SCRIPTURE PORTRAITS;

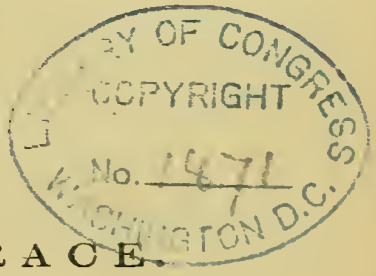
OR,

Sketches of Bible Characters.

ESPECIALLY DESIGNED

FOR THE

FAMILY CIRCLE.



BY

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Introduction.

Of all the channels through which interesting and valuable knowledge is conveyed to mankind, perhaps none is more popular and effectual than that of *biography*. There is no better mode of becoming acquainted with human nature—of familiarizing ourselves with the springs and motives of human conduct—of learning the walks of respectability and happiness—of being animated to duty and deterred from transgression—than by studying the character and deportment of those who have lived in the world, and who, though "being dead," yet speak.

If this is true of biography in general, it is emphatically true of *sacred* biography. Our

Heavenly Father, all whose doings are marked with a wisdom and goodness which are infinite, has not confined the inspired volume to statements and defences of doctrine merely, nor yet to history and prophecy; but has sketched there *characters* also—has drawn, with His own inimitable pencil, a gallery of striking portraits for us to contemplate, and from which proceeds an influence, salutary and powerful, on the life that now is, and on that which is to come.

We have thought we could not render a more acceptable service to the readers of the Mother's Magazine and Family Monitor—a service that would minister more highly to their gratification, or tell more successfully upon their spiritual profit—than by presenting, in its successive numbers, a group of those eminent characters raised up by Providence in former days, and exhibited in the Scriptures of truth.

In portraying these characters, we shall, wherever opportunity presents, dwell particularly on

the lessons to be drawn from the conduct and influence of those sustaining the *parental* relation; not confining our suggestions on this point to *mothers*, but giving to *fathers* also their due proportion. And while in this respect we shall depart from the beaten track of writers for the home-circle, who usually place a double share of responsibility to the mother's account, we trust the influence of the course we shall pursue, will tell no less truly and powerfully on the highest interests of the family.

The above remarks were introductory to these pieces, when they originally appeared in that ancient and popular periodical, THE MOTHER'S MAGAZINE AND FAMILY MONITOR, published in New York. They were received with much favor by the readers of that work, and the friends of the Author, believing that they are entitled to a less ephemeral existence than the pages of a

monthly, have induced him to issue them in the present form. Whatever may be their defects, they will be found to possess at least *one* merit, that of being scriptural, as opposed to what is merely fanciful or interesting; and if they shall generate an increased fondness for the sacred oracles, or clothe any portions of them in new charms, or give forth any lessons of wisdom and virtue, the end of their publication will be answered.

August, 1854.

Scripture Portraits.

I.

ADAM.

The Sacred Volume opens most appropriately, for it opens with an account of the Creation. The first sentence is, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth;" a sentence which the highest intellect unaided by inspiration never could have written, and which lets in a flood of light upon the mind. Not self-created was the world, but it had an intelligent Author. Nor was this goodly fabric formed out of materials which had existed from eternity, but these materials had their beginning from Himself. His creative act produced them. They sprang from nothing at his word. And when these materials were rude and undigested, when "all was without form and void, and darkness was

upon the face of the deep, the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters," hovered over this dense and floating chaos, and infused into it a vivifying principle.

> "With mighty wings outspread,
> Dovelike, sat'st brooding on the vast abyss,
> And madest it pregnant."

Thence arose the mountains, valleys, landscapes and oceans of the terraqueous globe, and the overarching heavens!

But though a material world was thus organized, and order and beauty, simplicity and stupendousness appeared on every side, there was no living creature upon it who could discern this assemblage of graces, these exhibitions of wisdom, goodness, and power,—much less adore the Divine Architect. *Man* therefore was made; and ADAM, the father and founder of the human race, was brought into existence. This exquisite piece of workmanship was not formed by a word, but originated from a special council. Though when the earth and the azure canopy of heaven were formed, "God spake and it was done, He commanded and it stood fast;" though when a

luminous substance was to be diffused abroad to scatter the thick vapors, he said, "Let there be light, and there was light;"—an announcement which Longinus, the illustrious Athenian philosopher and critic, instances as a matchless specimen of the sublime;—though, at a word, the waters rolled back into their beds, the dry land heaved, the mountains lifted their tops towards the sky, and grasses and plants, forest and fruit-bearing trees clothed the earth; though at a word the brute creation, every moving creature which hath life, began to exist, and perform their prescribed functions; yet when *man* was to be formed, a consultation was held relative to this highest work in the scale of the series, this nobler order of beings, transcending the material and animal, and "God said, let *us* make man!" Man accordingly was made, his body cunningly fashioned by the hand of God, and illumined by a soul immediately inspired by the breath of the Almighty. "God created man in his own image," made him upright in figure, with nobility impressed upon his brow, clothed him with the majesty of unclouded reason, endowed him with

the capacity of resembling himself in moral attributes, and gave him dominion over the inferior creatures, who were governed only by instinct.

Behold then Adam as he came from the hands of the Infinite! His form, how stately! his intellect, how clear! his soul, how capacious! A distinguished link in the chain of being, connecting the animal with the spiritual, dust with Deity, earth with heaven; he stands forth the acknowledged sovereign of the globe; all cattle, the fowl of the air, and every beast of the field, presenting themselves before him as his subjects, to receive their distinctive and appropriate names.

Adam differed somewhat from all his descendants. He derived his existence from God by direct creation; they theirs, through the intervention of human parents. Adam came into existence in the perfection of his physical stature, and in the full vigor of his intellectual powers; they advance to maturity in these particulars by slow degrees. He was taught of God, and the properties of the objects and beings around him were supernaturally imparted to him; we are left to gather such knowledge by

laborious study and slow experience. Adam was "created in righteousness and true holiness," enjoyed sensible intercourse with God, and probably with angels; we are born depraved, and go astray from the birth. Adam was created immortal; we, with the seeds of decay and death sown in our constitution.

It was right that a creature thus fashioned and endowed, should love and obey the Author of his being; and that it might be seen whether or not he would do so, his affection and loyalty must be subjected to some decided test. But what shall this test be? To a being possessed of a holy nature, an abstract, moral precept would not subject his obedience to an appropriate trial; the test must therefore be some positive, tangible injunction. He must abstain from some gratification in which he has natural power to participate, simply because his Maker enjoins upon him such abstinence. In that delightful garden, therefore, in which his Creator had placed him, "to dress it and to keep it,"—that garden stocked in luxuriant abundance with whatever could please the eye, or charm the ear, or regale the sense,—one

tree was placed, the fruit of which he was commanded neither to eat nor touch. Easy test, indeed, of Adam's regard for his Maker's will! He needed not the fruit thereof to make him happy, and he had only to let it alone, to prove his reverence for Jehovah's authority, manifest his attachment to the Author of his every mercy, and advance himself in perfection as a reward of righteousness. But he foolishly and criminally partook thereof; was despoiled of his innocence; forfeited the blessings of the covenant; and conscious guilt, remorse, and shame possessed him.

Behold Adam now a fallen creature. We have seen him in innocence, now he is in guilt; we have seen him righteous, now we behold him wicked; we have seen him loyal, now we behold him rebellious; we have seen him happy in the smiles and favor of God, now we behold him fleeing from Him in confusion and terror, and driven from Him, a prey to suffering, disease, and death.

We may well look at him as thus degenerate, for by this awful revolution in his condition and

character, we are all affected. As, if this venerable Father of all men, had kept his first estate of holiness and felicity, we should have had virtue without alloy, and delight unaccompanied with pain; so, now that he transgressed and cast himself out from the bosom of God, we partake of his changed nature, and are involved in the consequences of his sinful act. As he, the covenant head and representative of all his posterity, "being in honor, abode not," the crown has fallen from our heads, and the sceptre dropped from our hands.

No longer now in Eden, Adam, with the image of God departed from him, and with sadness in his heart, addressed himself to the tillage of the earth, which, cursed for his sake, spontaneously produced thorns and briers. This was part of the sentence pronounced upon him for his disobedience. Nor was this his only grief, as we shall find when the history of his companion Eve, with whom his own history is so intimately blended, is considered.

Well was it for Adam, and for us his posterity, that, after partaking of the tree of knowledge

of good and evil, he partook not also of the tree of life. This would have made his life of sin and sorrow immortal, and perpetuated our existence in a world of woe. But as it was, when his dust in due time returned to dust, his imperishable spirit, we hope—clothed with the righteousness of Christ, even as his nakedness had been covered with the coat of skin furnished by the hand of his compassionate Lord—was received up into heaven; whither, too, we may go, through faith in the same atoning Redeemer. For—blessed be God—the merits of the promised seed of the woman who was to bruise the serpent's head, like the luminary of day which irradiates the stars above it, and our globe beneath it, go back in their virtue to the beginning of time, and forward, till "time shall be no longer."

II.

EVE.

As we visit the groves of Paradise and the streams of Eden, admire the beauties of its flowers, breathe their fragrance, and partake of its fruits, we behold an individual there, superior to all other created objects, in that he alone possesses intelligence and immortality. It is the first man, Adam, whom God had formed in His own likeness, and made capable of beholding, with adoring wonder, the wisdom, goodness, and power which his works exhibited. Something however was needed to make this individual consummately happy, and that was a person of kindred nature and powers with himself; who could be his companion, share his happiness, and praise with him the Author of their joint felicity. "It is not good for man to be alone," said Jehovah; "I will make him a help meet for him."

Hence the creation of EVE. It was to supply a want;—to furnish a companion possessed of those mental and moral endowments which would qualify her to be society for the man made in God's own image, heighten his joys, aid his growth in goodness, and commune with him in close and beatified intercourse with the great Lord of all;—in a word, to complete the perfection of Paradise. "And the Lord caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept; and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof. And the rib which the Lord had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man." With what delight must Adam have looked upon this new proof of the Creator's skill and benevolence! A part of himself—a portion of his very substance—breathing and graceful before him, and smiling upon him! As Matthew Henry quaintly remarks: "The woman was made of a rib out of the side of Adam;—not out of his head to top him, nor out of his feet to be trampled on by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved." This shows

what God intended woman to be, and in this she may learn her earthly mission.

This lovely creature, as a piece of Adam's self, was to be regarded as on a level with himself, and as equally though differently endowed. *He* was to guide, protect, and cherish her, and she was to be in all things a help meet for him—infusing into his rougher nature her own gentleness, and suitably influencing him as a spiritual being. And when woman does this, then is she truly a "help meet," and answers the high purpose of her creation. Too often, however, is this important fact lost sight of, and woman is found considering herself formed rather to minister to man's gratification, as a return for which, she is to be waited upon and caressed, than formed to blend her energies with his in mutually developing their intellectual and moral powers, and promoting a more perfect state of society. May our fair readers remember why it was not "good for man to be alone," and aim to fulfil for him that office of affection and assistance which he imperiously needs to make him what he should be,

and for the performance of which office, they were divinely created and commissioned.

> "For contemplation he, and valor formed,
> For softness she, and sweet attractive grace."
>
> *Milton.*

A mournful revolution soon occurred in Eve's character and circumstances, caused by disobedience. Two trees, differing from all others in the garden—"the tree of life, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil"—she and her partner, as a test of their affection and loyalty to Jehovah, were forbidden to touch. The test was a simple and easy one, but they could not bear it, and so lost their virtue. Seduced by the arch apostate in the form of a serpent, who charmed her by his fascinations, she listened to his siren voice, looked at the forbidden tree of knowledge, with its rich foliage, exquisite fragrance, and tempting fruit, and in an evil hour plucked and ate. Adam, overcome by her persuasions and her fond tones, as she had been overcome by the voice of the tempter, presumptuously partook also, and became a sharer in her guilt.

"Earth felt the wound; and nature from her seat,
Sighing through all her works, gave signs of wo
That all was lost." *Milton.*

Innocence was exchanged for criminality, loyalty for rebellion, confidence for fear, happiness for misery, and glory for shame: and when the Lord God, from whom they had thrown off allegiance, and by that act voluntarily rejected his favor and incurred his displeasure, came to see and converse with them as he was wont to do, they fled to the shrubbery of the garden, to screen themselves from his eyes. But who can elude the discovery of Omniscience! He found them, and his former accents and language of love were exchanged for those of denunciation and wo. Both were expelled from Eden;—cherubium and flaming sword barred to both all access to the tree of life;—irregular passions and unholy desires took possession of their breasts;—man was doomed to till the earth, of which thorns and thistles were the spontaneous product, and woman was loaded with those ills under which she now labors.

Was Eve impelled by the principle of curiosi-

ty to partake of what was forbidden? Let her daughters set a watch here, lest they be moved by this same principle to do likewise. Did Eve, by her blandishments, involve Adam in her sin? Taken originally from his side, a near and tender part of himself, did she beguile him by the magic power of love to do as she had done? Let her daughters, while they learn here the extent of their influence over the other sex, see that this influence becomes not a snare to man; see that man's fond attachment to them is not appropriated and perverted by them to man's injury. Did Eve, delirious with Satan's enchantments, and with an overweening trust in her own ability, neglect to lift up her heart for guidance and support to the Infinite God; and therefore, left by him to battle with the wily serpent, alone, was conquered and fell? Let her daughters learn from this, in the hour of temptation not to be independent of Him who made them; but, on the swift wing of faith, send a prayer upwards for sustaining strength. And in all the manifold trials of this present life to which woman is subjected, let her remember, under the

pressure of these sorrows, their original cause;—for "the curse causeless doth not come;"—and so be patient and resigned to her lot. Eve's disobedience was the commencement of her troubles. These troubles were peculiar, and they are *woman's.*

Eve soon became a *mother;* the mother of a son whom she called Cain; a name signifying a *possession* or *acquisition;* saying, "I have gotten a man from the Lord." It has been thought that as God in mercy promised Eve an illustrious descendant, by whom the old serpent who deceived her should be vanquished, she supposed that Cain was that one; for the words may be translated—"I have gotten the man, even Jehovah;" and that hence, in the exuberance of her joy, she believed the promised seed, the predicted Messiah, to have been born. Had Cain been Christ, he would have been indeed an acquisition, a valuable gift; but it was not so; and the first mother was sadly mistaken in her first offspring—what he was, and what he would become. And so with mothers since, who have exulted at the birth of a child; forgetting their

anguish in what they regard as a great blessing, too frequently have they been disappointed; "for who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool," a Christian or an unbeliever, a comfort or a curse to his parents!

"When the wife,
Blest into mother, in the innocent look,
Or even the piping cry, of lips that brook
No pain and small suspense, a joy perceives
Man knows not,—*when from out its cradled nook*
She sees her little bud put forth its leaves,
What may the fruit be yet?—I know not; Cain was Eve's."

Byron.

In him his parents beheld the fruits of their guilt; their sin working in him, for his passions were violent and his will headstrong. Perhaps, exulting in affections unknown, unfelt before, they, in their fondness for the first-born, neglected to govern him. If so, they received that recompense of their erring indulgence which was meet; for "a child left to himself, bringeth his mother to shame."

Adam had by his wife a second son, whom she called Abel, which word, signifying vanity, reveals the severity of her disappointment in the

case of Cain, and a feeling of sadness at the prostration of her hopes and wishes. But *this* boy proved better than his mother's fears, and grew in wisdom as he grew in stature; developing traits of character amiable and pleasing in the sight of his Creator. May be the mother, reproved of negligence in the discipline and education of Cain, was not at fault in this respect touching Abel, but "trained him up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." If so, her "labor was not in vain in the Lord," and she had the unspeakable satisfaction—that maternal joy which refreshes the soul, from the sight of a son "walking in the paths of truth and of righteousness."

But there was still another trial for Eve, another pang to teach her the bitterness of sin. This child of promise and of piety was slain by his elder brother! Here was death; death by a brother's hand! She had heard of death before, in the words, "dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return;" but here it was—the death of the helpless and innocent by the strong hand of the guilty; the death of her loving Abel, as he

was ripening into a holy manhood! How must Eve have looked upon his life-blood dyeing the green sward! What tides of sorrow flooded her soul, as she stood over his mangled corpse! Perhaps this was Eve's last grief ere she herself descended to the tomb. She had another son given to supply the loss of Abel, and daughters also; and it is to be hoped, through access to Him whom the tree of life prefigured, and to whose embrace no cherubim or flaming sword presents a barrier, she passed at her decease into a more glorious Paradise than she had lost.

III.

ENOCH.

If, while travelling, we stop in a town, enter a grave-yard belonging to it, (for every town has its grave-yard,) and read on a marble slab—"Enoch walked with God, and was not, for God took him;"—if we should read this inscription, and knew no more relative to the departed one than this, that his mortal remains were not lying there, "ashes to ashes, dust to dust," though his memory was thus preserved by the monumental stone;—we should suppose him to have been a singular and interesting character. If, then, we further read in a book, where a true record was kept: "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death, and was not found because God had translated him, for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God;"—we should be still more interested in

the man; and yet if this was all the intelligence we could glean concerning him, our information would be very limited.

Now such is nearly the fact relative to Enoch. We know but little concerning him. The inspired account of him is brief. And yet, as the seen wing of an angel but awakens a more keen desire in the beholder to view the concealed angelic form entire;—so the short prominence given in scripture narrative to this man of God, but kindles an ardent curiosity to know more about him.

By a touch of the pencil dipped in heaven, he is presented to us—"*walking with God.*" We have met with those to whom these three words conveyed the idea of retirement and seclusion, and whose imagination portrayed Enoch in the garb and character of a monk. They suppose him to have lived apart from his contemporaries, having nothing to do with the ordinary concerns of life, but occupying himself exclusively with things divine. In their conception of him, he might have sat for the portrait of Parnell's hermit.

"Far in the wild, unknown to public view,
From youth to age a reverend hermit grew;
The moss his bed—the cave his humble cell,
His food the fruits, his drink the crystal well;
Remote from man, with God he passed his days,
Prayer all his business, all his pleasure praise."

But in our view, they have a mistaken idea of Enoch. He was no hermit. In no such "serene repose" did his days glide away. He was in the busy world while his affections were above;—was "diligent in business, while fervent in spirit;"—was endeavoring to win mankind to virtue, while virtuous himself. We learn that he was a preacher, and have a specimen of his preaching;—saying to that profligate generation—"Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints to execute judgment upon all;" and are told by Jewish Rabbis, that it was when he was upon the point of being murdered for his protestations against sin, and his honest, vigorous, and unselfish devotion to the good of individuals, and of society, that Jehovah interposed, and extending a divine arm down from the skies, lifted him from the reach of his enemies. No, Enoch was

not a recluse;—nor do the words, "walked with God," convey to our minds any such idea. The idea they do convey, is rather that of an individual, distinguished, by being reconciled to God, from an evil and perverse generation who walked contrary to God, and God to them; of an individual who "set the Lord always before him," soliciting the divine guidance, and living in conformity thereto; of an individual who was in fellowship with God through the medium of his works, providence, and Spirit; keeping bright the flame of piety on the altar of his own heart, and kindling up and cherishing it in the bosoms of others. This, as we understand it, is the way in which Enoch "walked with God." Contemporary with Adam three hundred and eight years, and the first who sustained the sacred office, with faith in the promised Seed, he offered sacrifices, listened to Jehovah's voice in those various ways in which the Most High expressed His will, cultivated a holy intimacy and communion with God, and, in the spheres in which he moved, as a man, a minister, and a father—for he was the father of Methuselah "and

begat sons and daughters"—developed the possession of religion as a vital, habitual, and abiding principle. This worthy, "God took," or, as Paul explains it, "translated, that he saw not death." How this was done, or what cheering intimations were given him of his departure—who shall say? Did a car of fire come for him, as, centuries after, the wheels of God's chariot made music on the air for Elijah? Did angels, those spirits pure and bright, who "minister unto the heirs of salvation," and who had ministered unto him in his earthly pilgrimage;—were they commissioned to visit him, and folding him in their soft embrace, take him to his and their heavenly home? Or in some other mysterious manner was he transferred from the troubles of earth, to the bliss of the celestial paradise? We cannot answer these questions. We only know that "God took him," so that he saw not death. No "pains or groans or dying strife" were his; and to "the deep, damp grave, the darkness, and the worms," he was a total stranger. Probably "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, he was changed," as saints will be at

their Lord's second coming;—for "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God;"—and with a seraphic escort was "received up into glory." What a change from the clayey vestments of mortality, to that "body likened unto Christ's glorious body;"—from the disgusting depravity of this lower world, to the holiness of that upper world;—from the revilings of men of corrupt minds, to the anthems of the blessed;—from the society which he left, to the congenial company of the redeemed;—from the tainted atmosphere of earth, to the vivifying atmosphere of heaven! Valuable purposes were subserved by this passage of Enoch to the skies. If, as is quite probable, the wicked of his day denied the soul's immortality; here was a sensible, impressive, and convincing proof it. If, as is quite probable, they turned a deaf ear to his preaching, and denied the truth of the testimony which he bore against their unrighteousness; God showed that his servant was right and faithful, by bridging for him the valley of shadows, and charioting him to glory. By this flight of his through the golden gates of the New Jerusalem without

looking upon the face of the king of terrors, we learn too, what, but for *sin*, had been the happy lot of all mortals; for had our first parents persisted in their obedience, their descendants, like Enoch, would have reached the heavenly mansions, without the dissolution of their mortal tabernacles by the icy touch of death; nor would the dust of the church-yard have pressed upon their cold and pulseless bosoms.

We, now fallen, sinful creatures, cannot expect to be translated as was Enoch. And yet to the genuine believer, to him who has Enoch's faith, and walks like him with God, death is, though painful, but a translation; for he has underneath him the everlasting arms; to him death and hell are despoiled of their dominion, and the crumbling of the prison walls of his soul encircles him with the glories of the Lamb.

IV.

NOAH.

THE extreme corruption of mankind before the general deluge, may be accounted for, not only from the loss of the pristine innocence of our first parents, and the depravity which they contracted and transmitted to their descendants, but also from the intermarriages between the "seed of the righteous and the seed of the wicked." The good are more easily injured by the bad, than the bad are reformed by the good; and when the family of Seth, who had espoused the true religion, and were denominated "the sons of God," became united by marriage to the family of Cain, who partook of his impiety, then the sacred stock by such affinity degenerated—"the salt of the earth" lost its purity, and corruption mightily prevailed. Such unequal alliances it were better to avoid. If they are *not* positively forbidden by the Apos-

tle, where he says: "Be ye not unequally yoked with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath Christ with Belial? or what communion hath light with darkness? or what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?"—if this language is *not* to be interpreted as prohibiting marriage between Christians and those who make no pretensions to the possession of piety, yet such marriages are too frequently a fruitful source of evil. As it is difficult for a bird to soar aloft with one wing crippled, so it is difficult for a person to advance in piety who has for an intimate associate one who is not pious. Extremely difficult is it too, for a family of children to be trained up in the ways of the Lord, when their parents differ in sentiment and feeling on the momentous subject of religion. The father and the mother, governed by different principles and tending to a different destiny, will be divided in the counsels which they give to their offspring, and in the examples which they set before them; and the influence of such division can hardly fail to be unhappy upon their offspring for time and for

eternity. There is no sympathy or unison between truth and falsehood, holiness and sin. Had those who descended from Seth, and among whom was the true Church, refused affinity with the carnal, irreligious descendants of Cain, evil would not have so abounded; and if, in selecting a partner for life, the question by the pious one should invariably be raised, "Is he or she a Christian?" and marriage be contracted with such a person alone, most beneficial would be the result upon the spiritual welfare of the parties, the spiritual welfare of their children, and the interests of the community.

From these specified causes, the antediluvians were sunk to the lowest ebb of sin. Not only was their wickedness universal, but it was extreme. The words which the Spirit of God employs with reference to it are: "The earth was corrupt before the Lord, and the earth was filled with violence. And the Lord looked upon the earth and behold it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth." In the midst, however, of this profligacy, vice, and rapine, there was *one* who partook not of it, but was

distinguished for his righteousness. This was NOAH, the son of the second Lamech, the grandson of Methuselah, and the tenth in descent from Adam. It would seem, from the name given to this personage by his parents, that they had a presentiment of his future signal services, for the word Noah signifies *rest* or *comfort;* and he was a comforter of many, and a type of that Messiah who is the true centre and rest of the soul. Like

> —— "the seraph Abdiel, faithful found
> Among the faithless, faithful only he;
> Unshaken, unseduced, unterrified,
> His loyalty he kept, his love, his zeal,
> Nor number nor example with him wrought
> To swerve from truth, or change his constant mind,
> Though single." *Milton.*

Thus Noah resisted the contagion of evil influences, opposed the maxims and practices of the times, stemmed the current of corrupt public sentiment, despised the sneers of the profane, and braved the threats of the ungodly. "Noah was a good man, and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God." To him the Lord revealed his intention of covering the whole compass of the habitable globe with a flood of waters,

and commanded him to construct an ark for his own preservation, and the preservation of his family. Noah acted in obedience to the voice of God. He proceeded openly to his work, which employed him for one hundred and twenty years. During this period he told those around him that he was acting by divine command, and solemnly warned them, by forsaking their sins, to escape the impending destruction. We know not that one was found, (with the exception of his family,) who received his warnings; but doubtless many laughed at his folly and credulity. The ark or large vessel being completed, "the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou and all thine house into it." No sooner had he and his family entered, and the Lord had shut them in, than divine mercy withdrew, and the Holy Spirit ceased longer to strive with rebellious man. "The fountains of the great deep," says the sacred historian, "were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened." The vast reservoirs of water, which Jehovah had hitherto restrained, "that they might not pass over to cover the earth," burst forth in tremendous floods; the barriers also,

which prevented the "waters above the firmament" from mingling with the "waters under the firmament," were taken away, and the rain descended in solid sheets. The warnings of the pious patriarch were then remembered, but remembered as the warnings of gospel ministers are remembered by the wretched victims of the pit. The same power which shut Noah *in*, shut them *out*, and safety was nowhere else to be found. The guilty beings fled in vain to the mountains, and thence to the topmost branches of the trees which crowned their summits. The hand of the Almighty was upon them. The waters reached them even there, and buried them beneath the angry billows. "Fifteen cubits upward did they prevail." Excepting Noah, and they that were with him in the ark, every living creature perished. They alone, lifted up on the bosom of the rising flood, and riding on the back of the swelling surges, were secure; and the higher the flood arose, the nearer they were borne to their own heaven.

A whole family in the ark! What a delightful thought! A whole family in heaven! A

still more delightful thought! And as that family in the ark were introduced there through the faith of one man—the faith of Noah—so, by the blessing of God upon a father's faith, a Christian father's faithful counsels, affectionate solicitude, and fervent prayers, a whole family may stand together at Christ's right hand. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," said the Apostle Paul to the Roman jailer, "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and thy house." Not thou only, but thy house. Father of a family, think of this. Think of the connection between you and yours—you and the partner of your bosom—you and the offspring of your loins, bone of your bone and flesh of your flesh; consider that God has constituted you a minister of his grace in your own house, and connected the salvation of your own household with your faith and fidelity; and since God has provided an ark in the person of his Son, come thou and all thy house into it, for there is room for thine as well as for thee, and together may you be wafted to the haven of eternal rest.

The tempest having spent itself, serenity returned and the waters assuaged; Noah removed

the covering of the ark, and beholding that the ground was dry, came out of the ark, he and they that were with him, after it had been their asylum for little more than a year. With a soul overflowing with gratitude to his divine Preserver, his first act was that of worship. Erecting an altar and assembling his family around it, he laid upon it their united sacrifice of thanksgiving to him who "holdeth the winds in his fist, and the waters in the hollow of his hand," and who had kindly watched over them and guarded them from danger amidst the convulsions of the earth. This sacrifice was accepted, and a covenant established with the patriarch that the globe should not again be inundated—of which covenant the rainbow was made by Jehovah the seal and the pledge. "Look," says the writer of Ecclesiasticus: "Look upon the rainbow, and praise Him that made it; very beautiful it is in the brightness thereof; it compasseth the heavens about with a glorious circle, and the hands of the Most High have bended it."

We pursue not the story of Noah further. Suffice it to say that this second father of the

human race engaged in the labors of husbandry, the training of his family, and the service of the Lord, and "came to the grave as a shock of corn cometh in its season," having survived the deluge three hundred and fifty years. "And all the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years, and he died."

V.

ABRAHAM.

AMONG the many personages brought to view in the Old Testament, whom the mind delights to contemplate, and around whom the affections gather, no one holds a more decided prominence than Abraham.

Concerning the early part of this patriarch's life, we know nothing. Not having been made a matter of record, it can only be a matter of conjecture. He is first introduced to us at the seventy-fifth year of his age, when he was called from Ur of the Chaldees, to "go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance."

This call to leave his country and his father's house, to turn his back upon the place of his birth, the scenes of his childhood and youth, and the graves of his kindred, and start off through a pathless waste to a distant and unknown land, he, from a sense of duty to God and acquiescence

in the Divine will as good and wise, cheerfully obeyed, and went four hundred miles across a part of Arabia Deserta, to Palestine, or the land of Canaan. This surrender of present feeling and interest in obedience to the voice of Jehovah, from a conviction that his commands are right, and that those who obey them will be indemnified against loss, is worthy of all imitation; and he who has Abraham's temper and faith, will, when called to leave the scenes of impiety, the pomps and vanities of a vain world, and set his face towards heaven, promptly and actively address himself to this duty. Soon after the arrival of Abraham in the land of promise, there was a severe famine there, on account of which he was forced to go down into Egypt. The famine having ceased, he returned to Canaan again; when the promise of God to him, ere yet he had left Ur of the Chaldees, that he should be blessed with a numerous and thriving progeny, that his name should be illustrious, and that "in him all the families of the earth should be blessed," was renewed and confirmed. In all his movements, as we track him from spot to spot—now at

Sichem, and then at Bethel—now at Mamre, and then at Beersheba—we find him scrupulously rearing the domestic altar, and laying upon it the appointed sacrifice. In the several stages of his journey, he held uninterrupted intercourse with the God of heaven, and by the side of his tent is invariably found the altar, encircled by his family. Signal instance of warm devotion!

Abraham knew that God was the God of households, as well as the God of individuals; that he it is who "setteth the solitary in families;" that he it is on whom they are dependent for life, health, and every blessing; that a dwelling without an altar is an unfurnished dwelling, however much of other furniture there may be in it; and that the influence of the domestic altar is, of all influences, the most potential and salutary in its bearings upon family government and prosperity;—and hence, in the place where he tarried but for a night, the altar was set up. This was an essential element in the patriarch's domestic discipline, by which he was enabled to "command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord, to do justice

and judgment;" and the parent who would have Abraham's God for his God, and the God of his offspring—who would have his children blessed because of their relation to him, will imitate the patriarch in this respect—"build an altar to the Lord, and call upon the name of the Lord." Let me ask my readers, whether Abraham, who, till he had passed the age of three-score years and ten, lived in the very centre of idolatry, shall rise up against them in the day of judgment, because he, in his pilgrimage, offered up prayer to the Lord in the presence of his household, while they do not?

Soon after the return of Abraham to Canaan, the largeness of his possessions, and those of his nephew Lot, threatened an alienation of mind between them. Both being rich, having flocks, herds, and tents in great numbers, "the land was not able to bear them, that they should dwell together." This furnished another opportunity to develop the disposition of Abraham, and presents him in a lovely light; for, instead of allowing the clashing of worldly interests to separate him and his nephew, he, though the elder, more

distinguished, and superior man, freely concedes to him, with a magnanimity, generosity, and self-sacrifice greatly to his honor. His frank, pacific, and affectionate language to Lot, was: "Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between thy herdsmen and my herdsmen; for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me; if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go the left." The consequence was, that they amicably parted; and his nephew, regarding temporal advantages merely, irrespective of religion, chose the well-watered and fertile plain of Jordan.

We may learn, by this, how to conduct ourselves in similar circumstances. We are, "if it be possible, as much as lieth in us, to live peaceably with all men;" and where this peace is endangered, it is better to yield what we may lawfully and properly retain, than by a tenacious, inflexible maintenance of our rights, to generate contention. Few family differences there would be, few neighborhood quarrels, few angry colli-

sions between man and man, were Abraham's spirit more generally diffused in place of that self-love, self-conceit, and punctilious adherence to fancied dignity and claims, now so prevalent.

Some years having elapsed, during which the faith of the patriarch, relative to God's promise to him of a numerous offspring, having been tried, and not found wanting, another more specific and fuller assurance, that his posterity should be as numerous as the stars in the firmament of heaven, was made to him, and likewise that his wife Sarah should have a son. Ishmael had been born before; but the stock with whom the covenant of God was to be established, from which the Messiah should spring, and from which the Church of Christ should proceed, was not to be in Ishmael, but in this promised son of Sarah—whose name, now changed from Sarai (*my princess*) to Sarah (*a princess*), indicated a higher honor, and stamped her "a mother of nations." The child in due time was born, and was named Isaac; for the counsel of God never faileth to stand. Ishmael was by a bond-maid, Isaac by a free woman. Ishmael was the father and founder

of the Arabs, while to Isaac "pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; and of him, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever." Isaac was "the root whence the visible Church rose, as a tree distinct from all others, of which tree, Christ was the branch of righteousness; and from which, after Christ came, the natural branches were broken off, and the Gentiles were grafted in; the same tree which has spread its branches over many nations; which, in due time, will cover the whole earth; and, at the end of the world, will be translated from an earthly soil into the Paradise of God."*

The next thing deserving of note in the history of Abraham, was a visit paid him by three angels, on their way to inflict divine vengeance upon the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. As he sat in the tent door, in the heat of the day, and spied them approaching, he, with true oriental hospitality, invited them to enter, and partake of such fare as he might furnish. On being apprised of

* Edwards' History of Redemption.

the melancholy mission on which they were despatched, his heart was smitten with grief, and he fervently supplicated the Almighty to spare those profligate cities, if fifty righteous persons could be found therein. But no fifty such were there. He interceded again and again, till the number fifty was reduced to ten; but even these were not found, so general and extreme was the corruption. His nephew Lot, who, resident among them, "vexed his soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds," with his family, were the only individuals saved from the fiery ruin. Abraham, pitying where he could not relieve, "returned to his place," and from a distance beheld the fiery shower: "fire and brimstone rained down from the Lord out of heaven," blasting all the beauties of nature, and consuming the impious thousands who had enjoyed the fertility of the plain only to nourish their sensual passions, and aggravate their wickedness against God.

