but that Jerusalem belonged originally to this tribe, as may be seen, Joshua xviii. 28; Judges i. 21. And though in process of time it came to be generally considered as one of the cities of Judah, yet it is not improbable that when the

temple was built, the spot on which it was erected and the environs were still regarded as a part of Benjamin's portion. However, this is certain, that God intended these two tribes to share in the same fortune, and to continue the enjoyment of their property and privileges longer than any of the other tribes, as the prophecies plainly intimate; and this may be the reason why we cannot easily trace what belongs to each separate." Houbigant, after the Seventy, whose interpretation he much approves, reads as follows :—

The beloved of the Lord shall have a secure dwelling-place—
The Most High shall overshadow him;
He shall hang all the day long over his shoulders.

"In which words," he observes, "God is compared to an eagle descending from on high, hovering over the shoulders of Benjamin, and protecting him with his wings." I am disposed to concur in this exposition, it is so exquisitely poetical, yet so clear and natural. It is a magnificent image, representing with no less beauty than truth the "tender mercy" of God towards those whom he determines to succour. There is, moreover, no perplexity in this rendering. The same image too had been before employed, though with greater amplitude of detail, in chapter xxxii. 11; and if the two passages are compared, it will be at once obvious how dexterously the poet uses the same symbol of divine sustentation without servilely copying himself, both passages exhibiting the most perfect originality from the varied manner in which the

like image is introduced. In the first instance it is positively expressed and extended into the most minute detail; in the second it is only intimated and confined to one general action.

Herder has caught the spirit of this interpretation, and given it with great felicity; his remarks upon this blessing deserve notice.

The beloved of Jehovah shall dwell safely,
The Most High hovereth over him daily,
And giveth him rest between his wings.

“This blessing,” writes the eloquent German, “is tender in sentiment, and entirely changed from the character of Jacob’s. The ravening wolf is here again the same Benjamin, whom his father restrained from the hazards of a journey, and carefully commended to the guardianship of his brethren. So Moses commends him to the protecting care of Jehovah, under the frequent and favourite image of an eagle. This bird hovers over its young, supports them when about to fall, and permits them to rest upon its back between its wings. All this the lawgiver applies to Benjamin.” He says, further—“It is not shown that ‘shoulders,’ either of God or Benjamin, mean mountains, and the discourse here is not of the mountains of Benjamin between which God should dwell. Between the mountains, Moriah and Zion, even had they belonged to Benjamin, Jehovah never dwelt. There was a cleft between them, but the temple stood upon the mountain. The Hebrew text must be read here as the Seventy read it.”*

* Spirit of Hebrew Poetry, vol. ii. p. 158.

According to the interpretation of the Seventy, as adapted by Houbigant and Herder, there is not the slightest obscurity in the animated and eloquent blessing pronounced by Moses upon the posterity of Benjamin, and of the poetical beauty present in it there can be no question. This is too prominent to lie beyond the perception of the most heedless reader. Our version, undoubtedly, gives a good sense, though it is more perplexed than that proposed by the French and German commentators, which likewise differ; still, whichever interpretation is embraced,—for after all they each represent the divine protection and favour towards Benjamin in equally strong terms, though under somewhat varied aspects,—the blessing will not be essentially different. The triplet in which it is conveyed expresses three stages of the divine mercy; first, Benjamin dwelling in safety; secondly, the Lord's protecting providence, represented by his hovering over, or overshadowing him, as an eagle over its young; and thirdly, the crowning dispensation of love is consummated by giving the offspring of Jacob's beloved son rest between his shoulders or wings. This, according to Herder's rendering, is one of the most magnificent examples of climax to be found among the divine treasures of Hebrew poetry, the wealth of which is so abundant and of so rare a quality.

CHAPTER XXVII.

The benediction on Joseph.

THE blessing upon Joseph next follows, which is characterized by extraordinary sublimity. Joseph was a man eminent in his generation, highly favoured of God, and not without reason, for he was a person of distinguished integrity, morally pure almost beyond example; gifted with the rarest endowments of intellect, as good as he was wise, and entrusted with power in a measure proportioned to his wisdom and goodness. Here then was a noble subject for prophetic song, and it was evident that Moses felt this, for he has embellished it with the richest graces of the poetic art, although, as will be seen, many of the images are borrowed from Jacob's prophecy. "And of Joseph he said,"

Blessed of the Lord be his land,
For the precious things of heaven, for the dew,
And for the deep that coucheth beneath,
And for the precious fruits brought forth by the sun,
And for the precious things put forth by the moon,
And for the chief things of the ancient mountains,
And for the precious things of the lasting hills,
And for the precious things of the earth and fulness thereof,
And for the good-will of him that dwelt in the bush :
Let the blessing come upon the head of Joseph,
And upon the top of the head of him that was separated from his
brethren.

His glory is like the firstling of his bullock,
 And his horns are like the horns of unicorns :
 With them he shall push the people together
 To the ends of the earth :
 And they are the ten thousands of Ephraim,
 And they are the thousands of Manasseh.

This prophecy corresponds very nearly with that of Jacob, and almost exactly in many of the main particulars. In several instances the same terms are employed, though somewhat differently distributed, according to the more refined taste and peculiar genius of the poet. In the first hemistich a blessing is invoked upon the "land" or portion of Joseph; that is, upon the portions inherited by his sons Ephraim and Manasseh. The division of Palestine subsequently possessed by the posterity of these patriarchs, was prodigiously fertile, yielding a greater general abundance than any other district of that fertile region.

For the precious things of heaven, for the dew,
 And for the deep that coucheth beneath.

Durell reads these two clauses, and I have no doubt rightly,—

With the precious things of heaven above,
 And with the deep lying beneath ;

for in this version the correspondency of the two verses is exactly preserved, which is not the case in our translation, and the sense is maintained in Durell's reading with equal, if not

with closer fidelity. "The precious things of heaven" include both rain and dew, as well as all other atmospheric contingencies, which form the local peculiarities of climate and often essentially contribute to the productiveness of the soil, by favouring germination and consequently promoting its fecundity. The meaning of the passage appears to be, that the portion of Joseph's descendants shall be plentifully watered with rains and genial dews, besides being fructified by numerous springs gushing from the depths of the earth. An example of antithetical parallelism will be here detected, "heaven above" and "the deep lying beneath," being the phrases in which the antithesis lies. Jacob had promised similar blessings in almost precisely the same terms—

With blessings of heaven above,
Blessings of the deep that lieth under.*

It will be seen that Moses here quotes, as nearly as possible, the words of Jacob, and that he intended to present the same parallelism. Nothing can more strongly show the fertility of that portion of Judæa, inherited by the descendants of Joseph, than the expressions here employed. It was one of the most productive parts of an extremely fruitful region, and how just the representation made by Moses was, the following extract from Maundrell's Travels† will suffice to confirm. Speaking of the rocky districts of Palestine, that traveller

* Genesis xlix. 25.

† Page 65.

says—" For it is obvious for any one to observe that these rocks and hills must have been anciently covered with earth and cultivated, and made to contribute to the maintenance of the inhabitants, no less than if the country had been all plain, nay, perhaps much more; forasmuch as such a mountainous and uneven surface affords a larger space of ground for cultivation than this country would amount to, if it were all reduced to a perfect level.

" For the husbanding of these mountains, their manner was to gather up the stones, and place them in several lines along the sides of the hills in the form of a wall. By such borders they supported the mould from tumbling, or being washed down, and formed many beds of excellent soil, rising gradually one above another from the bottom to the top of the mountains.

" Of this form of culture you see evident footsteps wherever you go, in all the mountains of Palestine. Thus the very rocks are made fruitful. And perhaps there is no spot of ground in this whole land that was not formerly improved to the production of something or other, ministering to the sustenance of human life. For than the plain countries nothing can be more fruitful, whether for the production of corn or cattle, and consequently of milk. The hills, although improper for all cattle, except goats, yet, being disposed into such beds as are before described, served very well to bear corn, melons, gourds, cucumbers, and such like garden stuff, which makes the food of these for several months in the year. The most rocky parts of all.

which could not well be adjusted in that manner for the production of corn, might yet serve for the production of vines and olive-trees, which delight to extract, the one its fatness, the other its sprightly juice, chiefly out of such dry and flinty places. And the great plain joining to the Dead Sea, which, by reason of its saltness, might be thought unserviceable both for cattle, corn, olives, and vines, had yet its proper usefulness for the nourishment of bees, and for the fabrick of honey, of which Josephus gives us his testimony (*De Bell. Jud. lib. v. cap. 4.*) And I have reason to believe it, because when I was there, I perceived in many places a smell of honey and wax as strong as if one had been in an apiary. Why then might not this country very well maintain the vast number of its inhabitants, being, in every part, so productive of either milk, corn, wine, oil, or honey, which are the principal food of these eastern nations? the constitution of their bodies, and the nature of their climate inclining them to a more abstemious diet than we use in England and other colder regions." Dr. Shaw bears similar testimony.* After speaking of the vast quantities of wild honey and olive-oil produced in this fruitful region, he says,—“ The mountainous parts therefore of the Holy Land were so far from being inhospitable, unfruitful, or the refuse of the land of Canaan, that in the division of this country, the mountain of Hebron was granted to Caleb as a particular favour (*Joshua xiv. 12.*)

* Travels, p. 336, et seq.

We read likewise, that in the time of Asa, this hill-country of Judah (2 Chronicles xiv. 8,) mustered five hundred and eighty thousand men of valour; an argument beyond dispute that the land was able to maintain them. Even at present, notwithstanding the want there has been, for many ages, of a proper culture and improvement, yet the plains and valleys, though as fruitful as ever, lie almost entirely neglected, whilst every little hill is crowded with inhabitants. If this part, therefore, of the Holy Land was made up only, as some object, of rocks and precipices, how comes it to pass that it should be more frequented than the plains of Esdrachon, Ramah, Zebulon or Acre, which are all of them very delightful and fertile beyond imagination? It cannot be urged that the inhabitants live with more safety here than in the plain country; inasmuch as there are neither walls nor fortifications to secure their villages or encampments; there are likewise few or no places of difficult access, so that both of them lie equally exposed to the insults and outrages of an enemy. But the reason is plain and obvious; inasmuch as they find here sufficient conveniences for themselves, and much greater for their cattle. For they themselves have here bread to the full, whilst their cattle browse upon richer herbage, and both of them are refreshed by springs of excellent water, too much wanted, especially in the summer season, not only in the plains of this, but of other countries in the same climate. This fertility of the Holy Land, which I have been describing, is confirmed from

authors of great repute,* whose partiality cannot in the least be suspected on this account."

These accounts refer to Palestine generally, and the portion of Joseph's posterity was in the most fertile part of that eminently fruitful country. In Jacob's blessing upon this good and wise son, we find that he dwells upon his virtues with paternal pride and fondness; and the benediction of Moses is no less abundant in promises of future greatness, as if he felt a satisfaction in reflecting upon the eminent qualities of this patriarch, who certainly was the greatest man of his time, and has, from that period to the present, been justly the pride of all the Hebrew races. There is a glow and fervour throughout this prophetic blessing, which shows the inspired bard was animated with a lofty sense of his deserving, respecting whose descendants he was now delivering a solemn prediction, before he should be withdrawn from them to a world of everlasting peace—

Where the prisoners rest together;
They hear not the voice of the oppressor.†

There is an earnestness in every thought and in every expression of this prophecy, which shows that the venerable bard was strongly moved by his impressions of the eminence of him whose seed were the subjects of it.

And for the precious fruits brought forth by the sun,
And for the precious things put forth by the moon.

Moses is supposed to allude here to the annual

* See Justin Hist. lib. xxxvi. cap. 3.

† Job iii. 18.

and monthly productions of the vegetable kingdom; the first being grain, pulse, and such things as require nearly the full year to mature; the second, those flowers, vegetables, and esculents, which may be obtained monthly: but I apprehend that this distinction between *solar* and *lunar* plants was chiefly employed by the inspired lawgiver for the sake of poetical adornment, and of producing the parallelism; for, strictly speaking, there are no vegetables of any consequence that are brought forth monthly; the two phrases, however, may be said to include every variety and description of vegetable produce. The picture of fruitfulness which they combine to complete, is extremely vivid, and it was, beyond question, the poet's design to convey the strongest impression possible of the fertility of that inheritance upon which the posterity of Joseph were shortly to enter; he has, therefore, employed those terms, and resorted to that mode of poetical conformation, the best calculated to fix such an impression.

