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THE
WOMEN OF THE BIBLE;

DELINEATED IN A SERIES OF

SKETCHES OF PROMINENT FEMALES

MENTIONED IN

HOLY SCRIPTURE.

BY CLERGYMEN OF THE UNITED STATES.

ILLUSTRATED BY EIGHTEEN CHARACTERISTIC STEEL ENGRAVINGS.

EDITED BY

THE REV. J. M. WAINWRIGHT, D. D.

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TO

THOUGHTFUL READERS,

MEN AS WELL AS WOMEN,

THE ONE BEING INTERESTED EQUALLY WITH THE OTHER

IN

WHAT CONSTITUTES THE CHARACTER

OF

MOTHER, WIFE, DAUGHTER, SISTER,

THIS

BOOK OF FEMALE PORTRAITS,

DRAWN FROM

THE HIGHEST AND HOLIEST RECORD OF LIFE.

Is Dedicated.



ADDRESS OF THE PUBLISHERS.

To this volume it has been the hope and the design of the Publishers to give a permanent value. The source from which its subject-matter has been derived, and the distinguished persons whom they have been so greatly favored as to interest in its composition, will, they doubt not, secure this result. The range of choice amongst the individual subjects adapted for illustration was indeed very wide, and not one but many volumes might easily be written upon the Women of the Bible. A selection therefore was indispensable, and it has been made with a view to variety as well as interest of character. Not the pure and holy alone have been selected for delineation—those whose memory has been embalmed and will be fragrant to the end of time, and whose name must ever suggest to the imagination a form of grace and loveliness, and an expression radiant with virtue—but also some few from amongst the depraved and abandoned, and whose memory is consigned to perpetual execration, have been brought forward for contemplation.

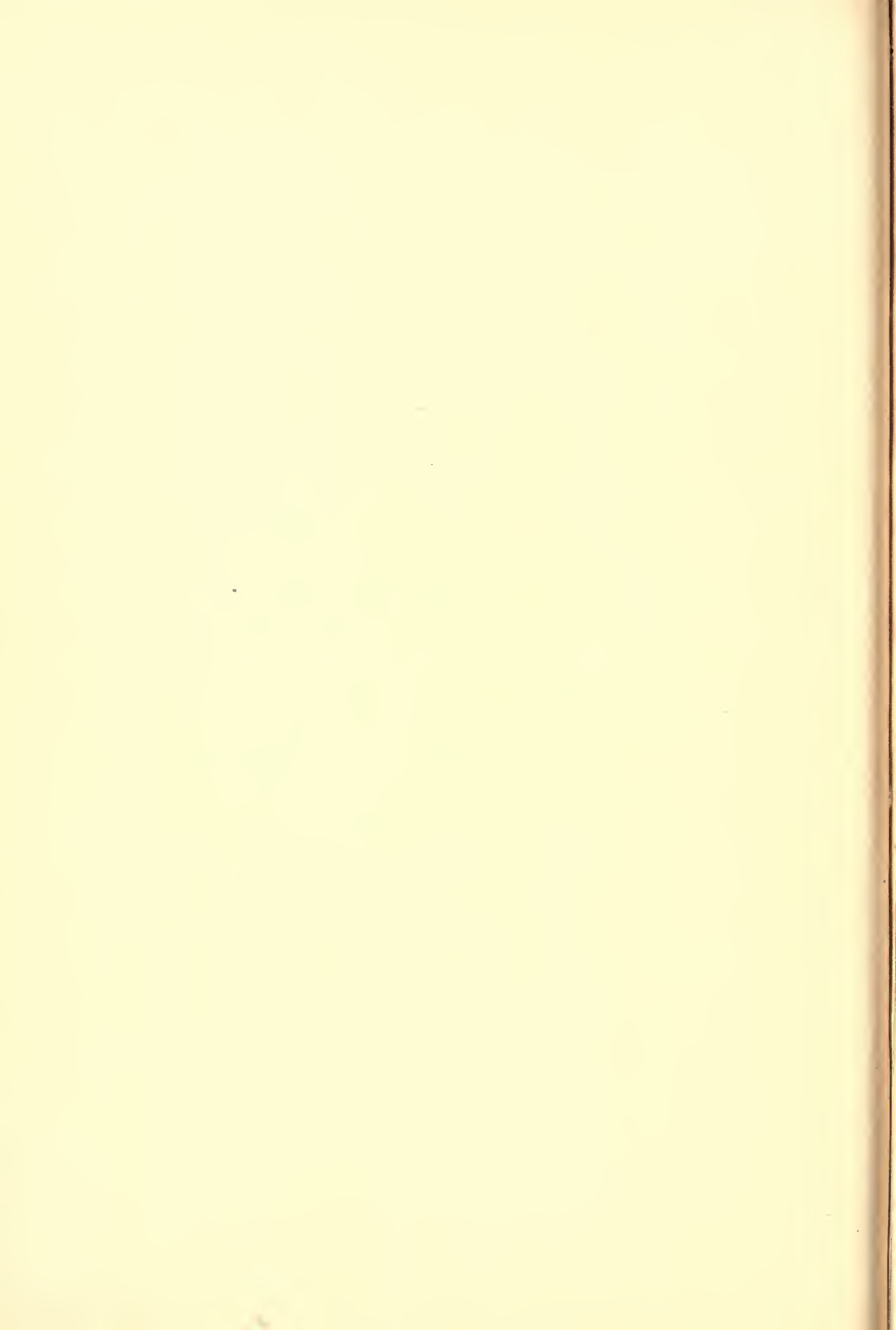
The Publishers therefore have the satisfaction of feeling that they have opened to the public view, as it were, a gallery of portraits, where the

spectator, in walking through, will be sometimes delighted, and sometimes moved by an opposite sentiment ; but in both cases he will receive the pleasure that arises from the view of forceful and truthful delineation, and where he can hardly fail of obtaining moral improvement, and oftentimes of the better privilege of imbibing religious sentiment through the exhibition of pictures which allure to virtue and repel from vice.—No labor or expense has been spared in preparing the volume to become as little unworthy as possible of being an humble associate of the Holy Bible.

In conclusion, the Publishers take this opportunity to express their gratitude for the valuable and essential assistance they have received in the literary and editorial departments, and also their hope that the enterprise may receive that patronage which it will be found intrinsically to deserve.

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HAGAR.

Who that has ever read the story of Hagar, has not felt himself enchained by its almost matchless attractions? The incidents of which it is composed,—can any thing be more touching and beautiful, more illustrative of the simplicity of the patriarchal age, or of the strangely diversified operations of human nature, or of the movements of a wise and wonder-working Providence? And the materials are moulded with admirable skill and effect. Throughout the whole narrative, it is nature herself speaking with inimitable grace and tenderness. And herein consists the charm of Scripture narratives generally: there is an unstudied ease about them, which no words can describe and no art can counterfeit. Among the manifold evidences that the Bible is the product of divine inspiration, this is not to be overlooked—that the pictures of characters and scenes which it presents far transcend the highest human skill; so that we are forced to the conclusion that they must have been sketched by a divine hand, and with colors which Heaven alone can supply.

It is not necessary for the present purpose to attempt a connected narrative of the life of this extraordinary person. I propose to contemplate her simply at one point, and that perhaps the point of greatest interest in her history;—I mean at the moment of her having laid her son down under a tree, as she supposed, to die for the

want of water, when the voice from Heaven was just about to speak words of consolation to her, and her eyes were almost in the act of being opened to behold the relief which Providence had provided. A little reflection will show that her condition at this critical moment was the result of a singular combination of influences, affecting several individuals beside herself, while there was also bound up in it the germ, not only of her own future history, but of the history of no inconsiderable portion of the race.

Hagar, at the period referred to, was in the depths of sorrow, while yet she was on the eve of being cheered by the most welcome and grateful revelation. The suffering and the relief, then, are the two points which here claim our consideration.

THE SUFFERING.

That it must have been intense suffering, no one can doubt who considers either the demonstrations by which it was attended or the causes in which it originated. There is nothing recorded of her, either before or after this event, that would suggest even the probability that she was deficient in natural fortitude, or that she would, under any circumstances, make an unreal display of grief: on the contrary, there were some things in her conduct in Abraham's house that indicated rather a hardy and even insolent spirit; and it is reasonable to suppose that she had, to say the least, the ordinary ability to meet difficulties of any kind with calmness and firmness. And yet we find her overwhelmed with emotion: the language of the inspired record is that she "lifted up her voice and wept." And is it any wonder that she should have done this, in view of the sad and strange condition into which she had fallen? No doubt the immediate cause of her grief was the fact that she supposed her son was dying at a

little distance from her;—dying for the mere want of water, which it was not in her power to furnish. Every mother who has lost a son at the age of fifteen or sixteen, under any circumstances, has been conscious of a deep wound in her heart; and though she may afterwards regain her spirits, and seem to the world as before, yet that wound will never be so entirely healed to her dying day, but that recollection will often set it to bleeding afresh. But in the case of *this* mother, there were ingredients in her cup of sorrow which few mothers have ever known. She was alone with her child in the wilderness, and had become bewildered and lost her way. The bottle of water with which her master had provided her was exhausted; and her son, wearied with the journey, and having nothing to sustain or refresh him, found it impossible to proceed any farther. She was beyond the reach of all human help, and there was no ear but that of God on which her supplicatory voice could fall. Sad would it have been for her to have stood by the death-bed of her child, with all the grateful appliances that friendship and sympathy could furnish; but to have laid him down to die alone,—to die for want of that of which she knew there was an abundance somewhere,—and then to go on her way a solitary wanderer, reflecting that she should see the face of her beloved child no more,—surely it must have been among the bitterest experiences incident to bereavement. She did for him the best that she could: not doubting that he must die, and die soon, she could not bear to witness the final scene; but she laid him beneath the shade of a tree,—the best alleviation to his sufferings that she could provide; and then went and seated herself at a little distance, in what seemed to her like the shadow of death, to struggle with her maternal sensibilities. Surely the most stoical could not elude the deep grief of a mother on losing a son, especially under such trying circumstances.

But there were yet other circumstances that served to increase the

anguish of her spirit. There can be little doubt that the affliction took her by surprise. If we can anticipate any particular afflictive dispensation, we have time to prepare for it; to surrender our minds to the special contemplation of those truths which are fitted to inspire a calm and filial resignation, and thus abate the violence of the shock or prevent it altogether. The mother who sees her child gradually sinking under the power of an insidious but fatal malady, has an opportunity to discipline her spirit to meet with composure the final issue; but the mother who sees her child stricken in a moment with a malignant disease, and, in a few brief hours, placed by death beyond the reach of maternal kindness, — oh, she finds the path from the heights of prosperity, as it may be, to the depths of adversity, so very short, that it is more than probable that she will be overwhelmed by the sad transition. There is nothing in the narrative that would seem to indicate that Hagar had apprehended any untoward event in connection with her journey; least of all, that she had anticipated any thing like what actually occurred. She knew that she was setting off on a journey under somewhat peculiar circumstances; but probably she thought of nothing but that she should be carried safely and mercifully through it. She knew that she was not provided with any considerable quantity of water; but she doubted not that she should be able to obtain, as often as she needed it, a fresh supply. She knew that she had to make her way through a wilderness; but there is no reason to believe that she expected to *lose* her way, and be thrown into an attitude of hopeless uncertainty. She knew that her son was to accompany her; but she might reasonably expect to be entertained and cheered by his conversation, rather than be obliged to lay him down to die. In short, we have every reason to believe that sad disappointment was one of the bitter ingredients in her cup; that when she stood there sorrowing for her beloved child, she experienced that which not only had

never entered her thoughts, but for which she had made no adequate preparation.

It is the dictate of true wisdom to be always prepared for affliction. We live in a world of perpetual vicissitude. No sun can rise upon us so brightly, but that it may set in a cloud, or even in a storm. No earthly hopes can be so well founded, no earthly possessions so secure, but that they may be blown away by a single blast of calamity. We may not be able to anticipate the particular trials that are in store for us; but trials of some kind or other we may regard as inevitable. We may not be able to calculate the precise periods when desolation and sorrow shall hang upon our footsteps; but that such periods will occur, is as certain as the ordinance of Heaven can render it. Surely, then, the only wisdom, the only safety, consists in being always ready to bear the rod. A principle of true religion in the heart, kept in habitual and vigorous operation, is the appropriate preparation for affliction in every form. Only let the great truths which Christianity presents have a firm lodgment in the mind, let them be rendered real and practical through the influence of a lively faith, and the floods may rise and the storms beat, the sun may be turned into darkness and the moon into blood, and still nothing will have happened but what can be met with an undisturbed tranquillity. Yes, Christianity, all-glorious Christianity, furnishes an antidote to every sorrow; and if it is ever unavailing, the only reason is, that it is not suitably applied.

There was yet another characteristic of Hagar's grief that served greatly to increase its intensity—or rather it may be said to have constituted its sting: I refer to the fact that it was to some extent retributive grief; and the remark applies as well to her son as to herself. Hagar's conduct in Abraham's family, at a preceding period, had been far from being exemplary; she seems to have manifested an

arrogant and supercilious spirit, which was utterly inconsistent with her humble station; and her mistress never forgot this amidst all subsequent changes. Ishmael, too, had conducted himself towards Isaac in a most unworthy manner; insomuch that Sarah refused any longer to tolerate his presence. Both the mother and the child, therefore, notwithstanding they may have felt that they had been to some extent cruelly dealt by, could not but feel that they had been the culpable instruments of their own sufferings; and nothing appears but that if they had behaved themselves discreetly, they might have remained unmolested in the house of their master. That Sarah, in consideration of the peculiar circumstances, may have been predisposed to fault-finding, seems more than probable; but there is no reason to believe that she would have ever meditated the design of their expulsion from the family, had it not been for the insolent treatment which both herself and her son received at their hands.

It will be found, in respect to a large part of the afflictions which mankind suffer, that, either directly or indirectly, they bring them upon themselves. How common is it for persons to make enemies in the same way that Hagar and Ishmael did; and as a remoter consequence, to bring upon themselves a train of the most serious evils. An unkind action, an indiscreet word, a haughty look, may leave a sting behind, whose poison no subsequent acts can ever neutralize. And when the poison begins to make itself felt in its manifold operations of evil, then begins an inward scrutiny in respect to the cause; and conscience, in an honest and earnest ministration, throws it into the light of noonday. There is nothing like trouble to put conscience at its appropriate work; especially where the evil experienced is the result of evil committed. Joseph's brethren, while they continued in prosperity, seem to have escaped the visitations of remorse; but when the night-clouds of adversity gathered around them, and every thing

seemed ominous of disaster and ruin, the ghosts of their misdeeds came trooping before their imaginations, and one of their first reflections was, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother." Oh! there is no grief but what can be well enough borne if remorse be not one of its elements; but if with the burden that oppresses us we are obliged to associate the recollection of our own corrupt dispositions or evil doings, then what might otherwise seem light, becomes intolerable. Let every one keep a conscience void of offence in every thing; and then his spirit may sustain itself in joyful serenity, even though he should be called to lay himself down in a wilderness to die, or to sit by in gloomy solitude, and watch the last exercises of a friend in his passage through the dark valley.

No one can adequately appreciate the importance of a good conscience as an element of manly and vigorous endurance. Let the records of martyrdom speak; from Stephen down to the last disciple that has sealed his testimony with his blood. Those men, so strong and glorious in suffering, were not haunted by unforgiven crimes: conscience witnessed to their sincerity, their integrity, their unyielding devotion to the best of masters; and under this all-sustaining influence they could march calmly and triumphantly into the fire. We may not be called upon to offer up our lives at the altar of our religion; but so long as we continue in the world we shall be heirs of calamity, and no one can tell how bitter may be the sufferings that are ordained for us. As we would find the most effectual alleviation to our woe, let us take heed that we suffer with a good conscience; let us see to it, not only that our trials do not originate immediately in our own misconduct, but that our character in every respect be such as to furnish no ground for inward accusations.

It was a bitter cup that was put into the hands of this unfortunate woman, and not the less but the more bitter, because she had to share

it with her own child.—But this is but one side of the picture : from the suffering it is grateful to turn to

THE RELIEF.

There lies Ishmael under a shrub, where he has been placed by his mother to die. There sits Hagar, with a mother's heart beating, as she supposes, to the agonies of her dying child. The sobs of the mother and the cries of her son seem to be wasted upon the desert air. Perhaps they are within the sound of each other's voices ; but they look not upon each other, because the mother's eye suffused with tears, the mother's heart bursting with anguish, cannot endure the appalling spectacle ; and though it is not stated in the narrative, possibly the son might have chosen to die without being an eye-witness to the struggles of maternal affection. The case has now become an extreme one, and is every way ripe for God's gracious interposition. The voice of the suffering child, though it reached no human ear, unless it was the ear of his despairing and wretched mother, was heard in Heaven ; and God's commissioned angel took the case into his own hands : and he not only assured the mother that her son's life should be preserved, and that he should be the germ of a great nation, but he showed her a refreshing spring almost by her side, from which his wants might be, actually were, supplied. It was just at the moment when the darkness seemed the deepest and the most portentous, that light burst upon her path and joy kindled in her soul. God saw and pitied his poor sorrowing creatures ; but he suffered them to be reduced to a state that seemed not only helpless, but hopeless, before the source of relief was discovered to them.

And thus God often deals even with his own children ; especially when they are subjected to chastisement for great and signal delin-

quencies. He suffers them not only to lose their way in the wilderness, but to remain there long enough to make them sensible how dreary and desolate a place they are in; long enough to impress them with their inability to effect their own deliverance. When they are first carried thither, they may perhaps be insensible how sad their condition is; and they may rely with confidence on their own unassisted strength to bring them out of it; but as the days, or perhaps weeks and months pass off, they find the burden upon their spirits grows heavier and heavier, till at length it becomes well nigh insupportable. And then they lift up the voice of lamentation, and cry for help; and perhaps, by some most unexpected divine ministration, the help which they need is afforded. It comes not, however, until the requisite preparation is made in their being rebuked into an humble and dependent spirit. Or if there be apparent relief, while another spirit is predominant, the result will show that it was deceptive, and had in it the elements of ultimate dissatisfaction.

In the case contemplated in this affecting narrative, the relief was strictly miraculous; for it is not now, and was not even then, according to the common course of nature, that man or woman should be found in colloquy with an angel. But we are expressly informed that “the angel of the Lord called to Hagar out of Heaven,” and bade her take courage in that hour of her calamity, and indicated to her the source of relief, and added some most encouraging words in respect to the future. Miraculous interpositions for the relief of human woe are not indeed now to be looked for; but who that notices the gracious dealings of our Heavenly Father with his children, is not ready to testify that he not unfrequently stretches out his arm for their protection or defence or consolation, in so signal a manner as to be a matter of grateful surprise to those who are witnesses, as well as to him who is the subject, of the interposition. Infinite wisdom and

Almighty power are not straitened in respect to the accomplishment of any purpose ; and there is no darkness so deep but that Heaven may find means of dissipating it in a moment,—no cup so bitter, but that, by some new ingredient graciously infused into it, it may become a cup of joy. Let any Christian, especially any one who has had long experience in the religious life,—nay, let any one who is a stranger to the quickening power of Christianity,—review the path by which he has been led, and he will find that he has been the subject of many signal deliverances and preservations ; and that, but for the ever-watchful Eye and the ever-active Hand, he would not have continued in this world of danger and calamity to this day.

I may not conclude these remarks without adverting to the fact that the events recorded in this narrative have a high typical reference, and connect themselves in their consequences with the history of not a small portion of the human race. In this most simple and touching tale, on the face of which appears little else than a case of deep suffering relieved by an unlooked-for visitation of mercy, were hid the elements of a nation's destiny through a long course of ages. And thus it is always: "God moves in a mysterious way." The scheme of universal Providence is too deep for any mortal line to fathom. Events are continually occurring that seem to us of small moment ; and yet, when contemplated in their connections, they are seen to have an importance that outruns all human calculation. Let man sink into the dust, when he attempts to scan the mighty works of the Ruler of the world !



R E B E K A H .

THE patriarchal history is one which holds a peculiar place in the annals of the world. It tells of a life so hidden in the distant past, that no other history reaches it ; while even tradition but faintly whispers what it dares to utter concerning the strange people and the far-off times. The reader who seeks for proof and explanation, aside from the narrative itself, finds no second witness to the facts, and no contemporaneous record to throw its light upon the dark sayings of this. It is true, indeed, that the manners and customs of their descendants explain many things which Moses has recorded concerning the Patriarchs ; while in the same manner we verify many of his statements. A ray from times nearer to our own is thus cast back into the dimness, and we discern that which before was unseen. But this light does not reach into the deeper places ; the narrative has yet its mysteries ; and to them there is no clue beyond the narrative itself. It is therefore manifest that we read this ancient story of an ancient people with but a partial appreciation of many of its statements ; much of its power is hidden, because much of its truth is unknown. This remark applies as well to its details of social and family life, as to the greater events which concerned nations and the world itself.

At the same time we have an earnest sympathy with this people

of a distant age; the bond of a common nature holds us, and we feel that, in a sense full of meaning, *we were in them*. The scenes and the characters which compose the history are consequently deeply interesting to us; the movements of the social life, as well as the sweep of grander events, stir us in the recital as powerfully as if the chasm between us were no broader than one generation.

Among these characters to whom we have just alluded, Rebekah — the daughter of Bethuel — the wife of Isaac — the mother of Jacob — holds a prominent place. She becomes an actor in these wonderful scenes in the freshness of her womanhood; nor does she pass away until she has imparted something of her own character to the scenes themselves, and made *her* life a part of the life of the people, after she was dead. We read that Isaac was the child of Abraham's old age: for him many prayers had been offered, even before he was born; the gift of life to him was a miracle, and wonders made up his story as he grew into manhood. The feelings with which the Patriarch regarded his son were of a kind to which words can give no expression; they belonged to that class of thoughts which are above language — as deep and as voiceless as the soul. As he felt the palsy of age creeping through his own frame, and was thereby reminded that for him days would soon have an end, his thoughts naturally centred upon his son — the years through which he was to live, and the things with which he must struggle, after the father had passed away. He doubted not that Isaac was the child of God, and that God had a work for him to do, which he would not fail to accomplish; but with a nice discernment of the relation between the Creator's purposes and human effort, he felt that he also had a parent's duty to perform, in shaping the life and the character of his son. Isaac had reached the age of about forty years; the time had come for him to enter upon another of the periods of existence, by

taking to himself a wife ; while the father had lived long enough to understand that this step involved interests of the highest character. He knew that it would influence powerfully the future life of his son, and perhaps decide whether that future was to be one of happiness and usefulness, or one of misery and shame. Doubtless there would have been quite as much happiness in the world, had the fathers of *later* days given more prominence to the thoughts which at this time ruled the conduct of the Patriarch. He was especially desirous that his son should not marry one of the daughters of the Canaanites ; for they had corrupted the true religion, and upon them rested the curse of the Almighty. Here again was Abraham wiser than the men of this generation ; in his view, religious considerations were of some importance in deciding a question of this kind. He perceived how directly they would influence his son, and shape him for a higher or a lower place in the great work which God was doing through the agency of man. The Patriarch had a servant in whom he confided, and who to the virtue of honesty added mental strength and deep religious faith. To him he intrusted (according to the custom of the times, and doubtless with the consent of Isaac) the most important and delicate work of selecting a wife for his son. The servant, however, had his charge from the Patriarch, and the promise of aid from One greater than man. He was to go into the land of Mesopotamia — the land where Abraham dwelt for a time with his father, and where many of his kindred had then a home. Accordingly, the servant took ten camels of his master, and departed for the land of which Abraham had spoken. As he drew near unto a city then called Nahor, he paused at a well just without the city, and there the camels kneeled down to rest. The sun had fallen below the horizon, and that period (so delightful in the warmer seasons of the warmer countries) when twilight begins to dim the heated face of day, was

the period when the servant was by the well. Nor was he there without knowledge or design. He knew that at the time of evening, the women would come forth from the city to draw water. We infer that these wells were the common meeting-places for this class of the population: here they gathered in the cool of the day, dressed in their best attire, and wearing the ornaments which were peculiar to the times and people. Of all this the servant of Abraham was of course aware; and when he had arranged his camels near the well, this servant of a Master greater than Abraham addressed a word to that greater Lord. He prayed that God would there show to him the person who was to be the wife of Isaac, and give signs whereby she might be known. The shadows of the evening began to creep down the distant hills, and forth from the city came the daughters who were wont to gather at the well. There was *one* upon whom the eye of the servant rested, as in her youth and beauty she came bounding towards the fountain to execute her twilight task. The narrative which details these events is so compressed, that a single expression takes the place and does the work of a minute description. Hence, the most that is said of the personal appearance of the maiden is, that "she was very fair to look upon;" but this, in Scripture history, is saying much. It is a strong assertion of the extraordinary beauty with which nature had endowed her. She was one of those forms of life which have a light and glory of their own, and which, even in the midst of a multitude, shine like a costly stone set about with gems of inferior magnitude and brilliancy. In a like setting may this maiden have appeared, supposing her to have been but one of many who at that time thronged to the waters; while the eye of the servant, once resting upon her, was fixed there by the strange magic of her beauty. To him, at least, there was but *one* damsel at the well; and the thought which for the moment seems to have possessed him was,

that Isaac could find no fault with him should he return with such a prize. But higher thoughts were soon to take the place of this. The maiden by her acts began to assume the very character and office which were prophetic of the future; and as, with touching simplicity and benevolence, she filled out the signs for which the servant had prayed, her loveliness took a nobler cast. This was the moment when to the beauty of nature was added the *beauty of religion*; and as she stood in the twilight, with these signs of grace upon her—the chosen of the Lord—every line, and hue, and feature, assumed a more perfect form, and had a more transcendent power. The religious element began thus early to impart depth and richness to female life; not merely to the character, but to the person—to the graces of the body, as well as to the higher life of the soul. It is this which gives a meaning to loveliness, that lifts it above the range of the passions, and makes it the image of the purer beings of a purer world.

We cannot dwell upon the interview of the servant with Rebekah. She soon returned to her mother, and told of that which had happened at the well. Her brother, when he had heard her story, and seen the ornaments which had been given to his sister, went forth to the man, and invited him to share their home. He came. In due time meat was set before him; and then, ere he tasted it, he told—with that wondering family as listeners—of that for which he had come, and that which had happened unto him. It was a solemn scene—one of those scenes in the history of the great work of redemption, in which the details of daily life blend strangely with the plans of God. The mother and the brother heard the story of the stranger; and when he asked for the daughter and the sister, that he might take her to the home of his master, there was faith enough under that roof to meet the requisition. They saw therein the hand of God, and

they wished not to place themselves between the Almighty and his purposes. Rebekah, too, had faith; and from that moment the life of this beautiful girl turned from its old path, and she was no more seen with her pitcher at the well. Her companions missed her in the twilight walk and gathering; and if from time to time they heard of this absent one, they heard of her in connection with events which were shaping the world's history, and had wrapped within them the world's promise and hope. The morning of the day after the servant met her, her kindred gathered to say farewell to one thus early called of God. The camels and the men, her nurse and her damsels, were at the door; and, amid the voice of blessing and of weeping, she departed for the distant land. The record does not describe the journey. In due time they came near the place where Isaac dwelt; and Isaac, while in the field, lifted up his eyes, and saw in the distance the returning company. It was about the same hour of the day in which the servant first met Rebekah at the well; and when in answer to her question, "What man is this that walketh in the field to meet us?" the servant said, "It is my master,"—"she lighted off the camel," and "took a veil, and covered herself." They had never met; and as God had already told them both how the currents of their lives were to blend into one stream, and flow on together to eternity—can we wonder if a feeling deeper than maiden modesty inclined Rebekah to shrink from what her eyes were to behold? Nor can we say that Isaac was uninfluenced by the same feeling. It was one of those moments when the mighty interests which hang upon the disclosure incline us to draw back from the revelation; when the cast is so full of destiny, that, with all our desire to know the future, we are appalled by the magnitude of the certainties themselves, and desire to put them from us for a little time. The nerve that has faced death in many forms, without the yielding of a muscle, has,

when brought up to this line of which we are speaking, felt the shock of fear, and trembled upon that verge like a timid child. 'Twas because that hour was to utter prophecies concerning the whole future life, and forewarn of happiness or of misery in the years to come. Upon this line of uncertainty, then, stood the maiden and the son of Abraham. But it was soon passed. They met—and the meeting was for life. Of the forms by which that union was solemnized we have no account. It may be that God himself was the Priest, and that God too was the maiden's friend, when alone, in the strange country, she gave her hand to the man. The union had a double seal: the bond became part, not only of the things of earth, but also of the things of heaven; and the two were made one under the shadow of a blessing greater than that of Abraham's. The event itself was a part of the plan of redemption; and that which was outward in the scene, did but *enwrap another life*, which was full of power and glory, because full of God.

We have not space to pursue the history. The engraving which these words are designed to accompany, seems silently to protest against our dwelling upon the years when furrows came to the cheeks, and dimness to the eyes, of that maiden by the well. Indeed, the record itself is by no means full in its account of her future life. The birth of Esau and Jacob, about twenty years after the marriage—the dwelling in the land of the Philistines—the love of Rebekah for her youngest son—the means by which she secured for him the blessing of his father—are the prominent incidents. The narrative soon leaves the parents and passes to the children, who in their turn became parts of that on-rushing plan of love which swept through the generations, and at last found its completion in the birth of Him whose cradle was a manger in Bethlehem.

Isaac is thought to have been the only Patriarch who had not

a plurality of wives. This fact leads us to infer that his domestic life was one of uncommon purity and happiness; and for this cause the names of Isaac and Rebekah have found an honored place in the marriage service of the Episcopal Church of these United States. Supporting one another, they met life in all its changes; nor had the one a joy or a sorrow, to which the other did not answer with a smile or with a tear. We assume, without attempting to prove, that certain statements in the record do not conflict with this idea. Rebekah lived until the weight of many years was upon her—years not without their trials as well as joys; and having done the work of God, she passed from the things seen and temporal, into the higher realities of the things unseen and eternal.

Her story is not without its points of instruction. While it has features which can never be applied to common life, it at the same time presents the marriage relation in its highest form and influence. Its character as a divine institution—its religious uses and power—its bearings upon the future of this life, and that greater future whose spreadings are beyond the grave—are among the points which meet us, either in the form of direct statement or of obvious implication. May its lessons be heeded by the sons and daughters of our land. *Marriage is an event upon which the life turns*; and if, in the settlement of such a question, religious considerations are entirely put aside—the religious tastes, and habits, and character of the parties not considered—the approbation of God made of no account—kindred unadvised and unheeded,—if things lower than these are to rule the decision, let there be no complaints if the bond becomes a scourge, and the scourge a living serpent, whose coil makes life awful, and from whose sting there is no refuge but in death.



RACHEL.

THE beloved wife of the Patriarch Israel, the mother of Joseph and of Benjamin, appears but for a little while and by glimpses in the Mosaic history. Her first meeting with the exile by the well, in Padan-aram, her espousal, her participation in his flight, and her early death, are almost all which is told of Rachel. Still, the image is wonderfully distinct, and surpassingly lovely. It left its impress firmly fixed upon the memory of that nation, of which three powerful tribes were her descendants. When the Hebrews spoke of youthful beauty, of conjugal devotion, of maternal tenderness, or of sweetness too soon removed, they recalled Rachel, with the flock of her father ; Rachel, with whom and for whose sake fourteen toilsome years of Jacob sped by so lightly ; Rachel, the mother of the dear children of his age ; Rachel, as she gave her last-born his mournful name, and died close by the city of David.

In that ancient country between the Euphrates and the Tigris, Haran or Harran is still the abode of Arab shepherds. Through a sandy plain a small river glides towards the Euphrates ; and it was the existence of these little streams which made the spot a home of old for the pastoral kindred of Abraham. A hundred miles eastward from Aleppo, and about as far westward from the site of the ancient Nisibis, it can hardly be less than four hundred northeastward from

the southern part of Palestine, from which Jacob had accomplished his weary journey. For weeks he must have travelled under the burning sun, "with his staff in his hand," when he "came into the land of the people of the East."

It is certain that Jacob was guided on this journey by a special Providence, if there be any Providence that ought to be called special. Or rather, it is certain that in his vision he was instructed in that mystery of Providence, which always attends and guards the path of the servants of God. Angels ascended and descended around him; they were with him when he lay down at Bethel on his departure; they met him at Mahanaim on his return; and undoubtedly they led or accompanied his steps to Haran. The thought that in the most important as well as the most delicate transaction of life, a good man does not move apart from unseen guidance, is no idle fancy. Whatever may be said of the rash, the passionate, or the selfish, when they hasten on without prayer or deep tenderness, we know that marriages like those of Isaac and Jacob are indeed "made in heaven."

All things concurred to form the graceful picture of opening affection. In the afternoon, while "it was yet high day," Jacob reached the well, where the shepherds waited with their flocks. He learned that he was near Haran; that his kinsman whom he sought was in health; and that one of those daughters of Laban, from whom he had been charged to choose, would presently be there. The beautiful shepherdess came near, even while they were speaking; and Jacob, with the gentle courtesy which is no mere growth of the age of Christian chivalry, but is as old as manly dignity and honorable love, hastened to roll the stone away, and water her flock, before he told his name and lineage. In those patriarchal times and lands, such an act was a pledge of truth and kindness; there was no more peril or fear from the stranger; he "kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice

and wept," while he assured her that he was her cousin, the son of that Rebekah, for whom the steward of Abraham had come, with camels and jewels, and almost with the pomp of an ambassador.