While in the devastation of these guilty cities of the vale of Siddim, we see Jehovah's abhorrence of sin, and his punishment of it, we observe,

too, the efficacy of intercessory prayer. Wicked as that population were, odious, unspeakably odious as they must have been in the eyes of a holy God, yet the pleadings of one man almost held back the struggling bolts of divine indignation from falling upon them! There was a strength in that solitary, pleading one, superior to their insults,—virtue in his wrestlings overtopping their outrages; and the presence of ten pious persons would, because of the supplications of the patriarch, have delivered the cities.

Learn hence the power of prayer, not only in our own behalf, but in behalf of others—in behalf of our children, neighbors, and the community. "Prayer," beautifully remarks one, "is the slender nerve that moves the muscles of Omnipotence;" and as beautifully remarks another—"Prayer and God's mercy are like two buckets in a well—while one ascends, the other descends."

Time rolls on, and the thoughts of this venerable saint are found directed to the grave. And why should they not be, when the very first spot in that land of Canaan, promised to him and his seed for a possession, was a spot purchased by

him for a burying-place? It is remarkable that the most ancient money transaction of which we have any account in the book of God or elsewhere, was this purchase by Abraham of a grave. He bought it of the sons of Heth, for his deceased Sarah,—a resting-place for the companion of his years, the partner of his toils, and the solace of a protracted and chequered life. Bowing himself to the children of Heth, he said, "I am a stranger, and a sojourner with you; give me a possession of a burying-place with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight. Give me the field, and the cave that is therein, and the trees that are in the field and in the borders round about; and let them be made sure for the possession of a burying-place." That cave and field, "bought for four hundred shekels of silver, current money with the merchant," was Macpelah before Mamre; and there the mortal remains of his wife were deposited. There too did other hands, performing the last sad offices of humanity in his behalf, bury *him*. Isaac and Ishmael were both present at his funeral. Though separated before, they met at their father's interment, and, we hope,

gave each other the fond embrace of affection over his ashes. If children for any cause have disagreed, obdurate must be the heart and unforgiving the spirit, that does not bury its resentment in a parent's grave.

This identical family sepulchre of the patriarch is reported to have been found near Hebron, in the year 1119, and to it, out of respect for his memory, Mohammedans often repair. Over it, also, Christians at a later day erected a church; but Turks changed the cross into the crescent, by converting the edifice into a mosque.

That interesting and instructive passage in the history of the Father of the Faithful—"*the offering up of his son Isaac*,"—we reserve for distinct consideration.

VI.

ABRAHAM AND ISAAC.

In a previous sketch of the Father of the Faithful, we waived all notice of that most wonderful and interesting act of his—*the offering up of his son Isaac*;—deeming this worthy of distinct and minute consideration. Such consideration we now propose to give it.

That was a most singular command given by Jehovah to the Patriarch: "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt offering, upon one of the mountains that I will tell thee of!" It would be a singular mandate for any tyrannical monarch to give; how much more so to be given by the Lord of Hosts, a perfect God—a God who formed the ties of nature, and made them sacred, and who, amidst the lightnings and thunders of Sinai, said,

"Thou shalt not kill!" Children were passed through the fire to propitiate a pretended deity—the cruel Moloch—a god of blood; but here, "the Father of mercies and God of all grace," who declares that he afflicts not and grieves not his creatures willingly, enjoins it upon a pious parent to murder his amiable and affectionate son. The unnatural, merciless act must be done by himself, and not by another. It would have been painful intelligence to Abraham, to be informed that Isaac must die. Still more distressing to be told that he must die by violence. But how much more poignant the anguish to learn that the beloved boy must perish by *his* hand; that he must journey with him three days to the place of sacrifice, thinking and sorrowing as he moved along — "the iron entering his soul" at every step—that in the dark solitude of a mountain forest he must build up an altar, bind his offspring and extend him upon the wood, stand over him with an unsheathed knife, strike the fatal blow, witness the gushing blood and the death-struggle, and then conclude the dark tragedy by burning the body, and mingling its

ashes with the ashes of the pile on which it was laid! Yet such was the nature of the command given to test the power of the faith of the faithful Abraham.

Numerous were the objections which the patriarch might have made to complying with it; many pleas entered against the performance of such a deed. Obstacles thick and formidable lay in his path. There was Sarah, his wife, to whom Isaac was dear as the apple of her eye. If he *told* her that he was commanded to present such an offering, would she believe it? Would she believe that an order apparently so barbarous ever emanated from God? Would she not deny that her husband ever had so strange a vision, or was ever actually commissioned to the performance of so atrocious a deed? Would she not infer that he was deranged, and that it was her duty, aided by her servants, to prevent him from insanely burying the knife in the bosom of his boy? And then, if, apprehensive of these difficulties, he did *not* tell her of the order, and his purpose, with what face could he return to her again without her son? Could she confide

in him? could she respect him? could she forgive him? Would she not say, "a bloody husband hast thou been to me!" and flee from him as from a murderer? What if a father should do such a thing *now*—should go out from his wife, and slay her only and beloved son? Could she look upon him, at his return, as the loved father of her loved boy—as her cherished husband? Would not his very presence freeze her blood with horror, and she shrink from him as from contact with the plague? Another difficulty might have been found with his neighbors. Abraham was encompassed with idolaters. The Egyptians, with the Canaanites and Perizzites, dwelt in the land. The patriarch doubtless desired their conversion to the true faith. Doubtless, as he looked upon "their unlawful deeds, his righteous soul," like Lot's in Sodom, "was sorely vexed." Doubtless he pointed them to the spiritual worship of the one living and true God, and the pure principles of that piety which he approved. These idolaters, too, doubtless knew Isaac; they must have frequently seen him with his father. What, then, would be the

impression which this singular act would make upon *them?* Might they not tauntingly and triumphantly say, "Are these the fruits of that religion which you commend to *us?* It seems that *your* God delights in human sacrifices as well as ours, and that you do not scruple to offer them—to offer even the body of your own and only son! If this is the effect of your religion—if it sanctions such cruelty—a tragedy so dread—extol it not as superior to ours, nor urge us to exchange ours for it." Abraham, keenly alive to the glory of Jehovah—"very jealous for the Lord of Hosts"—must have felt the force of remarks like these, and must have grieved at being the occasion of casting such reproach upon the Infinite Being whom he loved and adored.

But another, and a greater obstacle than either of those now mentioned, was, how this command was consistent with the Divine promise, that through Isaac should come the Redeemer. Before the birth of Isaac, it was predicted concerning him, that he should be the one from whom the Messiah should descend. But how could this be, if he should be thus put to death? How

could he, after his own life was extinguished, give life to others? When the root was cut up and destroyed, how was it possible for a branch to spring from it? This seemed indeed an insurmountable obstacle. God had told the patriarch that he should have a son who should live and be blessed in his generations. He had comforted him with the animating prospect of this for many years. When Ishmael was born, God told Abraham that he was not the one who was to be thus illustrious, but that in Isaac should his seed be called. He then allowed him to send away Ishmael, thus cutting off all hopes from that quarter, and now strangely tells him to kill Isaac! Here, to the eye of sense, was a palpable contradiction. Abraham might have properly inquired, whether he really understood God: God might reasonably be expected not to contradict himself. But here he apparently gives two opposite conflicting commands; one, to circumcise and rear up Isaac, that he may be the founder of the Church, that all the nations of the earth may be blessed in him and his seed—and the other, to dye the knife in his heart's blood,

and burn his body to ashes on the altar of wood. But what did the patriarch do? Did regard for Sarah, and the fear of his neighbors, and the fond yearnings of nature, and the impossibility of harmonizing Jehovah's prophetic declarations and express command, triumph? No. Observe his actual conduct. "He arose early," we are told;—probably the order was given in a vision of the night; and no sooner had the morning star melted away, and the sun, indicative of his rising, flushed the eastern sky, than the patriarch was up, promptly to execute his sad office. He informs not Sarah his wife what he is about to do. Her affection for her son might have been too powerful for her faith; and as to displeasing her, though he cordially loved her, he would rather displease her than displease God. He cleaves the wood for the burnt offering, lays it upon Isaac his son, takes two of his young men with him, and sets forth on his melancholy journey. He is three days in arriving at the place. What days of misery must those have been! It is hard to live in the expectation of coming evil. It is often as painful to anticipate

as to encounter. But for three successive days the patriarch was going to massacre his son—the boy of prayers and promises. On the third day he comes within sight of the mountain. Pointing it out to his servants as it lay in the distance, he tells them it is the spot where he is to worship, and dismisses them from him until his return. Then taking the knife and fire—the instruments of death—he with his son ascends the mountain. As toiling they ascend it together, Isaac puts to him the affecting question: "My father," (oh, that word *father*, in such circumstances! It must have pierced the patriarch's soul as deeply as the knife he was to strike into his son:) "My father," said the lad—for he had seen his pious father offer too many sacrifices, not to know what was requisite on such occasions—" my father, behold the fire and the wood, but *where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?*" This question, it would seem, must have overcome the parent; but no, undaunted through grace, he preserves a serene countenance, represses his bursting emotions, and calmly replies: "God, my son, will provide a lamb." Reaching the

place, with the same composedness of mind, he builds an altar, lays the wood in order, and binding Isaac his son, lays him upon the altar upon the wood. He puts cords around those feet which had moved in filial obedience to parental counsel, and ties the hands which he had taught to be raised in prayer. He must have told him his purpose, and the reason of it; a tear, yea, many tears must have fallen as he spake; he must have bid him farewell, kissed him for the last time for his own sake, and for Sarah, his dear mother's sake; and then taking the knife, he is about giving the fatal blow. This, however, is not suffered to fall. It is enough that Abraham has given him up. God accepts the offering, while he stays the uplifted hand. The gold tried in this, the hottest fire, is found pure, and so the fire is extinguished. A voice is heard! It is the angel of the Lord calling to Abraham out of heaven, and saying: "Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do anything unto him, for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing that thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me." At the sound of the voice,

"Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and beheld behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns." Him he took and offered. The exchange was a happy one; happy to Abraham, happy to Isaac, and more acceptable to God.

The account of the offering up of Isaac by Abraham, is fraught with instruction to our readers.

What an illustrious instance is here furnished of the power of faith! Among those worthies recorded by the Apostle in the eleventh chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews, as exhibiting the nature and efficacy of this divine principle of action, Abraham holds a conspicuous place. "By faith, Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac, and he that had received the promises, offered up his only begotten son; of whom it was said, that in Isaac shall thy seed be called; accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead, from whence also he received him in a figure." Abraham believed God. This is faith; a fixed, governing trust that Jehovah will accomplish what he promises, and will execute what is right. It is such a conception of the

Divine being and attributes, as assures the mind that God is, and is righteous in all his ways, and will certainly reward the righteous. When God told Abraham that his promised son should be born, he believed it. When God told him that from this son the Messiah should descend, he believed that also. When God told him to tear that child from his embrace, witness the pangs of his death, and reduce his body to ashes; though Abraham could not comprehend the reasons of this command, nor see how it could be reconciled with divine goodness and truth, yet he believed that such goodness and truth really existed, and would one day be seen to exist; and so, stifling the feelings of nature, he ascended Mount Moriah, and bound the human sacrifice to the altar. Here was the exercise of a tranquil confidence in the Almighty. The patriarch knew that God spake to him, and that was enough. He knew that God would not promise, to disappoint, and that though Isaac should lie bleeding under the knife, God would miraculously restore him again. He expected that he should have to slay his son, and yet was persuaded that he should

somehow receive him again, and generations unborn be, according to the prophecy, blessed in his life: "Accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead." He firmly believed that if he did not neglect Jehovah for Isaac, Jehovah would neglect neither father nor son. Such was the triumph of faith!

The patriarch furnishes likewises an impressive example of obedience. The Most High is entitled to the obedience of all his creatures. He possesses wisdom and authority competent to assign the rule, and regulate the subject by it. He can have no motive to issue a wrong command, and his perfections forbid such a command ever to proceed forth from his throne. When his will, therefore, is made known in any instance, we should perform it. We are ready to do this in some instances, when it can be done without the expense of time and care, and the exercise of self-denial; but the obedience which is illustrated in the history of Abraham, and which marks the Christian, is a universal obedience. God never demands too much, and all his demands, however great the present inconveniences to

which they subject us, however severe the pain they cost, however roughly they come athwart our fond gratifications and long-cherished purposes, must nevertheless be fulfilled. When God commanded Abraham to part with Isaac—that dearest object of his love—raise the altar, extend him upon it, and make it smoke with his blood, there was no refusal. He looked up to the authority whence the trying order came, acknowledged its rectitude and obligatory power, and conducted accordingly. And while, like Abraham, we should obey in matters not pleasing to the flesh, as well as in those which involve the sacrifice of no interest, our obedience too, like his, should be cordial and immediate. The will must go with the act. We must feel that God's commandments will not in the end be found grievous, though they may now seem to be so. No wrong feelings must exist, as though God were a hard master, stern and excessive in his exactions.

So, also, our obedience must be immediate, without hesitation. We are to run in the way of Jehovah's wishes, when the path is once pointed out. There was no arguing of Abraham with

God, and no delay. The heart-rending order given in the night, he was found executing early in the morning. If Satan gets us to hesitate, he will soon get us to demur, then to cavil, and then stoutly to oppose. When God calls, we are to arise promptly, and follow speedily, leaving consequences with him, and "the dead to bury their dead."

Further: The offering up of Isaac typifies the sacrifice of the Lamb of God. Mount Moriah was a shadow of Mount Calvary. On that same hill, where was seen the knife of a father suspended over his darling son, was seen, two thousand years afterwards, God's only begotten and dearly beloved Son, nailed, wan and motionless, to the accursed tree. Where a ram was caught in the thicket and offered up, was a Lamb subsequently slain, who "taketh away the sins of the world;" and in the spectacle of the altar and the victim, were shadowed forth the thrilling tragedy of the Cross. "Abraham," said our Saviour to the Jews, "rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad." He saw in the sacrifice of the ram, provided instead of Isaac, the great sacrifice

of Him who "was in the beginning with God, and who was God;"—the promised seed,—the Shiloh, —the Messiah,—who "was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities, and by whose stripes we are healed." As Isaac carried the pile of wood up Moriah, Christ bore his cross up Calvary; as Isaac was to suffer alone—the servants being left at the foot of the mount—so Christ "trod the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with him;" as Isaac's hands and feet were bound by cords to the altar, Christ's hands and feet were fastened by nails to the tree; as God was well pleased with the one sacrifice, so he was also with the other; and as no one can question the reality of Abraham's faith and obedience, so no one can question Jehovah's love for man, in consenting to part with his only begotten and dearly beloved, to die as their substitute. And surely if the Most High rewarded Abraham by establishing with him a gracious covenant, we ought to manifest our obligations and gratitude, by a cheerful, absolute surrender of ourselves, our all, to our heavenly Father. A view upon the altar of the ineffably glorious Lamb of God,—the cli-

max of grandeur and humiliation,—those hands and feet spiked, that had built the stories of the heavens, and trodden the sapphire pavements of the celestial city—should penetrate the centre of our conscious being, stir the fountains of affection in their lowest depths, and send their streams in one broad, deep, unfailing current to Him, who thus "gave his life a ransom for many."

One more lesson taught us by the patriarch, is, the duty of submission to the most afflictive providences.

Many are the afflictions, not only of the righteous, but of all the children of men. There is no passing through this world without passing through more or less of trouble. It is a vale of tears. Tears are dropped by some of the pilgrims at every stage of their journey. We must drink of the cup of sorrow before filling our urns from the river of life.

There is a right way, however, of encountering these adverse providences; and that is, with resignation. There must be a renunciation of our own purposes and hopes, and a resigning of ourselves to the Lord's will, as to the will of a

wise and kind parent. This it is often exceedingly difficult to do. Perfect acquiescence in God's wishes is a noble and rare attainment. But we see that it is attainable, and was attained by Abraham. He was enveloped in as dark a cloud as ever enwrapped a mortal; yet there was no fretting, no murmuring, no repining. What conceivable trial can be more distressing than the one to which he was called? to be the executioner of his own son, the child of his old age—a child not wayward and rebellious, but a dutiful, affectionate, and hopeful child! To lose such a child in the ordinary course of providence, is often deemed an event well nigh insupportable. Hear Jacob, refusing to be comforted, saying, "I will descend into the grave after my Joseph, mourning." Hear David exclaiming, even over ungrateful and wicked Absalom: "Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" But here we see Abraham about to destroy the fruit of his own loins with his own hand, calm and submissive, because the Lord had ordered it.

Called we all shall one day be to mourn, if

even now the habiliments of sorrow are not worn by us; for truthfully, alas, speaks the poet,—

"There is no flock, however watched and tended,
But one dead lamb is there!
There is no fireside, howso'er defended,
But has one vacant chair!"

Let us then look to the patriarch Abraham and hush our sighs. We shall not be forced to bear up against such waves of tribulation as met and broke over him! We shall never be baptized with *his* baptism of suffering. Friends near and dear we may be called to surrender, but their life's blood will not gush out by the blow we have given. God may take away our Isaacs, but will not torture us by ordering *us* to smite them. Nothing so painful, so agonizing, will be demanded of *us*. Let us then think of this in the hour of bereavement and distress, and be comforted. Let us think of the patriarch's severe trial, and "faint not;" of his submission, and do likewise. Let us sacrifice with Abraham, that we may pass an eternity in his bosom.

VIII.

LOT.

THE sacred Scriptures have been aptly compared to a mine of diamonds. As in such a mine there are gems of various water and value, so there are portions of Scripture more interesting and weighty than other portions; and as in a mine of diamonds there is not a gem which is not precious—the minutest and dullest even having a value—so there is no part of the word of God which is not important, and from which spiritual profit may not be derived. The same is true of Scripture characters—saints of old—prophets and pious men of former days. Some of these were more distinguished for their excellences than others; and yet, all whom inspiration has numbered among the children of God, had with their imperfections many redeeming qualities, which raised them above the mass of humanity by which they were surrounded.

This remark applies to LOT. He was not a diamond of the first water—not a Noah, nor an Enoch, nor an Abraham. There was a crust upon him obvious to the eye, which dimmed his polish; and yet the root of religion was in him, and the principles of grace implanted in his heart.

Lot was the nephew of Abraham. In our article on Abraham, we found this venerable patriarch making a generous proposition to his nephew, to take his choice of the extensive country before them. Lot took him at his word, chose the fairest and the best portion of the land to the east of Canaan, and while Abraham remained at Bethel, "pitched his tent towards Sodom." In this movement, Lot made two capital mistakes—one in leaving Abraham, and the other in locating himself in Sodom. Abraham had showed him marked kindness, had been to him in the place of those parents of whom he was early deprived, and it was to his uncle's judicious counsel and supervision that he was mainly indebted for that measure of goodness by which he was characterized. It is hazardous

to leave a faithful Christian friend—to pass beyond the reach of those conservatory influences which his conversation, example, and instructions bring to bear upon us. Many a person may date his ruin from the hour when he left the roof where the Bible was considered sacred and was daily perused, where sacrifices upon the domestic altar sent up their morning and evening incense, and where every thing tended to generate and nourish in his heart the principles of virtue—for an abode where no holy example met his eyes, no pious counsel sounded in his ears, no family altar received him as one of the worshippers bowing around it, and where the momentous realities of eternity were disregarded and despised. But Lot not only left Abraham, —not only endangered his morals by putting himself at a distance from his improving society and fellowship, but went to a place where the very opposite of what Abraham had exhibited and inculcated prevailed. Sodom was a city where everything that was demoralizing and infectious centred;—a sink where the sewers of corruption emptied. "The men of Sodom were

wicked, and sinners before the Lord exceedingly," so much so that among them all, *ten* could not be found who were not infamous for their vices and impiety. If we are asked why Lot went thither, the cause must be resolved into his passion to accumulate wealth. His besetting sin was covetousness. Though he had much, though Jehovah had blessed him and greatly increased his possessions, he inordinately desired more. Hence the fertility and beauty of Sodom, promising this, attracted him toward it as a place of residence, though it brought him into connection with the vilest idolaters. O how many, in their anxious pursuit of wealth, in order that their worldly affairs might prosper, have gone themselves, and taken their families with them, where their religious interests were sure to suffer!—as if the welfare of the perishing body was of greater importance than the welfare of the imperishable soul; as if treasure on earth was superior to treasure in heaven!

But Lot paid dear for his evil choice. Pitching his tent in Sodom, disappointment, disaster, and anguish were his; "for they that will be rich,

fall into snares, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition." Dwelling in that seat of wickedness, his heart was perpetually pained with what he beheld, and his soul vexed with the abominable deeds of its guilty inhabitants. Once he was stripped of all his property and taken captive, from which captivity he was rescued by the timely and heroic interposition of Abraham; and again was he burned out of house and home, and obliged to flee for his life to the mountains.

Of this last catastrophe which befel him and the devoted cities of the plain, the Bible gives us a particular account. As he was sitting in the gate of Sodom, at even-tide, he beheld two strangers approaching, whom, by a kind of instinctive courtesy, he rose up to meet, and with generous hospitality welcomed to his dwelling. They at first declined his proffered kindness, but at length were prevailed upon to accept it. No sooner, however, had they come under his roof, been introduced to his family, and partaken of the entertainment provided for them, than his house was besieged by the inhabitants

of the city, who demanded that his guests should be brought out, to endure the perpetration of a species of crime too unnatural and loathsome to be named. Lot shielded his guests by protesting against the shameful demand, beseeching the citizens to "do not so wickedly," and remonstrating with them against such abusive treatment to strangers. But his efforts were vain. The mob persisted in their iniquitous purpose, and even went so far as to threaten Lot himself with violence, who was obliged to seek refuge from their assaults within the walls of his dwelling. The heavenly messengers within—for such his guests proved to be—perceiving his perilous situation, caught hold of him quickly, drew him through the open door, closed it, and smote the people without with blindness.

Things in Sodom had now reached such a pass, that the long-suffering of God toward its wicked inhabitants was exhausted. They had long been filling up the measure of their impiety, sensuality, and injustice, and were ripe for destruction. The cry of the city—the cry of its abominations—waxing louder and louder, and

calling for vengeance, had entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabbath, and judgment was now to be executed. "Hast thou," said the guests of Lot to him, "hast thou here any besides? Son-in-law, and thy sons and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring them out of this place. We will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the Lord, and the Lord hath sent us to destroy it." Their commission was not discredited by Lot, who promptly communicated the intelligence to those who had married his daughters, and urged them to fly. "Up!" was his stirring, pointed warning; "up; get you out of this place, for the Lord will destroy it." But he seemed to his sons-in-law to be jesting, and they heeded not his words. No portentous signals, no thundering menaces indicated the hour of vengeance to be so near. "It is not impossible that the evening was serene and beautiful. We can imagine the silver moon for the last time throwing a mild and softened radiance on the city and across the plain; and numbers of the people gaily sporting in so gentle

a light and air; and no alarm by ominous signs and elemental disorder. Nature keeps the secret of her great Governor. If conscience and the words of Lot do not startle, nothing shall. But what was there *latent* in that soft tranquillity? There was the hovering power of Divine justice, —the spirit of retribution, just growing to the intensity to reveal itself in resistless flame!"*

Lot could not delay for the unbelieving, mocking mortals who derided his warning, and left them to their fate, while he hastened away from the devoted spot. And as his progress was not sufficiently rapid, and the danger was imminent, the celestial messenger "laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hands of his two daughters—the Lord being merciful unto them—and brought him forth, and set him without the city, and said: Escape for thy life, look not behind thee, neither tarry thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed." As the mountain was some distance off, Lot asked permission to seek shelter in

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*John Foster.

a small city nearer, called Zoar,—which request was granted. That city he entered, and his daughters with him, just as the sun had risen; and as from that place of safety he looked back upon the plain, "lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace," for floods of fire and brimstone had descended upon it from the Lord out of heaven. The sun that morning looked for the last time on Sodom! Its beautiful scenery, its fragrant flowers, its fertile fields, its fruitful trees, its rich soil, where nature bloomed and which depraved man had polluted—its flocks of sheep and goats, its herds of cattle, its houses and the atrociously wicked people who dwelt therein—were all, by one and the same blow, stricken out of the world; and from the scene of destruction a vast cloud of smoke rose, in awful grandeur, to the skies! A great lake or sea, called the *Dead Sea*, now marks the spot where Sodom and Gomorrah and other cities of the vale of Siddim stood;—the waters of which are of a dull green color, bitter and nauseous to the taste, and no living thing inhabits them.

Lot, fearing to dwell in Zoar, might have

returned to Abraham, but preferred, for some reason which does not appear, to dwell in the mountain. Here he was overtaken with evil, drawn into sin, and his old age covered with disgrace.

As we have already observed, Lot was far from being perfect;—the gem was surrounded by an unsightly crust. We must say that he was a good man—because, when Abraham by Divine command left his native country, he went with him,—because, in Sodom, instead of partaking in the sins of the place, his soul was vexed thereby from day to day,—because he obeyed the voice of the Lord in fleeing from Sodom,—and because he is denominated by the apostle Peter "a righteous man." Yet we marvel that a Christian should have gone to Sodom, knowing how corrupt a place it was; or, having removed there, that he should stay there! Sad indeed was his choice, and melancholy the harvest reaped from the well-watered and fertile plain! God grant that our readers may imitate his virtues, avoid his errors, and escape his trials.

VIII.

LOT'S WIFE.

In the monitory words of Jesus—"Remember Lot's wife," we have a sufficient reason for devoting a brief article to her history.

When Sodom and Gomorrah, two cities in the vale of Siddim, noted for the beauty of their location, the fertility of their soil, and the wealth and wickedness of their inhabitants, were about to be visited with a tempest of divine vengeance, and the Lord miraculously interposed to save Lot, who, just and righteous, had preserved himself uncontaminated amidst the corruption and licentious conduct of the ungodly around him, he interposed also in behalf of his family. "Arise," said the angelic spirits who came to rescue him from the approaching storm,—"arise, take thy wife and thy two daughters, lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city, and fly, and look not behind thee, nor stay in all the plain."

Lot, obedient to the heavenly mandate, and aided by the visible personal agency of the angels, hastened forward across the devoted plain, soon to go down in an earthquake and tempest of fire, and stopped not till he had entered the appointed asylum of safety,—the city of Zoar.

Not so his wife. Whether she doubted the truth of the divine declaration that Sodom should be destroyed, or was curious to see the mode of its destruction, or hankered after the treasures she was forced to abandon—she lingered, fell behind her husband—looked back upon the city, and, overtaken by the sulphurous storm, was instantly struck lifeless, and yet standing, statue-like—a lasting monument of human folly and God's wrath!

As to the specific nature of the judgment sent upon her, there has been a diversity of sentiment. Some have supposed that, without any material change in her physical organization, her flesh and blood were so charged with saline particles, as to be kept from putrefaction, and thus preserved for ages; others that she was actually converted into a pillar of salt; and others still, regarding a

pillar as a memorial, and a pillar of salt as a continual memorial, merely understand by her recorded fate, that, as a signal punishment for her violation of Jehovah's orders, and her passionate attachment to the vain objects of earth, she was to be a perpetual memorial of the Divine displeasure. It is not necessary to decide which of these opinions is the correct opinion. It is enough to know that, slighting the injunctions of the angels, and her inordinate affections clinging to the city which she was commanded to forsake, God in his awful justice inflicted a most striking punishment upon her.

If any reader thinks that the judgment was unreasonably severe—was disproportioned to the sin committed, let him consider how her conduct was in contradiction to an express mandate of the Most High which had just been given, and that such disbelief of Jehovah's declarations—such contempt for his authority—is the very essence of all crime. If it was so trifling a sin, then there was as trifling an excuse for committing it. If it was so trifling a matter merely to look back, then why look back? why in so little a matter

not abstain from disobedience, and respect the authority of the Infinite? If, when God had thus manifested towards her marked kindness by interposing in her behalf—snatching her as a brand from the burning,—it was of little consequence whether she conformed to the requisition of his law or went antagonistical to it,—why not conform? why transgress? why doubt when she ought to believe, and linger when she ought to hasten, and pause when she ought to run, and look back when a voice from heaven was sounding in her ears—"Look not behind thee!" It is to be feared that many regard trifling violations of the divine law as venial; but there are no venial, no trifling sins; and it is by little sins, as they are called, that towering masses of guilt are rolled up, and the characters of men formed and manifested.

Lot's wife, smothered and stiffened as she stood by saline incrustations, ancient travellers have affirmed they have beheld. To the same effect is the testimony of Josephus, a Jew, who declares, (Antiq. i. 11, 4,) not only that such a strange pillar had existed, but that he had seen

it.* Clement of Rome and Ireneus make similar statements. It is quite doubtful, however, whether they indeed saw what they thought they did. It is quite surprising, that if a monument so singular stood for ages on the borders of the Dead Sea, none of the sacred historians or the poets should have alluded to the fact. But they have never referred to it, and modern travellers and pilgrims have diligently sought for it in vain.

This judgment of God on Lot's wife, Jesus enjoins upon us to "*remember;*" and the lessons which it teaches are various.

Remember, as she dwelt in Sodom, and God destroyed that city because of the impiety of its inhabitants,—how odious sin is in his sight,—how it is the abominable thing he hateth; and let the

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* His language is,—"But Lot's wife continually turning back to view the city as she went from it, and being too nicely inquisitive what became of it, although God had forbidden her so to do, was changed into a pillar of salt, for I have seen it, and it remains to this day." An old tradition is related by Reyland, that as fast as any portion of this saline corpse fixed to the soil was worn away by the action of the elements, the waste was supernaturally supplied.

example of Sodom, set before us, deter us from committing iniquity.

Remember, as she looked back, probably from a reluctance to part with her possessions, and from a strong desire to take some of them with her—not to be dazzled by the deceptive charms of the world or captivated by the things that perish. There is something better than earthly substance, and on such vanities our thoughts and desires should not be concentrated. Man was formed for something higher and better than the amassing of wealth; and to be mainly occupied in so doing alienates the affections from God, degrades the soul, and provokes chastisement. We are to "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." This should be first in our affections and first in the objects of pursuit. He who is satisfied with what of earth he has, "may smile upon his stool, while Alexander weeps upon the throne of the world."

Remember, as she lingered after she had started from Sodom, and stopped,—there is danger even after the arm of God's power has been reached forth from heaven to pluck us from im-

pending destruction—after we have been aroused from a state of thoughtlessness and unconcern, and professedly turned our backs upon the world and sin—of relaxing our exertions, faltering in our course, yielding to temptations, and ceasing to persevere.

The work is not done when we have passed the strait gate which opens into the narrow way. Not less serious, not less watchful, not less earnest and determined, must we be than we were before. Many are the devices of Satan and his emissaries, to draw us aside, cast us down, or bring us to a stand. But as Bunyan's pilgrim, after leaving the city of Destruction for Mount Zion, when accosted by those who by flattery and threats would prevail upon him to return, put his fingers in his ears and rushed forward, crying, "Life, life, eternal life!" so should we move on and stop not till our feet press the golden pavements of the New Jerusalem.

Remember, that her obedience was a *partial* obedience. It was well enough as far as it went, but it did not go far enough. It was well that she did not behave as did her impious sons-in-law,

nor spurn the message of the angels; but it was not well that her *mind* looked back and then her *eyes*, and that, a fugitive across the plain, her steps were arrested. Our obedience must be entire. "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto *all* thy commandments."

And, once more, if Lot's wife perished because she did not go far enough, what will become of us if we do not go even as far as she? If she, though she came out of Sodom, was overtaken by the fiery storm, what will become of us if we continue in the place over which the reddening storm is gathering—carnally secure, wedded to our idols? This question each reader can answer for himself.

IX.

ESAU AND JACOB.

THOUGH the promise of a numerous offspring had been made to Isaac, and he had been united by marriage to Rebekah twenty years, yet no tokens of approaching paternity cheered his heart. In these circumstances, he looked to "Him who setteth the solitary in families," and was heard of Him, and had granted the desire of his soul. The answer to his prayer was the gift of two sons, whose strife, ere yet they were born, was a pre-intimation of the future variance which would subsist between their respective posterities. The first-born was of a ruddy complexion and was called Esau, to denote the sanguinary disposition by which he and his descendants would be characterized. He had not, too, a soft, smooth skin, like other infants; but was covered with hair, indicating the possession of unusual constitutional

vigor. The second-born, however, who was called Jacob, had no such marks.