There will be observed in the couplet now under notice an inverse gradation of the terms, the parallelism, instead of being constructed according to the usual gradational form, declining into an anticlimax. It is an inversion of the ordinary arrangement, and occasionally, though by no means frequently, occurs in the poetical scriptures. In this passage the first clause has the strongest terms, which are modified instead of being advanced in the second, and our translators have marked this distinction very strongly. In the former, the phrase "*precious fruits.*" is opposed

to “precious *things*” in the latter, “*brought forth*” to “*put forth*,” and “sun” to “moon.” Here it will be admitted is a refined, and artful, but nevertheless most effective varying of the phrases. These, though apparently equivalent, will not be found so upon a nearer examination; although similar, they vary considerably in force of signification, and were no doubt designed by Moses to bear just such a difference of sense as should at once preserve the parallelism, sustain the anticlimax, and impart an elegant variety to the couplet. “Precious *fruits*,” which include all sorts of *grain*, as well as every kind of *fruit*, are the most active productions of the soil in an eastern climate, where they constitute the chief refection of the people whose religious prejudices prohibit the use, almost exclusively, of animal food. Those words, I apprehend, relate especially to the products of the land more immediately designed for the use of man: “the precious *things*” refer to those of inferior growth, assigned generally for the use of cattle, both productions being *precious*, though of superior and inferior estimation.

The influence of the moon upon vegetation, which may be confined chiefly to the night dews that fall upon the land,—for it distributes no heat with this salutary moisture—is far inferior to that of the sun, the genial warmth of which literally quickens the fruits of the earth, as chickens are hatched under the mysterious process of incubation; hence the two parallel expressions, “brought forth” and “put

forth" bear not the same degree of force in their signification, and were employed to signify two orders of production in nature, kindred indeed, but different both in kind and in degree.

I think our translators have been particularly successful in rendering this couplet. Durell does not vary much from them; still his translation is not so good as theirs: it is smoother indeed and more gracefully turned, but lacks the Hebraic character and identification of the common reading. His version is—

And with the precious fruits of the sun,
And with the precious produce of the moon.

Here the expressions are less varied and the parallel terms less distinctively marked. Herder is still less fortunate. He translates the passage—

With precious things produced by the sun,
And precious things brought forth by the moon.

In this version the two clauses are mere repetitions the one of the other, the agents of production alone breaking the exact uniformity in the sense. All the terms, save the last word in either line, are synonymous, and thus tame to the last degree. I confess I much prefer the distich as rendered by our venerable translators to either of these *improved* readings. They show in the strongest manner, by their own internal evidence, that alterations are not always improvements.

And for the chief things of the ancient mountains,
And for the precious things of the lasting hills.

Again we have the gradational parallelism, which would have been better brought out had the word "lasting" been rendered *everlasting*, for this term, though strictly signifying unceasing duration, is frequently applied to finite objects when a great lapse of time is to be expressed; it is moreover an expression of vast force and effect. The parallel terms "chief things" and "precious things," "ancient mountains" and "lasting hills," show an evident advance of emphasis in the last clause, the two latter phrases embracing a wider extent of meaning than the two former.

The "chief things" may allude to the superficial productions of the mountains, their stately forests, their majestic cedars, and other vegetable treasures which appear upon the surface, such as olives, esculents, fruits, grain and honey; the "precious things" may refer as well to various metals and gems dug from the bosom of the hills, as to springs, the great sources of fecundity. Under this view the distinction will be palpable. There can be no question as to the gradation of force from "ancient mountains" to "everlasting hills;" and few will deny that gold, silver, and gems rise above the "chief things" before enumerated as the superficial produce of the mountains, in the estimation of men.

The more elevated regions of Judæa were not only, as it would appear, fruitful in olives, vines and pasturage, but likewise yielded iron and brass; as it is stated in the eighth chapter of Deu-

teronomy,* “ For the Lord thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig-trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey; a land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack anything in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass.” There is, I think, sufficient warranty for the interpretation I have proposed, and as this distinction projects the parallelism so distinctly to view, I have no doubt it was thus intended by the inspired author of this valedictory but prophetic song. That there were mines in Palestine and Mount Libanus we are assured by ancient authors; and Aristæus, in his *History of the Seventy Interpreters*, states, that these mines continued down to the time of the Persian dominion, when the rulers of the district, acquainting the king that the expense of working the mines exceeded the profits, they were abandoned. It is probable that these aliens were unacquainted with the methods of working them with advantage, and, therefore, in their ignorance, relinquished a considerable source of wealth, only because they did not know how to possess themselves of it.

I think the beauty of those prophetic promises contained in the first three verses of this blessing, can hardly escape attention from

* Verse 7—9.

any reader of taste. The whole passage is similar to the parallel clauses in Jacob's prophecy,* but surpasses them in beautiful propriety of adaptation and symmetrical correspondency of parts. Herder has given a very poetical turn to the couplet we are now examining, varying the terms with excellent judgment, and accurate discrimination.

*The good that grows from eastern mountains,
The beautiful that springs from ancient hills.*

This is extremely happy; and the gradational parallelism is placed before us in a form of exquisite proportion and beauty, even more strongly than in our version, in which it is impossible not to trace it. The distinction between the *good* and the *beautiful*—that is, between the vegetable and metallic produce of the mountains—is most judiciously preserved, and can hardly fail to arrest the reader's admiration; that between “growing” and “springing from” is equally well sustained—*growing* upon the surface of the earth, and *springing from* beneath it; the one referring to vegetable produce, the other primarily to springs, which are the parents of rivers, and secondarily, to precious metals and gems hidden in its bosom, but exposed to view by the labours of the miner. The last pair of parallel terms are much more positively varied than in any other translation which I have seen, and speak strongly for Herder's poetical discernment.

* Gen. xlix. 25, 26.

And for the precious things of the earth and fulness thereof,
And for the good-will of him that dwelt in the bush.

“ And for the precious things of the earth,” is here contrasted with the produce of the “ ancient mountains,” and of the “ everlasting hills.” It refers to the rich productions of the level country, and “ the fulness thereof” imports the richest harvests, finest pasturage, and most plentiful vintages which a level and well watered region, with a soil of uncommon fertility, is capable of affording. Every description of fruitful land is referred to in these lines, signifying the amazing fecundity of that portion to be thenceforward possessed by the seed of Joseph.

“ That a champaign country is here referred to,” observes Durell,* “ will appear more probable from the event; for, besides the great plain near Jordan, which Joseph had in common with some other tribes, and the plain of Sharon, near the Mediterranean Sea, there seems to have been another great plain near Samaria, which Josephus calls “ the great plain of Samaria,” and near Mount Ephraim was *the valley of fatness.*”

And for the good-will of him that dwelt in the bush;

that is, for the special favour, manifested in the distribution of all those temporal blessings before enumerated, of the Lord Jehovah, the great I AM, who revealed himself to Moses on

* See his note on the place.

Mount Horeb in a flaming bush, and gave him his commission to be the future leader of the Israelites ;—who, as Dr. Adam Clarke truly and eloquently says, “has preserved and will preserve, in tribulation and distress, all who trust in Him, so that they shall as surely escape unhurt, as the bush, though enveloped with fire, was unburnt.”

This is a very delicate, and at the same time impressive allusion, on the part of Moses, to the singular providential agency of the all-merciful Jehovah, the inconceivable and incommunicable Godhead, who had appointed to the Israelites a temporal ruler to release them, aided by the miraculous intervention of him who raised the son of Amram to that responsible office, from the hard servitude which the tyranny of Pharaoh had imposed upon them. It must at once have carried the minds of his hearers back into the comparatively recent past, in which the divine mercy had been so wonderfully displayed to the unhappy bondmen of Egypt, from the appointment of Moses at Horeb to the moment of anticipated triumph, when the vastly multiplied race of Abraham were about to enter upon their long-promised possession. It was a happy stroke of art to recal to their recollections thus incidentally, as it were, this extraordinary revelation, so inseparably connected as it was with all those marvellous circumstances which followed in the land of Egypt, and subsequently in the wilderness during a term of forty years. It brought vividly to their thoughts the paternal dealing with them of that almighty Providence

whose presence had been with them throughout all their difficulties and trials. The assurance of territorial prosperity to be enjoyed by the descendants of Joseph was very properly followed by a promise of divine favour. No temporal blessings without this would be of any avail in securing the happiness of those to whom they were assured by prophecy. God's spiritual requital to man is after all the only substantial blessing in this life, and such as can alone bring him peace at the last.

Let the blessing come upon the head of Joseph,
And upon the top of the head of him that was separated from his
brethren.

The blessing here referred to is primarily that mentioned in the preceding clause,

The good-will of him that dwelt in the bush ;

and secondarily the heavenly benefactions before enumerated, which may be said to be all included in it. Moses, in fact, says,—‘may the fullest manifestation of divine favour distinguish the descendants of this patriarch, and render them eminent among the tribes.’ “Upon the top of the head” is clearly a metaphorical phrase signifying supreme eminence of distinction, as if the poet had said, ‘may these blessings appear like a glory upon his head, rendering him conspicuous among his brethren.’ Here reference is made to Joseph personally—to the political supremacy which he attained in the court of Pharaoh, and the rays of legislative wisdom which he threw round that monarch's

crown. Through the father, who was so luminous an example of political and moral ascendancy, great temporal prosperity, as well as personal distinction, was to accrue to the descendants of his sons; this eventually came to pass, for Joshua, Gideon, and Jephthah were among the distinguished descendants of that illustrious patriarch, the former being of the tribe of Ephraim, the two latter of that of Manasseh.

The words of the last clause suggest an idea of the most splendid of all earthly distinctions; a crown placed upon the top of the head, being emblematical of supremacy, is here a representative image, not only of that great celebrity as a ruler, which had been enjoyed by the best and wisest son of Jacob, but likewise of the temporal power to accrue to the future race of this great and good man “that

Was separated from his brethren.

This I understand to refer, first, to Joseph’s separation from his brethren, in consequence of their conspiracy against him, which terminated in his being sold as a slave; and secondly, in that remote issue of their unnatural barbarity, his becoming lord over the entire dominions of Pharaoh, which he governed with a capacity and statistical prudence inferior to no lawgiver whom history has recorded. He was separated from his brethren as well as from his father, for a considerable term of his life, and restored to them after an interval of great but glorious vicissitude. This separation, conceived in turpi-

tude and begun in sorrow, eventually proved the salvation of his whole family, and was one of those mysterious agencies by which providence works in advancing the destinies of nations. Moses here incidentally alludes to that remarkable event in the history of this singular people whom he had been divinely appointed to govern, as if to remind them of that act of ferocious hostility which abandoned an innocent brother to the cruelty of a tribe of slave-dealers ;—those unnatural brethren having adding the sin of falsehood to their previous crime, by stating to their disconsolate parent that his favourite son had been devoured by wild beasts.

It is surprising how aptly the more prominent points in the history of the Hebrews is introduced by the poet into these benedictions, in the most natural and easy manner too ; and yet they are so admirably timed, as no doubt to have produced the happiest effect. He merely refers to the disgraceful event above alluded to, without offensively dwelling upon it, or entering into any painful detail, but, by immediately passing to the honours which were to signalize Joseph's posterity, the more pointedly shows the heinousness of their cruelty who had acted so severely towards a brother in such favour with God, and deservedly beloved of his father.

Herder translates this last couplet,—

Let them come upon the head of Joseph,
Of him who was crowned among his brethren ;

alluding simply to the temporal supremacy of this patriarch over all the other sons of his

father ; but I think this too great a restriction of the sense. Houbigant enlarges as much as Herder restricts it, observing upon the concluding words of the couplet last quoted, as he interprets them,

Heshall be king, or the most excellent of his brethren ;

“these things are spoken, as truly as magnificently, of that Joseph concerning whom St. Matthew informs us it was foretold, ‘he shall be called a Nazarene ;’ thus referring christians to the blessings of Jacob and Moses, in both of which Joseph is called *nezir*, a Nazarene ; and understanding not that Nazareate which was afterwards celebrated among the Jews, but that of which Jacob and Moses had spoken.”

I believe both Jacob and Moses, in the parallel prophecies referring to the separation of Joseph from his brethren, to have really had no other object in view than a reference to that event which placed him into the hands of the Ishmaelite slave-dealers, and which, by a divine determination, and under a wisely directing providence, was the ultimate cause, not only of Joseph’s own personal distinction at the court of Pharaoh, but likewise of the future extraordinary aggrandizement of his family.