Not thus came Jacob, a solitary wanderer, fleeing from his angry brother, with no other wealth or defence but the staff with which he had passed over Jordan. Laban, a worldly, calculating man, received him accordingly with kindness, but with prudent kindness; as "his bone and his flesh," but as one who, in need as he saw him, and furnished as he soon found him to be, with abundant sagacity and skill, might do him excellent service. The love of Jacob for Rachel, the constant and fervent affection which had begun at the first interview, was the chain which bound him to the tasks imposed by Laban. It was a delightful chain; for the seven years of toil which the rigid father exacted from the portionless exile, "seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her." The daily sight of her as he saw her at first amongst the flocks which he now tended, made the months pass like a happy dream; and Jacob forgot the revengeful wrath of Esau, and was forgotten.

The involuntary polygamy of Jacob brought some of the ills which attend on that unsuitable, but then unforbidden arrangement. Not all the meek piety of Leah nor the attractive sweetness of Rachel could quite prevent the breach of sisterly kindness. One was the favored mother, the other the chosen spouse; a righteous Providence balanced their happiness by their disappointments. The traits of the disposition of Rachel, which can be drawn from the history, seem such as are not seldom observed in union with the perilous gift of youthful beauty. Admiration, without necessarily tarnishing the essential excellence of the heart, yet often produces a certain self-indulgence. The lighter tempers, which so easily run into folly, even wear a kind of gracefulness, and are not held in firm restraint. Some-

thing is then felt to be wanting to the moral and religious strength of the soul; that something which is the growth of humiliation or self-denial. Even after later discipline, the first weakness may remain; and thus it was with Rachel. In the few sayings and actions which are related of her, there is an impatience, an ill-checked eagerness, a want of tenderness of conscience, and a partial reliance even on the superstitions that had glided in amongst the Mesopotamian Patriarchs. Through their respective trials, the character of the elder sister shines with a calmer religiousness; but the faults of the younger, though they had been greater than they were, could not transfer the heart of him who loved her from the first, and loved her to the end.

It is a sufficient proof that the holiest pledges ought never to be given without the warmest and most spontaneous affection. The deceit of Laban cannot be repeated; but the happiness of more than one may be fatally bartered, when a Leah is accepted instead of a Rachel, by a heart less true to itself than that of Jacob. He, while he discharged the office of a faithful father to his elder sons, yet so delighted in the youngest of all as to stir their envy. It was not merely that Joseph was the son of his age, but that he was the son of Rachel; and as he inherited her beauty, so perhaps his gentle and forgiving temper was visible through her transient impatience. With all the difficulties of such a state, the household of Jacob, while she lived, seems to have been one of harmony.

The time came when Rachel and Leah must leave father and mother, to share the lot of the returning heir of Canaan. After an absence of more than twenty years, he fled, with all the wealth which his diligence and skill had won; and they could not but justify both his departure and his secrecy. They removed their tents, much as an Arabian family changes its abode at this day from valley to valley. Rachel took with her the teraphim of Laban; and concealed them, at

the expense of truth, both from him and from her husband. Possibly, she wished to prevent the idolatry of her father. Possibly, she took them for the gold or silver, and deemed it but a part of the payment due for the long services of Jacob. But, more probably she was not quite emancipated from all regard for those gods whom the fathers of the Hebrews had worshipped "on the other side of the flood." Some remnant of such superstition, in that age, must not destroy our belief in the piety of Rachel. The second commandment had not yet been proclaimed from Mount Sinai. Her deceit, too, like those of Abraham, of Isaac, and of her own Jacob, is to be construed under the recollection that civil or ecclesiastical society as yet existed but imperfectly; that the obligation of truth, which rests upon the principle that, in all society, we are members one of another, was therefore imperfectly felt; that it lacked the clearness of the revealed law; and that, without that law, craft was the obvious defence of weakness against violence. These reflections may make us more lenient towards those actions of the Patriarchs which, had they lived under our completer revelation, would never have marred their high integrity.

At the ford of the brook of Jabbok, we once more catch the form of Rachel. She leads her young first-born by the hand; and they, as the weakest and the most tenderly beloved, are the last of the train; for, in the front is the host of Esau, and Jacob has gone before to expose himself first to the anger of his offended brother. But Esau has had no heart for vengeance; he has fallen on the neck of the companion of his childhood; and they have wept together. The train passes on before him; the handmaidens and their children approach and bow; and Leah and her stripling sons; and last of all, Rachel and Joseph. What happier emotions ever softened the heart of man, than those of Esau, when he looked back on the fair proces-

sion after it had passed by, and as the beauty of Rachel and her sweet boy receded from his sight, rejoiced and blessed God that he had been able to forgive!

Only one of the sons of Jacob was born in the land of promise. It was that one whose birth was purchased by the life of his mother. But a little time had passed since the return of the patriarchal family, when Jacob was commanded to go up to Bethel, the spot where, when he fled, he planted his stony pillow as an altar. Before he took his journey towards that spot, he determined to purify his household from all traces of the errors which they might have learned in Mesopotamia. At Bethel, he had vowed himself to the one true God, when he went into exile; and now, returning to plant the altar of his prosperity on the same site, he desired to bring with him, pure and undefiled, those whom the Lord had given him. It is interesting to remember that one of the last acts of the life of Rachel must have been her participation in this solemnity. The images and ornamental amulets, all things which could be abused for idolatrous ends, were buried under the venerable oak in Shechem; and Jacob and his household went up to Bethel, and there, a second time, he talked with God.

At Bethel, the aged nurse of the mother of Jacob, a person now attached to his household, closed her long life, and was buried under an oak; which, in the affectionate regard of patriarchal days for such relations, bore afterwards the name of "the oak of weeping." When the solemn rites for which they had gone up to Bethel were finished, they journeyed towards the south. Their road must have led them near the mountain of Moriah, the ancient seat of Melchizedek, the future city of the Holy One of Israel. They passed the ridge from which Jerusalem is seen to the north, and to the south the smiling valley of "Bethlehem the fruitful." The last prospect on which the

eye of Rachel rested, was that which first met the infant sight of David, and that on which angels looked down when they sang, "Glory to God in the highest; peace on earth, good will to men." She died fast by the valley where Jesus was born.

There is no death like the death of the mother who dies that her child may live. That struggle of hopes and fears, of the brightest and tenderest hopes with the most fatal fears; that struggle which, after a few hours, must close in such light and gladness, or in such blackness of sorrow, was seen at Bethlehem, at the couch of Rachel. The husband of her youth, after long toil and patience, had reached his own land; had offered his sacrifices of thanksgiving; had renewed his dedication; had been reconciled to his hostile brother; had sanctified his household; and now stood, surrounded by eleven noble sons, and ready to welcome the twelfth—sons, amongst whom the promises to the seed of Abraham were to be divided in the wonderful future. What was wanting to the joy of Israel? In that very hour, he was to drink the bitterest cup, perhaps, of all which made his days seem, when so long after he recalled them, not few only, but evil. Such is the glory of man. The memory of Rachel was to be, to all the descendants of Jacob, the shadow that steals over the noonday—the perpetual remembrancer of the conditions of all earthly happiness.

"Son of my sorrow," was the name which the dying mother left to him whom, as if doubly endeared by the precious price which had purchased his existence, the mourning father called the "son of his right hand." For, like a man who has parted with his own right hand, and goes on towards the grave maimed, and comparatively helpless, Jacob left the descent of Ephrath. But first he erected a pillar at the grave of Rachel; which, centuries after, when the Pentateuch was written, bore her name, and drew the tears of her posterity.

That pillar has crumbled into dust ; but a later monument still marks the spot. Rachel, from her grave, seems to look towards Bethlehem and the coasts thereof ; and, when the cry of many mothers was heard over the slaughter of their innocents by the sword of Herod, it was " Rachel weeping for her children, and refusing to be comforted."

Of Benjamin little is left to us, except that to him the affectionate fondness of his father clung, when the envy of his elder sons had deprived him of Joseph. But in Joseph all the beauty of the mother, without her faults, was reflected, and there it shines in the most touching, delightful, and evangelical of all the narratives of the Old Testament. If such was the son, who can forbear to think that he inherited much, besides the attractiveness of his person, from the mother ; much from her character, from her example, from her prayers, even when she could no longer teach him the service of that God whom he served from his childhood ! Who, remembering her early graces, and seeing them again in her first-born, can avoid admitting the thought of the poet —

" Oh, unless those eyes deceive,
I may, I must, I will believe
That she whose charms so meekly glow,
Is, what she only seemed below,
An Angel in that glorious realm
Where God alone is King !"

But from this history, uniting as it does all the reality of common life with all the beauty of a kind of sacred romance, we must not pass without adoring those counsels which alone contemplate the end from the beginning. That Israel might be a peculiar and a ransomed people, the type of the redeemed Church of God, they must go into

Egypt. The greatness of Joseph must invite them to share his fortunes; and that greatness must be prepared through their envy. So only could he be the fit representative of One who, exalted at the right hand of the Majesty on high, is there the first-born among many brethren. The envy of the ten patriarchs must be provoked by the partiality of Jacob; and the partiality of Jacob must be fostered by the dear memory of her whom in his youth he had chosen. From that first pastoral scene by the well in Padan-aram, to the triumphant passage of the two millions through the Red Sea; and onward to the day when salvation should be of the Jews, and the word of the Lord should go forth from Jerusalem; and still onward to the glories of the latter days and of eternity,—all is one wondrous chain, in which no link could be wanting. When all the saints shall “stand in their lot at the end of the days,” and “the tomb of Ephrath” shall give up its dead, we shall better understand how weakness and strength, affection and bitterness, the wrath of man and forgiving love, long life and early death, orphanage and parental tenderness, captivity and the splendor of thrones,—all could be so fastened together that all should alike fulfil the one design of mercy, and should give glory to God and to the Lamb.



POTIPHAR'S WIFE.

POTIPHAR'S WIFE! And what can be said of *her*? What claims has *she* to a place in a portrait gallery like the present? What was her distinction, that she has been chosen to appear among the remarkable women of old? You may well ask the question, gentle reader, but I cannot answer it: "the powers that be" have concluded to bring her forward. They have had her likeness taken, and so we must make the most of her. Where shall we find our material? It would not be well to let fancy fill up the outlines of her story as we read it in the sacred page,—and the story itself, in these days of delicacy "double refined," might not be thought altogether the thing.

Potiphar's wife was a memorable woman indeed, but in no way remarkable. She will ever be remembered as a link in the mysterious chain of God's decrees, in which evil willingly, yet unwittingly, does its part. She was one of the myriad wheels in the infinite machinery of an all-controlling Providence; and in that way was of importance in her unconscious relations, but of utter insignificance in herself. Hence, and hence only, her position in the Bible; not because of any thing extraordinary in her conduct or character, but because of the extraordinary virtue she was the means undesignedly of calling into action, and on which such momentous consequences depended in the fortunes of the ancient Church.

She was memorable too for her great wickedness; but then it was wickedness of a very ordinary kind. She was not bad in any startling, or daring, or monstrous way, which might invest her with the interest of heroism: she but acted the part of thousands like her, —if indeed there have been thousands to sustain the other part of the drama. To tempt a virtuous youth—to persevere in her seductions—when disappointed to resolve on revenge—to bring the object of her vile passion into trouble, by charging upon him the guilt that lay wholly with herself—all this, from beginning to end, was but a course of procedure quite familiar to persons of her description. There was nothing in it to individualize her—nothing to make her stand out in bold relief in any of the niches of fame, or rather of infamy. She was simply the *genus generalissimum* of a miserable class of sinners.

But her cunning—was not that a marked feature in her character? Hardly, for it was no more than the universal tact at inventing falsehood: and who, among the dullest of the dull, is not equal to that? The old serpent was the original falsifier; of course his brood, of whatever species, will possess something of his characteristic cunning. The father of liars generally endows his offspring with a portion of his wit. We indeed speak of *stupid* devils, but even these in the arts of fiction are often singularly smart. A genius for lying is perhaps the commonest gift of the wicked one—the ordinary inspiration, we might call it, of the devil.

The Egyptian adulteress, as she appears in the plate prefixed to this article, or rather this *apology* for an article, does not appear in a very fascinating form. The artist has refused her any of the winning charms of her sex. In this he deserves commendation. We naturally associate vice with uncomeliness: it is one of our moral instincts, which the creations of the painter or the poet ought never to violate; their ideal should be ever loyal to virtue. And yet, on

the other hand, had the artist followed the Persian legends, which represent their *Zuleika* (the name they give this personage) as surpassingly beautiful, he would impliedly have done more justice to Joseph; for if the original resembled his picture, if such was her wanton and vulgar mien, verily the young Hebrew was in no great peril of losing his heart.

The oriental poets, we are told, also expatiate on the excellence and integrity of the incorruptible Israelite, whom, in point of personal attractions, they celebrate as the Adonis of the East—for which they are not without support in sacred writ. While Tom Moore can only sneer at “Joseph’s coldness,” Mohammed makes his purity the theme of eloquent eulogium in one of the finest chapters of the Koran. Now, were *that* our subject, there would be something to descant upon; for that was no commonplace goodness: there was true greatness—there was heroism. Though Potiphar’s wife was no heroine, Potiphar’s steward was a hero. His was the stern excellence which Greeks and Romans have extolled. When conscience alone casts a frown, to refuse the enticements of illicit love; when the siren besets the ardor of youth with her witching song, for youth to turn its ardor to Heaven, and say, “How shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” when pleasure arrays her charms to the eye—entrances the ear with her dulcet notes—sheds her perfumes on the air, leading all the senses spell-bound;—then for the soul, unmoved amid all, to see only “Him who is invisible”—to hear distinctly the “still small voice within”—is a measure of the adamant virtue which makes martyrs and confessors. Alas! for the times, when the continence of a Joseph might fail of admiration; when chastity, the pearl of the soul, is deemed an ornament only of the weaker sex; when the boy, scarce outgrown his teens, must needs quench the grace of purity in mortal sin, to prove his claims to manliness!

Away with the fashionable morals which bind a law of God, the dearest of all his laws to the commonwealth, on woman, but not on man! A curse on the licentious literature which assumes as granted the profligate distinction; which with its bold sentiments, and its scenes, rejecting the veil of modesty, stimulates the young of one sex to premature vice, and so defiles the imaginations of the other, that while their innocence is saved by the demands of society, they scarce have virgin souls. The pestilence infects our moral atmosphere. It invades the domestic hearth. Aside of this very volume, on the centre-table of a Christian parlor, there may be lying the loose novel, or the foul journal—perchance, too, gloated over by some reader, who shall affect to criticise remarks like these, as wanting in delicacy!



PHARAOH'S DAUGHTER.

Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages.—Exod. ii. 9.

It is noon upon the Nile. A Hebrew woman wanders there, and weeps. She gathers of the bulrushes that wave upon its brink, and wets her burthen with her tears. It is Jochebed, Amram's wife, the mother of Miriam and of Aaron; and, as yet, of one dearer than both, the secret child of silence and of sorrow. Pharaoh has charged his people, that every son, born of a Hebrew mother, shall be drowned. The goodly infant has been hid three months. The next day, inquisition will be made in every Hebrew house; and even a mother's love will not suffice to save him. Alas, alas, Jochebed!

It is midnight on the Nile. A mourning mother weeps upon her babe. She has arrayed him in his choicest robe. She has lavished upon him the rarest of her store. She has fed him, for the last time, from her bursting breast. She has lulled him, for the last time, to his serene repose. She has imprinted her last kiss upon his brow. She has lent it the consecration of her tears. And, with a mother's trust, that so much innocence and so much loveliness cannot be quite forsaken of her God, she lays the frail and buoyant ark, which her own hands have framed, with blessings upon every joint, in the tall flags, beside the river's brink. Alas, alas, Jochebed!

It is morning on the Nile. Upon the river's side, a royal maiden loiters, with her virgin train. They lave their shrinking feet in the cool stream. They launch the sacred lotus on its wave. In frolic mirth, they toss its silver spray. The thoughtful princess, as she wanders by herself, descries the floating ark. She sends for it. She opens it. She sees the child. It weeps. She has a woman's heart, and it is melted at the infant's tears. She has a woman's heart, and it takes in, at once, the whole sad tale of Hebrew slavery and suffering. Alas, alas, Jochebed!

But, when was faith forsaken? When were the sacred tears, with which a mother bathed her child, unnoticed of the Lord? When were a mother's prayers not heard? A sister's heart had yearned upon the babe. She saw the ark, where it was laid. She stood aside, to watch its fate; and, when the royal maid had found and rescued it, she was at hand, with love's instinctive promptitude, to seek and find a nurse. "Then said his sister to Pharaoh's daughter, Shall I go, and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee? And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Go. And the maid went, and called the child's mother." Was ever poet's dream to equal this? Was ever mother's grief so turned to joy? Was ever woman's heart so filled and overflowed with gladness? "And Pharaoh's daughter said unto her, Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages. And the woman took the child"—it is the child himself that makes the record, with a simplicity that only nature's self could be contented with, and art would overdo, and spoil—"the woman took the child, and nursed it." Joy, joy to Jochebed!

What a lesson of the vicissitudes of life! Amram and Jochebed were of the priestly line of Levi. Their lot was cast in the serene and guarded precincts of the house of God; where, if on earth,

contentment should be found. Blessings had multiplied upon their love. The thoughtful Aaron and the joyous Miriam were as olive branches at their side, and soon another was to smile upon their joy. But Israel is too prosperous for Egypt. The blessings which God sends upon His captive children move the envy of their masters. They make their lives bitter with hard bondage; and when they prosper still the more for their afflictions, the decree is passed that every man-child shall be slain. Then, with what new anxiety is nature's trial-hour expected! Then, with what dread, that quickens every pulse into a nerve, the issue apprehended! Then, what a pang, to crush the heart of father and of mother, the tidings, that should, else, be full of joy! And what a record, that, of slavery and of shame; "when she saw him, that he was a goodly child, she hid him three months." So little is man's estimate of life to be relied on. So do its choicest blessings become fountains, to the heart, of care, solicitude, and sorrow.

What a lesson of the providence of God! Behold that fragile ark, twined, by a woman's hand, of bulrushes, and daubed with slime and pitch. See it deposited among the flags, upon the river's brink. Think of the swellings of the Nile. Think of the prowling wolves and ravening hyenas. Think of the treacherous crocodile. Consider that the tenant of that frail receptacle, exposed to such variety of deaths, is an infant of but three months old. How speedy, how inevitable the destruction! But, no! It may not be. That sleeping child is God's deliverer, for captive Israel. And Noah was not safer, when his ark of gopher-wood was made the refuge of a race, than Moses, in his ark of bulrushes. And, by what wondrous means! The footsteps of a royal princess, and her train, are turned, that moment, towards the guarded spot. The daughter of their oppressor becomes the saviour of the captive nation. Jochebed's son falls into

the only hands that could have rescued him from death. Her daughter is at hand, to shape the wonderful result. And the poor trembler, that had laid him in what seemed to be his coffin, is the same that, trembling even more, for love and joy, now takes him from his hiding-place, to nurse him for the daughter of a king. How can we ever doubt, with cases such as this before us, that every thing is possible with God? What too small for His considerate mercy, or too great for His almighty power? He calleth the stars by their names. And yet, He numbereth every hair of every head.

And what a lesson of the security of faith! It was a bold venture, to disregard the king's commandment, and hide the child three months; but it was made in faith, St. Paul has taught us, and so was safe. It was a bold venture, to commit a helpless infant, in a frail basket, to the waters of the Nile; but it was done in faith, and it was safe. Nay, it was more than safe. Not only was it so, that Moses should be saved alive; Jochebed, by the royal pleasure, made the nurse of her own son; and joy and gladness shed upon the darkened house of Amram. It was only so — to speak, as men can see — that Moses could be fully fitted for his high and sacred trust. How else could he be “learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians?” How else could he achieve that glory, which St. Paul ascribes to him, of disinterested virtue, in refusing, when he came to years, “to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter?” How else could he set forth that noble pattern of unpurchasable patriotism, in “choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season?” How else could he have reached that loftiest height of Christian perfectness, in “esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt;” as the Apostles, beaten for the Cross, “rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name?” The ventures of true faith are thus transcend-

ent triumphs. To suffer with Christ is to reign with Him. His Cross insures His crown. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

I might pursue, almost without a limit, my enumeration of the lessons, which this speaking scripture teaches. But your own hearts will suggest them: and God will bless your thoughtful meditations on His holy word, to the increase of wisdom and the furtherance of faith. In what remains, I rather dwell upon a single aspect of the story; and briefly follow, to some portion of its just conclusions, the language of the text; "Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages."

It suggests the helplessness of little children. Nothing living is so helpless as a little child. "It is crushed before the moth." The first thought that comes with it, anticipated long before, is that of the Egyptian Princess; of a nurse, of watching, and of care. And how much it calls for! And for how long! To be fed; to be tended; to be cared for, in a thousand ways: awake, asleep, in sickness, in health. Is there a trust more sacred, is there an office more delicate, is there a responsibility more serious, than that which the word, nurse, implies and comprehends? Happiest, and holiest, and surest of a blessing, when, like favored Jochebed, the mother is the nurse. And, for the wages, which the royal maiden promised! If toil, and care, and pain, and watching, and anxiety, that never intermits, and cannot be relieved, or delegated, or divided, be the mark, what could be equal to the task? While, if the heart be in it, and its life be love, what over-payment, in ten thousand ways, of all that love can prompt, and life can yield! The rounding limb; the opening feature; the elastic spring; new speculation in the eye; new music in the dove-like cooing of the inarticulate voice; new gleamings of the mind; new openings to the heart; new glimpses of the spiritual and the

immortal. How gracious and benign the providential ordering, that makes "little children" types to us of Heaven; and draws us by them, as with cords of love, towards a purer and a better world! "Verily, I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein."

But full of tenderness, and high in sacred trust, as is the nurture of the infant, it is but the shadow of that which falls upon the heart of parents, teachers, pastors, in the training of the child. There cannot be a text more pregnant, more impressive, more exacting, than those words of holy Paul to the Ephesian parents: "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." They tell us of the soul. They tell us of its fearful alienation from the God who made it. They tell us of the obstacles which hinder its return; of the tendencies within, by which it gravitates towards eternal ruin; of the unseen foes, which from the cradle dog its track, and to the grave pursue their prey. They tell us that, as the harvest, so is the garner; as the seed-time, so the harvest; as the spring, so the full circle of the eternal year. And, if they left us thus, they would pronounce a blessing upon childlessness, and make the grave more gracious for our children than the cradle. But the divine Creator knows our frame, and cares for all its wants. He leaves us not un comforted, in any of the trusts and trials which He lays upon our hearts. In every duty and in every danger of our lives, He meets us with His love. The "blessings of the breasts and of the womb" are blessings, which take in the soul, and go with it into eternity. None of His promises are more explicit than those which sanction the religious care of children. His praise of Abraham turns expressly on his domestic piety: "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him; and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment." Nothing can be more positive than that

which he declares by Solomon; "Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old he will not depart from it." And the benign and gracious Saviour, while He won, by every charm and charity of love, the "little children" to Himself, opened a world of comfort and encouragement, to hearts of parents, and of teachers, and of pastors, in those mysterious words: "I say unto you, in heaven, their angels always do behold the face of my Father which is in heaven."

The Christian parent, that desires salvation for his children, need not greatly fear. God has provided, in His Church, all needful helps and means, to gain, through grace, that great and gracious end. There stands the Font, with its regenerating wave, to wash him from his primal sin, and give him back, new-born, "of water and of the Spirit." There ever sounds, in tones of ancient piety, a mother's voice in her dear children's ears, the simple yet majestic Catechism. There, at the chancel-rail, the Pastor of the pastors waits, with hands outstretched, to hear the meek renewal of his infant vows, and sign him with the seal of the Divine and Holy Spirit, and commend him to the cares, and toils, and trials of the life that lies before him, with the blessing of the Holy One. There, in the bread and wine which He ordained and blessed, the Saviour gives Himself to every faithful heart. There, the life-giving word is ever vocal, with its lessons of truth, its counsels of wisdom, and its promises of peace. There, in a voice that rolls up, round and full, from the deep caverns of the past, the faith delivered once to the old saints is uttered, in the creeds, which martyrs moistened with their blood. There, in a ceaseless round, the prayers are offered, which have promise, from the gracious One, who comes wherever "two or three" are gathered in His name, of answer and fulfilment. And, from every consecrated stone, and every sacred spot, and every word of faith, and penitence, and praise,

as from His garment's hem, when in the flesh, virtue comes forth, to heal, to strengthen, and to bless, to all who kneel to Him, in meek, obedient faith. Only be faithful, my beloved brethren, in your use of these divine provisions, for the training of your children in the way in which they ought to go, and He will make His promise sure. Only bring up your children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," and He will take and own them, to be His forever. "Take this child away," He says, who gave it to you first, "and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages." But you must nurse it for God, you must nurse it for immortality, you must nurse it for heaven. You must bring it up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

And, for myself, to whom so many parents have intrusted the nurslings of their love,* the Church still seems to say to me, with every lamb of Jesus, that is gathered here, to tend and feed, "Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages." Wages, it may be, of toil; wages, it may be, of care; wages, it may be, of difficulty; wages, it may be, of disappointment; wages, it may be, of debt; wages, it may be, of old age before the time; wages, it may be, of an anticipated grave. But, welcome toil, and care, and difficulty, and disappointment, and debt, and old age, and the grave, so I can nurse these children, for the Lord; and, when He comes again, to seek His lambs, and take them, to be with Him, in His heavenly Fold, can stand, and say, "Behold I, and the children which God hath given me!"

ST. MARY'S CHURCH, BURLINGTON,

Eighth Sunday after Trinity, August 13, 1848.

* There are nearly three hundred children in training at St. Mary's Hall, and Burlington College; besides the children of the Sunday School and Parish School.



Handwritten signature or text, possibly "W. G. Smith"

DEBORAH.

DOUBTLESS, if Deborah had lived in our day, and been an American, the people would have elected her for President of the United States. There is such a madness in the world after military glory, that nothing but her piety and poetry, with her hatred of slavery, would have prevented her political success.

And yet, the glory of Deborah was no part of it military, except that her course of conduct arose out of faith, which is essentially the main point in the character of a Christian warrior. She aroused and animated Barak to the fight, but led it not herself, and only reported the commands of God. Barak's faith, at first, seemed mainly to have been in Deborah; Deborah's faith was in God. Barak relied upon her, almost as if she were in the place of God: "If thou wilt go with me, then I will go; but if thou wilt not go with me, then I will not go." This was straightforward and decided, though looking a little like trusting in an arm of flesh. Perhaps, however, the cause of this may be found not in any deficiency of Barak's own faith in God, nor in any undue reliance upon Deborah; but in the fact of her known vast influence over all Israel, as the Lord's acknowledged prophetess and constituted judge over the people, whom her presence would greatly encourage to gather together at Kedesh, to go out against the enemy. Barak probably felt that without the sanction and animating

power of her co-operation, he would not have been able to gather his ten thousand men from Zabulon and Naphtali. So she left her tent beneath the palm-tree, and went down with Barak to Kedesh. There she probably remained in prayer, while he went forth with the men of Zabulon and Naphtali to the conflict.

Barak relied upon Deborah, because he knew that God himself spake by her and guided her, and all Israel knew that in her dwelt the wisdom and Spirit of the Lord. Her office, in this case, was simply to communicate God's commands. And she did it with such an enthusiastic earnestness of determination to have them obeyed, that not only the command went from her, but the obedient impulse with it. She did it with a sublimity and energy of purpose and feeling, a decision of character, a rapidity, heartiness, and power of faith, that made hers the animating mind, while Barak the warrior simply executed her plan for the conflict. It is good to see the mingled fire of piety and patriotism so pure and bright in her own soul, and the energetic impulse it communicated to others. It was the undoubting, unhesitating nature of her faith,—the Lord had thus given her dominion over the mighty,—combined with the inevitable influence which an imaginative and heroic mind would wield over common ones, that made her authority so absolute. When the time came for action, there could be no delay: "Up! this is the day. Is not the Lord gone out before thee? Arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive!" What an energetic, whirlwind style of prophetic enthusiasm and command! Barak could not resist it, but went forth with his ten thousand men, no longer demanding the presence of Deborah, but relying upon that of God. And, in this reliance upon God, they gained a complete victory. The faith of Barak followed that of Deborah, being assured of God's presence through her.

Now it is somewhat singular that among the names celebrated in

the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, we find that of Barak, but not that of Deborah. How are we to account for this? We rather think it is because, in the case of Barak, the instance is a remarkable one of a mind "out of weakness made strong," by the power of faith sustaining it; whereas, in the case of Deborah, the faith being that of a person a long while honored with direct communications from God, its particular exercise in that immediate juncture was not so very remarkable, although the degree of habitual faith in her may have been much greater than in Barak. Her whole life had been one of faith, so that she was a mother in Israel, and at a special crisis like this a great faith was demanded and expected in her as a matter of course: but with Barak it was different; in him it was an extraordinary development. Deborah's natural endowments were greater than Barak's; and her discipline for years having been that of such direct communion with God, it had been a shame indeed if she had not, at such a time as this, possessed and manifested a great faith. Of her it might be said that out of *habitual faith* she was made strong. Whereas, in the case of Barak, the example was that of a person perhaps naturally timid and distrustful, but now, out of that habitual weakness, raised to such a strength of faith, as made it a fit instance for the divine record. It was the grace and power of the Divine Spirit in a new and unexpected display. The development of character in both these cases is exceedingly natural and interesting.

And now comes the great song of praise and triumph—one of the sublimest pages of poetry within the compass of the Scriptures. It is the only war-song in existence that has the divine mingled with the human, the very deepest and sweetest spirit of grateful piety with the loftiest temper of patriotism and martial enthusiasm. Its sublime apostrophes, its bursts of feeling, its rapid and startling changes of thought, its lightning-like descriptions, its comprehensive historic

allusions, its questionings, its solemn adjurations, its benedictions, its grandeur of faith in God and gratitude to him, all make it one of the most extraordinary compositions in the Bible. If we should consider it as an effort of human genius, it would be unrivalled; there is nothing to be compared with it in the world of literature. And how noble, how religious, how beautiful its close! "So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord: but let them that love Him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might!"

The land had rest, after this, forty years; and probably before the revival of the spirit of devotion in the people had utterly ceased, Deborah was buried beneath the palm-tree, where the bones of the beloved nurse of Rebekah were resting. But the very next chapter begins with the old record of depravity: "And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord." Neither mothers nor fathers in Israel could create for another generation the spirit of obedience and love.

The case of Deborah shows what strong faith and habitual deep piety in a single woman may do for the Church of God, and even for a whole nation. It may possibly do more, at the present period in the world's history, than ever before. It does not need an appointment to the office of a prophet, nor the exercise of public gifts, nor the commanding genius of a poet, but a patient, earnest, persevering spirit of faith and prayer. The unseen interpositions of God in answer to prayer may be more and greater than those that are seen. They are not now chronicled as of old in a divine record, and thus made to shine out in the notice of all mankind, observable, undeniable; nevertheless, they may be just as real as those recorded in the Scriptures, which are indeed but solitary examples of what God is constantly doing. Here and there the supernatural agencies by which God works are made visible, to keep the fire of our faith burn-

ing, and to prevent us from losing sight of God in common things. Faith and prayer may be answered daily, though the chain of connection between God and us may not be visible. When God, by his Spirit, abides remarkably in a holy soul, that soul, though its tabernacle may be as lowly as the poor widow's, who glided in and out with her two mites among the rich men at the Jewish treasury, occupies the place of a prophetess, and divine impulses from God may be communicated to her, and announced in her, in answer to prayer, as truly as in the case of the wife of Lapidoth.





JEPHTHAH'S DAUGHTER.

THERE is a touching and fearful interest in the brief narrative connected with Jephthah's daughter. In the manner characteristic of Sacred Scripture, it gives a simple statement of facts and circumstances without ornament, or impassioned comments and appeals to excite attention or inspire interest. Leading facts alone are stated, and important points unfolded, while minuter incidents bearing upon the clearer development of character, and furnishing the links in the train of the drama, are passed over. Thus the mind of the reader is left to curious conjecture, and the spirit is drawn out under strong imaginative influence in seeking to supply what is withheld or concealed. There is also in the facts recorded much that is anomalous, and singular, apparently inconsistent with, or not readily explained or illustrated by, the genius, rites, or institutions of the Hebrew economy. We therefore do not receive that help from the comparison of scripture with scripture, and other aids usually connected therewith, in solving the difficulties found in this historical passage. The questions, *What was the precise nature of Jephthah's vow? How was it fulfilled? &c.*, have exercised the critical acumen and skill of many of the learned in careful investigation and extended discussion, leaving the subject still within the province of mere probability. On this account it has been termed a *cruæ criticorum*. But amidst all the

uncertainty which may attend the interpretation of parts of the narrative, there is enough to stamp importance upon it, and to invest it with peculiar interest. Important moral and spiritual lessons are involved in it. Painful as is the impression produced by the thought of the young, lovely, and only daughter sacrificed at the hands of her father in the fulfilment of a rash and unlawful vow, yet, under that impression, relief is at once borne home as we sympathize with the spirit and mark the conduct of the destined victim, and we acknowledge Jephthah's daughter as one of the *heroines* of Scripture, in the best and most appropriate sense of the term.

