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WOMAN IN THE BIBLE:

BEING

A COLLECTION OF ALL THE PASSAGES IN THE SCRIPTURES WHICH RELATE TO WOMEN; WITH BRIEF NOTES EXPLANATORY AND SUGGESTIVE.

BY

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GENESIS—SONG OF SOLOMON.

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To The Memory of My Loved Ones:

Wife and Daughter,

The Sorrow and Loneliness occasioned by whose loss have been beguiled somewhat by this employment:

To My Old Students

In Ohio University and Jefferson College, as a fit present for their Wives:

To My Former Lady Pupils,

In the Edgworth Seminary, as a companion to their daily Bible reading: and

TO WOMAN EVERYWHERE,

"The Glory of Man," when the blessed Bible is her Teacher,

This Work is Inscribed.



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PREFACE.

THE design of this work is, (1.) To rescue from comparative neglect many passages of Scripture, especially in the Old Testament, which are either seldom read, or, if read, not fully understood or appreciated; (2.) To relieve the apparent indelicacy of certain passages by proper explanations; (3.) To direct attention to many other portions of Scripture not herein quoted, but copiously referred to, so as to make the Bible, as far as possible, its own interpreter; (4.) To render the sacred volume generally a much more interesting book to women than perhaps it now is; and, (5.) By some suggestive hints to promote the spiritual edification of women, and through them to benefit, also, those of the other sex who their influence can so powerfully reach.

The condensed results of much study are here commended to the favorable attention of the reader, and to the blessing of God.

It has not been thought necessary to quote at length all the passages which are made the subject of comment. It is presumed that every reader will have the Bible at hand, and can thus readily refer to the text.

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BOOK OF GENESIS.



THE name Genesis, which signifies generation or origin, was given to this book by the authors of the Septuagint, or Greek translation of the Old Testament. It is the first of the five books of Moses, called the Pentateuch, or fivefold volume.

CREATION OF MAN AND WOMAN.

Genesis I. 26-28.

26. And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. 27. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. 28. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

Verse 26. *Let us make, etc.*—This crowning work of creation God seems to approach with deliberate counsel. The language implies the plurality of persons in the Godhead; each of which is represented as taking part in the original work of creation (vs. 1-3 compared with John 1: 1-3. Psalm 33: 6. Job 26: 13, etc.). *In our image.*—This is commonly defined as ‘consisting in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness’ (Col. 3: 10. Eph. 4: 24). This is God’s moral image, which was lost in the fall, and is restored in the new creation. There is also a natural image (as Edwards says) “consisting in man’s reason and understanding, his natural ability, and his dominion over the creatures.” This he still

retains, at least in a measure (cf.* 9: 6 with 1 Cor. 11: 7 James 3: 9). *After our likeness.*—In so compact a narrative the words ‘image’ and ‘likeness’ can not be used as synonymous. The Hebrew for ‘image’ primarily means *shadow*, and may properly denote the more shadowy spiritual resemblance; while the word for ‘likeness’ is more commonly applied to outward similitude. The writer would, therefore, diffidently suggest that besides the moral and natural image of God above mentioned, there was also a physical ‘likeness,’ namely, to that visible manifestation of God in which his communications to man were afterward made. Immediately after the fall of our first parents we read of the voice of the Lord God ‘walking’ (Hebrew, ‘about’) in the garden, and of a visible ‘presence’ from which they hid themselves (3: 8); and often afterward the Lord appears in human form, as the ‘Angel of the Lord’ (Hebrew, ‘Angel-Jehovah’). See Gen. 17: 1, 22; 18: 1, 2, 13, 33, etc. It is admitted that all these visible appearances were in anticipation of the incarnation of the *Logos*, or ‘Word,’ which ‘became manifest in the flesh’ (John 1: 14–18). Is it then unreasonable to suppose that this *Logos*, or second person in the adorable Trinity, may have assumed this theanthropic form even prior to the creation of man, and as the type after which his body was to be fashioned, and that man was thus made physically after the likeness of him who is himself the image of the invisible God? (Cf. Col. 1: 15. Heb. 1: 3.) See, also, note on Gen. 5: 3.

27. *Male and female.*—Man is not complete as man, nor is the image of God in him fully expressed until it appears in *them* (cf. 5: 1, 2. ‘Called *their* name Adam’). Man is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of the man (1 Cor. 11: 7). The wisdom and benevolence of the Creator are wonderfully displayed in making man male and female, to be attracted toward each other by strong mutual affection, to delight in each other’s society, and cheerfully to share with each other the burdens of domestic care. If even in man’s fallen state so much of his happiness is found in the family, what a little paradise would each home have been had sin not entered! And how blessed is the influence of true Christianity in that it hallows the endearments of husband and wife, conserves the sweet charities of the various domestic

* Cf. compare.

relations, and thus restores to fallen man something of his lost earthly paradise.

28. *God blessed them, etc.*—Thus God's first blessing upon man was in connection with the conjugal relation. Marriage was the first institution which God gave to man. The second was the Sabbath (2: 3). These two institutions lie at the foundation of all human society, and all true religion. Both are blessed, and were necessary even in the innocence of paradise. How much more should both be held sacred now that man has fallen.

A MORE FULL ACCOUNT OF THE CREATION OF WOMAN.

Genesis II. 18-25.

18. AND the Lord God said, It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him. 19. And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. 20. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found a help meet for him. 21. And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept; and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof. 22. And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. 23. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man. 24. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. 25. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

18. *Not good.*—Heretofore every other part of creation had been pronounced good, but at this stage of the work of the sixth day, there is something which is 'not good,' viz: 'that man should be alone.' *An help meet for him.*—Hebrew, 'As before him,' or, the counterpart of himself. To be the *helpmeet* of man, is ever the true sphere of woman. All modern "reforms" which are based upon any different assumption, will on experiment prove their own folly.

19. *Formed.*—Rather 'had formed.' *To see.*—Speaking after the manner of men. It implied that Adam had the gift of language, and that he was made to know, at sight, the peculiar nature of each animal.

20. *But for Adam, etc.*—This shows the main design of this review of the animals, viz: that Adam might be made to

realize his lack of an helpmeet, and be prepared the more joyfully to prize "God's last, best gift" to him.

21. *A deep sleep*—A sort of trance, in which he seems to have retained some consciousness of what was taking place (v. 23), though without pain. *Rib.*—God chose to make woman thus, rather than otherwise, in order to teach man how tender and indissoluble is her relation to him as a part of himself, and that marriage might thus be a symbol of the union between Christ and the Church (Eph. 5: 28-31).

23. *Woman.*—In the Hebrew man is *Ish*, and woman *Isha*, i. e., *man* and *woman*.

24. *A man leave his father and mother.*—Why is the *man* said to leave father and mother, when it is rather the woman who has to submit to this sacrifice? Doubtless, because the man goes forth to originate a new family, of which he is the head, while otherwise the woman would only be absorbed into the family of her father-in-law.—Marriage is man's normal condition, and constitutes a constructive unity of being—'one flesh.'—All had been pronounced 'good' before (except man's loneliness), but now all is 'very good' (1: 31). Nothing was now wanting to make man perfectly happy, as he was perfectly holy. O, that he had stood in this his first estate!

25. *Naked.*—They needed no clothing for comfort; and having no sin they were strangers to shame.

THE TEMPTATION AND SIN.

Genesis III. 1-6.

1. Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? 2. And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: 3. But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. 4. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: 5. For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. 6. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

1-3. The '*serpent*' in which the invisible tempter was concealed (cf. 2 Cor. 11: 3. Rev. 12: 9) appears, no doubt, in a form which was then most attractive; perhaps winged and beautiful, or like one of the *cherubim*—'an angel of

light' (2 Cor. 11: 14); as unlike the now degraded and crawling *snake*, as man in his original perfection was morally unlike the fallen, guilty thing he now is. Eve is not surprised at the serpent speaking, for as yet everything was new to her. In the manner of the temptation there was infinite cunning, (1) in approaching the woman alone, as being the most persuasible, and the best persuader of the man; (2) at first, only in the way of question, and suggestion of a doubt; and (3) when her eye and ear are gained, and the doubt awakened, then boldly storming the fortress of her faith by a lie so stupendous that it overwhelms her ignorance of falsehood; also, (4) in avoiding all gross temptation, and appealing only to her desire of knowledge, and of likeness to God (or 'gods,' *i. e.*, angels—the same word, *elohim*, God, being plural in form, and applied also to angels, *e. g.*, Psalms 97: 7: 'Worship him all ye gods'); (5) awakening at the same time her appetite, by *showing* her that the tree was 'good for food and pleasant to the eyes.' Who would not have yielded to such a temptation? And how many of Eve's daughters have fallen through similar insidious approaches! And yet there was no excuse; for obedience was easy, and most reasonable, in the midst of the abundance of other fruits; and she fully understood the command as not allowing her even to 'touch' this fruit (v. 3). *She took—she ate, and gave also unto her husband, and he did eat.*—How sublime the simplicity of this dreadful record! How unlike the gorgeous imaginings of Milton and Pollok. But, oh mystery of mysteries! why did God permit his perfect work to be thus marred? 'Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.'

THE FIRST FRUITS OF TRANSGRESSION.

Genesis III: 7, 8.

7. AND the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons. 8. And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden.

7. The tempter had promised that their 'eyes should be opened' (v. 5), and so they are, but only to see their own nakedness; also, that they should 'be as gods knowing good and evil;' and so they do, but what fatal knowledge. Oh!

the deceitfulness of sin. The sense of shame is unknown to the inferior animals, also to infants. It arises only in consciously sinful beings, and it naturally associates itself with the *origin* of our fleshly nature. And, yet, shame is conservative of purity. Brutes only are shameless.—These fig-leaf coverings, how aptly do they represent the self-righteousness of man.—And how unbecoming is the pride of dress, which is the memorial of our sin and shame.

8. *The voice of the Lord God walking* (Hebrew, 'walking about').—The word 'walking' refers to the Lord God, and not to voice. They hid themselves from the *presence* of Him with whom they had before spoken face to face. It was *Jehovah God*, the Coming One, the Son of God who was to become manifest in the flesh. (*See Jacobus.*) And thus has fallen man ever since shown himself disposed to shun the presence of the Lord God by dismissing God from his thoughts, or by making to himself false and more congenial gods, or by atheistic systems of science, which aim to keep God as far as possible out of view.

THE CONDEMNATION AND THE PROMISE.

Genesis III. 9–21.

9. AND the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? 10. And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. 11. And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? 12. And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. 13. And the Lord God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat. 14. And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: 15. And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. 16. Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. 17. And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; 18. Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field. 19. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust

shalt thou return. 20. And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living. 21. Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them.

10. *I was afraid, because I was naked.*—Why should bodily nakedness and dread of God be associated; but that Adam had a deeper consciousness of his moral nakedness and guilt, and of his need of the *covering* of an atonement.

12. *The woman whom thou gavest.*—The woman, and even God, are to blame, rather than himself! But he does not plead that he was deceived.

13. *The serpent beguiled me.*—This is also self-vindication, but different from Adam's (cf. 1 Tim. 2: 14).

14. The curse upon the serpent falls primarily upon the visible instrument, but ultimately and mainly upon the invisible tempter in a figurative application of the words.

15. The last clause has been well termed the *protevangelium*, or first gospel promise. It is fulfilled in Christ. The promise was given even before the curse. How good and merciful is the Lord, that 'where sin abounded, grace did much more abound' (Rom. 5: 15-21).

16. The sorrows of maternity (if not also its frequency) are 'greatly multiplied.' She incurs also a humiliating though voluntary, subjection to her husband, who often 'rules over her' with but too unkind a rigor. In all this, Eve is the representative of her sex. Yet God's mercy is mingled with these peculiarities of woman's lot (see 1 Tim. 2: 15). As to the import of the words 'desire' and 'rule,' cf. 4: 7. This does not, however, excuse man's tyranny over woman. Woman's subordination to man in the domestic state, arises, (1.) From the necessity that every social organization should have a head. (2.) From her physical inferiority as the 'weaker vessel.' (3.) From her priority in transgression, and (4) as a part of her curse (see 1 Tim. 2: 11-14).

17-19. The curse upon Adam falls also on his race whom he represented. The facts are undeniable, whatever theories men may adopt. The ground is still cursed for man's sake, and toilsome labor is still the common lot; and yet a blessing is in this also, for, to a sinful being, there is no greater curse than idleness; and not only man, but 'the whole creation groaneth,' being subjected to the curse 'in hope' (Rom. 8: 20-22).

20. *Eve, i. e., life.*—He had called her *woman*, as wife, and now *Eve*, as mother. He finds that there is a respite from

the death threatened in the curse, and that a living posterity is to be given them. Some also find in this name an evidence of Adam's *faith* in that promised 'seed' of the woman who should bruise the serpent's head, and remove the curse of death (John 1: 4, etc.) Such commemorative and significant changes of name were common afterward, as may be seen in the case of Abram, Sarai, Jacob, Saul.

21. *Coats of skins*.—These were of the Lord's providing, and are strikingly significant of that *covering* of atonement which is provided in the robe of Christ's righteousness (cf. Phil. 3: 9. Rev. 19: 8); and the more so if these skins were, as is probable, those of victims which they were taught to offer in sacrifice (cf. Abel's sacrifice 4: 4). We can not account for the origin of sacrifice except from a special divine command. There could be no propriety in bloody offerings except as they prefigure the blood of atonement.

THE FIRST FAMILY.

Genesis IV: 1, 2, 25, 26.

1. AND Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the Lord. 2. And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.—25. And Adam knew his wife again; and she bare a son, and called his name Seth: For God, said she, hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew. 26. And to Seth, to him also there was born a son; and he called his name Enos: then began men to call upon the name of the Lord.

1, 2. *Adam knew Eve his wife*.—It is not necessary to suppose that this conjugal intercourse did not commence until after their exclusion from the garden. *Cain* (*i. e.*, gotten or acquired). *A man from the Lord*, or a 'man Jehovah.'—The word 'from' is not in the original; and as the word LORD (Hebrew, 'Jehovah') is here first used alone, and means the *Coming One*, it is thought that Eve supposed this child to be already the promised seed that should bruise the serpent's head. The giving of this name is an evidence of her faith, so that she who was the first sinner is also the first believer, unless the priority be accorded to Adam, as above in 2: 20. We love to entertain the thought, upon however slight grounds, that both of these our unhappy fallen parents became the partakers of the salvation provided in the promised seed. *Abel* (*i. e.*, vanity).—Such, perhaps,

she began to find her hopes to be.—Agriculture and pasturage were the primitive employments of mankind.

25. *Seth* (*i. e.*, appointed).—Eve thus piously acknowledges God as the giver of this child also, and, at the same time, commemorates her sorrow at the loss of Abel.

26. *Enos* (*i. e.*, weak man). *To call upon, etc.*—This passage is variously rendered, 'to be called,' (or to call themselves) 'by the name of the Lord,' or 'Then it was begun to call on the name of Jehovah,' *i. e.*, to worship God under this name with distinct reference to its Messianic import. It implies, at any rate, an advance in religion among the sons of Seth, and a more formal separation from the growing ungodliness of the descendants of Cain (*cf.* 6: 2, 4). Because only these children of Adam are here mentioned, we are not to infer that he had no others (*see* 5: 3, 4). Some of the 'daughters' there mentioned must have been grown up before Cain or Seth were married.

CAIN'S DESCENDANTS.

Genesis IV: 17-22.

17. AND Cain knew his wife; and she conceived, and bare Enoch: and he builded a city, and called the name of the city, after the name of his son, Enoch. 18. And unto Enoch was born Irad: and Irad begat Mehujael: and Mehujael begat Methusael: and Methusael begat Lamech. 19. And Lamech took unto him two wives: the name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other Zillah. 20. And Adah bare Jabal: he was the father of such as dwell in tents, and of such as have cattle. 21. And his brother's name was Jubal: he was the father of all such as handle the harp and organ. 22. And Zillah, she also bare Tubal-cain, an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron: and the sister of Tubal-cain was Naamah.

17. *Cain knew his wife.*—She must have been one of those 'daughters' of Adam mentioned in 5: 4. No other marriage was possible in the peculiar circumstances of the case.