Before I proceed to what follows, I cannot refrain from pointing out how skilfully the gradational parallelism is brought out and sustained in this beautiful—this most expressive passage. In the first clause it will be perceived that the terms are extremely simple, though figurative ; in the second they are strongly pleonas-

tic, and most effectively amplified. The blessing is to “come upon the head;” in the parallel clause, “upon the top of the head;” Joseph is simply named in the first hemistich, in the second he is declared to be he “that was separated from his brethren;” thus, not only is this patriarch recalled personally to remembrance, but also that extraordinary event of his life from which such stupendous results in course of time accrued. It may be noticed in this noble benediction, that after the opening line—

Blessed of the Lord be his land,

there follow five couplets consecutively, enumerating the territorial blessings which should be ultimately enjoyed by the posterity of Joseph. In these couplets collectively, two forms of parallelism may be traced; the first, second, and fourth, exhibiting the antithetical form already described,* the third and fifth the gradational.† In the fourth couplet the parallelism is not quite so obvious as in the other four, but although not strongly marked in the words, it is decidedly so in the sense, which is perfectly antithetical in the two lines composing this very emphatic passage.

And for the precious things of the earth and fulness thereof,
And for the good-will of him that dwelt in the bush :

or in other words, for thus I think the lines may be fairly interpreted—

* Vol. i. page 60.

† Ibid, 59.

For the best productions of the earth where it is most fruitful,
And for the merciful favour of heaven where it is most beneficial.

These earthly and heavenly dispensations are obviously contrasted, both, nevertheless, being obtested upon the head of Joseph: I apprehend it will be admitted that the sense is distinctly antithetical, and that the parallelism, though delicately, is positively manifested.

His glory is like the firstling of his bullock,
And his horns are like the horns of unicorns:
With them he shall push the people together
To the ends of the earth:
And they are the ten thousands of Ephraim,
And they are the thousands of Manasseh.

The bullock, in ancient times, was held to be an emblem of magnificence, being considered by the Israelites superior to all other domestic animals in beauty as well as in usefulness. Bochart has shown* that among the ancients a young bullock was made the symbol of sovereign dominion. Taking up the supposition that it was so applied by Moses, "the firstling of his bullock" may refer to the bullocks of Bashan, this district,—remarkable for producing the finest breeds of cattle, especially oxen, and ultimately forming part of the inheritance of Joseph's descendants,—being in the half tribe of Manasseh.

And his horns are like the horns of unicorns.

Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, are

* Hieroz, lib. ii. cap. 29.

here compared to the horns of the reem. A horn is emblematical of strength, and the reem, as has been already shown,* is not only a prodigiously strong, but likewise an extremely fierce creature. Ephraim and Manasseh are compared to the horns of this animal, because the descendants of both were very powerful and populous races. They produced some of the most eminent Jewish heroes and princes, among whom may be reckoned Joshua, Gideon, and Jephthah.

The tribe of Manasseh was divided in the Holy Land, one half settling east of Jordan, occupying the country of Bashan, from the river Jabbok to Mount Libanus; the other half settled west of Jordan, possessing the country lying betwixt the portions of Ephraim and Issachar. The Ephraimites had their inheritance between the Mediterranean sea west, and the river Jordan east.† The ark and the tabernacle remained, for a considerable time, at Shiloh, which was in the portion of Ephraim. After the separation of the ten tribes, the seat of the government of Israel was in the inheritance of Joseph's younger son, and is frequently called by his name.

The comparisons in the first pair of lines last quoted, are extremely vivid;—the whole passage is one of great energy and spirit. The picture which it realizes to the imagination is animated in the highest degree. Every word

* Vol. i. pp. 540—551.

† Joshua xvi. 5.

is an intelligible accessory, communicating a perceptible influence to the combined spirit and power of the whole. There is an evident advance of sense in the second clause. In the first, the glory of Joseph's descendants is compared to the beauty, activity, and courage of a bullock; in the second, their power to the strength and fierceness of the reem; the former being symbolical of kingly splendour, the latter of sovereign domination. Magnificence is adumbrated by the one, power by the other.

In the original Hebrew the word translated unicorns, is in the singular number, which has been declared to be decisive against the reem being the rhinoceros, that animal having but one horn; and it was probably to meet this anticipated objection that the pious men who contributed their labours to form our present authorized version of the Bible, put the term, in their translation, in the plural number; it is, however, well known to all modern naturalists, and was, undoubtedly, equally well known to Moses, that the rhinoceros,—the animal I suppose the reem to be,—of Africa, has *two* horns, one longer than the other. Moses having dwelt so long in Egypt, and being master of all the various learning of that ancient nation, could not have been ignorant of its existence; he may, consequently, in the passage just referred to, allude to the two-horned rhinoceros, an animal sufficiently common in the vast swamps and forests of Africa. Thus, then, it will appear that the clause in which our

translators have inserted the plural noun, unicorns, might have been rendered with very just propriety,

And his horns are like the horns of the reem,

which undoubtedly would have given a truer sense than that existing in the passage as it now stands.

Dr. W. C. Taylor, the author of a very interesting little volume, entitled “Illustrations of the Bible from the Monuments of Egypt,” has endeavoured to show—but, as I think, unsatisfactorily, that the reem of scripture is the giraffe or cameleopard. His *proof* here follows:—
“The Egyptian monuments of the chase enable us to explain a passage in the book of Job which has perplexed the commentators. Amongst the animals mentioned as illustrative of the wisdom and power of Providence, is one called, in Hebrew, a reem—a word which literally signifies “the tall animal.” It is thus described in scripture:—

Will the reem be willing to serve thee,
Or abide by thy crib?
Canst thou bind the reem with his band in the furrow?
Or will he harrow the valleys after thee?
Wilt thou trust him, because his strength is great?
Or wilt thou leave thy labour to him?
Wilt thou believe him, that he will bring home thy seed,
And gather it into thy barn?*

“Our translators have rendered the word reem—unicorn; which is absurd. Some commenta-

* Job xxxix. 9—12.

tors assert that it is the rhinoceros, or the buffalo, because the cognate Arabic word is sometimes applied to a species of gazelle ; and the Arabs frequently speak of oxen and stags as one species. But neither the rhinoceros nor the buffalo can be called a tall animal ; and the analogy between either of them and any species of gazelle with which we are acquainted, would be very difficult to demonstrate. But we find, upon the monuments, an animal *fulfilling all the conditions of the description*, and that is the giraffe, which occurs several times among the articles of tribute brought to the Pharaohs from the interior of Africa.”*

Seldom has there, in my opinion, been a greater failure of proof than is here exhibited. How can the giraffe be said to “fulfil all the conditions” of a description which characterizes his *strength as great* ? and not only so, but implies that he is indomitable, which naturally presupposes fierceness ; for these are qualities always allied in brutes of an intractable, nature—nay they are positively indicated by the poet, as it is asked if the reem can be yoked to the plough or attached to the harrow. The very questions and manner of them point to an indocile and savage animal ; since the obvious reply to them would be, no ; and why ? because the reem could not be subdued to such rustic servitude as is performed by the servile and disciplined steer, but would not become the mighty

* The Bible illustrated by Egyptian Monuments, pp. 17, 18.

giant of the forest, whose neck had never been galled by the yoke of husbandry.—How does Dr. Taylor show that the giraffe “fulfils all the conditions of the description” in the passage from Job, which he has selected for the settlement of this long disputed and still agitated question? Strength is assuredly not an attribute of the animal declared so confidently by the learned critic to be the reem; on the contrary, it is physically weak, and constitutionally delicate, timid in the extreme by natural temperament, and yet it is said by the author of “Illustrations of the Bible from the Monuments of Egypt,” to “fulfil all the conditions of a description,” which manifestly refers to a creature not only of great power, but likewise of great ferocity, the former being broadly asserted and the latter to be fairly deduced from the whole scope of the context; for here is the gist of the divine interrogation; ‘Wilt thou force the reem, possessed of such uncommon strength, and displaying on all occasions the most indomitable ferocity, to perform the duties of the domestic ox? Wilt thou bind such an animal in the furrow? Wilt thou persuade him to submit his proud neck to thy yoke all day? Canst thou make him go to plough, or will he draw the harrow over thy lands?’ The assumption, from the manner in which these questions are proposed in the text is, that it would be impossible; but where would be the difficulty in reducing a timid tractable creature like the giraffe to such a state of agricultural discipline? Would he be likely to offer any effectual resistance, if he

were harnessed to the plough or to the harrow ? The fair inference from this obvious induction of particulars indisputably is, that the animal referred to in the thirty-ninth chapter of Job, under the designation of reem, was a creature of prodigious might and unsubduable ferocity. Let us only apply to other passages in scripture in which this animal is mentioned, and the same attributes must be inferred. We find nothing like timidity, or acquiescence to the dominancy of a superior agent ; the permanent features are strength and fierceness. In Balaam's third prophecy* the reem is mentioned in the following emphatic terms :—

God brought him forth out of Egypt ;
He hath as it were the strength of an unicorn (reem) :
He shall *eat up* the nations his enemies,
And shall *break their bones*,
And *pierce them through with his arrows*.

Can this quotation possibly apply to the giraffe ? unquestionably not. The dullest apprehension cannot be blind to a fact so broadly manifest. Is not the reem in Balaam's prophecy, clearly and beyond all possibility of question or of cavil, a creature of exceeding strength, and ungovernable temperament, as well as of great voracity, having a fierce pleasure in destruction ? else why are the images of “ eating up his enemies,” of “ breaking their bones,” and “ piercing them through with his arrows ” employed ? Do not these expressions denote voracity, power, a savage delight in destruction ? and, as I have else-

* Numbers xxiv. 8.

where shown,* the rhinoceros is not only the most voracious of quadrupeds, but likewise the strongest, excepting only the elephant, and most ferocious.

How does Isaiah introduce the reem? as a creature of superior power and fierceness; for it is placed before bullock and bulls, as exceeding either in both.

And the *reems* shall come down with them,
 And the bullocks with the bulls;
 And their land shall be soaked with blood,
 And their dust made fat with fatness.
 For it is the day of the Lord's vengeance,
 And the year of recompences for the controversy of Zion.†

In this extract the prophet contrasts the fierce and powerful animals with the weaker and more gentle, that is, the wild with the domestic; rams and goats being mentioned in the preceding verse, representing all ranks and sorts of people, as Bishop Lowth observes, who shall be brought down like tame beasts to the sacrifice and like wild beasts to the slaughter, "and their land shall be soaked with blood." I think it must be admitted by every candid reasoner, from what is said of the reem in the two passages quoted from the prophecies of Balaam and of Isaiah, and even in that extract out of Job, that it is not possible this animal should be the giraffe. The whole stress of Dr. Taylor's argument in favour of his reading is laid upon the bare fact, that the Hebrew word signifies *a tall animal*. But what does this prove? Surely not that the giraffe is the only *tall* animal of the brute

* Vol. i. chap. 93.

† Isaiah xxxiv. 7, 8.

creation. It would be just as good proof that a dray horse must be an elephant because it might chance to be described as a *large* animal, and no one, I apprehend, will deny that it is the latter, though it certainly is not the former. Will Dr. Taylor say that the elephant is not a tall animal, or that the rhinoceros is not a tall animal, because the giraffe happens to be taller than either? Although height is not the distinguishing quality of the rhinoceros, yet it will hardly be disputed that he is tall as well as huge, by comparison with the vast majority of the animal races? Can any one truly affirm that a stork is not a tall bird, because it is not so tall as the ostrich? But waving this argument altogether, might not the term "tall animal," in the Hebrew, be meant to include both height and bulk? Might it not be intended to express general dimensions rather than particular? It might be used as a synecdoche to embrace the entire notion of size as well as of stature, for these things are extremely common in the Hebrew writings, which are very fertile in such and similar expedients. Besides, do we not frequently apply the epithet "noble" to brute creatures, not to express nobility, but bulk? Shakspeare employs the word *tall* in the sense of sturdy. "I swear thou art a tall fellow of thy hands;"* and it has been the practice of all times before and since Shakspeare's, to warp words from their literal meaning when any rhetorical advantage was to be gained by such transmutation. Can an argument

* Winter's Tale, act v. scene 2.

then be reasonably grounded upon any single term that may be used in more than one sense, and a question that has perplexed the greatest Hebrew scholars for the last ten centuries be thus easily and categorically decided? Neither Ben Maimon, who settled in Egypt, and who must therefore have been well acquainted with the existence and character of the giraffe, nor any other learned rabbin, has pointed out this gentle creature as the reem of the Hebrew bards. So far from Dr. Taylor bringing proof to substantiate his decision, he merely rests it upon his own grave avouchment. I do not hesitate to arraign his determination of a widely admitted difficulty, upon the simple ground that the giraffe bears no resemblance whatever to the reem of scripture. Now the rhinoceros, on the contrary, positively does “fulfil *all* the conditions of the description” in Job and elsewhere, of that unknown creature, being not only a *tall*, but likewise a very huge,—a very powerful,—a very ferocious, and excessively voracious animal; while the giraffe only fulfils *one* condition, that of being tall, and is, in every other respect altogether oppugnant to the reem of Holy Writ. Even Dr. Taylor’s own quotation from Job decides at once against him, showing as plainly as words can do that the giraffe could not possibly be the reem.