The facts simply set forth in the short narrative are these. Jephthah was the ninth Judge of Israel. He was the illegitimate son of Gilead of the tribe of Manasseh. After the death of his father, the lawful sons expelled him from his home, and he withdrew to the land of Tob, beyond the frontier of the Hebrew territories. It is evident that he had distinguished himself by daring, skill, and prowess in arms, so that men of varied fortunes resorted to him, and he engaged in border warfare, confining his aggressions to the borders of the small neighboring nations, who were in some degree considered as the natural enemies of Israel, when there was no actual war between them. The times and circumstances in which Jephthah lived, the influences under which he was placed in his early training and subsequent course, and the occupations in which he was engaged, should all be taken into account as we follow the train of the narrative. After the death of Jair, the Israelites fell into idolatry, and were punished by subjection to the Philistines on the west of Jordan, and to the Ammonites on the east. The oppression which they sustained for eighteen years became at length so heavy, that they were led, in deep humiliation, to return to the God of their fathers, who graciously gave them promise of deliverance from their affliction. The tribes

beyond Jordan having resolved to oppose the Ammonites, Jephthah seems to occur to every one as the most appropriate leader. A deputation was accordingly sent to invite him to take the command. He first reproached them with their expulsion of him from his father's house; but on their repeated entreaties he offered to be their leader, if they would submit to him as their chief after the wars should be ended, to which they assented. The Ammonites being assembled for one of those ravaging excursions by which they frequently desolated the land, he sent to them a formal complaint of the invasion, and a demand of the ground of their proceedings. Their answer was, that the land of the Israelites was theirs; that it had originally belonged to them, from whom it had been taken by the Amorites, who had been dispossessed by the Israelites; and on these grounds they claimed the restitution of their lands. Jephthah laid down the principle, which has been adopted in the practice and incorporated into the law of nations since, that the land belonged to the Israelites by the right of conquest from the actual possessors, and that they could not be expected to recognize any antecedent claims of former possessors for whom they had not acted, who had rendered them no assistance, and who had themselves showed hostility against the Israelites. But the Ammonites reasserted their claims, and on this issue they engaged in the conflict. Before engaging in battle with the Ammonites, Jephthah, in a most solemn manner, vowed a vow unto the Lord, to be fulfilled in the result of a victory granted to him over the enemy. This brings us to the affecting and thrilling incidents connected with Jephthah's daughter. We quote the passage from Scripture :

“ And Jephthah vowed a vow unto the Lord, and said, If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into my hands, then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of

Ammon, shall surely be the Lord's, and I will offer it up for a burnt-offering. So Jephthah passed over unto the children of Ammon, to fight against them, and the Lord delivered them into his hands. And he smote them from Aroer, even till thou come to Minnith, even twenty cities, and unto the plain of the vineyards, with a very great slaughter. Thus the children of Ammon were subdued before the children of Israel. And Jephthah came to Mizpeh unto his house, and behold, his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances: and she was his only child; beside her he had neither son nor daughter. And it came to pass, when he saw her, that he rent his clothes, and said, Alas, my daughter! thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me; for I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back. And she said unto him, My father, if thou hast opened thy mouth unto the Lord, do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth; forasmuch as the Lord hath taken vengeance for thee of thine enemies, even of the children of Ammon. And she said unto her father, Let this thing be done for me: let me alone two months, that I may go up and down upon the mountains, and bewail my virginity, I and my fellows. And he said, Go. And he sent her away for two months: and she went with her companions, and bewailed her virginity upon the mountains. And it came to pass, at the end of two months, that she returned unto her father, who did with her according to his vow which he had vowed. And it was a custom in Israel, that the daughters of Israel went yearly to lament the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite four days in a year."—JUDGES xi. 30-40.

The first inquiry which arrests the attention of the mind respects the *nature and import of Jephthah's vow*. The general nature of a vow is that of a promissory oath, referring to future service and duty. Sometimes vows were of a more general character, and at other times more specific, in return for some benefit sought and received. They were very common under the Old Testament dispensation. In case of danger, difficulty, and distress, the pious at that period, in seeking protection and deliverance, offered vows unto God, that, if the desired benefits should be bestowed, certain services stipulated would be rendered. Thus Jacob, when he went forth an exile from his father's

house, after the remarkable vision of the ladder reaching from earth to heaven, vowed a vow, saying, "If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God, and the stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house." Of this God particularly reminded Jacob on his return, when he delayed, and failed to erect the altar at Bethel as God's house. Hannah vowed unto the Lord, when she asked a child from the Lord, and fulfilled that vow when she brought the child Samuel to the sanctuary, and said, "I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth, he shall be lent to the Lord." We find the Israelites nationally vowing, when supplicating for victory over the Canaanites, Num. xxi. 2. Those vows of a general nature, in which we feel and express our cordial and unreserved subjection to his service, while the divine claims are enforced and impressed by a consideration of his providential and gracious favors, are warranted and sustained by the relations we bear to God, and are interwoven with the exercise and culture of the spiritual life. In this view they are perpetuated under the gospel, and are the appropriate exercise of every Christian. Of such vows the Psalmist speaks when he says, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows now unto the Lord in the presence of all his people." Psalm cxvi. 12-14. And again, "Thy vows are upon me, O God; I will render praises unto thee, for thou hast delivered my soul from death. Wilt thou not deliver my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the land of the living?" Psalm lvi. 12, 13. The vows peculiarly recognizing and pledging certain defined and particular services in return for benefits sought and received, though not wholly to be discouraged, must be carefully guarded, and always be

regulated by the clearly revealed will of God in his word, and be entirely compatible with the fulfilment of the whole circle of Christian duties. In their more specific form, binding to a peculiar service, these vows appear to have been in a measure appropriate to the Old Testament dispensation, and suited to its genius and spirit. In the opening and progress of the gospel dispensation, more spiritual and expansive in its character, those vows characterize her which spring from the power of Christian faith and love, and pledge fidelity to all his service, as illustrated by his word and indicated by his providence. Specific vows of a stipulated return for providential benefits, unless most carefully formed and entertained, may bring a snare. The fulfilment may be rendered impracticable, perhaps unjustifiable, or may interfere with the harmonious adjustment and discharge of every Christian duty. Still, events in the providence of God will lead to the consideration and discharge of particular duties as an expression of gratitude. A superstitious mind, or an evil heart and conscience, may pervert such vows. The influence of the superstitious mind occurred in the case of Jephthah, and that of an evil heart and conscience in the case of the forty Jews who had bound themselves by an oath not to eat or drink till they had killed Paul.

There were vows peculiarly prescribed under the Levitical dispensation, and interwoven with its ceremonial, typical, and temporary character. Many of them are specified, and rules for commutation of the articles vowed are laid down in the twenty-seventh chapter of Leviticus. Jephthah vowed that "whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, shall surely be the Lord's, and I will offer it up for a burnt-offering." "The two principal forms of vow were the *cherem* and the *neder*. The former denoted that the person or thing vowed unto the Lord was accursed, and thus devoted unto him, and could not be redeemed, Lev. xxvii. 28, and answered to the

anathema of the Septuagint and New Testament. When it respected persons and animals of any kind, it implied that they were devoted to destruction; but when it respected things, it implied that they were either to be utterly consumed by fire, or to be forever devoted to the Lord for religious purposes. In its application to persons, it appears to have been applied to heathen, aliens, &c.; nor do we any where read that the father of a family was ever authorized thus to anathematize any of his household. The utter destruction of Jericho, with all that it contained except Rahab, was a striking instance of the *cherem*. There was a second kind of vow, of a milder character, termed *neder* (the word used in the original for the vow of Jephthah), by which one engaged to perform a particular act of piety, as for instance to bring an offering to God, or otherwise to dedicate any thing to him. The objects of this sort of vow were various, as clean and unclean beasts, lands, the tithes of lands, houses, and the person of the vower himself, of all of which we have an account in the twenty-seventh chapter of Leviticus. These various objects, with the exception of clean beasts, might be redeemed by paying at the rates and conditions prescribed in that chapter." (*Bush*.) Thus we see that the vow of Jephthah (being a *neder*) might have been redeemed by paying thirty shekels of silver, the valuation of a female.

Human sacrifices were expressly forbidden by the law of Moses, and emphatically declared an abomination in the sight of God, as found among the heathen. Deut. xii. 31: "Thou shalt not do so unto the Lord thy God; for every abomination to the Lord which he hateth have they done unto their gods; for even their sons and their daughters have they burnt in the fire to their gods." It was one of the grand reasons assigned for driving out the Canaanites, that, among other abominations, they offered their sons and daughters to

Moloch. Human sacrifices were as expressly forbidden by the letter of the law as they are contrary to its spirit. If the vow of Jephthah involved and implied a human sacrifice, it was in the face of the express precept of the law, while proviso was made for the redemption of a person devoted by a vow, at an estimated price. Such a vow was therefore in its very conception unlawful, and duty required it to be at once renounced and broken. Yet when we regard the history, circumstances, and character of Jephthah, we may readily suppose that he may have been drawn away from the proper study of the laws and statutes of Israel. He was born at a time of great degeneracy—was brought up beyond Jordan, at a distance from the tabernacle—and was in constant contact with heathen tribes, so that he would become familiar with their idolatrous practices. He had been engaged in the tumults and conflicts of partisan warfare—employments little adapted to remove imbibed prejudices, or restrain and purify evil affections. Superstition blinds the understanding, perverts the affections, and often becomes the parent of a reckless and bloody fanaticism; while genuine religion sheds light in the mind, opens the fountain of love within the soul, and brings every blind prejudice and evil affection under the control of truth and love. On the supposition that Jephthah vowed and offered a human sacrifice, it only stands marked as his sin. Scripture throughout gives a simple statement of actions, and leaves us to apply the test of the law and the testimony.

The words of Jephthah's vow have given rise to critical investigations and to different interpretations, of which there are three principal ones. The first strictly follows the words of the present standard version: "*whatsoever* cometh forth of the doors of my house," &c., "shall be the Lord's, *and* I will offer *it* up for a burnt-offering." This has a general reference to whatever might come out

of the door of his house, whether human or brute beings, and is the interpretation given by Josephus, and the larger proportion of Jewish and Christian writers of the highest authority. The second interpretation adopts the rendering, "*whosoever* cometh," &c., "I will offer *him* [or *her*] up for a burnt-offering." This supposes Jephthah to have had a human sacrifice directly in view, and is adopted by the Septuagint and Vulgate versions. The third follows the rendering in the margin of our English Bibles: "whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house," &c., "shall be the Lord's, **OR** I will offer it up for a burnt-offering." Here the copulative particle *and* is changed into the disjunctive *or*—a meaning which the original sometimes possesses, and which relieves us from the unpleasant supposition of a human sacrifice. The comparison of various criticisms and comments does not leave the subject entirely without perplexity, and only gives to the solution adopted one of high probability. The inference upon the whole, to our mind, is in favor of the first translation, which states that *whatever* came out of the door of his house to meet him, should be the Lord's, and he would offer *it* up for a burnt-offering. When he met coming out of the door of his house a human being, and that his only, beloved daughter, disappointment, surprise, and overwhelming grief seized upon him; yet he felt constrained to fulfil the letter of his vow, and declared that, having opened his mouth unto the Lord, he could not go back. The succinct account of the meeting of Jephthah with his daughter, his exclamation, and her response, all seem to indicate this, and cannot be well understood without such a reference. Her asking for two months' reprieve appears grounded on the supposed forfeiture of life. We do not read in the Old Testament of any custom or institution connected with consecration to God, to give plausibility to the supposition that this was the alternative in the third or last translation referred to.

This brings before us JEPHTHAH AND HIS DAUGHTER IN THE TRYING SCENE OF THEIR MEETING AFTER HIS TRIUMPHANT RETURN FROM THE SCENE OF HIS VICTORIES. The sacred writer says of her, with great simplicity and pathos, "she was his only child; beside her he had neither son nor daughter." Parental affection has a tender and powerful influence in the heart of man beyond any other, and He who indited the Sacred Scriptures, and framed the spirit of man, has represented it in various ways and with emphatic point in his word. When this feeling is concentrated on an only child, fair and lovely, on whom repose the hopes of the family, it gains an intensity. How expressive is the appeal in the command given to Abraham to offer up his son Isaac! "Take now thy *son*, thine *only son* Isaac, whom thou *lovest*." It caused every fibre in his heart to quiver, while he was brought to yield to this test of his faith and obedience. How does every sympathetic feeling respond to the reference to the young man of Nain, who was raised from the dead! "He was the *only* son of his mother, and she was a *widow*." We may imagine this daughter of Jephthah, this *only* child, in the very bloom of youth, with every budding virtue, conveying delight and inspiring hope to her fond parent. From the bustling scenes of conflict he retires to his home, where this only daughter is the centre of delightful regard, and the minister of comfort and enjoyment, and where her gentle spirit has a soothing and moulding influence upon the stern spirit of the warrior. He is now called to lead the armies of Israel against the Ammonites, and conduct them to victory, and procure their secure possession of their inheritance in the land. The daughter, in remembrance of the annals of her kindred and country, in attachment to the ordinances of their faith and worship, feels the emotions of patriotism and piety blending with strong filial affection, in inspiring an intense interest in the impending conflict. The part-

ing scene is one with which "a stranger could not intermeddle." With mutual embraces they bid adieu, and blend their prayers before the throne in prospect of the contest now to be met. The warrior goes forth: and in preparing himself and his armies for the battle, asks success from God, stipulates a rash vow blindly made and adhered to, the fruit of which he gathered in bitterness of spirit. In the meantime she cherished him in every thought and feeling. From day to day she anxiously awaits intelligence as to the result. At length the tidings reach her that Jephthah and the armies of Israel are crowned with victory, and that the triumph, in the full defeat of the enemy, is complete. Her spirit bounds high with joy, and her loving heart overflows with gratitude. "As a bride decketh herself with ornaments," so she attires herself, and proceeds to meet her father, now approaching in his triumphal train, "with timbrels and with dances." He draws near, and she comes forth out of the door of his house to meet him. She is ready to rush into his arms, when, behold! he stops—a dark cloud lowers over his brow, not of excited anger, but of deep, poignant distress. It darkens, bewilders, distresses him. His sad vow, so blindly and rashly taken, rushes with subduing power into his mind; it turns his spirit into the gall of bitterness, and the fountains of joy into overwhelming grief, while with harrowing emotion he determinately adheres, in strong superstitious regard, to his disastrous vow, and says, "I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back." Who can imagine the emotions of father and daughter in that hour? They must have failed to find expression at first. The inspired writer only touches upon the leading incidents, but in such a manner as to bear us into the sympathy of the scene. When Jephthah finds utterance, with what inimitable, natural, and forcible simplicity and pathos does he speak! "Alas, my daughter! thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one of

them that trouble me." What a transition has taken place in a moment! From the high exultation of military success, and the honors that crowd upon him, he is fallen very low in the humiliation of an embittered spirit, as he contemplates his lovely daughter, and remembers his vow. She who was the joy and rejoicing of his heart, becomes the occasion of his severest trouble and agony of spirit. The only relief which he should have embraced, by breaking his unlawful vow, he refuses, and, in a mistaken regard to religious obligation, says, "I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back." How often are sudden transitions from the brightest sunshine of prosperity to the darkest gloom of adversity, from the highest elevation of joy to the deepest dejection of woe, realized in human life! "Let us not be high-minded, but fear." Guided by the word and upheld by the Spirit of God, let us pass on our way, in prosperity rejoicing with trembling, and in adversity cherishing submission and hope.

We turn to the *daughter*. A space must have intervened, in which, after explanations given, and the discipline of the kindled and swelling emotions which heaved her soul, she became calmed, and was enabled, in filial devotion and pious resignation, to reply to her troubled and agonized parent. What transpired during that intervening space within her own bosom, and in that conference, we can but faintly imagine. But the storm of conflicting emotions that raged within is now past, and amid the freely flowing tears, indicating the tenderness and force of her feelings, there appears the rainbow of peace beaming forth in her countenance. It marks the inward serenity of spirit in meek acquiescence and settled preparation for the lot which awaited her. In the portrait prefixed, the countenance exhibits a touching expression of such a spirit. She now responds, "My father, if thou hast opened thy mouth unto the Lord, do to me

according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth ; forasmuch as the Lord hath taken vengeance for thee of thine enemies, even of the children of Ammon." She gratefully acknowledges the blessing her father had asked, victory over Ammon ; views the vow connected with it as if owned and recorded in heaven ; with filial affection and devotion seeks to relieve his troubled spirit, and calmly resigns herself to her appointed lot, only asking a delay for two months. There is a moral heroism displayed in the meek endurance, the patient suffering, the ever active and unwearied sympathies in the domestic and social spheres of life, far more impressive and valuable than the active energy and fearless courage of men in the bustling pursuits and strifes of life. We view Jephthah's daughter, and think of the "lamb led to the slaughter." WILLIS beautifully alludes to this scene in the course of his poem on Jephthah's daughter :

" A moment more,
 And he had reached his home ; when, lo ! there sprang
 One with a bounding footstep and a brow
 Of light, to meet him. Oh, how beautiful !
 Her dark eyes flashing like a sunlit gem,
 And her luxuriant hair—'t was like the sweep
 Of a swift wing in visions. He stood still,
 As if the sight had withered him. She threw
 Her arms about his neck.—He heeded not.
 She called him Father ! and he answered not.
 She stood, and gazed upon him. Was he wroth ?
 There was no anger in that bloodshot eye.
 Had sickness seized him ? She unclasped his helm,
 And laid her white hands gently on his brow ;
 And the large veins felt hard and stiff like cords.
 The touch aroused him. He raised up his hands,
 And spake the name of God in agony.

She knew that he was stricken then, and rushed
 Again into his arms, and with a flood
 Of tears she could not bridle, sobbed a prayer
 That he would breathe his agony in words.
 He told her, and a momentary flush
 Shot o'er her countenance ; and then the soul
 O Jephthah's daughter wakened ; and she stood
 Calmly and nobly up, and said 't was well,
 And she would die."

After a reprieve of two months, it is said " that she returned unto her father, who did with her according to his vow which he had vowed : and she knew no man. And it was a custom in Israel, that the daughters of Israel went yearly to lament the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite four days in a year." There is much conflicting opinion whether Jephthah did, after the return of his daughter, actually offer her in sacrifice. Many, who hold to the belief that the vow was viewed on this occasion, and perhaps originally intended, to apply to a human sacrifice, and that Jephthah's daughter yielded to the vow thus interpreted, and prepared herself as a voluntary victim, still come to the conclusion that the sacrifice was not finally accomplished. The words, " he did with her *according* to his vow which he had vowed," may be rendered more indefinitely, " he did to her his vow," which does not determine the precise mode of its fulfilment. Nothing is said as to the circumstances of the sacrifice, but there is immediately added a reference to her virginity. Where it is said that " the daughters of Israel went yearly to lament the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite," the word translated *lament* may be correctly rendered " *to talk with,*" as in the margin of our English Bible, or to condole with her ; as, in this alternative, it is supposed she was consigned to perpetual virginity — deemed, particularly among the Jews,

an affliction. It may be well conceived that, during the two intervening months, the subject of Jephthah's vow must have been publicly known and become the topic of general interest and conversation. The priests and interpreters of the law would in such a case have pronounced its original unlawfulness, and have referred to the stipulated price of redemption. After a perusal of the criticism and discussion on this passage, the conclusion we reach does not go beyond a prevailing strong probability; and we must be content to leave it in this position, without the indulgence of curious and unprofitable conjecture. Whether the sacrifice was finally accomplished or not, the tenor of the narrative decisively indicates that at the meeting of Jephthah and his daughter, on his return from the victory, his vow was viewed by both as devoting her in sacrifice, and that in this view she yielded herself a submissive and willing victim.

In perusing the narrative before us, our minds are led to recall the history of the trial of Abraham, in being required to offer in burnt-offering his only, his beloved son Isaac. There are points of similarity and coincidence in these cases which present themselves, particularly in the meek, submissive, and affectionately filial spirit of the devoted victims. But there was one prominent, marked point of contrast between them. Jephthah's vow was voluntarily assumed, and pledged in the ardor of his feelings and hopes, when he sought of God success in the impending conflict. It was rashly made, not guided by knowledge, and contrary to the express law of the God of Israel. A superstitious and false sense of religious obligation prompted him, at least for a time, to adhere to his cruel and unlawful vow. Well might he have been addressed in the name of God, "Who hath required this at your hands?" On the contrary, the plain, explicit, and peremptory command of Jehovah was laid upon Abraham, and it proved a severe trial of his faith and feelings, before he yielded obe-

dience. "By *faith* Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac, accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead, from whence also he received him in a figure." Heb. xi. 17. Wondrous and impressive scene on Mount Moriah, holding forth in typical vision the sacrifice on that very spot, CALVARY, in the fulness of time, where God provided his only and beloved Son as "a lamb for burnt-offering." On Mount Moriah it was said to Abraham, "In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen." It was seen when the Lamb of God, his only begotten Son, giving up the ghost, said, "IT IS FINISHED!" And now the Christian, with unwavering faith and unfailing consolation, resting on this finished work of redemption, embraces God in Christ as JEHOVAH JIREH, the Lord will provide.

The legend in profane history relating to Agamemnon and his daughter Iphigenia, is in its leading circumstances assimilated to this history of Jephthah and his daughter. Agamemnon, it is said, having incurred the displeasure of Diana, applied to the oracle, and was directed to offer his daughter Iphigenia in sacrifice. It is generally stated, in the different accounts of the tradition, that, as she was brought to the altar for that purpose, she disappeared, and was taken away, and a stag substituted in her place. Singularly, the name of *Iphigenia* answers to that of Jephthah's daughter. *Iphi* is akin to *Jephthah*, and *genia* may signify *born of*, or a daughter. It is curious to trace many of the facts handed down traditionally among different heathen nations, varying perhaps in some circumstances, but evidently referring to the same substantially.

A few hints only can be given on some of the instructions interwoven in this narrative.

1. The contemplation of the times and circumstances in which Jephthah was placed, should lead us *gratefully to value the signal privileges and advantages which we enjoy under the gospel.* The light

which Jephthah enjoyed was but the dim twilight ray of an opening morning, and the spirit nurtured amid war and the rudeness of the times little fitted him to mark and improve these rays of light. Now the gospel, "which brings life and immortality to light," shines in meridian splendor. The types and shadows have received their fulfilment in the completion of the redeeming work of the Saviour, and the facts of Christianity are now matters of history. "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ," while "the law came by Moses." Clear light now shines forth, and enlarged privileges and spiritual influence are extended without limitation. Paul speaks of the gospel dispensation as "the ministration of the Spirit," in contrast with the former as "a ministry of condemnation." "Blessed are our eyes, for they see what kings and prophets desired to see, and yet saw not." "The day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them who sit in darkness, to guide our feet into the way of peace." The gospel proclaims and brings "glory to God in the highest; peace on earth, and good will towards men." It is the great mission of the Church of Christ to diffuse this gospel with its blessings, and establish through the earth that kingdom which is "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

2. We learn from this narrative *the sacredness of a solemn vow or promise, and at the same time the great care, deliberation, and discretion with which it should be formed and offered.* If a vow or promise is made which is contrary to the will of God, and therefore unlawful, it is void in itself, and duty requires it to be broken. But when it is not contrary to God's revealed will, it should be faithfully and strictly fulfilled at every sacrifice and hazard. It is one of the characteristics of him "who dwells in the tabernacle of the Most High, and abides in His holy hill," that he not only "speaks the truth in his heart," but also "swaureth to his own hurt, and changeth not." Solomon

very fitly says, in the fifth chapter of Ecclesiastes, "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thy heart be hasty to utter any thing before God. When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it. Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay."

3. *In the spirit and conduct of Jephthah's daughter, we find some of the elements which enter into the excellence and beauty of female character.* We see prominent in her an affectionate and dutiful filial spirit. Filial piety lays the most sure basis of character to be developed in other relations and in all circumstances of life. "Honor thy father and thy mother," is the only commandment which has special promise pertaining to this life. Hers was the "ornament of a meek and quiet spirit," which in the sight of God is "of great price," and should be so in the sight of man. Blended with it and springing from it was a moral heroism and self-sacrificing devotion. These and kindred elements of female character, combined, form a happy and strong influence in the circle of home and the whole sphere of society.

4. *The narrative impresses us not only with the endearment, but also with the momentous responsibility, of the parental relation.* Children with the embryo of immortality are cast upon the affection, care, and fidelity of their parents, to seek and promote the *life* of their souls, to train them for Christ and heaven—thus securing their best interest in this life, as well as that which is to come. Hannah *vowed* to lend her child to the Lord as long as he lived. God has graciously extended to us his promise, "I will be a God to thee and to thy seed after thee," signified and sealed in the precious baptismal ordinance of his Church. Casting our faith upon this promise, let us feel it our privilege to leave before him our vows to bring up our children in "the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Too many parents, alas! yield their children to the full influence of the world, which stands,

Moloch-like, ready to draw them into its arms for the destruction of their souls. Be it our care so to watch over them by prayer and faith, and so to guide them by precept and example, that, under the Divine blessing, we may be prepared to meet our children among the redeemed of Christ in heaven, and in that heavenly recognition gratefully confess—**BEHOLD, HERE ARE WE, AND THE CHILDREN THOU HAST GIVEN US."**





DELILAH.

. . . the next I took to wife
(O that I never had! fond wish too late)
Was in the vale of Sorec, Dalila,
That specious monster, my accomplish'd snare.

MILTON'S *Samson Agonistes*.

THERE she stands — the beautiful traitress — “so fair, and yet so false!” Her witcheries have at last succeeded; the strong man’s secret has been enticed from him; and, shorn of his strength, a handful of those who once by multitudes fled from him in dismay, have overcome him, fettered him, and carried him away. She yet remains upon the scene, meditating upon her bold and treacherous deed and its probable consequences. The complacent smile of success overspreads her countenance — the fatal shears by which the mystic locks have been severed, just returned to her by her accomplice, are still in her hand — and the price of her treason in piles of gold lies by her side. But surely she must have been deceived in regard to the ultimate purpose of her seducers: she cannot have suspected what cruel punishment was in store for her victim — that the eyes which an hour ago had gazed upon her in delighted love, and then, under the soothing influence of her caresses, as the head of

Samson lay pillowed upon her lap, had closed in soft confiding slumber—that those eyes were to be torn from their sockets, and their light quenched for ever,—else, cold and mercenary as she is, some compunctious visitings would have reached her heart, and she would begin to regret the success of her artifice, and would at least have been shedding a few transient tears over her lover's hapless fate.

Doubtless then she acted under a delusion ; and when “ the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and said unto her, Entice him, and see wherein his great strength lieth, and by what means we may prevail against him, that we may bind him to afflict him,” she supposed that this was the extent of the evil to which she would subject him—bonds, and a temporary confinement, from which she could probably in the course of time prevail to release him. Had the open proposal been made to her that he was to be killed, or maimed for life, we cannot believe that the eleven hundred pieces of silver, five or even ten times told, would have tempted her ; otherwise might she not have permitted him to be slain, or his eyes to be thrust out in an instant, while under the influence of deep sleep ? No, it was only bodily restraint that she contemplated ; and to this perhaps she was reconciled, through fear that, restless and inconstant as he was, he might soon break away from her softer toils, and she lose him altogether.

On this favorable supposition does Milton represent her as artfully reasoning out her apology, when, in his poetical drama upon this subject, he introduces Delilah as coming to the prison to visit the sightless victim of her treachery, and, if possible, to regain his confidence and affection. We will not quote the passage here, because as a sequel to this brief sketch, and as filling out its deficiencies in the delineation of female character, and moreover with the intent of bringing to the notice of some of our readers a poem by

the great master of verse, constructed with exquisite and classical art, and clothed in language of great power and beauty, but almost lost sight of in the constant pouring flood of modern writers, we propose to insert the scene between Samson and Delilah. An able critic characterizes this scene as “drawn up with great judgment and particular beauty. One cannot conceive a more artful, soft, and persuasive eloquence than that which is put into the mouth of Delilah, nor is the part of Samson less to be admired for that stern and resolute firmness which runs through it. What also gives both parts a great additional beauty, is their forming a fine contrast with each other.”

But from this promised treat we must yet detain our readers, to listen to another supposition, as suggested by the artist's picture, and one which carries us back a little farther to a previous scene in the cruel drama. Delilah there stands out before us, not having yet succeeded in her treacherous design. She has been seduced to attempt it by the promise of a large reward. The five* Philistine lords are to give her each eleven hundred pieces of silver for the secret of Samson's strength. She has made three successive attempts to draw it from him, and he, by playful yet dextrous evasion, has escaped them all.

Wonderful indeed is it that he did not begin to mistrust some evil intention as the cause of her pertinacious efforts; but he is generous and confiding, he has the attributes of strength and courage, and these ever indispose their possessor to originate or cherish suspicions. He imagines, doubtless, that she is only incited by her womanly curiosity. When, therefore, by long entreaties, repeated caresses, abundant tears and reproaches, and all the power of woman's artillery, against which the strongest defences of the heart

* Judges iii. 3.

and even the understanding of man have so often proved unavailing, she has at last triumphed, he commits to her the fatal knowledge, never for a moment supposing that with it goes his liberty and life. How succinctly and yet how graphically is all this related in the sacred narrative !

And she said unto him, How canst thou say, I love thee, when thine heart is not with me ? Thou hast mocked me these three times, and hast not told me wherein thy great strength lieth. And it came to pass, when she pressed him daily with her words, and urged him, so that his soul was vexed unto death, that he told her all his heart, and said unto her, There hath not come a razor upon mine head ; for I have been a Nazarite unto God from my mother's womb : if I be shaven, then my strength will go from me, and I shall become weak, and be like any other man. And when Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, Come up this once ; for he hath shewed me all his heart. Then the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and brought money in their hand.

This, then, is the moment chosen by the artist. The lords of the Philistines have made their visit, the secret of Samson's strength has been communicated to them, and they have counted out to her, in golden coin, the equivalent of the five thousand five hundred pieces of silver she was to receive. Pleased with her success, and holding the ready instrument in her hand, she is plotting how she may best contrive the severance of the seven sacred locks of hair from the head of the yet resistless one, and she carries with her the smile of self-satisfaction to become the smile of hypocrisy, which shall win the deluded and doting Samson to recline himself and rest his fated head upon her knees.

But we must now set aside the sketch which the artist's fancy has delineated, and direct our attention for a moment to the scriptural narrative. Of Delilah's parentage, and her history previous and sub-

sequent to her connection with Samson, we know nothing. We are told simply that he loved this woman in the valley of Sorek. This valley was situated at the south of the territory of the tribe of Dan, and took its name from the brook which ran through it, and fell into the Mediterranean sea, near Ashkelon. It was on the borders, therefore, of the land of the Philistines. But whether Delilah was a woman of Israel, of the tribe of Dan, or of Philistine origin, is left in doubt. And it is equally uncertain whether she became the wife of Samson, or was connected with him only in the way of unlawful concubinage. Upon this point one of the older writers quaintly remarks, that if the former was the case, Samson made a most unfortunate choice ; if the latter, he dearly paid for the indulgence of his criminal passion. The Jews generally, and especially Josephus, declare her to have been a Philistine, and a woman of abandoned character, thus shielding the reputation of the daughters of Israel at the expense of that of their hero.

The supposition that she was a woman of Philistia we are inclined to adopt as being the most probable, for it would be hard to believe that a wife of Israel, how abandoned soever she might be, would thus betray her husband into the hands of her nation's bitterest enemies ; or that a daughter of Israel, if she could so far forget her sense of character, and despise the threatenings of the law, as to play the harlot, would yet crown her wickedness by so base an act of treachery. But that Delilah was other than the lawful wife of Samson, we are disinclined to believe ; not, however, from respect to any single trait of character which she exhibited. Artful, mercenary, and destitute of natural affection, she was fitted to be the prototype of her against whom Solomon utters the voice of warning : " For the lips of a strange woman drop as a honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil : but her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a

two-edged sword, Her feet go down to death ; her steps take hold on hell." Proverbs v. 3, 4, 5. Samson, however, was a Judge in Israel, a Nazarite from his birth, and had some regard for his public character and high responsibilities, and though a man of strong passions, and in danger of being led astray by some sudden impulse, as we know he was, in Gaza, yet it is not probable that he would consent to live for a lengthened space of time in open violation of the law of God.

But our purpose is not an account of Samson, or a vindication of his character. Our subject is she whom his cruel and miserable end has brought out to an unenviable notoriety amongst the Women of the Bible. She was a wife, indeed, taken by one who should have been a man of God, and the deliverer of his nation, and who, had his choice been a wise and holy one, might have been aided in accomplishing this glorious purpose ; but she was a wife taken under the influence of headstrong passion from amongst an idolatrous and wicked people, and, therefore, became to her husband

"That specious monster, his accomplish'd snare."