18. In this notice of Cain's descendants we find the beginning of various arts: architecture (v. 17), nomadic life (v. 20), music (v. 21), metallurgy (v. 22), and poetry, for such is Lamech's language, (vs. 23, 24.)

19. Here also we have the first notice of polygamy, and, significantly, it is in close proximity with murder (v. 23). Cain and his posterity seem to have lived for this world, while religion was forgotten.

22. *Naamah*—whose name we have and no more. Why is she mentioned? The name means *beautiful*. Beauty is a

gift to be desired, because God bestows it; but it is worth while to remember that Naamah, who is the first distinguished 'beauty,' was a daughter of Cain (cf. 6: 2).

LAMECH'S TWO WIVES.

Genesis IV: 23, 24.

23. AND Lamech said unto his wives,
Adah and Zillah, hear my voice;
Ye wives of Lamech, hearken unto my speech:
For I have slain a man to my wounding,
And a young man to my hurt:
24. If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold,
Truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold.

The words intervening between verse 19 and 23 may be regarded as parenthetical, and intended to give a brief notice of Lamech's descendants through these two wives.

The words of Lamech here quoted—probably from some earlier tradition—are obscure, because we do not know their historical connection. They are the oldest specimen of poetry on record.

The two last clauses, 'for I have slain,' etc., and 'if Cain,' etc., are each introduced by the same Hebrew word, *ki*, which may be rendered *if*, or may be taken interrogatively. In either case Lamech is relieved from the charge of having actually committed murder, though he still has the bad notoriety of having been the first polygamist. And very likely the violence to which he refers may have been somehow connected with his disregard of the original law of marriage.

"Some suggest that Lamech's poetic and profane boast may have been in mockery of Enoch's prophecy of the judgment."—*Jacobus*. (Cf. Jude 14, 15.)

THE LINE OF SETH.

Genesis V: 1-4.

1. THIS is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him; 2. Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created. 3. And Adam lived a hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth: 4. And the days of Adam after he had begotten Seth were eight hundred years; and he begat sons and daughters.

This chapter is the first genealogical record ('book of the

generations') of the line of the pious, from whom was to come the promised seed.

2. *Called their name Adam.*—The generic name of the race, 'man,' or *mankind*.

3. *In his own likeness.*—This is in contradistinction from the 'likeness' of God in which man was first created (v. 1). The posterity of Adam all 'bear the image of the earthy' (1 Cor. 15: 49). The use again of the words 'likeness' and 'image' corroborates the view suggested in our note on 1: 26. Here both physical and moral resemblance are undoubtedly implied; the former being mentioned first as the more obvious.

But for the preceding record we might suppose that Seth was Adam's first-born, although he may not even have been the third in the list of those 'sons and daughters' (v. 4) which were born to Adam, but only the one through whom were transmitted the peculiar privileges of the birthright. So also of the subsequent names in this chapter, *e. g.*, in v. 32. Shem is named first, although Japheth was 'the elder' son. From Shem came the Messiah.

FAMILY DEGENERACY BRINGS ON THE FLOOD.

Genesis VI: 1-5, 11, 12.

1. AND it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, 2. That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose. 3. And the Lord said, My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be a hundred and twenty years. 4. There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown. 5. And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.—11. The earth also was corrupt before God; and the earth was filled with violence. 12. And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth.

2. The *sons of God*, are commonly supposed to be the sons of the pious line of Seth, who, in the days of Enos, began to be called by the name of the Lord (4: 26). Adam is called the 'son of God' (Luke 3: 38); so are Christians now (1 John 3: 2). The *daughters of men* were those of Cain or other ungodly ones. *They were fair.*—Being attracted by their beauty, without regard to their character.

Of all which (perhaps also 'as many as') *they chose*, and thus the family is no longer the home and safeguard of true religion; and the 'wickedness of man soon becomes so great in the earth' as to require the waters of the flood to wash it away (cf. 2 Cor. 6: 14). The more ancient, and, perhaps, the more obvious, interpretation of this passage (but for the supposed absurdity of it) makes the 'sons of God' here to be angels, who are so called in Job 1: 6; 2: 1, and 38: 7. This would make the contrast between 'sons of God' and 'daughters of men' more obvious. Angels appeared often in human form; they ate of the food which Abraham set before them (18: 8; 19: 3); they 'rolled away the stone from the door of the sepulcher' (Matt. 28: 2), etc. Thus they seem to have had 'a real corporeity, at least for the time being. The 'giant' offspring favors the same view, as do also the fables of heroes and demigods with which heathen mythology abounds, and which seem to be traditions of these strange unions. May not these also be the 'angels that sinned,' and who 'kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation,' etc. (2 Pet. 2: 4. Jude 6, 7)? And as the devil tempted our first parents, may he not thus also have tempted these angels? and hence 'the devil and *his angels*.*

3. *My Spirit shall not always* (Hebrew, 'forever') *strive*.—Implying that religion then, as now, was kept alive in the world by the resistance of the Spirit of God to the fleshliness of men (cf. Gal. 5: 17). *For that he also is flesh* (Hebrew, 'in their errors or transgressions he is flesh'), *i. e.*, man has become so entirely fleshly or corrupt (v. 12) that my Spirit strives with him in vain.

4. *Giants* (Hebrew, 'fallen ones,' or fallers, who do violence to others)—in stature and strength, like Goliath afterward. This verse may better be read: 'There had been giants in those days—also after that the sons of God came in,' etc. The offspring of these mixed marriages continued to be 'mighty men, which, from of old, were men of renown,' like Nimrod, the 'mighty one' (10: 8), and like the *heroes* of antiquity.

5, 11, 12. This universal corruption and violence was the legitimate fruit of these unhallowed connections. At length God is constrained to withdraw his Spirit, and to destroy a

* Kitto still favors this view; but see, on the other hand, Bush, Jacobus, and others.

race whose 'iniquities were full,' but God is long-suffering, and allows them still 'an hundred and twenty years' before the judgment of the flood descends upon them (v. 3).

NOAH AND HIS FAMILY ARE SAVED.

Genesis VII: 1-4, 7; VIII: 18-20.

1. AND the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation. 2. Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and his female: and of beasts that are not clean by two, the male and his female. 3. Of fowls also of the air by sevens, the male and the female; to keep seed alive upon the face of all the earth. 4. For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and every living substance that I have made will I destroy from off the face of the earth.—7. And Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him, into the ark, because of the waters of the flood.

8: 18. And Noah went forth, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him: 19. Every beast, every creeping thing, and every fowl, and whatsoever creepeth upon the earth, after their kinds, went forth out of the ark. 20. And Noah builded an altar unto the Lord; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

1. Observe that the salvation of Noah's 'house,' or family, in the ark is attributed to his righteousness rather than their own. We have no evidence that Ham was a righteous man (9: 22, cf. Acts 16: 31). The Church of that day was in the ark, and it is still composed of the families of God's people.

2. *Clean beasts—not clean.*—This distinction between clean and unclean animals, could not have been merely anticipative, as some suppose, but it implies that already certain beasts had been designated as suitable for sacrifice, the same that were subsequently used also for food.

3. *By sevens, i. e., seven pairs, or, as some suppose, three pairs, and one additional for sacrifice on coming out of the ark (8: 20).*

4. *Seven days (cf. v. 12; 8: 10, 12).*—This observance of periods of seven days shows that the Sabbath, as well as the family, were preserved in the ark, as was also the rite of sacrifice.

7. *Wife—sons' wives, (cf. 2, male and female).*—Thus provision was made for repopulating the earth, both with men and beasts (cf. 8: 17).

8: 20. *Altar—burnt offerings.*—These are here first mentioned; but Abel's bloody offering (4: 4), and the preservation of clean beasts by sevens (7: 2), as also the clothing of skins (3: 21), afford evidence that the rite of sacrifice had been instituted from the first as the chief ordinance of worship. This 'altar' was a family altar, and was appropriately set up immediately on coming out of the ark in commemoration of a great family deliverance. It was, at the same time, the altar of the Church, which was now confined to Noah's family (cf. 1 Pet. 3: 20, 21).

ABRAM'S FAMILY AND MIGRATION.

Genesis XI: 27–31; XII: 5.

27. Now these are the generations of Terah: Terah begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran begat Lot. 28. And Haran died before his father Terah in the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chaldees. 29. And Abram and Nahor took their wives: the name of Abram's wife was Sarai; and the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah, and the father of Iscah. 30. But Sarai was barren; she had no child. 31. And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there.

12: 5. And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came.

27. *Abram* is mentioned first, although not the eldest, just as Shem in the family of Noah, because they are in the line of covenant succession.

29. *Abram's wife, Sarai*, is probably the same as *Iscah*. Thus Abram and Nahor both married their nieces, the daughters of the deceased Haran. This nearness of consanguinity was not yet forbidden (see note on Lev. 18).

30. Barrenness is first mentioned here in anticipation of subsequent events recorded in chap. 16, etc. It will be found always referred to as a grievous calamity in the estimation of Israelite women, because it precluded them from the hope of bearing the 'promised seed.'

31. *Haran*—a name given obviously in commemoration of Haran, the deceased. Thus we often find the names of persons given to places. The land of Canaan, toward which they set forth, was then the 'great west.'

12: 5. *The souls, etc., i. e.*, the retinue of servants and attendants which they had gathered around them, and who, no doubt, embraced the true religion (cf. 12: 16; 14: 14).

ABRAM'S FAITH YET WEAK.

Genesis XII: 10-20.

10. AND there was a famine in the land: and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there: for the famine was grievous in the land. 11. And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt, that he said unto Sarai his wife, Behold now, I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon: 12. Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say, This is his wife: and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive. 13. Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister: that it may be well with me for thy sake; and my soul shall live because of thee. 14. And it came to pass, that, when Abram was come into Egypt, the Egyptians beheld the woman that she was very fair. 15. The princes also of Pharaoh saw her, and commended her before Pharaoh: and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house. 16. And he entreated Abram well for her sake: and he had sheep, and oxen, and he asses, and menservants, and maid-servants, and she asses, and camels. 17. And the Lord plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues, because of Sarai, Abram's wife. 18. And Pharaoh called Abram, and said, What is this that thou hast done unto me? Why didst thou not tell me that she was thy wife? 19. Why saidst thou, She is my sister? so I might have taken her to me to wife: now therefore behold thy wife, take her, and go thy way. 20. And Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him: and they sent him away, and his wife, and all that he had.

12. *His wife.*—In oriental countries the rights of husbands were regarded as peculiarly sacred. They would take a man's life rather than his wife.

13. *Sister.*—According to Hebrew usage, any near kinswoman might be called a sister (cf. 14: 14, 16; 20: 12, 13). But Abram is here guilty of criminal and unmanly equivocation, for in representing her as only his sister, he exposes her to the sin of adultery for the sake of saving his own life. Surely he is not yet worthy to be called the 'father of the faithful.'

19. Thus God was better to Abram than his fears; and he finds that there was more of the fear of God in Egypt than he had supposed (20: 11). The path of duty is ever the path of safety.

1. *Into the south, i. e.*, into the southern part of the land of Canaan (cf. 12: 9).

DOMESTIC TROUBLES.

Genesis XVI. 1-16.

1. Now Sarai, Abram's wife, bare him no children: and she had a handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar. 2. And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, the Lord hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened unto the voice of Sarai. 3. And Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar her maid the Egyptian, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife. 4. And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived: and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes. 5. And Sarai said unto Abram, My wrong be upon thee: I have given my maid into thy bosom; and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes: the Lord judge between me and thee. 6. But Abram said unto Sarai, Behold, thy maid is in thy hand: do to her as it pleaseth thee. And when Sarai dealt hardly with her, she fled from her face. 7. And the angel of the Lord found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, by the fountain in the way to Shur. 8. And he said, Hagar, Sarai's maid, whence camest thou? and whether wilt thou go? And she said, I flee from the face of my mistress Sarai. 9. And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands. 10. And the angel of the Lord said unto her, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude. 11. And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael; because the Lord hath heard thy affliction. 12. And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him: and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren. 13. And she called the name of the Lord that spake unto her, Thou God seest me: for she said, Have I also here looked after him that seeth me? 14. Wherefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi: behold, it is between Kadesh and Bered. 15. And Hagar bare Abram a son: and Abram called his son's name, which Hagar bare, Ishmael. 16. And Abram was fourscore and six years old, when Hagar bare Ishmael to Abram.

2. This was an unlawful and ill-advised course, though sanctioned by the customs of those times, and still prevalent, it is said, in India and China. The child of the slave in such cases is adopted by the wife, and treated in all respects as her own offspring (cf. 30: 3).

3. *To be his wife, i. e., in loco uxoris.*—It was not a mere loose concubinage, but made her a secondary wife to Abram. Polygamy was then tolerated, though not approved. Abram consented the more readily to this arrangement because of the long delay in the fulfillment of the promise that he should have seed (12: 2; 15: 4, 5). 'Ten years' had already elapsed,

and Abram was eighty-five years old, and Sarai seventy-five. His faith could not trust God as to the time and way of fulfilling the promise; while as to the promise itself, his faith was 'counted unto him for righteousness' (15: 6).

5. *The Lord judge, etc.*—Thus ungenerously does she blame Abram for the fault of Hagar. Polygamy is unnatural, and destructive to domestic peace.

7. *The angel of the Lord* (Hebrew, 'Angel-Jehovah').—This remarkable person is here first formally mentioned, but is doubtless the same as the 'Lord God' who 'walked' in the garden, and spake to our first parents (3: 8). All the visible appearances of the Lord (Jehovah), in the Old Testament, are in the person of this same Angel of the Covenant, who was the second person of the blessed Trinity, anticipating his appearance as the Messiah, 'God manifest in the flesh' (cf. 10, 13; 17: 1, 3, 22; 18: 1, 14, 22, 33). *In the way to Shur, i. e., on her way back to Egypt.*

9. *Submit thyself.*—This by no means excuses the oppressive treatment of her by her mistress; but it was God's purpose that Ishmael, although not the promised seed, should be brought up in the family of Abram.

10. *Multiply thy seed.*—Cf. 17: 20. 1 Chron. 5: 19, 21.

11. *Ishmael*—(God shall hear)—*heard thy affliction* (cf. 21: 17).—Thus God can hear even unuttered or inarticulate cries, as the 'voice of Abel's blood' (5: 10), and the cry of Sodom's guilt (18: 21). But Hagar may have prayed in her distress, and been heard for Abram's sake.

12. *Presence of all his brethren, i. e., never be conquered or dispossessed of his territories* (cf. 25: 18).—All this has been fulfilled in the history of the Arabians, many of whose tribes are the descendants of Ishmael.

13. *Have I also here looked.*—These words are obscure. It may mean 'Do I still live after seeing God?' (cf. 32: 30), or 'I have seen the back of him who saw me' (Exod. 33: 20-23).

14. *Beer-lahai-roi, i. e., 'the well of the living seeing one.'*—It is well thus to give names to places where we have experienced signal deliverances, as memorials in God's honor.

THE COVENANT RENEWED IN THE LINE OF SARAH.

Genesis XVII : 15-22.

15. AND God said unto Abraham, As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be. 16. And I will bless her, and give thee a son also for her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her. 17. Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is a hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear? 18. And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee! 19. And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him. 20. And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation. 21. But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year. And he left off talking with him, and God went up from Abraham.

The former part of this chapter records the renewal of God's covenant with Abram, whose name is changed to Abraham, or father of nations. Here also (v. 15), Sarai's name is changed to Sarah, which words are commonly understood to mean 'my princess' and 'princess;' but more probably *Sarai* denotes contentious or tyrannical, while *Sarah* denotes fruitful (v. 16)—(Jacobus). Such changes of name are frequent in the Bible, and are commemorative of some important event or promise, *e. g.*, Jacob to Israel, Cephas to Peter, Saul to Paul, etc.

17. *Laughed*.—Abraham's laughter was that of joyful surprise, and not of incredulity, like that of Sarah afterward (18: 13).

19-21. *My covenant*.—Involving the paternity of that 'seed' in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed—the Messiah (18: 18).

20. *Ishmael*.—A *great nation* (cf. 25: 12-18. 1 Chron. 5: 19-21).

ANGEL VISITANTS—SARAH'S LAUGHTER.