The different tempers and propensities of the two boys were early exhibited. While Esau was active and laborious, addicted to ranging the field, and was skilled or expert in hunting, Jacob, of less robust make and of a more quiet disposition, preferred the more calm and easy duties of the pastoral life. The daring and lofty spirit which moved Esau to take delight in the toils, perils, and adventures of the chase, won for him the partiality of the father,—while the gentle and tranquil temper of Jacob, inclining him to pass his days in and around his tent, made him the favorite of the mother. And these parental preferences proved in this case, as they have also in a multitude of others, a fruitful source of evil. An unequal distribution of parental favors or affections sows seeds of discord, and kindles those baleful passions which often break out in deeds of violence and blood. Parents should be hereby warned against making any invidious distinctions between their children, or showing a decided partiality for one, to the neglect

of another. There may, indeed, be that in one child which renders him more loveable than others in the same household group,—something so charming in his disposition and so winning in his manners, as to give him an easier entrance to, and a deeper hold upon a parent's heart; but the fact, if in any instance it be a fact, should not, by the words and actions of the parent, be made manifest to the other "olive plants around the table," if harmony and good feeling in the family would be preserved.

Rebekah, the mother, previous to the birth of the children, had been divinely informed that they should be the heads of two mighty nations, differing in their tempers, habits, and country, and that, notwithstanding the right of primogeniture, the elder should serve the younger. This she doubtless told Jacob, which communication roused him to make efforts for the attainment of what he and she regarded as properly belonging to him.

The honor and privilege of seniority, or the important distinctions belonging to the elder brother as his birth-right, were of acknowledged value.

The first-born was peculiarly consecrated to God. "The first-born of thy sons," was the command of Jehovah,—"the first-born of thy sons shalt thou give unto me."

The first-born was elevated in rank next to his parents. "Reuben," said the dying patriarch, when all his sons were gathered about him, 'ranged like zodiacal signs around his bed:'—"Reuben, thou art my first-born, my might, and the beginning of my strength,—the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power."

The first-born, before the giving of the law of Moses, had a right to the priesthood, and performed the functions of the sacerdotal office. The first-born received a double portion of the father's property above his brethren. (Deut. xxi. 17.) "He shall acknowledge the first-born by giving him a double portion of all that he hath, for he is the beginning of his strength." And, above all, there was an inspired assurance that "the seed of the woman, who should bruise the serpent's head,"—the illustrious Shiloh—the glorious Messiah,—the Desire of all Nations,—was to come in the line of the first-born. Such advan-

tages of dignity, authority, property, and promise, were wrapped up in the birth-right,—belonged to Esau; and Jacob sought for a favorable opportunity of extorting them from him.

Such an opportunity ere long presented itself. The life of the hunter is necessarily one of toil, danger, and privation. The native red man of this country often roams the forest for days, without finding game within the reach of his bow or rifle, and returns to his wigwam, wearied, discouraged, and faint. It was after an unsuccessful excursion of this kind, that Esau on a certain occasion came back disappointed. He had sought for sustenance in vain, had captured no prey, and, fatigued and famished, turned his steps for food towards his father's house. Arriving there, he found Jacob with a savory dish of pottage, and asked permission to share it with him. Jacob, more disposed to make a profitable bargain than to show an act of kindness to his brother, and coveting the birth-right, availed himself of this exigency in his brother's condition to get it; and offered to part with the prepared food in exchange for it. Esau, pinched with hunger, depressed in spirits, and swayed by a carnal mind, inconsider-

ately and profanely parted with it on these terms, —remarking: "Behold, I am at the point to die, and what profit shall this birth-right do to me?" Thus transferred he to Jacob all the rights of seniority, and confirmed the contract by a solemn oath:—a mean transaction on the part of Jacob, in thus taking advantage of his brother's necessities to obtain what was of high value, and giving no equivalent; and a rash, criminal act on the part of Esau, in thus treating with contempt precious covenanted blessings. And yet how often have like deeds been practised since! How many, when summoned by the stern voice of want to part with their possessions, have received for them, from professed benefactors and friends, not a tithe of their true value! and how many, in obedience to the clamors of appetite and passion, have relinquished health, character, and virtue!

One ungenerous act paves the way for another; and Jacob having basely obtained the birth-right from his brother, proceeds to defraud his father Isaac of the blessing. Instead of informing his father what he had done, and claiming the birth-

right, in accordance with the letter of the contract, he, in order to secure it, resorts to indirect and dishonest means. In these he has his mother's counsel and aid. What can be expected of children, if, to their knowledge, their parents connive at injustice? What shall restrain them from wrong-doing, if in this they are countenanced and abetted by a mother's advice and coöperation? Rebekah, through partiality for her favorite son, sinned herself, by proposing sinister, crooked measures, and was chastised for it; and the parent who encourages and assists a child in concocting and executing any scheme of fraud, will most certainly "receive that recompense of his error which is meet." Isaac, in the hearing of Rebekah, having called Esau, said, "Behold, now I am old, I know not the day of my death; take I pray thee thy weapons, and go out to the field and take me some venison;* and make me

* Having observed, on a hill-side at a distance, four beautiful gazelles, two or three of our men started in pursuit. In a few minutes we heard the report of a match-lock, and saw one of the gazelles bounding down the hill on three legs, the other being broken by the shot. It was coming directly

savory meat such as I love, and bring it to me that I may eat, that my soul may bless thee before I die." Upon this, Rebekah immediately contrived how her fond Jacob might be put in the place of Esau, and the blessing be pronounced upon him.

Her device was an artful, though an unwarrantable one. As all the senses of Isaac were dull and feeble through age, she passes off Jacob upon him as Esau, by putting upon him Esau's raiment, and "skins of the kids of goats upon his hands and upon the smooth of his neck," and giving him bread and meat which she had carefully prepared, and sending him in with instructions how to speak to his blind father. Attired,

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towards us, and suddenly found itself hemmed in, when the strange Arab who had joined us at Mount Hor, struck it down with a stone, severed its head from its body in an instant, and bore it away as his part of the spoil. Two Bedouins held it up by the hind legs, while a third stripped the skin off in a few seconds. We purchased it, and had a mess of the same kind of venison which Esau used to take on these hills nearly four thousand years ago, and which his father Isaac loved so well,—and for good reasons, if it were as well flavored as we found this to be.—*Dr. Durbin's Observations in the East.*

however, and guarded thus, he was unable to counterfeit his brother's *voice*. "My father," said he. The patriarch is suspicious, and exclaims, "Who art thou, my son?" It was not the voice of *the* son for whom he was looking. Jacob said, "I am Esau, thy first-born. I have done according as thou badest me. Arise, I pray thee, sit and eat of my venison, that thy soul may bless me." Isaac is not yet satisfied that the hairy hunter is before him, and desires to feel his hands. These he judges to be Esau's, and yet there is something unaccountable, for while the hands are the hands of Esau, the voice is Jacob's. He asks him therefore again: "Art thou my very son Esau?" and, on being solemnly assured that he was, proceeds to bless him; and thus, by an artifice wholly unjustifiable, the coveted property and dominion are secured.

Jacob had hardly received the full, comprehensive blessing, which the patriarch had bestowed, and left the room, before Esau, returning from the chase, entered it, and approaching his decrepit and sightless father, announced his arrival. At that well-known voice, the tones of which had so

often been music to his ears and sent thrills of gladness to his heart, he now "trembled very exceedingly," for the imposition was discovered! "Who, where is he," said the aged and afflicted saint, "Who, where is he that hath taken venison and brought it to me, and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him!" And no less disappointed and shocked was Esau. If the father "trembled," the son "cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry; and said unto his father, Hast thou but one blessing, my father? bless me, even me also, O my father! and again he lifted up his voice and wept." But there was no change of purpose in the patriarch. Either recollecting the divine oracle, or finding himself more than ordinarily filled with the Holy Ghost when he gave the blessing to Jacob, he perceived that Jehovah, as it were, said amen to it, and he would not reverse the word which had proceeded from his lips. That he spake by a divine *afflatus*, is evident from the remark of the Apostle Paul, "by *faith*, Isaac blessed Jacob."

The birth-right was thus gone forever! It was divinely conferred upon another, and confirmed, and could not be revoked!

We pity Esau, while we blame him. O how did the mess of pottage then look, contrasted with that long catalogue of golden blessings which constituted the substance of the patriarchal benediction! Truly and significantly observeth Bishop Hall; — "never was there any meat, excepting the forbidden fruit, so dear bought as this broth of Jacob!"

Esau was thrown into a paroxysm of grief at the removal from his mind of those visions of future greatness and glory which, as the eldest son of Isaac, he had long cherished. His younger, rival brother had now those sacred and far-reaching blessings which once lawfully belonged to himself, but which he had profanely sold, and of which the patriarchal benediction pronounced upon the head of that brother, had forever deprived him. But he was not left utterly disconsolate. Though he could not have the power and privileges which he had forfeited — that birthright which he had so despised as to part with it for a morsel of meat,—his father gave him all he consistently could. To his entreaty with tears—"Bless me, even me also, O my father," Isaac said to him: "Behold, thy dwelling shall

be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above; and by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother; and it shall come to pass when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck."

As Esau rose from his knees, on which he had bowed to receive this benediction, and retired from the tent, he was heard to say—"The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob." These threatening words were blasting to Rebekah's and Jacob's peace. They revealed what might have been expected—that malignant passions were raging in that breast—that a spirit of hatred and revenge was kindled up there against the supplanter Jacob, which the decease of Isaac would give occasion to burst forth into a consuming flame. And now the guilty mother, who had taken upon herself the responsibility of the recent contrivance, which required for its execution dissembling of the truth, and who had quieted the fears of the reluctant Jacob to the adoption of her scheme, by saying, "Upon me

be thy curse, my son, only obey my voice;" reaped the bitter fruits of her crooked policy, by being obliged to part with that son immediately—nay, urge him to fly to Mesopotamia, as a place of refuge from the exasperated Esau. Jacob accordingly departed, Isaac invoking the benison of Almighty God to attend him; and heavy was the heart of Rebekah as she watched the lessening form of her cherished son receding from her view, till it was lost on ascending a hill which looked down on the pasture grounds of Beersheba.

Nor less sad was Jacob, as evening drew on and found him solitary upon a plain where he passed the night, the damp ground for his couch, and stones for his pillow. Doubtless while pursuing his lonely way he reflected upon the unworthy part he had acted, repented thereof, and sought divine forgiveness therefor; for as he slept under the canopy of the skies, the stars shedding their cold light upon him stretched out and weary, he had a very extraordinary dream, in which "he beheld a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to Heaven, and

lo, the angels of God ascending and descending upon it." Above this ladder or stair, (the original word is uncertain,) the Lord stood, and confirmed his father's blessing, by assuring him that it should be completely fulfilled. Jacob awaking—the vision gone—was filled with reverent dread, for he felt that he was on holy ground, and exclaimed, "This is none other than the house of God and the gate of heaven;" and as Jehovah had been in that place, and he knew it not—had protected, comforted, and blessed him there—he by a solemn vow dedicated himself to the Eternal. There are those who think that this was the spot and time of Jacob's conversion. Perhaps it was. He appears a changed man from henceforth; and with faith in God, peace in his soul, and a staff in his hand, he travels on to the house of his uncle Laban in Haran.

Here he was hospitably received, and remained, in hopes that time would subdue Esau's wrath. Here he served seven years for Rachel, which "seemed unto him but few days for the love he had to her;" for, as one remarks, "when there

is nothing to obstruct a union, love is impatient of delay, but when great difficulties interpose, it stimulates to a patient and resolute course of action in order to surmount them. Where the object is highly valued, we think little of the labor and expense of obtaining it. 'Love endureth all things.'" Seven additional years also did he serve ere yet he was permitted to call Rachel his wife, for, having dealt treacherously with Esau, he in turn was dealt treacherously with by Laban.

As in this his new home, he suffered repeated injury and oppression from his uncle, whose besetting sin was avarice, he determined, favored notwithstanding as he had been by a kind Providence in his basket and in his store, to leave the house of Laban and return again to the land of his fathers. Esau, the meanwhile, had been growing powerful in Idumea, and Jacob longed to have friendship restored between them. To this end he sent messengers to him, with instructions, if possible, to bring about a reconciliation. But when these messengers returned with the alarming intelligence that Esau was advancing

on him with four hundred men, he was greatly distressed, and divided the people that was with him, and the flocks and herds and the camels, into two bands, saying, "If Esau come to the one company and smite it, then the other company which is left shall escape;" and having taken this wise precaution, he invoked in his behalf the interposition of the Almighty. Low before God, his pleadings are those of the kind husband, the affectionate father, and the sincere devout Christian. After enumerating God's acts of benevolence towards him, reminding him of his gracious promises, and disclaiming all personal merit, his supplicatory language is—"Deliver me I pray thee from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me and the mother with the children." His prayer was effectual. "As a prince he had power with God, and prevailed;" for when, across the ford of Jabbok, they approached each other, Jacob respectfully bowed, Esau magnanimously "ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him." Both wept, both felt the warm beatings

of each other's hearts; both tenderly inquired after each other's welfare, and both parted with an affectionate farewell,—Jacob hereby teaching us that "a soft answer turneth away wrath," and Esau hereby teaching us that "it is a glory to a man to pass by a transgression."

The two brothers came together again at the funeral rites which were paid to their deceased father. But little more is known relative to Esau than that he had a long line of descendants, who took pride in dating back to him as their manly, independent, illustrious ancestor.

Jacob settled in the land of Canaan, and was sorely tried by the misconduct of his sons. His lamentation, when his beloved Joseph was supposed to have been devoured by some evil beast, when his sons were treated as spies in Egypt, whither an extended famine had forced them to go in order to buy corn, and when Simeon was confined there as a hostage for their return, was, "Me have ye bereaved of my children; Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away; all these things are against me." His sun, however, had a serene and bright de-

cline. His last days were passed in Egypt with his family around him, all favored with a large share of earthly prosperity. Convened together around his bed, he gave them his benediction—a blessing full of the loftiest thought, most poetical diction, and most graphic imagery—and died with an unfaltering trust in the Almighty. "I have waited," was his devout exclamation, "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord;" and when he had made an end of speaking, he gave up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people.

The glance we have taken of these two brothers, shows that there was a striking difference between them. Esau was of a sanguine temperament, Jacob of a phlegmatic temperament; Esau was of an active, daring spirit, Jacob of a quiet, gentle spirit; Esau had a predilection for the bold and hazardous enterprises of the hunter, Jacob for the tranquil safety and pleasing occupations of a shepherd's life; Esau had more about him that was sensual, Jacob that was selfish; Esau had more of magnanimity, Jacob more of prudence; Esau had the most courage, Jacob the most cunning; Esau reached his ends by

force, Jacob by policy; Esau in a direct and vigorous manner, Jacob in a circuitous manner. Theologians have agreed to extol Jacob and disparage Esau; but while we would detract naught from Jacob as a child of grace and of the promise, we must plead guilty, with another, to "an attachment to poor Esau, as a sincere and stalwart son of nature, with a strong heart, fit to be the strong heart of a people."

X.

JOSEPH.

We have hesitated about putting Joseph among our group of Scripture Portraits, not because he is a less interesting and instructive character than those others which have passed under review, but because he is so much more so. We have been apprehensive that the simple story of his life, as detailed by the sacred penman, would be marred by any attempt on our part to repeat it. As "beauty unadorned is most adorned," so the charming record of this charming personage, as found within the lids of the Bible, cannot be improved.

"To gild refined gold,—to paint the lily,—
To throw a perfume on the violet,—
To smooth the ice—to add another hue to the rainbow—
Or, with taper-light, to seek the beauteous
Eye of heaven to garnish,—is wasteful
And ridiculous excess." SHAKSPEARE.

But while this is so, and any attempt of ours to perfect the inspired original would be presumptuous and vain, yet as our very familiarity with the history in the words of holy writ, may prevent us from being as much impressed by it as if it came to us in words and a style with which we are less familiar,—for such, as our minds are constituted, is often found to be the case,—we venture to gather out the most prominent incidents in the character and life of Joseph, and present them in our own language.

Joseph was regarded by his father with peculiar affection. "Israel," says the sacred historian, "loved Joseph more than all his children." And why? Because he was the first born of his beloved Rachel?—because he was a lad of so much promise?—because of his gentle, affectionate disposition?—because he had not tried his father as the other sons had?—because he was so watchful and prompt in ministering to his father's comfort? Possibly, probably, indeed, all this was true touching Joseph,—that he was promising, amiable, and dutiful, in a high degree; but not on this account is his father said to have

cherished a superior affection for him, but "because he was the son of his old age." Never are men more pleased with having descendants than when they are themselves about descending to the grave. Such a descendant of Jacob was Joseph; born when his father was advanced in life. Hence this partiality for him. A weakness in Jacob, it must be admitted; a weakness which further manifested itself in making for him "a coat of many colors," an embroidered garment worn only by individuals of distinction. A little reflection would have showed Jacob that such a badge of merit or parental fondness would array against him the opposition of the other sons. And such was the fact. Older than he, as much entitled in their own estimation as he to their father's affections, passions of envy and jealousy were kindled against him in their hearts. "His brethren hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him." This parental fondness, therefore, defeated itself. Instead of benefiting Joseph, it injured him. Though the innocent subject of his father's misguided partiality, it made him ridiculed and abused by the other members

of the family. Let no parent conduct in a similar manner, by expressing partiality for any particular child—if he would not harm both him and the others—cause him to be vain or envied, and the others to be jealous and resentful. This malice against Joseph on the part of his brethren, because of his engrossment of parental love, was heightened by some testimony which he felt it his duty to bear against certain iniquitous conduct of which they had been guilty, as also by certain dreams foreshadowing his future greatness, which he had, and which in the simplicity and guilelessness of youth he told. These dreams, interpreted by his brethren to signify that they would be forced to acknowledge his superiority, and render him homage, fanned the flame of resentment, already lighted, into increased intensity. "They hated him yet the more for his dreams," and deliberately purposed revenge.

It was customary in those days for persons engaged in the occupation of shepherds to move from place to place with their flocks, in order to furnish them with pasturage; and Jacob's sons having absented themselves from their father's

dwelling on this errand for a longer period than usual, and their father becoming anxious with reference to them, Joseph, now seventeen years of age, was dispatched by him to go after them, and inquire after their welfare. "Go, I pray thee," said he, "see whether it be well with thy brethren, and well with the flocks, and bring me word again." Joseph accordingly set forth; went first to Shechem, where he had reason to think they would be found; and not finding them there, and being told by an individual who observed him roaming the fields in search of them, that they had gone northward to Dotham, directed his course thither. As he moved on with elastic step—not the verdant hills and sloping vales spread out before his vision, nor the music of birds, nor the fragrant air which floated around him, charged with the aromas which rose from flowers and fruits to regale his senses—not all these could utterly free his bosom from disquietude, for he shared his venerable parent's solicitude for the safety and happiness of his brethren, towards whom, notwithstanding their jealousy of him, his heart throbbed with no emotions but those of fraternal love.

At length he comes within sight of their encampment, and he quickens his pace, happy to have found them, and to be able to be the bearer to them of pleasant tidings from their father. But with what different feelings did they descry *him!* No sooner did he emerge into view—no sooner was his youthful form recognized, attired in that well-known many-colored garment, than they forgot that he was their brother, and regarded him only as an alien and an enemy. All their former feelings of envy and hostility glowed afresh ; evil thoughts rushed into their minds in crowds ; electric currents of malignant passion flashed from eye to eye, and they exclaimed—not, "Behold our *brother!*" but, "Behold this *dreamer* cometh!" They immediately plot against his life—a barbarous and sanguinary design was instantly formed to murder him! "Let us slay him," are their cruel words, "and cast him into some pit, and we will say some evil beast hath devoured him, and we will see what will become of his dreams." "We will see what will become of his dreams!" As if they could prove that adorable One false, who

prophetically intimated to Joseph his preëminence, in the night season; as if they could thwart the counsels of Him who "seeth the end from the beginning!" as if they could defeat the purposes of Omnipotence! No. Easier chain the swelling tides of the ocean, or arrest the orb of day triumphing in his pathway through the heavens! The project, however, to murder him, one of his brothers (Reuben) dissented from. "Shed no blood," said Reuben, "only cast him into the pit;" intending, as it would appear, to extricate him, and return him to his father again. To this proposition they agreed. And now Joseph approaches; and ere he can make known the object of his coming, or even salute them, they pounce upon him like wolves upon a lamb, and hurry him away. In vain did he plead for his life; in vain did he assert his innocence of any design or wish ever to harm them or domineer over them; in vain did he plead for his own sake, and for his father's sake, and for their sake, that he might not die a death so lingering, so horrible; in vain did his tears flow. They were inexorable. Deaf and blind to his pathetic en-

treaties, supplications and tears, they tore from him his variegated robe, heaped insults upon him, and threw him into the pit. Then, with reckless indifference, they sat down to their daily repast. One would suppose that his piteous cries, sounding in their ears, would have taken from them all appetite for food. But they sit around their rustic board, exult in what they have done, and encourage each other in their sin. While there, God in his providence brings that mercy to Joseph which he had vainly sought to obtain from his brethren; for He so orders it, that just at that juncture a caravan approaches—a company of Ishmaelites from Gilead, bound, with their camels laden with spicery, and balm, and myrrh, for the much-frequented mart, Egypt; and He suggests it to Judah, that it would be far better to dispose of Joseph to these Arabian merchants, than to abandon him in the pit to perish. Judah receives the suggestion; it strikes him favorably, and he utters it aloud. "What profit is it if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood? Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for

he is our brother, our flesh; and his brethren were content." Reuben was not present; but there are nine without him; and they hail the merchants, who halt, and Joseph is drawn up from the pit, and presented before them. They mark his symmetrical form just swelling into manhood; his finely moulded oval face, his intelligent features, his mild eye, expressive, though shaded with sadness, and they have no doubt that purchasing him, they can sell him again advantageously. They buy him, therefore, for twenty pieces of silver, and he goes a bond-slave to Egypt! Oh, how much more would Jacob, ignorant of all this—Jacob in Hebron, bending under the weight of age, and anxiously looking for his son's return with messages from his brethren—how much more *he* would have given for his darling Joseph! But on no Joseph is he to feast his eyes for many a long year. The money has changed hands, and the child of his old age, the dutiful and affectionate son, is the property of heartless traffickers!

Reuben, we have observed, was absent when it was decided that Joseph should be sold. He

expected, therefore, on his return to find Joseph still in the pit, and to rescue him; and on being disappointed, gave vent to emotions of grief. On being informed, however, of what had been done, he seems to have acquiesced in the iniquity, and the brothers unitedly agreed to deceive their father relative to the fate of Joseph, and make him think he had been torn in pieces by some wild beast, by killing a kid, and dipping the party-colored garment in the blood, and bringing it to him. The cruel artifice succeeded. When the tattered coat was brought to him, soaked in blood, and he was told that they had so found it, and was asked whether it was his son's coat, he at once recognized it as the very same which had covered the body of his favorite child, and exclaimed: "It is Joseph my son's coat! Some ferocious beast hath devoured him. Joseph is, without doubt, rent in pieces." And then rending his own clothes, significant of his agony, he refused, so poignant was his distress, to be comforted, and said: "I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning."

Oh, wicked children! to be such thorns in a

parent's soul! Oh, malignant envy! which could convert brethren into such monsters—"implacable, unmerciful!" Reader, if envy throbs in thy heart, expel it now. Make no delay, for thou knowest not to what outrages that evil spirit with which thou art possessed may drive thee!

Joseph, torn from a fond parent's arms,—banished from the cherished scenes of his childhood,—"sorely grieved, shot at, and hated by the archers," on his arrival in Egypt, was purchased of the Ishmaelites by Potiphar, the captain of Pharaoh's guard. Here the good instruction which he had received from a pious parent's lips, and the sound religious principles which had been implanted in his heart, exhibited themselves, and proved profitable. Confiding in Jehovah, under the genial wing of whose providence he was sheltered and nourished, drawing wisdom from the great central source of all wisdom, and acting in accordance with truth, and the dictates of an enlightened conscience, he showed himself to be an individual who could be trusted, and though a slave, had committed to his care everything pertaining to his master.

Under his administration, too, every branch of his master's business went on prosperously, for "the Lord blessed the house of Potiphar for Joseph's sake." He was not, however, exempted from trial. Remarkable for his personal beauty and noble carriage, he was tempted by the wife of Potiphar to violate that purity and virtue so commendable,—which sheds such a charm over society, and the opposite of which "hardens all within, and petrifies the feeling"—enfeebles and prostrates the delicate sensibilities of the soul; and, being invulnerable to her attacks, rising superior to her seductive arts, was maliciously accused by her, and cast into the state-prison. But he whose character was so high, and his conduct so praiseworthy—he whom importunate and repeated solicitations could not corrupt—who had rather incur the anger of a woman who forgot her sex, her modesty, and her duty, than to abuse the confidence which his master had reposed in him, and go counter to the law of his God—was not without resources of comfort in the prison, for a supporting consciousness of his innocence and integrity was with him there, and

the Lord was with him there. "The Lord," we are told, "was with Joseph in the prison;" and when told this we are told much. Let Him, "the God of all grace and consolation," visit and abide with a soul, and He makes radiant with beauty the darkest dungeon, and light and easy the heaviest and most galling fetters. Sustained and cheered by Him, Paul and Silas caused the walls of their dungeon at Philippi to echo with their songs of praise; and doubtless Joseph, confined in that Egyptian fortress, was far happier than others at large, surrounded with all which wealth and power can furnish. Well speaketh the poet:

> "What nothing earthly gives or can destroy,
> The soul's calm sunshine, and the heartfelt joy,
> Is *Virtue's prize.*"

Imprisoned with him were two of the king's servants—"the chief of the butlers," and "the chief of the bakers"—each one of whom had a dream, which Joseph interpreted correctly; which fact after a time procured, on this wise, his restoration to the free air of day. Pharaoh, the sovereign's name who ruled Egypt, having an extra-

ordinary dream which impressed and exercised him much, and none of the wise men and interpreters of the land being able to explain it, the chief butler, then at liberty, was reminded of the gifted Hebrew who had satisfactorily explained *his* dream while in prison, and mentioned him favorably to Pharaoh. The consequence was, that Joseph was called into the king's presence. There, in the presence of royalty, he forgot not the God of Israel his father, nor neglected to acknowledge his dependence upon him; and on being addressed by the monarch as one who was endowed with the ability of interpreting prophetic dreams, replied, "It is not in *me; God* shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace." The dream was then related; and the interpretation, as given by Joseph, being—that seven years of plenty and seven years of famine were approaching, and he further recommending the appointment by government of some discreet and wise man, who during the season of plenty should make provision for the season of scarcity; Pharaoh, by and with the advice of his ministers and counsellors, selected *him* to be that one, and

invested him with office and dignity second only to those possessed by Pharaoh himself. Recognizing the wisdom of Joseph as of celestial origin and of priceless value, the king, addressing him, said, "Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled; only in the throne will I be greater than thou. See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh took off his ring and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck; and he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphnath-paaneah, (Savior of the world,) and he gave him to wife Asenath, the daughter of Potipherah, priest of On. And Joseph went out over all the land of Egypt." Thus he stepped from a prison to a palace—from the degraded condition of a slave, to a dignity inferior only to that of a king. An appropriate reward

for his fidelity, chastity, and piety. Never was honor more justly conferred—never did laurels deck a worthier brow!

Though persons suddenly raised from a humble position to a lofty one, are not unfrequently intoxicated with pride, or their temper and deportment changed for the worse, it was not so with Joseph, who appeared the same in disposition in his new sphere as he had been in his former one. As prime minister he was vigilant, prudent, and righteous, looked after the public interests, and during the season of plenty, which, agreeably to his prediction, arrived, laid up a copious supply for future want. At length the famine came, and not limited to Egypt, but felt in the countries contiguous, extended to the land where Joseph's father and brethren dwelt. Pinched for the necessaries of life, and receiving intelligence that there was abundance of food in Egypt, Jacob determined to send his sons thither to buy corn. All accordingly, with the exception of the youngest, Benjamin, went to the court of Pharaoh on this errand. It was indispensable that they should appear before Joseph,

for from him, as superintendent of the public granaries, the license to purchase could alone be obtained. Admitted, therefore, to an audience with him, it never occurred to them that the illustrious Zaphnath-paaneah, lord of Egypt, in whose august presence they stood, was the afflicted and injured youth whom, two and twenty years before, they had trampled upon, and shut from his soul every gleam of earthly hope by selling him in bondage to Ishmaelites; it never occurred to them that this prime minister, clothed in vestures of fine linen, with a golden chain about his neck, the object of affection and reverence of a mighty nation, was that poor captive; and they bowed down before him on their faces to the earth! Then was brought to pass that preëminence foreshadowed in the dream, of "his sheaf arising and standing erect, while the sheaves of his brethren stood around and made obeisance to his sheaf." While, however, they knew not *him*, he knew *them;* and that a good opportunity might be afforded him of becoming acquainted with their present views and feelings, he judged it best for a time to keep

them in this ignorance. He accordingly assumed a moroseness of aspect and roughness of language, and reproached them with coming into Egypt as spies; which behavior of his elicited from them the desired information, that Jacob and Benjamin were still living. That he might further learn the strength of their attachment to their father and brother, he told them they might go to Canaan, on condition that they should return with Benjamin, leaving behind them bound in Egypt one of their number as a pledge of this. As they demurred to the proposition, he imprisoned them three days; and then it was, that when thus shut away from the world, and involved in perplexity and distress, they thought of the past; and their barbarous treatment of Joseph, with his convulsive frame, earnest entreaties, and streaming eyes, rose vividly before them. Full confession of their inhumanity in steeling their hearts against his piteous plea, was wrung from their burdened breasts, and they said, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us, and we would not hear;

therefore is this distress come upon us." And then Reuben, who had not been in the plot, and whose plans of mercy had been thwarted in the outrageous procedure, reminded them of the opposition he at the time made to their wickedness. "Spake I not unto you, Do not sin against the child, and ye would not hear? Therefore behold his blood is required." Striking example of the power of conscience!—conscience, whom no man ever yet offended, but sooner or later he suffered for it.

> "For from the body of a single deed
> Do ghostly fears and haunting thoughts proceed."

How must Joseph have been affected as he heard such language from such lips!—for he understood the Hebrew tongue in which they spake, though they supposed him ignorant of it. No wonder that he was overcome, and turned aside and wept! They consent at length to the proposal made by Joseph, to leave their brother Simeon in custody, and go home with supplies of food, and prove the truth of their declaration, that "they were the sons of one man in the land of Canaan, and had a younger brother," by re-

turning with Benjamin. Reaching home, they informed their father of all that had occurred. And how deeply interested Joseph was for the family, how filial and paternal affection pervaded his bosom, notwithstanding his forced sternness of look and severity of language, is apparent, not only from his secret tears which he could not control, but likewise from their own account which they gave of the interview to their father, when they would prevail upon him to allow Benjamin, agreeable to the prescribed terms, to attend them to Egypt. "The man, the lord of the land, asked us straitly of our state, and of our kindred, saying, Is your father yet alive? have ye another brother? and we told him according to the tenor of these words." Hard was it for Jacob to give permission to take Benjamin. He remembered Joseph going out, and never coming back; and should a like fate befall Benjamin, it would be more, he thought, than he could endure,—such a calamity would "bring down his gray hairs with sorrow to the grave." Pathetic, touching to every spring of sensibility, were the expostulatory words of the venerable old man to

Judah: "Wherefore dealt ye so ill with me, as to tell the man whether ye had yet a brother?" But to his consent to let Benjamin go, there was no alternative but death. The famine was sore in the land, and Benjamin must accompany the others on the expedition, or they must all perish. Jacob therefore could not refuse; and with a heart bursting with grief, said, "If it must be so now, take your brother, and arise, go again unto the man; and God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother and Benjamin: if I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved." And the sons, with the best fruits of Canaan in their vessels, with double money in their hands, and the blessing of their father invoked upon their heads, set forth on their way to Egypt.