Ere we conclude, therefore, can we refrain from uttering a word of reflection upon the immeasurable influence for good or for evil of the conjugal relation? Upon this depends, in a great measure, the virtue as well as happiness of the two whom it binds together in the most sacred of earthly ties. With what careful circumspection, then, and what solemn sense of accountability should engagements be contemplated involving such momentous consequences, and which, when ratified, are designed to terminate only with life! Not without reason has the Almighty protected the conjugal relation with the strongest safeguards in its declared perpetuity and inviolability, and the Church provided that it shall be formed under the sanctifying

influence of a holy rite. It is a religious service, and so sacred and so mysterious is it, so designed to communicate to man the purest and best blessings of which his fallen nature is susceptible, and sweetly and mercifully to help him "so to pass through things temporal, that he finally lose not the things eternal," that the word of inspiration has made it the emblem of that union between heaven and earth, when Christ, as the bridegroom, so loved the Church, his bride, that he "gave himself for it," "that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing."*

Is it not, then, a grievous wrong done to society, and a prime cause of many of the evils which infest it, and at the same time an awful jeopardizing of the present happiness and eternal salvation of at least two, and probably many more immortal beings, when the most sacred of all contracts is entered into without any thought of religious responsibility? When the motives to it are fancy, or passion, or worldly interest, and these alone? While this is the case, must not that which was designed to be the highest blessing to individual man, and to society at large, often prove to both a bane and a curse? Would that the caution expressed in words replete with holy sentiment, as well as poetic beauty, could ever be heard and heeded!

"Oh, happy lot, and hallowed even as the joy of angels,
 When the golden chain of godliness is entwined with the bands of love :
 The idol of thy heart is as thou, a probationary sojourner on earth ;
 Therefore be chary of her soul, for that is the jewel in her casket.
 Let her be a child of God, that she bring with her a blessing to thy house —
 A blessing above riches, and leading contentment in its train :

* Ephesians v. 27.

Let her be an heir of heaven ; so shall she help thee on thy way ;
 For those who are one in faith, fight double-handed against evil.
 And at eventide kneel ye together, that your joy be not unhallowed ;
 Bride and bridegroom, pilgrims of life, henceforward to travel together,
 In this beginning of your journey, neglect not the favor of Heaven.
 Angels that are round you shall be glad—those loving ministers of mercy !
 And the richest blessings of your God shall be poured on his favored children.

(*M. F. Tupper.*)

A union thus formed, and thus cemented, is the harbinger of joy, that, without perverting inspired words, we may say, is “unspeakable and full of glory.”

But we must arrest a course of thought and reflection into which our subject seemed to invite us, and make good our promise, too long deferred, by filling up our meagre sketch with, or, rather say, by substituting for it, the well-drawn portrait by the master-hand.

Chorus. But who is this, what thing of sea or land ?
 Female of sex it seems,
 That so bedeck'd, ornate and gay,
 Comes this way sailing
 Like a stately ship
 Of Tarsus, bound for th' isles
 Of Javan or Gadire
 With all her bravery on, and tackle trim,
 Sails fill'd, and streamers waving,
 Courted by all the winds that hold them play,
 An amber scent of odorous perfume
 Her harbinger, a damsel train behind ?
 Some rich Philistian matron she may seem,
 And now at nearer view, no other certain
 Than Dalila thy wife.

Samson. My wife, my traitress, let her not come near me.

Chor. Yet on she moves, now stands and eyes thee fix'd,
About to have spoke, but now, with head declined,
Like a fair flower surcharged with dew, she weeps,
And words address'd seem into tears dissolved,
Wetting the borders of her silken veil ;
But now again she makes address to speak.

Dal. With doubtful feet and wavering resolution
I came, still dreading thy displeasure, Samson,
Which to have merited, without excuse,
I cannot but acknowledge ; yet if tears
May expiate (though the fact more evil drew
In the perverse event than I foresaw)
My penance hath not slacken'd, though my pardon
No way assured. But conjugal affection
Prevailing over fear, and timorous doubt,
Hath led me on, desirous to behold
Once more thy face, and know of thy estate,
If aught in my ability may serve
To lighten what thou suffer'st, and appease
Thy mind with what amends is in my power,
Though late, yet in some part to recompense
My rash but more unfortunate misdeed.

Sam. Out, out, hyena ; these are thy wonted arts,
And arts of every woman false like thee,
To break all faith, all vows, deceive, betray,
Then, as repentant, to submit, beseech,
And reconciliation move with feign'd remorse,
Confess, and promise wonders in her change,
Not truly penitent, but chief to try
Her husband, how far urged his patience bears,
His virtue or weakness which way to assail :
Then with more cautious and instructed skill
Again transgresses, and again submits ;

That wisest and best men, full oft beguiled,
 With goodness principled not to reject
 The penitent, but ever to forgive,
 Are drawn to wear out miserable days,
 Entangled with a pois'nous bosom snake,
 If not by quick destruction soon cut off,
 As I by thee, to ages an example.

Dal. Yet hear me, Samson ; not that I endeavor
 To lessen or extenuate my offence,
 But that on the other side if it be weigh'd
 By itself, with aggravations not surcharged,
 Or else with just allowance counterpoised,
 I may, if possible, thy pardon find
 The easier towards me, or thy hatred less.
 First granting, as I do, it was a weakness
 In me, but incident to all our sex,
 Curiosity, inquisitive, importune
 Of secrets, then with like infirmity
 To publish them, both common female faults :
 Was it not weakness also to make known
 For importunity, that is for nought,
 Wherein consisted all thy strength and safety ?
 To what I did, thou show'dst me first the way.
 But I to enemies reveal'd, and should not :
 Nor should'st thou have trusted that to woman's frailty :
 Ere I to thee, thou to thyself wast cruel.
 Let weakness then with weakness come to parle
 So near related, or the same of kind,
 Thine forgive mine : that men may censure thine
 The gentler, if severely thou exact not
 More strength from me than in thyself was found.
 And what if love, which thou interpret'st hate,
 The jealousy of love, powerful of sway
 In human hearts, nor less in mine tow'rds thee,

Caused what I did? I saw thee mutable
 Of fancy, fear'd lest one day thou would'st leave me
 As her at Timna, sought by all means therefore
 How to endear, and hold thee to me firmest :
 No better way I saw than by importuning
 To learn thy secrets, get into my power
 Thy key of strength and safety : thou wilt say,
 Why then reveal'd? I was assured by those
 Who tempted me, that nothing was design'd
 Against thee but safe custody and hold :
 That made for me ; I knew that liberty
 Would draw thee forth to perilous enterprises,
 While I at home sat full of cares and fears,
 Wailing thy absence in my widow'd bed ;
 Here I should still enjoy thee day and night
 Mine and Love's prisoner, not the Philistines',
 Whole to myself, unhazarded abroad,
 Fearless at home of partners in my love.
 These reasons in love's law have pass'd for good,
 Though fond and reasonless to some perhaps :
 And love hath oft, well meaning, wrought much woe,
 Yet always pity or pardon hath obtain'd.
 Be not unlike all others, not austere
 As thou art strong, inflexible as steel.
 If thou in strength all mortals dost exceed,
 In uncompassionate anger do not so.

Sam. How cunningly the sorceress displays
 Her own transgressions, to upbraid me mine !
 That malice, not repentance, brought thee hither,
 By this appears : I gave, thou say'st, th' example,
 I led the way : bitter reproach, but true :
 I to myself was false ere thou to me :
 Such pardon therefore as I give my folly,
 Take to thy wicked deed ; which when thou seest

Impartial, self-severe, inexorable,
 Thou wilt renounce thy seeking, and much rather
 Confess it feign'd: weakness is thy excuse,
 And I believe it, weakness to resist
 Philistian gold: if weakness may excuse,
 What murderer, what traitor, parricide,
 Incestuous, sacrilegious, but may plead it?
 All wickedness is weakness: that plea therefore
 With God or man will gain thee no remission.
 But love constrain'd thee; call it furious rage
 To satisfy thy lust; love seeks to have love;
 My love how could'st thou hope, who took'st the way
 To raise in me inexpiable hate,
 Knowing, as needs I must, by thee betray'd?
 In vain thou striv'st to cover shame with shame,
 Or by evasions thy crime uncover'st more.

Dal. Since thou determin'st weakness for no plea
 In man or woman, though to thy own condemning,
 Hear what assaults I had, what snares besides,
 What sieges girt me round, ere I consented;
 Which might have awed the best resolved of men,
 The constantest, to have yielded without blame.
 It was not gold, as to my charge thou lay'st,
 That wrought with me; thou know'st the magistrates
 And princes of my country came in person,
 Solicited, commanded, threaten'd, urged,
 Adjured by all the bonds of civil duty
 And of religion, press'd how just it was,
 How honorable, how glorious, to entrap
 A common enemy, who had destroy'd
 Such numbers of our nation; and the priest
 Was not behind, but ever at my ear,
 Preaching how meritorious with the gods
 It would be to ensnare an irreligious

Dishonorer of Dagon : what had I
 T' oppose against such powerful arguments ?
 Only my love of thee held long debate,
 And combated in silence all these reasons
 With hard contest : at length that grounded maxim,
 So rife and celebrated in the mouths
 Of wisest men, that to the public good
 Private respects must yield, with grave authority
 Took full possession of me and prevail'd :
 Virtue, as I thought, truth, duty, so enjoining.

Sam. I thought where all thy circling wiles would end ;
 In feign'd religion, smooth hypocrisy.
 But had thy love, still odiously pretended,
 Been, as it ought, sincere, it would have taught thee
 Far other reasonings, brought forth other deeds.
 I before all the daughters of my tribe
 And of my nation chose thee from among
 My enemies, loved thee, as too well thou knew'st,
 Too well, unbosom'd all my secrets to thee,
 Not out of levity, but overpower'd
 By thy request, who could deny thee nothing ;
 Yet now am judged an enemy. Why then
 Did'st thou at first receive me for thy husband,
 Then, as since then, thy country's foe profess'd ?
 Being once a wife, for me thou wast to leave
 Parents and country : nor was I their subject,
 Nor under their protection, but my own,
 Thou mine, not theirs : if aught against my life
 Thy country sought of thee, it sought unjustly
 Against the law of nature, law of nations,
 No more thy country, but an impious crew
 Of men conspiring to uphold their state
 By worse than hostile deeds, violating the ends
 For which our country is a name so dear :

Not therefore to be obey'd. But zeal moved thee ;
 To please thy gods thou didst it ; gods unable
 To acquit themselves and prosecute their foes
 But by ungodly deeds, the contradiction
 Of their own deity, gods cannot be ;
 Less therefore to be pleased, obey'd, or fear'd.
 These false pretexts and varnish'd colors failing,
 Bare in thy guilt how foul must thou appear !

Dal. In argument with men, a woman ever
 Goes by the worse, whatever be her cause.

Sam. For want of words no doubt, or lack of breath ;
 Witness when I was worried with thy peals.

Dal. I was a fool, too rash, and quite mistaken
 In what I thought would have succeeded best.
 Let me obtain forgiveness of thee, Samson,
 Afford me place to show what recompense
 Tow'rds thee I intend for what I have misdone,
 Misguided ; only what remains past cure
 Bear not too sensibly, nor still insist
 To afflict thyself in vain : though sight be lost,
 Life yet hath many solaces, enjoy'd
 Where other senses want not their delights
 At home in leisure and domestic ease,
 Exempt from many a care and chance to which
 Eye-sight exposes daily men abroad.
 I to the lords will intercede, not doubting
 Their favorable ear, that I may fetch thee
 From forth this loathsome prison-house, to abide
 With me, where my redoubled love and care
 With nursing diligence, to me glad office,
 May ever tend about thee to old age
 With all things grateful cheer'd, and so applied,
 That what by me thou hast lost thou least shalt miss.

Sam. No no, of my condition take no care ;

It fits not ; thou and I long since are twain :
 Nor think me so unwary or accursed,
 To bring my feet again into the snare
 Where once I have been caught ; I know thy trains
 Though dearly to my cost, thy gins and toils ;
 Thy fair enchanted cup, and warbling charms
 No more on me have power, their force is null'd.
 So much of adder's wisdom I have learn'd
 To fence my ear against thy sorceries.
 If in my flower of youth and strength, when all men
 Loved, honor'd, fear'd me, thou alone couldst hate me
 Thy husband, slight me, sell me, and forego me ;
 How wouldst thou use me now, blind, and thereby
 Deceivable, in most things as a child
 Helpless, thence easily contemn'd, and scorn'd,
 And last neglected ? How wouldst thou insult,
 When I must live uxorious to thy will
 In perfect thralldom, how again betray me,
 Bearing my words and doings to the lords
 To gloss upon, and, censuring, frown or smile ?
 This jail I count the house of liberty
 To thine, whose doors my feet shall never enter.

Dal. Let me approach at least, and touch thy hand.

Sam. Not for thy life, lest fierce remembrance wake
 My sudden rage to tear thee joint by joint.
 At distance I forgive thee, go with that,
 Bewail thy falsehood, and the pious works
 It hath brought forth to make thee memorable
 Among illustrious women, faithful wives :
 Cherish thy hasten'd widowhood with the gold
 Of matrimonial treason : so farewell.

Dal. I see thou art implacable, more deaf
 To prayers than winds and seas, yet winds to seas
 Are reconciled at length, and sea to shore :

Thy anger unappeasable, still rages,
 Eternal tempest never to be calm'd.
 Why do I humble thus myself, and suing
 For peace, reap nothing but repulse and hate?
 Bid go with evil omen and the brand
 Of infamy upon my name denounced?
 To mix with thy concernments I desist
 Henceforth, nor too much disapprove my own.
 Fame if not double-faced is double-mouth'd,
 And with contrary blast proclaims most deeds;
 On both his wings, one black, the other white,
 Bears greatest names in his wild aery flight.
 My name perhaps among the circumcised
 In Dan, in Judah, and the bordering tribes,
 To all posterity may stand defamed,
 With malediction mention'd, and the blot
 Of falsehood most unconjugal traduced.
 But in my country, where I most desire,
 In Ecron, Gaza, Ashbod, and in Gath,
 I shall be named among the famousest
 Of women, sung at solemn festivals,
 Living and dead recorded, who, to save
 Her country from a fierce destroyer, chose
 Above the faith of wedlock bands, my tomb
 With odors visited and annual flowers;
 Not less renown'd than in Mount Ephraim
 Jael, who with inhospitable guile
 Smote Sisera sleeping, through the temples nail'd.
 Nor shall I count it heinous to enjoy
 The public marks of honor and reward
 Conferr'd upon me for the piety
 Which to my country I was judged to have shown.
 At this whoever envies or repines,
 I leave him to his lot, and like my own.

Chor. She's gone, a manifest serpent by her sting
Discover'd in the end, till now conceal'd.

Sam. So let her go, God sent her to debase me,
And aggravate my folly, who committed
To such a viper his most sacred trust
Of secrecy, my safety, and my life.



R U T H .

IN one of those day-dreams which happily sometimes cheat the every-day world of its inflictions upon the poor victim of its toil and care, transporting him any where, as it may happen—in a day-dream, I say, when I was wandering in Eastern lands, and meditating upon the wonders of Providence which had been manifested there,—a soft, sweet strain of music fell suddenly upon my ear. Of youth, beauty, and innocence, sang a blithe and kindly voice, and of the heavenly love which, spreading its guardian hand over them, leads them surely, by the rough way or the smooth, to their refuge and their home. Well do I remember the words—I will write them down :

“She stood breast high amid the corn,
Clasped by the golden light of morn,
Like the sweet-heart of the sun
Who many a glowing kiss had won.

On her cheeks an autumn flush
Deeply ripened;—such a blush
In the midst of brown was born,
Like red poppies grown with corn.

Round her eyes her tresses fell —
 Which were blackest none could tell ;
 But long lashes veiled a light
 Which had else been all too bright.

And her hat, with shady brim,
 Made her tressy forehead dim ;
 There she stood, amid the stooks,
 Praising God with sweetest looks.

Sure, I said, Heaven did not mean
 Where I reap thou shouldst but glean ;
 Lay thy sheaf adown, and come,
 Share my harvest and my home.”*

This was uttered by a wanderer and visionary like myself. He had, in his spirit-journey, just passed by the fields of Boaz, and to a single rapid glance at the graceful gleaner of the harvest, we seem to owe the burden of his song. How far it is a mere “fancy sketch,” my readers will determine : if, however, they are not satisfied with it, let the light dream be dispelled, and let us go together and find the original, where she lives for all time as a model of the noblest self-devotion, and of unchanging, unfailing constancy to her duty and her love.

Surely, not the least among the memorable women whose names are recorded in the Bible, is *Ruth the Moabitess*. We are told, in the sacred history, that “in the days when the Judges ruled [in Israel], there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem

* Hood.

Judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab [a neighboring country beyond the Jordan], he and his wife and his two sons." We gather also from the narrative that this family went out from Bethlehem Judah rich. Evil, however, soon fell upon them, and they were brought down to the deepest sorrow and adversity. The head of the household died, and the woman—her name was Naomi—"was left, and her two sons." These sons, after the death of their father, "took them wives of the women of Moab: the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth." A few years passed away, and the two sons died also; "and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband." To the anguish of these bereavements was added the loss of the wealth of this severely stricken family, as we learn from the sorrowful words of Naomi, after her return to her own country: "I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty."

The husband and father had sinned in exposing his wife and children to the temptations of an idolatrous land—for such was the land of Moab—and he was quickly deprived, by death, of the guardianship of those whom he had placed in the midst of danger. The fruits of his sin soon appeared in his children, for they married strange wives of the heathen, and on them also came the judgments of God. The wife and mother, no doubt, in going into the land of Moab, acted purely in obedience to her husband, and after his death was probably unable to restrain her sons, or to persuade them to return to their own country. She was not a willing partaker of their sins, and therefore did she find mercy at the hands of the Judge of all the earth. Though for a time the innocent was not without an apparent share in the punishment of the guilty,—and in the agony of her broken spirit she spoke like one condemned of Heaven, "Call me Mara, for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me Why call

ye me Naomi, seeing the Lord hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?"—yet in the end to Naomi, *my pleasant, my kindly one*,—for so is the name interpreted,—did comfort, and blessing, and honor, arise from the very evils—namely, the sojourn in Moab and the marriage alliances with the women of the land—whence had proceeded the transgression and the punishment of her husband and her sons.

Orpah, one of the daughters-in-law of Naomi, was not converted from heathenism; the other, *Ruth*, by the divine blessing upon her noble nature, became a proselyte of the true religion, and thereafter was an angel of heavenly consolation to the widowed, desolate heart of her mother.

Naomi being "left of her two sons and her husband," resolved to return to her own country. Sad indeed was her condition in Moab, the land of strangers—scarcely less so were her prospects when she turned her face homeward; for what happy visions of *home* could hover above her path of widowhood, and poverty, and tears? In the most gradual succession of the changes of the world—in the gentlest decline from maturity to the grave—the inevitable trial of the spirits of all flesh is hard enough to bear. When this trial comes by degrees during the slow lapse of time—when lengthening years bring the failure of joy and hope, and the gathering together of sorrows,—the mournful shadows still spreading and deepening into the cloud which finally settles down upon the green fields and glittering islands of life—even then to the *strong man* "sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." But to this afflicted *woman* the desolation of long years was accomplished as it were in one day. In mid-life, her *home*, with all its pleasant things, had perished: in the strange land where she dwelt, her only portion was the *graves* of her husband and her children; in her native land, whither she was about to return, her

only possession would be, *her own solitary burial-place*. But in that hour of despair a ministering spirit, as it might be, from the immediate presence of the Father of all Mercies, stood at her side, and gently breathed into the sinking, breaking heart, the eternal truth, "As thy day so shall thy strength be." "He defendeth the cause of the widow, even God in his holy habitation." Her two daughters-in-law, when told by Naomi of her intention to return to Bethlehem Judah, instantly declared that they would go with her. But against this she earnestly remonstrated, gratefully commending their faithfulness and affection—yet representing to them the sacrifices they must make in leaving the land of their birth and kindred, where, being yet in their youth, many friends, many comforts, and the fulfilment of many hopes still awaited them—while, if they should be the companions of her journey to her own land, she had no home, no hope, no one blessing of this world to offer; they must share her lowly and sorrowful estate, her poverty, her widowhood, her living grave. "Turn again, my daughters, why will ye go with me?" "Go, return each to her mother's house; the Lord deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me." "It grieveth me much for your sakes that the hand of the Lord hath gone out against me." "And they lifted up their voice and wept, and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clave unto her."

Orpah was not destitute of affection for Naomi, nor of a desire to perform the duty she owed her. But after the first tumultuous moment of grief at the thought of parting, she began to regard the matter more reasonably, and decided, that the relation between Naomi and herself, being, humanly speaking, ended by the death of her husband, her duty both to the living and the dead, had been already fulfilled. She loved her kind and gentle mother-in-law, and would love her ever; her best wishes would follow her; but for herself, it

could not be required of her, even for the consolation of that poor widow, to leave her native land, and sacrifice thus early all the hopes of her future life. All this, no doubt, was very reasonable—perhaps very amiable—and to the present day it may find approval with the large class of ordinary human beings, of whom Orpah is a fit representative. It were well, if, among those who profess and call themselves Christians, no men or women of this type were to be found. They are, in a manner, affectionate, and not without occasional displays of enthusiasm in their affections—but, in the main, they hold the balance of affection and interest nicely adjusted. They are conscientious to a degree in the matter of duty—but in their diary a profit and loss account is carefully kept. In their love and their duty the most vigilant guard is maintained against the danger of extravagant impulses, and of being “righteous overmuch.” Always at their command are the precise reasons for and against a specific charity—and, as fearing that *mercy* may transcend her authority, they skilfully estimate and distinguish the merits and demerits of the miserable, weighing out with exactest hand bread to the hungry, and applying a scrupulous measure to the sufferings and tears of the widow and the fatherless. Under cover of all this righteous and benevolent dealing, their own temporal interests are sure not to be neglected, nor to lose the *first place* in their pious attention and care. “Orpah kissed her mother-in-law.” Through a generous impulse, she had accompanied her a little way on her sad journey—and then a calmer, more rational view of the reality of the barren pilgrimage being taken, “she kissed her,” bade her an affectionate farewell, turned back to “her people and her gods,” and perhaps soon again “found rest in the house of her husband.”

“Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clave unto her.” Ruth appears never once, in deciding to go with Naomi, to have

bestowed a thought upon an accurate adjustment of duty and interest; nor to have considered whether her feelings were extravagant or reasonable; nor to have entertained any idea that she was making a sacrifice at all. She was not controlled by refined definitions of duty, nor by fears of the excess of an affection "heaven-born, and destined to the skies again." She knew that the widowed Naomi needed her kind support more than it was needed by any one else in the world; and the love of her large yearning heart being her monitor and law, she said, in words never to be repented of or recalled, "Entreat me not to leave thee, or 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 I will die, and there will I be buried; the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me."

She acted not from any unwise and blind impulse—and they greatly err who blame her for thus leaving the house of her kindred, and going into a strange country. Her lot of life had been cast long before. When she became the wife of the son of Naomi, his people, his family, and his God, became hers; and could she now abandon all that was left on earth of that holy bond, his afflicted, childless mother, in the time of her utmost need? Orpah might do this. She did it. Her selfish spirit regarded the family tie as now severed; and as she turned back to her idols from the living God, whom she had in vain been taught to serve, so did she turn away from her earthly friends in their adversity, whom she had loved only with the most transient affection. Her character, as that of her class, had little substance in itself—taking its tone and temper from things external, and varying with time and circumstance. Moved by no one strong principle or feeling which might give unity to her life—except the selfish one, and this could not give the unity of a good life—she defined her duties in

detail, as they occurred, according to the rule of the hour, and regulated her affections by the *cold letter* of the law, interpreted in accommodation to any interest or allurements as it might happen. Such an one, if not liable to deep transgression, is incapable of any thing highly great or good; and to expect from a source like this any uniform devotion, or any real devotion to virtue, is as if we should wait to hear a prolonged and perfect harmony from harp-strings played upon only by gusts of the fitful wind. In what beautiful and sublime contrast does Ruth stand before us! At her marriage, the current of her life had received its direction; and in a nature like hers, that direction was to be maintained for ever. In darkness and in light, in sunshine and in storm, in the wilderness and in the pleasant land, the pure bright tide of faith and love must flow onward through time to its ocean-home—the truth and beatitude of Heaven.

It is true that, according to the letter of the law, death had dissolved the tie which bound her to the husband of her youth; but death had no power to take away his living image from her heart, nor to open her eyes to the misery and privation which the world might behold involved in her “cleaving” still to his family, nor her ears to the seductions of that new nuptial song which invited her to tarry in Moab. The marriage bond to her had been a law of liberty, because a law of love; and this law survived the removal of the outward sanction—its real object when the mortal husband faded away from all other human eyes into the grave—living on, untouched by the spoiler’s hand, and immortal as the spirit which enshrined it. And it is fit that Marriage—the fountain of human charities, the foundation of families and states, and in one sense also of the Church of God—should so be entered into, under the influence of an affection which may not change with the changes of time, and which death shall not extinguish. When Adam is represented by

Milton, after the sin of Eve, as meditating upon her probable death, by which “the love so dearly joined” must be broken, and the bowers and groves of Eden be changed for his lonely spirit into “wild woods forlorn,” his words are a beautiful expression of the finest feelings of human nature. They illustrate what I have been saying, and must find an echo in the true heart of either man or woman—

“——— loss of thee
 Would never from my heart: no, no! I feel
 The link of Nature draw me: flesh of my flesh,
 Bone of my bone thou art, and from thy state
 Mine never shall be severed, bliss or woe.”

It is true that, as the subject is presented by Milton, the sin of the woman is interposed between the conscience and the heart of her husband—between his duty and his love; and bitter are the consequences, and in this respect most emphatic is the warning that is given.

The entertaining of one principal idea, quickened by thought and feeling, made impulsive by enthusiasm, never allowed to depart, but becoming, as it were, a part of the soul, is one of the distinguishing marks of the highest grade of human character. It is a sign of the orator, the patriot, the hero, the apostle, the martyr—of the spirit, whether of man or woman, alive to the noblest aims, and faithful unto the end, to every object of its devotion. When this bent of the strong nature has been received wisely, and so in the fear of God that it shall always be *at one* with conscience, it is the very ladder of the patriarch leading from earth to heaven, on which ministering angels are ever descending and ascending; but otherwise what is

powerful for good, becomes equally powerful for evil : “ its ways go down to death, and its steps take hold on hell.”

The estate of marriage, when the constant love of this strong nature, in unity with wisdom and a good conscience, leads to it,—how independent it is of the frowns of the world, and the ravages of time ! how full of beauty and truth, of liberty, and all-enduring happiness ! On the other hand, when, in an unguarded hour, or through any evil habit, the counsels of wisdom and the will of God are disregarded by one of the character I have described, passion leading captive the strong, and this estate is “ entered into unadvisedly or lightly,” how inevitable and how utter are misery and ruin ! What help can be given ? Who shall release the poor victim of an erring but undying love ? What human lawgiver, what minister of religion, what yearning parent, may open the doors of the household sanctuary, or dare to stretch forth the hand to take the idol from the altar ? Too true to nature, and even to the noblest unsanctified nature, is the frightful representation by the German poet of a mother remonstrating on the subject of an unblest love with her almost maniac child :

“ Be calm, my child ; forget thy woe,
 And think of God and heaven :
 God, thy Redeemer, hath to thee
 Himself for bridegroom given.

Oh, mother ! mother ! what is heaven ?
 Oh, mother ! what is hell ?
 To be with William — that 's my heaven ;
 Without him — that 's my hell.”

Afar from darkness and despair like this, walked Ruth, the Moabitess, in her journey to the strange land beyond the Jordan. All-controlling as was the affection by which she was led, it did not disturb the just balance of her character. Her conscience and her heart were at peace with each other, and her fidelity to her friends of the earth, living or dead, was sustained and made perfect by trust in her Father in Heaven. She went out from her native land "not knowing whither she went," but in faith and in hope. She had no inheritance in Bethlehem Judah. The husband of her early love would not meet her there, nor ever again on earth. But she would "cleave" to all that remained of the beloved. She would accomplish, with heart and hand, and in the fear of God, her work of charity. And, this being done, her desire should be fulfilled, of finding her home at last in that better country, even the heavenly, where the households of the faithful shall be gathered together again, beyond the reach of affliction or of death, and where "the work of thy hands shall be rewarded, saith the Lord God."

How often is it seen in the dealings of Providence with mankind, that, even on earth, "the last becomes first and the first last." To the unselfish and unworldly, to them who pursue fervently and purely an elevated course of duty and love, regardless of temporal reward or loss, are frequently given honors and rewards far above even the range of *their* ambition, who have toiled only for time. "The poor hath he filled with good things, and the rich hath he sent empty away." When Ruth found her home with Naomi to be as she had anticipated, that of the poorest of the poor, and murmured not—when she earnestly and cheerfully asked permission of her mother to go forth and earn their morsel of daily bread by the labor of her hands—when the fair woman, who had been brought up delicately in the house of her mother, was gleaning in the harvest fields of Boaz,

among his handmaidens, the lowliest of them all—uncomplaining, patient,—beautiful in her youth—more beautiful in her work of all-enduring love,—even then, the all-seeing Heaven was preparing for her an honorable home upon the earth, and renown among the sons and daughters of men to the latest generation. The family of her husband, to whom she “clave” in their adversity, now “clave” unto her in their prosperity, and she found her portion with the wealthiest of them. Boaz, in whose fields she had gleaned, in ignorance of the relationship between them, upon discovering the kindred tie, instantly obeyed the divine law regulating the economy of families in the commonwealth of Israel, and married the widow of his deceased kinsman, “that the name of the dead might not be cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place.” And for Ruth—henceforth “riches and plenteousness were in her house.” She became the ancestress of mighty kings, and—more glorious still—her name is recorded for ever in the Book of God’s Revelation, as one of that more than royal line, which terminated with the Virgin-Mother, and the Blessed Saviour of the World.



24

H A N N A H .

THE character here presented is very different indeed from those of many of the women recorded in the Old Testament; and the narrative opens to our contemplation one of the most delightful and instructive passages to be found upon the inspired page. In several other instances we have the representation of lofty intellect, intense determination of will, and even martial daring and success : in which, however, our admiration is somewhat diminished by a strong feeling of incongruity between the deed performed and the sex of the actor. Here every thing is in entire harmony with the social position of the individual. Her conduct is marked throughout with feminine grace, and unfolds some of the finest affections that lodge in the female heart. Others appear and execute their brilliant parts upon the conspicuous stage of royalty. Here we are introduced to a retired, domestic scene, where the wife and the mother sanctifies the duties of those relations by fervent piety towards God. If Rachel betrays a wicked impatience to her husband under her calamity as a wife, Hannah, not less sensible of the same affliction, submissively offers her prayers and her vows unto the Lord. The mother of the Maccabees might exult in a progeny of heroes, the story of whose patriotism fires the imagination of their people. But the mother of Samuel was honored to bear a son, who became a prophet of the

Lord, among the most eminent of all whom God ever called to that holy office, or qualified to utter the lessons by which nations and ages were to be instructed. If we study the shading of her individual character, we shall find that the various womanly affections, deep and strong in her bosom, were blended in a peculiarly beautiful manner with high religious sentiments, and absolutely directed and controlled thereby.

It is a little remarkable, that although we have descended with the current of the world's history through nearly three thousand years before we reach the period of our story, Hannah is the first woman directly presented in the attitude of prayer. We are not to suppose she was the first who prayed. Doubtless many of those holy women of old who trusted in God, and adorned themselves with a meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price, were frequent in this service. Many a wife, many a mother, many a daughter of sorrow found relief from anxieties, support under trial, grace to help in the time of need, while making known her requests by supplication. A practice so indispensable to the life and growth of religious affections, we cannot question was their solace and strength. And piety, in the graces and duties of which their sex has in all ages been conspicuous above the other, was made more pure in them, their faith more firm, their love more intense, their obedience more constant, through the influence of habitual devotion. Yet in the instance before us we have the first distinct mention of a woman engaged in such an act.

The occasion of her prayer was this. Although a loving and tenderly beloved wife, and longing with natural desire for the blessing of offspring, she was still childless. But Peninnah bare children to Elkanah. Polygamy, which was contrary to the original ordinance of marriage, and which God for a season permitted among the Jews,

though he never sanctioned it, in this case wrought its usual evil effects, in domestic jealousies and discord and divisions. The fruitful Peninnah, envious of the superior favor Hannah had obtained in the affections of her husband, vented her anger by exulting over her rival, and provoked her sore because she had no children. This she did year by year; and especially, it would seem, at the seasons when, with devout zeal, Elkanah went up with his family to the house of the Lord. Even the time and the place of religious observance were not secure against her relentless malice. And Hannah's soul was overwhelmed, and "she wept and did not eat." With meek forbearance, however, she utters no complaint of her wrongs to her husband, not even when he reproves her sadness, but seeks opportunity to unburden her heart unto the Lord. Nor does she imprecate divine vengeance upon her persecutor, but asks that the Most High would look upon her affliction, and remove her reproach by giving to her a man-child; whom she there vows, with exemplary piety, to "give unto the Lord all the days of his life." Such was the effect of her importunity upon her countenance and manner, while she spake in her heart and her voice was not heard, that Eli, with hasty judgment, rebukes her for drunkenness. With inimitable beauty does she vindicate herself from the injurious suspicion. "No, my lord; I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit. I have drunk neither wine, nor strong drink, but I 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 my grief, have I spoken hitherto." Having relieved her breaking heart by committing her cause unto God in humble prayer, Hannah returns with serenity to the sphere of her accustomed duties. In process of time her petition is granted. The Lord remembered her, and "she bare a son, and called his name Samuel, saying, Because I have asked him of the Lord."