Genesis XVIII. 1-15.

1. AND the Lord appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day; 2. And he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground, 3. And said, My Lord, if now I have found favor in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant: 4. Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree: 5. And I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your hearts; after that ye shall pass on: for therefore are ye come to your servant. And they said, So do, as thou hast said. 6. And Abraham hastened into the tent unto Sarah, and said, Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes upon the hearth. 7. And Abraham ran unto the herd, and fetched a calf tender and good, and gave it unto a young man; and he hastened to dress it. 8. And he took butter, and milk, and the calf which he had dressed, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree, and they did eat. 9. And they said unto him, Where is Sarah thy wife? And he said, Behold, in the tent. 10. And he said, I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life; and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son. And Sarah heard it in the tent door, which was behind him. 11. Now Abraham and Sarah were old and well stricken in age; and it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. 12. Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also? 13. And the Lord said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of surety bear a child, which am old? 14. Is any thing too hard for the Lord? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son. 15. Then Sarah denied, saying, I laughed not; for she was afraid. And he said, Nay; but thou didst laugh.

1-8. This passage presents a beautiful picture of ancient and oriental manners; also, another appearance of the Lord (*i. e.*, the 'Angel-Jehovah') to Abraham, accompanied by two angels, all three in the form of 'men,' who even 'eat' (v. 8) of the food which is set before them.

9-14. The burden of this whole passage is, the more specific promise respecting the birth of Isaac (*cf.* 17: 19).

10. *I will certainly return.*—Abraham had waited fourteen years since he first received the promise respecting this son (*cf.* 12: 4 with 21: 5), and his faith was sorely tried. He needed, therefore, this renewed and earnest assurance, and God graciously affords it.

12. She *laughed*, incredulously, thinking it physically impossible, and too good to be true. *My lord.*—The Apos-

tle Peter commends this style of speech to the women of his day (1 Pet. 3: 6).

15. *Laughed not.*—True, she had only laughed within herself (v. 12), but the omniscient Lord detected it. Notwithstanding this temporary unbelief of Sarah, she afterward, ‘through faith received strength to conceive seed’ (Heb. 11: 11. Gen. 21: 6). Thus lenient is the Lord toward the human infirmities of true believers.

LOT AND HIS FAMILY—DARK PICTURES.

Genesis XIX. 12-16, 23-26, 30-38.

12. AND the men said unto Lot, Hast thou here any besides? son-in-law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring them out of this place: 13. For we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the Lord; and the Lord hath sent us to destroy it. 14. And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons in law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons in law. 15. And when the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, which are here; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city. 16. And while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the Lord being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth, and set him without the city.—23. The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar. 24. Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven; 25. And he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground. 26. But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.—30. And Lot went up out of Zoar, and dwelt in the mountain, and his two daughters with him; for he feared to dwell in Zoar: and he dwelt in a cave, he and his two daughters. 31. And the firstborn said unto the younger, Our father is old, and there is not a man in the earth to come in unto us after the manner of all the earth: 32. Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father. 33. And they made their father drink wine that night: and the firstborn went in and lay with her father; and he perceived not when she lay down, nor when she arose. 34. And it came to pass on the morrow, that the firstborn said unto the younger, Behold, I lay yesternight with my father: let us make him drink wine this night also; and go thou in, and lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father. 35. And they made their father drink wine that night also: and the younger arose, and lay with him; and he perceived not when she lay down, nor when she arose. 36. Thus were both the daughters of Lot with child by their father. 37. And the firstborn bare a son, and called his name Moab: the same is the father of the Moabites unto

this day. 38. And the younger, she also bare a son, and called his name Ben-ammi: the same is the father of the children of Ammon unto this day.

12. *The men said.*—These ‘men’ are the same as those spoken of in 18: 2, 22, and in v. 1 of this chapter, as ‘two angels.’ *Any besides.*—All these might have been spared for Lot’s sake, imperfectly ‘righteous’ as he was. So much does God honor even a little piety. Compare the faith which is but as a grain of mustard seed (Matt. 17: 20).

13. *Hath sent us to destroy it*—Not merely to announce its coming destruction, but as the ministers of God’s judgment, just as they smote the vile men of Sodom with blindness (v. 11), and as God permitted Satan to smite Job with calamities and sore boils. We have a specimen here of the *visible* ministration of angels. At other times it is invisible (cf. 24: 7, 40. 2 Kings 6: 17. Ps. 34: 7). How cheering to God’s true and tempted people is the assurance that the ‘angels are all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation’ (Heb. 1: 14).

16. *Lingered.*—Strange that he should linger in such circumstances! Lot was a backslider, and was ‘scarcely saved.’ Even so do sinners, still, linger in fleeing out of the Sodom of their sins.

23–26. *The Lord rained, etc., i. e.,* through the agency of the two angels sent for that purpose. Some suppose, however, that the Lord himself reappears and speaks in vs. 17, 21.

24. *Brimstone and fire, etc.*—Besides this miraculous tempest, natural causes may have operated, such as volcanic action, and the setting on fire of the bitumen—which still abounds there—and which long continued to burn (Jude 7).

26. *A pillar (or mass) of salt.*—She may have been suffocated by the sulphurous vapors, and as she lay there became gradually encrusted with salt, such as that which still whitens the shores of the Dead Sea (see Bush, Kitto, Jacobus, etc.). A terrible lesson as to the danger of delay, and of looking back when fleeing out of Sodom. ‘Remember Lot’s wife’ (Luke 17: 32). ‘Almost saved, but lost after all!’

30–38.—*Zoar* had been spared at Lot’s request (v. 21), but now he is afraid to dwell there. He had better have fled to this ‘mountain’ at first, as he was commanded (v. 17). What a lesson to those half-way Christians who plead for their Zoars (little ones) of conformity to the world, etc.

Their souls can not dwell there in peace. A whole-hearted piety is always the happiest.

31-36. This revolting story, as well as the equally revolting proposition of the father, in verse 8, shows how the moral sensibilities of the whole family had been blunted by their residence in Sodom. 'Evil communications corrupt good manners.'

37, 38. The Moabites and Ammonites were among the bitterest enemies of the people of Israel (cf. Num. 25: 1. Deut. 23: 1-5). This is the last notice of Lot which occurs in the Bible. His name is not found among those heroes of faith celebrated in Heb. 11, 'of whom the world was not worthy;' and yet the Apostle Peter speaks of him as 'a righteous man' who was 'vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked' (2 Pet. 2: 7, 8.)

ABRAHAM AGAIN DENIES HIS WIFE.

Genesis XX: 1-18.

1. AND Abraham journeyed from thence toward the south country, and dwelt between Kadesh and Shur, and sojourned in Gerar. 2. And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, She is my sister: and Abimelech king of Gerar sent, and took Sarah. 3. But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, Behold, thou art but a dead man, for the woman which thou hast taken; for she is a man's wife. 4. But Abimelech had not come near her: and he said, Lord, wilt thou slay also a righteous nation? 5. Said he not unto me, She is my sister? and she, even she herself said, He is my brother: in the integrity of my heart and innocency of my hands have I done this. 6. And God said unto him in a dream, Yea, I know that thou didst this in the integrity of thy heart; for I also withheld thee from sinning against me: therefore suffered I thee not to touch her. 7. Now therefore restore the man his wife; for he is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live: and if thou restore her not, know thou that thou shalt surely die, thou, and all that are thine. 8. Therefore Abimelech rose early in the morning, and called all his servants, and told all these things in their ears: and the men were sore afraid. 9. Then Abimelech called Abraham, and said unto him, What hast thou done unto us? and what have I offended thee, that thou hast brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin? thou hast done deeds unto me that ought not to be done. 10. And Abimelech said unto Abraham, What sawest thou, that thou hast done this thing? 11. And Abraham said, Because I thought, Surely the fear of God is not in this place; and they will slay me for my wife's sake. 12. And yet indeed she is my sister; she is the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife. 13. And it came to pass, when God caused me to wander from my father's house, that I said unto her, This is thy kindness which thou shalt show unto me; at every place

whither we shall come, say of me, He is my brother. 14. And Abimelech took sheep, and oxen, and men-servants, and women-servants, and gave them unto Abraham, and restored him Sarah his wife. 15. And Abimelech said, Behold, my land is before thee: dwell where it pleaseth thee. 16. And unto Sarah he said, Behold, I have given thy brother a thousand pieces of silver: behold, he is to thee a covering of the eyes, unto all that are with thee, and with all other: thus she was reproved. 17. So Abraham prayed unto God: and God healed Abimelech, and his wife, and his maidservants; and they bare children. 18. For the Lord had fast closed up all the wombs of the house of Abimelech, because of Sarah, Abraham's wife.

2. *My sister.*—It was now some twenty-four years since the visit to Egypt, when a similar adventure took place (chap. 12); and Abraham seems to have forgotten the lesson which he then learned. We find, also, from v. 13, that it was a permanent understanding between them that Sarah was to pass among strangers as Abraham's sister rather than as his wife, and that this was done in 'kindness' to him. It is, perhaps, difficult for us fully to estimate the force of the motives for such concealment of their true relation, but we know, in general, that he considered himself in danger of being killed if known as her husband, but not as her brother (cf. 12: 12; 20: 11). It was a cowardly arrangement at best, and exposed Sarah's virtue to danger in order to screen Abraham's life. It was the more criminal in this instance, because it occurred in the critical period between the promise recorded in 18: 10, and the birth of Isaac, 21: 1, 2. But, as before, God is gracious to them, and delivers them from the natural consequences of their own indiscretion.

3. *In a dream.*—This is one of the ways in which divine communications were made in those days (28: 12; 37: 5, 9, etc.); and they were not confined to the pious alone (cf. 31: 29; 40: 5, 8. Matt. 27: 19). In this case the true paternity of the child of promise must not be put in doubt. Nor is there anything in the conduct of Abimelech to show that he may not have been a worshiper of the true God. Some remains of the primitive patriarchal religion seem still to have lingered in the region of Canaan, *e. g.*, Melchizedek (chap. 14).

6. *For* (rather 'and') *I also withheld thee*, etc.

9. *A great sin* (or judgment.)

12. *She is my sister* (cf. 11: 29; 12: 13, and notes).—She was his niece, the granddaughter of Terah, and probably by a second wife, so that she was the (grand) 'daughter of Abra-

ham's father,' but not of his mother. She might be called his 'sister' with the same propriety that Lot, his nephew, is called his 'brother' (14: 14, 16). Still we can not excuse the prevarication. Abraham's faith was subject to lapses, or he would have told the whole truth, and trusted his case to the Lord.

14, 15. In all this Abimelech seems to be more righteous than Abraham. Thus the people of God are sometimes put to shame by those of the world. *Thy brother.*—Spoken here sarcastically.

16. *He is to thee*, etc.—This language is somewhat obscure. It may be rendered, 'Behold *it* (*i. e.*, the thousand pieces of silver) is to thee (to purchase) a covering of the eyes (*i. e.*, a veil such as married women wore), to be worn not only before 'all those that are with thee' (*i. e.*, thy own family), 'but before all others' (*i. e.*, strangers), so as no longer to pass thyself as one unmarried;' or, 'it is a peace offering' to atone for the damage done; the Hebrew words rendered 'covering to the eyes,' sometimes meaning 'to appease or propitiate,' as *e. g.*, in 32: 20.

17. *So Abraham prayed*, etc. (v. 7).—Although Abraham had sinned and acted foolishly, yet he was a 'prophet' of God, and in covenant with him; and his prayer is heard. Thus graciously does God condone the infirmities of his believing people. *Healed* (cf. 12: 17).

BIRTH OF ISAAC—HAGAR AND ISHMAEL.

Genesis XXI. 1-21.

1. AND the Lord visited Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did unto Sarah as he had spoken. 2. For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him. 3. And Abraham called the name of his son that was born unto him, whom Sarah bare to him, Isaac. 4. And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac being eight days old, as God had commanded him. 5. And Abraham was a hundred years old, when his son Isaac was born unto him. 6. And Sarah said, God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me. 7. And she said, Who would have said unto Abraham, that Sarah should have given children suck? for I have borne him a son in his old age. 8. And the child grew, and was weaned: and Abraham made a great feast the same day that Isaac was weaned. 9. And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had borne unto Abraham, mocking. 10. Wherefore she said unto Abraham, Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac. 11. And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight because of his son. 12.

And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called. 13. And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed. 14. And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took bread, and a bottle of water, and gave it unto Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, and the child, and sent her away: and she departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Beer-sheba. 15. And the water was spent in the bottle, and she cast the child under one of the shrubs. 16. And she went, and sat her down over against him a good way off, as it were a bowshot: for she said, Let me not see the death of the child. And she sat over against him, and lifted up her voice, and wept. 17. And God heard the voice of the lad; and the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said unto her, What aileth thee, Hagar? fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is. 18. Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand; for I will make him a great nation. 19. And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went, and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink. 20. And God was with the lad; and he grew, and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer. 21. And he dwelt in the wilderness of Paran: and his mother took him a wife out of the land of Egypt.

1. *Visited*.—God is said to ‘visit’ when he interposes by his providence, whether in the way of mercy or of judgment (cf. 1 Sam. 2: 21. Luke 1: 68. Exod. 20: 5; 32: 34).

3. *Isaac*—‘laughter’—(cf. 17: 17; 18: 12–15).

6. *God hath made me to laugh*.—Her former laughter of incredulity has now become, like Abraham’s (17: 17), a laughter of faith and joy (Heb. 11: 11). *Isaac* is, therefore, doubly worthy of that name.

8. *A feast—weaned*.—This was an oriental custom. The weaning did not take place before the second or third year (cf. 1 Sam. 1, 22, 24).

9. *Mocking*—‘laughing derisively.’—Paul calls it ‘persecution’ (Gal. 4: 29). It was a spirit like that of Cain toward Abel, and of Esau toward Jacob (Luke 15: 25, etc.).

10. *Cast out, i. e., repudiate*.—The whole of this account is allegorized in Gal. 4: 30, as representing the ‘two covenants.’

11. *Very grievous*.—Abraham still retains an affectionate regard for Ishmael as his first-born, and the son of his old age (cf. 17: 18). But by a divine intimation (v. 12) he yields to Sarah’s wishes, and dismisses Hagar and her son, no doubt with a view to their return to Egypt, ‘Beer-sheba’ (v. 14) being on the way to that country.

12. *The lad* (cf. 15, *child*).—He was now from fifteen to seventeen years of age.

14. *A bottle, i. e.*, of skin, and holding a considerable quantity.

15. *Cast the child, i. e.*, caused him to lie down, not that she was carrying him. *Shrubs, i. e.*, trees of stunted growth, such as are found in sandy regions.

16. *Lifted up her voice and wept.*—It is not said that she *prayed*, but we may suppose that she had learned enough of religion for that.

17. *God heard the voice of the lad.*—We would fain hope that this, too, may have been the voice of prayer, but more probably it was the cry of his distress (cf. 16: 11). *Angel of God* (Hebrew, of *Elohim*) not of 'the Lord-Jehovah.'—Although it is the same personage as he who addressed her before, 16: 7, etc., yet he is here called by a different name, because Ishmael has no interest in him as Jehovah, the God of the Covenant, but only as Elohim, the God of Providence.

19. *Opened her eyes, i. e.*, caused her to discover a well or fountain which she had not seen before. Thus despairing sinners fail to see the 'fountain of life' in Christ, until God by his spirit opens their eyes.

20. *God was with the lad*—With his providential protection and favor, so as to secure him great worldly prosperity; and all for Abraham's sake (v. 13).

21. *Wilderness of Paran.*—A vast desert region of Arabia, south and south-west of Palestine, in which the Israelites afterward wandered forty years. *His mother took him a wife, etc.*—A country-woman of her own. It were well if *mothers* still were more frequently consulted by their sons on this important subject.—The Bedouin Arabs are his descendants.

ABRAHAM'S KINDRED.

Genesis XXII. 20–24.

20. AND it came to pass after these things, that it was told Abraham, saying, Behold, Milcah, she hath also borne children unto thy brother Nahor; 21. Huz his firstborn, and Buz his brother, and Kemuel the father of Aram, 22. And Chesed, and Hazo, and Pildash, and Jidlaph, and Bethuel. 23. And Bethuel begat Rebekah: these eight Milcah did bear to Nahor, Abraham's brother. 24. And his concubine, whose name was Reumah, she bare also Tebah, and Gaham, and Thahash, and Maachah.