On arriving there, they were again presented to Joseph, who, observing Benjamin among them, and perceiving that they had complied with his orders, received them graciously, and told his steward to take them to his house and make ready a dinner, as they must dine with him at noon. The steward did as he was directed, pre-

pared the entertainment, and Joseph, the business of the morning being over, went to his dwelling. No sooner had he entered it than they met him with "the balm, myrrh, spices, and almonds," which they had brought as a present to the governor of Egypt, and as they had done before, "the pregnant hinges of their knees were bent," and they prostrated themselves before him. As in their former interview they had mentioned their *father*, it gave Joseph a fair opportunity, without awakening suspicion, to inquire about one whom he so ardently loved, and concerning whose welfare we was so solicitous to hear. He, therefore, courteously put the question, "Is your father well? the old man of whom ye spake, is he yet alive?" And rejoiced was he to receive for answer, "Thy servant our father is in good health: he is yet alive." The eye of Joseph then resting on Benjamin, his own mother's son, he asks again, "Is this your younger brother of whom ye spake unto me?" And on their replying in the affirmative, could just so far control his bursting heart as to say, "God be gracious unto thee, my son," when he

was forced hastily to quit them, and repair to his chamber to weep. His self-possession restored, and his face washed, that they might not discern marks of the tears, he reënters and sits down to the furnished table. Not yet, however, does he act other than under disguise. He restores Simeon, and sends them homewards with a fresh supply of food, privately causes his silver cup to be put into Benjamin's sack of corn, and then dispatches a messenger after them charging them with the theft. The cup is searched for and found, and Benjamin is declared the guilty one. This artifice was resorted to by Joseph, not wantonly to grieve them, but to test the strength of their affection for Benjamin, and to discover whether he was envied as he himself had been by his brethren, or truly loved. And when he ascertained that their regard for him and for their father was sincere, all his purposes were accomplished, and his magnanimous heart desired no more. A change then took place in his conduct; and most impressive and melting was the scene. Commanding all his servants to withdraw, that the struggling emotions of his

soul might have free vent, he sobs, breaks out in a loud weeping, so loud that the Egyptians from without heard him, and cries, "I AM JOSEPH! DOTH MY FATHER STILL LIVE?" Not more astounded could his brethren have been had a thunderbolt dropped at their feet, or had he come up a sheeted corpse from the sepulchre! Words fled from them; they were struck dumb; "They could not answer him, for they were troubled at his presence." Observing their dismay, he hastens to remove it; assures them of his forgiveness, and declares to them his love. "Come near unto me," saith he,—for they stood as it were petrified with fear,—"Come near me, I pray you. I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Be not grieved nor angry with yourselves that ye sold me hither, for God did send me before you to preserve life. So it was not you that sent me hither, but God, and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and ruler throughout all the land of Egypt." Thus he traced up all that had occurred to an overruling Providence, the wonder-working machinery of God, and poured

balm into their wounded hearts! He then "fell upon Benjamin's neck and kissed him, and Benjamin fell upon his neck;" and by this time, his brethren being sufficiently composed to speak, they talked together. It having become noised abroad that Joseph's brethren had arrived, the intelligence was gratifying to Pharaoh and his court, who welcomed them to the land of Egypt, and would have their venerable father transferred there also. Joseph still more ardently desired this, and sent his brethren up with wagons to bring him, his household and effects, down. The old man in the vale of Hebron could not at first believe that God had made his favorite son lord of all Egypt; "the news," he thought, was "too good to be true;" but when he actually saw the wagons sent to bring him, and the corn and meat provided for his subsistence by the way, his incredulity vanished, and joy flooded his soul. "It is enough," he rapturously exclaimed, "it is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go down and see him before I die." Delaying only on the way to perform in the true spirit of piety certain religious acts—

to "offer sacrifices at Beersheba to the God of Isaac," his covenant God,—he hastens to Egypt, and is met by Joseph in his chariot, with open arms and an open heart. Tender was the interview between them. He fell upon his venerable parent's neck and wept long. Both wept; they were tears of joy and gratitude. In the best of the land of Egypt, in the land of Goshen, he located him and his brethren, Jacob forgetting all his vicissitudes and distresses in the comforts thus generously provided for him. As the last sands of his mortal existence were running out, he commended the offspring of Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh, to the blessing of Heaven; and his unconscious clay, agreeably to his dying charge, was deposited by Joseph in the cave of Machpelah, with the garnered dust of his ancestors. The years of Joseph were one hundred and ten, when his pure and gentle spirit fled to the bosom of that Saviour of whom he was a distinguished type, and to that heaven where the righteous are congregated, and where they "shine forth as the sun" for ever.

Contemplated as a Boy, he was a noble boy,

"remembering his Creator in the days of his youth;" and though exposed to corruption from the evil conversation and example of his brethren, he kept himself free and unspotted from their vices.

Contemplated as a SON, he was filial and obedient. Regarded with peculiar affection by a fond parent, he proved himself worthy of such affection, by tenderly respecting his father's feelings, anticipating his wishes, and cheerfully obeying his every precept.

Contemplated as a STATESMAN, he was sagacious, prudent, and faithful, far-reaching in his plans, and energetic in carrying them out; and, considering new honors as conferring new obligations, gave his undivided powers to the promotion of the vast interests intrusted to his care.

Contemplated as a CHRISTIAN, who is "the highest style of man," he was conscientious and devoted, adhering to the God of his fathers in the midst of idolatry, and remaining inflexibly firm to truth and duty in the face of opposing influences, by which others, less deeply rooted and grounded in the faith and experience of spi-

ritual religion, would have been dislodged from their principles and borne away.

We have remarked that Joseph was A TYPE OF CHRIST. Nor is it difficult to make good the declaration.

Was Joseph hated by his brethren because he testified against their wickedness? Christ was hated by the world, because "he testified of it that the works thereof were evil."

Was Joseph's greatness foreshadowed by dreams? Christ's superiority and glory was predicted by prophets.

Was Joseph stripped of his coat of many colors and insulted? Christ's clothes were taken from him, "lots cast upon his vesture," and indignities heaped upon him.

Was Joseph sold to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver? Add ten pieces more to these, and make thirty, and you have the sum for which Jesus was sold to the Jews.

Was Joseph sharply tempted by the wife of Potiphar, and did he overcome the temptation? Christ was violently assaulted by Satan in the wilderness, and proved invulnerable to his attacks.

Did Joseph's road to future advancement lie through a prison? Did he pass from a dungeon to a palace? So Christ passed from the ignominious cross, and rose from the humiliating grave to the throne of Majesty in the heavens.

Did Joseph's brethren, like the sheaves in the vision, bow down their heads and make obeisance to him? Did even his venerable father acknowledge his preëminence? Thus "at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that He is Lord."

In the time of scarcity and want, did Joseph throw open the well-stored granaries, and did the famished multitude go thither and obtain supplies of food? So there is treasured up in Christ all which the needy, guilty, perishing children of men need for time and eternity, and these blessings He bestows freely. May my readers go to Him and feed upon Him, for "His flesh is meat indeed, and His blood is drink indeed;" and "by faith in Him," says the inspired author of the epistle to the Hebrews, "Joseph died." "Trust ye in His mercy, and your hearts shall rejoice in his salvation."

XI.

JOB.

We have heard of a free-thinker who, with an incredulous look and tone, once asked a clergyman, "if he really believed that there ever was such a man as Job?" The clergyman said nothing, but coolly taking out his pocket Bible, read, in a distinct voice: "*There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job.*" Upon this the free-thinker, after a moment's delay, replied, "Well, I don't *know* but there was such a man, after all." To this the clergyman rejoined, "Nor I either." They separated; nothing more was said; and thus terminated what was meant to be, by one of the parties at least, a long and sharp debate.

There *was* such an individual as Job. Of this we have as much evidence as that there were such characters as Noah and Daniel; for he is represented with them as an example of piety by

the prophet Ezekiel, (Ezek. xiv. 14–20,) and is referred to as a real personage by the apostle James, (James v. 11.) We cannot surely fix the period when he lived, though we think it must be assigned to an age not far remote from the age of Moses. The book which bears his name is generally admitted by those who have examined the subject, to be exceeded in antiquity only by the Pentateuch. It is mostly written in the highest style of Hebrew poetry,—as an epic poem, has merits surpassing either the Iliad or the Odyssey,—and cannot be read by any individual of emotion or taste without admiration and profit.

This patriarch, in the land of Uz, is first presented to us sitting in peace and prosperity under his vine and fig tree. Jehovah had smiled upon him: riches had been poured into his lap, until he had become the wealthiest of all the men of the East; he had been raised to an elevated and influential civil station; was an Emir; and seven sons and three daughters, spared to grow up and become settled in life, were located near him, bound to each other and to him by ties of

warmest affection. Nor was he unmindful of the Divine hand which had conferred upon him such comforts. He traced up these streams of bounty to their fountain-head in the skies; and while a grateful partaker of the gifts of God, was a faithful, generous minister of them, as his steward, to the suffering and the destitute. While he made not "gold his hope, nor fine gold his confidence," but found his supreme portion and delight in the perfections of his Creator; was clothed with righteousness, and had judgment to him as a robe and a diadem, he was "eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, a father to the poor," and a benefactor to the widow, whose "heart," because of his beneficence, "often sang for joy." O how much good can one blessed with possessions do with them, if, instead of hoarding and making them his idol, he is "ready to distribute, and willing to communicate," for purposes of benevolence! As Shakspeare says of the "quality of mercy," beneficence

> "droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
> Upon the place beneath; it is twice blessed:
> It blesses him that gives and him that takes."

Besides adding to the happiness of those over whom he pours the expressions of his own kind heart, he resembles and is approved by that Being whose "tender mercies are over all his works," who pours vials of joy into the hearts of his subjects, and who "loveth a cheerful giver!"

Job, thus surrounded with felicity, "a guileless and upright man, fearing God and eschewing evil," could hardly fail of being an object of envy and enmity to Satan, that adversary of the happy and the good, who accused him with being, in his principles, professions, and acts, mercenary, selfish, and insincere. Jehovah, to show the falsehood and maliciousness of this allegation, and to test the integrity of his servant,—for it is in the battle and the storm that the gallantry and worth of the soldier and the mariner are tried,—and designing, too, to overrule, for the benefit of Job, Satan's malignant assaults, permitted him for a season to try this pious man by calamities.

The picture is now reversed, and we behold the patriarch given into the power of the Prince

of Evil, a severe sufferer. The blue curtain of the sky above him becomes dark, black with clouds and tempest, for a smiling God has given place to a scowling devil! Suddenly his property departs, and he becomes poor; for robbers and the blazing thunderbolt plunder and consume his substance. Suddenly his offspring, around whom his affections are entwined, by one fell stroke are crushed in death; and thus he who yesterday was opulent and the father of an affectionate family of children, is to-day needy and childless!

But what is the effect upon him? Is it such as Satan hoped, and declared that it would be? Was his religion proved to be mercenary, the result of reward or mere necessity? Did he love God simply because God had conferred upon him many gifts? and now that those gifts were removed, did his religion depart with them, and he become rebellious and profane? No. Though the blows came so unexpectedly—though they came so hard and were so desolating—though they followed each other in such quick succession as gave the good man's energies

no time to rally from one stroke, till he was smitten again, and more grievously than before, he yet trusted in God, and was patient and submissive. "He arose and rent his mantle, and shaved his head,"—the modes in which grief in those ages was manifested; "and he fell down upon the ground and worshipped, and said, 'Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.'" Beautiful language, expressive of the sincerest piety! His sore calamities, instead of driving him *from* God, drove him *to* God; instead of eradicating the principle of grace in his soul, rooted it more firmly, and exhibited it as existing in great vigor; for though flockless, childless, a beggar and a wreck, amidst former scenes of elegance, luxury, and joy, the patriarch, seated at his tent door, as messenger after messenger comes with heavy tidings—tidings of spoil, conflagration, and destruction—sees in them the hand of the Lord, bows himself and acquiesces in his Maker's will! What an example is here for the mourner, whatever may

have been his loss, whether he has been stripped of his honors, has had swept from him his property, or been called to consign the amiable and the beautiful to the grave! What had you, smitten one, till you came into the possession of it by the good providence of God? and what He gave, what must be traced up to Him as the Author and Proprietor, He has a right to remove when He pleases. So, when it *is* removed, not accident removes it, not hap-hazard, any more than it was chance, bad fortune, the Sabeans or the Chaldeans which bereaved Job, but that intelligent and holy Sovereign who restrains what He will, and permits what He will—who "numbers the very hairs of our head," in accordance with whose wise plans and intentions all things come to pass, and who "doeth all things well."

Satan, however, is not satisfied yet. He next subjects Job to acute and protracted bodily suffering, covers him with painful and loathsome ulcers, with refined cruelty stirs up against him his familiar friends, who wound him with their suspicious and skilful criminations, and even uses his wife as a tempter, who, instead of utter-

ing words of condolence and affection, advises him to "curse God and die!"

Strange, indeed, if in all this tremendous discipline, in the midst of such multiplied and prolonged calamities, the terrors of the Lord in array against him, and His waves and billows rolling over him, no feelings of impatience were generated, and no language of murmuring escaped the sufferer. Only one model of pure submission has there been on earth, and that was the Lord Jesus Christ. But though Job's fallen nature was found too feeble to sustain these terrible shocks, without their making any unfavorable impression upon him, he, when reproved for these shortcomings of his by the Almighty, penitently confessed them, acknowledged and deplored his weakness, and received from that Being who cannot err, testimonials of his sincerity. In awful grandeur, clouds piled on clouds, constituting a throne, forth which issued a dazzling and overpowering light,—fit emblem of His majesty,—did Jehovah appear; and in opposition to the charges of Satan and the unfounded insinuations of Job's censors, triumphantly vindicate him.

Indeed, so complete was their discomfiture—so unworthy were his friends pronounced when compared with him, that not until he interceded with God in their behalf could they be forgiven for the wrong which they had done him by their reflections upon his integrity.

Thus was the captivity of the patriarch of Uz effectually turned. The sky of ruin which had suddenly lowered over him was as suddenly swept clear of clouds, and the sun of prosperity beamed again warm and genial upon him and his. "Around him a golden shower descends in the form of troops of friends, bringing with them silver and gold; sheep and oxen, as if springing from the earth, fill his pastures; new sons and daughters are born to him; the broad tree over his tent again blooms and blossoms, and seated under its shadow," a recipient of blessings so many and precious, he lives one hundred and forty years, probably twice the length of time which he had spent upon the earth before his afflictions.

In conclusion, let those who are wont to infer that sudden and overwhelming calamities are

proofs of corresponding guilt, look at the sage of Uz, and correct their mistake, for this is not a settled principle of the divine government.

As the prosperous behold this distinguished patriarch, let them be, like him, fellow-workers with the Giver of all grace.

As those in adversity behold him, let them not despair, nor in the mysteries of the divine dealings be unsubmissive.

Let those who say that there is no difference between the pious and others, note his patience and resignation. For as the Koh-i-noor diamond, in the Crystal Palace at London, was exhibited encompassed with brilliant gas, that the brighter brilliancy of the gem might prove its genuineness and peerless worth, so does piety ray out in trying circumstances, and reveal by its lustre its manifest superiority.

And let each reader, as he "hears of the patience of Job, and of the end of the Lord," imitate the sage, and trust in the Divinity as good and true.

"One part, one little part, we dimly scan,
Through the dark medium of life's feverish dream,

Yet dare arraign the whole stupendous plan,
If but that little part incongruous seem,
Nor is that part, perhaps, what mortals deem;
Oft from apparent ills our blessings rise—
O! then renounce that impious self-esteem
That aims to trace the secrets of the skies;
For thou art but of dust—be humble and be wise."

BEATTIE.

XII.

MOSES.

SOME one has remarked, that if a general convention were held of men of science, gathered from all parts of the civilized globe, they would, by acclamation, elect Sir Isaac Newton for their president. So we may say relative to the next personage in our gallery of portraits—the great Jewish lawgiver and leader, MOSES—that if the suffrages of the Church universal were taken, as to which was the most splendid character on record, this station of preëminence would be assigned to him. Others had high intellectual qualities, but none his transcendent genius; others made their mark upon their generation and succeeding generations, but none so enduring a mark as he made; others had their peculiar excellences,—"shine aloft like stars," along the tract of time,—but in him there was a singular assemblage of excel-

lences, as the seven primary colors constitute the mellow golden ray of the sun.

This extraordinary man, of the race of Abraham, in the line of Levi the son of Jacob, was born in Egypt about sixteen hundred years before the Christian era. A short time previous to his birth, Pharaoh, the Egyptian monarch, had published a sanguinary edict, that all the male children of the Israelites,—who were then his slaves,—should, as soon as born, be strangled, and thrown into the river. To evade the force of this barbarous decree and save their son, the parents of Moses—Amram and Jochebed—concealed him three months. But when concealment in their own house was no longer possible, the mother formed a little ark or skiff of rushes and papyrus,* and placing her infant son in it, hid him among the sedges on the banks of the Nile. While the feeble babe was thus exposed, Thermutis, the daughter of Pharaoh, came down to the river for the purpose of bathing. "She spied the ark

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* Light boats of osiers, bound with papyrus, were common among the Egyptians.—*Wilkinson*, vol. iii., pp. 185, 186.

among the flags, and sent her maid to fetch it; and when she opened it, she saw the child, and behold, the babe wept." The tears of suffering infancy spoke eloquently to her heart. Though she saw and declared that he was "one of the Hebrew children," she could not be his bloody executioner, nor would she allow the merciless agents of her father to tear him from her arms, and consign him to a watery tomb. On the contrary, struck by his rare beauty, she made those arms a warm sanctuary for the helpless foundling, and resolved to adopt him as her own. At this interesting and critical moment, Miriam his sister presented herself, and offered to procure a nurse for the child. The princess consented, and the happy girl flew to her mother. The mother came. "And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will pay thee thy wages. And the woman took the child and nursed it. And the child grew, and she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. And she called his name Moses," (Hebrew, Moshee, *i. e.*, *drawn from water.*) A noble act, this of Thermutis, and it

has immortalized her. Though it would have been counter to woman's tender nature not to have been moved with pity at the spectacle of an outcast babe in so hazardous a situation, yet this concern of the princess for the boy, this taking of him to her bosom, though the offspring of a bondman, has embalmed her memory, and made it fragrant for ever. As an excellent writer observes,* "The Christian traveller wanders among the ruins of Egyptian greatness, and as he gazes upon the mysterious pyramids, or the serene face of the colossal Sphinx, wonders yet more at the forgetfulness which, like the sands over the cities where they reigned, has covered the names and the story of those far-past dynasties; but as he turns his step towards the river, and sees the bulrushes waving upon its brink, he thinks of her who walked there more than thirty-five centuries since, and saved from the waters a weeping child; and we, on this far-west Atlantic shore, bless her memory for that one deed of kindness, which blooms fresh and

* Bethune.

odorous in the garden of the Lord, while the warlike fame of Sesostris is wrapped about, like a shrivelled mummy, in doubtful hieroglyphics." Reader, "take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones." That orphan boy or girl, exposed to the sensual, the rapacious, or the brutal —the crocodiles of temptation and sin—may, rescued by you, cherished and trained by you, become an ornament to society, a pillar in Zion, and a splendid monument of your mercy.

Moses, claimed by the princess, was educated under all the facilities for mental discipline and furniture to be found at the fountain-head of learning in the ancient world. According to Clemens Alexandrinus, the most eminent Egyptian instructors took him under their charge; and, according to Philo, masters came from Greece and Assyria, to familiarize him with the arts, sciences, and literature of their respective nations. We have the inspired authority of the martyr Stephen for saying "that he was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians."

Previous, however, to coming under *their* tutoring, he was doubtless taught by his *mother*.

She had possession of his mind first, and instilled into it the principles of true religion. As she told him of their one only living and true God, in distinction from the idolatry and superstitions of Egypt,—as she told him of their ancestors, the patriarch Abraham, and the promise made to him and his descendants—as she told him of the advancing Messiah, "the glory of his people Israel," and the Redeemer of the world, unquestionably the bosom of maternal affection yearned over her son, and the prayer of faith was offered that he might be a faithful servant of this God, a worthy descendant of so holy a predecessor, and a devout friend of the anticipated Shiloh. The effect of her pious solicitude, judicious counsel, and fervent prayers, was as might be expected. She who has put into her hands a plastic soul, and essays, looking for direction and help to the Divine Spirit, to cast that soul into the mould of heavenly truth, and draw upon it the bright lineaments of holiness, will not labor in vain. The expanding mind will be illumined with celestial light, and the deathless spirit made meet for the mansions of the blessed. There is no

loftier vocation than the mother's. There is none to which Jehovah more uniformly sets the seal of success. There is none to which is connected more decisive or more stupendous issues. Mother of that little bud—the germ of a seraph's bliss or a devil's woe—how exalted your ministry! how responsible your duty! What achievement is so great, what honor so high, as to educe from that bud the pleasant flower and the precious fruit, and cause it to thrive with rich luxuriance and eternal beauty in the paradise of God! Moses, thus trained—the first outgoings of his life thus watched and nurtured—on coming to the years of maturity, "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward." Josephus tells us that when the youthful Moses was presented by the princess to her father, as her adopted son, and heir to the throne, and the royal crown was put upon his head, he refused to wear it, and

cast it from him and trod upon it. Certain it is, that he never forgot his mother's instructions, nor ceased, under those moral stimulants which she had applied in the morning of his being, to undervalue empty honors, forego the pleasures of the imperial court of Pharaoh, and cast in his lot with God's people.

With this people were his sympathies, though he was rich and they poor, he high in royal favor and they in cruel bondage. Hence, going out on a certain occasion, for the express purpose of observing their condition under their exacting task-masters, and beholding one of his enslaved countrymen inhumanly beaten by a brutal Egyptian, his love of freedom and keen sense of wrong were in the ascendant; and rising upon the oppressor,—for "surely oppression maketh a wise man mad,"—he slew him and concealed the body in the sand. The day following he found, to his mortification, two Hebrews quarrelling, and on being taunted, at his kind interference for the purpose of adjusting the difficulty between them, with having put the Egyptian to death, he deemed it prudent, ere that deed reached the ears of

Pharaoh, to fly; and accordingly left the coast of Egypt, and took refuge in that part of Arabia denominated, from its mountainous or rocky aspect, Petrea. The old Jewish rabbis have recorded among their fables—for they have many, equally singular and ludicrous—that ere Moses could escape, he was arrested, charged with the crime and condemned, but that Jehovah gave such a preternatural hardness to his neck, that while the sword of the executioner could make no wound upon it, the rebounding weapon destroyed the executioner himself.

The particular city to which Moses came was Midian, which lay on the eastern shore of the Red Sea; and to Jethro, a priest or prince of the city, he engaged himself as shepherd or herdsman. Any employment, however humble, is, if honest, far preferable to idleness, which is alike inconsistent with usefulness or comfort. Thus he who had been the adopted son and heir of Egypt's king, and a proficient in the schools of the Eastern Magi, considered it, and hence thought it no dishonor or mark of a grovelling spirit to be occupied as a keeper of flocks. Here, in Midian,

he pursued this unpretending occupation—here, discharged the duties and exemplified the virtues of the private citizen—here, won by his gallantry the heart and hand of the daughter of Raguel, or Jethro, (for he bears both names in the sacred volume;) and here, in this quiet retreat, as is commonly supposed, explored still farther those fields of knowledge for which his previous studies and mental discipline had signally qualified him; and under the inspiration of the "Heavenly Muse," wrote so much of the Book of Genesis as is comprised from the creation of the world to his own times:

> "On the secret top
> Of Horeb, or of Sinai, first taught the chosen seed
> In the beginning, how the heavens and earth
> Rose out of chaos." MILTON.

In this shady retirement forty years of the life of Moses glided tranquilly away, at the expiration of which the season for efficient and memorable action arrived. As he grazed his flock among the verdant meadows found in the valleys and declivities of Sinai's mountains, a singular

phenomenon caught his attention and arrested his steps. It was that of a bush, from the midst of which shot up a brilliant flame, without consuming it. On turning towards it his admiring eyes, he observed that the bush was vocal as well as bright, for from out of the blaze his own name was called, and he addressed by the uncreated Angel of the Covenant—commanding him to put off his shoes from his feet, for he stood in the presence of the holy God. This burning bush was symbolical. It represented his afflicted countrymen, though encompased with the fires of persecution—down-trodden, and rendered serf-like by a cruel tyrant, yet glowing with a spirit which tyranny could not subdue; and was a striking emblem of the Church, which, though environed by dangers—though the world, the flesh, and the devil have marshalled against it their confederated powers—still lives, the raging flames "harmless as the light of the morning," because God is her everlasting defence!

At this manifestation, Moses, conscious of the distance, natural and moral, between himself and the Infinite, "hid his face," for he feared to look

upon the Divine Majesty; but Jehovah sustained him by an assurance of His love—the very same with which Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had been blessed—commissioned him to go on the merciful errand of salvation to his enslaved brethren in Egypt, and furnished him with the requisite endowments to achieve the magnificent enterprise. "And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: And thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, *I am* hath sent me unto you." With this proclamation of the name and nature of God, from the mouth of God himself, the constitutional diffidence of Moses was overcome, and his soul nerved with fresh energy; and with a rod in his hand, which had been miraculously transformed into a serpent, and then back again into a rod, and joined by Aaron his brother, he appeared at the court of the reigning Pharaoh, and demanded, as the Lord's prophet, the deliverance of his people from the yoke of bondage. "Thus saith the Lord," was his language, "let my people go, that they may serve me:" to which the haughty monarch of Egypt impiously replied: "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice

to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go." He recognized no such Being as superior to himself in greatness, no such authority by which he was bound; and not till the thunders of divine indignation had rolled along his guilty path, and a series of judgments had desolated his nation, and Isis, Osiris, Horus, Thoth, and all the reputed divinities of the realm, had been shown worthless, did he see the folly of contending with Omnipotence, and was induced to submit. At length, however, after ten different plagues from the throne of God had avenged the sorrows of the oppressed, the arrogant king was sufficiently humbled to consent to their liberation; and the Hebrews, with their flocks, herds, and little ones, set forth with Moses at their head, and left the Egyptian frontier behind them.

They went out, leaving behind them tears, lamentations, and corpses; for the angel of death, entering cottage and palace, had smitten the first-born in every dwelling, and consigned to the dismal tomb sons and daughters of their taskmasters.

But though the haughty king, awed by a se-

ries of prodigies, had relented, and allowed the Hebrews to depart, he was still unwilling "to let the oppressed go free," and lose his slaves; and accordingly determined to follow after and bring them back. He did so; girded on his armor, gathered his forces, pursued the fugitives, and overtook them in a position which seemingly promised him success. Before them rolled the Red Sea, and on each side high and impassable barriers enclosed them. But their great Deliverer had not brought His people thus far, then to leave them to the fury of their enemies. At His word, the wondrous rod of Moses was extended over the sea, whose waters were miraculously divided, and they marched on dry ground through the midst of the sea to the opposite shore. Pharaoh and his disciplined hosts presumptuously following, the rod of Moses, extended again, brought back the flood, which "covered the chariots, the horsemen, and all the army of Pharaoh, so that there remained not so much as one of them." This decisive victory over their enemies, emblematic of the final triumph of Christians over their spiritual adversaries, was

appropriately celebrated by a song of Moses, —the first triumphal song that was prepared and sung on earth,—in which the rough notes of manly, and the softer notes of female voices, blended in sweet accord with the harmony of the trump and timbrel, in praise of Him who had fought for Israel, and redeemed them from the power of the Egyptians. Happy they who sing that song which this song betokens,—"the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb;" who, clean escaped from the troubles of earth and the bondage of sin, shall, on "the starry plains," join in that anthem, rising loud from unnumbered hearts and voices, by which is commemorated the complete triumph of Zion, and the victory of the kingdom of God over all error and unrighteousness!

The Hebrews, thus rescued, and the pride of Egypt crushed—swallowed up by the waves—Moses took charge of them, and in connection with the "pillar of cloud by day, and of fire by night," led them on their journey. When they were distressed for food, he fed them with quails and manna; when they needed water, this gush-

ed pure and limpid at his bidding from the sterile rock; when they reached Sinai, near which for about a year they lay encamped, he delivered to them a divinely prescribed code of laws,—the matchless decalogue, graven for their use by the finger of the Almighty upon tables of stone; and when neighboring tribes, singly, or in alliance with each other, made war against them, the Hebrews conquered—for Jehovah was their patron Deity, and Moses, their commander, His servant.

Manifold were the trials to which the ignorance and perverseness of his countrymen subjected Moses during their passage through the wilderness. On more than one occasion a violent rebellion broke out against him, which he, by divine assistance, energetically suppressed.

He was not, however, absolute proof against temptation—for the annals of mankind furnish no model of perfection but One—and falling into sin, by speaking in a transport of passion, "inadvertently with his lips," was on this account deprived of the privilege of introducing the people into Canaan. On reaching therefore its borders, he gathered them under the broad

and open canopy of the skies, pronounced in their hearing his farewell discourse, devolved his trust on his already designated successor, Joshua, and then, repairing to the heights of Pisgah, a peak of the mountain range of Nebo, which overlooked the vine-clad hills and valleys of the promised land, took a survey of them from its summit, and then, vigorous in mind and body to the last, rested in death from his eventful labors. Jehovah dug his grave in a hollow of the hilly region where he died; and since, if the spot had been known, the Hebrews might have performed pilgrimages thither, and made his body an object of adoration, Jehovah, to prevent this, caused his burial to be secret, and to this day "no man knoweth the place of his sepulchre."

"God dug his grave—to men unknown—
Where Moab's rocks a vale enfold,
And laid the aged seer alone
To slumber while the world grows old.

"Though nameless, trampled, and forgot,
His servant's humble ashes lie,
Yet God has marked and sealed the spot,
To call its inmate to the sky."

BRYANT.

Yes, the grave may be unknown to man, but "God has marked and sealed it;" and when, at the archangel's trump, the descending glorified spirit shall knock at its portals, and enter again the body, then changed from corruption to incorruption,—a convoy of angels will be there, to form a guard and escort for the celestial city!

The patriarch, the most prominent facts in whose history we have now contemplated, possessed, as has been observed, all the elements of superiority. Others may have rivalled him in some particulars—perhaps surpassed him; but when you gather those qualifications which constitute true *greatness*, you find more of them combined and dominant in Moses, than in any other mortal.

He was a *finished scholar*.

His was an intellect of the highest order, and admirably disciplined—capable of comprehending the remote, exploring the unknown, and fathoming the profound — far-reaching in its views, vigorous in its action, and correct in its decisions. The advantages with which he was favored, he appreciated and improved, and made

all that knowledge tributary to the good of humanity and his Maker's glory—brought all his acquisitions—all the spoils which he had gathered in Egyptian schools of science—all the laurels with which successful scholarship had there crowned him, and laid them down at His feet, from whom minds and genius are emanations.

He was a *distinguished writer.*

A baptism richer than Castalian dews had wet his lips, and all his varied utterances and compositions embody truths of priceless value. The Pentateuch is from his pen; and, as the Hebrews affirm, those psalms from the ninetieth to the hundredth. What a range of doctrine and narrative, of biography and poetry, is here! What a treasury of wisdom! The very first verse in the very first chapter of the book of Genesis,—"*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*,"—this very first sentence overturns all the systems of Pagan cosmogony; and as Dr. Scott, the commentator, well remarks, "A child from this book, nay, from a single page of this book, may learn in one hour more than all the philosophers of the world learned without it, in a thousand years."

He was a *sterling patriot.*

He loved his nation, and was devoted to the furtherance of their best interests. Nothing—no distrust, no murmurings, no calumny, no abuse—could wean them from his affections. He "grappled them to his soul with hooks of steel." The government, also, under which he lived, he prized and cherished; and what Solon was to Greece, the renowned Alfred to England, Gustavus Adolphus to Sweden, William Tell to Switzerland, and George Washington to America, was Moses to the Hebrew Commonwealth.

He was a *consummate general.*

Though the people whom he led out of Egypt were scarcely elevated above the condition of serfs,—raw, craven, and restive,—such was his control over masses of men, such his military skill, such his prowess, that he formed of this tumultuous rabble a brave and united army, and in the face of an immensely superior enemy, won with them victory upon victory.

He was an *illustrious prophet.*

None of that long and bright succession "of holy men, who swept the harp and rolled the

numbers down the tide of time," were more so. The twenty-eighth chapter of Deuteronomy, which he wrote, and in which, from his exalted watch-tower of prophecy, we behold him looking down the vista of ages, and predicting the future condition of his nation, in an accurate representation of the condition of this singular people in the nineteenth century! Perhaps among his many inspired utterances, there is no one more remarkable than where he speaks of the advent of another prophet, after a lapse of years, like unto himself. His memorable words are, "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him shall ye hearken." That prophet was the Lord Jesus Christ; and the supereminence of Moses as a prophet consisted in this, that he bore so striking a resemblance to God's only-begotten and dearly-beloved Son! Other prophets were richly endowed, other prophets were rapt into an ecstatic transport, in which ideas were immediately imparted from heaven, and other prophets had clear and brilliant visions; but it was the distinctive peculiarity, the

glory, of Moses, that no one so closely resembled Jesus, the Messiah, as he. "There arose not a prophet in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face.

He was a *possessor of true religion.*

This was his crowning excellence. He reverenced and loved that august Being under whose commission he acted, and in all the duties of private and of public life sought His direction and approbation. How meek he was—"clothed with humility!" How self-denying—renouncing the pomp of an imperial court, and scorning temporal riches and pleasures! How steadfast to his convictions of right in presence of the scoffer, the flatterer, and the threatening tyrant! How exemplary the intercourse which he ever maintained with his kindred,—with the wife of his bosom, his brother Aaron, and his sister Miriam! And with what singleness of purpose, and with what constant effort, did he aim and strive to be the benefactor, not only of his own nation, but of the whole human family!

In the language of another:* "Every now and

* Hamilton.

then men have appeared in human society, endowed with minds so vigorous, active, and commanding, as that they have moulded the opinions and controlled the intellectual movements of their own age and of succeeding generations. These were the master-spirits of their age. Such were Homer and Aristotle, Socrates and Plato, Demosthenes and Cæsar, each in his peculiar sphere of influence. Such, too, were Charlemagne, and but lately, Napoleon, Bacon, Newton, and Luther, each in his own department of action. But Moses has shown himself the great master-spirit, not of one age, but of all ages, and of all nations too!"

Such was MOSES—the *scholar*, the *author*, the *patriot*, the *commander*, the *prophet*, the *man of piety!* Such is the brilliant assemblage of excellences which his character presents,—thus justifying the Hebrews in pronouncing him the most distinguished man of all their race, and the united voice of those who can appreciate greatness, when they declare, that—

"Take him for all in all,
We ne'er shall look upon his like again."

SHAKSPEARE.

XIII.

DEBORAH.

"God," says Cowper, "has appointed a certain niche for every individual to fill, and puts every individual in the niche thus designed for him." There is much truth in this remark, and yet it is not all truth. The rule may be general, but has its exceptions; for persons are found in positions, and engaged in occupations, for which, both by nature and education, they are manifestly unfitted. They are "out of place," we say. It is apparent to every observer, sagacious or casual, that this is so; and what is declared to be a fact by all, may reasonably be affirmed to be, partly at least, true.

Woman's sphere—that for which the God who created her designed her—evidently is the *family*. For this she has peculiar qualifications—a special fitness. Here is her centre of power; here,

in the relations of life, as wife, mother, or mistress, is her throne. And yet there are occasions when, stepping out of this circle, she shows herself equal to signal achievements, and makes her influence happily and widely felt. An illustration of this is furnished us in the case of *Deborah*, who, while she discharged the conjugal and domestic duties of a Jewish female, and had the confidence and love of her husband, possessed also great civic and administrative virtues, was a military heroine, sacred singer, and prophetess.