Almost all that we know of Hannah is comprehended by the sacred writer within a short space, and relates more particularly to the birth and education of this son. When the fervently-sought blessing was obtained, she did not forget upon what condition she received him of the Lord. His infancy she cherished with sedulous care, herself performing all the duties which maternal affection and fidelity prompted. At the proper period he is brought to Eli, and thenceforth solemnly devoted to the service of the Temple, in fulfilment of her recorded vow. "And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favor both with the Lord, and also with men." The mother's prayers and care were answered in the exemplary youth of her son: and his early promise was abundantly fulfilled in a long life of usefulness and renown.

We may here pause and turn our thoughts to some useful practical reflections, which naturally arise out of this narrative.

How inestimable a privilege is prayer! How sweet a refuge, in the hour of adversity, is that throne of grace which our compassionate Saviour has established in the merit of his own blood! And how sustaining in trial the assurance that a perfect sympathy is felt with us by our Great High Priest, who having been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin, and having passed into the heavens, there wears our nature, feels our griefs, knows how to pity, and ever lives to make intercession for us! Whatever is of moment sufficient to cause his children anxiety and distress, may be brought to him in prayer. No care, no pain, no burden that weighs down the spirit on earth, is beneath his notice in heaven. No age, no sex, nor condition, nor character, is forbidden to approach him. And when human ear cannot be made the depository of our woe, when no human bosom can sympathize with our peculiar sorrows, and no human power can aid us, "God is our refuge and strength, a very

present help in trouble." He has commanded us to look up to him when all other resources fail. We need be under no apprehension that he will repulse us. "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in every time of need."

The propriety of prayer for temporal good is likewise apparent from this example. A large, perhaps the largest portion of our trials and wants in this valley of weeping, come more or less directly from our temporal relations. We touch the world at so many points, and are vulnerable through so many avenues; the comforts of our inward spiritual life so much depend upon outward associations and circumstances, that if the vicissitudes of our earthly estate were excluded from the subjects of our supplications, the provision for our journey towards the promised rest would be defective indeed; but very imperfectly adapted to man's actual condition and necessities. And this want of adaptation would furnish its enemies with one of the most plausible of all their objections against the heavenly origin of our religion. But we are not thus restricted. The Bible opens a rich treasury of temporal benefits while it bestows, and even in bestowing, spiritual gifts. It confers high present solace, while it prepares us for immortal joys. Even the natural affections it treats with marked tenderness. The warm, instinctive desires of the heart may be poured forth in submissive prayer before God. And whether he gives or withholds, he can cause us to rest satisfied with his ways. To woman, who must bear in silence many and sometimes peculiar afflictions her position necessarily imposes upon her, and whose strength to fulfil her ministry of love and goodness is eminently in her dependence on God, prayer is an especial privilege. And its efficacy to soothe the mind and banish its grief, how direct and certain! Hannah came "in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the

Lord and wept sore." A sadness was upon her spirit, so deep and subduing that it spread a sable hue over the whole scene of life, and blighted all her joys. But after she had made known her complaint, and left her cause with God, her heart was eased. "And the woman went her way and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad." "Is any among you afflicted, let him pray."

BUT CHIEFLY, the narrative we are considering suggests important reflections upon the subject of maternal duty. No relation in the world is more tender, none involves responsibilities more wide-reaching and momentous than this. And it is hardly within the power of language to exaggerate the influence which a mother's fidelity may exert over the disposition and life, the temporal prosperity, and the spiritual and eternal well-being of the object of her fond regard. To her care its utterly helpless infancy is committed. And Providence has so ordered, that in the strong workings of the maternal heart, the instinctive and irrepressible glow of its passion, its sleepless anxiety and self-sacrificing toil, which have made a mother's love the appropriate name for all that is gentle, and soothing, and unswerving and constant in human intercourse, a guardianship should be created to which the dependent charge may be safely intrusted. The purest delights are mingled with important duties to secure their performance. And the clear intention of God is violated, when, from indolence, or fashion, or love of pleasure, from any cause but absolute necessity, a mother resigns to servile hands the sacred office which the voice of nature proclaims belongs to herself.

But the intellectual and moral life likewise are placed, in a very important sense, under her training as the instrument of their development and direction. It has passed into a maxim, that the mother has more to do than the father in the formation of the character of their children. Almost as a matter of course in relation to eminent

men, we inquire who and what was the mother. And if their peculiar physical and intellectual qualities may be thought to some extent to be inherited, yet the bringing out, and directing and confirming of what is good, the correcting or eradicating of what is evil, depends much, almost entirely, under the divine blessing, upon the mode of training.

Education is the great plastic power. And the infant mind, with its wonderful endowments, its unfledged capabilities of thought and feeling, of bright imaginings or dreadful purposes, of pure affection or dark and stormy passion, is subjected to its forming agency. Like the softened wax it is susceptible of almost any impression. It is its property to receive impressions. It momentarily receives them from every object and influence around. How early the process commences it may be difficult to determine—much earlier, beyond a doubt, however, than is generally supposed. On the mother's bosom the bright eye observes and soon answers her meaning glance; the ear turns to her voice and drinks in the tones of soft affection. In the nursery, its first school, the powers of attention and memory and imitation become daily more acute and active. Every thing enstamps its image. And even then and there a bias may be given which may decisively prevail in the character, and last through life. Over this whole period of the unfolding powers, more momentous in some respects than any that follows, the dominion of the mother is particularly extended. To her it is almost exclusively given up, and her influence is almost absolute. The vine which, with luxuriant growth, shoots forth its tendrils to embrace surrounding objects for support, she is to prune and train; its exuberant foliage must be wreathed into beautiful garlands, its fragrant blossoms must be ripened into fruitful clusters. With her is deposited the germ of character. And, so far as these depend upon the individuals who compose them, with

her rests the happiness of future families, and the destinies of nations and of the world. Who will say that woman's mission is insignificant?—that the mother's sphere, in real dignity, in holy influence, in wide and lasting usefulness, is inferior to any station, her employment beneath any occupation given to any mortal on the earth?

And what can rightly qualify her for her duty, and give the best promise that the child she rears shall be an honor and shall be honored? What but the blessing of God unceasingly sought upon her labors, and the presence and power of pure religious principle? "Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord." By solemn vows, and in the baptismal rite, should they be devoted, "lent unto the Lord as long as they live." From the early dawn of intelligent apprehension, these thoughts should be instilled into their minds: that God has a sovereign right over them, that his blessing alone can send prosperity, and that it is the highest honor, the most graceful ornament they can possess, to be found walking in his truth. By direct and unremitting endeavor should they be allured into the right paths. From a mother's lips the prattling tongue should be taught the language of prayer. A mother's example and precept should imbue the infant mind with religious ideas. A mother's hand should lead them early to the house of God. A mother's image should ever be blended with lessons of affectionate and fervent piety. It will throw round the heart a bond which temptation will not easily break through. It will summon natural affection to the aid of virtuous principle in the conflicts of life. A pious mother's memory will often become a shield against the fiery darts of the wicked one; or recall the wanderer from the forsaken paths of holiness and peace. Nor will the influence be weakened, nor will it make heaven less attractive, to imagine, that a mother's will be the first glad spirit to welcome the child of vows and of prayers to those happy shores.





A B I G A I L.

THE story of Abigail reveals scenes in domestic life which, though common, we hope none of our readers may know by sad experience. It is the living picture of a conjugal union between a brutal man and a gentle wife.

To illustrate her character, is little more than to evolve the Scripture narrative in 1 Samuel, chapters xxv. and xxx., and accordingly we introduce our essay in the following words of the sacred history :

“There was a man in Maon, whose possessions were in Carmel : and the man was very great, and he had three thousand sheep, and a thousand goats : and he was shearing his sheep in Carmel. Now the name of the man was NABAL, and the name of his wife ABIGAIL. *She was a woman of good understanding, and of a beautiful countenance ; but the man was churlish and evil in his doings ;* and he was of the house of Caleb.”

Nabal, then, was one of the great men of the land. He was distinguished for wealth and family. His ancestry, indeed, was the very noblest, though he was an unworthy scion of the illustrious stock. “He was of the house of Caleb.” Caleb was he who, with Joshua, reported faithfully concerning the promised land, and to whom Moses swore on that day, saying, “Surely the land whereon

thy feet have trodden shall be thine inheritance, and thy children's for ever, because thou hast wholly followed the Lord my God."* God fulfilled to Nabal that blessing of his forefather; for "he owned a patrimony in Maon," one of the districts assigned by Joshua to Caleb and his posterity.† Though the husband of Abigail was of honorable lineage, yet, with the estate of Caleb, Nabal inherited none of his ancestor's nobility of character.

Nabal's escutcheon was distinguished in another quarter: for it appears ‡ that he sprang from the Kenite Hobab, or Jethro, a prince of Midian, and Moses' father-in-law. He came also of Hemath, the father of the house of Rechab—that Rechab whose posterity were forbidden to drink wine or to build houses, and whose reverent obedience to their ancestor's injunction elicited the encomiums of God.§ Nabal disgraced his parentage in this line also, by his sensuality and drunkenness. In short, he is stigmatized as "a man of Belial," both "churlish" in his manners, and "evil in his doings."

It was Abigail's misfortune to be wedded to this abandoned man. She could command, indeed, the luxuries of wealth, and was endowed with the advantages of high birth. But what compensation are these coveted insignia of worldly greatness to "a woman of good understanding," who shall purchase them at the cost of her domestic happiness? With a husband whom she cannot but despise, her union is a bondage, and all the glitterings of earthly grandeur are but the phosphorescent exhibitions of splendid misery.

The Scripture tells us nothing of the causes of this mismatched alliance, but only reveals the exemplary behavior of Abigail as a

* Joshua xiv. 9.

† Joshua xv. 55.

‡ 1 Chron. ii. 55. Judges i. 16, iv. 11. Exod. ii. 16, iii. 1.

§ Jeremiah xxxv. 2, xviii. 19.

pious and devoted wife. Her merit, which distinguishes her as a heroine, also makes her illustrious as a spouse; for her self-sacrifice, which, under happier circumstances, conjugal love might have prompted and made easy to perform, the higher motives of duty to her husband and to God inspired.

In our frontispiece the artist's conception of Abigail's "beautiful countenance" is delineated. Let the reader pardon our attempt, if we fail to rival her engaging picture by transferring to our pages the Scripture portraiture of "her good understanding." The incidents of the story carry back the thoughts to a remote period of society. It was a crisis in the history of the elder Church. The curse was fallen on the house of Saul. Samuel was lately dead and buried. The bright prospects, promising peace and glory by the accession of David to the throne of Israel, were eclipsed by David's voluntary banishment. Though he had been chosen and anointed king, that pious man elected rather to be a fugitive from the royal occupant of the throne, and patiently to await God's providence to effect the transfer of the crown, than to stretch forth a sacrilegious hand against the Lord's anointed. He was wandering in the wilderness of Paran, gaining a precarious livelihood for himself and a band of devoted followers, with great hazard of his life. It was that period of dire want to which our blessed Lord refers,* when David, a hungered, was nourished by Abimelech of the shewbread "which it was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests."

Among the many resorts of David and his men was Mount Carmel, where Nabal's flocks and herds were finding pasture. But, instead of helping themselves to Nabal's property to appease nature's

* 1 Samuel xxi. 1-6. Matthew xii. 3, 4.

cravings for food, they touched nothing; yea, according to the testimony of Nabal's shepherds, "The men were very good to us. They were a wall to us by night and day: we were not hurt, neither missed we any thing." This is most honorable testimony to the probity of Jesse's son, ranking him withal among the highest of commanders, whose discipline restrained his followers from depredation, in spite of the urgencies of strong temptation. That it required a resolved will and a powerful hand to curb his men, while fretting under the spur of appetite, is made more evident by the account given of the persons who had joined him. They are described as a set of disorderly and reckless fellows—a kind of guerrilla band, but little better than banditti: "Every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them."* Yet the virtue and authority of David both kept them within the bounds of honesty, and marshalled them as the protectors of Nabal's flocks.

When, therefore, David heard in the wilderness that Nabal was come to shear his sheep in Carmel, he sent out ten young men as an embassy to the lordly proprietor, requesting him to furnish, out of his abundant store, a supply of food for their pressing hunger. Leaving Paran, the ambassadors journeyed up to Carmel, and accosted Nabal with these courtly words: "Peace be both to thee, and peace be to thine house, and peace be unto all that thou hast. We greet thee in the name of David: Give, I pray thee, whatsoever cometh to thine hand unto thy servants and thy son David. When thy shepherds were with us we hurt them not, neither was there aught missing unto them all the while they were in Carmel. Ask thy

* 1 Samuel xxii. 2.

young men, and they will show thee. Wherefore let us find favor in thine eyes; for we come in a good day."

But Nabal answered David's messengers with scorn: "Who is David?" said he in irony: "and who is the son of Jesse? There be many servants now-a-days that break away every man from his master." And to barb this sarcasm, the proud churl continued, in the temper of a selfish and ungrateful niggard, saying, "Shall I then take my bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have slaughtered for my shearers, and give it unto men whom I know not whence they are?" With such an irritating message, he sent away David's messengers as famished and destitute as they came.

We must allow that it required surpassing virtue, and more than ordinary influences of Divine grace, even for David, when he heard the report of his servants, to repress the violence of his indignation. His men were starving, and yet were refused a portion of that meat which their valor had protected and their honesty had held inviolate. Besides, to injury was added insult. Nabal's reproachful insinuation, — was not that deserving vengeance?

Now, among the saints of the earlier Church, none was capable of greater magnanimity than the persecuted son of Jesse. He had shown it towards Saul, only a few days previous, in the cave of Engeddi, and his generosity on that occasion had melted the hard heart of that wicked king. But the best of saints are sinful men. Mortals can brook all wrongs more easily than insult and contempt. Satan, too, shows his craftiness by surprising the citadel which would foil his slow approaches. Wherefore, David's anger, inflamed by treacherous pride and justified by beguiling sophistry, opened his heart to the demons, malice and revenge.

"Comrades!" he exclaimed, "surely in vain have I kept all that this fellow hath in the wilderness, so that nothing was missing of all

that pertained unto him : and he hath requited me evil for good. So and more also do God unto the enemies of David, if I leave of all that pertain to him, by the morning light, any male alive ! Gird ye on every man his sword !”* Then they girded on every man his sword ; and David also girded on his sword. And there went up after David about four hundred men.

What horrid passions raged in the breasts of those furious men, in that sudden march to Carmel ! “Death to Nabal and his household !” was the muttered watchword for that fearful night. And who shall be the assassin ! Alas for the reputation of Israel’s best son ! Alas for human nature, fallen and debased ! David was meditating an outrage against his neighbor more flagrant than that he would avenge. Murder was in his heart, and theft besides. He was resolved to punish the owner and to spoil his goods, in the face of all his boasted honesty and honor in refraining from the temptation. His former virtues were about to be disparaged, shamed, and brought to nought, and immolated to false honor. Satan seemed about to triumph over the grace of God. The enemies of the Church and revilers of her saints were about to be furnished with one of the most signal arguments for their blasphemy. Such were, no doubt, the forebodings of the holy angels and the anticipations of the devil. Good creatures must have dreaded and evil ones hoped for the consequences which should issue from David’s misconduct.

But meanwhile the God of Israel was shielding his Anointed from overt crime, and magnifying the power of his effectual grace in converting the sinner’s heart unto repentance. ABIGAIL was the chosen minister of this great work. Her name is become renowned in Holy Scripture, for her successful mediation in this awful crisis.

* 1 Samuel xxv. 21, 22.

Abigail was not present at the interview between her husband and the messengers. But "one of the young shepherds told her, saying, Behold David sent messengers out of the wilderness to salute our master, and he railed on them. But the men were very good to us, and we were not hurt, neither missed we any thing as long as we were conversant with them when we were in the fields. They were a wall unto us both by night and day, all the while we were with them keeping the sheep. Now therefore know and consider what thou wilt do: for evil is determined against our master and against all his household; for he is such a son of Belial that a man cannot speak to him."

She listened to these tidings, trembling at their import. Her husband was threatened with robbery and death, and his household was doomed to massacre. The fierce banditti were on their march, thirsting to revenge themselves. The valiant David, who once had braved and conquered Goliath of Gath, and delivered Israel in the name of the Lord of Hosts, was now possessed with an evil spirit, and rushing headlong for rapine and assassination.

She was appealed to as a saviour. She was summoned to immediate action to avert the accumulating evils ready to burst in woe upon all about her. What can she do in such a crisis? How shall she save her husband, and his foes be spared from crime? Shall she warn him of his peril, and urge him to flee away? Flight was useless, and Nabal was too proud to seek the coward's refuge.

Shall she incite him to arms?

This would augment the conflict, and bloodshed, and sin. War is no remedy for wrongs, but an aggravation of them. Neither was it probable that Nabal, with servants who despised him, could defend himself against a united band of four hundred desperate men like David and his warriors.

Never was danger more imminent. But it is on like occasions of emergency that talent and ability are best developed. With little time for forethought, the habits of the soul, formed and matured by the slow training of a lifetime, display themselves, and show forth what we denominate the person's *character*. As there never was greater need, so was there never a clearer demonstration of that "good understanding" by which Abigail is characterized in Holy Scripture.

Although peace was the last result to be expected while a fool and a madman were the belligerents, yet Abigail despaired not to accomplish it, and to quench the conflagration in its very height and fury. Refraining, for the present, from acquainting her husband with her purpose, she undertook to be a mediator. She would use no artifice, but truth. She would offer no bribe, but the tribute of gratitude and justice. She would be governed by no base motive, but duty to her husband and the fear of God. There was no magic in her power, save the charm of self-sacrifice—the persuasive majesty of the cross. Had Nabal deserved her love, she could have done no more for his deliverance and safety.

Lading the beasts with an offering of food, "of loaves, and wine, and sheep ready dressed, corn and raisins and figs," and sending her messengers before her face, Abigail made haste to follow them. "And it was so, as she rode on the ass, that she came down by the covert of the hill, and behold David and his men came against her, and she met them. And when Abigail saw David, she hastened and lighted off the ass, and fell before David on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and fell at his feet, and said, UPON ME, MY LORD, UPON ME LET THIS INIQUITY BE."

In the frontispiece, our artist has delineated Abigail in this suppliant attitude, offering herself a voluntary victim.

Now let us listen to her eloquence, as a persuasive pleader to the affections and a stern preacher to the conscience. These are her memorable words :

“ Let thine handmaid speak in thine audience, and hear the words of thy handmaid. Let not my lord, I pray thee, regard this man of Belial, even Nabal : for as his name is, so is he. Nabal [a fool] is his name, and folly is with him : but I, thine handmaid, saw not the young men of my lord whom thou didst send. Now therefore, my lord, as the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, seeing the Lord hath withholden thee from coming to shed blood, and from avenging thyself with thine own hand, now let thine enemies, and they that seek evil of my lord, be as Nabal. And now the blessing of this present which thine handmaid hath brought unto my lord, let it be given unto the young men that walk at the feet of my lord.”

In this argument, Abigail despoiled David of the pretext of *necessity*, wherewith he might have attempted to justify his assault on Nabal's goods.

But yet there remained the rankling thorn, the tormenting sore, the sense of insult. Nabal's taunting words, like a hot iron, had burnt deep wounds in David's bosom. Him, the deliverer and anointed king of the house of Israel, preferring persecution from the jealous Saul rather than be disloyal—yea, choosing the precarious life of a forester and a fugitive, for conscience' sake, awaiting the good pleasure of the Lord to give him the throne,—even him a Nabal mocked and sneered at! “ Who is David? Who is the son of Jesse? There be many servants now-a-days that break away every man from his master.” These bitter words were coals of fire in his heart. “ That burning imputation must be quenched in the churl's blood.” So spake the demon of revenge. So was he muttering still, when Abigail, the sweet exorcist, resumed her argument ; in which she

combined the poetry and fire of enthusiasm, the artlessness of faith, the hatred of sin, a confidence, almost that of a prophet, in God's promises, and graced withal by self-abandonment and spiritual exaltation, betokening such a singleness of heart, and earnestness, as aimed only at God's honor and David's greatest good. These beauties, it seems to us, she forcibly concentrated in a masterful appeal, so full of truth and nature that art cannot match its eloquence, nor the best rhetoric do more than imitate it :

“I pray thee, forgive the trespass of thine handmaid : for the Lord will certainly make my lord a sure house ; because my lord fighteth the battles of the Lord, and evil hath not been found in thee all thy days. Yet a man is risen to pursue thee and to seek thy soul ! But the soul of my lord shall be bound up in the bundle of life with the Lord thy God. And the souls of thine enemies, them shall he sling out, as out of the midst of a sling. And it shall come to pass, when the Lord shall have done to my lord according to all the good that He hath spoken concerning thee, and shall have appointed thee ruler over Israel, that this shall be no grief unto thee, nor offence of heart unto my lord, either that *thou hast shed blood causelessly*, or that *my lord hath avenged himself*. But when the Lord shall have dealt well with my lord, then remember thine handmaid.”

Abigail ceased to speak, and her words were arrows from the quiver of the Almighty. And David said to Abigail,

“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me. And blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou, which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hand ! For, in very deed, as the Lord God of Israel liveth, which hath kept me back from hurting thee, except thou hadst hastened, and come to meet me, surely there had not been left unto Nabal, by the morning light, any male alive. So David received of her hand that which she had brought him, and said unto her, Go up in peace to thine house ; see, I have hearkened to thy voice, and have accepted thy person.”

Thus Abigail appeased the wrath of her husband's enemy, and her mediation was, on the one hand, prospered.

We now pass to contemplate her subsequent procedure. We have surmised the reasons that moved Abigail to conceal her purposed conduct from her husband. Although, in general, a studious secrecy between man and wife is wrong, and suggests suspicion of misconduct, yet the circumstances of this case justified the prudence of her course.

Yet she delayed not to acquaint Nabal with the tidings of her successful mediation. Had she informed him of her plan beforehand, the sequel proves it to be likely that the brutish man would, in his rage, have abused his lovely wife, and foiled the weapons she had prepared for his defence.

But when David's enmity was quenched, and Nabal's life was spared, Abigail sought out her husband, and found him carousing at the table. For "behold, he held a feast, like the feast of a king. And his heart was merry within him, for he was very drunken." That fearful day she was called to encounter the worst passions of mankind, in every hideous shape. But she prudently withheld her information, and "told him nothing, less or more, until the morning light. But in the morning, when the wine was gone out of Nabal, and his wife had told him these things, it came to pass that his heart died within him, and he became as a stone."

His rage, too full for utterance or a fiercer demonstration, brought on paralysis; and "about ten days after, the Lord smote Nabal that he died."

Such was the tragic end of this wicked man. Such was the righteous retribution of HIM who hath said, "Vengeance is mine! I will repay."

When David heard that Nabal was dead, he offered this pious

thanksgiving for a dispensation that rebuked his own sinful purposes of self-revenge and malice: "Blessed be the Lord, that hath pleaded the cause of my reproach from the hand of Nabal, and hath kept his servant from evil. For the Lord hath returned the wickedness of Nabal upon his own head."

Thus the Divine hand severed the matrimonial ties between the mismatched pair, releasing the gentle and suffering Abigail from her thralldom to a coarse, brutal, and drunken husband. Nor was this all. Abigail became the wife of David. Afterwards she was taken captive by the Amalekites, and her life was put in jeopardy. But she was rescued by the prowess of her valiant husband, in one of his most brilliant and triumphant exploits.

The Scripture reveals no more of Abigail's history, but leaves her the worthy and honored wife of the "sweet psalmist and shepherd of Israel."

We conclude with a moral from our story, applicable to domestic life.

If parents seek the happiness of their daughters, let them be solemnly cautioned not to wed them to men "churlish and wicked in their doings." There is no conceivable bondage harder to be borne by woman. By "the law of her husband," while he liveth, she is bound to obedience, and, of course, may become the victim of oppression and of suffering. The untold and withering grievances of her husband's surly temper, harsh words, bursts of passion, and habitual violence of demeanor, stretch the catalogue of woman's wrongs, calling for the exercise of every passive virtue in the wife, and invoking the fullest gifts of Divine grace to aid her in her trial. Great wealth and venerable ancestry are no recompense for her husband's mental imbecility and moral baseness. A rich fool for a husband is a wife's disgrace; a wicked one is her torment.

Yet, if the irrevocable choice be made, and the marriage-vows be uttered, let the unfortunate woman learn patience, fidelity, and discretion, from Nabal's wife. When a woman so acts, from duty to her lord, base, intemperate, and churlish though he be, as she would do from motives of respect and love to a faithful husband, she is a pattern of conjugal excellence and an exemplar for female imitation.

Abigail was such a **WOMAN** and such a **WIFE**.



THE QUEEN OF SHEBA.

THE Queen of Sheba! It is not merely by the narrative of the visit of that remarkable woman to the court of Solomon that the Scriptures have set her name on high, and given it a claim to the respectful notice of the Christian reader. Our blessed Lord has consecrated her memory in those impressive words: "The Queen of the South shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, a greater than Solomon is here."*

The Queen of the South! Uniting that title with the name of Sheba, which is the name of her dominion wherever else she is mentioned in the Scriptures, and adding to both the distance of her journey as given by the Saviour, "*from the uttermost parts of the earth,*" we are materially assisted in ascertaining whence she came. Ethiopia, in Africa, has been supposed to have been her country. A tradition to that effect has been handed down among the Ethiopians as unquestionable. They assert that her throne was occupied for many generations by her posterity, and they have boasted the possession of their names, and the order of their succession. Josephus

* Matthew xii. 42.

seems to have looked for Sheba in the same quarter. He gives that name as the original name for the city which Cambyses, in honor of his sister, called Meroe, from whence, he says, the Queen of Sheba came. Meroe is sometimes embraced within the bounds of Ethiopia.

But learned writers very generally concur in placing the Sheba of the Queen of the South in Arabia Felix, in its utmost south, where, bounded by the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, the region might well be called "the uttermost parts of the earth," for though not so far from Jerusalem as Ethiopia, it was the outer boundary of the earth as then known in that direction. In no sense could the town of Meroe be considered as in the utmost parts of the earth, since many extensive countries in Africa were known in the Saviour's day to be beyond it. Wherever else in the Scriptures the name of Sheba occurs, as pertaining to a country, it manifestly applies to Arabia, as in the sixtieth chapter of Isaiah: "*All they from Sheba shall come; and they shall bring gold and incense.*" In this place, the association of Sheba with Midian and Ephah, in the same verse, determines the Arabian locality. The presents brought by the Queen to Solomon, consisting of "an hundred and twenty talents of gold, and of spices very great store, and precious stones," teach her Arabian origin. Arabia Felix abounded in such things. The region of Ethiopia in which Meroe lay did not.

The Queen of Sheba was not the only sovereign who had heard and been moved by the fame of the unparalleled wisdom with which God had endowed the King of Israel. "There came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, *from all kings of the earth*, which had heard of his wisdom."* It is not said that kings themselves came; but people from all kings that had heard of his fame. It was the

* 1 Kings iv. 34.

distinguishing honor of Sheba's Queen, that she only of all of her rank was so in love with the wisdom which rumor had spoken of so widely, as to have zeal and devotedness to go in person, and hear and admire and learn. Other royal personages sent ambassadors. Wisdom at second hand could not content her mind. Her own ears must hear the man unto whom God had given the "wise and understanding heart." Others of equal rank were much nearer Jerusalem; but, busied with the affairs of state, they could not come. She, dwelling in the utmost parts of the earth, had also her state affairs to think of, and might well have considered her sex and exposure to many dangers by the long way. But none of these things moved her. Such an opportunity of learning the wisdom which is from above might never occur again. It was worth all the cost and sacrifice and danger to be incurred in reaching it. She came; and like the woman that came to Jesus, the true wisdom, and while the men of that generation were preparing his crucifixion poured the precious ointment upon his head, so, wheresoever the gospel shall be preached in the whole world, this pilgrimage of the Queen of the South shall be told for a memorial of her; and her example, enshrined in the teaching of our Lord, shall be held up for the condemnation of those who suffer any hinderances to keep them from coming to learn of him, who "is the power and wisdom of God."

There is decided reason to believe that the motive of the Queen of Sheba in coming to hear the wisdom of Solomon was of the most elevated kind; that her object was the attainment of wisdom in its highest and most precious sense. The narrative in the book of Kings speaks of her having visited Solomon "*to prove him with hard questions.*"* It has been too readily supposed from hence that her

* 1 Kings x. 1.

errand was one of mere curiosity, or at best the attainment of mere secular knowledge. But *hard questions* need not be understood as merely curious or captious questions; or as not belonging to the class of the most serious and spiritually important. They may have been exceedingly difficult to one of her light, and quite plain to the man who was taught of God. The being and attributes of the only true God; what his will towards man; wherewithal a sinner must come before him so as to be accepted of him; what we must do to be saved; these have always been hard questions for the reason of man, until enlightened by the revelation of God. Eminent philosophers of ancient days confessed their inability to answer them. The Queen of Sheba could not have given stronger evidence of an elevated mind and an advanced spirit of true wisdom, than by taking her long journey exclusively to inquire of the wisdom of Solomon in those momentous subjects. Had her object been of a merely worldly kind, we do not believe the Saviour would have distinguished her example as he has set it before us in the words already quoted. If the Queen of the South is to rise up in the judgment against those who refused to avail themselves of the teaching of Jesus, it must have been heavenly teaching which she sought in going from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon.

But let us not overlook an important passage, which seems to determine the religious character of that pilgrimage. We read that it was "when the Queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon" *concerning the name of the Lord*, that "she came to prove him with hard questions." Hence it appears that it was not the fame of Solomon for wisdom in general, but for wisdom "concerning the name of the Lord," his being and attributes and will; it was the spiritual value of Solomon's wisdom that particularly arrested the mind of that royal lady, and suggested the hard questions which she travelled so

far to propose. It was the power of a religious motive, the urgency of spiritual and eternal interests, that made the difference between her course and that of all the other royal dignitaries to whom the same fame had reached. They sent representatives to hear and render homage. A deeper sense of her need of wisdom, of light to show the way of peace with God, constrained her to leave all, and go a dangerous road, and seek a strange land, that she might hear for herself what she must do.

Who was the wisest *man*, any child who has learned the infant's catechism can tell. But who was the wisest *woman*? Is there one among all the women of antiquity, who, considering her circumstances and privileges, can offer a stronger claim to that distinction than the Queen of Sheba? We ask not what she learned at Jerusalem. "She communed with Solomon of all that was in her heart," and he "told her all her questions," and a ready mind to profit by such privileges she must have had, who had been at such cost to obtain them. But we refer to what she was when she set out from her distant home. Stronger evidence of a wise heart cannot be given than in her devoted earnestness to grow in wisdom. Wise, indeed, is that man or woman who has learned so much as to feel, as she manifestly did, that "Wisdom is the principal thing;" "the merchandise of it better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold;" that "all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her."

"Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." Such was the object of the spirit of inspiration in placing on the pages of the Scriptures the narrative of the wise Queen of Sheba. The words of our Lord have made it a part of the New Testament teaching. "The Queen of the South shall rise

up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, a greater than Solomon is here."

A greater than Solomon! Yes, as Wisdom herself is greater than him whom wisdom has taught; as the sun is greater than the planet shining in its light. As God, the fountain of all wisdom, is greater than man drinking at the stream. The wisdom of Solomon was great by comparison with that of other men. Compared with what angels know, or with what was to be known, it was as an infant's play with letters of which he knows not the use. Compared with the fulness of God it dwindled to nothingness. The wisdom of Jesus depends on no comparison. "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;" so that "in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." He is *the Light*. All other lights are darkness but as they receive from him. And how freely does he communicate his wisdom, to make men wise unto salvation! "*Learn of me,*" is his call to all the ends of the earth, and his only condition is, "come and take my yoke upon you;" while the precious reward of such pupilage is, what other teacher could never give—"Ye shall find rest unto your souls;" rest to the weary and heavy laden, peace with God, entire deliverance from the condemnation of his law, the sweet comfort of being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

"*A greater than Solomon is here.*" Solomon could teach the knowledge of wisdom, he could not make men wise. His light might show the way of life, it could not impart the will or the strength to go therein. It might enlighten, it could not sanctify. Christ is "made unto us wisdom." He makes the simple wise, by transforming them into his own likeness. They learn of him, and

are made like unto him while they learn. “*We have the mind of Christ,*” could certain of old say who had been in his school. He is made unto those who learn of him, not wisdom only, but “righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” These several constituents of blessedness are never separated from wisdom, under his teaching. Wisdom from him is the will to go, as well as the understanding to know, the way of life; it is a heart sanctified as well as a mind enlightened; it is “the way, and the truth, and the life.” Whoever comes to Jesus and sits at his feet, in the spirit of a meek and lowly heart, shall be able to testify, as did those officers whom the Jewish rulers sent to take him: “Never man spake like this man.” Never did other teacher so constrain the heart, and hush the tumult of its passions, and bow down its pride, and pour consolation into a wounded spirit. It is a beautiful as well as a faithful account which he gives us of himself: “The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary.”* And though now we have reason to lament over this generation, as did the Saviour over that which heard his ministry, because it is so insensible to the privilege of having such a teacher in the midst of us, a day cometh when all the ends of the earth shall see and rejoice to partake in his salvation. “The abundance of the sea shall be converted unto him. The forces of the Gentiles shall come to him.” “He shall come down as rain upon the mown grass; as showers that water the earth.” “All kings shall fall down before him, all nations shall serve him.”† And it is interesting to note, in the glowing pictures which the pencil of inspiration has drawn of the multitudes from all kindreds of the earth then gathering together unto the name of the Lord, how often and

* Isaiah l. 4.