Wilt thou trust him because his strength is great?

How can this question apply to a weak, timid animal, and one of the most delicate in

constitution among the numerous races of dumb creatures?

I have only just seen Dr. Taylor's volume, or should have added these strictures to what I have already said upon the twenty-fourth chapter of Numbers.

Although I have ventured to dissent in a matter of considerable importance from the able, learned, and instructive author of "Illustrations of the Bible from the Monuments of Egypt," I must, nevertheless, do him the justice to say, that his volume is full of valuable information, and is a book which ought to be in every one's hands. It exhibits considerable erudition, a well regulated acquaintance with the subjects treated of, laborious investigation, and accurate information; at the same time that it furnishes many new and important evidences of the unimpeachable integrity of scripture history. I should not have stopped to notice his little hallucination respecting the reem, had I not felt myself called upon to show that the *absurdity* of our version may be exceeded by rash and injudicious guesses.

I return now, after a somewhat long, but, I trust, not altogether useless digression, to the benediction of Moses upon Joseph.

With them he shall push the people together
To the ends of the earth.

This clause is supposed to refer to the victories subsequently obtained by Joshua, who was of the tribe of Ephraim, over the Canaanites. He drove them with great slaughter to the ex-

tremity of their land, for "the ends of the earth" simply signify the borders of Canaan. The Jerusalem Targum gives the following excellent gloss. "For these are the great men of the Amorites whom Joshua, the son of Nun, slew, who was of the tribe of Ephraim; and the captains which Gideon, the son of Joash, slew, who was of the tribe of Manasseh." The image of conquest is exceedingly fine; it is that of a powerful and ferocious creature pushing with his horns every opposing object; destroying or dispersing all before him, and pursuing the inhabitants to the extreme limits of their land.

And they are the ten thousands of Ephraim,
And they are the thousands of Manasseh.

The two horns undoubtedly represent the tribes descended from Joseph's two sons, verifying the prophecy of Jacob, signified by the imposition of hands upon their heads, that the younger should be more powerful than the elder; which is confirmed in the benediction of Moses, who mentions the *ten* thousands of Ephraim, and the *thousands* of Manasseh. And how completely does this justify the presumption that the reem in this blessing is the African rhinoceros, which, as I have before stated, has two horns, the one being many times larger than the other; thus at once substantiating the comparison of the text, and presenting a just image of the stronger and weaker, in the "ten thousands of Ephraim" and the "thousands of Manasseh."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The benedictions upon Zebulun, Issachar, and Gad.

IN the next benediction, Zebulun and Issachar, the two younger sons of Leah, are classed together, because, says Dodd, they were uterine brothers : but this is no good reason, since Leah having had six sons, there were consequently four other brothers by the same mother ; it is therefore more likely to have been because their portions were near each other : they were territorial neighbours, as well as uterine brothers, and the former I apprehend to have been the main reason why they were united by Moses in his blessing. Although Issachar was the senior, he is placed last, as Jacob had before done, probably because he held an agricultural people in less esteem than a commercial, which the descendants of Zebulun and of Issachar respectively were. The one stands higher in the scale of national distinction than the other, commerce opening wide that unbounded field of international communication, which places at the disposal of all the resources severally enjoyed by each ; thus ultimately producing a vast aggregate of civilization and political wisdom.

“ And of Zebulun he said,”—

Rejoice, Zebulun, in thy going out ;
 And, Issachar, in thy tents.
 They shall call the people unto the mountain ;
 There they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness :
 For they shall suck of the abundance of the seas,
 And of treasures hid in the sand.

We shall find upon comparison that these two blessings correspond precisely with those delivered by Jacob upon the same patriarchs. Their immediate progenitor says of Zebulun,*

Zebulun shall dwell at the haven of the sea ;
 And he shall be for an haven of ships ;

and Moses says, with the same spirit of prophecy, though at a less remote time,—

Rejoice, Zebulun, in thy going out ;

that is, from those havens alluded to by Jacob, on commercial speculations, calculated to increase the prosperity of a people dwelling near the Mediterranean sea ; the portion of this tribe extending from thence on the west to the lake of Gennesaret on the east.

And, Issachar, in thy tents.

This refers to their agricultural habits, living in tents, which were easily removed from place to place, like the primitive nomads, for the more convenient feeding of their flocks and herds. Tents were in those early times in the east the usual, as they are even at this day the frequent, habitation of those who till the soil. In the days of Moses, and long subse-

* Genesis xlix. 13.

quently, they were especially distinguished as an agricultural people.

They shall call the people unto the mountain ;

that is, as Dr. Adam Clarke* supposes, with great probability, though the passage will bear a different interpretation, “ there, by their traffic with the gentiles, they shall be the instruments in God’s hands of converting many to the true faith, so that instead of sacrificing to idols, they should offer sacrifices of righteousness.” The couplet is thus paraphrased in the Jerusalem Targum : “ Behold the people of the house of Zebulun shall be ready to go to the mount of the holy house of the Lord.” “ Or by the people,” says Bishop Patrick, in his note on the place, “ perhaps he means the gentiles, their neighbours, whom they should endeavour to bring to the service of the true God, which was especially fulfilled when Christ came. (Matt. iv. 15, 16.)

For they shall suck of the abundance of the seas,
And of treasures hid in the sand.

This couplet applies to Zebulun only, who shall become prosperous from successful commerce.

And of treasures hid in the sand.

“ By which,” observes Dr. Durell, “ some understand the art of making glass from sand. Jonathan paraphrases the words thus : “ They shall dwell near the great sea, and feast on the tunny fish, and catch the *cholson* or *murex*,

* See his Note.

with whose blood they will die of a purple colour the threads of their cloths; and from the sand they will make looking-glasses, and other utensils of glass." "Several ancient writers," says Dr. Adam Clarke, "inform us, that there were havens in the coasts of the Zebulunites in which the vitreous sand, or sand proper for making glass, was found."—(See Strabo, lib. xvi. See also Pliny Hist. Nat. lib. xxxvi. cap. 26. Tacitus Hist. lib. v. cap. 7.) The words of Tacitus are remarkable. "The river Belus falls into the Jewish sea, about whose mouth those sands, mixed with nitre, are collected, out of which glass is formed, or which is melted into glass. Some think that the celebrated shell-fish called *murex*, out of which the precious purple dye was extracted, is here intended by the 'treasure hid in the sand': this also Jonathan introduces in this verse. And others think that it is a general term for the advantages derived from navigation and commerce."

The exposition of Calmet of this prophecy is clear and judicious: "It means," he says, "that these two tribes, being at the greatest distance north, should come together to the temple at Jerusalem, to the holy mountain, and should bring with them such of the other tribes as dwelt in their way; and that occupying part of the coast of the Mediterranean, they should apply themselves to trade and navigation, and to the melting of metals and glass, denoted, by those words, *treasures hid in the sand*. The river Belus, whose sand was very fit for making glass, was in this tribe." Of Belus, the same writer

says, this is “ a little river of Judæa, which falls into the Mediterranean, about two furlongs from Ptolemais. Pliny says, lib. xxxvi. cap. 26, it rises from a lake, and does not run above four miles. Its waters are not good to drink; its bottom is marshy; but the water of the sea, flowing into its channel, washes the sand, and of this they make glass. The bank from whence the sand is taken for this use is not above five hundred paces in extent; and though, for many ages so much has been carried away, yet it remains inexhaustible. Josephus and Tacitus, lib. v., speak of it as well as Pliny; but the authors who treat of the holy wars take no other notice of the sands of Belus than of something then out of use, and known only by the writings of the ancients. It is said the making glass originated from this river.”*

Houbigant remarks on this prophecy, that “ Moses preserves the same order with Jacob, naming the youngest first, and for the same reason. The youngest was to rejoice in *his going out*, or departure; but the elder *in his tents*; that is, the Jews, who were the elder, were not to leave their tents when becoming Christians, because Christ came *to fulfil the law*, not to *dissolve it*; but the church of the *gentiles*, the younger, could not rejoice unless she forsook her tents, rejecting the worship of false gods, and turning herself to the true religion, in which religion both of them *call to the mountains, and offer the sacrifices of righteousness*

* Calmet's Dic. art. Belus.

That the legal sacrifices are not meant, appears from hence, that it was not the office of the tribes of Zebulun and Issachar to call men *to the mountain* of Jerusalem to offer sacrifices; much less *the people*, which word is never applied to the Jewish nation alone; for that it is plain this mountain can mean no other than the Christian church."

The poetic beauty of this prophecy is eminently great. It is figurative in the very extreme, and yet so condensed that numerous thoughts are made to rise out of a single expressed idea, which seems to fructify into many from its own exuberant and communicative vitality; so that much more is conveyed to the mind than is really declared. How extremely elegant and comprehensive is the first short couplet?

Rejoice, Zebulun, in thy going out;
And, Issachar, in thy tents.

Here a vivid perception is first conveyed to the mind of the maritime character of the Zebulunites, their activity in commercial enterprise, their daring spirit; signified by their quitting those havens of the Mediterranean sea which belonged to their lot in the division of Canaan, on expeditions of prosperous traffic, and the prosperity naturally accruing from such energy of adventurous speculation. Next we seem to behold the tribe of Issachar in their moveable dwellings tending their flocks and herds in all the quietude of pastoral contentment, or cultivating the prolific soil for the ripening of those

harvests which shall return them "some sixty and some a hundred fold," at their appointed season. The opposition of character, too is extremely striking, between the activity of pursuit manifested by the descendants of Zebulun and the quiet, unvaried but sustained industry of those of Issachar. Mercantile speculation and agricultural management are the two dominant ideas brought into immediate approximation, each suggesting its own appropriate and kindred reflections. Both the posterities of the patriarchs named are bid rejoice in their respective callings, prosperity being promised to each.

They shall call the people unto the mountain ;
There they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness.

In the first clause of this couplet, by an elegant metonymy, "mountain" is put for the temple at Jerusalem, that sacred edifice being erected upon Mount Moriah, which formed a part of Mount Sion, being in fact one of the cones of the same hill; thus the mountain upon which the sanctuary was built is used in the prophecy for the sanctuary itself. Both Zebulun and Issachar were to offer "sacrifices of righteousness" upon the mountain. The one should bring the offerings of successful enterprise, the other those oblations of clean beasts enjoined by the Hebrew formularies. In the last two clauses quoted of this combined benediction, there is so near a relation between them as to suggest the idea of a parallelism although it is not very perfectly developed. It is said

that they shall call people, or bring worshippers to the temple, and that they shall there “offer the sacrifices of righteousness;” that is, they shall effect the one by performing the other. Here the cognation in sense of the two clauses cannot escape notice, there being an immediate though latent connexion between them; they are united by a strong and inseparable link of association.

For they shall suck of the abundance of the seas,
And of treasures hid in the sand.

The term “suck” is a strong and emphatic metaphor, representing with extreme relevancy of illustration, the perseverance of the tribe of Zebulun, in availing themselves of those numerous advantages which their maritime situation laid open to them. The poet in fact declares that they shall derive all the benefit offered by their position near the sea, and turn even the sands of their coasts to a profitable account. The whole passage is highly figurative, but strongly gives out the character of the Zebulunites, who were bold speculators as well as hardy mariners and courageous warriors; for of their bravery and military conduct an account is given in the ode composed by Deborah the prophetess, upon the victory obtained by her general, Barak, over Sisera, commander of the forces of Jabin, king off Canaan.

Zebulun and Naphtali were a people
That jeoparded their lives unto the death
In the high places of the field.*

* Judges v. 18.

We see strongly the enterprising spirit of this tribe in the brief but characteristic sketch given by the Hebrew lawgiver, who with singular felicity of description brings them to the reader's imagination with a vivid energy of truth no less eloquent than impressive. The couplet upon which I have been enlarging shows that the posterity of Zebulun were not only successful merchants but prosperous artizans, the manufacture of glass being in those days exceedingly lucrative.

Next follows the benediction upon Gad :—

Blessed be he that enlargeth Gad :
 He dwelleth as a lion,
 And teareth the arm with the crown of the head.
 And he provided the first part for himself,
 Because there, in a portion of the lawgiver, was he seated ;
 And he came with the heads of the people,
 He executed the justice of the Lord,
 And his judgments with Israel.