This record is given because of its connection with Isaac's marriage. The information here said to have been given to

Abraham (v. 20), was the occasion of his sending his head servant to the country of Nahor, to take a wife for Isaac (chap. 24).

24. *Concubine*, i. e., secondary-wife, who could not be put away without divorce, and whose children were legitimate. Hagar, Keturah, etc., belonged to the same class. Although a departure from the original law of marriage, it was one of the things allowed under the Old Testament 'on account of the hardness of their hearts' (Matt. 19: 8), but which can not be tolerated under the gospel.

DEATH AND BURIAL OF SARAH.

Genesis XXIII. 1, 2, 19, 20.

1. AND Sarah was a hundred and seven and twenty years old: these were the years of the life of Sarah. 2. And Sarah died in Kirjath-arba; the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan: and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her.—19. And after this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah before Mamre: the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan. 20. And the field, and the cave that is therein, were made sure unto Abraham for a possession of a burying-place by the sons of Heth.

This chapter contains the first account of a family vault, or burying-place; and Sarah is the only woman in the Bible whose age, death, and burial are distinctly mentioned. In 1 Pet. 3: 6, she is given as a model woman, of whom all true Christian women are 'daughters,' as Abraham is the 'father of all them that believe.' Both had their imperfections, but those were dark times, and we are not to look for such bright examples of faith and piety as the clearer revelations of the gospel require.

ISAAC AND REBEKAH—MARRIAGE CUSTOMS.

Read Genesis XXIV. entire.

THIS chapter contains a most beautiful picture of the simple, unsophisticated manners of those early times. The piety of the steward (vs. 12, 21, 26, 27, 48, etc.); the employments of women (11-14, etc.); the part of parents in negotiating marriage for their children (3, 49-51); the right of the woman to a final consent to the arrangement, and the frank reply, 'I will go' (58); Isaac's pious and anxious waiting for the result (63), and Rebekah's modest and deferential introduction to him (64, 65); her installment as head of his house-

hold in the tent of his departed mother, and his tender affection for her (67), are all noticed with a divine simplicity which is infinitely unlike the fustian of modern romance.

2. *Eldest servant*.—Probably 'Eliezer of Damascus,' who was the high steward or chief ruler of his household (15: 2). *My thigh*.—A peculiar Jewish mode of administering an oath of unusual solemnity (cf. 47: 29).

3, 4. He wished to guard his family against the demoralizing influence of an unhallowed marriage, not having forgotten the lesson of the flood (6: 2, 5. 2 Cor. 6: 14-18).

7. *His angel* (cf. 5: 40; also, 19: 13, and refs).

10. *Ten camels*—With, of course, a corresponding number of servants, etc. (32); the whole making quite a caravan, and showing the wealth and princely estate of the owner.

14. This prescribing of a sign by which the proper damsel may be known, looks to us like presumption; but Eliezer was a man of true faith, like his master, and knew that his errand was of sufficient importance to warrant him in expecting such a divine intimation. It is noticeable, however, that he proposes to exercise his own discretion in selecting the one whom he shall address, and he wisely fixes upon such indications of character as the wife of Isaac ought to possess.

16. *Went down*, etc.—Wells reached by descending steps are still seen in that country.

17. *Drink* (Hebrew, 'sip' or taste), a modest request to which she responds with a politeness and alacrity that bespeak the true lady (18-20).

21. *Wondering*, *i. e.*, with admiration at her beauty, courtesy, etc. *To-wit*, *i. e.*, to know.

22. *Earring*.—The word *ear* is not in the original. It is rather a nose or face ring, such as oriental ladies still wear in the left nostril. This, with the bracelets for the hands or wrists, being all of gold, would be of great value. He did not present these until he had inquired as to her family, etc. (47), and learned enough to satisfy him that she was the one whom the Lord had chosen for Isaac (23-25).*

* "There is a warrant for the godly to wear gold and precious things, for, being God's goods and gifts, his children have a good title to them as from him; but, withal, (1) they must have a good title to them in respect of men, by gift, inheritance, or purchase with their own pains or cost. (2) They must be ordered with suitableness to their calling and condition in the civil state. (3.) They must not be costly above their ability. (4.) They must not always use them, especially if grave

26, 27. Feeling now that his prayer has been answered, he promptly gives thanks in most pious and appropriate terms.

28. While he is thus employed, Rebekah is on her way to report at home this unusual arrival.

29-33. In these verses we have a true specimen of oriental hospitality. The 'washing of the feet' (32) was rendered necessary by the open sandals which they wore, and was a most welcome service to a guest (cf. John 13: 5).

33-48. So intent is this man on his errand, that he will not eat until he has made it known; and with admirable skill does he state it in a simple narrative of facts: He was Abraham's servant; his master is great and wealthy; he has but one son who is his heir; a wife is desired for him from his own kindred; divine guidance has been sought and obtained, and now the interview which has just taken place between him and Rebekah. This simple story convinced his hearers at once, including Rebekah herself, that 'the thing proceeded from the Lord,' and they could say nothing against it (v. 50). The mention of Laban as taking part in these negotiations, shows that older brothers, as well as the father, were guardians of their sisters (cf. 34: 5, etc. 2 Sam. 13: 20).

57, 58. She was not disposed of without her own consent; and in so frankly answering, 'I will go,' she shows her freedom from modern affectation, and that she too regarded the whole thing as 'from the Lord.'

60. A truly oriental blessing. *Possess the gate, i. e., have power over (22: 17).*

62. *The well Lahai-roi*, mentioned in the history of Hagar (16: 14).—As this was the place of Isaac's permanent residence after his father's death (25: 11), we may suppose that he had now an independent establishment here. Abraham now 'dwelt at Beersheba' (22: 19).

63. *To meditate, i. e., devotionally.*—The evening was es-

matrons as Sarah (1 Pet. 3: 3-6). (5.) They must neither be fond of them, to buy them at dear rates, nor proud of them, nor think the better of themselves for them. (6.) In cases of great necessity they must be willing to part with them. (7.) While they use them they must have an especial care to be adorned inwardly with spiritual graces—with faith, which is much more precious than gold (1 Pet. 1: 7); with a meek spirit, which, in the sight of God, is of great price (1 Pet. 3: 4); and to set their minds upon the golden glory and precious jewels of the new Jerusalem (Rev. 21: 11, 19-21).—*Assembly's Annotations.*

If our ladies can wear jewelry under all these restrictions, they are welcome so to do. Cf. remarks at close of notes on Isa. 3: 12; 4: 1.

pecially devoted to this purpose by pious Israelites; and there was afterward the 'evening sacrifice' of the temple worship (cf. 3: 8. Ezra 9: 5. Ps. 141: 2). *The camels were coming.*—Many an anxious look, no doubt, had Isaac cast over those plains as he walked out for his evening meditations and prayer; and, now, lo the welcome caravan appears in sight.

64. Rebekah was as anxious as Isaac for the result of this interview, and had inquired of the servant who it was that she saw approaching (65); and when he drew near she alighted (Hebrew, 'sprang off') from her camel and veiled herself, as was the custom, not only from modest reserve in presence of a stranger, but probably in recognition of him as her husband, the veil betokening subjection to his authority (cf. 20: 15, and note).

66. The servant tells the whole story as it was. We have no romance about the introduction of the lovers, etc.

67. There seems to have been no other marriage ceremony besides the formal introduction of Rebekah into 'his mother Sarah's tent,' and thus installing her as head of his household. It was a heaven-made marriage, and was cemented by an ardent affection which superseded the sorrow that Isaac had cherished for the loss of his mother. The marriage of Isaac and Rebekah was one of no common importance, for from them the Messiah was to spring; hence the unusual fullness of the details. If in our marriage arrangements the Lord was more frequently sought, as in this case, much more frequently would our conjugal unions be hallowed like this, and be symbols of the union between Christ and the Church, according to the apostle's ideal of marriage in Eph. 5: 23-33.

KETURAH, AND CLOSE OF ABRAHAM'S HISTORY.

Genesis XXV. 1-10.

1. THEN again Abraham took a wife, and her name was Keturah. 2. And she bare him Zimran, and Jokshan, and Medan, and Midian, and Ishbak, and Shuah. 3. And Jokshan begat Sheba, and Dedan. And the sons of Dedan were Asshurim, and Letushim, and Leummim. 4. And the sons of Midian; Ephah, and Epher, and Hanoch, and Abidah, and Eldaah. All these were the children of Keturah. 5. And Abraham gave all that he had unto Isaac. 6. But unto the sons of the concubines, which Abraham had, Abraham gave gifts, and sent them away from Isaac his son, while he yet lived, eastward, unto the east country. 7. And these are the days of the years of Abraham's life which he lived, a hundred threescore and fifteen years. 8. Then

Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years; and was gathered to his people. 9. And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, which is before Mamre; 10. The field which Abraham purchased of the sons of Heth: there was Abraham buried, and Sarah his wife.

This genealogy of Abraham's descendants by Keturah is probably introduced here, out of course, so as to wind up his family history preparatory to that of Ishmael and Isaac.

1. This verse may be read, 'Now Abraham had taken again' (*i. e.*, in addition to Sarah and Hagar), 'a wife, whose name was Keturah.' This is all that we know of her, except that in v. 6, and 1 Chron. 1: 32, she is called a *concubine*, or secondary wife, such as Hagar was. This marriage is supposed to have taken place, and these children to have been born, after the death of Sarah, Abraham having survived her thirty-four years, in a green old age. The Midianites and Sabeans, with the Asshurim, Letushim and Leummim (names of tribes) were among the descendants of Keturah.

5. *All that he had, i. e.*, all his chief possessions (24: 36).—The 'concubines' here mentioned are Hagar and Keturah. To their children he 'gave gifts,' no doubt of considerable value, and sent them away to those regions of Arabia lying south-east of the land of Canaan.

8. *Gathered to his people.*—This means not merely that he went to the grave like them, but that the 'ghost,' or spirit, which he 'gave up' joined the departed spirits of his people in that 'better country,' for which the pious of those days looked in faith (cf. Heb 11: 16).

9. *Isaac and Ishmael.*—We may suppose that their old jealousies were long since forgotten, or at least were swallowed up now in their common sorrow for a great bereavement (cf. Jacob and Esau, 35: 29).

10. *There Abraham was buried, and Sarah his wife.*—A sweet repose, when husband and wife, after having long trod the journey of life together, and after a few years of separation by death, at last sleep side by side in the silent sepulcher, in hope of a glorious resurrection.

ISAAC'S FAMILY.

Genesis XXV. 20-28.

20. And Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah to wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Padan-aram; the sister to Laban the Syrian. 21. And Isaac entreated the Lord for his wife, because she was barren: and the Lord was entreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived. 22. And the children struggled together within her; and she said, If it be so, why am I thus? And she went to inquire of the Lord. 23. And the Lord said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger. 24. And when her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, there were twins in her womb. 25. And the first came out red, all over like a hairy garment; and they called his name Esau. 26. And after that came his brother out, and his hand took hold on Esau's heel; and his name was called Jacob: and Isaac was threescore years old when she bare them. 27. And the boys grew: and Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents. 28. And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison: but Rebekah loved Jacob.

20. *Isaac was forty years old*, etc.—The longevity of those days, although very much less than that before the flood, was still about double that of modern times, and marriages were contracted at a much later period of life than now (cf. 26: 34).

21. 'Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord, and the fruit of the womb is his reward' (Ps. 127: 3; cf. 1 Sam. 1: 10, 27). The patience of Isaac had been long tried—some twenty years—(v. 26), as also was that of Abraham, by the barrenness of his wife, but he has recourse to no such ill-advised expedient for securing offspring. His love for Rebekah is too ardent and exclusive to admit a secondary wife, and he has probably learned a lesson from his father's experience of domestic trouble from this source. He, therefore, lays his case before the Lord, pleading, no doubt, the covenant promise made to Abraham, 'In Isaac shall thy seed be called' (21: 12). *For his wife* (Hebrew, 'before his wife').—Implying, perhaps, their united prayer for this object.

22. *Went to inquire of the Lord*.—How she inquired we know not. Probably through Abraham who was a 'prophet' (20: 7). She 'went' to the central place of the patriarchal worship where Abraham officiated as priest. When the providences of God toward us are obscure and trying, we, too, may inquire of the Lord in prayer, 'Why is it thus?'

23. The response assures her that she shall be the mother of 'two nations,' viz: the Israelites and Edomites, whose subsequent history fulfilled the prediction that the 'elder should serve the younger' (cf. Rom. 9: 12). These inward struggles of the two children are typical of the future national struggles of their descendants. "God can and does often so order events as to make them typical and foreshadowy of other events."—*Jacobus*.

25. *Esau, i. e., hairy*.—He is also called *Edom*, which is 'red,' and for an additional reason assigned in v. 30.

26. *Jacob, i. e., heel-holder*, or 'supplanter' (cf. 27: 26. Hos. 12: 4).

27, 28. *Esau—a cunning hunter* (cf. Ishmael, 21: 20). *Jacob—a plain man dwelling in tents*, fond of home life, and of a more gentle spirit; therefore 'Rebekah loved Jacob,' while Isaac preferred the adventurous hunter and the good provider. Such conflicting parental partialities always lead to trouble.

ISAAC, TOO, DENIES HIS WIFE.

Genesis XXVI. 6-11.

6. AND Isaac dwelt in Gerar. 7. And the men of the place asked him of his wife; and he said, She is my sister: for he feared to say, She is my wife; lest, said he, the men of the place should kill me for Rebekah; because she was fair to look upon. 8. And it came to pass, when he had been there a long time, that Abimelech king of the Philistines looked out at a window, and saw, and, behold, Isaac was sporting with Rebekah his wife. 9. And Abimelech called Isaac, and said, Behold, of a surety she is thy wife: and how saidst thou, She is my sister? And Isaac said unto him, Because I said, Lest I die for her. 10. And Abimelech said, What is this thou hast done unto us? one of the people might lightly have lain with thy wife, and thou shouldst have brought guiltiness upon us. 11. And Abimelech charged all his people, saying, He that toucheth this man or his wife shall surely be put to death.

6. *Isaac dwelt in Gerar, etc.*—The preceding verses inform us that Isaac had been driven, by a famine in the land of Canaan, to follow the example of his father in setting out for Egypt, which was a land of plenty. But while on his way, the Lord appeared to him, and renewed to him the covenant promises made to Abraham, at the same time warning him not to go into Egypt, but to sojourn in the land of the Philistines. This country lay south-west of Palestine, and on the way to Egypt. Its capital was Gerar, and the name of

its king, Abimelech (a son, perhaps, of the former), as in the days of Abraham. *Abimelech*, 'my father king,' was the royal title of the Philistine kings, as was Pharaoh of the Egyptians.

7. It is singular that Isaac's experiences here should be so similar to those of his father as recorded in chaps. 12 and 20. He, too, passes his wife as his 'sister,' and for the same reason (v. 9). There is also the same equivocation. Rebekah was his second cousin (cf. 11: 29 with 24: 15), and might, therefore, be called his sister (cf. 20: 16 and notes). This seems to have been a customary, and, as it looks to us, cowardly device in those countries where men were liable to be killed for their wives' sake.

8. Although he had resided there 'a long time,' Rebekah had not been taken into the house of Abimelech; but her true relation to Isaac was discovered from certain affectionate familiarities which Abimelech witnessed.

9, 10. A worthy rebuke is administered to Isaac, in which the sinfulness of adultery (which might have been committed, not by the king himself, but by 'one of the people') is acknowledged, and then a charge is given that no one, upon pain of death, shall touch 'the man or his wife,' the former to kill him for his wife's sake, or the latter to defile her. We can not but like these Abimelechs, although they were Philistines; and we are ashamed of Abraham and Isaac in comparison with them. Alas! that professing Christians should so often be put to shame by the better conduct of the people of the world.

ESAU'S MARRIAGE.

Genesis XXVI. 34, 35 (cf. 36: 1, 2).

34. AND Esau was forty years old when he took to wife Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Bashemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite: 35. Which were a grief of mind unto Isaac and to Rebekah.