Every reader of the Bible must be familiar with the term *judges*, as applied to a class of persons among the Israelites. We have no office at the present day to which this primitive office perfectly corresponds. They were individuals raised up to meet an exigency then existing—to explain and enforce the statutes of Jehovah, be the organ of communication between Him and his people, animate them to deeds of noble daring, and deliver them out of the hands of their oppressors. It was an office of responsibility and honor, and, as it was not hereditary, was the more creditable to him who held it; on that ac-

count proving, as it did, the existence in him of high and commanding qualities.

Such a judge was Deborah. The word Deborah signifies a bee, aptly illustrative of her who "had honey for the friends and a sting for the enemies of Israel!" The wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time, and dwelt under a palm tree between Ramah and Bethel in Mount Ephraim. There she gave forth utterances of wisdom, adjusted differences between man and man and tribe and tribe, and was the fount of human authority in all matters of general concernment. She denominates herself "a mother in Israel," and this term is not inappropriate in its application to her; for she had that tender, wakeful concern for Israel which a mother has for her offspring; consulted for their welfare, sympathized with them in their trials, and aimed to further their interests by all the resources which she possessed.

The condition of the Jews at this period was a lamentable one. They had wickedly departed from the Lord, and were "receiving that recompense of their iniquity which was meet," by being

subjected to the tyranny of Jabin, king of Canaan. They were besieged by their foes, the highways occupied by them; they were deprived of shields and spears, and no opportunity afforded them of manufacturing others; and what was more and worse, a disheartened, cowardly, craven spirit was diffused through the nation, inclining them to settle submissively down, and make no effort to throw off the yoke of bondage. In these desperate circumstances, the genius of Deborah illustriously appears. In her triumphal song she says:

"In the days of Shamgar, son of Anath,
In the days of Jael, the ways lay desert,
And highway travellers went in winding by-paths.
Leaders failed in Israel, they failed,
Until that I, Deborah, arose,
That I arose, a mother in Israel."

Military talent, martial prowess, have been deemed the attributes of men; but when men lay supinely on their backs, hugging their inglorious chains, she stepped forth as her country's champion, and from her canopy of state under the shade of the palm tree, there went out clarion

notes, which roused desponding men to a sense of their rights, and moved a host to battle.* Summoning to her presence Barak, the son of Abinoam, she infused into his breast some of her own patriotic ardor, and urged him to strike a blow for the liberties of Israel. At first he demurred to the proposition. Such an enterprise, in his view, would be fruitless, and serve but to rivet more closely the fetters already upon them. She desisted not, however, from her fervent appeals to him, until at length she effected her purpose. He consented to undertake the commission, on condition that she should go with him as a companion and directress. They accordingly went to Kadesh, which was made the place of rendezvous for an army; and there, by their joint endeavors, were gathered, from Zebulon and Naphtali, a force of ten thousand men, at the

* When Greece was invaded by Xerxes, so much adroitness and prowess were manifested by Artemesia, a notable female of Halicarnassus, that the imperial general remarked, that "the men had acted like effeminate women, and the women like stalwart men." There are womanish males, as there are Amazonian females. A lion heart is sometimes found in those whose nature it is to feel their dependence.

head of which they went to, and pitched their tents on, Mount Tabor. This movement was not unperceived by Sisera, the captain of the hosts of Jabin, who, with a far superior number of troops, backed by a formidable armament of nine hundred chariots of iron, marched to what he confidently supposed a signal victory. Indeed, this collection of incensed, turbulent Jews, in their encampment, was considered by him as merely an insurrection, which he expected, by a single decisive onslaught, to quell and punish. But greatly was he mistaken. On the signal of battle being given by Deborah, in the stirring language: "Up! for this is the day in which the Lord hath delivered Sisera into thine hands: is not the Lord gone out before thee?" lo, "one chased a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight!" the children of Israel, miraculously aided, caused the forces of the Canaanites to be completely routed. "The Lord discomfited Sisera, and all his chariots, and all his host, with the edge of the sword, before Barak." "The stars in their courses fought against them;" which expression, as interpreted by Josephus, means,

"that a furious storm of wind and rain, mingled with hail, put out the eyes of the troops of Sisera, and drove back the hurtling arrows upon their own heads." He himself, hotly pursued, leaped from his chariot, as Napoleon, a fugitive from the lost field of Waterloo, and fled away on foot to the tent of Heber the Kenite; but only by the hand of another heroine to meet his end. Sheltered there, concealed there, and, as he supposed, safe there, weary and worn out, he fell into a deep sleep; and as this scourge of Israel there lay in unconsciousness, a woman, Jael by name, taking one of the long pins which secured the tent-cords to the ground in one hand, and a mallet in the other, stealthily approached him; and putting the pin against his temples, smote it with an aim so true, and with blow upon blow so great, that the pin passed through, and fastened the bleeding head to the ground.*

* The tents of the Bedouin Arabs are kept firm and steady by bracing or stretching down their eaves with cords tied down to hooked wooden pins well pointed, which they drive into the ground with a mallet; one of these pins answering to the nail as the mallet does to the hammer, which Jael used in fastening to the ground the temples of Sisera."—SHAW'S TRAVELS.

So completely subdued were the Canaanites by this carnage of the field, and this humiliating death of their commander-in-chief, that for forty years they gave Israel no further trouble, and the land had rest.

Deborah, still continuing to exercise her former function as a judge, next appears as a poet and sacred singer, in the triumphal ode composed by her, commemorative of this great victory over King Jabin's host. It must strike every reader of taste as sublime and beautiful, though much of its sublimity and beauty is lost to those who are strangers to the Hebrew, in which it was originally written. Charming as it appears in our English version, this finished specimen of Hebrew poetry has merits and graces which no translator, however qualified, can eliminate and express. Observes one who has attempted this, and is competent to speak with authority: "Her strains are bold, varied, and sublime; she is everywhere full of abrupt and impassioned appeals and personifications; she bursts away from earth to heaven, and again returns to human things. She touches now upon the present, now dwells upon

the past, and closes at length with the grand promise and results of all prophecy, and of all the dealings of God's providence, that the wicked shall be overthrown, while the righteous shall ever triumph in Jehovah's name." And remarks another: "In the hymn of this mother in Israel, the poetry of war comes to its culmination. Not the hoofs of many horses running to battle produce such a martial music as do her prancing words. How she rolls the fine vesture of her song in blood! How she dares to liken her doings to the thunder-shod steps of the God of Sinai! The song begins with God, and with God it ends." How forcibly the death of the slain Sisera is described!

"At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down;
At her feet he bowed, he fell:
Where he bowed, there he fell down dead!"

And then the view of his watching and waiting mother at the lattice,—how graphic and life-like!

"The mother of Sisera looked out at a window,
And cried through the lattice:
Why is his chariot so long in coming?
Why tarry the wheels of his chariot?"

And the answer, too,—alike the utterances of her ladies and the echo of her own heart,—how spirited and significant!

"Have they not sped?
Have they not divided the prey?
To every man a damsel or two;
To Sisera a prey of divers colors,
A prey of divers colors of needlework,
Of divers colors of needlework on both sides,
Meet for the necks of them that take the spoil!"

All is fine, eminently, surpassingly so, vindicating her claim as a prophetess and poet beyond contradiction.

Rare is it that you find such a combination of gifts in the person of a woman. Her natural aptitude for expounding and enforcing civil and religious statutes; the integrity and purity of her patriotism; her undaunted resolution and martial valor, with her poetic and musical skill; all conspire to raise her to a position of fame which it has been the lot of few females to reach, and a contemplation of which cannot but be inspiriting and ennobling in its influence upon her sex. Deborahs they may never be, Deborahs

they cannot be. But as this matron of Israel knew not what lay in her heart and genius till it was called forth, so there may lie in the mind and souls of our readers hidden resources, which need but to be opened and brought out and consecrated to God, to give them a deathless name upon the earth, and insure to them a rich recompense of reward in heaven. May this prove true with respect to each one of them! As from under the spreading boughs of the palm tree in Ramah there issued a power by which dangers were dared and marvellous exploits done, the basis of freedom widened, and a glorious triumph given to the covenant people of God; so from the hearthstones of our readers may there go out influences by which the kingdom of darkness shall be successfully invaded, religion spread, and humanity saved!

As the laurels of Miltiades would not suffer Themistocles to sleep, so may the achievements of Deborah, showing what woman, even out of her appropriate sphere, can do, awaken an ambition in her sex to become famous also,—famous, not for military prowess and conquests, but for

the advancement of themselves and others in knowledge, in virtue, and in excellence of all kinds.* For, well speaketh the poet:

"Though louder fame attend the martial rage,
'Tis greater glory to *reform* the age."—WALLER.

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* We hope that our commendation of Deborah's spirit and enterprise will not be interpreted as committing us in favor of the "Woman's Rights" movement,—woman voting, lecturing, serving on committees, &c.,—procedures not less impolitic than immodest and unnatural.

XIV.

GIDEON.

This distinguished personage — the fifth in order of the Judges of Israel — was the son of Joash, of the tribe of Manasseh, and when called into his country's service, resided at Ophrah, in Gilead, beyond the Jordan.

The Jews were at this period in bondage to the Midianites, who, from time to time, made incursions into their territory, and bore off the products of their fields, leaving behind, on these predatory excursions, barely enough to enable the Jews to subsist. It was quite important, therefore, for them to conceal as much of their crops as possible. Accordingly, the corn was not threshed out near the field where it grew, but in some retired place among the vineyards. It was in such a place, a smooth and clean spot of ground near a wine-press, that Gideon was "threshing wheat to hide it from the Midian-

ites," when a heavenly stranger appeared to him, and accosted him with the words—"The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor." This language to one so engaged—stealthily, laboriously working there to obtain food—threshing, that the lowing of the oxen by which the corn was usually trodden out might not betray him, and threshing upon the ground, and not from a wooden floor, that the strokes of the flail might not echo and direct thither his rapacious, cormorant oppressors; such language addressed to such a man in such circumstances, fell upon his ear as a cruel irony, and hence his reply to the visitant, whose appearance betokened no ordinary stranger: "O my Lord, if Jehovah, as you say, be with us, why hath all this befallen us? Why am I here, employed as I am, and why are my people in bondage? If the Lord be with us, as he was with our fathers, where are his miracles in our behalf, and why are we in such cruel thraldom?"

The celestial stranger debated not the matter with him, but looking earnestly upon him, said in words of emphasis and authority,—"Go in this

thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hands of the Midianites. Have not I sent thee?"

Gideon, like Moses, naturally modest and self-distrusting, underrated his capacity to conduct such an enterprise, and replied, "O my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? Behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house."

He forgot that there was another I, not mortal and impotent like himself, but eternal and omnipotent; and on that one's affirming again, "Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man," assurance came to him, and his arm was supernaturally nerved for the great work he was commissioned to undertake. Demurring no more, he pressed his hospitality upon the divine stranger, who, instead of eating the cake prepared, caused fire to come down from heaven and consume it, and then suddenly vanished.

The first thing done by Gideon, was overturning the local image and altar of Baal—a very appropriate initiatory step to other exploits; and

when remonstrated with by the friends of that false god, they were tartly and sarcastically told, that he was not worth much as a tutelar divinity, for if he could not protect himself—and it was evident he could not, or his local image and altar would not have been thrown down—he certainly was unable to protect his followers! Baal, thus in the dust, and his grove levelled to the earth, and an altar to Jehovah, with a sacrifice thereon, secured in their stead, Gideon blew a trumpet, called the Jewish forces together, and prepared them to proceed against their enemies.

Two nights before their march, their spirits and those of their leader were much animated by two miraculous signs, which they asked of Jehovah as tokens of victory, and which were graciously given. The first was a fleece, laid out on an open threshing-area over night, which fleece was quite wet in the morning, while the soil around was quite dry; and the other was the same sign reversed, or the identical fleece on the next night, perfectly dry, while the surrounding ground was saturated with dew. Immediately upon receiving these proofs of the Lord's patron-

age, Gideon advanced towards the allied invaders, who, a numerous and mighty host, had encamped on the great plain of Jezreel.

The army of Israel, likewise, was not small, for it numbered no less than thirty-two thousand men;—so large, they might perhaps think that it was their own prowess and energy to which success was to be attributed. To guard, therefore, against this, and to insure the glory of the coming victory to Jehovah alone, to whom it of right exclusively belonged, expedients were resorted to, under divine direction, greatly to reduce their numbers. First, it was announced from headquarters, that all faint-hearted ones had liberty to withdraw; a privilege of which twenty-two thousand availed themselves. Ten thousand then remained. These, however, being thought still too numerous, they were taken down to a brook, and every one who "lapped the water as a dog lappeth," was segregated from those who bent down on their knees to drink. Most of the ten thousand "brought their mouths near the water, and luxuriated in a leisurely manner." Only three hundred continued on their feet, and

quenched their thirst by filling the hollow of their hands with water, and jerking it into their mouths, an action "not inaptly compared to the rapid projection and retraction of a dog's tongue in lapping;" and these three hundred, whose conduct on this occasion—if it indicated character—denoted men of quick and energetic action, enterprising men, were the only ones retained; and with this limited select band, God, through Gideon, proposed to redeem Israel from their oppressors.

As the confidence and firmness of Gideon had been increased through signs furnished him by the Almighty, he is further told, in connection with his armor-bearer Phurah, to go down to the camp of the Midianites by night, and see something more to strengthen his faith. In the darkness of the night they went thither, and there they found the huge host of their enemies wrapt in slumber, covering the ample plain. As they arrived at the outer border of the encampment, they overheard one of the outposts speaking to another, relative to a strange dream which he had had, and which exercised his mind greatly. It

was, that as the Midianites' army lay encamped upon the plain, a cake of barley-meal rolled from an adjacent hill, and came against the tent with such momentum, that the tent was thrown down.

The word in the original Hebrew, here translated tent, signifies the most valuable and strongest tent—the royal tent, therefore; that which was spread out over the King of Midian and his generals; and hence the man to whom the dreamer told his dream, readily interpreted it as he did. The interpretation was, that the barley-cake was the sword of Gideon, and that by him, under God, Midian and all the host were to be vanquished.

This was enough for Gideon. He was willing to be symbolized by an humble cake of barley-meal, so he might smite the enemies of Israel to their overthrow. Inspirited thus, he made no delay, but resorting to a remarkable stratagem—arming his three hundred chosen troops with a trumpet in one hand, and a pitcher enclosing a lighted torch in the other, and dividing them into three ranks, that they might approach the enemy simultaneously in three different directions, he

came suddenly upon them under cover of dense darkness. At a concerted signal, all dashed their pitcher, lifted up their torches, sounded their trumpets, and shouted, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon." The fright thus caused was equivalent to a panic. "The sudden glare of torches on the margin of the camp, the din on all sides, the united war-cry rising above the whole, coupling the sword of Gideon with the dread name of Jehovah, struck terror into the Midianites suddenly awakened from their sleep, and perhaps dreaming of defeat, and instead of turning their weapons against the invaders, they fought and slew one another."

The slaughter was great, without the Israelites striking a blow! Then followed a general and precipitate flight; and the masses being now thoroughly united in pursuit of the flying foe, and hotly pressing them and cleaving down, few comparatively escaped. The tribe of Ephraim, stationing themselves at the lower fords of the Jordan, cut off all who fled in that direction, while those who hoped to escape by the upper

fords, encountered the stout-hearted troop of Gideon.

Among the captured, were two noted tyrants, Zeba and Zalmunna, who met the fate their barbarous deeds so richly merited.

Gideon having thus emancipated Israel from a bondage the most galling to which they had been subjected since they had cast off the brutal yoke of Pharaoh, was solicited by the nation, so deeply indebted to him for his achievements, to become their supreme ruler; but the offer he declined. "I," was the noble language of the hero, "I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you; Jehovah, he shall rule over you." Thus putting away the offer of the crown from himself and his sons—an act, when we consider the natural passion of mankind for power, far more to his credit than even his triumph over the enemies of his country; he consented to receive only the golden ear-rings of his vanquished foes, which ornaments were cheerfully given him.

The latter days of this, one of the most respected and illustrious of Israel's Judges, were not

unmarked by defects of character, but his life was peaceable, and his death occurred at an advanced age; and we find his name on that bright record of the faithful, the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

XV.

RUTH.

At the period when the attractive history on which we are now entering, commences, the land of Israel was suffering from famine. God has many ways of chastising his people when they depart from him; and among others, by causing the earth to be sparing of her fruits. "A fruitful land doth God make barren, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein." Canaan, "the land flowing with milk and honey, the land as the garden of the Lord for beauty and abundance," produced not enough, because of the sins of the inhabitants, to support those inhabitants; and hence many were driven out to seek subsistence elsewhere. Among those forced from this cause to emigrate, was a man from Bethlehem Judah, whose name was Elimelech. He, with his family, a wife and two sons, left the land of

Canaan, and sought an asylum in the territories of Moab. But though by thus exiling himself he escaped the woes of famine, he could not escape that insatiate spoiler, death, who found him soon after his removal to Moab, and cut short his days upon the earth. His wife Naomi was thus unexpectedly left a widow in a foreign land, far from her country and friends, and with the charge upon her of two fatherless children. These two surviving sons became in time allied through marriage to the Moabites—one of them marrying a woman named Orpah, the other a female by name Ruth. Death, however, was still busy with the family; and soon both these sons—the comfort of their wives and the stay and hope of their widowed mother—were swept away childless in the prime of their age. These props on which Naomi had leaned, being thus stricken down into the dust, made her resolve to return again to Bethlehem. The famine, she had been informed, had ceased; plenty had taken the place of scarcity; and herself poor and afflicted, struggling with poverty, and bowed with sorrow, determined to go back to her native country and kin-

dred. This her purpose she communicated to her daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth. They listened to her, and though bound by many ties to the country where they were, were yet inclined to accompany her whose affection they had tried and whose sympathy they had shared. She, on the other hand, aware of the difficulties of the journey, and of the trials to which, on their arrival at Bethlehem, they would probably be subjected, endeavored to dissuade them from so doing. They, however, were unwilling to separate themselves from her, and set out upon the road with her. They had not, however, proceeded far when she again besought them, from every consideration that reason and prudence could suggest, not to cast in their lot with her, a poor, unprotected, unbefriended foreigner, but to leave her and go back again to their homes. Her generous, touching, pious language was, "Go, return each to your house: the Lord deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me. The Lord grant that you may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband." She then kissed them, and they lift up their voice,

and wept. By this eloquence of words and tears, one of the daughters, Orpah, allowed herself to be persuaded, and, parting from her mother-in-law Naomi with the valedictory kiss of peace, went back to her own country, and is heard of no more. Ruth, however, was not so wrought upon. The disinterested language and affectionate tears of her mother-in-law only made her more dear, only knit to her her affections more closely, and she insisted upon going with her, and living and dying with her. "Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clave unto her." We see here the temper and disposition of these two girls. Orpah had a tender and feeling heart, and was formed for virtuous friendship; but Ruth, while she had such a heart, had also what Orpah had not, a steady, resolute, self-denying spirit. While we can love the one, we are forced to love, respect, and admire the other. "And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, nor to return from following after thee, for whither thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God; where thou diest will I die, and there will I be

buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me." Naomi could not resist the unalterable resolution breathed out in words like these—the noble sacrifice of herself which Ruth had made. She uttered no reply to this appeal, but committing the event, and whatever consequences might flow from it, to an overruling Providence, these two female pilgrims travelled on together towards Bethlehem.

After many a weary step across the Arnon, across the Jordan, and over the mountains, they reached Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley-harvest.* The old acquaintances of Naomi soon gathered round her and welcomed her back; but so altered was her appearance from what it once was—such a change had time, poverty, and affliction, made in her appearance, that they hardly knew her. "Is this Naomi?" said they,—once so fresh and fair; to which her answer was, "Call me not Naomi, but call me Mara, or bitter, for the Lord hath dealt very bitterly with me; I went

* They commenced cutting their barley as soon as the notes of the cuckoo were heard, which bird usually made its appearance in the middle of April.

out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty."

She returned, we have said, about the time of the barley-harvest, and in the extremity of their need, Ruth endeavored to gain a subsistence for herself and Naomi, by gleaning after the reapers in the fields. There was still resident in Bethlehem a wealthy kinsman of her deceased father-in-law, Elimelech, named Boaz; and God so ordered it,—Providence so directed her steps, that "her hap was to light on a field belonging unto him." As his servants were reaping, and gathering in his grain, he as a wise master came to see how the work went forward; and observing a strange female gleaning in his field, he made inquiries of the workmen concerning her. They gave him a very good account of her; that she was a Moabitess damsel, a proselyte to the Jewish faith, who had come out from the country of Moab, to settle in the land of Canaan; that she was modest and industrious, gleaning only in those places where she was allowed to glean, and keeping close to her work. On hearing this, Boaz was very civil to her, and told his reapers

to be so also; and further charged them to "let fall some of the handfuls of grain on purpose for her." Ruth received his kindness with great humility and gratitude, and showed such a delicate sense of propriety in what she said and did, as won for her his cordial respect and further favors.

On looking at the results of her labor that day, she found she had gathered a full ephah, or about four pecks. This she took to her mother-in-law Naomi, and divided with her; whom she told how it so happened that she had obtained so much, as also the compassion for her and interest in her, which had been shown by Boaz. Naomi recognized in this the hand of the Most High; saw in this partiality of Boaz, her nearest kinsman, for her daughter-in-law Ruth, an intimation of future good; and at once set herself to the accomplishment of what she so much desired, and what she believed Jehovah had purposed to bring to pass. She counselled Ruth to seek an opportunity for intimating to Boaz the near relationship she sustained to him, and to avail herself also of another expedient to secure his

friendship: which expedient, though it was adopted by prayer, since it was not recorded for our imitation, and must not be judged of by modern customs and maxims, cannot here be detailed. Suffice it to say, that the plan laid by Naomi was, through the adroitness of Ruth, and the blessing of God, completely successful. A matrimonial alliance was formed between Boaz and Ruth, which was consummated by benedictions and prayers; and she who once gleaned in his fields as an humble, poverty-stricken stranger, presided over his household as a wife.

This brief history of Ruth presents us with a pleasing picture of rural life.

Benjamin Franklin tells us that, while our minister plenipotentiary to the court of France, he passed an evening in a literary circle there; and that the conversation turning on Oriental life and manners, he took from his pocket a Bible which he had with him, and read to the company parts of the book of Ruth. They expressed themselves delighted with it, as a most beautiful exhibition of the honest simplicity of nature and the manners of rustic living, and inquired eager-

ly for the volume in which so touching a pastoral was found. Greatly surprised were the Parisians when told that it was in the Bible; for that was a book which they had agreed to despise. But it is there, and so are many other lovely descriptions and biographies there,—descriptions and biographies more truthful and charming than can be found anywhere else, and which, if found anywhere else, would attract towards them the admiring eyes of all. But unfortunately for worldly-wise men, they are found in the Bible, and so are neglected! And yet what can be more graceful and beautiful than this plain, unadorned picture which our subject furnishes!

The emigration of Naomi from the land of Canaan to Moab; her misfortunes in her lonely exile, stripped of husband and children; her humiliating return again to her country and kindred; the filial duty, tenderness and constancy of the sweetly timid and bashful, yet the nobly resolute and undaunted Ruth; the harvest field of the wealthy Boaz, the reapers busy there, cutting the grain, binding up the sheaves, and purposely dropping some stalks for a young Mo-

abitess, a widow and a stranger in a strange land; the favor of the owner of those acres, which her personal charms and artless simplicity won; with the pious and daily acknowledgment of God throughout,—all combine to make a most delightful history of Oriental and rural life, and form a picture with a beauty of exactness of coloring worthy the pencil of inspiration! For a more lovely character than the fair Moabitess damsel, or for a more interesting group than the sunburnt reapers in the fields of Boaz, or for a more pleasing story of a harvest-day's employment and recreation, you will search the records of history in vain to find!

We see likewise the watchful care of Divine Providence over families.

When we behold Elimelech, of the seed of Abraham, forced by famine to abandon Bethlehem, and seek food in Moab, we behold what has been often seen since, a royal house reduced to want and dependence. And when, having reached Moab, Elimelech died, and his death was followed by the death of his two sons who left no children, the family name might seem to have

become extinct. But no. Christ was to come through the tribe of Judah, and so through Elimelech; and hence we see Naomi preserved, and her daughter-in-law, Ruth, married in process of time to a near kinsman of her husband; from which union was born one whose descendants were a long line of princes until the advent of the Messiah! The marriage contract between Boaz and Ruth the Moabitess, brought Boaz, in accordance with the usage of those times, into honest and honorable possession of all the estate of the family of Elimelech, and transferred to him the right and title to all its honors. Boaz, the husband of Ruth, was the great-grandfather of David, through whom was transmitted empire and fulfilled prophecy, and from whom twelve centuries afterwards sprung the Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world. So from that solitary and almost extinguished taper in Moab, appeared the Sun of Righteousness,—and from the very ashes of a family, a tender plant blossoming as the rose, and fragrant as the smell of Lebanon! Thus are families looked after by Him who "setteth the solitary in families." His far-reaching

scheme of Providence is carried out through the family relation. Without Him no family can prosper; but if He be their household God, if the heads of the family can say, "As for us and our house, we will serve the Lord," then, though, like Elimelech in Moab, they may be for a season reduced to great straits, He will take care of them. This temporary depression may be the very means by which prosperity will be most relished and enjoyed,—by which virtue will be exalted to the highest pitch, and by which in a private family may be built up the church of God. Let no pious family think for a moment, that Jehovah has forsaken them because they are brought low. He raiseth the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the needy. If He hath taught them to know and choose him as their God, He has some noble purpose yet to accomplish through them. And when this noble purpose of Him who is "wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working," is accomplished, they may be assured that, after the examples of Abraham, Naomi and Job, their "last end will be better than was the beginning."

In the call and conversion of Ruth, we have, too, an emblem and pledge of the conversion of the Gentiles. To the Jews, for many hundred years, "pertained the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law and the promises." They were highly favored in this respect, and properly regarded themselves as the peculiar people of God. And not only did they plume themselves upon being thus the special objects of the divine favor, but presumed likewise that it would be always thus with them, that they would be always distinguished above other nations by their religious privileges, and the arm of God be bared for their defence and exaltation. In this they judged incorrectly. No such promise was made to them, while there were plain intimations to the contrary. As early as the days of Ruth, the intention of Jehovah to gather in the Gentiles might have been seen, for Ruth herself was a Gentile. Though a Moabitess, she became a proselyte to the Jewish religion, and adorned the religion she professed. Though by birth a foreigner, an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, she, prompted by grace, put her-

self under the wings of Jehovah and espoused his cause. In this, behold "a shadow of good things to come,"—a token of Jehovah's will and ability to disciple all nations, and make the kingdoms of the earth his own. In the conversion and preferment of Ruth—in her becoming, from a heathen, an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile,—in her deliverance from the idolatry of Moab and attachment to the faith and worship of the God of Israel,—behold an expression of the divine purpose, to admit Gentiles to like privileges with the Jews, and to beat down that partition wall which separated Gentiles and Jews. We wonder that Jews cannot see this. We wonder that, pronouncing the book of Ruth inspired, and lavishing their encomiums upon Ruth as a perfect character, they cannot see that she, a Moabitess, was yet a child of God, and if she, then that others may be rescued and redeemed also, and Gentiles be admitted to spiritual fellowship and privileges. Ruth is but one, brought out of heathenism to the truth,—gathered from heathenism to the Shiloh. Around him are yet to cluster all nations,—for "Gentiles are to come

to his light, kings to the brightness of his rising," and the whole earth be one vast harvest field of regenerated souls!

Our memoir further furnishes a striking example of what is called "a change of fortune."

Death enters the dwelling of Naomi, goes from couch to couch, passes from husband to children, spares neither root nor branch, and leaves her childless and a widow, to struggle alone with poverty, affliction, and neglect. There she is in Moab, sunk in woe, with every comfort embittered and every prospect clouded. But look again, and the hand of time has changed the scene. Naomi, the exiled widow in a heathen land, is in the society of her kindred,—her daughter-in-law, allied to wealth, rank, and piety, is a mother in Israel, and the house of her own deceased husband is built up, and his name revived in the offspring of Ruth.

Ruth, likewise, we observe at one time forced by the pressure of poverty into the barley field to glean there. She asks not for that abundance which autumn pours into the lap, but is grateful for that pittance which compassion leaves for the

needy and the stranger. The few scattered ears, and the accidentally dropped sheaf, she picks up in her round of toil, and is glad as a menial to get even them. Thus she is at one time a forlorn female, but one step above begging her bread. Again you see her, the pride and joy of her husband,—joint owner of those fields where she once gleaned,—mistress of those servants with whom she once labored,—the joyful mother of children, and brought in among the ancestors of David and Christ! Such revolutions in fortune are not very uncommon in our world of changes. The wheel is constantly revolving, and the depressed to-day may be exalted to-morrow. The poor and the rich, the lowly and the proud, the hireling and the employer, change places. None are so low, that they may not come up, none surrounded with clouds so dense and dark, that the sun of prosperity may not again shine upon their tabernacle.

He was a wise man who bowed down to the fallen statue of Jupiter, in order, as he said, that the divinity might show him favor when his statue was erected again. There is no one so

reduced, as to have his good-will of no worth; none so high, as to warrant in him insolence and unkindness; and no one so crushed and dependent, as to have utterly extinguished in his breast the flame of hope.

Once more. We may observe the far-reaching and momentous results of a single act.

"Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clave unto her." Both these girls loved Naomi; both enjoyed her society; both determined to cast in their lot with her and accompany her to Bethlehem; and both left Moab for this purpose. But one of them, Orpah, stopped. She wanted Ruth's resolution to proceed, and halted, and went back to Moab,—to her heathen neighbors and her idols. The other girl, Ruth, cleaves to her new choice, and unmoved by the example of her sister or the formidable obstacles in the way of her journey, persists in her purpose. Mark the important consequences of these acts of the two! Orpah, conferring with flesh and blood, is heard of no more. She probably adopted the opinions and customs of her native land, and lived and died an idolater; while Ruth, adhering

firmly to her choice, relinquishing at once and for ever the superstitions of Moab, and espousing the rites of Canaan, is embalmed in the respect of millions on earth, and is a partaker of the joys of heaven!

So have I seen two persons set out for the Canaan which is above. Both were thoughtful, both were anxious for their souls, both resolved to obtain and possess religion. But one continued not steady and persevering. As he thought of the sacrifices he must make, the difficulties and trials of the narrow way, his heart failed him, and he went back to a vain and wicked world. What has become of him? Read in his present thoughtlessness, impenitence, and guilt, that his "last state is worse than the first." What will become of him? Inspiration answers, "He that putteth his hand to the plough and looketh back is not fit for the kingdom of God."

The other, on the contrary, cleaved to truth and religion; said to the people of God, "Whither thou goest, I will go; where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God;" and he is a stable, consistent, growing Christian. He is with the children of

God now, he will die the death of the righteous, he will rise with them at the resurrection morning, and will inhabit with them realms of light and bliss for ever!

Who of our readers have set out for the heavenly Canaan? Who, having set out, will linger, halt and perish? Beloved, be not almost, but quite saved. You may almost reach the Rock of Ages, and yet the returning wave may bear you away from hope for ever. You may come even to the door of salvation, put your foot on the threshold and your hand on the latch, and yet perish!

Have the courage, then, not only to resolve to do right, but carry out your resolution. Cleave to Christ, as did Ruth to Naomi. Cleave to Him in all places and at all times, and bind your souls to Him in everlasting bonds. He will protect you, sustain you, and crown your brows with the wreath of victory. But, be discouraged, give over the pursuit of salvation, and go back to Moab,—back to the beggarly elements of a vain and evil world,—and that one act will part you from the people of God now, at the judgment-day, and for ever!

XVI.

HANNAH.

To woman under the Old Dispensation, the being childless was a source of deep regret. United in the nuptial bands, they yearned to hear the cry of infancy, and to be called by the endearing name of—mother.

Such was the case with Hannah, one of the two wives of Elkanah, an Ephrathite. Though possessing the confidence and love of her husband—a love stronger than that cherished for his other wife, Peninnah, who had given him a goodly progeny—she was yet unhappy, because not blessed with offspring. This fact we find her bemoaning at the altar of God which was at Shiloh. On one of her visits there, she prayed fervently for a son, and vowed to Jehovah that if a son was given her, he should be devoted to His service. As she uttered this prayer and vow in

a low tone of voice, so that her lips only were seen to move, the high-priest Eli, who officiated at the altar, suspected her of being disguised with wine. But to this charge Hannah feelingly replied, "No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit; I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord. Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial, for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto." Then Eli answered and said,—"Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of Him." That petition was not denied. In due course of time, a fair, lovely babe was born—a boy—whom she called SAMUEL, which name signifies, "asked of God."

When her husband went up, at the period of the annual sacrifice, to the temple of the Eternal, she did not accompany him, preferring not to go thither until the child was weaned; but when this was done, mindful of her vow, she promptly repaired to Shiloh with the prescribed offering of her store, field and vineyard, of three bullocks, an ephah of flour, and a bottle of wine, and

presented them and her son to Eli. And she said, "O my lord, as thy soul liveth, my lord, I am the woman that stood by thee here praying unto the Lord. For this child I prayed, and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him: therefore also I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord." Then followed an exulting chant in lyric poetry — the spontaneous gushings of a heart overflowing with gratitude to the beneficent Being who had remembered her in her low estate, and bestowed the gift for which she had pined and which she had sought. Before, when she was in that hallowed spot, she was sad,—now she was happy. Before, she offered prayer,—now she offered praise. Before, she was childless,—now her gentle and trusting nature had a new affection unfelt before—a mother's love! True to her sacred promise that the boy should be consecrated to the service of the Most High, she parted from him, committing him to the hands of the high-priest. A severe trial was this relinquishment of this crowning jewel of her bliss; and feelingly and sweetly has Mrs.