† Isaiah lx. Psalm lxxii.

particularly Sheba is mentioned. "All they from Sheba shall come." Like their queen of old, "they shall bring gold and incense;" and as she testified that the half of the wisdom of Solomon had not been told her, and her heart exclaimed, "Happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and hear thy wisdom;" so it is written, "All they of Sheba shall show forth the praises of the Lord." "To him shall be given of the gold of Sheba: prayer also shall be made for him continually, and daily shall he be praised."*

It was a day of universal peace in the wide dominion of Solomon, when the Queen of Sheba came to hear his wisdom. The kingdom of Israel was at the height of its power and glory. It extended from Egypt to beyond the Euphrates. The temple was built in all its beauty and glory, and was a wonder of the world. The church of that dispensation had attained its most complete establishment; all the divine appointments concerning it were most fully exhibited. Its worship was in its glory. So will it be in the days of Him who is to sit on the throne of his father David, when "all they of Sheba," with all kindreds and nations, shall flow unto him. "In his days shall the righteous flourish; yea, and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth." "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth."† His glorious temple, the Church of the living God, built up of living stones, made alive by the power of his Spirit, and all joined together in one holy fellowship unto Him, the living corner-stone, will then be attaining rapidly its perfect state as a holy Church, without blemish and without spot. It will be the wonder of men and angels; its materials brought from all nations; its amplitude embracing the breadth of the earth; its

* Isaiah lx. 6. Psalm lxxii. 15.

† Psalm lxxii.

height reaching into heaven ; its inward adorning the beauty of holiness, the most fine gold of a pure and perfect love ; all the workmanship of God ; all his people composing its holy priesthood, and continually offering “ spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” How will the wisdom of the Son of David, at once the corner-stone and architect, the High Priest, and the one only propitiatory sacrifice of that glorious temple, appear, when it shall be seen how, out of the shapeless and polluted and confused ruins of the nature of man, lying scattered over all the world and overgrown with the rankest growth of sin, that building of God, in all its perfect proportion and golden purity and eternal strength, was raised, *created in Christ Jesus !* Then shall it be seen, indeed, that a greater than Solomon is here, a wiser and mightier master-builder : as far greater as the spiritual house of God, the communion of saints made up of men redeemed from the dominion of sin and changed into the image of God, the house “ not made with hands eternal in the heavens,” is greater than the temple which Solomon built of the stones of Tyre, and the cedars of Libanus, and the gold of Ophir. In all its glory, that temple was not arrayed like God’s sanctuary in the heart of any sinner, whom his grace hath created anew in Christ Jesus for the indwelling of his Spirit.

It is written, that “ when the Queen of Sheba had seen all Solomon’s wisdom—*there was no more spirit in her.*” In her amazement and admiration she was as one entranced. Much more were the three disciples of our Lord overcome, when upon the holy mount they saw his glory, “ the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

The queen said to Solomon : “ It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts and 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.”* How seldom does rumor fall below the reality, especially when it travels far, and creates universal wonder, and is repeated from mouth to mouth! Such was the rumor that reached the Queen of the South. It must have been a wonderful report that persuaded her to such a journey. It was too much to be entirely believed; but even the half of it had not been told. The words of fame could not convey a just idea of the marvellous truth. The wisdom of the king, whom God taught, must be seen to be known. Great things are spoken in the word of God, and in the messages of his ministers, concerning our Lord Jesus Christ, as a prince and a Saviour, full of grace; mighty to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him; precious beyond degree to all that seek him. But “who believes our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?” And when a soul is persuaded to leave all and go to him, how far is his faith below the full reality of what the Saviour is, and has to give to all believers; what a difference does he find between hearing of Jesus by the hearing of the ear, and having communion with Jesus in the faith of the heart; between such knowledge of his excellence as comes by the most exalted accounts of those who have been with him, and the knowledge arising from personal proof and enjoyment of his wisdom and grace! No words, no teaching of man, can enable us to know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. No teacher beneath himself is sufficient for these things. Jesus must be seen in the riches of his grace, to be known in the preciousness of his salvation. Whoever will take up his cross, and sit at his feet, and open his heart to the power of his truth, in meekness and lowliness, receiving him as he offers himself to the sinner, shall testify that the thousandth part had not been told him of the

* 1 Kings x. 6, 7.

excellence of his Saviour. But how much more when the believer shall have seen the King in the glory of the New Jerusalem above, and hath been permitted to commune with him, face to face, and to enter upon the possession of "the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints," will he feel that his faith never reached but to the dim reflection of his Saviour's glory, that his ear never heard, nor did it ever enter into his heart to conceive what God hath prepared for them that love him.

But to reach that blissful communion, to be permitted that glorious manifestation, we must, like the faithful apostle, "count all things but loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord;" a spirit of devotedness must be in us, which will make us willing "to suffer the loss of all things, that we may be in Christ, and be found in him;" we must leave the world as the Queen of Sheba left her home and throne; and, like her, we must be strangers and pilgrims in the earth, seeking a better country, even an heavenly; leaving all to follow Christ; counting not our lives dear unto us, that we may learn of him. And if this seems too heavy a cross to bear, too long a journey to take, too great a sacrifice to make for such reward, the Queen of the South shall rise up in the judgment and shall condemn us; "for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, a greater than Solomon is here."



J E Z E B E L .

MODERN biography alone furnishes us with portraits, in which the minutest characteristics are given with elaborate detail. Without any such detail in the case of the "cursed woman" (2 Kings ix. 34) who is the subject of our brief memoir, we are obliged to complete her character as naturalists complete an imperfect skeleton of some remote age. The incidents in her history which have been handed down to us, though few, are sufficiently marked to decide at once to what species the monster remains belong: and further, the labor of restoration is rendered comparatively easy by the fact, that the race of Jezebel has constantly reappeared in history, nor is it even yet extinct.

The daughter, the wife, and the mother of kings, we may beforehand expect to find in her certain characteristics, which have ever since been too common in the regal families of the world, especially during those periods when royal prerogative was considered a divine gift which raised its possessor above human opinions and laws. Absolute power has ordinarily gone hand in hand with gigantic crime, dispensing as well with the laws of God as with the rights of man. What has been the history of morals in royal courts? And if an improvement in this respect be visible in our days, do we not owe it to the increased purity and energy of popular opinion?

“If,” says an acute observer of the last century—“if vast crimes are not now in fashion, it is only because despotism is generally exploded. Give human nature scope, and it can still be sublimely abominable.”* We have only to consider, in addition, that the court of Zidon (a commercial city of Phœnicia on the coast of the Mediterranean, now called Saide, where were worshipped Baal or Bel, and Ashtoreth or Astarte, the eastern Venus), was the home of Jezebel, and we are prepared to find that the princess whom the king of Israel married, proved to be neither a pure woman, a just ruler, or a good wife.

Ahab, himself an evil-disposed man, may have wedded her for her beauty, or possibly from expediency, the motive of most royal marriages. It is not likely that he foreknew the unscrupulous self-will which she afterwards manifested, and which made her not only the despot of the nation, but the master of her husband. But however that may be, this marriage was itself a great crime, for Jezebel was probably the first avowed pagan who had been raised to the throne of Israel. Not only did his own evil dispositions receive a powerful impetus from the influence of such a companion—she corrupted the whole nation by her idolatries and witchcrafts. It was little more than a century since the sweet singer sat upon the throne of Israel, and less than half a century since Jeroboam carried the ten tribes into revolt. Ahab was the sixth in succession from Jeroboam, who, until the accession of Ahab, was spoken of as the model of royal wickedness. But Ahab, we are told, excelled all his predecessors. While the worst that could be said of them was that they walked in the steps of Jeroboam, of Ahab it is said that “he did evil in the sight of Jehovah above all that went before him,” and, “as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam, he took to wife

* Horace Walpole, than whom few better understood the history of royalty.

Jezebel (as we would now say Izebel), the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal and worshipped him." This was his great crime, because it led to the open establishment of an idolatrous system which through her agency rivalled and in the end nearly exterminated the worship of Jehovah. Until now kings and people had contented themselves with that qualified form of idolatry, which consisted in paying certain honors to the two golden calves which Jeroboam had set up in Bethel and Dan, for the purpose of drawing off the people from the temple at Jerusalem. These were not precisely idols, in the worst sense of that word, but rather symbolical representatives of the true God, Jehovah Elohim. Baal, however, was not a symbol but a rival of the God of Israel, and the establishment of his worship with its costly and depraving accompaniments, was a vast stride in the downward progress of the nation.

Before we proceed to unfold the character of the corrupt woman who was the chief agent in this monstrous revolution, a word or two may not be amiss in regard to that proclivity to idol-worship which seems to be a universal tendency of human beings. Those who live under the Christian light find it difficult to enter fully into the mental processes by which a people like the Hebrews, whose laws and institutes were so explicit, and whose previous history was one series of supernatural attestations of the grand truths of the Divine Unity, Spirituality, and Purity, were led away into the insane absurdities, to say nothing of the impious depravities, of polytheism. Undoubtedly the secret of all false worships, and of idolatry among the rest, is the reluctance of the fallen soul to be habitually brought into contact with the holy Spirit of Goodness, when presented in his full-orbed character, judicial as well as paternal. "Men *like* not to retain God in their knowledge," and yet must have some object of reverence to satisfy their ineradicable religious instincts. It is not at once,

but gradually, that they can abandon a spiritual system, and materialize and sensualize the grand ideal. First, under the plea of representing that ideal more impressively by means of visible symbols, they choose some one or more of the objects of creation, the grandeur, beauty, or utility of which is supposed to make them suitable representatives of the attributes of the great Maker. Acting upon this principle, they can be at no loss for symbols—for which of God's works does not come under the one or the other of these characters? The sun, with all the host of heaven, the elements, and innumerable other objects, down to the calf, the onion, and even more ignoble idols of Egypt, were first introduced as symbols of the attributes of the Great Supreme.

Without attempting to describe the whole process, let it be observed that the passage from this pantheism, which regards every thing in God and God in every thing, to polytheism, which ascribes a separate individuality to the objects of worship, is accomplished with comparative ease. They have a natural affinity. Without discarding the idea of a Supreme, it is only to suppose his will executed not directly but mediately by agents, themselves a lofty race of beings with appropriate functions. The honor paid to these is professedly subordinate, and not intended to degrade but rather to exalt the Supreme, just as a monarch is made more glorious by the extent of his court and the reverence paid to them. Only set the imagination free from the restraint of that grand truth which is the basis of all truths—that “Jehovah our God is One Jehovah, and that there is none else”—and the process of god-creating becomes fascinating, and well-nigh interminable. It cannot be denied that much inventive skill and poetic beauty have been employed in the peopling of every pantheon, and chiefly that of Greece. Jove, Supreme, Father of gods and men, retains a theoretic supremacy, sending forth and governing

all things by the agency of minor deities, who severally take Heaven and Hell, and the Earth with its mountains, seas, rivers, woods, and fields, together with the various interests of man, under their special direction and patronage. No wonder that thirty thousand gods ultimately shared the homage of the Greeks.

On the moral effects of such a theory when reduced to practice, it is not necessary to enlarge. The morals of polytheism have uniformly been even worse than its theoretic philosophy, if indeed it can be said to have aught of the latter. Without exception, all pagan mythologies demonstrate the truth, that in the act of degrading God man most effectually demoralizes himself. For one who will select for his worship the purer creations of the polytheistic fancy, there are tens of thousands who will choose the baser. What pantheon does not abound in gods many and lords many, stained with the vilest pollutions? What human passion or appetite, what base function of the body, has not been dignified and a sanctioned indulgence secured to it, by assigning to it some patron deity? Is the worshipper likely to be purer than the god he worships?

The Phœnician mythology (traces of which are to be found to this day in the remains and superstitious usages of some parts of the British Isles, and which Jezebel was the means of establishing in Israel), was not an exception to the above remarks. The shrines of Bel or Baal smoked with the blood of human sacrifices, while the worship of Astarte or Astaroth the patron goddess of the Sidonians, may be best understood by referring to that of her compeer, the Cyprian Venus, and to the unutterable depravities which made one of the principal seats of her worship—the groves of Daphne, near Corinth—proverbial even in Greece. Doubtless the groves established in Israel by Jezebel, were similar in character.

To have permitted the gradual introduction of such gods to inter-

fere with and at last displace the worship of Jehovah, was indeed a token of deep depravity on the part of the Israelites. But let us be just to them. Are they singular in betraying this tendency to materialize and sensualize religion? This conflict between the spiritual worship of the one exclusive God, and the worship of inferior deities—has it ceased even now under the bright sun of Christian truth? No: the disposition of the weak and guilty human soul to throw itself upon some patron guardianship, which shall not be so remote nor so holy as the Supreme Spirit, is visibly at work in the Christian church at this hour. This has multiplied intercessors and patrons of various powers and attractions, until the calendar is overloaded with them: from the virgin mother of our Lord, down to the last dead saint canonized by papal authority. The same subtle spirit runs through the Christian as through the Pagan polytheism, with this difference, that the objects of reverence in the former case have generally a purer character, and that the superstition which honors them as mediators and patrons, is therefore not quite so pernicious in its effects upon individual and social morals. Until, however, their shrines and images and rituals are abolished as an opprobrium to the glorious system which owns but “One God and one Mediator between God and man,” we have little cause to wonder at the infatuation which in a less privileged era honored the golden calf of Jero-boam, or bowed down to the idols established by Jezebel.

We now return more immediately to the subject of our memoir. In the matter of her false gods, Jezebel appears to have been a thorough propagandist. Not content to worship them herself, not even content to seduce her husband to join her and openly to deny the God of Israel, she resolved with all the energy of her domineering character, to extend their spiritual dominion over the whole

nation, to the final expulsion of the worship of Jehovah. The tolerance of polytheism has been vehemently praised, by some who hate the intolerance of Christian truth. And it is true that Greece and Rome willingly made room for the gods of every land. Athens erected an altar even to an "unknown god." But this liberality ceased the moment the claims of the true Jehovah were presented, and was succeeded by the fiery persecutions of the Emperors. Between congenial altars there need be no rivalry. But Jehovah must be God alone. "His glory will he not give to another, neither his praise to graven images." Jezebel felt all the antipathy of an idolater to the exclusive claims of "Him that is higher than the highest." She declared a relentless war against his altars, and persuaded her husband to second her with the force of his authority. Her influence was that of a strong will over a will often rendered irresolute by the remaining power of conscience. Ahab was not ignorant of the history of his people. He knew that there was danger in the undertaking—that Jehovah was to be feared;—the greater his guilt for yielding to the fierce bigotry of this relentless woman. Their relative share of guilt in this matter is forcibly indicated in the words of the historian: "there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of Jehovah, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up." Had we the skill displayed by our great poet in the interview between the hesitating Macbeth and his more ruthless partner, in which she *stirs him up* to the murder of his guest, we might tell how Jezebel employed all the blandishments of her sex, all that innate tact which belongs to the female character, to overcome the remaining scruples of her husband—now persuading, now appealing to his pride and courage, now taunting him for his cowardice, until she succeeds in deadening his fear of the God of his fathers, even so far as to gain his consent to the murder

of all the prophets of the Lord, because they stood in the way of her ambitious fanaticism. How many she put to death we are not informed; but that it was a large number, may be safely inferred from the circumstance that a hundred prophets at least escaped her vengeance at the time, having been hidden in a cave by a faithful believer. These, too, subsequently disappeared by violence, until Elijah was left the sole survivor of the teachers of Israel.

This devotion to her country's gods came so near to a complete triumph, that we learn that Elijah stood alone during the memorable scenes on Mount Carmel, while the false prophets, the minions of the wicked queen, who sustained them at her expense in every part of the land, numbered eight hundred and fifty. Her success with the people was corresponding. The eye of God, more keen than the eye of the desponding Elijah, could discover in all Israel, only 7000 who had not been seduced or terrified into a complete or partial conformity to the royal example. Who can imagine the terror which must have pervaded the land before such a result could be reached! Into how many households did her name carry alarm! She too had armies at her command, to dragoon the unwilling, who could only worship Jehovah in secret glens and caves, as the persecuted since her day have done.

The most striking evidence of the fear in which her cruel fanaticism was held, is afforded by the flight of Elijah himself into the wilderness. After the mighty portents of Mount Carmel, so graphically described in the eighteenth chapter of the first book of Kings, the sanguine prophet, confident that even Jezebel must coincide as Ahab appeared to do, in the judgment of the people on that occasion, that even she must join in their acclamation—Jehovah, he is God! Jehovah, he is God!—runs in haste to Jezreel, and waits to be summoned to re-establish the worship of the God of Israel. But

instead of a summons, the infuriated woman, in contempt of the testimony of her husband who had been an eye-witness of the preceding marvels, sends him a message threatening death. Overpowered by disappointment and fear, the prophet gives way to desponding unbelief and flies into the wilderness.

Other incidents in the Scripture narrative, which afford a further insight into the depths of this evil character, now require notice. A woman who could thus brave the claims of Jehovah, was not likely to respect the rights of man. A single instance of the relentless energy with which she executed her purposes, is given in the case of a man whose property adjoined the palace grounds. With a respect for the rights of property which we are surprised to meet in a character like Ahab, the king proposes to secure it by barter or purchase. But Naboth declines, because it was against the laws of God for a man to alienate the possession of his fathers. In the struggle which took place between the king's cupidity on the one hand, and on the other hand his conscience, or more probably his fear of exciting a popular commotion in Naboth's favor, he shows the pettishness of a sick child. His wife, full of contempt for his scruples, but desirous to gratify her tool, directs the chief men of the city to arraign the poor Naboth for treason against God and the king. The stratagem she planned, succeeded, and he is murdered under color of law. She then coolly bids the coward go and take possession of the vineyard which he had coveted but dared not grasp by his own act. What is it to her, that she has shed innocent blood, has added rapine to murder, and hypocritically covered her contempt of justice under the forms of law? What is it to her that an orphaned family have been driven from their now desecrated home? We see her seated amidst her luxuries in the ivory house (1 Kings xxii. 39), her cruel heart

unmoved by the crimes she has thus committed against a defenceless man, to please her base partner in guilt.

The vices are said to run in companies. Remembering that the worship for which Jezebel had shown all the ardor of a devotee, was as lascivious as it was cruel, we shall not be doing her injustice if we interpret the language which is several times applied to her in the history, to mean that she was as great a disgrace to her sex in respect to modesty as in respect to gentleness and sensibility. The temples of Bel and the groves of Astarte were not the schools in which to train a tender and chaste woman. It is true that the terms which describe personal impurity, have often in Scripture a figurative application to idolatry: but when the basest epithets which can be applied to woman are found attached to the name of Jezebel (as by Jehu, for example, himself no spotless character, 2 Kings ix. 22), we infer that more than her idolatries are meant, and that this wicked woman was as licentious as she was cruel.

Jezebel was a mother. A mother! sacred name! The being who holds a plastic power for good or evil, how great! Were all the mothers of the world upon the side of God and truth, how mighty the revolution that would follow! But what could be expected of such a mother? The tigress will breed tigers. Ahaziah and Joram, her sons and successors to the throne, were the genuine offspring of their mother. Her daughter Athaliah, who married the king of Judah, also inherited her ambition and cruelty. This wicked woman, after the untimely death of her husband and oldest son whom she had corrupted by her influence, resolved to retain the reins of power, and for that purpose ruthlessly murdered all her grandsons, with the exception of one who was concealed by his aunt; and after enjoying her ill-gotten power for six years, she was herself

brought to a violent end. The curse of the Lord is on the house of the wicked.

We now approach the becoming termination of Jezebel's long career of iniquity. It appears that upon the occasion of Ahab's first visit to the grounds he had stolen from Naboth, it pleased Jehovah to warn him of the accursed end that awaited himself, his partner in crime, and his children. The great prophet who had so long haunted his steps, and whom he hated with all the violence of his cowardly nature, suddenly appeared before him to announce their doom. Upon the very spot where the dogs had licked the blood of Naboth, they should lick the blood of Ahab. Of his sons, him that died in the city the dogs should eat; him that died in the field the birds of prey should eat. And of Jezebel, the dogs should eat her body by the wall of Jezreel, the royal residence. Not to dwell upon the verification of these threatenings in the case of the king and his sons, we confine ourselves to the case of the queen. While Ahab was terrified at the denunciation of Elijah, Jezebel scorns to clothe herself in weeds, after his example. Why should she be moved by the curse of a prophet whom she had driven into the wilderness by the very terror of her name, and the worship of whose God she had almost extirpated? Bold from the beginning, she is bold to the end of her career of successes. But her time is come. The catastrophe occurred after the defeat of her second son Joram, who was slain by Jehu the agent chosen by Providence to execute his long-delayed vengeance. As soon as the battle was over, Jehu drove furiously with his hosts to take possession of the royal city. As he enters the gate in triumph, a bold sharp voice is heard above the noise of the multitude. It is the voice of Jezebel, not mourning for her son just slain, not imploring the forbearance of the conqueror. She has adorned her person after the fashion of the time, her eyes

painted, her head tired, as if she were still a sovereign. Her shrieking voice threatens Jehu with the fate of Zimri, who had been slain for usurping the throne of his master (1 Kings xvi. 9). In a pure and high-principled woman, we might feel justified in admiring as a noble courage, what we must here condemn as the desperation of a ferocious animal. It was no sense of injustice, no trust in God, no conscience void of offence, no patient resolution which have made so many delicate and timid females, heroines in the hour of danger. It is the madness of humbled pride, defeated ambition, and revenge frantic because powerless. Her last resort is to bravado. Hers is the bravery of the mastiff.

Jehu, who knew her well, "lifted up his face to the window" at which the infuriated woman stood, and shouted, "Who is on my side? who?" Two or three chamberlains looked forth, ready to propitiate the conqueror, who commanded them to cast her down. The result we give in the graphic words of the original narrative.

"And they threw her down, and part of her blood was sprinkled on the wall, and on the horses. And he trode her under foot. And when he was come in he did eat and drink. And he said, Go, see now this cursed woman, and bury her: for she is a king's daughter. And they went to bury her: but they found no more of her than the skull, and the feet, and the palms of the hands. Wherefore they came again and told him. And he said, This is the word of Jehovah, which he spake by his servant Elijah the Tishbite, saying; In the portion of Jezreel shall dogs eat the flesh of Jezebel: and the carcass of Jezebel shall be as dung upon the face of the field in the portion of Jezreel, so that none shall say, This is Jezebel."

Our memoir might be made to point many a moral. It illustrates the fatal consequences of mating with unbelievers in the true God; the vast influence of high station abused; the unscrupulous

nature of ambition; the intolerance of idolatry; and the indignant curse which sooner or later falls upon the house of the wicked. But we must pass by these and other lessons, and confine ourselves to the testimony it affords to *the mighty transforming power which belongs to sin*. By that power we have seen woman converted into a fiend.

In compliment to woman, it has been said—and we have no disposition to question its justice—that “Intellect is of no sex.” May it not be said with even less room for debate, that Sin is of no sex? It is not our purpose to compare the sexes as to their constitutional differences, or attempt to decide which has contributed most largely to the benignant, and which to the malign influences, that are active in the movements of society. Least of all would we detract from the glory which really belongs to woman when, under the control of pure moral sentiments, she devotes herself to the work for which her constitutional instincts qualify her.

He is a parricide of his mother's name
 Who wrongs the praise of woman; who dares write
 Libels on saints, or with foul ink requite
 The milk they lent us.

We leave it to that class of “men of the world” who have no virtue themselves, to disparage the whole race of women. A host of mothers, wives, daughters, and sisters refute their slanders, by realizing the beautiful ideal of holy Scripture, in which the virtuous and calm affections enshrining themselves in her peculiar nature, predominate over those evil tendencies, in which woman, alas, is no less a sharer than man.

But, she too is a fallen being. She too has been poisoned by the common taint, and none of her instincts are so pure and strong as to have escaped beyond its reach. It is a wicked flattery that denies this fact. There is a dark as well as a bright side to the history of the sex. In acting their parts in public or private life, have they not—(we will not say as often, but)—as thoroughly displayed the power of pride, ambition, envy, vanity, jealousy, revenge, with their attendant meannesses, treacheries, and violence? Have they not furnished their quota to the crowd of voluptuaries who worship at the shrine of Belial—of the greedy who bow to Mammon, of the cruel who have surrounded the altars of Moloch? There have been many Jezebels. The dark spots of history have received their hue almost as much from the crimes of the female great ones of the earth, as from those of the other sex who have often been merely their agents. And even in the less conspicuous theatres of human life—even under the appliances of Christianity, who has not met with examples of all the passions in excessive forms, showing that the female soul may be converted into a noxious swamp, exhaling baneful vapors?

Indeed, energy of intellect and will, destitute of the control of principle, when found in the form of a beautiful woman, make her a being more to be dreaded than a wicked man, because by her sexual blandishments she subjugates his will through his passions, and is thus enabled to subsidize and direct his more rugged violence. Our Christian poet expresses the universal opinion, when he says, "A wicked woman is the worst of men." No man can go farther towards the extremes of impurity and even cruelty, than she who has shaken off the natural restraints of her sex. In ancient days women took a delighted part in witnessing the bloody combats of the gladiators; and in modern times, those of the bull-fight, and by

their presence and applause contributed mainly to stimulate those brutal exhibitions. Amid the scenes of revolution, women have often played the most fierce and bloody part. "If the women do not mix in it,"—whispered Mirabeau to the emissaries whom he was exciting to the first Parisian insurrection—"there will be nothing done." The women of Paris, running at the head of the republican bands of the capital, were, in effect, the first to violate the palace, brandish their poniards over the bed of the queen; and during her last melancholy journey to the scaffold, her own sex crowded round her to enjoy her misery, and heap upon her their obscene and brutal taunts. They carried on the end of their pikes the heads of the massacred bodyguards. Of all the agents of cruelty during that era of crime, whose convulsions like an earthquake revealed many hidden things, none excite our horror so much as the "Knitters of Robespierre," so called because, with the symbols of quiet domestic life in their hands, "they stood in crowds around the tribunals, followed the tumbrils, and sat on the very steps of the guillotine, to greet death, insult its victims, and glut their eyes with blood." Were these things possible only in that age? As if to prove that poisoned waters may still flow from the fountain, we learn that women have partaken in the ferocious excesses which have disgraced the same city during our own times. Yes, if it were just to give to the Graces and Muses, no less just was it to give to the Furies, a female form.

Not to dwell longer upon such repulsive pictures, we return to the thought already expressed, that in no case does sin display its power so balefully as in causing the transformation of which these and kindred crimes are the fruits. It is indeed the crowning triumph of sin. And that it should be so regarded universally by the wicked as well as the good among men, is a testimony to the high estimate universally attached to female excellence. Every man, be he of the

vilest sort, agrees to the sentiment of our great poet, that "proper deformity shows not in fiend so horrid as in woman." Every, even the most unprincipled man, desires a modest and gentle woman for a mother, a wife, a daughter, or sister. Who, with a full knowledge of their characters, would, from love, mate with a Semiramis, a Herodias, a Catharine of Russia, a Brinvilliers? The brutal Claudius, himself a "mere composition of mud mixed with blood," could not endure the infamous Messalina for a wife: and Nero justified his parricide, because Agrippina his mother had become the scandal of her sex for her amours and murders. Before, therefore, she can attract the love and confidence of man, she must appear to him, as woman, full of the modesty, reserve, and tenderness, which seem to be hers by a sort of physical necessity. She must feign, if she do not feel, these qualities. "False face must hide what the false heart doth know." Cleopatra could not have subjugated the conqueror of the East, with all her wit and beauty, if she had from the first appeared before him in her real character for cruelty and licentiousness. When Catharine de Medicis first appeared at the French court, she came as a gentle, amiable, domestic woman; nor was it until ambition had taken possession of her heart, that she became the Jezebel of modern times; like her, remorseless in cruelty; like her in antipathy to the worship of the true God, in the skill with which she subjugated the will of her husband and sons, and in the unflinching decision with which she pursued her objects. And (to turn again to our story for an illustration) Ahab, wicked as he was, was first the lover of a gentle, fascinating woman, before he became the pander and minion of a fury. The claws of the tigress were doubtless concealed under a soft, attractive covering, until her womanly skill had established her power.

Our justification for having presented these revolting aspects of

the female character, must be their truthfulness, and the momentous lesson which they convey, viz., that society must not rely upon the merely constitutional qualities of the sex which was first in the transgression, as sufficient preservatives against the power of a principle which has produced such results. She too has susceptibilities for that fatal influence, which, when it has conceived, bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death in her no less than man. For her, as for man, the only security is to be sought in the regenerating influences of the Spirit and the Word of Truth. The noblest specimens of womanhood are those who have received the second birth of Grace, and have learned the necessary lessons of Virtue at the feet of Mary's friend. Then, indeed, they are

The common clay, ta'en from the common earth,
But wrought of God, and tempered by the tears
Of angels, to the perfect form of — *woman*.

Otherwise, the fire of temptation may blacken if it does not destroy them. Why, then, should not youthful woman be taught to hearken to the ten thousand voices which convey the memorable moral, "Let her that thinketh that she standeth, take heed lest she fall?"



ATHALIAH.

“THE evil that men do lives after them,” said the dramatist, so celebrated for his criticisms on human nature, when contemplating the history of thrones among the Romans. Had he lived in the times of the Jewish monarchies, he might have expressed his sentiment in even stronger terms. For never, perhaps, did the law of evil’s transmission receive a fuller demonstration than then. One can follow its dark pathway, as easily as the course of rivers upon maps.

Athaliah, who forms our present subject, might astonish the cursory reader by her steady exhibition of merciless strength and violence. How, he might ask, can such marvels in iniquity be accounted for? “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?” This seems to indicate the ultimate reach of a mother’s inhumanity to her offspring. She can forget them, abandon them, and give herself up to an insane career of follies. But how can a mother’s hand, coolly and deliberately, imbue itself in blood which was once her own? This appears to be an enormity too prodigious for man’s aptitude in crime, and impossible for the softer sex. Yet Athaliah is presented to us, upon the records of history, as the calculating and unrepenting murderess of her own descendants. Whence caught she such diabolical inspiration? No one, says the adage, was ever extremely base

on a sudden. Hence we are curious about the philosophy of such capacities for deeds of darkness. Where did this most dauntless woman learn her fiendish lessons ?

She was the granddaughter of Omri, who waded through slaughter to a throne which he never inherited. She was the daughter of Ahab, the legitimate successor of an unscrupulous father. Her mother was Jezebel, whose prolific ingenuity for mischief would make the name of Izabella, if common readers did but know its origin, as horrible as it now is classic—the feminine, if there were such a thing, of Beelzebub itself. Under such auspices, Athaliah learned not merely how to reject all true religion, and thus set Heaven at defiance ; but, also, how to compass any ends her passions coveted without regard to means. The war which Jezebel proclaimed against the worship of the true God, and her ruthless extermination of his prophets, was an example which prepared her to treat the most sacred things with entire disdain. And the destruction of pious Naboth, through as base instrumentalities as were ever employed by the most presumptuous tyrant, taught her to use dependents as though machines of which sensibility and conscience could not be predicated.

Thus equipped for the elevation and employments of a life of power and greatness, she was transferred from her father's roof to become a queen. Jehoshaphat king of Judah (it is one of the mysteries of his character, ordinarily under the influence of piety and judgment), instead of soliciting for his son a wife who adhered to the faith of those after God's own heart, sought an alliance with the idolatrous house of Ahab ; and, with many a parent who has regarded earthly prosperity rather than religious duty in so serious a connection, he wedded his family to sorrows which a prophet represents as "desperate." Athaliah was an apt scholar under (one can

hardly deny the fitness of the word, who compares the books of Kings and Chronicles with the history of Europe) the Jesuitical policy of her mother Jezebel; and immediately made herself felt in the cabinet of her royal husband. It is said expressly, by the sacred chronicler, that "he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, like as did the house of Ahab." Of course the inference is hardly avoidable, that the policy and administration of Jehoram were moulded under the plastic efficiency of his wife. But if there should be the least doubt that it was to her, mainly or only, that his departure from the footsteps of his ancestors is to be attributed, that doubt may be resolved at once, by reading the text which portrays her conduct towards her son after his father's death. "His mother was his counsellor to do wickedly," says the unflinching record; and adds, that he yielded but too ready an ear to such a whisperer of sin and madness.

And, now, mark the sway of this reckless adviser and its terrific consequences!

Jehoshaphat left no less than six sons besides Jehoram; to whom, as the eldest, he gave the throne with undisputed sovereignty. These sons, who possessed wealth and eminence, and commanded fortresses, enjoyed none of their worldly monarch's confidence, brother though he were to them. His throne he well knew stood not upon the basis of his own worth of character. He relied not for its stability upon the Divine promises which had erected it, and which only could give it permanence. So he resorted to such earthly appliances as were at hand, and bid fair to subserve his wishes.