Here were polygamy, and a heathen marriage connection, and family trouble, all conjoined. Those Hittites were of the wicked tribes of Canaan, whom God afterward doomed to destruction (Deut. 20: 17).

With such daughters-in-law, Isaac and Rebekah could have no religious fellowship, and their incompatibility of temper,

no doubt, rendered all intercourse with them a vexation (cf. 27: 46).

How much domestic discord and misery often arise, still, from similar sources.

STRATAGEM OF REBEKAH AND JACOB.

Read Genesis XXVII. 1-23.

THIS whole scheme of Rebekah was unjustifiable and ill-advised, and brought trouble upon all concerned; and yet God allowed it to be the means of accomplishing his own purpose of transferring the birthright blessing to Jacob, to whom it properly belonged. The same may be said of Esau's profane selling of his birthright for a mess of pottage (25: 33, 34). God had said to Rebekah at the birth of the two, that 'the elder should serve the younger (25: 23), and she has kept this promise in mind. Esau's profane conduct also was an abdication of his claim to the birthright, of which he is now about to be deprived. This knowledge of what was the will of God on this subject, is the only apology that the conduct of Rebekah and Jacob admits. But it is not sufficient. They ought to have been honest and true, and have trusted to remonstrance with Isaac, and to the providence of God, to bring about the proper result (cf. 48: 13, 14, 17-19).

9. *Two good kids*, etc.—The feast, therefore, could not have been for Isaac alone, but was a solemn family festival on the occasion of conferring this great patriarchal blessing, as was customary near the close of life (v. 7).

15. *Goodly raiment*.—Probably the robe which was handed down as the badge of the birthright, and which would be kept in a scented chest to preserve it from moths.

20. *Because the Lord thy God*, etc.—We are shocked at this almost blasphemous pretense, so much like the *pious frauds* of more modern days. But we have no evidence that Jacob, as yet, even professed to be a pious man.

23. *So he blessed him*.—God permitted this covenant birthright blessing to be bestowed upon Jacob, not so much for his own sake as for that of his posterity, in whose line the Messiah was to be born. We are not to infer that God approved, or even connived at, Jacob's falsehood and trickery.

MORE OF REBEKAH'S INGENUITY.

Genesis XXVII. 41-46.

41. AND Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him : and Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand ; then will I slay my brother Jacob. 42. And these words of Esau her elder son were told to Rebekah : and she sent and called Jacob her younger son, and said unto him, Behold, thy brother Esau, as touching thee, doth comfort himself, purposing to kill thee. 43. Now therefore, my son, obey my voice ; and arise, flee thou to Laban my brother to Haran ; 44. And tarry with him a few days, until thy brother's fury turn away ; 45. Until thy brother's anger turn away from thee, and he forget that which thou hast done to him : then I will send, and fetch thee from thence : why should I be deprived also of you both in one day ? 46. And Rebekah said to Isaac, I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth : if Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these which are of the daughters of the land, what good shall my life do me ?

41. *The days of mourning, i. e.*, when they would meet to bury their father, just as Isaac and Ishmael met to bury Abraham (25 : 9).

44. These 'few days' proved to be twenty years (31 : 41).

45. *Both in one day, i. e.*, of Jacob by assassination, and of Esau by the punishment of death for the murder (9 : 6), or otherwise by flight.

46. *Weary of my life.*—She probably spoke truly here, but with characteristic ingenuity she makes it a pretext for sending Jacob away to take a wife among their own kindred, just as she herself had been taken for Isaac.

JACOB SENT AWAY—ESAU TAKES ANOTHER WIFE.

Genesis XXVIII. 1-9.

1. AND Isaac called Jacob, and blessed him, and charged him, and said unto him, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan. 2. Arise, go to Padan-aram, to the house of Bethuel thy mother's father ; and take thee a wife from thence of the daughters of Laban thy mother's brother. 3. And God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people ; 4. And give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee ; that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave unto Abraham. 5. And Isaac sent away Jacob : and he went to Padan-aram unto Laban, son of Bethuel the Syrian, the brother of Rebekah, Jacob's and Esau's mother. 6. When Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob, and sent him away to Padan-aram, to take him a wife from thence ; and that as he blessed him he gave him a charge, saying, Thou shalt not take a wife of the

daughters of Canaan; 7. And that Jacob obeyed his father and his mother, and was gone to Padan-aram; 8. And Esau seeing that the daughters of Canaan pleased not Isaac his father; 9. Then went Esau unto Ishmael and took, unto the wives which he had, Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael Abraham's son, the sister of Nebajoth, to be his wife.

This charge of Isaac to Jacob is similar to that of Abraham to his steward on setting out to take a wife for Isaac (24: 3. etc.).

5. *Went, i. e.*, set out for.

8, 9. Esau here designs, perhaps, to show some regard for the wishes of his parents, by taking also a kinswoman to wife. She was a granddaughter of Abraham by Ishmael; but as she belonged to an *alien* branch of the family, she could not be made welcome.

JACOB AND HIS MARRIAGES.

Read Genesis XXIX. entire.

1. *JACOB went on his journey* (Hebrew, 'lifted up his feet'). After the vision of the ladder and the renewal of God's covenant with him, as recorded in the preceding chapter, Jacob goes on his way with such alacrity that the long journey to Padan-aram seems but a step to him. Thus the manifestations of God's favor should increase our alacrity in his service.

3. *They rolled the stone, etc., i. e.*, were accustomed to do so. In this case it was not actually done until Rachel came, as the representative of Laban, who was the proprietor of the well (vs. 8-10). Wells were often kept covered, both to protect them from the sand, and to preserve the water, which was a scarce and precious article, from being taken by strangers.

11. *Kissed Rachel*, with chaste and brotherly affection (as she was his cousin), and with a heart full of gratitude to God who had thus brought him to the end of his journey (v. 13).

12. *Brother, i. e., near kinsman*, here a nephew (cf. v. 15; 14: 14; 20: 19).

18. *I will serve thee.*—Having no dowry to offer, as was customary, he offers his services instead.

20. *But a few days, for the love he had.*—Here is the poetry of nature.

26. *It must not be so done.*—Laban thus attempts to excuse this base imposition, and to cover his own selfishness, while

his true aim was to secure Jacob's services gratuitously for another seven years.

26. *Fulfill her week, i. e.*, the week of the marriage feast (cf. Judges 14: 17).

31. *Leah was hated*.—This expression is too strong, according to modern usage. To *hate*, in Scripture language, often means to *love less*, or to prefer another (*e. g.* cf. Matt. 10: 37, with Luke 14: 26; also Rom. 9: 13. Deut. 21: 25). It is not to be wondered at that Jacob should have no great love for Leah, but positive hatred is not implied. *Opened her womb, i. e.*, gave her conception. Thus God's providence favored the neglected Leah rather than the beloved Rachel. Such are often its compensations.

32-35. All these names are significant, and were piously given. Reuben means, *see a son*; Simeon, *hearing*; Levi, *joined*; Judah, *praise*. 'Our Lord sprang out of Judah' (Heb. 7: 14).

RACHEL'S BARRENNESS AND DEVICES.

Read Genesis XXX. 1-24.

1. *GIVE me children, or else I die*.—The great impatience of Israelitish women to have children, arose, no doubt, from the promise respecting the 'seed of the woman' (3: 15).

2. *Withheld from thee*, etc. (cf. 17: 22; 25: 21. 1 Sam. 1: 5).

3. *Bear upon my knees, i. e.*, bear a child which I may nurse as my own. In this she but follows the example of Sarai in giving Hagar to Abram (16: 2, and note).

8. *Wrestlings, i. e.*, in the use of expedients to be equal with her 'sister;' and wrestlings also with God, in prayer, as we may hope. *Naphtali* (my wrestling).

9. Leah would not be outdone by Rachel in this matter of having children *vicariously* born to her.

13. *The daughters, i. e.*, women generally, they being like-minded (cf. Luke 1: 48). *Asher* (blessed).

14-16. *Mandrakes*, or love-apples,—a sort of fruit supposed to possess a *prolific* virtue, and still used in the East for that purpose (cf. Song 7: 13).

20. *Dwell with me, i. e.*, give me more of his affection, for having borne him six sons. Sons were much more valued than daughters, as is still the case in all oriental countries.

21. *Dinah*.—She seems to have been Jacob's only daughter. See her melancholy history, chap. 34.

24. *Joseph* (he will add).—A name given with a prophetic assurance that God 'will add to her another son' (cf. 35: 18).

JACOB'S FLIGHT AND LABAN'S PURSUIT.

Read Genesis XXX. 25, 26; XXXI. 3-24.

30: 25. *SEND me away*.—Jacob was now about ninety years of age, and having always felt himself but a sojourner in his present abode, he now longs to return to the land of his nativity and of God's promise.

31: 3-7. At Laban's urgent request Jacob had remained six years longer (30: 27; 31: 41), during which time God had greatly prospered him in the acquisition of wealth (30: 43). The jealousy of Laban and his sons is awakened on this account (31: 1, 2), and now the Lord himself commands Jacob to set out on his return (cf. v. 13).

4. *Called Rachel and Leah to the field*—In order to have a private interview with them both together. This sort of family conference implies a much higher respect for the judgment of women than is usually accorded in Eastern countries. The concubines however were not consulted.

14-16. There seems now to be the most entire accordance between the sisters in regard to this great family change.

15. *Hath sold us, i. e.*, for Jacob's services. *Devoured our money, i. e.*, withheld that which was due to us. Some doubt whether this complaint was well founded on their part.

19. Laban's going to shear his sheep would take him some distance from home, and thus Jacob had opportunity to escape. Rachel also embraces this opportunity to purloin her father's *teraphim* (cf. 30, 32, where they are called 'gods'). These images were probably small metallic busts in human form, somewhat like the Penates, or household gods of the Romans, and were used not so much for worship as for superstitious purposes, like amulets, fetishes, greengreases, etc. (cf. Judges 17: 5. 1 Sam. 19: 13). They were at least semi-idolatrous; and Rachel is to be condemned alike for her superstition, her theft, and her subsequent prevarication (v. 35). She is not set before us as an example.

20. *Stole away, i. e.*, apprehending opposition from Laban, Jacob escapes by flight.

INTERVIEW BETWEEN LABAN AND JACOB.

Read Genesis XXXI. 25-55.

25. In the account of this interview, we notice chiefly the things which relate to the women. *Laban overtook Jacob.*—This was not until seven days after Jacob's flight (v. 23). 'Mount Gilead' was the eastern boundary of Canaan.

26-29. This talk of Laban is full of hypocrisy, but he reveals the truth as to the hostile intentions with which he had set out, when he admits that he had received a special communication from Jacob's God forbidding him to do him harm.

29. *Stolen my gods.*—This also reveals a further motive for Laban's pursuit. These images were probably of silver (Judges 17: 2-5), and of very considerable value. Laban's avarice was, therefore, sorely tried by the loss of them. Moreover, as Jacob knew not what Rachel had done (v. 32), the charge that he had stolen them was most foul and offensive to him.

31-35. He first replies to Laban's inquires as to the cause of his clandestine departure, and then indignantly repels the charge of theft, little knowing that his beloved Rachel was guilty. It was by an artifice which was truly womanly that Rachel evaded detection. It was probably not until long afterward that Jacob discovered the truth (cf. 35: 2. 4).

43, 44. After a most indignant and reproachful address from Jacob, Laban, self-condemned, gives up the contest and proposes a friendly separation, idly pretending, at the same time, to great generosity in so doing.

45. *Set it up for a pillar*, not as a part of the covenant transaction, but as a stone of memorial, such as he had set up at Bethel (28: 18).

46-54. These were the proceedings connected with the making of a covenant between them.

47. *Jegar-sahadutha*, a Syriac or Chaldee phrase, having the same meaning as the Hebrew *Gilead*, *i. e.*, 'heap of witness.'

49. *Mizpah*, *i. e.*, 'watch-tower.'—This double name was given to make the place a more signal memorial of their mutual covenant. It is mentioned again in the history of Jephthah (Judges 9: 29).

50. Laban, with all his selfishness, manifests a commenda-

ble regard for the welfare of his daughters, now that he expects to see them no more.

53. *Jacob swore by the Fear of his father Isaac.*—Laban had seemed to connect with the 'God of Abraham,' the idol deities of Nahor and Terah (see Josh. 24: 2), so that Jacob was careful to recognize only the covenant Jehovah whom his father Isaac *feared* and worshiped.

54. A covenant was not complete without a sacrifice, followed by a feast. The phrase, to *smite* or *cut* a covenant, which is used in all ancient languages (and in v. 44, above, Hebrew), originated from the custom of *slaying* a sacrificial victim on such occasions (cf. the English, "strike a bargain").

JACOB AND ESAU MEET.

Genesis XXXIII. 1-10.

1. AND Jacob lifted up his eyes, and looked, and, behold, Esau came, and with him four hundred men. And he divided the children unto Leah, and unto Rachel, and unto the two handmaids. 2. And he put the handmaids and their children foremost, and Leah and her children after, and Rachel and Joseph hindermost. 3. And he passed over before them, and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother. 4. And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and they wept. 5. And he lifted up his eyes, and saw the women and the children, and said, Who are those with thee? And he said, The children which God hath graciously given thy servant. 6. Then the handmaidens came near, they and their children, and they bowed themselves. 7. And Leah also with her children came near, and bowed themselves: and after came Joseph near and Rachel, and they bowed themselves. 8. And he said, What meanest thou by all this drove which I met? And he said, These are to find grace in the sight of my lord. 9. And Esau said, I have enough, my brother; keep that thou hast unto thyself. 10. And Jacob said, Nay, I pray thee, if now I have found grace in thy sight, then receive my present at my hand: for therefore I have seen thy face, as though I had seen the face of God, and thou wast pleased with me.

1-3. The preceding chapter tells us of Esau's hostile approach with 'four hundred men;' of Jacob's distress, and of his prudential arrangements; then of his having recourse to God in prayer; especially of that mysterious wrestling scene at Peniel, in which he receives assurance that he has 'power with God and with men, and has prevailed.' He is now prepared to meet his brother with more of confidence than at first. Still adopting the most prudent arrangement of his company; sending forward munificent presents; then

the handmaids and their children; then Leah and her children; and then, with those who are dearest kept nearest to himself, he approaches Esau with seven profound oriental acts of obeisance.

4. Jacob 'has prevailed.'—The same God who restrained Laban from doing him injury, has turned the heart of Esau, so that they meet with embraces and weeping.

10. *As though I had seen the face of God* (cf. 32: 30: 'I have seen God face to face and yet my life is preserv'd').—Jacob probably alludes to that mysterious interview in which his divine antagonist seems to have personated Esau. His *wrestling* prayers, along with the wise precautions adopted, have procured for him this deliverance.

DINAH AND SHECHEM.

Read Genesis XXXIV. entire.

1, 2. *WENT out to see, etc.*—Probably 'went' here denotes continued action, *i. e.*, was in the habit of going. It was 'to see the daughters of the land,' which might have been the more excusable and the less dangerous, were it not that where the 'daughters' are, the 'sons' are apt to be not far off. In her visits she makes the acquaintance of Shechem, a young prince of the country, and is, no doubt, flattered by his attentions, while he in turn becomes enamored of her. For it is not supposable that he committed an act of violence upon her at a first interview. The true love which he seems to have entertained for her (vs. 3, 12, 19) is not consistent with this. Beside, she was taken (no doubt voluntarily) into Shechem's house (v. 26), and it is an honorable marriage which he proposes. In this he was less base than most vile seducers. Some one says, "See the danger of young women going *a-gadding* among strangers;" and (we may add) even though it be 'to see the daughters of the land.' Woman's safest place is in the sanctuary of home. Bush remarks, "that from the first transgression down to the present day, female disgrace and ruin have, in thousands of instances, begun in the seemingly harmless desire to see and to be seen."

4-6. *Spake unto his father, etc.*,—showing that such negotiations were conducted through the parents of the parties. And yet Jacob will not act without consulting his sons, who

also had a claim to be regarded as their sister's guardians (cf. 24: 50).

7. *Wrought folly—ought not to be done.*—These expressions denote far more than that it is a mere impropriety. They mean that it is a thing not to be thought of or tolerated (cf. 2 Sam. 13: 12. Deut. 22: 21).