Hemans expressed the emotions of "The Hebrew Mother," at thus leaving the son of her prayers and hopes in the temple, and returning without him to her home in Ramah. Our readers will thank us for quoting some of the beautiful lines. They are as follows:

"Oh! the home whence thy bright smile hath parted,
Will it not seem as if the sunny day
Turned from its door away?
While through its chambers wandering weary-hearted,
I languish for thy voice, which past me still
Went singing like a rill!

"Under the palm trees thou no more shalt meet me,
When from the fount at evening I return
With the full water-urn:
Nor will thy sleep's low dove-like breathings greet me,
As midst the silence of the stars I wake,
And watch for thy dear sake.

"And thou, will slumber's dewy cloud fall round thee,
Without thy mother's hand to smooth thy bed?
Wilt thou not vainly spread
Thine arms when darkness as a veil hath wound thee,
To fold my neck, and lift up, in thy fear,
A cry which none shall hear?

"I give thee to thy God,—the God that gave thee,
A well-spring of deep gladness, to my heart!
And, precious as thou art,
And pure as dew of Hermon, He shall have thee,
My own, my beautiful, my undefiled!
And thou shalt be His child."

Not empty must have seemed her dwelling because the boy was not there, though every object therein reminded her of his smiling face, his innocent prattle, and his winning ways. She however comforted herself with the thought that this treasure of her heart was safe under the genial wing of God's altar, and that three times a year, as she went up thither to the celebration of the festivals, she should see him again and fold him to her breast. Till then, among other matters, she busied herself in making him a little coat, the threads of which, woven with her own fingers, she knew would be all the more valued by the wearer on that account, as evidence of a fond parent's affection and skill—which new garment at her coming she presented to him and put upon him; and the precious child — no longer hers, but God's—"girded with a linen ephod, ministered before the Lord" in Shiloh.

Who, beholding the lad there, and thus engaged, can doubt that God accepted the person and services of the young? The boy Samuel was an approved minister in the courts of the Lord, and out of the mouth of this child, God perfected strength. He used him to reprove Eli for the weak, criminal indulgence of his sons; he used him to reform abuses in the church, and he used him to repair the breach about to be made in the ranks of the priesthood. Youth are never more amiable and attractive, never more in the path of duty, than when remembering their Creator, and employed in his business. Every thing is beautiful in its season, and piety is for all seasons—is the grace of youth, the ornament of maturer years, and of hoary hairs the crown. As the child Samuel grew in stature, he grew in moral excellence and the favor of God, so that she who "lent him to the Lord" was abundantly repaid for the loan, not only in beholding his virtues, but in enjoying the blessings which flowed forth from his life to Israel.

The above brief sketch is fraught with instruction to our readers, and gladly would we dwell

upon its bearings at greater length than our limits permit.

It teaches how children should be regarded. They should be regarded as a gift from God. Not only have they the infinite capacities of the soul in them, and an immortal destiny; not only are they an accession to the state; not only do they transmit the paternal name and influence; but they are a fresh manifestation of Jehovah's wisdom, benevolence, and might, and as much and as directly a gift from his hand, as any other gift. And so should they be considered. Thus Hannah considered her son. The Lord, she said, "remembered her, the Lord gave her the petition which she asked of Him." When persons become parents, they are remembered as really as Hannah was, and every infant is in this sense a Samuel, as that word imports. God gave the little one. It was His before He gave it, and when He gave it, He gave what was His own, and in what His proprietorship was absolute. Hence the language of Scripture, "Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord, and the fruit of the womb is His reward. As arrows are in the hands

of a mighty man, so are the children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them; they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate." Isaac, Jacob, Samson, and John the Baptist, were born into the world through the immediate, direct influence of faith and prayer; and though all children are not born from these causes, it is nevertheless true of all children as it was of these worthies, that they are gifts from the hand of God, and are to be recognized as such.

The preceding sketch teaches also what should be done with children in their infant age. They should be treated as Hannah treated Samuel;—have the same measures taken with respect to them, which she adopted in relation to her son. What these were, we are left in no doubt. She "gave him unto God all the days of his life." This was in accordance with the vow which she had made. Previous to the birth of the child, she had said, "O Lord of Hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man-child, then

will I give him unto thee all the days of his life." This vow she did not neglect to pay. No sooner was he born, than she acknowledged the right of God to him, and resigned the boy to him for ever. So should every parent do. Their first act on taking a new-born infant into their arms, should be, a consecration of that infant to its Creator's service.

The next thing done by Hannah was, to repair to the feast at Shiloh, and there, with her little Samuel at God's altar, dedicate him to the Lord. The law of Israel demanded for the God of Israel, the first-born of every creature. With that law she cheerfully and publicly complied, solemnly engaging for her son that he should be "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which was his reasonable service." "I have lent him," are her significant words, "unto the Lord; as long as he liveth, shall he be lent unto the Lord." There was no reservation here, and there was to be no revocation. He was to be the Lord's wholly and for ever.

So should the Christian parent, in the Lord's temple and over the Lord's altar, consecrate his

offspring. The original law in the church of God touching the offspring of believers, has never been repealed, and an unrepealed law abides in force. "The promise is yet unto us and to our children," and hence duty and privilege both demand, that children receive the seal of that promise. "The parent is to bring them to the altar of God, and there by the name of the adorable Trinity, and by the symbols of divine and saving influence, pledge himself that, so far as his instrumentality can go, and so far as the choice and purpose of his own mind are concerned, his children shall be trained for the service of Christ in this world, and for the inheritance of the people of God in the next."

It has been said, that "there is no express command in the Bible to baptize infants, and therefore they should not be baptized." This is supposed to be an unanswerable argument, and is urged with an air of triumph. Nowhere, it is said, are we told to baptize infants.

The persons, then, who affirm this, are never to do any thing except what they are expressly told to do,—nothing for which they cannot show

a divine command. Otherwise their argument against infant baptism has no force. For they cannot object to my doing that for which I have no direct command, as long as they do any thing for which *they* have no express command. If the argument is good as against *me*, it is equally good as against *them*.

Now will such please to tell us, why they keep the first day of the week as the Sabbath? Where is the *express command* to do so? Show it, that we may see it.

Why do they observe family prayer? Many of them do so; all of them *ought* to do so; but where are they expressly commanded to do so? Give us the chapter and verse.

These persons admit females to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. But why?—Where is there a "thus saith the Lord" for this? You search for it in vain.

And yet, while these persons do so many things for which they have no divine command, they repudiate infant baptism, because they say, "we are not in so many words commanded to practise it."

What inconsistency!

Another thing Hannah did. Aware that when Moses was about to die, he rehearsed in the ears of God's covenant people the commandments and statutes of Jehovah, and enjoined upon them to teach the same diligently unto their children; she taught her son to regard those as bearing the bright signet of divinity, and to regulate his life agreeably to their requirements. She placed him in circumstances best fitted to make him see and feel the odiousness of sin and the beauty of holiness, and placed around him every possible shield against seductions to vice. She located him where she knew he would be watched over, and religiously educated, and trained to habits of virtue; and day and night her fervent orisons arose for her boy, that he might become a godly man, and a faithful prophet.

Thus parents are to turn the attention of their children to the blessed pages of the Bible; see to it that the word of God dwell in them richly, exercise over them a vigilant supervision, and call down by prayer, renewing grace upon their souls. "From the moment of their birth," God

says, "take that child and nurse it for me." Sow in that mind the seeds of truth; engage for me those warm affections; subject to my authority that will; stamp upon that character my moral image; and secure for that accountable, immortal creature, committed to your trust, a happy, eternal home in the mansions of the righteous.

Note further, the blessed consequences of such judicious, pious training.

The efforts Hannah put forth in behalf of her son were not lost. This plant so conscientiously cultivated, became a plant of renown, flourished in the high places of the earth, and in the courts of God, and bore wholesome fruit. See him in the midst of surrounding licentiousness, pure and exemplary; see him ministering before the Lord with propriety and spirituality; see him chosen by the Lord to renew his communications with Israel,—the oracle of Shiloh made vocal again by this youthful hierophant; see him at the convention of the tribes at Mizpeh, elected regent; see him guarding the liberties and rights of the nation, developing their resources, and elevating the standard of morals among them;

see him a priest, sanctifying offerings by his prayers; see him a prophet, an oracle of wisdom; see him a judge, dispensing equal and exact justice with the intrepidtty of a hero, and the integrity of a saint; see him thus, and learn hereby the far-reaching, potential influence of maternal counsels and supplications. The spirit of Hannah pervaded her son, for his spirit he caught from her, and in his eminence and usefulness, breathed in her life. She lived in him as lives the seed in the lovely fragrant flower,—as lives the acorn in the branching sturdy oak!

What a post of honor, influence, and responsibility is that occupied by mothers! For as the dip of a swallow's wing on the bosom of a quiet lake, sends circling vibrations to the distant shore, so do the impulses given by them to their offspring, reach on after years have elapsed, extend into the remote future, and are felt in all departments of human society.

The success of Hannah in the case of her son stands not alone. It is but one of many examples of God's blessing on parental faithfulness. The parents of the Reverend Dr. Finlay were

accustomed, as a child was born unto them, to set apart a day for prayer that it might become an exemplary, devoted Christian. They had eight children, (seven of whom were sons,) and all of them were early distinguished for their piety, and grew in grace as their years increased. An elder in the Presbyterian Church who had twelve sons, (we had the fact from the late venerable Dr. Alexander of Princeton,) and who, with his wife, was very particular in the religious training of them, lived to see those sons all elders of the church, and when the descendants of these sons numbered more than eighty, there was not one of them not a communicant in the church of Christ! It appeared upon careful investigation a short time since, that out of one hundred and twenty students connected with the Theological Seminary at Andover, one hundred were the sons of pious mothers; and that of one hundred and fourteen students preparing for the work of the ministry at Princeton, all but ten of them had pious mothers, and all but thirty-two of them had pious fathers also! Thus does God bless children, the church, and the world, through

parents. Would that this was fully realized, and that there was corresponding action! Then would "our sons be as plants grown up in their youth, and our daughters as corner-stones polished after the similitude of a palace."

That son, Christian parent,

"His heart, now passive, yields to thy command:
Secure it thine—its key is in thine hand.
If thou desert thy charge, and throw it wide,
Nor heed what guests there enter and abide,
Complain not, if attachments lewd and base
Supplant thee in it, and usurp thy place.
But if thou guard its secret chambers sure
From vicious inmates, and delights impure,
Either his gratitude shall hold him fast,
Or if he prove unkind, (as who can say,
But, being man and therefore frail, he may?)
One comfort yet shall cheer thine aged heart,
Howe'er he slight thee, thou hast done thy part."

COWPER.

XVII.

ELI AND HIS SONS.

In the inspired account of Eli and his sons, we have a striking instance of criminal parental indulgence, and the lamentable consequences of such indulgence. The facts touching this melancholy case are the following:

Eli, in whom, when the ark was located at Shiloh, the offices of high priest, and regent, or civil judge, of Israel were united, was a man of natural amiability of temper, and seemingly possessed of true piety. Within his ecclesiastical and civil jurisdiction he conducted well, administered public affairs wisely, and had the confidence and respect of those who appreciated active virtue. Occupying stations of such importance, and presiding there to such general acceptance, he might have been regarded, but for a single exception, as a peculiarly fortunate man. That

exception—that dead fly which spoiled the ointment—that thorn in the flesh—that bane which embittered his bliss—was the undutiful and ungodly behavior of his sons.

He had two, Hophni and Phinehas, who by reason of their birth and education were invested with sacerdotal authority, and officiated in the sanctuary. Related thus to the chief ruler of Israel, favored with superior educational advantages and moral culture, and moving in so elevated and sacred a sphere, these young men might have been expected to present an example of uncommon excellence; but, alas, they were profane and profligate.

Of the beasts sacrificed for peace offerings, the law allowed them the shoulders and the breasts, after these had been waved before the Lord. The remainder of the animal offered in sacrifice was the property and at the disposal of him who had brought the victim to the altar. Eli's sons, however, not satisfied with this their legal allowance, grudged the offerers theirs, and while their portions were boiling in the caldrons contiguous to the tabernacle, sent a servant round with a flesh-

hook of three prongs, who struck the sharp trident into the caldrons, and drew out whatever pieces were attached to it, which pieces, in addition to the shoulders and the breasts which the law assigned them, they surreptitiously appropriated to their own use.

Nor did these dishonest gains satisfy their greediness. Since the portions thus drawn up from the caldrons were not always the choicest portions, they demanded other raw pieces of the offerers, that they might have an opportunity of preparing them to their taste; and these pieces they demanded even before the fat was removed, which fat was solemnly consecrated to Jehovah, thus defrauding not only the individuals who brought the sacrifices, but likewise that august Being to whom the sacrifices were devoted.

We wonder not that such conduct pained the hearts of those pious ones who came to the tabernacle to worship, and that the young men were devoutly expostulated with for this shameful betrayal of the high trusts confided to them; and we are not surprised that when such remonstrances proved of no avail, but they continued

on in this rapacious and sacrilegious course, persons refrained from visiting the tabernacle, and that sacrifices were few. "The sin of the young men," we are told, "was very great before the Lord, for men abhorred the offering of the Lord."

Nor was this all. Would that it was. But these crimes paved the way for others more enormous still. The excesses of the table were succeeded by debauchery, and we are shocked to learn that "the women that assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation were abused" by the profligate sons of Eli! So much moral leprosy the white ephod covered!

Knowledge of this gross indecorum, this glaring impiety, being brought to their father, what did he do? Manifestly such sacrilegious wickedness, so malignant in itself and in its bearings upon all that was sacred and conservatory, called for severe and energetic action on his part; but, instead of this, the pontiff, regent, and father, only mildly and ineffectually expostulated. Instead of a public arraignment of them, and deserved chastisement of them, issuing in sincere

repentance and reformation, by which his own government might be vindicated, the deep disgust of the people removed, and the services of the tabernacle purged from stain and restored to their former sanctity, the fond, indulgent father, with an easiness of temper most unbecoming the solemn responsibilities of his official character, and the stringent exercise of that authority inseparable from the parental relation, merely said, "Why do ye such things, my sons? I hear no good report of you, but evil; ye make the Lord's people to transgress." How disproportionate a remonstrance so mild, to conduct so reprehensible, guilt so aggravated!

But though the father thus connived at the delinquencies of his sons, and they escaped with so slight a rebuke, the criminal affair was not allowed to rest here. A holy God in the heavens was conversant with the whole case, and took the matter in charge.

There was with Eli, attached to his person, waiting upon the aged high priest, and under his watch and care, performing many little duties connected with the tabernacle service, the consecrated and pious lad Samuel.

What a contrast between this youth, the regenerated and devoted son of Hannah, and the corrupt Hophni and Phinehas! The first, a comfort and honor to her that bare him, and a blessing to the church; the latter, a heaviness to their mother, miserable votaries of "foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition," and bringing down the gray hairs of a weak yet affectionate father with sorrow to the grave!

As the young devotee, the child Samuel, was reposing in his chamber adjoining the sacred edifice, he heard some one call him, and supposing it to be Eli, he ran unto him and said, "Here am I, for thou calledst me." On being told that he was mistaken, that Eli had not called him, he went back and lay down. Again was his name called, and again did he go to Eli, saying, "Here am I, for thou didst call me." And he replied, "I called not, my son; lie down again." Yet once more was he called, and on arising and going to Eli as before, and saying, "Here am I, for thou didst call me," Eli perceived that the Lord had called the child. Eli then told him to withdraw to his room, and in event of being

called again, to respond to the summons with "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." Soon the familiar voice, calling, Samuel, Samuel, was heard; and on his answering, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth," the fearful doom of Eli's apostate house was pronounced. "And the Lord said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle. In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken against his house; when I begin I will also make an end. For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; *because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.*"

The threatened judgment came. Though some years elapsed first, and the bolt of vengeance was held back from the head and family of the pontificate, yet at the appointed time it was launched, and dreadful was the blow. A war having arisen with the Philistines, in the first encounter with whom the Israelites were repulsed with the loss of four thousand men, it was thought that victory perched upon the banners of their

enemies because of the absence of the ark, the symbol of God's favoring presence. It was accordingly taken into the field, and Hophni and Phinehas accompanied it. With exulting shouts its advent was hailed by the hosts of Israel, and with fresh prowess infused into their ranks, the conflict was resumed. The issue of the battle was awaited with intense solicitude by Eli, who had taken his seat by the wayside, that the earliest tidings might reach him. They came, borne by one retreating from the field with rent garments and earth upon his head. And sad indeed they were. They told of disaster, and they were the vehicle of disaster. They fell like molten lead upon the soul of the blind, aged man, whose decayed frame was trembling from a presentiment of evil. They were, "Israel is fled before the Philistines; there has also been a great slaughter among the people; thy two sons Hophni and Phinehas are dead, and the ark of God is taken." What a confluence of calamities! The great dramatist tells us that

> "When sorrows come, they come not single spies,
> But in battalions."

A remark in this instance most signally verified. There was no redeeming item in the entire message. It was all dismal—a blood-red cycle of sorrow! Four furious torrents of tribulation united their forces, and broke their billows upon the head of the father and priest! He bore up under the tremendous message till the last clause, "the ark of God is taken," fell upon his ears, but that completely overpowered him. He fainted, rolled from his seat, and from the imbecile corpulence of age, broke his neck and expired! Nor was this all, terrible and ruinous as it was. The wife of Phinehas died, with the word ICHABOD upon her lips, which signifies, "the glory is departed;" Zadok succeeded to the priesthood instead of Abiathar, a descendant of Eli; and if we credit a tradition of the Jews, there was at Jerusalem a family no one member of which survived his eighteenth year, and that doomed household were those whose pedigree was traceable back to Eli!

Such were the crimes of the sons of Eli; such was the criminal indulgence of the father towards them; and such were the dire judgments which

such indulgence drew down upon him, upon them, and upon Israel!

We learn from this brief history of Eli and his sons, that grace runs not in the blood, and that the children of the pious may be undutiful and wicked.

Eli is generally regarded as having been an upright man, fearing God. Nothing militates against this popular persuasion, except his dereliction from the path of duty in the management of his sons. He seems, by his moral excellences, to have attracted towards him the affections of the people, while his integrity and ability in discharging the functions of the sacerdotal and judicial offices, secured their esteem and praise.

And yet we see what his sons became. How is this to be accounted for? Not to anticipate in our answer what we propose remarking in another place, suffice it here to say, that it may be accounted for from that natural law of depravity, which, as it is universal in its extent and action, operates in all, reigned in them, notwithstanding grace in the heart of their parent; for "that which is born of flesh is flesh." Fallen

"Adam," we read, "begat a son in his own likeness;" after that likeness was fallen Eli, and his sons partook, by nature, of his depravity. They came into the world with no bias to righteousness, but with propensities to evil, which propensities unarrested, unrestrained, would bear them onward in a course of iniquity. And what, in this particular, was true touching them, has been ever true, and is true now, touching the offspring of all Christians. Their children partake of their native proclivity to sin; and hence it is that the offspring of the pious, notwithstanding their religious advantages, and their training up in the strictest forms of pious instruction, are sometimes in their habits and principles so corrupt. "The seeds of sin, that bitter root," have struck deep into the soil of the heart, and in spite of all that is done to eradicate them, exhibit themselves in ways and works of unrighteousness. Corruption runs in the blood, and not piety.

"If," observed Bishop Hall, "virtue was as well entailed on us as sin, one might serve to check the other in our children; but now, since grace is derived from heaven on whomsoever it

pleases the Giver, and that evil which ours receive hereditarily from us, is multiplied by their own corruption, it can be no wonder that good men have ill children; it is rather a wonder that any children are not evil."

The narrative further teaches, that it is the imperious duty of the father to exert over his children a firm, efficient discipline.

Much is said of maternal influence, and too much cannot be said in exaltation of it, unless, as we have reason to apprehend, so much is said as to relieve the father from a sense of his responsibility. The father is the scripturally appointed head of the household, and as such has an authority and influence of which he can be divested only by death, and for the judicious and successful use of which he is accountable. To him is committed the duty, at the return of morning light and evening shade, of bowing down with his family and offering fervent prayer; to him, equally with the mother, is committed the duty of instructing the children from God's holy oracles; and while upon them jointly devolves the task of correcting faults, bridling tempers, and

educating the heart, turning it to the Lord, it is his more particular province to issue reasonable, wholesome commands, and enforce obedience thereto.

Without commands there is no known acknowledged standard of action; without commands there are no penalties and no order; with no penalties and no order there is no government, but every barrier to an inundation of destructive influences is levelled, and vice comes in like a flood. Fathers may counsel, may warn, may remonstrate, may even threaten, but if they proceed at no greater length, they stop short of their duty, unless by proceeding thus far their will is made dominant over the self-will of their offspring, and submission thereto is obtained. Hence chastisement is sometimes found necessary. The Bible recognizes this as a part of parental discipline, and to assume to be wiser than the Bible is neither proper nor safe. Nothing can be more pointed or decisive than the declarations of Scripture on this subject. "Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.

Withhold not correction from the child, for if thou beatest him with the rod he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell. Chasten thy son while there is hope. He that spareth the rod hateth his son, but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes." Not that brutal violence is to be used, not that an intemperate use of the rod is ever justifiable, not that in the case of every child the infliction of corporeal punishment is imperatively necessary, but that when it *is* necessary, when subordination cannot be obtained and obedience secured without it, then is this instrument of authority and corrector of evil to be put to its legitimate and judicious use. "I know Abraham," said the Lord, "that he will command his children and his household after him to do justice and judgment." "*Command* his children." Here Eli failed. He did not command, or if he did, was too tender, indulgent, and yielding, to insure corresponding action. His very language —"Why do ye such things, my sons? It is no good report that I hear: ye make the Lord's people to transgress;"—this very language indi-

cates weakness, for it is no such expression of paternal authority as the magnitude of the case demanded. We marvel not that it was impotent in its influence—that it "restrained not." It is quite probable that Hophni and Phinehas had been familiar with kindred language, and with nothing more stringent and coercive, all their days, so that now the words of their father "passed them as the idle wind." Had they from infancy been subjected to appropriate parental discipline, been taught to obey, these words from the lips of a venerable parent, a pontiff and judge in Israel, might have availed something; but now the young men were too hardened and intractable to be wrought upon by any such means. Accustomed to having their own way in their childhood and youth, accustomed to govern, instead of being governed, their sinful feelings, vicious habits, and licentious passions had acquired a maturity and strength, on which mere words had no impression. "Leviathan is not so tamed." Had they been ruled early, "chastened *betimes*," the result had been different. And he is the affectionate, considerate, faithful father,

who by taking an opposite course,—commanding his children and his household after them in the ways of the Lord,—thereby secures subordination, moulds the characters of his children aright, and obtains for himself filial reverence and love.

The narrative teaches, moreover, the dreadful consequences of excessive parental indulgence.

Though this point has been adverted to, it deserves more than a passing glance.

What dire calamities flowed from Eli's guilty unfaithfulness! The record thereof, like the roll beheld in vision by Ezekiel, was lamentation, mourning and woe. His own heart was crushed, his own soul tortured, his own life taken away with a stroke, perdition brought upon his sons, reproach and suffering upon their descendants, and dismay and disaster upon all Israel! Fearful retribution!—and was it too severe? Those will think so who think lightly of parental obligations, and are disposed to apologize for parental delinquencies, no doubt; but such was not the estimate set upon Eli's deadly sin by a just and merciful God, or he would have been spared its infliction. The harvest of shame, sorrow, and

distress, which in divine providence his conduct produced, revealed its atrocity in the eyes of the God of providence. Parental negligence and folly are no venial class of transgressions. It is no trifling thing to be entrusted with the guardianship of youth. Boyhood and girlhood are fashioning manhood and womanhood. The disposition and deportment nursed at the fireside under parental tendance in the impressibility of early years, are borne onward, and develop themselves in the drama of future life. "The child is father of the man," and what men are to be, and women are to be, and the character of society is to be, depends upon how the domestic circle is regulated, and children are trained.

This consideration it was which made the sin of Eli so great. It was heinous exceedingly, because it affected not only himself, but the immortal interests of his sons, and the community at large. It was rebellion against the divine government, was the perversion of sacred authority, and struck a fatal blow at the foundations of good order, morality, and religion. In neglecting his duty as a parent, he set in motion a train of evils

which not only filled his own cup of woe, broke his own heart and neck, but gave over the ark of God into the hands of the uncircumcised Philistines, and entailed calamities upon unborn generations.

Let no parent think lightly of the responsibilities imposed upon him. Let no one think that his children are naturally so amiable and so good, that they can be safely left to their own chosen way, unchecked and uncontrolled. Let him not weakly indulge them in their wayward fancies and inclinations, or connive at their faults and follies, for in the hot-bed of such noxious products, thistles and the deadly nightshade will most certainly appear. Pursuing such a course, he will find at length, alas, that he is making, poisoning, and pointing arrows to "pierce his soul through with many sorrows."

Parents can in no way more certainly make themselves wretched than by connivance at their children's sins. If they wish their own ears to tingle, and hearts to ache, let them take this course. We know that it is much easier to let children go unrestrained, than to restrain them;—

let them have their own way, than keep them in the right way;—let them come up themselves, than to *bring* them up; but is it easier in *the end?* That is the question. A question which the fate of Eli and his sons very distinctly and conclusively answers.

We cannot refrain from adding, that a deep and solemn interest should be taken in the preceding history by our young readers. Let them see here the fruits of juvenile insubordination and depraved tempers. The germs of that aggravated wickedness which brought Hophni and Phinehas to their untimely end, cut them down in the midst of their days, and hurried them unprepared to the bar of an offended God, were nurtured in childhood. Their destruction was just the result of their undutiful profligate career. They were self-confident and self-willed, scorned parental admonitions and entreaties, and gave free rein to their licentious passions; and, by so doing, agonized the soul of a venerable father, were objects of public abhorrence, and plucked down ruin upon their own heads! Imitate them not, unless you would be partakers of

their plagues. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it!" Many have confessed upon the scaffold, that the crimes which brought them there, commenced with despising parental restraints and counsels; and as the corpses of such criminals were denied burial, and were suspended as was the body of Pharaoh's baker, the flesh of which was torn from the bones by birds of prey; it is literally true that the mocking eye has become the food of the raven and the eagle. Survey such examples to escape a like end, as the sailor looks at the flame of a lighthouse to escape the rock on which it stands.

XVIII.

SAUL AND THE WITCH OF ENDOR.

MANKIND have a strong propensity to pry into the future. Though "secret things belong unto the Lord our God," men would dispute God's exclusive possession of them, by endeavoring to gain possession of them themselves. Hence the variety of measures resorted to for the purpose of lifting the curtain which shuts from human view what is to be, and ascertaining what lies behind it. A memorable instance of this prurient curiosity on the part of mankind is furnished us in the history of SAUL, who, in the perplexity of his affairs, with clouds lowering over the future, repaired to Endor, near Mount Tabor, in order to consult a woman dwelling there, who had a familiar spirit.

Neither in sacred history nor profane history is there a character more sad to view than that of Saul the son of Kish, a person of considera-

tion in the tribe of Benjamin, and the first king of the Israelites.

In person tall and commanding, towering head and shoulders above any of the people, endowed with much physical strength and with no ordinary degree of courage, there was no individual among the Jews, when that nation had rejected the theocracy and demanded a king, more likely or more fit to be raised to that important station than he. Accordingly he was raised to it. In quest of his father's asses which had strayed from home, he was met by the prophet Samuel, who, in obedience to divine authority, set him apart to discharge the royal functions, by anointing him with the consecrating oil. For a time he did well, administered the government wisely, in seasons of emergency acted with energy and promptitude, and adopted a course of policy favorable to the growth and general prosperity of the Jewish people. He soon, however, forgot his true position as a servant of Jehovah. Instead of regarding that august Being as the primal source of power, and himself as under him in the capacity merely of a lieutenant; instead

of looking up to the King of kings as the fountain of all authority, seeking of him conservatory laws, and then faithfully executing those laws, he seemed to suppose authority and power to be vested in himself, and acted independently of the Most High. This assumption of right to conduct the affairs of the realm according to his own private judgment and will; this thrusting Jehovah from his throne, and seating himself in his place, weakened his popularity with his subjects, and provoked the displeasure of the God of heaven, who, wearied at length with his stubborn arrogance, first threatened him with the rejection of his family from the throne, and then visited him with that rejection:—the venerable prophet Samuel rending before him his mantle, thus significantly representing or mystically predicting the rending of his kingdom. This visitation of Jehovah Saul sorely felt. A deep melancholy at times came over him, which he could not shake off,—a melancholy bordering upon insanity. "An evil spirit troubled him"—chastened him for his transgressions—which, instead of bringing him to repentance, only made

him more desperate. The chief object of his hate and malice on these occasions—these paroxysms of passion—was David, the youngest of the sons of Jesse, who was popular, heroic, and wise, and whom Saul suspected, from the possession of these qualities, was the person destined to be his successor. Twice did he attempt his assassination with his own hand,—sent him on hazardous military expeditions,—placed him in dangerous straits where he could hardly hope for deliverance, and because Ahimelech the priest was David's well-wisher, slew in one day him and eighty-five other "persons that did wear a linen ephod." Indeed, so furious was he, when his strong passions were in the ascendant, when ambition, envy, and jealousy held empire in his soul, that he exhibited the moral infatuation of a man who abandons himself to iniquity, vainly thinking that the punishment due for one crime may be averted by the commission of another crime. In this way did he proceed, filling up the measure of his sins, and waxing worse and worse, till disaffection towards him by the people so prevailed, and distractions in the kingdom

became so numerous and alarming, that he was driven to that act of direct treason against Jehovah, the God of Israel—consultation with the witch of Endor. What we would say on this singular incident in Saul's life will be a brief reply to the five following interrogatories.

What object had Saul in view in desiring to see Samuel?

He wished for his advice. Samuel had been always a good friend to Saul. He it was who had anointed him king; and although many things which Saul did, Samuel could not and did not approve of, but solemnly and firmly protested against, he yet ceased not to take a lively interest in his welfare. While Samuel was living, though Saul respected him as a faithful prophet of the Lord, he did not sufficiently value his friendship and counsel, but when the prophet died, he began to appreciate his worth. He felt that he had lost a good friend; the best friend he ever had; a friend who, though he frowned upon his deeds of wickedness, wished for his true happiness; a friend who was capable of giving sound advice, and stood ready to give it—advice

which he had never followed, but to his advantage, nor neglected, but to his serious injury. Hence he wished to see Samuel again, to consult him. It was a time of perplexity and distress with Saul. God had departed from him. He had grieved the Holy Spirit, and now he was under the influence of an evil spirit. The Philistines, too, were gathering their forces together to assault Israel. It was a cloudy and dark day with the monarch. He wanted light, wanted some judicious adviser, and who so judicious as his old friend Samuel? But Samuel was dead. He must, nevertheless, have an interview with him, if possible.

Our second interrogatory therefore is:—What measures did he resort to, in order that he might see him? He sought a woman that had a familiar spirit, who lived at Endor. By "a woman that had a familiar spirit," ("a woman, a mistress of Ob," Heb.; "habens Pythonem," Vulg.,) we are to understand a woman who pronounced or muttered spells; who practised magic; a sorceress, or magician; a person, the popular idea concerning whom was, that she had powers be-

yond the common powers of humanity, through aid of a familiar spirit appointed by Satan to attend on her and execute her wishes. There were persons among the Jews who pretended to have this power, both male and female, and have been such in all ages of the world; persons who, by the use of spells, conjurations, or enchantments, or rappings, profess to hold direct communion with the invisible state, and have a potent influence there; as likewise to predict and accomplish things transcending the abilities of ordinary mortals. Scripture makes reference to the existence of such persons, and that in other passages than the one now under consideration, but does not so refer to them as to involve the reality of their pretensions. It tells us that there are persons making such pretensions, denounces them, and warns us against them; but nowhere tells us that their pretensions are true, that they are what they profess to be, or can do what they profess to do. And we have no sufficient ground for belief that any mortal laying claim to such supernatural powers really possesses these powers. As "we know that an idol is nothing in the

world, and that there is none other gods but One," so a person who has a familiar spirit, a witch, sorcerer, or necromancer, is nothing in the world, is vanity, an ignis-fatuus, a delusion. God has appointed no such inferior deities to act between mankind and himself; disclose His plans to whom "secret things belong," or call up the spirits of the dead to converse with the living; and it is foolish, wicked to believe that he has or can have any fellowship with such pretended agents of darkness. Saul, in his sober moments, had, by an express statute, banished all such mischievous persons from the land, but now, in his excitability, anxiety, and infatuation, he, like the gloomy tyrant of Scotland, Macbeth, inquires for one, and consults one at Endor. Disguising himself, he went thither by night, taking two men with him, and asked the sorceress to bring the individual from the dead whom he shall name; and then named Samuel: "Bring me up Samuel."