And now we begin to perceive how evil germinates and spreads, like the contagion of a pestilence. She, who had seen Naboth fall under the deadly circumvention of her mother, knew what to instigate Jehoram to attempt, and how to aid him in the most remorseless

schemes. Accordingly, one after another of the king's brethren, "and divers also of the princes of Israel," melt away and disappear, by some dark and sudden casualties, until he enjoys that awful solitude, which, says the acute Tacitus, a devastator calls security and peace. He sees his father's sons and their associates victims to his own ambition, and smiles with grim delight, as they are successively withered under arts which a sorceress enables him to practise. Henceforth, he presumes he shall reign in undisturbed magnificence. And so he would have done, but that, while a brother's blood cries from the ground, there is an ear to hear its inexpressible wrongs, at a sanctuary "higher than the highest." The hand which can write iniquity upon the imperishable records, with an iron pen and a diamond's point, reached Jehoram when he was beginning to think he had exalted himself as the eagle, and set his nest among the stars. It smote him; but with such characteristic equity, that the eye of man even could see him writhe beneath it in hopeless anguish. Jehoram was two years dying, and went to his long home so slowly, yet so steadily, that, like Herod the Great when his last breath forsook his wretched body, it left him twice dead—festering beforehand with the corruption of the grave.

Surely such a spectacle might have indented a wrinkle or two upon a brow of brass, and caused an adamant heart to feel, if nothing else, a few twinges of remorse. The throne, whose steps Athaliah had sought to cement with human blood, and the blood of those who ought to have been dearest to him who was one with her own self—that throne, whose foundations had been so costly—laid at such immense sacrifice and hazard—for which every human tie had been sundered, and every Divine obligation scorned—that throne was fleeing from her like a morning cloud, and all her earthly

hopes retreating with it. It was a moment for bitter regret, if not for sober repentance: to make the soul sick of the weary and disheartening toil of wickedness, if not resolved to amend its ways.

But no. Repentance is a "strange work" for them, whose veins have become thoroughly poisoned with the "leprous distilment" of iniquity. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil." Such is the matter of fact philosophy of a Hebrew sage, which the modern optimist, who talks of the secondary omnipotence of moral suasion, tries in vain to prove fallacious.

Athaliah turned not from the couch of her doomed partner, saddened, disgusted, and remorseful, to hide her head in a cloister, and learn to lament the policy which had been arrested by such a frightful issue. Not at all. She but changed her subject, not her arts, not her determinations. She would still be mistress of Jerusalem, and perfect, by other hands, the plans which an inconvenient death had interrupted.

Jehoram left a son capable of reigning, for he was two and forty years old when the sceptre fell from his father's hands. To this son she immediately addressed herself, with renovated wariness and duplicity. And she succeeded but too speedily and too well. It was easier, doubtless, to vanquish Ahaziah, than his father Jehoram; for his pious grandfather had now long been dead, and had he lived, might have been shuffled off for a dotard, as the old counsellors of state had been treated by Rehoboam.

So the influence, and the successful influence of Athaliah, are matters of distinct and emphatic testimony. Ahaziah became his mother's willing pupil; and her baleful ascendancy was still experienced, to the full, in the councils and undertakings of the kingdom of Judah.

Jehoram was left to be uncared for in his loathsome grave. And, now, a new race was to be run in the career of power and splendor. Possibly, Athaliah, with less of title to the name, would have had more of the prerogatives and immunities of a queen than ever; since the sacred historian seems to imply, that the son was, if any thing, more completely her tool than his pliant parent.

But as Providence had thwarted her plans in the bud, by cutting off Jehoram in his prime, so now did it disappoint them in their bloom, when Ahaziah was about to wield the energies of government with the promise of long prosperity. Ahaziah lived but a single year. He went down to Samaria to visit his cousin, the king of Israel, at that unpropitious moment, when the vials of predicted wrath were about to be emptied on the house of Ahab. His visit was most ill-timed; and he was specially unfortunate, also, in the retinue which he took with him, to add doubtless to his personal grandeur. That retinue embraced the whole royal family of Judah, save his own infant children, who were left behind under the charge of Athaliah. Thus they all perished, by the hands of that thorough minister of retribution, Jehu the son of Nimshi, in one common massacre; not a soul of them escaping to tell of their bloody and hapless fate.

And now, assuredly, we say, Athaliah, with all her desperate propensities for evil, has a lesson taught her—has scenes to look upon—which must disarm her frenzied will, and reduce it, if not to submission, at least to something like capitulation with a contending Providence. Niobe, according to a graphic fable, turned into stone when she beheld the desolation of her family. Was there not enough in the catastrophe which had swept away the family of Athaliah, to petrify her soul with horror, and constrain her to believe, though with the faith of trembling devils, that sin is an evil and a

bitter thing, which can turn wine into “the poison of dragons,” and “the cruel venom of asps?”

Oh, behold her, rise up from the ghastly wreck around her, with the eye and the purpose of a restless demon, to make that wreck yet more terrible—perfectly consummate—that she might sit alone upon the funeral pile of royalty, an unquestioned, an unquestionable despot. “And when Athaliah, the mother of Ahaziah, saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the seed royal.”*

“All the seed royal,” according to her comprehensive purpose, and the exact, business-like way in which, after her mother Jezebel, that peerless model at diabolical dispatch, she was accustomed to do up her work. Bone of her bone and flesh of her flesh though that seed royal were, the opportunity was too enticing for her to permit a solitary one to obstruct her way, while she was aiming, like a famous association of the present age, for *the greater glory* of something else in appearance, but for her own greater glory in reality. Blood was no more than water spilt upon the ground, to the inexorable ambition of her lion-heart. She could plant her throne upon the gory relics of her house, and then, as did Milton’s Satan, hail the horrors that surrounded her, with “a mind not to be changed by place or time.” She could have looked upon Jerusalem in flames, and crumbling into ashes, and then dance like Nero over burning Rome; so that her every opponent had been wrapped in the blaze, and vanished from her sight.

And she seemed, at length, to have reached the summit of her unearthly aspirations. She had bowed down to the instigator of deeds of darkness, and he had given her a kingdom, and the glory of it, without abatement. She could now say in her heart, with apocalyptic Babylon, “I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no

* 2 Kings xi. 1. That is, every *male* heir of the crown.

sorrow." For years of fear and woe her banners waved over the Holy City; until the stricken land seemed, like its own Dead Sea, to have sunk into the lethargy of leaden slumber.

But how often does the simplest intervention of Providence baffle our keenest foresight! In the heap of dead, where Athaliah confidently imagined "all the seed royal" lay, a single little one was missing; or, at least, was left there for a certain victim. Yet, by judicious and cautious tenderness, that child was rescued from the jaws of destruction, and reared to life and vigor. A Divine promise had given sacred pledge, that the seed of David should not fail; and this forgotten infant had an Eye hovering over him, and an Arm encircling him, which would one day guide his footsteps safely to his ancestral throne.

A daughter of Athaliah, little thought of no doubt for her very sex's sake, was, fortunately, not her mother's admirer or her counterpart. That the palace might be well rid of her, she had been permitted to marry the high priest; and probably, under his tuition, she had learned something of the old-fashioned religion of better days, and of her duty to legitimate authority on earth, as well as in high heaven. Together, she and her husband succeeded in stealing one child from the heap of death, ere the tide of his little life had flowed away. They were favored in secreting and educating this lost heir of the crown; and, at a proper time, under the auspices of religion, and surrounded, not for form's sake, with the weapons of war, he was introduced to the people, and greeted with the acclaim of loyal homage.

Beyond question the daughter of Athaliah, and her husband the high priest, knew well with whom they had to do, and concerted all their arrangements with the adroitest skill. This is quite evident from the fact, that Athaliah was first aroused to a consciousness of

the reality, by a shout which welcomed a descendant of David to his hereditary honors; and even then, was so little suspicious of the formidable preparation of her opponents, as to rush upon the scene without a solitary guard. Either her fury had overpowered her, or her ordinary foresight had deserted her; for she is found in the presence of a mighty multitude, who are glowing with loyalty and gladness, frantic with passion, and screaming treason! treason! as if every sword, within reach, would gleam to obey her call. The act was as fatal as it was rash. She was driven forth from the precincts of the Temple, where the solemn scene of recognizing the heir of the throne was acting; and flying for safety to some obscure passages of the palace, was there cut down, and left weltering in her blood.

In her miserable end she bore a singular resemblance to the model she had so faithfully copied, her heaven-daring mother. Jezebel was abandoned to the dogs, and Athaliah was left in a horse-path, to be trampled upon as offal. Both died queens; yet without a hand to help, or an eye to pity them. As the votaries of the world generally do, they found even their sycophants abandon them in their straits; so that we might easily fancy them repeating the bitter counsel of the fallen statesman, on his way to execution—

Where you are liberal of your loves and counsels,
 Be sure you be not loose; for those you make friends,
 And give your hearts to, when they once perceive
 The least rub in your fortunes, fall away
 Like water from ye, never found again
 But where they mean to sink ye.

In turning the eye back over this dismal story, to gather up some of the lessons which its review enforces, one is almost confounded at the

thought, that it is a woman who furnishes such a picture of unmixed and insatiable depravity.* It were doleful exhibition enough of man, and of the most reckless and audacious of his sex. But it belongs to the better portion of human nature, as we are accustomed to esteem it—to its fairest, gentlest, most susceptible portion, as we allow with willingness, and not with the concession of mere courtesy.

And how then can these things be? How indeed is it, that Revelation, elsewhere as well as here, presents us with such frightful manifestations of the capabilities of woman for iniquity? Sin begins on earth with her, and it reaches in her history a hideousness which might make one, like the abashed prophet, “black in the face”—dark with the shadows of despair, as he contemplates human fates and fortunes. Is this to prove, that those polite imaginations, which affirm that if man cannot woman *can* redeem our fallen nature from the imputation of being utterly depraved, do nevertheless utterly mistake? No, I am by no means anxious to extort such dreary inferences; and then ring changes on them, as is sometimes done with a kind of misanthropic triumph. But I think I can see a design in the very many and very marked examples of sinfulness in females, put upon those pages which never flatter, the pages of Revelation, that should arrest and fasten the attention of the most inconsiderate.

It is this. If even those whom we might expect would transgress least frequently, and least criminally, can, when left to their own wills and resources, become such tremendous malefactors, then what hope is there for any one, who makes his own pleasure his law, and employs all the immunities within his sphere for individual gratification? And is this more, or less, than what the great multitude are

* 2 Chron. xxiv. 7. Her very name (see the Hebrew) is made a synonym for wickedness itself.

doing? Who prays, morning by morning, "Give us this day our daily bread;" as if "our daily bread" were *all* a man had a right to expect, or ask, at the hands of his chief Provider? Who prays, "Lead us not into temptation;" if temptation lie directly in the way of moneyed gains, or sensual enjoyments, and if the only loss to be dreaded be a little wear and tear of conscience, or a diminished part in that Book of Life, which will never be read, or opened even, on *this* side of the grave?

Aye, but all go not, very few indeed go to such direful lengths as an Athaliah; and to put the bulk of the community upon her level is most gross injustice. *All* do not, objector? Who told you so? Who told you to measure sin by its outward heinousness, rather than by its inward pravity? Is that the rule of God's book? that the canon by which he will test and sentence obliquity in the awarding day?

On the contrary, are not the external manifestations of a crime, a secondary consideration in the eye of Him, who seeth not as man seeth? Is it not *His* way to probe the depths of one's spirit, and to judge of an action by the part which motives, aims, feelings, and resolves take in its commission? Look and see! Covetousness is a small matter to our comprehension; nay, is but an overdone virtue, so industrious and frugal are those who cherish it. Pride, as we understand it—spiritual pride especially—is quite a trifling mischief; for it is hidden away in the recesses of a man's bosom, and he is afraid or ashamed to make it visible. But *with God* this covetousness is, to himself, the profoundest of dishonors; it is absolute idolatry; it competes with himself for the mastery of the heart, and is therefore no better than downright atheism. And so with pride—spiritual pride, most eminently. That is to God, like smoke assailing the nostrils a livelong day—a perfectly detestable annoyance.

Nay, it is the height of the soul's achievements in rebellion: it is the very condemnation of the infernal devil. (Isa. lxxv. 5. 1 Tim. iii. 6.)

True, we see not, all around us, hands stained with blood like the hands of Athaliah. But if we could open human bosoms, how many hearts should we find there, unsoiled by covetousness, and pride, and spiritual arrogance—how many, indeed, unpossessed with the demons of lust, vainglory, and hypocrisy; of envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness? how many, which never knew the baleful dominion of those deceits, that the world, the flesh, and the devil abound in? how many, which, pricked in their consciences by a Visitant, who can look where human eyes cannot, and rebuke as human tongues are not allowed to do, have driven that friendly monitor away, with hardness of heart and contempt of God's word and commandment?

And if these things are so, then what is human nature to do, for itself, and by itself, if let alone? and who has any right to expect a more hopeful end than Athaliah's, if he neither believes in Divine grace nor seeks it? That is the great question, which such an example as hers brings home; and, though I have many other lessons at hand, suggested by her story, I care not to mention them, if I can secure an audience for this. To believe in something better than himself; to fly for succor to something higher than himself; to resolve, in consecrated language, to be "born again,"—that is the grand lesson which every exhibition of the overturns of human nature left to itself inculcates; and he who rises from the contemplation of a sinner's fate, with such a lesson graven on his heart, will have done one of the best day's works which the longest and the busiest life can boast.



ESTHER.

AHASUERUS, whom the Greeks call Xerxes, had but recently ascended the throne of Persia, and was desirous to signalize the commencement of his reign by the unequalled magnificence of an entertainment which he gave to his nobles and princes. Although the received opinion recognizes Ahasuerus as being the same with Artaxerxes Longimanus, yet there are various considerations which seem to establish his identity with the Xerxes so memorable in profane history, because of the disastrous expedition he led into Greece. In the first place, the two names, Ahasuerus and Xerxes, when stripped of their foreign terminations, may be resolved into the same Persian phrase, meaning Lion King. In the second place, every other Persian monarch, probably coeval with this Ahasuerus, is mentioned by his historical name in Scripture, and Xerxes alone is not spoken of, unless he be Ahasuerus. And again, the historical Xerxes and the Scriptural Ahasuerus exhibit a remarkable coincidence of character; each being in a high degree vain, frivolous, ductile, and at the same time haughty and cruel. The festival given by Ahasuerus was like what might have been expected from Xerxes, one of barbaric pomp and splendor, for it continued day by day for the period of six months. The riches of a kingdom which extended from India to Ethiopia, which embraced an hundred and twenty-seven provinces,

which comprehended the treasures of Egypt, the accumulated stores of Lydia, and the wondrous wealth of Babylon, all these were in succession exhibited to an admiring court. But the ostentatious king would not confine his favors to one class of his subjects. He causes a feast to be prepared for the whole population of the royal city. They are entertained in a tent, in the garden of the palace, hung with rich curtains, furnished with couches of silver and gold, while the cups out of which they drink, are also of gold, and the pavement under their feet is of mosaic.

The heart of the king swells with the thoughts of his own greatness, and is yet more inflamed by the wine which he has been drinking day after day. He forgets the proprieties of his country, and of his station, and contrary to all usage, and even to what was then considered decency, he commands his queen to come forth unveiled, that men may look on her face, and see that he excels all others, as much in the beauty of his wife, as in the extent of his dominions, and the profusion of his riches. But the queen is not less haughty than himself; she does not choose to be made a spectacle to this promiscuous and inebriated multitude; and she probably relies on those very charms, which he so much admires, and wishes others to admire, to save her from any ill consequences of her refusal. But she has over-estimated their influence. He loves her to be sure, but he loves his own dignity and authority still better, and he is enraged at such an act of contemptuous disobedience, witnessed by so many spectators. He inquires of his principal counsellors, what, according to law, should be done with so undutiful a wife, and so rebellious a subject. Either from courtly subserviency, or from sincere participation in the oriental feeling, as to the wide extent of marital authority, they recommend, and almost demand the repudiation of the haughty queen, and his marriage with another, of more

submissive temper. After some struggles with his affection for her, as it would appear, the king consents to this harsh counsel, and Vashti is cast down from her high place, and consigned to the obscurity, the seclusion, and monotonous misery, which, in the East, await a divorced wife. So much have a few rash words cost her! Her station, her grandeur, her luxuries, perhaps her affections, all are sacrificed to a hasty word. Bitterly, we may well believe, did she lament her pride, when it was too late. But she experienced, what we all, alas, in some painful manner learn, that a word spoken, an act performed, is a fountain opened up, which will flow on despite our efforts. A hasty word has cost many a woman her happiness, many a man his life. A hasty word has convulsed nations, and overthrown dynasties. Jephthah spoke such a word, and that word became a flame of fire, which consumed his young and innocent daughter, and his own peace, and blasted the triumphs of his nation. Rehoboam spoke such a word, and that breath of air had force to cleave asunder the throne which had been founded by the valor of David, and established by the wisdom of Solomon.

Words, indeed, are things, and great and mighty things; so great, so mighty, that our Saviour tells us that our All will in a very special manner depend on them; for that by our words we shall be justified, and by our words we shall be condemned.

When Vashti had been removed, lest the affections of the king should return to her, which would have insured the ruin of all who had counselled her degradation, the ministers of Ahasuerus recommended that the most beautiful young maidens, from all his wide dominions, should be brought to the palace, that from among them he might select a wife worthy to occupy the vacant place in his heart and on his throne. The suggestion pleased the king, and was adopted. The loveliest maidens of Asia were brought

together and presented to the monarch; but of all this dazzling array, none was so fair as the orphan Jewish girl, Hadassah. Among the rest she shone like a star, and the Persians therefore gave her the name of Esther. This superiority she could scarcely have owed to brighter eyes and rosier cheeks, or a more symmetrical form; for, among the hundred and twenty-seven provinces over which Ahasuerus reigned, were Georgia and Circassia. Whatever of loveliness dwells on alabaster brows, or amid raven tresses, or on gazelle-like shapes, this was seen, wherever the eye of the king rested. Nor was it merely the light of intellect, irradiating the countenance of the Jewish girl, which outshone the grosser charms of others, and won the heart of Ahasuerus. For his dominion extended over Asiatic Greece, and even among the islands of the Ægean sea. Some, then, of those fair maidens before him, had breathed the native air of Homer, had dwelt where "burning Sappho loved and sung." All the charm, then, that the light of intellect can add to material beauty, they possessed. But to Hadassah belonged more exalted loveliness even than that of the mind: the beauty of the soul, a soul enriched with heavenly graces, meek, pure, self-renouncing, grateful to benefactors, humble in prosperity, venturous in the hour of danger, because ever reposing on the promises of God. Of all the maidens gathered in Shushan, Hadassah was probably the only worshipper of the true God. Educated as a daughter in the house of Mordecai, a wise and devout Israelite, she had learned from his lips those glorious truths, which were the heritage of her people, but of which the Gentile world was ignorant. She had worshipped no Baal, no Venus, no filthy god or goddess, the creation of man's depraved fancy; and the very adoration of whom was itself a pollution as well as an impiety. From her very infancy she had bowed her knee to Jehovah; that

God who had made the heavens and the earth, whose name was Holy, whose nature was goodness, compared with whose purity the heavens themselves were not clean; that God was her God. She could hear and read of the revelations which He had made of Himself, and of His will, in the wise and righteous laws which Moses had announced, in the sublime prophecies of Isaiah and Ezekiel, in the divine songs of David and of Asaph. In the history of her people she could trace His hand and learn His character. She could there see, how, under His government, righteousness exalteth a nation, while sin is a reproach and ruin to any people. This God she had been taught to fear, to love, to trust, and to obey. She stood, then, among the degraded idolaters, by whom she was surrounded, as a being of another race.

“ Oft converse with heavenly habitants
Had cast a beam on the outward shape,
The unpolluted temple of the mind,
And turned it by degrees to the soul’s essence.”

When, then, Esther was presented to the king, he loved her, above all the women, and she obtained grace and favor in his sight, more than all the virgins, so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen, instead of Vashti. But Mordecai, her kinsman, reaped none of the fruits of her good fortune. He sat still in the king’s gate, perhaps as porter and guard—more probably as magistrate and counsellor, for it was at the gates of the palace that justice was dispensed. But even if elevated to the judicial office, he did not owe this elevation to the queen, for he had expressly required her not to communicate the secret of his race and lineage. He seems, with wonderful sagacity, to have foreseen the dangers to

which the Jews would be exposed, in that arbitrary and ill-governed monarchy, and the protection which the queen's influence, unexpectedly exerted, might afford them; and for the welfare of his people, and the people of his God, this humble and holy man is content to sacrifice whatever aspirations he might himself have felt for power and greatness. Esther, on the other hand, shows her piety and humility in obeying her wise and venerable kinsman as implicitly, now that she is seated on the throne, as formerly, when, at his footstool, she drank in from his lips the words of truth and godliness. This comparatively humble place, at the same time, enables Mordecai to perform a most important service for the king, which, in the wonderful providence of God, constitutes a necessary link in the chain of events that issues in the deliverance of his people. Two of the chamberlains, who guarded the door of the royal apartments, became, from some cause, incensed against the king, and plotted to put him to death. Mordecai, we know not how, becomes acquainted with their secret. The tradition of the Jews is, that they conversed with each other in a language which they supposed unknown to every one else, but with which Mordecai was acquainted—concealing, as he did, under his plain exterior, the highest wisdom and the amplest knowledge. This dangerous conspiracy is disclosed by him to Esther, and in his name communicated by her to the king. The view which this transaction gives us of the interior of a despotic palace, may well make us content not to be the inhabitants of such a mansion, and may well make us rejoice that all such are fast disappearing from the earth. We see here a man so powerful, that, at the solicitation of a worthless courtier, he is able to immolate the lives and confiscate the properties of millions of his most deserving subjects, without cause, without inquiry, by a decree arbitrary in its origin, and at the same time irreversible in its nature; and yet, with

all this portentous power for evil, in other things so impotent that his own life lies at the mercy of two of his menial servants, and is only protected by the probity and wisdom of a stranger. And this appalling view of the miseries, the anxieties, and the perils of a despot, is confirmed by all that history, ancient and modern, teaches us on the subject; by the Caligulas, the Neros, and the Domitians, by the Selims, the Amuraths, and the Mahomets, and, most remarkably, by the final catastrophe of this very Ahasuerus or Xerxes: for he fell, at length, by such a household plot as this of Bigthan and Teresh. He and his eldest son were put to death, and his whole family would have been exterminated, but for the treachery of one whom the traitor trusted. What wise man, then, would covet the power and pomp of an absolute monarch, held by such a tenure, where the reveller at the epicurean feast sees constantly hanging over him the naked sword suspended by a single hair? Who would desire his palaces and his treasures, his jewels and his banquets, his obsequious beauties and his adoring people, while, in the midst of all, are such treachery and insecurity, such cares and perils? A life like this may be compared to a ramble through a tropical forest, where vegetation grows with rank luxuriance, where rich fruits hang from the boughs, and gaudy flowers are flaunting in the air; but the tiger lurks in the jungle, and the serpent glides through the grass, and the scorpion hides beneath the leaves.

This imminent danger, from which Ahasuerus was so wonderfully rescued, seems to have produced no sedative or purifying influence on his character. He continues weak, frivolous, and cruel, as before. He adopts, as his favorite, one like himself, Haman the Agagite, and advances him and sets his seat above all the princes that were with him. As is the custom of courts, the favorite of the king becomes the observed of all observers, and those who seek their own pro-

motion, or are solicitous for their own safety, bow with idolatrous prostrations before this rising sun. But the mean and haughty soul of Haman is not so much gratified by the adulation of the crowd, as it is vexed by the undisguised contempt of one sincere and upright man. Mordecai, either because he understands the true character of this wretch, and consequently considers it hypocrisy to offer him the outward marks of respect he is so far from feeling, or because the honors demanded for him partake of idolatry, and to render them would be an impiety—for the one or the other of these reasons, or for some equally weighty, Mordecai will not either bow to him or do him reverence. The fellow-servants of the upright man are astonished at such contumacy in one usually so humble and so wise. They first expostulate with him, and then, probably in self-defence, lest they might be considered as partaking of his crime by concealing it, they finally inform on him. The anger of Haman, when he learns that he is despised by this Jew, himself in his eyes so despicable, knows no bounds. In a heart capacious of such things, he meditates the widest and most savage revenge. It is not enough for him, that, for the affront he has received, one man shall perish. A whole nation must be offered up as sacrifices to his wounded pride. He goes then to the king, whose weak compliance he counted on, and representing the Jews as an unsocial and disloyal race, makes the audacious proposal that the whole of them be destroyed—offering a large sum of money to the royal treasury as a compensation for the loss of their taxes and tributes. The king, who presents in his character—what is not unusual—a conjunction of vices apparently opposite, facility of temper and hardness of heart, yields a ready assent to this infamous and ruinous proposal, although he will not exact the purchase-money of the blood of his subjects, but permits it to be shed gratuitously. Their destruction would have at once been accom-

plished, but for the overruling providence of God, acting on the superstition of Haman. He inquires, by lot, as to the most propitious season for the completion of his enterprise, and he is directed to postpone it to the last month in the year—the lots being cast in the first. Ample time is thus secured to counteract his devices, and new evidence is given that, “though the lot be cast in the lap, the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.” Having dispatched their bloody decree to the governors of every province and to the rulers of every people, the king and Haman *calmly sit down to drink*, evincing thereby the close connection between boundless cruelty to others and boundless indulgence to ourselves.

When these things were made known to Mordecai, he was afflicted with the deepest grief, and rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and cried with a loud and bitter cry. Esther, in the meantime, who, in the interior of the harem, had heard nothing of what was occurring, learned first, to her great surprise, of the marks of profound sorrow which Mordecai was exhibiting. She sends to inquire the cause, and he informs her of the exterminating decree that had been issued, and bids her use her influence with the king to save her people. She replies, that, by a general law, no one is permitted to approach the king, unless sent for, except at the peril of life; and that she has no reason to believe she would be welcome to him, since for thirty days he had not called for her. Mordecai assures her, in reply, with heroic faith, that the people of God will certainly receive deliverance from some quarter or other, for the promises of the Most High cannot fail; but that if she refuse to be the instrument of that deliverance, then may she look for ruin to herself and her father's house; and he bids her inquire whether it were not for this very crisis that she had been exalted to the royal dignity. Esther hesitates no

longer, but asks that all the faithful in Chushan shall unite in fasting and prayer for her in this great danger, and announces that, having herself thus supplicated God, she will venture to approach the king with her request, and that if she perish in doing her duty, she can but perish.

We see, in this high courage, the fruit of sincere faith and habitual devotion. We see that these graces can flourish, even in the uncongenial atmosphere of a court, under the baleful shadow of the power of a wicked husband and an idolatrous king; that in every condition of life, if we are not wanting to ourselves, the grace of God will not be withheld from us; and that, when humbly and earnestly sought, grace will be vouchsafed, not only to a Hannah, worshipping in God's own temple, or to a member of some Christian household, but to the wife of an Ahasuerus, to the servants of a Narcissus or a Nero; just as the blessed light of the sun is poured out on all the earth, not only kindling the mountain tops, and making the glad waves of the ocean to glisten, but cheering, likewise, the solitary captive in his dungeon, and illuminating the dark recesses where the laborer toils at his forge or his loom.

With a countenance, then, chastened by abstinence, and exalted by devotion, with eyes more beautiful and expressive than ever, because of her consciousness of danger, and of the high purpose for which she encountered that danger, Esther presents herself before the king, and as soon as she is seen, her conquest is complete. Not only is she pardoned for approaching uncalled, but her request is granted before it is announced, whatever it may be, even to the half of the kingdom. Esther, with admirable prudence, will not then make known her petition. She seeks more thoroughly to ascertain the feelings of Ahasuerus, and to propitiate his favor; and she contents herself, for the present, with soliciting the king to come

with Haman to a banquet she had prepared for them, promising on the morrow to declare her request. The heart of Haman was elated with the honor thus conferred on him, in being alone invited to a feast with the royal pair; but neither this honor, nor his many dignities, nor his boundless riches, nor the multitude of his children, could give him any lasting content, while Mordecai still treated him with disdain. This fly in his ointment destroyed all its sweetness. He consults with his friends, and with his wife, what to do; and they advise him to erect a gallows, fifty cubits high, and then go in boldly to the king, and ask that Mordecai be hanged. This is a slight and trivial request, compared with many the king has already granted, and there is no reason to suppose it will be refused. But Haman, like every other wicked man, has to deal with an adversary far more formidable than the one he sees before him. God is engaged in baffling his counsels. That very night the king could not sleep, and desires, by what was, perhaps, a most unusual caprice with him, that the chronicles of his kingdom should be read to him; and the reader is guided to that part in which the service of Mordecai, in revealing the conspiracy of Bigthan and Teresh, is recorded. The king inquires what recompense had been made Mordecai for this, and finds there has been none. At that moment, it would seem, Haman, rising early, in his eagerness to dispatch Mordecai, had reached the court of the palace. Ahasuerus sends for him, as his favorite counsellor, and asks, "What shall be done for the man whom the king delights to honor?" Haman supposes this can be no other than himself, and immediately suggests all the honors which would be acceptable to a vain and frivolous mind like his own. To his amazement, the king, while he accepts his counsel, directs him to render all these honors to Mordecai.

With a face clothed with smiles, and a heart burning with

anguish, he goes forth to perform the hated service ; and when it is done, forgetful, it would seem, of his appointment at the royal banquet, he hastens home, devoured by rage and vexation. But he is sent for, and makes his appearance at the feast. Then, in his presence, when the king asks Esther her petition, she beseeches him to spare her life, and the life of her people. She informs him of the bloody and devastating decree which had issued, and which the king, it would almost appear, had forgotten, and she charges it on Haman, as its author. Both her hearers are amazed ; neither had before suspected her to be a Jewess, and neither is at the moment prepared to answer. The king sees the matter in a new light. He finds that he has been made the tool of another, and that nothing is more conspicuous in the whole transaction than his own folly. He rises up and walks in the garden, to see what is to be done. Haman, with all the meanness of detected villany, begins to supplicate the queen for his life ; but this only hastens and insures his ruin, for the king, on his return, affecting to misunderstand the posture in which he finds him, gives the signal for his immediate execution. The servants, who had that morning seen the gallows he had erected for Mordecai, with courtly alacrity in trampling on a fallen man, inform the king of this new offence, and he gives sentence, that, in expiation of all his crimes, Haman himself shall be hung thereon.

The influence of Esther and Mordecai is now paramount, and it is fortunate for the kingdom that they desire to use it only for salutary purposes. The authority of the king, who is like wax, in receiving the impressions of the objects in contact with him, is now employed to prevent the massacre of the Jews, and to punish their assailants ; so that instead of the extinction of their nation, which seemed impending, it is strengthened, enlarged, and secured.

From no part, perhaps, of Holy Scripture, is so deep an impression left on us of the far-seeing wisdom and majestic providence of Almighty God, as from this narrative of Esther. We see the threads of His designs, laid out at remote distances, and gradually brought together to form the web of events. The haughtiness of Vashti,—the birth, the breeding, and the beauty of Esther—the conspiracy of Bigthan and Teresh—the wisdom of Mordecai—the temporary forgetfulness of his services by the king—the superstition of Haman,—the disposal of the lots—the wakefulness of Ahasuerus—his unusual resource for the diversion of his mind—the direction of the hand and the eye of the reader to that part of the chronicles of the kingdom in which the services of Mordecai were recorded—the opportune arrival of Haman—all these events, apparently slight and unconnected, yet wrought together to bring about the result appointed in the determinate counsel and purpose of God. It remarkably illustrates what the sacred poet has sung :

“God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform ;
He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.

“Deep in unfathomable mines,
With never-failing skill,
He treasures up His bright designs
And works His gracious will.”



SARA, WIFE OF TOBIAS.

The maid is fair and wise.—TOBIT VI. 12.

WHY is she thus sad? She stands beneath her father's roof, in the pride of youth and beauty. The splendor of "a city of Media" surrounds her. But her eye is averted and downcast. Her attitude is that of one plunged into the depths of troubled thoughts—over whom some terrible calamity impends; and yet the meek and gentle aspect of that sorrowing countenance seems to bespeak that she does not *deserve* to be a sufferer!

Our sympathy is deeply excited by the sight of youth clouded with sadness, of beauty stained by tears; and nature prompts us to ask, What is the cause of her affliction? It is briefly this. She was the only daughter of her father—indeed, his last surviving child, and as such, no doubt, the object of his tenderest affection, of his doting pride. He had looked to her as the solace of his old age, and exulted in the hope that from her would spring a noble race, to inherit his riches and perpetuate his line. She had accordingly married; but one after another of seven husbands had been torn from her on the nuptial night. The morning had found them dead. And it is at this point of time that we contemplate her in the picture of the artist,

oppressed by this strange succession of misfortunes, and mournfully seeking, perhaps, for the causes of them.

The history informs us that "Asmodeus, an evil spirit, had killed" her seven husbands. And this she may have believed; for, in the age in which she lived, the agency of evil spirits was a matter of faith; nor do the canonical Scriptures forbid *us* to entertain it.

But, although she may not have been aware that an unseen enemy exercised so disastrous an influence over her destiny, she must have thought that some frightful fatality pursued her, from which she could never escape. And as we gaze on that sorrow-stricken face, the silent lips seem parting to exclaim, 'Why do I suffer these things? Why is the cup of happiness so often dashed at my feet? Why am I doomed to bring dishonor on my once spotless name, and my father's house? Why does every thing I seek to love, perish at my approach?'