The first five lines of this benediction relate to a past transaction, the last three are prophetic. This warlike tribe having applied to Moses for the territory of Sihon, king of the Amorites, whom they had been mainly instrumental in subduing, and obtained it, is not unaptly compared to a lion resting after being satiated with its prey. The Hebrew bard seems indirectly to commend their prudence in having chosen so extensive and so productive a tract of land for themselves, although it was a border country, and therefore open to continual incursions from neighbouring foes. He concludes with reminding them of the condition upon which their grant of territory

was based, namely, that after they had built cities for their families, erected folds for their flocks, and stalls for their herds, they should join the armies of Israel in their approaching conquests, and not return to their homes until they had completed the subjugation of Canaan—that idolatrous and devoted land. Conformable to the ideas given in this general summary of the sense of the passage, Durell renders it as follows :—

Blessed is Gad with a large country :
 He hath rested as a lion,
 And hath torn the shoulder with the head :
 For he provided the first for himself.
 When there, in the decreed portion, he was secured ;
 Then he went with the heads of the people ;
 He executed the righteousness of the Lord,
 And his judgments with Israel.

That the portion of Gad was a large country, will appear to any one who examines it by the map. How perfectly this tribe answered to the comparison of a lion resting after being satiated with its prey, will appear from 1 Chronicles v. 18, and xii. 8. “Tearing the arm,” or the shoulder, “with the crown of the head,” implies the destruction of the princes of Canaan with their power ; for princes are the *arms* or *members* of the state, and kings are the *head*. What “the righteousness of the Lord” and “his judgments” were, the context plainly points out ; namely, the extirpation of the seven nations of Canaan, whose sins being grown to maturity, called aloud for the hand of justice to root them

out before they spread their baleful influence further.*

Blessed be HE that enlargeth Gad :

that is, Jehovah, who alone can enlarge or reduce, exalted and enlarged this tribe under the judicial legislation of Jephthah, who, after a desperate conflict with the Amorites, defeated them and ravaged their country. The words may likewise refer to the defeat mentioned by Jacob in his benediction upon this patriarch :—

Gad, a troop shall overcome him.

This tribe, however, was always distinguished for its courage and military conduct.

He dwelleth as a lion.

This confirms the last observation. Secure from the molestation of enemies by whom they were surrounded, the courage and warlike capacity of the Gadites became so notorious and so dreaded, that those enemies were afraid to disturb them. They consequently suffered comparatively little molestation.

He teareth the arm with the crown of the head.

Such is his desperate valour and superior conduct, that he destroys nobles and even princes, these being respectively signified by the symbolical terms, “arm,” and “crown of the

* See Dodd's note.

head;" he spares neither rank nor condition. The expressions here employed forcibly depict the military prowess of the Gadites, which was great, as we learn from the first of Chronicles xii. 8. "And of the Gadites there separated themselves unto David, into the hold to the wilderness, men of might, and men of war fit for the battle, that could handle shield and buckler, whose faces were like the faces of lions, and were as swift as roes upon the mountains." This description of the inspired chronicler beautifully confirms the propriety of the strong comparisons employed by Moses to represent the eminent bravery and indomitable determination of this tribe.

And he provided the first part for himself.

After the defeat of Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, the king of Bashan, Gad and Reuben, two of the most warlike among the races of Israel, desired to have their portion first, on the east of Jordan, on account of its being favourable for pasturing their cattle. This request was granted by their lawgiver on condition that they would accompany the other tribes, and assist in conquering the country on the other side of the river. Thus Gad

Provided the first part for himself.

He received with Reuben a division of territory before any of the other families. He settled himself in the conquered lands of Sihon, which were well adapted to the grazing of his ex-

tensive flocks and herds; the soil producing abundance of rich grass and other aliment for cattle, of which the Gadites had a great quantity.

Because there, in a portion of the lawgiver, was he seated.

The distribution of territory to Gad, Reuben, and Manasseh, was made by Moses, but to all the other tribes by Joshua, after the conquest of Canaan: so that Gad having received his portion from the great lawgiver personally, “a portion of the lawgiver” will signify that part of the country beyond Jordan, upon which Moses entered, and having conquered it with the assistance of these tribes, divided it between Gad, Reuben, and Manasseh; in contradistinction to the territory on this or the Canaanitish side of the river distributed by Joshua to the remaining tribes.

And he came with the heads of the people.

This is spoken prophetically, while the preceding clauses clearly refer to a past transaction, pointing to Gad’s fulfilment of his promise to assist his brethren in the conquest of that territory promised to them for an inheritance, which the Gadites afterwards performed with scrupulous regard to their pledge made to Moses, as may be assumed from Joshua i. 12, *ad fin.*

The Gadites having made proper arrangements for the security of their families, and their “much cattle,” in the newly acquired possessions granted to them by Moses, accompanied the other tribes, and assisted in the

conquest of that land to be divided among them for an inheritance for ever.

He executed the justice of the Lord,
And his judgments with Israel ;

that is, in conjunction with the other families, the descendants of Gad expelled the idolatrous Canaanites from their land, executing upon them the divine *justice* by conquering them, and the divine *judgments* by slaying them. It will be observed that only the last three hemistichs of this benediction are prophetic. Moses bore testimony to what he knew of this tribe, that they were eminently brave, having furnished troops on whom he could rely, for they had already performed many signal military achievements. They had, no doubt, as well as the Reubenites, particularly distinguished themselves in the conquest of the territories of Sihon and of Og, and in consequence, the vanquished land was, at their request, assigned to them. The prophetic portion of this blessing, as has been shown, was strictly fulfilled under Joshua.

The poetical embellishment in this benediction will be found not inferior to that in any of the foregoing in magnificence and beautiful propriety of adaptation. Almost every phrase is figurative, each forming a grand accessory to the whole picture, which comes out before us in the most glowing hues that words can produce. Some of the metaphors, though as strong as language can convey, are nevertheless uncommonly appropriate and original ; neither does

their extreme vigour in the slightest degree abate the high qualities exhibited in this exquisite composition. Observe in the second hemistich how admirably the image of the lion is varied from the same comparison employed by Jacob and Balaam, by the action under which it is represented, "tearing the arm with the crown of the head." The lordly beast does not condescend to touch the nether extremities, but first fixes its claws in the shoulders of its vanquished prey, and then tears the crown of the head. Here are symbolized the most dignified among the enemies of Gad with whom the warlike descendants of that patriarch had contended, their nobles, their chiefs, and sovereign princes. In the fourth clause—

And he provided the first part for himself,

the image of the lion is still carried on with singular distinctness of allusion. The noble brute, sovereign even in his appetites, reserves the superior part of his victim for himself, the shoulders and head, leaving the inferior portion to the vultures, jackals, and carnivorous creatures of a baser kind which follow the lion at a distance as he prowls for prey, satisfied to devour what he leaves. Thus it will be found, that when the Hebrew poets repeat the same image, they diversify it by the new and striking positions into which it is placed—by the evolution of some specific attribute by which the thing represented is thrown out into the strongest point of view.

Because there, in a portion of the lawgiver, was he seated.

Here the image is dropped, and the figurative succeeded by the literal; this and the subsequent portion of the benediction, which is prophetic, bearing a marked contrast with that relating to matters of already known and established fact. The change of style from the metaphorical to the literal, thus distinguishing between ascertained and prophetic truths, is as judicious as it is beautiful. It is in this place, however, an inversion of the general order; language highly figurative being usually employed to shadow out prophetic events, and literal terms to exhibit matters of authenticated fact; but the change is justified here by the prior description requiring strong terms to convey a full impression of the character of Gad's posterity, and of their deeds of prowess. The reference is to great and startling incidents,—the acquisition of territory, the overthrow of princes, and the routing of armies. In the last three hemistichs, as if by way of repose from the extreme vigour of the five preceding, the aid of metaphoric and other poetical adornments is abandoned, thus showing a strongly contrasted distinction between the predictive and narrative portions. The clauses, embracing the former though unembellished by poetical imagery, are nevertheless marked by an earnest and graceful simplicity, which subsides into the sweet relief of repose, after the stirring energy and emphatic power of delineation displayed in the part immediately preceding. The “justice” and “judgments” are with

most judicious propriety not detailed; so that the active desire of the Gadites to perform their duty to God by executing their covenant with Moses, and their unanimous character as men of unflinching bravery and determined enterprise, are depicted without a numerical introduction of those terrible acts of extermination in which they were engaged with the other tribes, when they subsequently executed God's judgments upon the devoted Canaanites.

Herder's version of this blessing is, I think, admirable. The sense is not only clearly brought out, but vigorously sustained, without marring the exquisite imagery introduced by the inspired poet with such delightful effect. With the following extract from Herder's work* I shall conclude this chapter.

Blessed be God who hath enlarged Gad :
 He dwelleth as a lion, the arm and the head are his prey.
 The first spoil of conquest he chose for himself,
 Because the portion of his princes was safe.
 Yet will he march onward with the host,
 To finish the wars of Jehovah,
 And to execute the judgments of God
 With Israel.

* Spirit of Hebrew Poetry, vol. ii. p. 161.

CHAPTER XXIX.

The benedictions upon Dan and Naphtali.

IN Jacob's prophetic blessing upon Dan, he represents the descendants of that patriarch under the figure of a serpent, whose dominant characteristic appears to be cunning. This is the horned serpent, or cerastes, which is described by the great Roman naturalist Pliny, as hiding its whole body in the sand, showing only its horns, as a decoy, to entrap small birds and other prey. These venomous reptiles coil themselves in the traveller's path, biting the heels of his horse, causing it to rear and throw its rider. This prefigures the warlike stratagems that would be resorted to by the tribe of Dan in their future military enterprises. Moses, however, in his benediction upon the descendants of this patriarch, completes the picture of the true warrior by uniting the idea of courage with that of prudence. Dan, he infers, shall not only be skilled in stratagemical contrivance, but shall be likewise eminent for bravery. "And of Dan he said"—

Dan is a lion's whelp :
He shall leap from Bashan.

The portion assigned to the descendants of Dan

was a very fertile district, situated between the sovereign tribe of Judah, on the east, and the country possessed by the Philistines on the west. Their inheritance being only a part of the original portion of Judah, was necessarily narrow; they consequently made themselves masters of Laish, a district in the tribe of Asher, near the source of the Jordan, and built the city of Dan. Hence the expression "from Dan to Beersheba," which were the two extremities of Palestine, north and south. In this brief blessing Moses evidently looks, with a prophetic eye, to the future territorial position of the Danites; and intimates that they would not be content with the limited territory assigned to them, but issue, like young lions, from their confined borders, and make excursions beyond Bashan. "The land of Bashan, otherwise the Batanæa, in the Peræa, that is, beyond Jordan, north of the tribes of Gad and Reuben and in the half tribe of Manasseh, is bounded east by the mountains of Gilead, the land of Ammon, and east Edom; north by mount Hermon; south by the brook Jabok; west by the Jordan. Og, king of the Amorites, possessed Bashan when Moses conquered it. Bashan was esteemed one of the most fruitful countries in the world; its rich pastures, oaks, and fine cattle, are exceedingly commended."*

The greatest hero among the Israelites was of the race of Dan, the strong and indomitable Samson; to whom, probably, the prophet

* Reland. Palæst. lib. 1.

covertly alluded in this blessing, which forcibly pictures the strength and heroic courage of the Danites.

He shall leap from Bashan.

This tribe had no inheritance near Bashan, but Moses compares them to the young lions of that place; for lions-haunted mountains, as we find in the Canticles, chap. iv. 8.

Look from the top of Amana—
From the top of Shenir and Hermon—
From the lion's dens,
From the mountains of the leopards.

And the mountain of Bashan, in particular, was famous for them, and bred very fierce ones, which, as every one knows, leap upon their prey when they assault it, and fasten their nails and teeth in it. And thus did the Danites, on a sudden, leap from one end of Judæa to the other, and seized on the city of Laish, near to the source of the river Jordan, calling it by the name of Dan.* (Judges xviii. 29.)

In the brief distich containing the prophetic blessing upon this tribe, we can scarcely fail to perceive how much is expressed in a few words. We see strength, enterprise, activity, courage, displayed with wonderful variety and force of colouring. As the race of Gad had been compared to a lion in the full vigour of its strength, tearing the head of its prey, thus giving the fullest proof, not only of its power

* See Patrick's note.

but of its fierceness ;—so Moses compares the descendants of Dan, with equal felicity of delineation, to a lion's whelp full of reckless activity and daring impetuosity, combined with that caution which rendered them sagacious in stratagems as well as fearless in open warfare. The lion's whelp has, of course, all the physical properties of the lion, only less perfectly manifested ; so Dan, with the impetuous courage and buoyant vehemence of the former, was ultimately to display his superior prowess, and gradually rise to his full strength among the tribes of Israel. This it did during the life of Samson, whose strength and courage were not only the admiration of his countrymen, but the terror of all the heathen nations. The Danites, says the prophet, 'shall increase their territories by force of arms, and finally produce a champion, who will excel in strength and valour all the heroes of antiquity.' This the actions of the illustrious son of Manoah, who was of the tribe of Dan, fully realized, as may be seen from his slaughter of a thousand Philistines.*

He shall leap from Bashan.