Third interrogatory: Who was it, at the incantations of the woman, that appeared? None other than the prophet Samuel himself. In this

she was disappointed. She expected by some magical formula or rites to make Saul believe that she saw Samuel, and thus gain her end, obtain a gift, or magnify her skill; but instead of this, Samuel, much to her surprise, actually appears. Hence we read: "And when the woman *saw Samuel*, she cried with a loud voice, and said to Saul, Why hast thou deceived me? for thou art Saul." She was as much terrified at the phantom as Saul himself, for she had expected no such thing. That personage actually rose to view and presented himself before her, though she had not the most distant idea that he would. She screamed therefore from fright, and, conscious that it was by no work or power of hers that Samuel appeared, at once inferred from the past connection of Saul and Samuel, that the person who had consulted her was Saul. "Why hast thou deceived me? for thou art Saul!" She meant to deceive Saul, but was deceived herself; overreached and confounded by her own arts. She had brought up not a vague figure merely, the vain form of somebody or something which the blinded, agitated king might mistake for the

prophet, but the prophet himself. "And the king said, What is his form? And she said, An old man cometh up, and he is covered with a mantle: and Saul perceived that it was Samuel." Only the woman had seen the personated form before; now he sees it.

Fourth inquiry: What power caused Samuel thus to appear? The power of God! The act of God it was, unquestionably. All the particulars show this. He interposed his miraculous agency in the matter. The supposition that a woman by any magical arts can so evoke the spirits of the deceased, that they shall come at her call, or that Satan can do it, or, if not do this, can yet at his pleasure so personate an individual of the dead, as to deceive the eyes and minds of the living, is not for a moment to be credited. God, for wise reasons, allowed the prophet Samuel in this instance to appear, although the sorceress had no power of her own to cause him to appear, and cried out with terror when he did appear.

What objects were to be subserved by the apparition of Samuel? Several objects, and these of no trifling importance.

One was, to pour contempt on the whole system of witchcraft. Numerous have been the augurs, soothsayers, necromancers, magicians, jugglers, and wizards, who have declared themselves possessed of an occult science, by virtue of which they could foretell the coming destinies of mortals, and bring secrets from the invisible world. God, wishing to show that all such are base impostors, could not take a better or more convincing course, than to exhibit this witch, who claimed the power of evoking the person of Samuel, standing affrighted before him when Samuel actually presented himself. She was alarmed when the very thing was done which she pretended to do!—thus showing that her pretensions were empty, and that her whole aim was to deceive. She had no such superhuman power as calling back a departed spirit from the unseen state implies; and as she stands terrified in the presence of that spirit, and bursting into wild shrieks, she shows how contemptible were her own professions, and the professions of all other persons of like character.

Another object was, to warn Saul of his doom.

For a long time Saul had been filling up the measure of his iniquities, until at length the cup of God's wrath had become full. He had dethroned God from his heart, he had tried to imbrue his hands in the blood of David, he had slaughtered priests of the Lord, and now, as his crowning act of rebellion against Jehovah, he had sought for and consulted a wizard, when as king he had uttered an edict against witchcraft, and was bound to see the law cutting off all that had familiar spirits from the land, faithfully executed. His evil works, therefore, had ripened to their full, and he was to be told this by the very prophet who had anointed him king, and whose judicious counsels he had despised. Hence Samuel, while he upbraided Saul for sending for him, at the same time admonished him of his crimes, told him that Jehovah was his enemy, and informed him of his approaching ruin. "The Lord," is his language,—"the Lord will deliver Israel and thee into the hands of the Philistines, and to-morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me;" *i. e.*, separate from the body as I am, in eternity!

"And when shall sink
In night to-morrow's day, thou and thy sons
Shall be with me in death."

Words of dread import, revealing to the eyes of the guilty monarch that bursting thunderbolt of divine vengeance, and that avenging lightning leaping from the throne of an angry God, which in a few hours would rend and destroy him! No wonder that the king sunk under this terrible message,—that he "fell straightway all along on the earth, and that there was no strength in him!" for that dread Being whom he had defied, he well knew had all the fearful elements and agencies of death to punish his enemies; and that in eternity—his soul required—these batteries of wrath would be unmasked against him!

Another object to be subserved by this miraculous interposition of the Almighty was, to pointedly rebuke all impertinent pryers into futurity. He who made man, and knows what is in man, knows what a strong curiosity is inherent in the mind and heart for what is occult, and how this innate disposition to pry into what is hidden would seek to be gratified. He knew

that a class of persons denominated magicians, fortune-tellers, rappers, clairvoyants, &c., would appear, claiming to have prescience of futurity, and an intimacy with things invisible; claiming to reveal secrets, disclose hidden treasures, interpret dreams, and bring tidings from the eternal world;—he knew that such persons would appear, practise their various illusory arts, and that some would be so weak and credulous as to believe in them and trust them. Hence the record of this King of Israel sneaking by night to a sorry witch to learn his fortune! What did he get by it? Any good, any comfort? Did he reap any advantage in taking her as his counsellor? No; he was ensnared, entrapped, punished: and a like fate awaits all who have to do with such sinful agents. They derive no benefits by their inventions, but are duped, defrauded, and fall into mischief;—find a home in lunatic asylums. All who practise these enchantments, of whatever name, are not to be run after, or consulted, but frowned upon and denounced. "Have no fellowship," says the apostle, "with unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove

them." These vain, illusory arts are just such works, for they are "works of *darkness*, and *unfruitful;*" unproductive of any good to all parties concerned in them, save only the conjurer *himself*, or *herself*, who gets his or her fee for laying the snare. Avoid these necromancers, turn from them and pass away. When, in protracted trials and perplexities, sense and reason point out no way of deliverance, and you are tempted by evil imaginings or corrupt advisers to resort for relief to sinful expedients,—*remember Saul*, and neither "lean to your own understandings," nor apply for direction to other than to the Father of Lights. "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask,"—not of Satan, nor of Satan's emissaries, nor of any apparition counterfeiting human shape, but "ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth" and deceiveth "not." He who forsakes Infinite Wisdom, and contemns the counsels of the Most High, will be embarrassed, circumvented, stumble upon the dark mountains, and fall into hell. "The prudent man looketh well to his goings, by taking heed thereto according to *God's word!*"

Hence another object which the appearing of Samuel was designed to show was, that no creature in the universe can be of any essential service to us when God has left us. Saul, having slighted God's altars, oracles, and prophet, having gone in opposition to his conscience, and resisted the strivings of the Holy Spirit, was judicially deserted of God. He acknowledged this to Samuel. "God," said he, "has departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets nor by dreams, and therefore I have called thee." Yes, Jehovah, abused, provoked, incensed, had concluded to "let him alone," had forsaken him. And now he applies for help to Samuel, just as if a prophet of the Lord would help or could help a man whom God had abandoned as past hope. No Christian, no prophet, no angel, no created being in God's wide universe can help such a man! He has arrayed against him a power which no other power can master,—an almighty Agent, before whom the mountains fall down, and before whose wrath the rocks melt away! Jehovah has only to say, of a sinner, "he is joined to idols, let him alone;" his inclina-

tion or disposition is so fixed against repentance, faith, and love, that I will no longer try by my truth and grace to change it;—he has only to say this to make that sinner's hardened depravity hopeless, all help offered him worthless, every channel of spiritual good to him choked up, and to seal him over to despair! He will be let alone, or only told, as Saul was, what will goad him as the fangs of fiery serpents!

True to the terrible declaration of Samuel, Saul died, casting himself upon his own sword; and not improbably with some such sentiments as have been put into his mouth by a poet:

> "My kingdom from me rent, my children slain,
> My army lost, myself from hope cast out,—
> The seer hath spoken well. All is achieved!
> David, thou art avenged!"

XIX.

DAVID.

THE name of DAVID is one of the noblest on the catalogue of Israel's illustrious dead. His history naturally divides itself into three parts: the time he lived under Saul; the period during which he reigned over Judah alone; and the period afterwards, when he reigned over all Israel.

This,—the youngest of the sons of Jesse,—is first introduced to us as following the humble and quiet occupation of a shepherd. Relative to the character of his parents little is known; but from the frequent reference made in his writings to his mother, as "the handmaid of the Lord," it may be inferred that she was a pious woman; and, if so, the early religious impressions of her son may be traced to her Christian counsels and prayers. Certain it is, that in the morning of

life he seems to have been the recipient of a divine influence, and to have found rare satisfaction in contemplating the being, creation, and ways of God. In the fields of Bethlehem, his flocks feeding around him, he mused, as the sun rejoiced in its course, upon this handy-work of the Great Supreme; and when to day succeeded night, and the firmament "glowed with living sapphires," touched by an inspired impulse, he swept his harp to the praise of Him who made the moon to "walk in brightness," who marshalled the stars, and whose glory these luminaries in their shining pathway proclaimed.

Not long, however, was he allowed to remain amidst these peaceful scenes of pastoral life. Saul, the reigning monarch, having violated Jehovah's commands, and the sceptre therefore having passed from him and his descendants, the prophet Samuel, in obedience to divine direction, visits Jesse and his sons, and singling out David, then about eighteen or twenty years of age, from the group, pours the anointing oil upon his head. Though his stature was not as commanding as the others, he was "goodly to look to,"

and had personal qualities which his brethren had not—qualities which preëminently fitted him for the sphere in which he was destined to move.

His first successful essay as the champion of his people was against Goliah of Gath, who, a gigantic pagan, six cubits and a span in height—a little short of ten feet—and with a frame proportionably majestic and powerful, stalked forth out of the camp of the Philistines, defiant of the armies of Israel, and striking terror into their ranks. With a brazen helmet upon his head, greaves of brass upon his legs, a coat of mail around his body, a target of brass between his shoulders, and a spear like a weaver's beam, the head of which weighed six hundred shekels of iron, he presented himself, thus accoutred, in the valley of Elah, and challenged any Israelite to single combat with him. For forty days, morning and evening, did he throw down the gauntlet, and none had the courage to take it up. At length David, hearing his vaunts, and a spirit of patriotism and of faith stirring his soul, resolved to encounter him. Taking his shepherd's staff, his sling, and selecting five smooth stones from

the brook, he advanced into the field. The sight of so diminutive an adversary, and one so shabbily equipped, only excited Goliah's contempt and indignation. Eyeing the stripling with astonishment and disdain, he roared out, "Am I a dog, that thou comest against me with *staves?*" and he cursed David by his gods. The reply of David was that of a man of piety and true valor. Looking for victory, and victory from the Lord, he said to the insolent Philistine, "Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee, and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hands." Having spoken thus, his declaration was verified; for, having

fitted one of the stones to his sling, he hurled it with a velocity so great, and an aim so true, that, striking the giant in almost the only unfortified part of his body—the centre of his forehead—it forced itself through the bone to the brain, and felled him to the ground. As he dropped, the Israelites shouted and the Philistines fled; and David, running to his once formidable but now prostrate foe, severed, with his own sword, his head from his body, and bore it off in triumph! A victory so signal, so unprecedented, won for the youthful Hebrew, as well it might, high praise, which popularity of his, rousing the jealousy and anger of Saul, caused him to be persecuted by that infuriated monarch,—"hunted" by him from place to place, "like a partridge upon the mountains," till the death of Saul on Gilboa delivered David from his murderous assaults, and constituted him what he had been before designated and anointed to be—a King of Judah. During this first period of his history, while a shepherd, a chieftain, and a fugitive, nothing is chronicled relative to him which is much to his disparagement, while many things are recorded

to his credit. He had a cordial respect for the whole priestly order, whose character was raised, and whose influence with the masses was much increased by his devotional melodies; "loved Jonathan," the son of the king, "as his own soul;" endeared himself to all his associates by his personal self-denial and generosity; repaid the hatred and rage of Saul with deeds of kindness; and maintained communion with God.

David, now prince of Judah, is anointed anew and in public; consults Jehovah by Urim and Thummim as to where he shall locate; and establishes himself in the ancient and honorable city of Hebron. His claim, however, to the throne was disputed by Ishbosheth, Saul's son, backed by Abner, an imperious and ambitious officer in his army; and the consequence was a protracted civil war between them. But as the designs of God cannot be thwarted nor his promises fail of fulfilment, "the house of David waxed stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker," until the assassination of Ishbosheth gave David supremacy over all Israel, and transferred the centre of govern-

ment and seat of royalty from Hebron to Jerusalem. David had no part in this murder of his rival, and though it put him in undisputed possession of the throne, frowned upon and punished the guilty authors of the tragedy. As, when the head of Cæsar's rival, Pompey, was brought to that humane and illustrious general, he shed many tears, and slew those who had slain that distinguished man; so, when those who had imbrued their hands in the blood of Ishbosheth bore to David the ghastly trophy of their crime, confidently expecting to be commended and rewarded for it, David spake indignantly of their treachery, denounced their sin, and ordered them to be executed.

How different this from the conduct of Mark Antony, who ignominiously mutilated the corpse of Cicero! hereby showing his consummate meanness, as the opposite behavior of David manifested nobility of character.

Behold next the son of Jesse at Jerusalem, in full possession of the sovereignty, and inhabiting a royal palace! The God under whose banner he had fought, and by whose strength he had

achieved victory upon victory, he devoutly acknowledges, refers every thing that had occurred to his particular providence, and proceeds to bring the Ark, the august symbol of the presence of Divinity, to the civil metropolis of the nation, and install it there with the highest honors.

In this religious and imposing ceremony he acted a distinguished part. As it moved on, borne upon the shoulders of the sons of Kohath, he, divested of his royal raiment, girded with a linen ephod, and with harp in hand, headed the procession; and when reproached for having, in the exuberance of his joy at the return of the sacred treasure to the city, exceeded the bounds of strict propriety, and invaded that dignity which became a king, he gave the objecter to understand, that if such manifestations of zeal on such occasions were censurable, he purposed to be still more censurable. The Ark having advanced near to its final abode, the court of the tabernacle, he composed a song of praise in celebration of the event; an exquisite production of hallowed genius, which, sung by the full choir of Israel with trump and cymbal, floated upward like a

cloud of incense to the skies. A part of this noble canticle was:

"Lift up your heads, O ye gates,
And be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors,
That the King of glory may come in!
Who is this King of glory?
Jehovah, strong and mighty—
Jehovah, mighty in battle.
Lift up your heads, O ye gates,
And be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors,
That the King of glory may come in!
Who is this King of glory?
Jehovah of Hosts, He is this King of glory!"

And thus with David's harp and voice, and responding chorus, and sounding instruments, and shouting multitudes, were the doors and gates of Zion opened, and a free and glad entrance made of the Ark of God to the place of its rest!

Had the life of David closed here, though it would have been less eventful, less interesting, and less instructive than it indeed was, his character would have been a more admirable one; for at this stage of his public career, his prosperity, virtues, and fame reached their culminating point.

Henceforth the splendor of his worthy qualities pales, shadows conflict with the light; what pertains to him as a spiritual, thriving child of God is obscured, and what pertains to him as one of fallen Adam's descendants appears in bolder and melancholy relief; the infirmities of apostate humanity are more perceptible in him, and the trouble into which men are born more decidedly experienced by him. Dark was that stain upon his name,—the debauch of Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah; and as *he* did not pretend to deny the existence of the blot, or attempt to wipe it out by disguising or palliating the foul affair, but frankly, publicly confessed it and mourned over it, *we* shall not attempt, as some have done, by any special pleading or apology, to make it other than what it was,—a flagrant crime—but rather point to his voluntary humiliation and gushing tears as proof of his "repentance unto life." That pertinent apologue of the prophet Nathan, commending the truth to the reason and sensibilities of the delinquent king, and that cutting application thereof — that home-thrust, "Thou art the man!"—addressed to his conscience, dropping like a bolt from heaven on the soul of the

royal culprit, brought him to his knees, and forced from his laboring bosom the cry, "I have sinned against the Lord!" And then the sentence which came from the lips of Nathan—the mouthpiece of Jehovah:—"Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house," furnishes a key to God's subsequent providence relative to him, and the disasters of the remainder of his reign by which they are unlocked and revealed. Grievously did he sin, and grievously did he repent of it, and grievously did he suffer for it, notwithstanding his repentance; for he lost ground in the esteem of Israel which he never recovered; the spirit of his crime was reproduced in his offspring, and "the sword departed not from his family." Often was his heart wrung by the wickedness of his children; and the anguish thus induced was the more severe, because he could not but think that it was a judgment upon him for his own crime.

> **"Keen was the dart, but keener far to feel**
> **He nursed the pinion which impelled the steel!"**
>
> **BYRON.**

By the death of the child of Bathsheba he was

chastised, and by the iniquities and miserable end of Amnon, Absalom, and Adonijah. That these trials were sanctified to him—that all his reverses were sanctified to him—we cannot doubt. Jehovah forsook him not, but "as his day, so was his strength." Neither can we doubt that through his checkered history, his diversified experience, the people of God have been blessed; for the sentiments of his mind and exercises of his heart he has expressed in strains as brilliant and imperishable, as if written in stars upon the page of the heavens!

Purposing to devote an article to *Solomon*, with whom the closing portion of the life of David is intimately connected, we shall not pursue his history further.

And now, at the glance we have thus far given at this one of the most extraordinary of men, what shall we say? All sorts of appreciation he has had;—how do we appreciate him?

The principles of David were good; the virtues of David were great; the faults of David were many; and none can properly question his prowess or genius.

Think of the simple shepherd boy with his harp and staff, watching the lambs, and measuring his strength with their enemies, and we have a deep interest in him; think of military chieftains, and he is at the head of them all; think of famous kings, and he immediately comes prominent up by the law of association; think of divine worship, and you think of Jerusalem, the city of our God, which was the metropolis of his empire, and which he caused to be celebrated far and wide as the centre of religious influence; think of poets, and he, "the sweet singer of Israel," stands before you, his music entrancing your ears and his thoughts penetrating your souls. His best eulogy is his own productions — his best monument, the Psalms of David—a monument that will never crumble.

With his sacred lyrics, the poetical productions of Homer, Pindar, Shakspeare and Milton, great as are their acknowledged merits, cannot be compared. Unlike these masters of song, the Hebrew Minstrel is the poet of all creeds, nations, and climes. How wide the circle in which his devotional power is felt!

In a bold and beautiful figure of Daniel Webster, the British possessions are spoken of as a dominion on which the sun never sets: "a power which has dotted over the surface of the whole globe with her possessions and military posts; whose morning drum-beat, following the sun, and keeping company with the hours, circles the earth daily with one continuous and unbroken strain of the martial airs of England."

So we may say of the Psalms of David. The whole globe rings with these old temple chants.

"The sound thereof has gone out through all the earth,
And their music to the ends of the world."

From morning till evening, and from evening till morning, at every hour, by childhood, youth, manhood, and old age, are they sung, from Sinai to the Alleghanies, and from China to Oregon. In cottage and palace, in church and cathedral, are they sounded out; nor will they cease thus to be used as the vehicle of praise, the world's matin and vesper, till the millions upon millions who now employ them in their devotions, and are imbued with their spirit—yea, all God's elect

—shall be gathered to the general assembly of heaven, and mingle their hearts and their voices in the grand hallelujah chorus of the skies.

Reader, with soul attuned to that truly harmonious choir, now lift up thy voice in thanksgiving, like the jubilee trumpet of old, and celebrate that name which is above every name.

"Give unto the Lord the glory due to His name,
Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness."

XX.

SOLOMON.

This distinguished personage whose history we are now to consider, and who was the eleventh of the first class of David's sons, was born at Jerusalem, according to the most approved chronology, about ten hundred and thirty-three years before the advent of Christ. Like Joseph, Moses, and other Scripture characters which have passed under our review, he is represented as having been a promising child, endowed with a natural mildness and loveliness of character, and to have been beloved of the Lord. No pains were spared in his education. Not only, in common with the rest of the Jews who were of royal blood, was he taught from the Pentateuch, agreeably to that special command of Israel's great lawgiver, "The words which I command thee this day, thou shalt teach them diligently

unto thy children,"—a command, by the way, as binding upon parents now as it ever was,—not only was he instructed in these laws of Moses,—but likewise in all the sciences which were then taught. Possessing an aptitude for learning, an extraordinary capacity, and furnished with the best of instructions, and every advantage for prosecuting his studies which Jerusalem at that time afforded, he became by far the most learned man of the age, outstripping in all kinds of knowledge the wisest men of Egypt, Babylon, and Arabia. "God," we are told, "gave him wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is upon the sea-shore. And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt. He spake three thousand proverbs, and his songs were a thousand and five. And he spake of the trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon, even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall; and there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all the kings of the earth which had heard of his wisdom."

He was married early, at about eighteen years of age, to Naamah, an Ammonitess, whose influence over him was pernicious; for while "a virtuous woman is a crown to her husband, and her price is far above rubies," a woman corrupt in sentiment and immoral in practice proves the occasion of serious evil to the man to whom she is conjugally allied. It was well understood at the royal court of David, that Solomon was to be his father's successor in the administration of the government;—indeed, Jehovah had designated him for this post, and the nation generally were satisfied with the appointment. Not so, however, was his elder brother, Adonijah. He was a restless, ambitious man, grasped at the sovereignty, and openly avowed himself a competitor with Solomon for the throne. There were not wanting those who declared in his favor,—even some whose patriotism and fidelity, until they took that stand, had been unquestioned. Joab was of his party, and so was Abiathar;—the first, an accomplished and successful military officer,—the second, the high priest. In these circumstances, Adonijah aspiring and active, able and

popular men coming over to his side, and not a few of the people, in their zeal for the usurper, already beginning to shout, "God save King Adonijah,"—David felt the necessity of taking prompt measures to stay this tide which threatened the kingdom, and immediately caused Solomon to be anointed, and in the usual form and manner proclaimed prince of Israel and Judah. This being done; Solomon having been duly inaugurated, in the presence and under the sanction of David, and the crown placed upon his head, a panic seized Adonijah and his friends, as the sound of the trumpets and other musical instruments, celebrating his accession to the throne, fell upon their ears, and they precipitately dispersed, Adonijah fleeing, and for protection laying hold of the horns of the altar. Solomon, finding him there, was unwilling to treat him rigorously, and granted him a pardon on certain specified terms, with which Adonijah complied, glad to be let off so easily, when the charge of treason could be proved against him. Not a long period elapsed after Solomon was thus inducted into the royal office, before he was sum-

moned to the bed of a dying father. He lost no time in obeying the summons, and was deeply affected as he beheld disease progressing, preparing to attack the springs of life, and for ever remove from him a parent so kind, venerated, and beloved. The mind, however, of that parent, was in a state peculiarly serene and heavenly. Though the firm frame-work of the soul was breaking down, David had foreseen the approaching event, and prepared for it. Full of composure and hope, the pious monarch looked upon the face of his son, and gave him the following dying-charge: "I go the way of all the earth; be thou strong, therefore, and show thyself a man, and keep the charge of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself:—that the Lord may continue the word which he spake concerning me, saying: If thy children take heed to their way, to walk before me in truth, with all their heart, and with all their soul, there shall not

fail thee, said he, a man on the throne of Israel." David having given this direction to his son relative to his own deportment, and some other directions pertaining to other matters, "fell on sleep," and was welcomed, we cannot doubt, by that God whom he had loved and served, to the everlasting joys of his kingdom. Solomon assisted in the funeral ceremonies, wept over his grave, and, the customary days of mourning ended, was a second time anointed king. Sole monarch now of his father's wide domains,—a kingdom as extensive and flourishing as, up to that period in the annals of the world, the sun had ever shone upon,—Solomon bent all his energies to the preserving of this kingdom in its integrity and glory, and adopted a course of policy well adapted to this effect. Nor was he unsuccessful, for God was with him. While making a visit at Gibeon, to worship there, after he had offered a thousand burnt-offerings upon the brazen altar, and retired to rest, Jehovah appeared to him in a dream, and offered to grant him any request which he thought proper to make. Many were the desirable things which

the young king might have asked, and which others, situated like himself, would have asked; but to his credit as a man of sense, to his credit as a man of intelligence, to his credit as a man realizing his responsibility to God for the right government of the empire over which, in divine providence, he had been placed, he asked, not for an increase of wealth, not for long life, not for the destruction of those who might plot against the throne, nor for the extension of his kingly dominions, but for a wise and understanding heart. "Give thy servant," was his modest, humble, pious petition, "give thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad; for who is able to judge this, thy so great people?" Admirable choice! Who can but unhesitatingly approve it, and commend him for it? And yet that same Divine Being who appeared to Solomon at Gibeon, now says,—"If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him." Ye who approve the choice of Israel's youthful monarch, go yourselves and

seek for wisdom from the "Father of lights."

> "Come, let us put
> Up our requests to Him, whose will alone
> Limits his power of teaching; from whom none
> Returns unlearned, that hath once a will
> To be his scholar." QUARLES.

Solomon soon showed his wisdom in the decision he gave relative to the respective claims of two females to a certain child. Our readers must be familiar with the anecdote, the only one which is preserved concerning him, and there is no necessity therefore for quoting it. Suffice it to say, that if the verdict then and there given by Solomon evinces not an unmistakable knowledge of human nature, no verdict has evinced such knowledge, or can evince it! We are not surprised when the divine record tells us, that, on learning of the decision, "all Israel feared the king, for they saw the wisdom of God was in him to do judgment."

Solomon next turned his attention to the noble enterprise of erecting a temple for Jehovah, at Jerusalem. His father David wished to construct it, but was not allowed by God to do so,

"because he had been a man of blood." This honor, therefore, was reserved for Solomon. David, however, did not a little towards accomplishing the great undertaking, for he left to Solomon immense sums of money which he had amassed during his wars and dedicated to this purpose; and also a perfect model of the contemplated edifice, including all its furniture. Favored with these facilities, also with a national peace, and the friendship of neighboring princes, particularly that of Hiram, King of Tyre, Solomon commenced his work. As the exterior of the building was to be formed principally of stone, and the interior principally of cedar and fir, materials not easily obtained in Palestine, Solomon gladly availed himself of the large quarries and the suitable lumber found in the mountains of Lebanon, which were generously offered him by Hiram. To the written request of Solomon that he would do so, and appoint skilful men to hew out the cedars, promising on his part to furnish supplies of food for Hiram's family and laborers, Hiram returned the following courteous reply:—"I have considered the

things thou sentest to me for, and I will do all thy desire concerning timber of cedar and timber of fir. My servants shall bring them down from Lebanon unto the sea, and I will convey them by sea in floats unto the place that thou shalt appoint me, and will cause them to be discharged there: and thou shalt accomplish my desire in giving food for my household." The contract thus made was faithfully observed and fulfilled. Hiram spared as many master-mechanics as he could, out of his dense population, and Solomon furnished them with all necessary provisions. He also raised, by conscription, thirty thousand from among his own subjects, whom he despatched to the forests and quarries, ten thousand at a time, to labor there, besides those that were needed to prepare the ground at Jerusalem. Every stone and every timber was hewn and fitted to its place in the mountains, one hundred miles from the city, before it was brought to the city, so that the sound of no axe, hammer, saw, chisel, or any other instrument, was heard on the building during the process of erection. In the words of Heber:—

"No workman's steel, no ponderous axes rung:
Like some tall palm the noiseless fabric sprung."

Thus the architectural pile went up; seven and a half years rolled away ere it was completed, and when all was done to it that was to be done, probably no edifice, ancient or modern, exceeded it in beauty, and certainly none in value. The curiously wrought timber and stones, the Corinthian brass, and the silver and gold used in it and about it, were exceedingly costly. In the language of Scripture, it was "magnifical;" and when Solomon brought into it the sacred vessels of David his father, the ark containing the identical pot which had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant, and placed them under the overshadowing cherubim, "the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord!" The superb structure was soon dedicated to the august Being for whom it was reared, with appropriate ceremonies; Solomon kneeling upon a raised altar or scaffold, and with sincere and unaffected piety, and from a full heart, offering up a long and fervent prayer. Sacrifices and burnt-offerings, in great numbers, had been laid

in appointed places, and when the dedication prayer was concluded, fire burst forth from heaven and consumed them, while the singers and the vast crowd of spectators in the temple and its adjacent courts, exclaimed, "Praise the Lord; for he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever!"

This temple of Solomon, which was erected about ten hundred and five years before Christ, remained until it was destroyed by the Chaldeans, under Nebuchadnezzar, five hundred and eighty-four years before Christ. Subsequent to the Babylonish captivity, the temple was rebuilt by Zerubbabel, though with far inferior magnificence. This temple of Zerubbabel, having been polluted and injured in the Jewish wars, Herod the Great, in the eighteenth year of his reign, repaired and ornamented. This was the temple which was standing in the time of our Saviour. The site of it was Mount Moriah, and, agreeable to the prediction of Christ, it was entiely razed to the earth by the Romans, under Titus and Vespasian, and its site is now covered by the mosque of Omar, one of the most elegant and

costly specimens of Saracenic architecture anywhere to be found.

The Temple of Solomon having been finished, and Solomon's pecuniary resources not being nigh exhausted, he proceeded to erect other edifices; a magnificent palace for himself, one for his Egyptian wife, and, as his heart had now begun to depart from the Lord, a number of buildings to serve as places of idolatrous worship. He also fortified Jerusalem, put it in a more complete state of defence, provided military stores, and is supposed to have built Palmyra, or Tadmor in the desert, the ruins of which are still visible. He likewise constructed many ships, traded largely with the kings of Syria, Egypt, and Idumea, and opened a communication with Ophir, from whence he obtained great quantities of the precious metals, especially gold. About this time the Queen of Sheba, hearing of his greatness, for he had now become renowned—renowned for his wealth, the prosperity of his realm, and more particularly for his wisdom—paid him a visit, for the twofold purpose of seeing his glory, and obtaining answers to knotty questions in morals

and religion. Struck with the profusion of his riches, and the splendor of his court, and his consummate abilities, for he promptly and accurately replied to all her interrogatories, she expressed herself as surprised and delighted. "It was a true report," said she, "that I heard in my own land of thy wisdom. Howbeit, I believed not the words until I came and mine eyes had seen it, and behold the half was not told me; thy wisdom and thy prosperity exceed the fame that I heard. Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, who stand continually before thee and hear thy wisdom." On her departure, she made Solomon rich presents, and he conferred many valuable gifts upon her.

It is a trite saying, but no less true than trite, that "mankind cannot bear prosperity;" certainly not such a high degree of it as that with which Solomon was favored. And *he*—this son of David, this beloved of God, this oracle, this miracle of wisdom, alas! could not. His servants and maidens, his silver and gold, his men-singers and women-singers, and his sensual delights of all kinds, disjoined his heart from the Holy One,

produced extravagance and excess, and almost extinguished the flame of his piety. We read, in the eleventh chapter of the first book of Kings, that "when Solomon was old, his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David, his father; for Solomon went after Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom, the abomination of the Ammonites; and the Lord was angry with Solomon, and said, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant." "His strong mind, like the strong body of Samson, lay besotted and enthralled in the lap of the 'fair idolatresses' with whom he had filled his house from the nations around, and from whose blandishments he arose another man, shorn of his glory, shorn of his strength. He tolerated their corruptions and worships: this soon grew into active patronage and participation. Presently, upon the high hills overlooking the Temple of the Lord at Jerusalem, arose the shrines, the altars, and the images of Chemosh, of Moloch, of the Ashtaroth, and the other gods of his wives;

and the heart of every holy man fainted within him to behold the son of David, himself so highly favored of God, sanctioning by his presence and active coöperation, the degrading worship of the grim, the bloody, and abominable idols of Moab, of Ammon, and of Zidon, in the very presence of that 'holy and beautiful house,' which in his younger days he had reared to the glory of the Lord."* Yes, the fact cannot be denied, that Solomon's old age was vicious. Lamentable indeed was his worldliness and voluptuousness, and he fell!

"So fallen! so lost! the light withdrawn
Which once he wore!
The glory from his gray hairs gone
For evermore!
Of all we loved and honored, naught
Save power remains!
A fallen angel's pride of thought
Still strong in chains.
All else is gone: from those great eyes
The soul is fled:
When faith is lost, and honor dies,
The man is dead.

*Kitto's *Daily Bible Illustrations*, to which I am indebted in these papers for some suggestions and expressions.

Then pay the reverence of old age
To his dead fame;
Walk backward with averted gaze,
And hide the shame." WHITTIER.

But did he rise again, and was the extreme autumn of his life as it should be? We think that his fall was not fatal to his salvation, but that he was brought again to repentance, was recovered, and sunk not under his sin; but of this, the proof is not as conclusive as could be desired. The current judgment of the Church, based upon the book of Ecclesiastes, is, that at "evening-time it was light" with him.

Our readers will have glanced at the preceding history of Solomon in vain, if they learn not by it their moral weakness. If he, the consecrated child of King David; if he, the modest, studious, and obedient youth; if he, into whose mind knowledge was infused copiously, and direct from the divine fountain; if he, who was advanced to the throne of Israel, and ruled for years in righteousness, to the happiness of his subjects, and the admiration and praise of surrounding nations; if such a man was too impo-

tent to rule his own spirit, curb his own passions, discipline and govern himself; who is not morally weak, and in danger of a spiritual fall?

Eloquently speaketh Bishop Hall on this point, when he says: "Who can but yearn and fear, to see the woeful wreck of so rich and goodly a vessel? O Solomon, wert not thou he whose younger years God honored with a message and style of love? to whom God twice appeared, and, in a gracious vision, renewed the covenant of his favor? whom he singled out from all the generation of men, to be the founder of that glorious temple, which was no less clearly the type of heaven, than thou wert of Christ, the Son of the living God? Wert not thou that deep sea of wisdom, which God ordained to send forth rivers and fountains of all divine and human knowledge to all ages? wert not thou one of those select secretaries, whose hand it pleased the Almighty to employ in these pieces of the divine monuments of sacred Scriptures? Which of us dares ever hope to aspire unto thy graces? which of us can promise to secure ourselves from thy ruins? We fall, O God, we fall to the low-

est hell, if thou prevent us not, if thou sustain us not! 'Uphold thou me according to thy word, that I may live, and let me not be ashamed of my hope. Order my steps in thy word, and let not any iniquity have dominion over me.' All our weakness is in ourselves, all our strength is in thee!" Who, who will presume upon his moral power with the frailty of a Solomon before his eyes? "Let him who thinketh he standeth," who boasteth of his ability to stand, "take heed, lest he fall!"