But there is another reason for the expression of unutterable woe depicted on that faultless visage. She has not only to struggle inwardly under a sense of unprovoked and unaccountable calamity, but her singular domestic history cannot be kept concealed, and she is suspected of having occasioned the sudden deaths of her betrothed!

Is she, then, a *murderess*? Are the bitter taunts of her "very objects" merited? Has she indeed "strangled her husbands?" Alas! that fair exterior, whose loveliness is heightened by the aspect of grief in which it is shrouded, is no proof of her innocence; nor can it be suggested, in her behalf, that the crime is too horrible for *woman* to be its perpetrator. There have been those as fair, and as richly endowed with intellectual treasures, as *she*, who have committed crimes as foul as that with which she has been charged. Aye! beautiful and gifted woman! There are no sins on the blood-stained

annals of our race, which Truth, the "recording angel," has not entered against *thee* in "the chancery of heaven." Thine eye may beam with the softest rays of gentleness, and if it glistens with a tear, it may seem but a token of the pitying spirit that pervades and sanctifies thine heart. Thy lips may have breathed the winged words of faith and tenderness; yet, in thy calmest mood, and when the atmosphere of heaven seems floating round thee, even then, for one on whom thou smilest, and who has garnered in his "heart of hearts" the vows of thy devotion, thou mayest have plotted some deadly scheme to destroy this infatuated worshipper of thy beauty!

The story of "Sara the daughter of Raguel" may be a fable; but *this* part of it, certainly, is not incredible. Many a doting lover has expired in his bridal bed; and she who shared it with him, while the smile of innocence played upon her lips, may have drawn his breath with the subtle malignity of a fiend. And, then, hers may have been the tears most freely shed for him, her lamentations the loudest; and her attendants may have pitied the woes of the living, more than the untimely fate of the dead, and numbered her among the brightest examples of devoted, but ill-starred affection!

But for her, whose story we contemplate, there need be no fears like these. This is the sorrowful aspect of one laboring under unfounded distrust; not of a person ruminating over the triumphs of successful guilt, and who is proving, as thousands have also done, that its bitter fruit is torture of conscience and incurable remorse! Look not, therefore, on the fair and wise being before you, reader, with disgust; but rather with the deepest sympathy. She is not criminal; but her heart is smitten with a grief, than which none is more hard to bear—she is *wrongfully accused*. See! she seems sinking beneath the weight of the suspicions with which she has been assailed. She is in the attitude of listening; and, it may be,

the artist designed to represent her as still stunned with the cruel insults of her menials. They come to her ears with terrible distinctness: "Dost thou not know," said they, "that thou hast strangled thine husbands? Thou hast had already seven husbands, neither wast thou named after any of them. Wherefore dost thou beat us for them? If they be dead, go thy ways after them; let us never see of thee either son or daughter."

What accusations, more formidable, could be pronounced against a woman, however depraved! How utterly overwhelming to one conscious of her innocence! Such a charge would have startled the callous soul of an Agrippina, or a Lucretia Borgia. It must well nigh have broken a heart, knowing it to be false, yet incapable of disproving it; and feeling, as unfallen woman always feels, that even the breath of calumny tarnishes her fair fame for ever! To be the object of evil surmise to her equals, would have been a sore trial; but to be compelled to hear the revilings of "her father's maids," must have caused her unutterable anguish. This must have convinced her that the suspicion, which they had proclaimed in a tone so bold and unfeeling, had become universal, and that henceforth the finger of scorn would be pointed at her, even to her dying hour.

Can we find the heart to blame her, if, under such circumstances, she turned her thoughts towards that last refuge of the miserable—a self-sought grave? And when we meditate on this instance of one, as pure as fair, endowed with wisdom and adorned with piety—forced to the verge of despair by an accusation equally enormous and unfounded—can we refuse to render at least a passing sigh of pity, to those most hapless of her sex, who, though they may not have been as blameless, have been hunted by the world's untiring scorn, from one grade of infamy to another, till, in the frenzied

moment when their miseries reach their height, they touch the sacred ark of life with the unhallowed hand of suicide ! Possibly this may be disavowed, as morality insufficiently austere ; but let us think of Him who said, “ He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her,” and let us be forbearing.

“ Who made the heart, 'tis He alone
 Decidedly can try us ;
 He knows each chord—its various tone,
 Each spring—its various bias.
 Then at the balance let's be mute ;
We never can adjust it ;
 What's *done*, we partly can compute,
 We know not what's *resis* ! ”

We know not, indeed, through what infernal arts the poor victim may have fallen ; by what hideous but groundless accusations she may have been driven, like Sara, to desperation ; nor with what sincerity that cry may have been uttered to the last, which is never unavailing when it comes from the depths of a broken and a contrite heart, “ God be merciful to me a sinner ! ”

And what saved “ the daughter of Raguel ” from this melancholy doom ? We can hardly wonder that “ she thought to have strangled herself ; ” but what restrained her from this act of madness ! That principle, which is strongest in the most virtuous heart, and is rarely obliterated even from the worst—filial affection ! Her grief, however poignant, was not selfish. Amid her own distress, she thought of the sorrows of a childless parent, and soliloquized in these plaintive terms : “ I am the only daughter of my father ; and if I do this, it shall be a reproach to him, and I shall bring his old age with sorrow to the grave ! ”

How full of purity, how buoyant with sustaining strength, a daughter's love! The remembrance of that fond parent, who had treasured up in her all his lingering hopes, woos her back to the path of duty; and for his sake, she resolves to bear up against a fate, which even a father's unshaken confidence could scarcely make supportable.

But religion also came to her timely aid. She betook herself to a resource, ever open to the most guilty as well as to the most holy. From the thought of her earthly father, she lifted her soul to Him that "sitteth in the heavens." She "set her eyes and her face towards the Lord her God," and yet, in the extremity of her anguish, can address no other prayer to Him than this; "Take me out of the earth, that I may hear no more reproach." Invoking Him as the witness of her purity, and feeling that she would be safe with Him, and had no more to live for in a world where all her anticipations of happiness seemed for ever blasted, she utters the natural plaint of a crushed and hopeless spirit; "Why should I live?" But she defers her will to that of the Supreme; and adds, with becoming resignation, "If it please not Thee that I should die, command some regard to be had of me, and pity taken of me, that I hear no more reproach!"

Did ever a prayer, so humble and so earnest, ascend to "the Majesty of the Great God," unheard and unblest? Nay, gentle sufferer! The time has come when that deadly reproach shall no longer lacerate thee! The "Great God," to whom thou hast appealed, has received thy petition! and henceforth all that we read of thee, is an inspiring record of the triumphs of courage under temptation—the rich recompense of fidelity amid dishonor and distress! Asmodeus is bound; the evil doom, that hung over her like the pall of death, is averted; the voice of calumny is hushed; a

husband, worthy of her pure and trusting heart, is found mingling his prayers with hers ; the perils of the marriage-night are escaped, and the morning of a long and prosperous life at length dawns upon them both with its day-star of hope.

None may contemplate the story of the Wife of Tobias without profit ; though we find it accompanied with strange circumstances, and recorded in an apocryphal book. Let *any*, who have felt the poignant venom of unmerited reproach ; let any, from whom slander has filched the priceless pearl of a good name ; let any, whom reiterated and mysterious calamities have impoverished, till there is nothing left in life to make it desirable, and the narrow house of death seems a welcome hiding-place—let such gaze upon that meek and beauteous countenance, and learn that the fairest, wisest, purest of mankind have been subjected to misfortunes as bitter as their own ; let them ponder this narrative of far-gone time, and rise from its perusal with renewed ardor and invigorated faith ; for its enduring moral is this : that none “ever perished, being innocent ;” and that a happier destiny, even on this side of the grave, may be reserved for them who are “patient in tribulation,” and loyal to their God !



JUDITH.

I.

THERE was a hum and stir on the plains which stretched around the city of Nineveh, for a mighty army was encamped without its walls. As the sun rose, this crowded mass of warriors gradually awakened from their sleep, and the murmur deepened, while the clash of arms arose, and voices in many strange tongues were mingled in one loud tumult. At length, when the day had advanced some hours, the city gates opened, and forth came a procession gorgeous as oriental magnificence could make it. It was Nebuchodonosor, king of Assyria, with his royal court. Gold and jewels glittered in the sunlight—armor flashed back its rays from the burnished steel—tiaras and helmets and sparkling diadems were there—while robes of Tyrian lustre told that kings were attending in his train.

In the centre of the plain the royal pavilion had been erected, and there the king seated himself on his golden chair to survey the mighty force which he had called from his wide-spreading provinces. Six years before he had marched against the Medes, and Ecbatane the royal city had fallen before him, so that he had “taken its towers, and spoiled its streets, and turned the beauty thereof into shame.” But the lust of conquest grows with what it feeds on, and now the

king of Assyria had determined to turn his arms against all who did not acknowledge his rule, and to make Nineveh the centre of a universal empire. It was for this object he had summoned the mighty array of warriors who now were spread over the plain, and about to commence their march.

They displayed all the pomp and pageantry of Eastern warfare, as they defiled past the royal pavilion and paid their lowly reverence to the monarch. First came twelve thousand horsemen in armor glittering with gold, who bore the short Assyrian bows and arrows, and were the chosen warriors of the kingdom. Then marched a hundred and twenty thousand footmen of every color and clime. The pale countenance of the Asiatic was followed by those of the swarthy Egyptian and the black Nubian, while here and there were seen those noble forms and intellectual faces which told that the magnificence of the king had even allured some from the land of Pericles to enter his service. And their arms were as different as their races. Some, like the Roman retiarius of later days, bore only short spears with nets to entangle their antagonists. The Medes with their tiara helmets, the Assyrians with huge clubs tipped with iron, the Bactrians with long bows of reeds, and the Scythians with their hatchets, marched side by side. The pale Caspians, with shields of hide and heavy cimeters, were followed by the negroes of Ethiopia, clothed in skins of the leopard and the lion, and bearing arrows pointed with flint. There too were the Scythians with their casques of network, and the Thracians armed with javelin and dagger, and wearing helmets of brass ornamented with horns of the ox. All nations were mingled in that motley array: "Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, in Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia," all were represented. Gorgeous standards waved above them, and their lances gleamed in the sun.

The long array was closed by those beasts of burden which always followed in the train of an Eastern army. Elephants were goaded on by their riders, and the patient camels raised their lofty heads above the crowd.

The camp had gone—a dense cloud of dust on the horizon alone showed the direction of their march—and nothing remained but that their leader, Holofernes, should make his parting salutations to the king. He was the satrap most trusted by Nebuchodonosor—the one who stood nearest to the throne, and whose reputation as a warrior was already esteemed a presage of success to any army which he led. As he knelt before his master, the last instructions he received were brief, yet in the lofty tone of an oriental monarch. “Thus says the great king, the lord of the whole earth, Thou shalt march against the countries of the west, and order them to send me earth and water—the symbols of their homage—or I will go forth against them in my wrath, and cover the whole earth with the feet of my army, and give them for a spoil, so that their slain shall fill the valleys, and the river shall be filled with their dead, till it overflow. As I live, and by the power of my kingdom, what I have spoken, that shall my hand do.”

For weeks that mighty force marched on, trampling down every thing in its way. From the plains of Bectilah they entered Cilicia, and crossed the Euphrates into Mesopotamia, which yielded at once to their arms. The wilderness at the South did not shield the children of Ismael from their horsemen, while at the North they overran the fertile plains of Damascus, and the pleasant rivers which meandered through them were drained to supply the wants of this crowded host. Fear fell even on the cities of the sea-coast. Tyre and Sidon sent ambassadors to Holofernes to proclaim themselves servants of the king of Assyria, and his progress seemed to be a triumphant march, greeted with garlands, and timbrels, and dances.

Yet even this submission gained the conquered but little favor from their fierce invaders. "The land was as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness." Onward the living torrent rolled, sweeping every thing in its course, till it broke against the hills which hemmed in the land of Judea. There the Assyrian camp was pitched near Esdraelon, and Holofernes halted for a month before he entered the hill-country.

II.

There was trouble and sorrow through the length and breadth of Judea. The broken tribes had but recently returned from their captivity in Babylon—restored the worship of the temple—and resettled their country. But they were not yet prepared for this formidable irruption, and began to feel as if a new desolation and another captivity awaited them. Yet they knew their source of strength, and at Jerusalem they proclaimed a fast, and put ashes upon their heads and sackcloth about the altar, and cried earnestly to their God that He would not give them as a prey to the enemy, and His sanctuary to profanation and reproach. Joachim the high priest, and all who ministered at the altar, girt with sackcloth and with ashes on their mitres, presented before the Lord daily burnt-offerings, with the vows and free gifts of the people.

On the side of a mountain, overlooking a valley through which the invading host of Assyrians must pass, stood the little city of Bethulia. It commanded the defiles, and was the first obstacle which could arrest their progress. To the elders of it the high priest wrote, and urged them to guard the entrance to their land against the advancing foe, and if possible stop them at the outset. The citizens

therefore repaired its ramparts, and nerved themselves to the task, with the feelings of those who in Greece, under like circumstances, stood in the pass of Thermopylæ.

At last came the hour of trial. The camp of the Assyrians, their force increased by the nations they had conquered, broke up, and the living mass of warriors rolled through the defiles of the hills on their way to the plains of Judea. It was at the close of a summer's day, when the sun had gone down bathing every thing on hill and valley in a purple hue seen only by an oriental eye, that the sentinels on the towers of Bethulia beheld the approach of their invaders. At first, a distant cloud of dust announced them—then a trumpet brayed forth—then came the clash of cymbals and the noise of arms, as they defiled before the walls and spread themselves through the valley. As darkness gathered about the beleaguered city, its inhabitants lighted the fires upon their towers, and through the night watched on the walls with arms in their hands. But no attack was made.

On the second day, acting under the advice of the Moabites who had joined his army, Holofernes advanced his horsemen to the fountains on the mountain which supplied the city with water, and seizing them, quietly retired to his camp, leaving a force of five thousand men to cut off all communication with the besieged. Then followed days and nights of weariness, when their hearts fainted, for their cisterns were empty and no rain came to fill them. They could have gone forth gladly to conflict with their invaders, and fought with that wild desperation which characterized their nation when in a later age the Roman eagles had gathered around the holy city. But this was not permitted them. They were only hemmed in to die of thirst; and the courage which would have risen to its height on the field of battle, or even amid the agonies of the stake, failed before

the daily evils they were called to endure. Thus four and thirty days passed by, till disease began to thin their ranks; women and children died from exhaustion, and even the young men fell in the streets. Then at last arose the tumult; and, worn out, they gathered in desperation about Ozias, the chief of the city, and, weeping, required that he should make peace with Holofernes before all had perished. Trying indeed was his situation, yet still while he bowed to the storm he pleaded for delay, and answered them, "Brethren, be of good courage, let us yet endure five days, in which space the Lord our God may turn his mercy toward us; for he will not forsake us utterly. And if these days pass, and there come no help unto us, I will do according to your word."

III.

But there was one heart in Bethulia which fainted not. It was Judith, the daughter of Merari, of the tribe of Simeon. More than three years before her husband Manasses had died, and in the pride of her early youth she had been left a widow. Judith had all the lofty beauty of her nation, and in the days of its glory none excelled the Jewish maidens. Theirs was the dark eye which expanded as they spoke, and flashed out each passing emotion of the mind, united with the changing features they derived from their Arab blood, softened down and developed into the nobleness of aspect they assumed during ages of prosperity in Palestine. And above all they bore that stamp which comes from the loftiest sense of freedom—a feeling in that day peculiar to the Jewish women. It was the early consciousness of their high destiny which spread a grace and charm about them, and lightened up their countenances with something

more than mortal beauty. Each one felt that she was not a toy or a slave, but might become the mother of a Being who was to be the Light of the world. A goodly heritage too had fallen to Judith—gold and silver, men servants and maid servants, cattle and lands—all that constituted wealth in those pastoral days. It was no wonder therefore that suitors crowded around her, endeavoring to replace the memory of the dead by the love of the living. But none found favor in her sight, and the image of Manasses dwelt in her mind with a living and painful distinctness. She pitched a tent upon the housetop, and there she spent her days in prayer, wearing only sackcloth and her widow's apparel, and fasting except on the solemn festivals of her faith.

To her in her retirement came the news that in five days the city was to be surrendered to the fierce idolaters, and she sent for Ozias and the elders of the city. They came, and beautiful was the interview which took place, when woman in her feebleness was thus seen rising with more than man's loftiness of soul, and cheering those who should never have wavered in their faith. She reminded them of what God had done in "their fathers' day and in the old time before them," and declared that the determination they had made was one which bound down His counsels, instead of patiently waiting His own good time for their salvation. "For," said she, "if we be taken so, all Judea shall lie waste, and our sanctuary shall be spoiled, and He will require the profanation thereof at our mouth. And the slaughter of our brethren, and the captivity of the country, and the desolation of our inheritance, will He turn upon our heads among the Gentiles, whersoever we shall be in bondage." "All," answered Ozias, "that thou hast spoken hast thou spoken with a good heart, and there is none that may gainsay thy words." Then said Judith to them, "Hear me, and I will do a thing, which shall go throughout

all generations to the children of our nation. Ye shall stand this night in the gate, and I will go forth with my waiting woman, and within the days that ye have promised to deliver the city to our enemies, the Lord will visit Israel by my hand. But inquire not ye of mine act; for I will not declare it unto you, till the things be finished that I do." And Ozias and the princes said to her, "Go in peace, and the Lord God be before thee, to take vengeance on our enemies."

And so they parted, and she went to her tent to prayer at the hour that the evening incense was offered in Jerusalem, and they returned to their homes.

Night came, and the elders met her at the gate, that they might let her go forth. And as she went out they wondered at the change they saw, for she had put from her the sackcloth she had worn and the garments of her widowhood. A circlet of gems glittered above her braided hair, bracelets were on her arms, and she had decked herself with that profusion of dazzling ornament which makes the oriental costume of this day, that she might allure the eyes of all who saw her. "The God of our fathers," said Ozias, "give thee favor, and accomplish thine enterprise to the glory of the children of Israel and to the exaltation of Jerusalem." And they watched her as she went down the mountain, until she was lost to their sight amid the shadows of the valley.

Soon the first watch of the Assyrians met her. She told them she was a woman of Israel fleeing from the city because it was about to be consumed by them, and asked to be led to Holofernes. So they conducted her to his tent, wondering as they went at her marvellous beauty. The Assyrian satrap was reclining on his bed beneath a canopy woven with purple and gold, emeralds and precious stones; but when they told him of the capture they had made, he came forth

to meet her, with silver lamps borne before him. As she prostrated herself at his feet, his servants raised her, and he asked wherefore she had come. Enticing indeed were the words of Judith, as in reply she dwelt upon his power and that of his royal master, and prophesied for them the empire of the earth. And from his enemies in Bethulia, she told him, she had fled, because they were about to work their own ruin. Their food was failing them, and they were about to seize for their own use on the first fruits of their corn, and the tenths of their wine and oil, which had been dedicated to God. Then His vengeance would overtake them, and the Assyrians have an easy victory. Over the ruins of the city she would herself lead him through Judea to Jerusalem, and there his throne should be established. Sweet are the words of flattery, particularly when they fall from the lips of beauty! Holofernes was caught in the snare, and every honor was offered to Judith. His own servants waited on her by day, and she dwelt in a tent apart, from whence at midnight she always went forth with her maid, to pray in the valley, until her going out caused no surprise in the watchers at the gate.

IV.

Thus three days passed away, when Holofernes made a feast and sent Bagoas the eunuch to persuade the Hebrew woman to partake of his banquet. So he went to induce her to come to his lord. He would have degraded a daughter of Israel to become the inmate of his master's harem. Bitter indeed to her must have been the restraint as she listened to his words, yet she arrayed herself in smiles, and seeming to assent to his wishes, went with him to the tent. Hour after hour the banquet went on, and the prospect of

success exhilarated the heart of Holofernes, so that the wine cup was never out of his hand. In the flush of his dazzled hopes he forgot all prudence, and no fear whispered to him that his fall was near. As the evening closed his servants departed, and Judith was left alone with him in the tent. Yet still she pressed him to drink, with a fascination he could not resist, until at last, overpowered with wine, he sank senseless on his couch.

Then Judith arose and nerved herself to her task. From the head of the bed of Holofernes she took his jewelled cimier, and as its broad Damascus blade flashed in the lamps which burned around her, she leaned against the side of the tent, and offered up the prayer—"O Lord God of all power, look at this present upon the work of mine hands for the exaltation of Jerusalem. For now is the time to help thine inheritance, and to execute mine enterprise to the destruction of the enemies which are risen against us." For a moment there was a tumult in her breast—a conflict between the shrinking feelings of a woman, and the burning thirst for vengeance against the invader which fired her heart. It was like the struggle on the misty mountain-side between the sunlight and the thunder cloud. Another instant, and it is over. The gleam of human tenderness is gone, and the dark storm has swept over all. Her fingers are twined in the hair of Holofernes, and uttering the petition, "Strengthen me, O Lord God of Israel, this day," she strikes, once and again—the warm blood gushes in torrents over the couch, and the severed head is in her hand. Rolling it in her garments, she joins her maid who had watched without, and together they leave the camp.

But not as usual did they go forth to the valley to prayer. Swiftly they ascended the mountain to the city, and as the gates hastily opened at her voice, her exulting cry was, "Praise, praise God, praise God, for He hath not taken away His mercy from the house

of Israel, but hath destroyed our enemies by my hands this night." The startled city was roused from its sleep; and as her friends gathered about her, and she told of all that she had done, they realized that God had indeed "visited and redeemed his people"—that then, as in the days of Sisera, a woman's hand had wrought deliverance. As she ceased, the whole assembly with one heart and one voice lifted up that magnificent Psalm of David, "Let God arise, and let His enemies be scattered," and it swept in solemn melody over the awakened city. Thousands responded to the glorious chant—the winds of night bore it on their wings through the valley—and the Assyrian watchers were startled in their camp, as they heard its notes rolling on the air in rich harmony.

Morning broke in gladness over the hills of Judea, and all nature awakened from its repose—yet no sound was heard in the tent of Holofernes. At last Bagoas ventured to enter, and then there came forth one wild cry of terror, which in an instant was echoed through the camp. Appalled, dismayed, stupefied by their loss, fear and trembling fell upon all, princes and people. It was one of those sudden panics to which the Eastern armies were peculiarly liable—a panic like that which fell upon the Philistines after Goliath fell, when at once a mighty host seemed to melt away. Their camp about Bethulia was broken up, and they fled in wild disorder. But their foes were upon them. In the night Ozias had sent through the land, and every where the Israelites were arming in haste to pursue the invaders. From the hills of Galilee, from the valleys of the Jordan, from the streets of Jerusalem, they poured forth, and put the Assyrians to the sword, till they had driven them beyond Damascus.

Then came the Sabbath-time of rest and rejoicing—a time of triumph, when, loaded with the spoils of the Assyrians, the people,

with the high priest at their head, gathered to do honor to Judith. They gave her the riches found in the tent of Holofernes—his gorgeous canopy and vessels of gold and silver. And while they mingled in the dance, the women crowned Judith and her maid with wreaths of olive; and as all the men of Israel followed with garlands over their armor, they hymned her praises in one solemn and mighty chorus.

* * * * *

Two generations passed away. Eighty golden years of peace had gone since God hath thus delivered his people, when slowly and solemnly a funeral train came from the gates of Bethulia and wound down into the valley. Crowds gathered around the bier, on which the body lay swathed in linen, and there were bitter lamentations, as if for one whose requiem the inhabitants of a city united to chant. It was the burial of Judith, who thus, after a life prolonged through more than a century, was gathered to her fathers. There are those whose life is a single action, and history easily writes their epitaph, because there is but one bright and salient point of which to speak. And so it was with Judith. The rest of a long existence had flowed on with nothing to mark its progress. Many had wooed her, through whose instrumentality the deluge of the Assyrians had been rolled back from their land; yet her days were passed in widowhood, and now they were bearing her to the cave of Manasses. There she slept by the side of the husband of her youth, but she had changed an obscure existence for an imperishable name. For centuries the Jewish maidens sang her praises as they sat in their homes, or labored

in their vineyards on the hill-side, and her fame was entwined in their legends with that of the warrior-women of the heroic age—Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite, and Deborah the prophetess, who judged Israel beneath the palm-trees.



Woman in Mourning

THE MOTHER IN MACCABEES.

AND such a mother, so full of love and piety, of fortitude and martyr-zeal, the world beside her has never seen. “The blessed among women,” indeed, the mother of our Lord, we place far above comparison with any other; and the name of Mary shall to all generations recall one who for ever shall be the chief of those whose hearts have burned with maternal love, and whose “souls have been pierced through with a sword” at witnessing the cruel death of the offspring of their wombs. But this mother—her name is not on record; her acts, however, form a page of history than which there is none more remarkable for the exhibition of female heroism. To relate the story in other words than those in which it has been embodied for the instruction of all ages, would be to weaken its force and lessen its interest. It may be well, however, to introduce it by a few prefatory remarks.

The history of the Maccabees, which furnished the artist with the subject he has so successfully delineated, it is well known, is amongst the books called Apocryphal, so called from a Greek word, signifying concealed or put out of sight. They are thus distinguished by Protestants from the canonical Books of the Bible, or those which are admitted by the canon or law of the church to be of divine authority, because their authors are not known, and their authen-

ticity as inspired writings is not admitted. We hold them to possess greater sanctity and higher authority than works of mere human composition. The venerable Hooker indeed says of them, "we hold not the Apocrypha for sacred, as we do the Holy Scriptures, but for human compositions." By this expression, however, he must not be supposed to have esteemed such Books as Ecclesiasticus and the Book of Wisdom as deserving no greater consideration than the works of ordinary men, however pious and learned they might be. His intention was to state emphatically, in contradistinction to the opinion of Romanists, that the Apocryphal Books were not inspired as were the Holy Scriptures, and therefore were not of final authority in questions of religious controversy. The Church of England and the Protestant Episcopal Church in these United States have, with a judicious discrimination, stated their relative importance in the Thirty-nine Articles—the sixth of which, entitled "Of the sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures for salvation," thus asserts: "Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation. In the name of the Holy Scriptures we do understand those canonical Books of the Old and New Testament, of whose authority was never any doubt in the Church." Then are enumerated the Books from Genesis to Twelve Prophets the less. "And the other Books (as Hierome saith) the Church doth read, for example of life and instruction of manners; but yet doth it not apply them to establish any doctrine." The Apocryphal Books are then enumerated, and amongst them the First and Second Book of Maccabees, from the second of which the subject of the annexed portrait is taken. "These books," therefore, as a very learned writer, the Rev. Dr. Jackson, asserts, "though Apoc-

ryphal, do not deserve to be left out in any new impressions of our Bibles." Another writer also, as quoted by Arnold, says, "that without all doubt the world could not recompense the loss of the books of the Maccabees, and the use of them for understanding the Prophets; so inestimable is the benefit of them for that purpose." Arnold then proceeds to observe, that "God having withdrawn his Prophets, many and great revolutions happened to the Jewish state, and the Church of God underwent very severe and heavy persecutions both from the Greeks and Romans, in which the Maccabees in particular signalized themselves; the account of which times, and of their conduct on the occasion, we must take from these books; and therefore they are to be valued, and of the Church not unprofitably used, says St. Austin, for those glorious instances recorded in them of persons suffering such horrible persecutions with a remarkable patience for the testimony of God's religion, and thereby encouraging others to undergo cheerfully the like trial of sufferings."

One of these horrible persecutions, and perhaps the most horrible of all, was that inflicted upon the mother of seven sons, who, with her own eyes, beheld them one after another put to a most excruciating and lingering death, rather than violate the Law of God in the slightest respect, and who, after encouraging them with a fortitude unexampled to endure unto the end, and being martyred in soul seven successive times through the bodily sufferings of her sons, at last died herself. The history does not expressly assert that her death was upon the same day, nor yet that it was effected by the hands of the executioner. Still this is the natural, if not the unavoidable inference. Thus, then, the mother, with her seven sons, on one day won and wore the crown of martyrdom; but hers, we doubt not, shines with superior splendor; and though her name be lost on earth, it is recorded on the list of the noble army of martyrs in

heaven. Here follows the authentic history of her tortures, endurance, and death.

It came to pass also, that seven brethren with their mother were taken and compelled by the king, against the law, to taste swine's flesh, and were tormented with scourges and whips. But one of them that spake first, said thus, What wouldst thou ask or learn of us? we are ready to die, rather than to transgress the laws of our fathers.

Then the king, being in a rage, commanded pans and caldrons to be made hot: which forthwith being heated, he commanded to cut out the tongue of him that spake first, and to cut off the utmost parts of his body, the rest of his brethren and his mother looking on.

Now when he was thus maimed in all his members, he commanded him, being yet alive, to be brought to the fires, and to be fried in the pan; and as the vapor of the pan was for a good space dispersed, they exhorted one another with the mother to die manfully, saying thus, The Lord God looketh upon us, and in truth hath comfort in us, as Moses in his song, which witnessed to their faces, declared, saying, And he shall be comforted in his servants.

So when the first was dead after this manner, they brought the second to make him a mocking stock: and when they had pulled off the skin of his head with his hair, they asked him, Wilt thou eat, before thou be punished throughout every member of thy body? But he answered in his own language, and said, No. Wherefore he also received the next torment in order, as the former did. And when he was at the last gasp, he said, Thou like a fury takest us out of this present life, but the King of the world shall raise us up, who have died for his laws, unto everlasting life.

After him was the third made a mocking stock: and when he was required, he put out his tongue, and that right soon, holding forth his hands manfully, and said courageously, These I had from heaven; and for his laws I despise them; and from him I hope to receive them again. Insomuch that the king, and they that were with him, marvelled at the young man's courage, for that he nothing regarded the pains.

Now when this man was dead also, they tormented and mangled the fourth in like manner. So, when he was ready to die, he said thus, It is good, being put to death by men, to look for hope from God to be raised up again by him: as for thee, thou shalt have no resurrection to life.

Afterwards they brought the fifth also, and mangled him. Then looked he unto the king, and said, Thou hast power over men, thou art corruptible, thou doest what thou wilt; yet think not that our nation is forsaken of God; but abide awhile, and behold his great power, how he will torment thee and thy seed.

After him also they brought the sixth, who being ready to die, said, Be not deceived without cause: for we suffer these things for ourselves, having sinned against our God: therefore marvellous things are done unto us. But think not thou, that takest in hand to strive against God, that thou shalt escape unpunished.

But the mother was marvellous above all, and worthy of honorable memory: for when she saw her seven sons slain within the space of one day, she bare it with a good courage, because of the hope that she had in the Lord. Yea, she exhorted every one of them in her own language, filled with courageous spirits; and stirring up her womanish thoughts with a manly stomach, she said unto them, I cannot tell how ye came into my womb; for I neither gave you breath nor life, neither was it I that formed the members of every one of you; but doubtless the Creator of the world, who formed the generation of man, and found out the beginning of all things, will also of his own mercy give you breath and life again, as ye now regard not your own selves for his law's sake.

Now Antiochus, thinking himself despised, and suspecting it to be a reproachful speech, whilst the youngest was yet alive, did not only exhort him by words, but also assured him with oaths, that he would make him both a rich and a happy man, if he would turn from the laws of his fathers; and that also he would take him for his friend, and trust him with affairs. But when the young man would in no case hearken unto him, the king called his mother, and exhorted her that she would counsel the young man to save his life. And when he had exhorted her with many words, she promised him that she would counsel her son.

But she bowing herself towards him, laughing the cruel tyrant to scorn, spake in her country language on this manner: O, my son, have pity upon me that bare thee nine months in my womb, and gave thee suck three years, and nourished thee, and brought thee up unto this age, and endured the troubles of education. I beseech thee, my son, look upon the heaven and the earth, and all that is therein, and consider that God made them of things that were not; and so was mankind made likewise. Fear not this tormentor, but being worthy of thy brethren, take thy death, that I may receive thee again in mercy with thy brethren.

Whiles she was yet speaking these words, the young man said, Whom wait ye for?

I will not obey the king's commandment: but I will obey the commandment of the law that was given unto our fathers by Moses. And thou that hast been the author of all mischief against the Hebrews, shalt not escape the hands of God. For we suffer because of our sins. And though the living Lord be angry with us a little while for our chastening and correction, yet shall he be at one again with his servants.

But thou, O godless man, and of all other most wicked, be not lifted up without a cause, nor puffed up with uncertain hopes, lifting up thy hand against the servants of God: for thou hast not yet escaped the judgment of Almighty God, who seeth all things. For our brethren, who now have suffered a short pain, are dead under God's covenant of everlasting life; but thou, through the judgment of God, shalt receive just punishment for thy pride.

But I as my brethren, offer up my body and life for the laws of our fathers, beseeching God that he would speedily be merciful unto our nation; and that thou by torments and plagues mayest confess that he alone is God; and that in me and my brethren the wrath of the Almighty, which is justly brought upon all our nation, may cease. Then the king being in a rage, handled him worse than all the rest, and took it grievously that he was mocked.

So this man died undefiled, and put his whole trust in the Lord.

Last of all after the sons the mother died.

THE END.

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