It is said "he shall leap from Bashan," because the lions of that district were extremely active and fierce, as were likewise the bulls. Here then it will be perceived that Moses does not simply compare the Danites to a lion's whelp generally, but rather intimates their qua-

* Judges xv. 15.

lities of courage and enterprise by describing them as issuing from a part of the country where the lions were of amazing strength and bulk. This couplet is a fine and animated representation of certain physical and moral attributes, conveying to the imagination far more than the bare words express to the eye or ear; yet, withal, the intimations are so clear, and the typical illustrations so tangible, that it is next to impossible to miss what the poet intended to convey. We have the whole character of the tribe at once before us. This benediction is one of the most remarkable examples of uncommon condensation, united with extreme graphic force of development, to be found in the sacred volume. The number of ideas evolved is amazing; these arising out of words that do not positively express, but merely suggest them; and while the former appear to be only the accidents, they are, in fact, the immediate consequences of the one prolific image by which this singular prophecy is rendered so extensively intelligible. The posterity of Dan did, in process of time, "leap" from their borders, and conquered a portion of rich territory,* of which they took possession.

"And of Naphtali he said"—

O Naphtali, satisfied with favour,
And full with the blessing of the Lord :
Possess thou the west and the south.

There is a remarkable correspondency be-

* See Judges xviii.

tween this and Jacob's benediction upon the same patriarch. That prophet says of them—

Naphtali is a hind let loose :
He giveth goodly words,—

clearly implying the prosperity of Naphtali's descendants. To that son it is possible he was much attached, in consequence of his being the offspring of Bilhah, his favourite Rachel's hand-maiden. Moses speaks to the same purpose as Jacob, though prophesying at so long an interval after him,—

O Naphtali, satisfied with favour ;

that is, with the favour of Jehovah, which the posterity of this patriarch obtained ; for their portion was not only very fruitful in corn and oil, but its limits extended into upper and lower Galilee, so frequently, in subsequent times, the field of our Saviour's preaching, that he was in consequence called, though by way of contempt, a Galilean. Capernaum, in which Christ so often resided, and where he performed so many of his miracles, was in this tribe. In that city he called the apostle Matthew.* Most of the apostles are supposed to have been of this family ; and thus Naphtali might be well represented by the inspired bard as eminently signalized by divine favour. He was

Full with the blessing of the Lord,

in the most extensive sense of the term. He

* Matthew ix. 9.

possessed a productive territory, which, in process of time, became exceedingly populous; so that he not only enjoyed a goodly heritage, but was distinguished for a comely and numerous race.

Possess thou the west and the south.

This line has somewhat perplexed the commentators. The inheritance of Naphtali lay really north and east; "yet it was so situated, that by Zebulun, which lay next to him, and close upon the coast of the great sea, he could easily be possessed of the commodities of the *sea*, which we here translate 'west;' and lying on the river Jordan (Josh. xix. 33), he had the advantage of enjoying those commodities which came by that river from the 'southern' parts of the land."*

The vulgate reads *mare et meridiem possidebit—he will possess the sea and the south*, which the Hebrew plainly admits.

Dr. Durell's observations upon this passage are the following.—"Jacob appears to have promised the Naphtalites, a delightful country, under the image of a spreading tree. And here Moses predicts in clear terms that their portion would answer to that figurative description, and withal points out where it would be situated in the land of promise; namely, in the country afterwards called Galilee, a part of which fell to the lot of this tribe, and which is allowed on all hands to have been extremely

* See note to D'Oyly and Mant's Bible.

fertile. (see Genesis xlix. 15—21.) Le Clerc supposes that the original reading of what we render *the west and the south*, was *im merum*, the sea or lake of Merom, which we find mentioned in Joshua xi. 5 ; but his conjecture is not supported by any external evidence, and our reading may be justified: for, the town Laish or Dan, having been just before hinted at, and the country of Bashan mentioned, it is with reference to these two places, I apprehend, that *south* and *west* are to be understood; for the Naphtalites were situated to the *south* of Dan and to the *west* of Bashan. The word *im* or *imé* cannot simply, I think, be understood of the lake Semechon or Gennesaret, but must signify the Mediterranean sea, which was to the westward, as well as all the country of Naphtali, from Bashan. Le Clerc objects that it is harsh to say the Naphtalites would possess the *south*, because the Danites had a town to the *north*; but surely if not only Moses but Jacob thought that the circumstance of the emigration of the Danites deserved to be predicted so long before the time, the objection must vanish. Besides it is not improbable that many other Danites, oppressed on the one hand by the Amorites, and invited on the other by the success of their brethren and the goodness of the country, might come soon after to settle in that neighbourhood; insomuch, that the colony may be supposed to have become in a short time a rival to the mother country. And the reason of Moses mentioning this tribe after the other, seems to be on account of their respective situation."

Herder adopts the reading of the vulgate :—

O Naphtali, satisfied with favours,
And filled with the blessings of Jehovah :
Possess thou the sea and the land of the south.

With reference to the poetical character of this benediction, though it is not highly embellished, yet is the artificial construction strongly apparent. The first two clauses contain a parallelism of the gradational form, “satisfied with favours” and “filled with blessings” being the corresponding phrases, the latter rising both in strength and importance above the former, though both express the beneficent dispensations of heaven upon this favoured tribe. In the first hemistich, “of heaven,” or something equivalent must be understood in order to maintain the perfect correspondency of the two parallel clauses, for this the sense evidently demands. It is clear beyond dispute that the parallelism would be more obviously presented, if the couplet were rendered, as it must of necessity be understood in order to make a complete sense,—

O Naphtali, satisfied with the favours of heaven,
And filled with the blessings of Jehovah.

This would undoubtedly throw more impressive solemnity into the passage, and at the same time develop with greater distinctness that obvious artifice of construction which it was so decidedly the poet’s intention to exhibit.

CHAPTER XXX.

The benediction upon Asher. Conclusion.

THE last blessing pronounced by Moses is upon Asher, and terminates with a general benediction upon the tribes collectively. This is one of the finest passages to be found among the poetical wealth of the sacred volume. I proceed without further remark to consider it. “And of Asher he said :”—

Let Asher be blessed with children ;
Let him be acceptable to his brethren,
And let him dip his foot in oil.
Thy shoes shall be iron and brass ;
And as thy days, so shall thy strength be.
There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun,
Who rideth upon the heaven in thy help,
And in his excellency on the sky.
The eternal God is thy refuge,
And underneath are the everlasting arms :
And he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee ;
And shall say, destroy them.
Israel then shall dwell in safety alone :
The fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land
Of corn and wine ;
Also his heavens shall drop down dew.
Happy art thou, O Israel :
Who is like unto thee,
O people saved by the Lord,
The shield of thy help,
And who is the sword of thy excellency !
And thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee ;
And thou shalt tread upon their high places.

The inheritance of this tribe lay in a very fertile country, with Phœnicia west, Mount Lebanon north, Mount Carmel and the tribe of Issachar south, Zebulun and the tribe of Naphthali east.

The word Asher signifying blessed or happy, Moses has made the name of this patriarch illustrative of that territorial abundance and great political influence, by which his posterity should be distinguished; and both so signally came to pass, that not only was the lot of Asher, in Canaan, fruitful in corn, wine, oil, and in the productions of rich mines, but his posterity, which at the exodus amounted only to forty-one thousand five hundred men, when numbered in the plains of Moab, had increased to fifty-three thousand four hundred; and a little before the reign of David, it is said by Josephus,* that among the descendants of Asher were twenty-six thousand princes.

Let Asher be blessed with children;

that is, let him be blessed with a numerous posterity, which, as I have just shown, was abundantly fulfilled at a subsequent period.

Let him be acceptable to his brethren.

‘May he live in perfect concord with the other tribes, who will esteem him for his social and placable qualities and respect him for his numerous issue. May his political interests ever be united with theirs.’

* Jewish War, book iii. chap. 3.

And let him dip his foot in oil.

‘And may oil, the abundant produce of his divison of Canaan, be obtained in such plenty that he may be able to use it like water for the most ordinary purposes.’ The finest oil in Judæa was produced in the portion of Asher, which abounded with olive-trees of the best quality. This eloquent prediction confirms that of Jacob, who had previously said of this tribe,—

Out of Asher his bread shall be fat,
And he shall yield royal dainties.

Oil was much used in the east for household purposes, as it is even at this day; and many commentators suppose that the luxuries prepared for the table of king Solomon were obtained from the lot of Asher. Both the blessings of Jacob and of Moses agree in showing the plentiful production of oil which the land assigned to Asher’s posterity was to yield.

In the first three hemistichs of this prophecy there is a strong anticlimax. The poet commences by proclaiming that the descendants of Zilpah’s son should multiply exceedingly, which it has been shown they did; he next declares that they should live in peace and good fellowship with their brethren; and thirdly, that their inheritance shall be fruitful. These three blessings it will be perceived gradually diminish in force, descending in a gradual but marked declination, the first being more important than the second, and the second than the third; but all having a reciprocal relation so strong as that

neither can be disassociated without injury to each. In the estimation of a Hebrew no temporal boon could be so great as a numerous offspring, and, indeed, at this day in the east, the same feeling prevails. A barren woman is a degraded and despised being; unfruitfulness therefore, is the saddest curse that can fall upon a Hindoo mother. The third blessing of plenty could not be enjoyed unless the second had been obtained; the former was dependant upon the latter, for what could the greatest temporal prosperity really avail without peace and good fellowship among kindred? These, next to that "peace of God which keepeth the heart and mind through Jesus Christ," are the chief props of sublunary happiness; but in the estimation of a true "son of the circumcision," would be held only secondary to the gift of a numerous issue; and surely territorial abundance would be an inferior blessing to social concord and community of peace. Thus the anticlimax is made out in the opening triplet of this benediction. The third hemistich contains an elegant image, placing before the mind, in three or four monosyllables, a more complete idea of plenty, as in Jacob's prophecy upon Judah, than the most elaborate periphrasis could have realized. The image employed is so pregnant with meaning that it lifts up the imagination to the fullest height of the reality as by a magical process, multiplying the elements of thought until the sensorium seems absolutely to teem with the one vast and lucid impression.

It may be remarked that the opening triplet of this beautiful prediction contains a supplication for the blessings therein enumerated; because such blessings must be, to a certain extent, adventitious, depending upon circumstances, and regulated by the casualties of time. Bountiful harvests and a fruitful produce generally must be determined very much by the industry of the husbandman, the vine-dresser, the gardener. Moses, however, gives sufficient assurance that the soil of Asher's portion shall be capable, if properly cultivated, of yielding great abundance;—an assurance sufficiently encouraging. I have observed that this abundance, depending, under God, upon the casualties of time and circumstance, is besought by the prophet; but that which had no dependence upon any such casualties is promised, in direct terms, without any reservation or qualification.

Thy shoes shall be iron and brass;
And as thy days, so shall thy strength be.

The iron and brass contained in the bowels of the earth belonged to, and were coeval with, the original conformation of the globe. Moses knowing, either by divine intuition, or by direct revelation from God, that those valuable metals were in that portion of the land of promise destined to be the inheritance of Asher, declares that they shall constitute part of the wealth of this tribe.

Durell renders the first clause of this distich, after the marginal reading of our Bible,—

Under thy shoes let there be iron and brass.

That is, ‘the country to be apportioned to thee shall yield its treasures of iron and brass.’ The language is here tropical, the term shoes being employed merely as a strong figure. In D’Oyly and Mant’s Bible is the following note,—

Thy shoes shall be iron and brass.

“This verse informs us, that shoes *clouted*, as the old English expression is, were used as early as the days of Moses. We know that the Roman soldiers used *brazen* or *copper* soles to their shoes; and *clouted* shoes, that is, shoes well coated with iron, were anciently part of a soldier’s dress in this country; from which shoes well filled with nails, &c. for strength, are now called *clouted*. (Script. illust.) In the east, at this day, all the people, both rich and poor, wear iron plates at the heels and toes of their shoes.” (Calmet.)