15. *Every male—be circumcised.*—Here was not only cunning deception, but also sacrilege; for circumcision was a solemn ordinance, and they meant only to use it for an opportunity to disable and kill the Shechemites (v. 25).

24. A remarkable instance of the power which the rulers of that city exercised over their people. But the possession of the *wealth* of Jacob's family was the chief motive (v. 23).

25. *Simeon* and *Levi* were the brothers of Dinah by the same mother, Leah, and were her natural avengers; but their wrath was bitterly cruel, and so Jacob regarded it (cf. v. 30, with 49: 7). This chapter is full of solemn warning to incautious parents and to thoughtless daughters. Dinah is not mentioned again in the Scriptures. She probably lived the rest of her life in seclusion, and died childless, having never been married.

DEBORAH'S DEATH AND BURIAL.

Genesis XXXV. 8.

8. BUT Deborah Rebekah's nurse died, and she was buried beneath Bethel under an oak: and the name of it was called Allon-bachuth.

This woman is no doubt the one who was given to Rebekah as a nurse at the time of the marriage (24: 59). After serving her mistress faithfully until her death, she seems, as was natural, to have passed into the family of Jacob, the favorite son of Rebekah. She must have been now about one hundred and eighty years old; and Jacob's family testify their appreciation of this aged and pious servant by giving her an honorable burial under an oak, which we may suppose was equally venerable with herself for age, and which thenceforth commemorated their sorrow by being called *Allon-bachuth*, 'the oak of weeping.'—Faithful servants should not only be kindly treated while living, but honored, and their memory cherished when dead.

RACHEL'S DEATH, Etc.

Genesis XXXV. 16-22.

16. AND they journeyed from Bethel; and there was but a little way to come to Ephrath: and Rachel travailed, and she had hard labor. 17. And it came to pass, when she was in hard labor, that the mid-wife said unto her, Fear not; thou shalt have this son also. 18. And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing, (for she died,) that she called his name Ben-oni: but his father called him Benjamin. 19. And Rachel died, and was buried in the way to Ephrath, which is Beth-lehem. 20. And Jacob set a pillar upon her grave: that is the pillar of Rachel's grave unto this day. 21. And Israel journeyed, and spread his tent beyond the tower of Edar. 22. And it came to pass, when Israel dwelt in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine: and Israel heard it. Now the sons of Jacob were twelve.

16. *Journeyed from Bethel.*—The preceding verses tell us of Jacob's visit to Bethel after his return from the East, and of the renewal of God's covenant with him there, in commemoration of which he restores the 'pillar' which he had set up there at the first (28: 18), and re-names it *Bethel*, *i. e.*, 'house of God.' He now sets out for the purpose of taking up his abode at Ephrath, afterward called Bethlehem-Ephratah. When near this place he meets with this sore bereavement, of which he retains a tender recollection to the end of his life (see 48: 7).

18. *She died.*—It is something more than a coincidence that, as in her impatience she had said to Jacob 'Give me children or else I die' (30: 1), so now in having her second child she does die! Thus God sometimes gives us our heart's desire, but with a sting to chasten our impatience. *Ben-oni*, *i. e.*, 'son of my sorrow.' *Benjamin*, 'son of my right hand,' *i. e.*, one very near and dear. The other name would have been a constant reminder of his own sorrow.

20. *Rachel's grave.*—This was a monument so firmly built that it continued to stand and be known as "The Pillar of Rachel's Grave," unto the day in which Moses wrote, which was nearly three hundred years later. We find it again referred to in the days of Samuel (1 Sam. 10: 2), which was still later by some six hundred years. And modern travelers tell us that there is still a tomb bearing this name, 'even to this day' (see Bush, Jacobus, etc.).

22. This infamous conduct of Reuben is here mentioned without comment, except the emphatic words, 'Israel heard

it.' Bilhah is called a concubine, but her relation to Jacob was as sacred as that of wife (cf. 37: 2), and Reuben's crime was one of which the apostle says, that it 'is not so much as named among the Gentiles' (1 Cor. 5: 1). It was done in secret, but 'Israel heard it,' yes, and remembered it to his dying day, when, in pronouncing the solemn patriarchal blessing on his sons before he died, he leaves Reuben a curse instead of a blessing, and deprives him of the birthright (see 49: 3, 4). Sins against the seventh commandment entail a life-long curse and shame.

ESAU'S FAMILY HISTORY.

Genesis XXXVI. 1-8.

1. Now these are the generations of Esau, who is Edom. 2. Esau took his wives of the daughters of Canaan; Adah the daughter of Elon the Hittite, and Aholibamah the daughter of Anah the daughter of Zibeon the Hivite, 3. And Bashemath Ishmael's daughter, sister of Nebajoth. 4. And Adah bare to Esau Eliphaz; and Bashemath bare Reuel, 5. And Aholibamah bare Jeush, and Jaalam, and Korah: these are the sons of Esau, which were born unto him in the land of Canaan. 6. And Esau took his wives, and his sons, and his daughters, and all the persons of his house, and his cattle, and all his beasts, and all his substance, which he had got in the land of Canaan; and went into the country from the face of his brother Jacob. 7. For their riches were more than they might dwell together; and the land wherein they were strangers could not bear them because of their cattle. 8. Then dwelt Esau in mount Seir: Esau is Edom.

The names of Esau's wives, as here given, do not correspond fully with those mentioned in 26: 34; 38: 9. But it was common for women to have different names, and sometimes one given as a distinctive appellation only, may have superseded the original name (cf. *Sarai* and *Iscah*, 11: 29).

6. *The persons of his house.*—The word here rendered 'persons' is the same as 'souls' in 12: 5. *Into the country,* or 'into a country,' *i. e.*, another country, 'Mount Seir' (v. 8). *From the face,* or 'from before,' *i. e.*, before his arrival; the providence of God so ordering it, that as Jacob gradually advanced to take possession of his promised inheritance, Esau should gradually withdraw to make room before him (Bush).

7. Esau had been greatly prospered, as well as Jacob, in regard to worldly possessions; and as they were both strangers in the land there would not be room for them; although it is not to be supposed that Esau withdrew with the *design* to make room for Jacob, but that God so ordered it.

8. *Esau is Edom, i. e.*, as he is called in the next verse, 'the father of the Edomites,' or Idumeans, who became a great nation, and had for their capital the celebrated rocky city, Petra. The remainder of this chapter gives an extended account of Esau's descendants, and of their several *dukedom*s, or principalities. See a similar account of Ishmael's descendants in 25:12-18. The various tribes of the Ishmaelites and Edomites, with the descendants of Keturah, became gradually intermingled, and overspread the vast Arabian peninsula, lying south and south-east of Palestine. Thus was fulfilled the promise made to Abraham, 'Thou shalt be a father of many nations' (17:4).

JUDAH'S FAMILY HISTORY.

Read Genesis XXXVIII. entire.

1. JUDAH *went down from his brethren*.—His motive for thus withdrawing from the society of his brethren, and from the patriarchal altar of his father Jacob, we know not, but it indicates an indifference at least to the ordinances of religion, and the more so as we find him at first sojourning with a 'certain Adullamite,' who was probably a heathen, and afterward marrying a Canaanitish woman (v. 2), and taking up his permanent abode in that country. Thus we need not be surprised at the dark things which we find in his family record. He was an apostate Israelite.

6. *Judah took a wife for Er*, showing that he had lived there long enough for Er to grow up to marriageable years.

7. What was Er's 'wickedness' we know not, perhaps something too foul to be mentioned. At any rate the 'Lord slew him' by some special judgment.

8. "This is the earliest trace of the singular law afterward incorporated into the Jewish code, and frequently termed by modern writers, the *Levirate-law*, from the word *levir*, a husband's brother."—*Bush*. (Cf. Deut. 25:5-10.)

9, 10. From the sin and doom of Onan we may learn that *they who take measures to prevent conception* do virtually commit the sin of Onan and 'displease the Lord.'

11. *Remain a widow, etc.*—She was not at liberty to marry another so long as Shelah lived; but the parenthetic clause, 'Lest peradventure,' etc., would indicate that Judah did not intend to give her to Shelah.

13-22. Tamar is impatient at the long delay of Judah to

consummate her marriage with Shelah; and feeling, no doubt, the reproach attendant in those days upon childless widowhood, she adopts the stratagem here recorded. She was not herself an Israelite, and with her loose Canaanitish notions of morals, she had no scruples as to the propriety of her course.

23. *Let her take it, i. e.*, let her keep it, and let the matter be hushed up.

24. *Let her be burnt.*—Such was the law afterward adopted (Lev. 21: 9). The greatest transgressors in this respect are often the most ready to punish the erring *woman*.

25. Judah had hoped to escape being made 'ashamed' (v. 23), but now he is overwhelmed with confusion at the return of his own pledges. Thus his sin has 'found him out.'

26. It is some alleviation of Judah's crime that he acknowledges his transgression and sins 'no more.' Tamar was entitled to be the wife of Shelah, or of the next near kinsman (see Ruth 3: 12), and Judah was that kinsman. She was, therefore, 'more righteous than he;' hers being not a case of ordinary whoredom, while *it was* so with him.

29. *Pharez.*—His name is found in the line of our Lord's ancestors (Matt. 1: 3). Such an ancestry, Judah, Tamar, Rahab, etc., is a part of the humiliation of the Messiah.—As to Judah (whose name signifies *praise*), when Jacob, in his dying benediction (49: 8,) says, 'thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise,' we can but believe that it is not on his own account that he was to be praised, but because 'our Lord sprang out of Judah' (Heb. 7: 14).

JOSEPH'S TRIAL AND TRIUMPH.

Genesis XXXIX. 7-21.

7. AND it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph: and she said, Lie with me. 8. But he refused, and said unto his master's wife, Behold, my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand; 9. There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back anything from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God? 10. And it came to pass, as she spake to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not unto her, to lie by her, or to be with her. 11. And it came to pass about this time, that Joseph went into the house to do his business; and there was none of the men of the house there within. 12. And she caught him by the garment, saying, Lie with me: and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out. 13. And it

came to pass, when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand, and was fled forth, 14. That she called unto the men of her house, and spake unto them, saying, See, he hath brought in a Hebrew unto us to mock us; he came in unto me to lie with me, and I cried with a loud voice: 15. And it came to pass, when he heard that I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled, and got him out. 16. And she laid up his garment by her, until his lord came home. 17. And she spake unto him according to these words, saying, The Hebrew servant, which thou hast brought unto us, came in unto me to mock me: 18. And it came to pass, as I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled out. 19. And it came to pass, when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spake unto him, saying, After this manner did thy servant to me: that his wrath was kindled. 20. And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound: and he was there in the prison. 21. But the Lord was with Joseph, and showed him mercy, and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison.

8, 9. *He refused.*—We dwell not upon this foul scene except to admire the heroic virtue of Joseph. He was a young man of but twenty-eight years (41: 1, 46); he was but a servant, while his tempter was the wife of his master, and might claim a sort of right to command; the solicitations were urgent, and repeated from day to day; and he was secure of concealment. It was not in human nature to resist such a temptation, but by the special grace of God.—Joseph's refusal was respectful, when it might have been indignant. It was based first on the gratitude and duty which he owed to his master, and next (and mainly) on his duty to God. 'Whoso pleaseth God shall escape from her' (Ecc. 7: 26). **HOW CAN I DO THIS GREAT WICKEDNESS AND SIN AGAINST GOD?**—How sublime is such self-denial. Would that these golden words were engraved on the heart of every young man, yes, and woman, too.

14-18. What an infernal artifice! If Satan was ever incarnate in a woman, it must have been in this one (cf. Prov. 5: 3-5).

20. *Put him into the prison.*—And it was a most rigorous imprisonment, in a 'dungeon' (41: 14)—'where they hurt his feet with fetters, and he was laid in iron' (Ps. 105: 18).

21. *But the Lord was with Joseph, etc.,* just as he was with Daniel in the den of lions. 'The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations' (trials). 'Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.' It would not comport with the plan of this work to notice the deliverance of Joseph out of prison, and the subsequent events of his remarkable his-

tory; but doubtless every reader will be prompted to peruse it afresh. Nor is there any thing of interest in the remaining chapters of Genesis, pertaining to women, except the marriage of Joseph to 'Asenath, daughter of Poti-pherah, priest of On' (41: 45). This was a part of the high distinctions put upon him, and by which the Lord rewarded him and gave him a position in which he was able to save the lives of his father and his brethren, who, with all their faults, were God's chosen people (see 46: 8; 50: 20). The whole history of Joseph is a continued illustration of how God works out his own providential and holy purposes through the unconscionable agency of even wicked men; the good being his, and the evil theirs.

BOOK OF EXODUS.



THIS book derives its title from the principal subject of which it treats, namely, the *exodus* or *departure* of the children of Israel from Egypt.

THE HEBREW MIDWIVES.

Exodus I. 15-22.

15. AND the king of Egypt spake to the Hebrew midwives, of which the name of the one was Shiphrah, and the name of the other Puah; 16. And he said, When ye do the office of midwife to the Hebrew women, and see them upon the stools, if it be a son, then ye shall kill him; but if it be a daughter, then she shall live. 17. But the midwives feared God, and did not as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the men children alive. 18. And the king of Egypt called for the midwives, and said unto them, Why have ye done this thing, and have saved the men children alive? 19. And the midwives said unto Pharaoh, Because the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women: for they are lively, and are delivered ere the midwives come in unto them. 20. Therefore God dealt well with the midwives: and the people multiplied, and waxed very mighty. 21. And it came to pass, because the midwives feared God, that he made them houses. 22. And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive.

15. These two were probably the chief persons of that profession, and had the control of all the rest. Whether they themselves were Egyptians or Hebrews is uncertain. Verses 16 and 19, where they are spoken of as distinct from the Hebrew women, favor the former view; but the fear of God attributed to them in vs. 17, 21, favors the latter.

21. *Made them houses.*—Our English version at once implies that God 'dealt well' with these midwives by increasing

and prospering their own families (cf. 2 Sam. 7: 11. 1 Kings 2: 24); but as the word 'them' is masculine in the Hebrew, it would seem to refer to the people of Israel, whose 'houses' or families continued to be built up by the same increase as before (vs. 7, 20). 'Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord, and the fruit of the womb is his reward' (Ps. 127: 3).

BIRTH OF MOSES.

Exodus II. 1-10.

1. AND there went a man of the house of Levi, and took to wife a daughter of Levi. 2. And the woman conceived and bare a son: and when she saw him that he was a goodly child, she hid him three months. 3. And when she could no longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch, and put the child therein; and she laid it in the flags by the river's brink. 4. And his sister stood afar off, to wit what would be done to him. 5. And the daughter of Pharaoh came down to wash herself at the river; and her maidens walked along by the river's side: and when she saw the ark among the flags, she sent her maid to fetch it. 6. And when she had opened it, she saw the child: and, behold, the babe wept. And she had compassion on him, and said, This is one of the Hebrew's children. 7. 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? 8. And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Go. And the maid went and called the child's mother. 9. 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 and nursed it. 10. And the child grew, and she brought him unto Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. And she called his name Moses: and she said, Because I drew him out of the water.

1. *There went a man*, etc.—This was Amram, and his wife was Jochebed, who, in 6: 20, is called his 'father's sister,' which may mean cousin, or any near kinswoman (cf. Gen. 26: 7). Such marriages were not yet forbidden as they were afterward (Lev. 18: 12). The Septuagint and Syriac versions here render the word *sister* *cousin*.

3. *Ark of bulrushes*, *i. e.*, a vessel of papyrus (cf. Isa. 18. 2).

4. *Sister*.—This was probably Miriam, now a girl of ten or twelve years, and who afterward became a 'prophetess' (15: 20).

8. *The child's mother*.—Notice the methods of God's providence in thus securing a pious mother-nurse for the religious education of this child.

10. *Her son*, *i. e.*, by adoption.—Having been thus eleva-

ted to princely rank, he was educated in 'all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds' (Acts 7: 22). This double education fitted him for the high mission that was before him. Thus God raises up great men for great emergencies.

MOSES' FLIGHT AND MARRIAGE.

Exodus II. 15-22.