Further: the history of Solomon is a beacon against carnal indulgence. Like a signal erected near a whirlpool, it stands to warn the voyager on the sea of time, not to approach within the direful sweep of those passions which drown men in destruction and perdition! All our senses—the eye, the ear, the palate, the sense of smell, and of touch—are dangerous inlets to sin, and require a strong restraint to be laid upon them. Not to restrain them is to court sin, and to court sin is to court the tempter, and to court the tempter is to be shackled with a chain of adamant. To put oneself in contact with evil

company—to enter the house of the seducer—to indulge an unsanctified imagination—to visit theatres and other places of vain resort—to partake of the intoxicating cup—this is the way to kindle "those lusts which war against the soul;" and to kindle those is to kindle the fires of hell! "He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption." To exchange the straight and narrow road of purity, sobriety, and self-denial, for By-Path Meadow—the flowery plains of appetite and sin—is to put ourselves in the hands of the giant, and furnish bitter matter for repentance.

To compare small things with great, there was a similarity between the Scottish poet, Robert Burns, and Solomon. Both had brilliant genius, and yet neither could subjugate his passions. Burns acknowledged this in the epitaph for himself which his own hand penned. Affecting, touchingly pathetic, are the lines:

"The poor inhabitant below
Was quick to learn, and wise to know,
And keenly felt the friendly glow,
And softer flame,

But thoughtless follies laid him low,
And *stained his name.*

Reader, attend—whether thy soul
Soars fancy's flights beyond the pole,
Or darkling grubs this earthly hole
In low pursuit;
Know, *prudent, cautious self-control*
Is wisdom's root.

Thousands, millions, have been ruined for want of a "*prudent, cautious self-control.*" "He that keepeth his spirit is greater than he that taketh a city."

And, too, we shall have considered the history of Solomon to little purpose, if we are not led to a more diligent study of the books he wrote.

The book of Ecclesiastes and the book of Proverbs, we can hardly read too frequently, or study too intently. They are a mine of spiritual wealth; which, the more it is worked, the richer is the product. "He spake three thousand proverbs," from which he selected and recorded the most instructive and pertinent; and of these it may in truth be said, what the Roman orator, Cicero, said of the writings of Thucydides:

that "they are so full of matter that they comprise as many sentences as words." They are not the words of the wisest man merely, for, while the pen was that of the King of Israel, the sentiments are the wisdom of God. Solomon not only had a capacious and well-disciplined intellect; not only had a plenitude of knowledge, and a varied experience, and "breathes out in his writings his whole soul in the earnestness of benevolent desire;" but had supernatural aid, and "spake as he was moved by the Holy Ghost." Hence, in his books, you have the "mind of the Spirit," and there is garnered in them what the erring, wayward children of men need. They are a treasury for all, and a guide for all; and, as Dr. Johnson commences an interesting and instructive tale with the euphonious paragraph: "Ye who listen with credulity to the whispers of fancy, and pursue with eagerness the phantoms of hope, who expect that age will perform the promises of youth, and that the deficiencies of the present day will be supplied by the morrow, attend to the history of Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia;" so we say: Ye who would grow in

wisdom; ye who would store your minds with useful wisdom; ye who would become acquainted with human nature; ye who would "guide your affairs with discretion;" ye who would escape the snares which have been spread for you, and the pitfalls which are dug for you; ye who would conform your souls to the known will of God, and be "thoroughly furnished unto all good works;" industriously and prayerfully study "the proverbs of Solomon, son of David, King of Israel!" "Day and night read them, read them night and day."*

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* "Vos exemplaria Graca
Nocturna versate manu,—versate diurna."
HORACE.

XXI.

DANIEL.

"SLEEP ON," said one of distinction in the literary world, as he stood over the ashes of Bunyan, in Bunhill-fields; "sleep on, thou prince of dreamers." He does sleep on with others in that place of graves.

> **"The lark's shrill clarion or the echoing horn**
> **No more arouse them from their lowly bed."**

But he was not the "prince of dreamers." This title rather belongs to him whose history we are about to sketch. A princely dreamer Daniel was. Nor magnificent dreamer only, but an incorruptible patriot, an illustrious prime minister, a decided eminent saint, and one of the most gifted and eloquent of the Hebrew prophets.

He was born in Jerusalem, and descended from one of the highest families in Judah.

While he was yet a lad, Jerusalem was successfully invaded by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, who rifled the palace of its treasures, the temple of its sacred vessels, and carried away into captivity many children and young men, who were of royal extraction. Among those thus borne into captivity was Daniel. He was carried to Babylon, and being a comely and promising youth, was taken into the service of the royal court of Babylon, where he received the Chaldean name of Belteshazzar. In this new station he was furnished with a liberal education at the public expense, was instructed in history, philosophy, and mathematics, the language and laws of the realm, and in whatever else might qualify him for future influence and usefulness. He had an early opportunity of showing what manner of spirit he was of,—how that, though in Babylon, he was still an Israelite, and attached to the observances of the Mosaic law; for, though favored with a seat at the royal table, yet, as he was thus exposed to the temptation of partaking of unclean food, and participating in the idolatrous ceremonies at-

tendant on heathen banquets, he asked permission not to indulge his appetite with these dainties, lest he should defile himself therewith; and, having obtained such permission, temperately confined himself to a strictly vegetable diet. The divine blessing resting upon him for this conscientious self-denial, and aiding him in his studies, he grew rapidly in physical and intellectual vigor, and far outstripped others in the wisdom and learning of the age. His good scholarship and high attainments attracted the attention of the king, and won for him his favor. This favor was increased by his interpreting a dream of prince Nebuchadnezzar to his satisfaction, who therefore promoted him to office, and made him governor of the province of Babylon, and head inspector of the sacerdotal caste. He afterwards interpreted another dream of the king's; to the effect, that his dominion was to be taken from him for a definite period because of his haughtiness, and afterwards, because of his humility, was to come again into his possession; in the interpretation of which dream he manifested a tender interest in the monarch's

welfare, and gave him such counsel as befitted his trying situation. For some years after the death of Nebuchadnezzar we lose sight of Daniel. By those who immediately succeeded that monarch, he appears not to have been appreciated. He was removed from office, and his opinion in matters pertaining to the government and good of the realm was not asked. He comes, however, again into notice, under the reign of king Belshazzar, to whom he interpreted the handwriting upon the wall; which interpretation, though not such as the king desired, yet commending itself to his conscience as right, caused the king to reward him by titles and ensigns of honor. The kingdom of Babylon was at this epoch transferred into other hands. Darius, the Mede, took it in partnership with, and by consent of, Cyrus, who had conquered it. In remodelling the government, Darius, now invested with the crown, constituted Daniel his prime minister of state. By occupying this highest point of honor, he became an object of envy and jealousy. The other presidents and officers of the realm could not bear that a foreigner and a Jew should be

promoted above them; and the ill-will which they bore him shortly showing itself, illustrated the nature and power of his faith.

Wishing to degrade and ruin him, they were much exercised to know how it could be done. So unexceptionable and faultless was his character as a civilian and as a man, that they could bring no charges against him that could be sustained. They, therefore, attacked him for his religious sentiments and conduct. Their language was: "We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God." Would that this were true of every professor of religion! that if they were found fault with, it could not be for any thing really wrong, but only because they were too conscientious and devoted to their Master's interests! How creditable to Daniel that his enemies were forced to take exceptions to him on this point, and this only! Having, however, come to the conclusion, in caucus, to attack him here, they proceeded to lay their plans accordingly. It is the misfortune of those possessed of despotic power to have some

wicked counsellors, who take advantage of weak points in their character to accomplish their own selfish and base purposes. King Darius had such members in his court. He appears to have been a man of full ordinary vanity, and of this foible they took advantage on the present occasion. They flattered him, and by way of ministering to his self-esteem and exaltation, proposed that he should make a decree that he alone should be prayed to, thus putting him in the place of God most high! He was induced to do this,—to publish an edict, that "whosoever should ask a petition of any God or man, save of the king, for thirty days, should be cast into the den of lions." Thanks to the Supreme Ruler of all that we live not under a monarchy but under a constitutional government!—that no Oriental despot rules us, issues decrees, and enforces them by the power of the throne! What did Daniel in this perilous conjuncture? We know what he might have done, and what multitudes similarly circumstanced would have done. He might have had inward trepidation and dismay; he might have fled the

kingdom; he might have abjured God; he might have restrained prayer for a time; he might have sought some secret place and prayed there; he might have prayed, as many say they do, not orally, but silently,—prayed in heart, and omitted the form. But Daniel did none of these things. He was not alarmed, was not driven from his duty, attempted no compromise between conscience and safety. When he knew that the decree had gone forth, and the writing signed dooming him to the lion's den, if he offered a petition to other than to Darius, not a syllable of apology, of entreaty, or of remonstrance escaped his lips. Instead of going to the king of Babylon, and telling him why such a decree was extorted from him,—instead of revealing the plot which envy and jealousy had laid for his destruction, and protesting against it,—instead of pleading exemption from the bearing of the decree, because of his own distinguished position as an officer of the government, and his past public services,—instead of taking this course, he, with great firmness and dignity of spirit, with that moral intrepidity and strength of faith

so becoming a Christian, "went to his chamber, and his window being open towards Jerusalem—the place of his fathers' sepulchres — kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime!"

He, of course, was watched; his enemies were on the alert. "Then these men assembled, and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God." We can see them hurrying tumultuously thither to the dwelling of the saint, happy in the success of their plans. They have caught the Jew in his chamber, and praying. What a discovery! What a disclosure of crime! He is actually praying, and that when he is told he must not; and praying, too, not to the king of Babylon, but to the God of Heaven!

His enemies lost no time in complaining of him to the king, and their complaint is expressed in language calculated to increase the king's indignation against him as much as possible. "Hast thou not," said they, "signed a decree, that any man who shall ask a petition of any God or man within thirty days, save of thee, O

king, shall be cast into the den of lions?" The king answered and said, "The thing is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not." Then answered they and said before the king, that "Daniel, which is of the children of the captivity of Judah,"—that "foreigner, that despicable captive of that despicable people, the Jews,—regardeth not thee, O king, nor the decree which thou hast signed, but maketh his petition three times a day; not only has done it within the thirty days, but does it every day, and three times a day!" When the king heard these words, he was sore displeased with himself. He began to see that he had been too hasty, and had been ensnared; began to see that "he who is flattered has a net spread for him;" began to see that it was not out of compliment to himself, not as a tribute to his own honor and majesty, but malice against Daniel, which had prompted the officers of the realm to have such a decree made, and that he was wronging Daniel, and was in danger of losing a valuable public servant. His conscience, too, told him that Daniel was right, and he could

not but admire that firmness, that moral heroism, which he had displayed. He tried, therefore, to deliver him, and "labored till the going down of the sun to deliver him." But his efforts were vain. He could not. An inflexible decree, a solemnly ratified law, had bound him, and the law must take its course. "Then these men assembled unto the king, and said unto the king, Know, O king, that the law of the Medes and Persians is, that no decree or statute that the king establisheth can be changed. Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions." These lions were kept in a hungry, ferocious state, for the purpose of devouring such criminals as were convicted of capital crimes; and such ones were thrown to them. While, however, the king executed the law which consigned Daniel to their den, and laid upon the mouth of the den that signet which confirmed the law, he encouraged him with the remark, that the God to whom he had approved himself faithful would not desert him in this hour of trial. Thy God," was his language, "thy God, whom thou servest con-

tinually, he will deliver thee." And now the barbarous deed is done! Daniel is in the den of lions, and a heavy stone is at the den's mouth; his accusers are triumphing, and his enemies are revenged. But King Darius sympathizes not with them. His sympathies are with Daniel. His heart is with the innocent, abused Jew, who is in the den. Full of grief and fear, he retires to his palace. He eats no supper. He retires to bed, but he gets no sleep. Instruments of music he will not have brought before him, for "what are songs to a heavy heart?" Thus he passes the night. Very early in the morning he arose, and no sooner is he up than we find him hurrying to the den of lions. He might have sent a servant, but he goes himself. He would testify his affection for Daniel by going in person; besides, he cannot wait for the answer a servant might bring him. He hastens, therefore, himself to the den. And with what conflicting emotions of hope and fear does he go!—hope, that Daniel may be yet alive, and yet fearful that he may have fallen a prey to the savage beasts! Thus, full of concern and

trouble, he approaches the den. "And when he came to the den, he cried with a lame table voice unto Daniel. And the king spake and said unto Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions? Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live for ever. My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me; forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt." What respectful, yet bold and triumphant language! What respect and deference to the king, and at the same time what confidence in God! He reproaches not Darius for his impious decree; while, conscious of his own integrity, he vindicates himself, and magnifies the power of Jehovah! The king appreciated it all, and immediately ordered his discharge from confinement. "Then was the king exceeding glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God."

Nor was he thus miraculously delivered only, but again promoted to the highest seats of honor under Darius and Cyrus, where, although necessarily much occupied with the affairs of state, he did not forget his people, but did all that was in his power to further their interests, and had the satisfaction of beholding the consummation of his desires and endeavors in their being again restored to the land of Palestine.

In the third year of Cyrus, his prophetic character shone brilliantly forth in a series of visions, in which were minutely represented the condition of his nation to the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, as also of occurrences till the very close of the world's history. "The great grandeur of his prophecy," as Gilfillan remarks, "arises from his frequent glimpses of the coming One. Over all the wondrous emblems and colossal confusions of his visions, there is seen slowly, yet triumphantly rising, one head and form,—the form of a man, the head of a prince. It is the Messiah painting himself upon the sky of the future. This vision at once interpenetrates and overtops all the rest. Gathering from former prophets

the rays of glory which they saw, Daniel forms them into one kingly shape; this shape he brings before the Ancient of Days; to him assigns the task of defending the holy people; at his feet lays the keys of universal empire, and leaves him judging the quick and the dead. To Daniel it was permitted to bring forth the first full birth of that great thought, which has ever since been the life of the church and the hope of the world."

How long he lived after this signal manifestation of prophetic gifts, or where he departed this life, we cannot say. There is a tradition in the East, a tradition very ancient, and entitled to more respect than traditions in general, that he died and was buried at Shushan.* Josephus, though he gives no particulars relative to his latter days or of his decease, says regarding him: "He was so happy as to have strange revelations made to him, and these as to one of the greatest of the prophets, insomuch that while he

* It is stated that, among other recent discoveries in Persia, the ancient palace in Shushan has been brought to light, as also the tomb of Daniel, and sculpture representing his position in the lions' den.

was alive he had the esteem and applause both of kings and of the multitude; and now that he is dead, he retains a remembrance that will never fail."—Ant., b. x., ch. xi. Very true; for the name of Daniel stands one of the three highest in the Jewish calendar—

> "One of the few, the immortal names
> That were not born to die.—HALLECK.

XXII.

HAMAN, MORDECAI, AND ESTHER.

HAMAN, an Amalekite, was prime minister to the reigning king of Persia, Ahasuerus. Mordecai was one of the Jewish nation, against which nation, Haman, as was the case with all the Amalekites, cherished a bitter enmity. We propose to sketch the history of these two men, connecting with it that of Esther, a Jewess, who was the niece of Mordecai.

To occupy a post of honor, does not necessarily prove that the person occupying it possesses real merit. This remark will hold true as applied to all governments, and is emphatically true as respects an absolute monarchy, where office is hereditary, or where those are advanced to office who promise to execute the will, or so manage as to please the taste and caprices of the supreme sovereign. The fact, therefore, that Haman was

high in station in an Asiatic court, was exalted to a position second in dignity only to that of the king himself, does not show that he was deserving of respect, either because of his intellectual or moral qualities. He appears, on the contrary, to have been far from meritorious; and, promoted to a post of honor and influence, to have availed himself of it to further his own sinister purposes.

It is customary for oriental potentates to receive the homage of their subjects, which homage is rendered by bowing low before them. Such homage was rendered to Haman. While, however, the multitude rendered it, obsequiously prostrating themselves as he passed, Mordecai, who knew him to be an enemy to Jehovah, and to the Jewish religion and people, and who beheld him insolent with honor which he never merited, refused to do so. This refusal was not unnoticed by Haman, and the disrespect hereby shown him awakened his revenge. Full of wrath, he determined to empty the vials of that wrath upon the head of Mordecai; and not upon him only, for "he thought scorn to lay hands on Mordecai

alone," but upon all the Jews throughout the Persian dominions. In order that this cruel purpose might be carried into effect, he misrepresented the Jews to King Ahasuerus, as a people scattered abroad in the provinces of the kingdom, with laws of their own, conflicting with the laws of the realm, a disloyal people, and a people which it was not safe for the king to harbor. By these calumnies, he so far succeeded in prejudicing the mind of his sovereign against the Jews, as to obtain from him a decree, that by a certain day every Jew found within the bounds of the empire should be put to the sword. Having gratified his foul and violent passions by getting such a barbarous edict issued, an edict which in its execution would assassinate Mordecai, and exterminate the whole race to which he belonged, he congratulated himself, and confident of the success of his plans, "went forth that day joyful and with a glad heart." As he went forth, he again saw Mordecai in the king's gate, and again did the keen eye of Haman behold the erect form of the Jew among the bending courtiers.*

* To obviate the objection that it was Mordecai's pride and

This poisoned his joy, that Mordecai would "not stand up or move for him," but he comforted himself with the thought of the bloody decree which he had procured, and that general massacre of the Israelites which was near at hand.

Leaving now Haman and Mordecai for a few moments, we turn to Esther.

We have said that she was a Jewess, and the niece of Mordecai. She was an orphan, and adopted or brought up by him. She was a female of remarkable beauty, which beauty had so won for her the favor of King Ahasuerus, that having divorced his queen Vashti, for not submitting to his commands, he had substituted her in her place. It does not seem that at the time this change occurred, Ahasuerus was aware that she was of Jewish origin. The fact, however, that she was,

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insolence which caused him to refuse the customary tokens of respect to his official superior, the Targum and Aben Ezra say, that Haman had erected a statue for himself, and had images painted on his clothes; and hence for Mordecai to have bowed and shown him reverence, would have been mistaken by some for religious worship—would, in fact, have been idolatry. Dr. Gill excuses his conduct on this ground. William Penn, we know, from conscientious scruples, would not uncover to King Charles.

numbered her among the ones doomed by the royal edict to death, for that edict contemplated by one sanguinary blow the extinction of the entire Hebrew nation. It was soon made known to her, that for some cause her uncle Mordecai was in deep distress, and covered with sackcloth and ashes. Interested in his welfare, she sought to ascertain the occasion of his grief. To this end she sent Hatach, one of the eunuchs of the harem, to him, and through that faithful servant learned of the bloody decree, and hence of the dire calamity which was impending over the head of her uncle, and the head of her kindred, as well as over her own head. This calamity she immediately addressed all her energies to avert, and she proved equal to the task. Though the Persian law made it no less than death for any man or woman to go into the inner court of the king, without a summons from the king calling them thither, she nevertheless determined to do so, and risk the consequences. She knew that there was a Messiah to come, and come "of the seed of Israel, of the stock of Abraham," and this emboldened her to peril her life in saving the na-

tion through whom he was to come, for she felt that in making the attempt she would have the protection and aid of that Almighty Being whose promises were sure, and whose mercies to his people were covenanted. "Go, therefore," said she to Mordecai, "and convene all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and let them fast for me, and pray three days and three nights; I will fast and pray likewise, and then will I venture into the king's presence, though it be in violation of law; and if I perish, I perish." Having thus engaged the help of fasting and prayer in the success of her enterprise, she courageously, and in faith, walked into the inner court of the king, and put herself in his forbidden presence. "The king's heart is in the hands of the Lord, and he turneth it whithersoever he will." Ahasuerus received her graciously. Her lovely countenance, tinged with a pensiveness which a dejection of spirits had caused, made it seem more interesting and charming to him than ever before, and "he held out to her the golden sceptre that was in his hand." The top of this sceptre she touched, and to the courteous words of the king,

"What wilt thou, Queen Esther? and what is thy request? it shall be given thee, even to the half of my kingdom," she meekly replied, "If it seem good unto the king, let the king and Haman come this day unto the banquet which I have prepared for him." They accordingly came,—came two days in succession. It so happened, that between these days of banquet, Haman, at the instigation of his wife Zeresh, had erected a gallows fifty cubits high, for the purpose of hanging Mordecai upon it; and it so happened, likewise, that on one of the nights, King Ahasuerus, being unable to sleep, had commanded the records of his reign to be read to him, in which records it appeared that a foul conspiracy against him had, through the address and influence of Mordecai, been nipped in the bud.* The king asked those servants who ministered unto him whether any recompense had been paid for this

* Jewish authors state that the conspirators in this case were Tarsians, and, speaking the Tarsian language, supposed the matter was an entire secret, but that Mordecai understood the language and exposed them. The latter Targum says that a direct revelation was made unto him by the Holy Ghost.

distinguished service in behalf of himself and his empire; and on being told that there had not been, put the question, "Who is in the court?" They replied, "Haman." He was there for the purpose of obtaining a commission from the king to hang Mordecai upon the gallows which he had built. The king said, "Let him come in." So Haman came in. Then said the king unto Haman, "What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honor?" Haman, blindly supposing that that man could be none other than himself, returned for answer, that he ought to have the highest and most public honors conceivable. Upon which he was told, "Make haste and do even so to Mordecai, the Jew, who sitteth at the king's gate." This order he was compelled to obey, however unwelcome the task. Crestfallen and disappointed, he was forced to deck the hated Jew with robes of royalty, and, conducting him in magnificent cavalcade through the city, proclaim him the king's favorite. This being done, when on the second day he came to the banquet, Esther fastened upon him the charge of having plotted the destruction of her-

self and people. Haman was greatly agitated, as individuals usually are when charged with crime of which they are guilty, and in his confusion and trepidation so behaved as to rouse against him the anger of the king. And the king at the same time being informed that a gallows had been prepared by Haman, for the ignominious death of Mordecai, to whom he was so deeply indebted for rescuing his life from conspirators, was so incensed that he immediately commanded Haman himself to be hung upon it; and thus, on the identical gallows reared for the shedding of the innocent blood of Mordecai, Haman expiated his own guilt!

Haman now gone, and Mordecai advanced to the station which Haman had filled, he did all that was in his power to neutralize or counteract the barbarous decree which Haman had obtained. This decree could not be revoked, for no decree which had once gone forth from the Persian throne, could be. The law of the Medes and Persians, it is well understood, was unchangeable. This was a fundamental article in their Magna Charta. After, however, what had been done was known, after

a Jew had held the post of prime minister, and permission was given to the Jewish people to stand on the defensive, though the decree was not rescinded, but little blood comparatively was spilled. In commemoration of this signal deliverance, the Israelites instituted a feast called the feast of Purim, which is the last festival in their ecclesiastical year, and is observed by them to this day. At this festival the Book of Esther, written on a separate roll of parchment, is read from beginning to end; and when, in reading, Mordecai's name occurs, the whole congregation exclaim, "Blessed be Mordecai!" and when the word Haman is uttered, they cry, "May his name perish!" "The acts of Mordecai's power and of his might, and the declaration of his greatness," the sacred writer tells us, "are written in the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia. He was next unto King Ahasuerus, was great among the Jews, was accepted among his brethren, sought the wealth of his people, and spake peace to all their seed!"

It now remains to gather out from the preceding history those lessons which it designs to

teach. Among others which might be instanced, we learn by how small a matter earthly springs of happiness may be poisoned.

Had any one seen Haman in that exalted position, high in the favor of the king, in the midst of a thousand submissive courtiers, invested with honor and office, and surrounded with the means of sensual gratification, he would have said, "There is a happy man. He surely has every thing to make him happy, and he is happy." But he was far from happy, as he himself admitted. And how trifling an affair made him wretched! On returning home, after having received an invitation to the royal banquet which Esther the queen had prepared, he gathered his wife, children, and friends together, "told them of the glory of his riches, how he had been advanced above the princes and servants of the king, how no man but himself had been invited to the banquet with the king, &c.;" told them this, and then added, "Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate." He had money, he had friends, he had office, he had worshippers who

prostrated themselves before him, and fed his pride with servile homage; he had all these, yet so thoroughly wretched was he, that he confessed to his family that these sources of pleasure, this opulence and this power, availed him nothing—were as if they were not. And why? What dreadful evil besets him, which is an offset to all these, and banishes comfort from his soul? One person only in the empire will not stoop to him! That is all. A man by the name of Mordecai refuses to do him reverence. And this simple incident preys with such violence on the heart of Haman, that it embitters every joy and genders internal misery! Why did he let this trouble him? What if Mordecai did sit at the gate, and not rise up as he came in? Others did. Why look at the Jew? Why care whether his joints were supple or not? There was the ring of state on his own finger, evidence of the king's friendship and the seal of authority; there was his splendid equipage; there was the banquet; there was the palace. What then though Mordecai did decline to do obeisance, could not his obeisance be dispensed with? Was it worth while

to dwell upon it in thought, to be disturbed by it, to be shaken by a storm of passion, to be made wretched by it? Ah, what trifling causes annoy us, and trouble our repose! How slight a matter wounds our sensibilities and distresses us! How often a single element in the full and otherwise delicious cup of prosperity makes it distasteful and corroding! What, my readers, we observe in Haman, we may often find passing within ourselves. Things of little consequence are too often allowed to disturb us, vex us, and destroy our relish for other comforts. "A Mordecai appears, or seems to appear, sitting at the gate." Some evil, unworthy of notice, or which should scarcely be felt; some slight affront, or trifling privation, is pondered, and brooded over and aggravated, till the soul is ruffled, the temper soured, and all that we enjoy "availeth us nothing!"

Observe again, upon how many and precious interests pride and revenge will trample for their gratification. Because of the disrespect shown Haman by Mordecai, wrath, pride, and desire of revenge, rise into fury and determine his destruc-

tion. Nor his destruction only — this is not enough to give satisfaction. Others, too, must die. Because a Jew has shown him some despite, the whole Jewish nation must suffer—must be put to the sword! What had the innocent, defenceless women and children of Israel, scattered over the Persian dominions — thousands upon thousands of them who had never seen either Haman or Mordecai—what had they done to be thus butchered? Were they to blame for what Mordecai did, that their throats must bleed for his offence? Yet against all these does Haman's fury fly, and upon their unsheltered heads would he pour out his vengeance! Oh, how cruel is pride and revenge! On the tender interests of what numbers will it trample to meet the object of its hate! It will enwrap thousands of innocents within the trespass of one offender, and compel them all to bite the dust. Nero, on one occasion, expressed the wish that all Christians had but a single neck, that he might smite it off at a blow! Haman had the same wish relative to the Jews. By one stroke, by one fell swoop, he would extinguish the generation and the name!

Behold again the power of faith and prayer. When it was known that the merciless decree had gone forth, when the day was fixed on which Jews of all ages and sexes throughout the hundred and seven and twenty provinces of King Ahasuerus were to be sacrificed to the wrath of Haman, Mordecai not only puts on sackcloth and ashes, and these people devoted by the decree to death not only weep and lament and bemoan their hard lot, but Mordecai, Esther, and all the Jews at Shushan, pray. They look away from human help to divine help. They betake themselves to Jehovah, and lay his resources under tribute. Believing that there was a God—the God of Israel; believing that he was a prayer-hearing God; believing that he was clothed with omnipotence, and could do all his pleasure, could "make the wrath of man to praise him, and restrain the remainder thereof;" believing that he had said, "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me;" believing that he had delivered their race on former occasions when they cried for help against their oppressors; believing this, they assembled

together, and poured out their hearts before him in prayer! We can easily conceive how they would pray in such circumstances, with what fervor, importunity, and faith; and they did pray; their souls were in the work, and there were "groanings which could not be uttered!" Nor was it in vain. "Their cries entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth," and they received an answer, and a favorable answer. Which leads us to observe again—behold the wonder-working providence of the Almighty!

These praying ones could not tell how their prayers would be answered—in what way God would interpose for their relief. They only believed that he would interpose in some way, and that effectually. And how did he interpose? Singularly indeed! "On that night," we are told, (on the night Mordecai, Esther, and the Jews were fasting and making supplication,) "on that night Ahasuerus, the king, could not sleep."

A secret influence from the Hearer of prayer, that Being whose is the gift of sleep as well as all other gifts, a secret influence from this One came down upon the king, which made him rest-

less and wakeful. "He could not sleep;" and (oh, strange expedient to produce sleep, or while away the leaden hours of the night!) he called for the book of records, or the journals of his reign, to be read to him. They were brought, and (strangely again) the reader opened to that place in the register where was the record of the discovery by Mordecai of a plot against the king's life, which prevented its execution! Had the king slept, or had he called, as Oriental monarchs generally did, for music and songs wherewith to compose himself to rest, or called for any other book, in which to find entertainment for his thoughts, than the book of records; or, when the books of records was brought, had any other page been turned to than that identical one in which this kind patriotic act of Mordecai was chronicled; either of these things occurring—either of which might have occurred, and some one of which most certainly would have occurred, but for the particular providence of Him who superintendeth the minutest concerns of mankind, and without whose notice not a sparrow falls—either of these things occurring, "Mordecai had been that morning advanced fifty

cubits higher than the earth, ere the king could have remembered to whom he was indebted!" But no—there was a God, an omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent God, and prayer had been offered him, and he had heard it, and by his infinite wisdom and power this marvellous concurrence of circumstances was drawn together to accomplish his designs of love towards Esther, Mordecai, and his people!

"Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never-failing skill,
He treasures up his bright designs,
And works his sovereign will."

COWPER.

"Who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?"

The history we have been considering illustrates also the truth of that proverb, "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall."

How humiliating it must have been for the high-spirited and proud-hearted Haman—who had gone to bed pleased with the thoughts of seeing Mordecai hanged the next day, and who

had the next morning risen early and gone to the king's court to get an order to hang him—how humiliating it must have been for him to deck this his enemy in royal apparel, place him on the king's steed, set the crown royal upon his head, and escort him through the city, calling public attention to him, and proclaiming as he went, "This is the man whom the king delighteth to honor!" But this he had to do, and what was worse, it was a prescription of his own, honor which he had liberally carved out for "the man whom the king delighteth to honor," because he ignorantly and vainly supposed that man was himself, and in carving thus bountifully, he was carving for himself! That Jew whom, because he would not bow to Haman, Haman intensely hated, and thirsted for his blood; before that man Haman was forced himself to bow, be a witness of his pomp, herald his glory through the city of Shushan, and hear the streets of that city ring with his praises! We cannot conceive of any thing more galling than this must have been to the heart of Haman. We wonder not on being told that, the pageant over, "he hasted

to his house, mourning, his head covered." And what did he hear there from his wife Zeresh, she who had been a partner in his villany, and had advised to the erection of the gallows? Not any thing comforting, but what was calculated to depress and distress him still more. "If," said she and her other friends to Haman, whose soul was charged with mortification and grief, "if Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast begun to fall, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shalt surely fall before him." Such was the stinging language to which he was forced to listen from the lips of his wife and family friends, which was followed by the still more fearful words of Queen Esther, as she looked him in the face and confronted him in the presence of the king with his crime; "the adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman!"

Oh, what a fall was here to pride! what humiliation to a haughty spirit, when he who the day before had the homage of all knees but one, was now so covered with shame that none in the court of Persia were "poor enough to do him reverence!"

Finally, behold the sure triumph of justice. Though justice be slow, it is sure; though tardily executed, it is yet executed; though resisted and hindered, it will yet triumph. Why should men deny that there is a God on the throne of the universe who has established a moral government, under which crime will sooner or later be detected and punished? Why deny this, when evidences of the fact have appeared in all ages of the world, and are daily appearing before our eyes? It is not safe to sin, for "evil pursues the sinner." It is not safe to project any schemes of iniquity, for unforeseen obstacles will arise to prevent their being carried out, or, if carried out, executioners of justice will follow after and reach the criminal. Haman plotted against Mordecai and the Jews; plotted, as he thought, cunningly, and for a time things seemed to indicate that his barbarous wishes would be gratified. But Jehovah ordered otherwise. The web of destruction which he had woven for others was thrown around himself, and into the pit which he had digged for others he himself was precipitated. "Even-handed justice commended the poisoned

chalice to his own lips," and he was forced to drink the noxious draught!

The Psalmist tells us, that "the wicked plotteth against the just, and gnasheth on him with his teeth, but the Lord shall laugh at him, for he seeth that his day is coming."

Haman's day had come. Convicted, his tongue faltered, his lips trembled, and his heart failed him. "Hang him," said the exasperated king, "hang him upon his own gallows;" and unsuccored, unpitied, was he arrested, and suspended on the very gibbet which he had erected for Mordecai!

"So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord; but let them that fear thee be as the sun, when he goeth forth in his strength."

Here, then, we take our leave of the reader, having completed the several portraits which we had designed to sketch.

Lord Bacon has remarked, that "the Bible is like the land of Canaan, which flowed with milk and honey; or like the Garden of Eden, where the Lord God caused to grow out of the ground every tree that was pleasant to the sight and good

for food." And we have found it thus in contemplating these Scripture characters.

We feel how imperfect has been our impress of them. We are aware that it is but a faint pencilled outline. But we have taken pleasure in meditating upon these rich and instructive examples furnished by the inspired records—that

> "Broad land of wealth unknown
> Where hidden glory lies:"

have in no instance sacrificed truth to the popular taste, and hoping that what we have written will be found adapted for private devotional reading, and especially for the family circle, commit it to the blessing of the great Head of the Church.

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