I cannot see how the first paragraph of this note explains the passage of which it is quoted as an interpretation. The editors of the commentary above named read the clause literally; but what Moses could mean by telling his countrymen that Asher should wear *clouted shoes*, I am at a loss to comprehend; for I cannot persuade myself that he could have thought of stating such a bald fact—a fact of no conceivable consequence, literally taken, containing not even the shadow of a blessing, and leading to no intelligible conclusion. The clause, as it stands, if interpreted literally, has no significance,—it is jejune and unmeaning; consi-

dered figuratively it is eminently expressive, proclaiming that district of the future Palestine to be inherited by the descendants of Asher, as being so rich in valuable ores that the possessors of the soil should not be able to stir abroad without walking over them,—that is, over the ground beneath which they are deposited.

Calmet's statement, as quoted by D'Oyly and Mant, is an egregious error. The vast majority of people in the east go bare-footed, and those who wear shoes certainly do not wear them *clouted*. During a residence of several years in India, I never saw a clouted shoe. But Calmet alludes more especially to the Turks, for his words (the passage is curtailed in D'Oyly and Mant's Bible) are, "We are assured that in the east, at this day, all the people, both rich and poor, *even the wives of the great Turk himself and of his bashaws*, wear iron plates at the heels and toes of their shoes." But the Turks are, comparatively, a modern people, and compose but a small integral portion of the "people of the east." They are, numerically, a mere unit, opposed to the many populous communities of the eastern world. Turkish habitudes, therefore, can be no true illustration of primitive oriental customs; for many hundred years after the age of Moses, and even at a period long subsequent to the subversion of the Jewish polity, this people had no political existence. They formed but a small segment of the mighty circle of almost universal barbarism which enveloped the moral world, when Christianity ruptured the iron chain that ignorance and

superstition had forged around it, and poured her light into the dark void within, bringing the prisoners out of captivity to the blessed liberty of redemption through the atonement which has reconciled an incensed Divinity to his lapsed creatures, but for that merciful act of expiation, doomed, for a breach of covenant, to the penalties of a stern and inflexible law.

If the verse under examination—

Thy shoes shall be iron and brass,

be read literally, not only is it incongruous, but entirely void of poetical beauty; on the other hand, interpreted figuratively, it is extremely elegant, and gracefully descriptive. The marginal reading clearly favours the figurative interpretation—

Under thy shoes shall be iron and brass.

This surely can have nothing to do with the supposed iron or brass clamped shoes of the sons of Asher: for can any one gravely suppose that Moses would have resorted to the highest artifices of poetry to have told so insignificant a fact? The line simply signifies that Asher's posterity should tread upon a soil productive of the metals there specified. This view of the clause is confirmed by Bochart, who states that Sarepta, called by the Hebrews Zarephath, a city of Sidon, derived its name from the smelting of iron and brass carried on there, those metals being abundant in the neighbourhood of that city,

which was in the tribe of Asher; or they might have been brought from Libanus and Antilibanus, where they are supposed to have been found in great plenty.

The Arabic version reads—

Thy bolts shall be iron and brass;

signifying that their territory should be as well defended as if it were encompassed with iron and brazen walls. Either interpretation takes the passage quite out of the literal sphere of prose and throws it into the prismatic atmosphere of poetry.

And as thy days, so shall thy strength be.

That is, the descendants of Asher should not only be blessed with great temporal prosperity, but continue long to enjoy it; and that their power of enjoyment should be great, in proportion to its continuance. These words have been tortured by commentators into various meanings, but the most obvious appears to be —‘Thy prosperity and peace shall be continuous, and thy strength shall be in proportion to both;’ or as Waterland reads very clearly—

Thy bolts shall be iron and brass,
And thou shalt have peace all thy days.

Both the Arabic which is here followed, and our marginal reading, lead precisely to the same conclusion. They do not alter the character of the blessing, for if iron and brass were under

the feet of Asher in such plenty that it was obtained with the utmost facility, and in any quantity required, it is at once obvious that they were furnished with the amplest means of defence in their own territories: and to precisely the same inference does the Arabic version lead us, for the “bolts” there mentioned merely symbolize or represent by an expressive metonymy, the strong defences of the country. Either reading characterizes the highly figurative form of the original Hebrew.

There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun,
Who rideth upon the heaven in thy help,
And in his excellency on the sky.

With the preceding couplet the series of predictions concludes, and the magnificent triplet just quoted commences the sublime termination of this varied song—the last production of the great lawgiver of Israel.

There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun.

It was the Almighty Jehovah, the God of Jeshurun, or of Israel, who had communicated to Moses that knowledge, which enabled him to predict the future condition of the twelve tribes. The Deity had manifested himself to this wise delegate, and given him proofs of his power such as none other of the seed of Abraham had received. The inspired bard having finished his blessing, proclaims, in terms no less solemn than emphatic, the omnipotence of that God who had hitherto so uniformly befriended his countrymen, and would still continue his guardianship

of them, comforting them with the assurance that there was none like unto him; and thus, by the simplest but most persuasive induction, inferring the folly of offering worship to "them that were no gods," and therefore unable to save those who weakly put their trust in them. Here is implied the greatest blessing which the inspired lawgiver had yet pronounced, and which is not confined to any one tribe exclusively, but applied to the whole posterity of Jacob collectively; namely, that they were under the especial protection of the God of Jeshurun, single and alone in all his attributes, and to whom "there is none like."

Who rideth upon the heaven in thy help;—

'who acts not only on the earth, but likewise in heaven, where he is ever mindful of thy welfare, and of his covenant with thy righteous forefather Abraham, to whom the promise of a numerous seed was made. Even the elements, under his benign behoof, are made to subserve thy requirements, and above, as well as below, the ministers of his almighty will are ready to assist thee whenever he shall deem it fitting. He encompasses the universe, "riding upon the heavens,"

And in his excellency on the sky;'

that is, upon the clouds, signifying that the inscrutable Jehovah renders the elements obsequious to his will. The same idea is expressed with uncommon sublimity and greater amplifi-

cation by the Psalmist,* in one of his highest moods of poetic inspiration:—

Who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain :
 Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters :
 Who maketh the clouds his chariot :
 Who walketh upon the wings of the wind.

How frequently had he turned the powers of nature out of their ordinary course to benefit the Israelites! The Red Sea had been divided to afford them a passage, that should secure them from the future tyranny of Pharaoh. Water had been caused to gush from the flinty bosom of a rock in the wilderness. The sun had been made to stand still, and the moon in the valley of Ajalon. The very ground had been miraculously strewed with food; and of all these stupendous dispensations of mercy to an ungrateful people Moses reminds his countrymen, in his eloquent conclusion of that prophetic address which was to be his last, and made just before his departure from a world of trial to a world of glory.

Ben Maimon, in his commentary on this passage,† very admirably displays its poetical beauty: “and as he that rides upon a horse turns him on this side and on that, as he pleases, so does Jehovah by his power command the heavens, and is not fixed to them, as the soul to the body, but as the horseman is far more distinguished and excellent than the beast upon which he rides, being quite of a different species and infinitely more honourable; so is the Divine

* Psalm civ. 2, 3.

† More Novechim, p. i. cap. 70.

Being represented by this metaphor, although in a very feeble manner, as separate from the heavens, of a far more excellent nature, infinitely transcending them and all things which are but the obedient instrument of his will."

The picture embodied in this beautiful triplet is of the most elevated description. We behold the august and eternal prototype of power, of infinite wisdom, of infinite goodness, in sum, of all perfection, in the vast might and unlimited extension of his ubiquity, pervading the heavens, subjecting the elements to his control, directing the mighty springs of the universe, opening the pregnant clouds, and scattering their contents upon the earth. We see him as an armed warrior mounted upon the whirlwind, grasping the thunderbolt and ejecting the lightnings from their aerial prison. We behold him in all the glory and in all the terror of his omnipotent majesty. He curbs, and thus assuages, the terrific energy of the hurricane, as a practised rider does the steed which he has brought into complete subserviency to his control; or he urges it onward in its career of impetuous destruction, as may best suit the purposes of his ineffable wisdom. Every thing yields to his sole and matchless supremacy. The impression communicated by this sublime representation of the divine attributes is too strong to be easily effaced; it fills the soul with sacred awe, and the heart with reverential adoration.

Durell's version of the two concluding lines of the triplet contains an imperfect, though never-

theless extremely elegant, parallelism. The passage is exceedingly grand:—

Riding on the heavens to thy help,
And on the clouds in his excellency.

It will be seen, that in one pair of the corresponding terms the order is inverted, “heavens” and “clouds,” occurring in the first and second lines; that is, the least emphatic word being in the second line, which interrupts the gradation of progression causing a descent towards an anticlimax. This inverse order of force, however, is countervailed by the display which it exhibits of divine love and condescension. “The God of Jeshurun” not only exercises his power in heaven for the benefit of Asher’s posterity, but he likewise condescends to come down from the throne of his glory into this perishable world, and “in his excellency” rides upon the clouds; or, as the tropical language of the poet may be interpreted, manifests himself by his visible dispensations. Here the two cognate ideas of mercy and condescension are evolved, and in order to project these ideas into distinct and strong relief, the most emphatic term, “heavens” is coupled with human infirmity, requiring such *help* as only the Sovereign of heaven can bestow; while the least emphatic word “clouds” is united with omnipotent power, excellent and perfect in all its incomprehensible attributes: thus are the two paramount ideas, by the mere force of contrast, thrown into the greatest possible prominence.

The eternal God is thy refuge,
 And underneath are the everlasting arms:
 And he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee;
 And shall say, destroy them.

The subject is here continued. "The eternal God," so called in opposition to those divinities of the heathen, which, being the fabrication of human art, must have a mere duration, and that a very brief one;—He who is always existing, always acting, who ever is, ever has been, and ever shall be;—He is thy refuge. He "whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain," who compasses infinite duration and fills infinite space;—He is thy "dwelling-place" (this the Hebrew word imports). With him shall the weary and heavy laden "find rest unto their souls," when life's vicissitudes and trials shall be overpast.

Durell's reading of this and the subsequent clause is appropriate, and free from anything like obscurity:—

Thou art the habitation of the eternal God,
 And under his everlasting arms;

that is, under his everlasting protection, which is infinite and all-powerful to sustain, in every danger and difficulty, those who put their trust in him. Such are under the guardianship of his inscrutable but merciful providence—a providence that neither slumbers nor sleeps. Dr. Adam Clarke's note on this passage is much to the purpose:—"As the arm is the emblem of power, and of power in a state of exertion, the words here state that an unlimited

and unconquerable power shall be eternally exerted in defence of God's church, and in behalf of all those who trust in him."

And he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee ;—

' He shall enable you to expel the enemy from the land which he has given to the tribes collectively for a possession—

And shall say, destroy them.

By this may be meant, that the Israelites, having received God's command to destroy the Canaanites, acted under divine authority. Moses in this place seems to infer the justification of his countrymen entering upon a land already in possession of a numerous and flourishing people, slaughtering the inhabitants, and seizing their territory. The one was to be the Lord's doing, that is the *expulsion* of the Canaanites; and the other, their *destruction*, was to be the work of Abraham's seed under the divine sanction.

There is great sublimity in the passage, though it is not entirely free from obscurity.

The eternal God is thy refuge,
And underneath are the everlasting arms.

In both these clauses it is evident that the supreme and eternal Majesty of the Godhead, as well as his never-ceasing omnipotence, for eternity and infinitude are inseparable from all his attributes, is declared as a comforting assur-

ance to the Israelites, who, under his almighty protection, were about to enter the "land of promise." Both lines imply the protecting providence of Jehovah, and are, therefore, parallel, although the corresponding members have a separate and specific signification. 'God is thy refuge, thy dwelling-place, thy security.' The paternal guardianship of the Deity is here not only recognized but avowed, and this by a beautiful image—that of a habitation, of a place where men dwell under security from such powerful external agencies as they must fall a prey to, if constantly exposed to their destructive influences. As a well-secured dwelling protects its inmates from the extremes of cold and heat, from the effects of storms and other elemental contingencies, from beasts of prey, from venomous reptiles, and many other natural evils—often, too, from human treachery, from the assassin's knife and the bandit's dagger; so God casts the buckler of his almighty protection over those who flee unto him for refuge, who dwell with him and in him, and defends them from all evils that can have a tendency to render intolerable their mortal condition. They are

Underneath the everlasting arms

of his providence, and he "defends them as with a shield." The parallelism is sufficiently distinct, as Durell gives the passage; the first clause signifying the divine guardianship, the second his direct agency and visible benefac-

tions in favour of his people. The one implies passive protection, the other active defence ; so that both lines of the couplet really refer to the same subject : though they exhibit it variously, still both conjointly fulfil the divine dispensation of mercy consummated in the permissive, preventive, and operative grace of God. The parallelism is, nevertheless, distinctly traceable. Herder brings it out very obviously ; he has given the passage with great clearness, though not so literally as Durell. The sense, however, does not materially differ from the version of that able though often fanciful commentator. Herder reads :—

Thy protector is the eternal God,
Thou art beneath his everlasting arm.