15. BUT Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh, and dwelt in the land of Midian: and he sat down by a well. 16. Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters: and they came and drew water, and filled the troughs to water their father's flock. 17. And the shepherds came and drove them away: but Moses stood up and helped them, and watered their flock. 18. And when they came to Reuel their father, he said, How is it that ye are come so soon to-day? 19. And they said, An Egyptian delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds, and also drew water enough for us, and watered the flock. 20. And he said unto his daughters, And where is he? why is it that ye have left the man? call him, that he may eat bread. 21. And Moses was content to dwell with the man: and he gave Moses Zipporah his daughter. 22. And she bare him a son, and he called his name Gershom: for he said, I have been a stranger in a strange land.

15. *Land of Midian.*—This was a district of Arabia, east of the Red Sea, peopled, as is supposed, by the descendants of Abraham through Keturah (Gen. 25: 4).

16. *The priest*, which also means *prince*.—He was a kingly-priest, like Melchizedek, the two offices being united in patriarchal times (Gen. 14: 18).

17. *Drove them away.*—Here again the Hebrew for 'them' is masculine, and probably refers to the man-servants by whom these ladies were attended. To be a shepherdess was an employment deemed not beneath females of the highest rank in those countries.

18. *Reuel*, or Raguel.—He is also called Jethro (3: 1), and Hobab (Judges 4: 11), or Reuel may have been the father of Jethro. Being a descendant of Abraham, he probably retained the true religion, and, therefore, Moses was the more willing to become his son-in-law.

21. *Zipporah his daughter.*—In Num. 12: 1, Aaron and Miriam blame Moses for this marriage, because she was an 'Ethiopian woman'—which in the Hebrew is *Cushite* (not African),—but without reason, for she was a descendant of Abraham. We are not to suppose that this marriage took place

immediately. It may have been after years of service, as in Jacob's case.

22. *Gershom*—'a stranger.'—Moses had been taught by his mother what were the promises of God to Israel concerning the inheritance of the land of Canaan, so that he always felt himself to be but a sojourner in the land of Midian. The Septuagint version adds here from 18: 4: 'And she conceived again and bare a second son, and he called his name *Eliezer*, saying, For the God of my father is my helper, and hath delivered me from the hand of Pharaoh.' *Gershom* and *Eliezer*! names most expressive and piously given. We are all *strangers* on earth, and God alone is our *helper*. The old puritan custom of giving Scripture names has gone out of fashion; but with no gain to religion.—Moses was forty years old when he came out of Egypt, and he remained in the land of Midian forty years (cf. Acts 7: 23, 30).

A STRANGE OCCURRENCE.

Exodus IV. 19, 20, 24-26.

19. AND the Lord said unto Moses in Midian, Go, return into Egypt: for all the men are dead which sought thy life. 20. And Moses took his wife and his sons, and set them upon an ass, and he returned to the land of Egypt: and Moses took the rod of God in his hand.—24. And it came to pass by the way in the inn, that the Lord met him and sought to kill him. 25. Then Zipporah took a sharp stone, and cut off the foreskin of her son, and cast it at his feet, and said, Surely a bloody husband art thou to me. 26. So he let him go: then she said, A bloody husband thou art, because of the circumcision.

20. *The rod of God*.—This was his shepherd's staff which he had thrown upon the ground, and it became a serpent (v. 3). It is called the rod of God, because by means of it he wrought his great miracles before Pharaoh and in the wilderness (v. 17).

24. *The Lord (Jehovah) met him by the way*.—This was that *Angel-Jehovah*, or God-manifest, who is so often spoken of elsewhere—the same that appeared to him in the bush (3: 2). *Sought to kill him*, i. e., threatened to kill him; perhaps as in the case of Balaam (Num. 22: 22, 23). What had been the offense of Moses, we are left to infer from the accompanying circumstances. Probably it was his neglect to circumcise his child, showing his forgetfulness of his covenant relation to God (cf. Gen. 17: 9-14). He was not fit to engage in the great work to which God had called him, until

he should put away this sin and sanctify his own household. 'Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord.'

25. *Zipporah took a sharp stone, i. e., a knife of stone* (cf. Josh. 5: 2, 3, where 'sharp knives' is in Hebrew 'knives of stone'). It is probable that Zipporah performed the ceremony, because the Lord had so smitten Moses that he was unable to do it. *A bloody husband, etc.*—The import of these words is obscure. Some understand them as reproachful to Moses, others as having the opposite meaning—a 'husband of blood, or sealed to me by blood, art thou.'

26. *So he let him go, i. e., the duty having been performed*, the angel released Moses from the danger which threatened his life. She then repeats the language used before, adding for greater definiteness, 'because of the circumcision;' and as this word is in the plural, 'circumcisions,' it may refer to the performance of this bloody rite on a former occasion when Gershom was circumcised.—The experience of Moses here should be a warning to parents who neglect the duty which they owe to their children, *e. g.*, baptism. May not this be the reason why God sometimes seems to threaten to kill them by some sore affliction? It is probable that it was at this time Zipporah and her two sons were sent back home, where they remained until after Moses had brought the Israelites out of Egypt (cf. 18: 1-6). Such a separation between a man and his family should not take place except in case of some extraordinary service of God to which he may be called.

THE FAMILY OF AARON.

Exodus VI. 20, 23, 25-27.

20. AND Amram took him Jochebed his father's sister to wife; and she bare him Aaron and Moses: and the years of the life of Amram were a hundred and thirty and seven years.—23. And Aaron took him Elisheba, daughter of Aminadab, sister of Naashon, to wife; and she bare him Nadab and Abihu, Eleazer and Ithamar.—25. And Eleazer Aaron's son took him one of the daughters of Putiel to wife; and she bare him Phinehas: these are the heads of the fathers of the Levites according to their families. 26. These are that Aaron and Moses, to whom the Lord said, Bring out the children of Israel from the land of Egypt according to their armies. 27. These are they which spake to Pharaoh king of Egypt, to bring out the children of Israel from Egypt: these are that Moses and Aaron.

20. See note on chap. 2: 1.

23. *Elisheba*, the same as Elizabeth, *i. e.*, 'oath of God.'

Nadab and *Abihu*, these two the Lord smote to death for offering strange fire upon the altar (Lev. 10: 1, 2).

26. *These are that Aaron and Moses*, etc.—It is noticeable, perhaps, as a mark of Moses' humility, that he says nothing about his own family, while that of Aaron is given. He also names his elder brother first, although he himself had so great a preëminence. True greatness is ever humble.

SPOILING THE EGYPTIANS.

Exodus III. 21, 22; XI. 1-3; XII. 35, 36.

3: 21. AND I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians: and it shall come to pass, that, when ye go, ye shall not go empty: 22. But every woman shall borrow of her neighbor, and of her that sojourneth in her house, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: and ye shall put them upon your sons, and upon your daughters; and ye shall spoil the Egyptians.

11: 1. And the Lord said unto Moses, Yet will I bring one plague more upon Pharaoh, and upon Egypt; afterward he will let you go hence: when he shall let you go, he shall surely thrust you out hence altogether. 2. Speak now in the ears of the people, and let every man borrow of his neighbor, and every woman of her neighbor, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold. 3. And the Lord gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians. Moreover, the man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh's servants, and in the sight of the people.

12: 35. And the children of Israel did according to the word of Moses; and they borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: 36. And the Lord gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they lent unto them such things as they required: and they spoiled the Egyptians.

In the first of these passages, it is the women alone who are instructed to 'borrow' from and 'spoil' the Egyptians. In the second (11: 2), the same is enjoined upon the men. This transaction has always been a stumbling-block to those who desire to 'find occasion' against the word of God. But most of the difficulty lies in the use of the word 'borrow' in our translation. The original word means to *ask, solicit, demand, etc.*; so, also, the word rendered 'lent' means *gave or granted*. There is no evidence that the Israelites asked these things with any intention of returning them, or that it was so understood by the Egyptians. 'The Lord gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians,' because they saw that God was on their side, and was sending these great plagues upon Egypt on their account. They were glad to get rid of them on any terms, and were, no doubt, afraid also to deny

them any thing which they asked.—As to God's design in giving this permission (for so it may be regarded) to the Israelites, it was, doubtless, that his people might receive some remuneration for their unrequited servitude of 'four hundred years,' and that they might have the means of building and furnishing their tabernacle, etc. (cf. 35 : 22). It was also in fulfillment of a promise made to Abraham nearly five hundred years before that they should 'come out of Egypt with great substance' (Gen. 15 : 14). The word rendered 'jewels' may mean 'vessels,' or any thing else made of silver and gold. The 'spoiling' of the Egyptians was a part of the punishment so righteously visited upon them (cf. Ezek. 39 : 10).

CONSECRATION OF THE FIRST-BORN.

Exodus XIII. 1, 12.

1. AND the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,—12. That thou shalt set apart unto the Lord all that openeth the matrix, and every firstling that cometh of a beast which thou hast; the male shall be the Lord's.

This setting apart of the first-born, both of man and beast, was in commemoration of the deliverance of their first-born in Egypt, while those of the Egyptians were destroyed (see vs. 14, 15). It corresponded also with the setting apart of all the 'first fruits of their increase' to the Lord, and was calculated to remind them, as it also does us, that the best of all they had was due unto the Lord (cf. Num. 18 : 12-15 ; 3 : 12, 13). To the first-born of men belonged also the honor of the birthright. This high honor belongs alike to all Christians. They constitute the 'church of the first-born which are written in heaven.' (Heb. 12 : 23).

MIRIAM THE PROPHETESS.

Exodus XV. 20, 21.

20. AND Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. 21. And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.

Miriam—the same as the English *Mary*.—She was that sister of Moses and Aaron who had called her mother to be nurse for the infant Moses, when he was found by Pharaoh's daughter (2 : 8). She is called a 'prophetess,' not that she

foretold events, but because she was inspired to praise the Lord. To *prophecy* is to speak under any divine afflatus; and the term is applied to those who sang divine songs with the accompaniment of instruments (1 Chron. 25: 1). Miriam was the leader of a band of women who sang these words responsively to those of Moses in the preceding song (v. 1), her words being a sort of chorus which alternated with the words of Moses and his band of men, to whom the word 'them' in v. 21 refers, it being masculine. *Timbrels*.—

A sort of instrument resembling our tambourine. *Dances*.

—A sort of measured step which accompanied the music, somewhat like the modern Shaker dance. It was an act of worship on joyous occasions; here, on that of the great deliverance of Israel when they crossed the Red Sea (cf., also, David's dancing before the ark when it was brought home. 2 Sam. 14: 16). It seems here to have been confined to the women.

MOSES REJOINED BY HIS FAMILY.

Exodus XVIII. 1-6.

1. WHEN Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, heard of all that God had done for Moses, and for Israel his people, and that the Lord had brought Israel out of Egypt; 2. Then Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took Zipporah, Moses' wife, after he had sent her back, 3. And her two sons; of which the name of the one was Gershom; for he said, I have been an alien in a strange land: 4. And the name of the other was Eliezer; for the God of my father, said he, was mine help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh: 5. And Jethro, Moses' father in law, came with his sons and his wife unto Moses into the wilderness, where he encamped at the mount of God: 6. And he said unto Moses, I thy father-in-law Jethro am come unto thee, and thy wife, and her two sons with her.

We noticed in notes on 4: 24, etc., the probability that the temporary separation of Moses from his family commenced immediately after the occurrence there mentioned. They would have been an incumbrance to him in the great work of conducting Israel out of Egypt. Now that this work is accomplished, Jethro brings them to him as he lay encamped at the foot of Mount Sinai. The separation of families from each other should not continue longer than is absolutely necessary.

5. *His sons, i. e.*, Moses' sons.

6. *Said, i. e.*, through a messenger (cf. v. 7). The pious sentiments uttered by Jethro in the subsequent verses of this chapter (vs. 9-11), and his 'sacrifices to God' in his charac-

ter as 'priest' (v. 12), confirm us in the belief that he was a worshiper of the true God, a priest like Melchizedek.

Exod. 19: 15. '*Come not at your wives*' (cf. 1 Sam. 21: 4, 5, and note).

WOMAN HONORED IN THE DECALOGUE.

Exodus XX. 10, 12, 14, 17.

10. BUT the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates.—12. Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.—14. Thou shalt not commit adultery.—17. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor's.

Whatever may be the dishonor put upon woman by some of the ceremonial regulations of the Jewish economy, there is nothing of this in the Decalogue itself which is older than the ceremonial law, and is of original, universal, and perpetual obligation.—The fourth commandment honors woman in her *religion* by securing to the 'daughter' and the 'maid-servant' freedom from any requisitions which would hinder them from remembering the Sabbath day to keep it holy (cf. Deut. 4: 15,) 'that thy man-servant and thy maid-servant may rest as well as thou.'—The fifth commandment honors woman as *mother*, by placing her on full equality with the 'father' in her claim of duty from her children (cf. 21: 17. Prov. 30: 17).—The seventh commandment honors woman as *woman*, by the prohibition of all sexual unchastity; for such is the true meaning of this command.*—The tenth commandment honors woman as *wife*, by holding her too sacred to be the object even of impure desire (cf. Matt. 5: 28).—It is also noticeable that the sanctity of the *family* is thus guarded by four distinct precepts, while the position of the fourth and fifth commandments in the middle of the Decalogue makes them the two key-stones of an arch on which rest all *religion* and all *civil society*.

* Of course *adultery*, in the more proper sense of the word, is the sin immediately named in this commandment: but it is named as being the *worst* of all the offenses against chastity, and inclusive of all the others. The true meaning of the commandment is given in the definition of the Westminster Assembly, as forbidding "all unchaste thoughts, words, and actions" (cf. also Matt. 5: 22).

LAWS CONCERNING FEMALE SERVANTS.

Exodus XXI. 1-11 (cf. also Deut. XV. 12-18).

1. Now these are the judgments which thou shalt set before them: 2. If thou buy a Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve: and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing. 3. If he came in by himself, he shall go out by himself: if he were married, then his wife shall go out with him. 4. If his master have given him a wife, and she have borne him sons or daughters; the wife and her children shall be her master's, and he shall go out by himself. 5. And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free: 6. Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post: and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall serve him for ever. 7. And if a man sell his daughter to be a maid-servant, she shall not go out as the men-servants do. 8. If she please not her master, who hath betrothed her to himself, then shall he let her be redeemed: to sell her unto a strange nation he shall have no power, seeing that he hath dealt deceitfully with her. 9. And if he have betrothed her unto his son, he shall deal with her after the manner of daughters. 10. If he take him another wife, her food, her raiment, and her duty of marriage, shall he not diminish. 11. And if he do not these three unto her, then shall she go out free without money.

1. *Judgments, i. e., judicial laws.*

2. *Buy, etc.*—A system of servitude seems to have come into use at a very early period, not only among the people of Israel, but also among all ancient nations. The patriarchal and pastoral mode of life required many attendants for the large flocks and herds in which individual wealth at that time chiefly consisted. Some of these were hired servants, some were persons sold for theft, etc. (22: 3), and others were captives taken in war and reduced to slavery. God did not require Moses to abolish this system, as it would have involved an entire reconstruction of society; but all the regulations which were adopted concerning it were designed to ameliorate the system, and to relieve the different classes of servants from the oppressions to which they were subject in other nations.—In regard to the distinction between 'Hebrew servants,' and 'bondmen and bondmaids,' cf. Lev. 25: 39-44, etc.

4. *Given him a wife*, who was a heathen, for such alone could be held beyond the seventh year. *The wife and her children shall be her master's.*—This is *slavery* proper, and recognizes the master's right of property in the slaves and their children (cf. Lev. 25:44-46. 2 Chron. 28: 6, and notes). We have nothing to say in defense of this system,

except that Moses found it already in existence; and while he so far modified it that even the smiting out of the 'tooth' of a servant entitled him to his liberty (v. 26), he was not required wholly to abolish it, no doubt for reasons which, to the Divine Lawgiver, seemed wise and benevolent.—As a system it may be classed with *polygamy* and *divorce*, things which Moses allowed to the Jews 'because of the hardness of their hearts' (Matt. 19: 8), and the regulations concerning which were among 'the statutes which were not good' that God gave them (Ezek. 20: 25).—To all these things the spirit of the gospel dispensation is utterly opposed.