I am disposed to think this is the true interpretation ; it moreover clears the text of all obscurity, from which our translation certainly is not entirely free.

And he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee ;
And shall say, destroy them.

The literal here follows the figurative, which it commonly does in the writings of Moses, as a relief to the loftier flights of his muse. These occasional declensions from his higher aspirations are agreeable off-sets to the sustained dignity and uncommon elevation of his thoughts, and generally of his language, though this is frequently cast into the most simple mould of expression, in order, no doubt, to enhance the surpassing splendour which it is sometimes made

to throw around the thought it is employed to embellish. The terms used in the passage last quoted, though severely simple, are nevertheless extremely vigorous and expressive, the first clause conveying a vivid idea of the earnestness of the divine determination to have the Canaanites finally expelled from their land. He shall "thrust them out," that is, he shall cause them to be forcibly ejected. They shall be violently expelled by his express command.

In the first line of this distich God's determination respecting the Canaanites is solemnly but explicitly declared, and in a manner not to be misunderstood; that which follows, expresses the instrumentality of the Israelites in executing the almighty purpose. The distinction here is finely conceived and most emphatically conveyed. God is not represented as the active but determining agent in slaughtering the Canaanites, — not as the executive but as the judicial power; it is his chosen people, destined to inherit the land of the heathen, who are made the instruments of their destruction. Jehovah is declared in his own person to "thrust them out," in order that the full manifestation of his power may be displayed; in order too that it may be shown that he is the chastiser of nations as well as of individuals, who provoke his righteous indignation. On the other hand the Israelites are exhibited as the destroyers of the idolaters of Canaan, because the image of actual slaughter better suits with the violent and impetuous passions of men, than with the ineffable dignity, the calm, august and

imperturbable majesty of Jehovah. The seed of Abraham, therefore, to whom the promised inheritance was about to fall, are made the immediate ministers of judicial inflictions upon the worshippers of images: thus is the picture, placed before the reader's imagination, rendered much more striking, by keeping apart the two prominent objects and assigning to them their separate agencies. By preserving distinctly the dominant ideas of supreme power, the poet finely distinguishes the absolute supremacy of God from the derivative supremacy of man.

Israel then shall dwell in safety alone :
 The fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land
 Of corn and wine ;
 Also his heavens shall drop down dew.

The first clause of this passage declares the entire separation of Israel from the nations by whom they shall be surrounded, after their settlement in the conquered country. They were to enter into no alliances, either civil, political, or domestic, with idolaters. The theocracy established among them was essentially opposed to, and would never harmonize with, the polytheism of those gentiles whom they were to expel from Canaan; in fact it was essentially adverse to that of all other nations. How singularly and extensively has this part of the prophecy been fulfilled ! The seed of Jacob dwell alone at this very hour. They are a distinct community, separated by national barriers, by inflexible prejudices and certain moral influences, from

every other people. They bear about them at this moment the brand of a degenerate and outcast race, marked by the anger of an outraged God and rejected Messiah; tolerated only as despised aliens in those countries where they have obtained settlements; deuded the privileges of citizens; expelled from all other communities; their name at once a scoff and a reproach; content, under their social debasement, to bear their contumely for the sake of enjoying undisturbed their primitive worship and service. From the days of Moses to the present they have been kept distinct from every other nation by their civil and religious institutions; and although, after their possession of Canaan, vast numbers among them united in the idolatries practised by the people by whom they were surrounded, they were, nevertheless, nationally separate from other races; they "dwelt alone" no less in their political pre-eminence than in their moral degeneracy, as they do now in their degradation. All attempts to incorporate them with christian societies have signally failed. They still seem to glory in their shame, and continue blind to the judgments of heaven.

The fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land
Of corn and wine.

That is, the posterity of Jacob shall inherit a very fruitful country, in which corn, wine, *and oil*, as Durell adds, shall abound; these being the chief sources of animal support. Thus shall be realized to them the promise made to their righteous forefather Abraham, that they should be "as the sand on the sea shore for

multitude," and possess that promised inheritance which should be "the glory of all lands," from its singular productiveness; described afterwards by Joshua as "a land flowing with milk and honey." *

Also his heavens shall drop down dew.

The climate of the country about to be possessed by the Israelites was to be as salubrious as the earth was productive; the latter being watered by genial showers and fostering dews, which should cause it to bring forth exceedingly. In short, Moses here states that the region in which his countrymen were shortly to settle would fully verify his description given of it in another place. "For the Lord thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig-trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil-olive, and honey; a land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack any thing in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass." †

Israel then shall dwell in safety alone.

Observe here how beautifully, by mere implication, the special dispensations of Jehovah to Jacob's seed are signified. Though surrounded by many powerful and warlike adversaries, Is-

* Joshua v. 6.

† Deut. viii. 7—9.

rael was to “dwell alone;” that is, separated from them, for God was the refuge for his people—he was “their helper and defender.” There could have been no security for them “alone,” encompassed by such a host of active foes, unless they had been under the effectual defence of God’s “everlasting arms.” How much is signified in this brief clause, and how admirably expressed! The association, by inference, so covertly, but still so evidently made,—of the benefactor with the beneficiaries—of God with Israel,—is singularly expressive. We cannot fail to perceive the divine agency exhibited in every line of the prophecy, even where no special allusion is made to it. We feel its influence as by a sacred spell, and it is never for a moment lost sight of.

The fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land
Of corn, and wine, *and oil*.

The two latter words are added by Durell, and, as I think, justly. The passages appear incomplete without them. “The fountain of Jacob” is a figure of uncommon beauty, representing by one of the most vivid images which language can furnish, the prodigious increase of Jacob’s posterity. It may be worth while a moment to consider into what a small fountain is often magnified. It rises perhaps in some distant and inaccessible hill, beyond the prying eye of man, and here bubbling amid the sterile earth, where no eyes behold it but those which are immortal, gushes from its remote bed, increasing as it flows, shortly forming for itself a channel,

and rushing between opposing rocks or other interjected impediments; then, dashing over precipices in its impetuous course, and thundering through the valleys beneath, it swells to a mighty torrent, augmenting its volume as it proceeds, until it reaches the plain, a vast body of accumulated waters, rolling silently and majestically towards the sea; until at length, increased to a stupendous river, it disembogues itself into the unfathomable ocean, where it is finally absorbed and lost for ever. Such was the rapid increase and accumulation of Jacob's posterity. The exquisite beauty of this image requires no further comment; it is comprehensive in the extreme.

Also his heavens shall drop down dew.

The word dew is employed in this line as a synecdoche, to imply every description of elemental nourishment which the land was capable of receiving. Dew alone could not have the effect of rendering a country productive; so that the word in this place implies rain, as well as dew, embracing likewise within the scope of its application the necessary concomitants of bland sunshine and genial climature.

Happy art thou, O Israel :
 Who is like unto thee,
 O people saved by the Lord,
 The shield of thy help,
 And who is the sword of thy excellency !
 And thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee ;
 And thou shalt tread upon their high places.

This last passage depicts the superior tem-

poral condition of Israel above that of all nations of the earth then, and subsequently, existing. They were eminently favoured by being the especial, though not the exclusive, objects of almighty protection, and might have so continued throughout all time had they not abandoned their God, "the God of Jeshurun," and delivered themselves, not only to the idols of the heathen, but, what was even worse, to those likewise of the world.

Who is like unto thee,
O people saved by the Lord.

They were superior to every other people for this very reason, that they were "saved by the Lord;"—saved from the tyranny of Pharaoh—saved from the perils of the wilderness—saved to enter upon the land of their covenanted inheritance—saved to exterminate the Canaanites. As Jehovah was the only wise God, so were they the only righteous people—that is, though not perfectly righteous, they were relatively so by comparison with their idolatrous neighbours. No other people had Jehovah for their help, for they trusted in other protection, and were consequently not "like unto" the children of Israel. "The rock" of the pagan was not their rock.

The shield of thy help,
And who is the sword of thy excellency!

It will be noticed that the promise of divine protection is repeated at the close of this magnificent song. God would be a shield to de-

fend his chosen and "peculiar people" from the assaults of their gentile foes. He shall "whet his sword," and subdue their enemies before them, thus exalting them to the highest elevation of temporal distinction above those communities who "knew not God." This defence of Jacob's seed, "as the sand of the sea-shore for multitude," should issue in their "excellency," that is, should render them pre-eminent among the kingdoms of the earth.

Thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee.

The Canaanites had probably boasted that they would drive back the strangers, so that they should never obtain possession of their country. Thus would the enemies of Israel be found liars by having made a vain boast. Their expectation of maintaining their territories should be frustrated, for they would be expelled before "the sword of Israel's excellency."

And thou shalt tread upon their high places.

That is, thou shalt obtain possession of the whole country, uplands as well as plains, their fortified cities as well as their meanest hamlets, and even those elevated sites consecrated to their divinities. "This commonly signifies," says Patrick, referring to their high places, "either strongholds or places of idolatrous worship, which neither their great men nor their gods themselves should be able to preserve from ruin."

The whole conclusion of this divine song sub-

limely points to the complete subjugation of Canaan, and the final triumph of Israel. Its poetical beauty, from the twenty-sixth verse to the end, is so manifest that it can be scarcely necessary to point it out. The gradational parallelism is present in the following distich, and is a favourable example of that artifice so common in Hebrew poetry:—

The shield of thy help,
And who is the sword of thy excellency.

The first clause represents passive protection, the second active interference. They both exhibit the same dispensation under different aspects. In the one, God is represented, with relation to Israel, as the *shield* of their *help*; in the other, as the *sword* of their *excellency*. The latter terms evidently rise above the former in energy of delineament, yet both are obviously parallel. The admirable propriety of the images must be seen at a glance, the shield being emblematical of abstract power; the sword of that power exercised. The distinction is finely considered and skilfully brought out.

I shall now close these volumes with Herder's version, which upon the whole is excellent, of the conclusion of this sublime composition, and his remarks upon it.

“ And to Asher he said ”—

Blessed shall Asher be among the tribes,
He shall be acceptable to his brethren,
And shall dip his feet in oil.
Brass and iron shall be thy bolts,
And as thy days so shall thy strength increase.
There is none, O Israel, like God,

Who rideth on the heavens for thy help,
And in his majesty on the lofty clouds.

Thy protector is the eternal God,
Thou art beneath his everlasting arm,
He thrusteth out the enemy

From before thine eyes,
And saith, "destroy them!"

Yet Israel shall dwell
Securely and alone.

The eye of Jacob looketh upon a land
That is full of corn and wine,
On which the heaven droppeth dew.

Happy art thou, O Israel!

Where is a people like thee,

Whom Jehovah protecteth?

He is the shield of thy help,

And the sword of thine excellency.

Let thy foes seek thee with guile,

Yet shalt thou in triumph

Tread upon their high places.

"With such words of golden richness does Moses take leave of his people. He builds their hopes on God, represents their land as the object of his love,—that land on which they looked down from the heights of Bashan and Gilead. Here, shut out from the nations, secure and alone, should Israel dwell, nourished, not as Egypt by the river, but immediately by the dew of heaven, and the hand of Jehovah. A bold mountain race should Jeshurun become, and though the wiles of their enemies were unceasing, should proceed until they trod as conquerors on all their high places.

"The country lies apart, surrounded and limited by mountains, seas, rivers, and deserts; a small but divinely chosen spot, which, cultivated with diligence and guarded by the united force of the tribes, might have flourished. It lies, as it were, between the three divisions of the eastern

continent, in the boundless Asia, at the foot of those rich mountains of the primitive earth, and is their outlet and haven. Above and below Judæa were the routes of the trade of the ancient world. So far as its situation is concerned, it might have been the happiest people under heaven, had they used their advantages, and remained true to the spirit of their ancient law. Poor, and now barren and naked land! in which, partly through sacred poetry and song, but more through the consequences of misfortune and folly, we know almost every glen and hill, every valley and village, which ages ago in the history of mankind was famed for superstition, blood, and war,—wilt thou ever enjoy a better renown? or are the mountains on which thy prophets trod, once so fruitful, doomed henceforth to perpetual desolation?"*

* Spirit of Hebrew Poetry, vol. ii. pp. 162, 163.

THE END.



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