6. *Bore his ear, etc.*—This was in eastern countries a badge of perpetual servitude. It is mentioned by Juvenal (Sat. I. 102) as prevalent in countries bordering on the Euphrates.

7. *If a man sell his daughter, etc.*—This might be done under stress of poverty, or with a view to her being taken in marriage, as appears from v. 8. *She shall not go out, etc., i. e.,* probably, she shall not be sent away without more provision for her support than men-servants received.

8. *Shall let her be redeemed, i. e.,* by her father or next friend. *Hath dealt deceitfully, i. e.,* in disappointing her expectations of marriage.

9. *Shall deal with her after the manner of daughters.*—How unlike modern slavery is this.

11. *These three, i. e.,* the things mentioned in v. 10, which implies that she was either retained as a secondary wife, with all a wife's privileges, or must be set at liberty without ransom. Heathenism made no such provision for the protection of servants, especially females.

OTHER HUMANE LAWS.

Exodus XXI. 20-32

20. AND if a man smite his servant, or his maid, with a rod, and he die under his hand; he shall be surely punished. 21. Notwithstanding, if he continue a day or two, he shall not be punished: for he is his money. 22. If men strive, and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit depart from her, and yet no mischief follow: he shall be surely punished, according as the woman's husband will lay upon him; and he shall pay as the judges determine. 23. And if any mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life, 24. Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, 25. Burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe. 26. And if a man smite the eye of his servant, or the eve of his maid, that it perish; he shall let him go free for

his eye's sake. 27. And if he smite out his man-servant's tooth, or his maid-servant's tooth; he shall let him go free for his tooth's sake. 28. If an ox gore a man or a woman, that they die: then the ox shall be surely stoned, and his flesh shall not be eaten; but the owner of the ox shall be quit. 29. But if the ox were wont to push with his horn in time past, and it hath been testified to his owner, and he hath not kept him in, but that he hath killed a man or a woman; the ox shall be stoned, and his owner also shall be put to death. 30. If there be laid on him a sum of money, then he shall give for the ransom of his life whatsoever is laid upon him. 31. Whether he have gored a son, or have gored a daughter, according to this judgment shall it be done unto him. 32. If the ox shall push a man-servant or a maid-servant; he shall give unto their master thirty shekels of silver, and the ox shall be stoned.

21. *Continue, i. e., survive. Not be punished, i. e., as a murderer, or as the judges may determine' (v. 22); as was done in case the servant had 'died under his hand.'* *He is his money, or 'property,' and therefore he may be presumed not to have intended to kill him.*

22. *Hurt a woman with child, i. e., accidentally; and yet so tenderly did the law regard women in this condition, that he who did the hurt was liable to such personal infliction as the husband might choose to lay upon him, besides being fined at the discretion of the judges. This was in case the woman suffered no injury further than the miscarriage; but 'if any mischief followed,' i. e., to the woman, then the punishment was to be as in vs. 23-25. This was the famous *lex talionis*, which was applied to other cases of personal injury (cf. Lev. 24: 19, 20. Deut. 19: 21), but under the direction of the magistrates. In Matt. 5: 38, etc., our Lord not only rescues this law from the perversion of it by the Jews, as if authorizing private revenge; but he prescribes the sublime law of Christian forgiveness, and of rendering good for evil, rather than of retaliation for private injuries.*

26, 27. Instead of applying the preceding law of 'eye for eye,' etc., when a servant, male or female, was the subject of the injury, the master was punished by being compelled to emancipate the slave. The 'eye' and the 'tooth' are here mentioned as being the *greatest* and *least* of personal injuries, and as *inclusive of all the others* mentioned above.

28-32. These laws, as well as those above, are quoted here chiefly because they show that the judicial code of the Jews protected the personal rights of women—even of female servants—equally with those of men. How unjustly are the Jewish laws stigmatized as barbarous.

LAWS PROTECTING VIRGINS, WIDOWS, ETC.

Exodus XXII. 16-18, 22-24.

16. AND if a man entice a maid that is not betrothed, and lie with her, he shall surely endow her to be his wife. 17. If her father utterly refuse to give her unto him, he shall pay money according to the dowry of virgins. 18. Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.—22. Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child. 23. If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry; 24. And my wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless.

16. *Not betrothed.*—If she were betrothed the penalty was death to both (Deut. 22: 23, 24). The present law applies to the case of seduction only. If violence were used, the violator must die if the virgin were betrothed; if not betrothed, he must not only marry her, but she could never be divorced (cf. Deut. 22: 25-29).

17. *If her father refuse, etc.*—Thus absolute was parental authority in the matter of marriage (cf. Gen. 24: 50; 29: 19, etc.; 34: 4, 6). *According to the dowry of virgins, i. e.,* a greater or less amount according to the condition and standing of her family. If he were not able to pay this dowry, he was, no doubt, sold for the debt (v. 3).

18. *A witch, or sorceress.*—One who practiced magic arts, or pretended to do wonders by the aid of invisible spirits. All such *communications with the spirit world*, whether real or pretended, were most offensive to God (cf. Lev. 19: 31; 20: 6, 27, etc.).

22-24. *Widow*—or *fatherless*.—To afflict these by any oppressive treatment, provoked the displeasure of God, 'who is the avenger of all such' (cf. Isa. 1: 17; 10: 2. Zech. 7: 10, etc.). Let all such bereaved ones ever cry unto the Lord in their distresses, and he 'will surely hear their cry' (v. 23).

24. *Your wives, widows, and your children, fatherless.*—Thus God takes the *lex talionis* into his own hands.

JEHOVAH A JEALOUS GOD.

Exodus XXXIV. 14-16.

14. FOR thou shalt worship no other god: for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God: 15. Lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they go a whoring after their gods, and do sacrifice unto their gods, and one call thee, and thou eat of his sacrifice; 16. And thou take of their daughters unto thy sons, and their

daughters go a whoring after their gods, and make thy sons go a whoring after their gods.

All through the Scriptures the relation of God to his people is compared to *marriage*, which is the nearest and most tender of all earthly relations; and therefore idolatry is so often called adultery or whoredom, and God is said to be a *jealous* God (cf. Exod. 20: 5. Isa. 54: 5. Jer. 3: 20. Eph. 5: 23, and the Song of Solomon throughout).

16. *Daughters go a whoring after their gods*, etc.—From this and many similar passages, it appears that idolatry and whoredom were closely connected; the latter crime being actually practiced in the worship of some of the heathen gods, as is still the case in India (cf. Num. 25: 1, 2, and note). Much of the language of Scripture which to the prudish seems gross, is thus to be accounted for. God speaks to his people in terms which imply the greatest possible abhorrence for this sin, whether in its literal or figurative sense. To Zion God says: 'Thy Maker is thine husband; the Lord of hosts is his name' (see Isa. 54: 5-8).

WOMEN GIVING AND WORKING FOR THE LORD.

Exodus XXXV. 21, 22, 25, 26, 29; XXXVI. 5-7.

35: 21. AND they came, every one whose heart stirred him up, and every one whom his spirit made willing, and they brought the Lord's offering to the work of the tabernacle of the congregation, and for all his service, and for the holy garments. 22. And they came, both men and women, as many as were willing-hearted, and brought bracelets, and earrings, and rings, and tablets, all jewels of gold: and every man that offered, offered an offering of gold unto the Lord.—25. And all the women that were wise-hearted did spin with their hands, and brought that which they had spun, both of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, and of fine linen. 26. And all the women whose heart stirred them up in wisdom spun goats' hair.—29. The children of Israel brought a willing offering unto the Lord, every man and woman, whose heart made them willing to bring for all manner of work, which the Lord had commanded to be made by the hand of Moses.

36: 5. And they spake unto Moses, saying, The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work, which the Lord commanded to make. 6. And Moses gave commandment, and they caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp, saying, Let neither man nor woman make any more work for the offering of the sanctuary. So the people were restrained from bringing. 7. For the stuff they had was sufficient for all the work to make it, and too much.

All this liberality and labor were for the building and fur-

nishing of the Lord's tabernacle. See the preceding verses of this chapter.

22. *Jewels of gold, etc.*—Here we find the use that God designed to be made of that wealth of which the Israelites spoiled the Egyptians (12: 35, 36).

25. *Wise-hearted, i. e., skillful* in such work. These women had probably learned these arts while slaves in wealthy Egyptian families. Thus God was preparing them for his holy work.

29. *Whose heart made them willing.*—Thus 'the Lord loveth a cheerful giver' (2 Cor. 9: 7, etc.). The result of this benevolence is given in 36: 5-7. What an example is this for Christian men and women! When will they 'bring much more than enough' for the building up of Zion? And when shall their jewels and luxury be dispensed with as an offering to the Lord?

BOOK OF LEVITICUS.



THIS book is so called because it relates chiefly to the offices and services of the Levitical priesthood.

PURIFICATION OF MOTHERS.

Read Leviticus XII. entire.

THE uncleanness here spoken of, is that ceremonial unfitness for engaging in the services of the sanctuary, which was a peculiarity of the Jewish system. It was designed to teach, symbolically, the necessity of moral purity in order to worship God acceptably (10: 9-11). This distinction in the length of time required for the purification of the mother after the birth of a male and of a female child, respectively, the latter being double the length of the former, as though the birth of a female rendered her doubly unclean, is, of course, a stigma upon the sex. It was founded, no doubt, on the fact of Eve's priority in the transgression (1 Tim. 2: 14, 15). The same humiliating distinction was made in the setting apart of the 'court of the women,' in the temple, which, though higher than the 'court of the Gentiles,' was *fifteen steps lower* than the court of the men (see the Bible Dictionaries, or Biblical Antiquities). The gospel has done away with all such distinctions, and makes male and female one in Christ (Gal. 3: 28). It even honors woman more than man, as having been 'last at the cross and first at the sepulcher.' Christ also 'appeared first to Mary Magdalene' (Mark 16: 9). And instead of the stigma which is here put upon woman in child-bearing, it is made a means of her salvation—'she shall be saved in child-bearing' (2 Tim. 2: 15).

8. *If not able to bring a lamb, etc.*—The poverty of the

mother of our Lord is seen, in that she had to bring the latter and cheaper offering (Luke 2: 24).

CEREMONIAL UNCLEANNESS OF WOMEN.

Leviticus XV. 19-31.

19. AND if a woman have an issue, and her issue in her flesh be blood, she shall be put apart seven days: and whosoever toucheth her shall be unclean until the even. 20. And every thing that she lieth upon in her separation shall be unclean: everything also that she sitteth upon shall be unclean. 21. And whosoever toucheth her bed shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even. 22. And whosoever toucheth any thing that she sat upon shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even. 23. And if it be on her bed, or on any thing whereon she sitteth, when he toucheth it, he shall be unclean until the even. 24. And if any man lie with her at all, and her flowers be upon him, he shall be unclean seven days; and all the bed whereon he lieth shall be unclean. 25. And if a woman have an issue of her blood many days out of the time of her separation, or if it run beyond the time of her separation; all the days of the issue of her uncleanness shall be as the days of her separation: she shall be unclean. 26. Every bed whereon she lieth all the days of her issue shall be unto her as the bed of her separation: and whatsoever she sitteth upon shall be unclean, as the uncleanness of her separation. 27. And whosoever toucheth those things shall be unclean, and shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even. 28. But if she be cleansed of her issue, then she shall number to herself seven days, and after that she shall be clean. 29. And on the eighth day she shall take unto her two turtles, or two young pigeons, and bring them unto the priest, to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. 30. And the priest shall offer the one for a sin offering, and the other for a burnt offering; and the priest shall make an atonement for her before the Lord for the issue of her uncleanness. 31. Thus shall ye separate the children of Israel from their uncleanness; that they die not in their uncleanness, when they defile my tabernacle that is among them.

The ceremonial import of all these regulations is indicated in v. 31. It was designed to inspire them with the utmost reverence for holy duties and holy places, and with an abhorrence for all bodily or mental impurity (cf. 22: 3).

UNLAWFUL MARRIAGE CONNECTIONS.

Leviticus XVIII. 6-24.

6. NONE of you shall approach to any that is near of kin to him, to uncover their nakedness: I am the Lord. 7. The nakedness of thy father, or the nakedness of thy mother, shalt thou not uncover: she is thy mother; thou shalt not uncover her nakedness. 8. The naked-

ness of thy father's wife shalt thou not uncover: it is thy father's nakedness. 9. The nakedness of thy sister, the daughter of thy father, or daughter of thy mother, whether she be born at home, or born abroad, even their nakedness thou shalt not uncover. 10. The nakedness of thy son's daughter, of thy daughter's daughter, even their nakedness thou shalt not uncover: for theirs is thine own nakedness. 11. The nakedness of thy father's wife's daughter, begotten of thy father, she is thy sister, thou shalt not uncover her nakedness. 12. Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy father's sister: she is thy father's near kinswoman. 13. Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy mother's sister: for she is thy mother's near kinswoman. 14. Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy father's brother, thou shalt not approach to his wife: she is thine aunt. 15. Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy daughter-in-law: she is thy son's wife; thou shalt not uncover her nakedness. 16. Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy brother's wife: it is thy brother's nakedness. 17. Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of a woman and her daughter, neither shalt thou take her son's daughter, or her daughter's daughter, to uncover her nakedness; for they are her near kinswomen: it is wickedness. 18. Neither shalt thou take a wife to her sister, to vex her, to uncover her nakedness, besides the other in her lifetime. 19. Also thou shalt not approach unto a woman to uncover her nakedness, as long as she is put apart for her uncleanness. 20. Moreover thou shalt not lie carnally with thy neighbor's wife, to defile thyself with her. 21. And thou shalt not let any of thy seed pass through the fire to Molech, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the Lord. 22. Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination. 23. Neither shalt thou lie with any beast to defile thyself therewith: neither shall any woman stand before a beast to lie down thereto: it is confusion. 24. Defile not ye yourselves in any of these things: for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out before you.

The design of the prohibitions in this chapter is to prevent unhallowed marriages between those who are 'near of kin' (v. 6). Such marriages, or incestuous connections without marriage, were common both among the Egyptians and the Canaanites (v. 3); and therefore the people of Israel were much exposed to the contamination of the bad example. The prohibition of marriages with the heathen, or with women having no brothers, or out of their own tribes (Num. 36: 6), also greatly increased the temptation to such connections. At an earlier period, marriages with those 'near of kin' were not forbidden; indeed they were unavoidable among the immediate sons and daughters of Adam, and were sanctioned by the example of Abraham, Isaac, etc., who married their own near kinswomen, rather than such 'daughters of men' as those of the heathen (Gen. 6: 2). But as the world grew older, and the deteriorating influence (physically) of such

close family connections became more manifest, they were wisely forbidden.

18. *Thou shalt not take a wife to her sister, etc.* (cf. 20: 21). This is a very vexed passage, and the best expositors differ in regard to its meaning. There are two readings of which it is capable, viz: (1.) The received and literal one, which forbids the marriage of *two sisters at the same time*—polygamy being then tolerated. (2.) The marginal reading, 'one wife to another,' which is most in accordance with the usage of the Hebrew language. It would then be a prohibition of *polygamy* for the future, although it had been tolerated in time past; just as the marriages of 'near kin,' such as those of Abraham, Isaac, etc., are here prohibited. The former interpretation is claimed as sanctioning the *marriage of a wife's sister*, although not in the lifetime of the first wife; while others make the words 'in her lifetime,' to qualify 'vex her' (a polygamous marriage always being vexatious to the first and proper wife), and they pronounce the marriage of a wife's sister unlawful even after the death of the wife, because the surviving sister is still 'near of kin,' as the Hebrews used those words. Such marriages, to say the least, are of very doubtful propriety, and ought to be discouraged on the ground of expediency, if not for moral reasons. But we can not here prolong the discussion. A very full and impartial treatment of the whole subject may be found in Bush's Commentary. The closing verses of this chapter (vs. 24-30) show God's exceeding displeasure against those who commit any of 'these abominations.'

LAWS CONCERNING FILIAL DUTY, PURITY, ETC.

Leviticus XIX. 3, 20, 21, 29.

3. YE shall fear every man his mother, and his father, and keep my Sabbaths: I am the Lord your God.—20. And whosoever lieth carnally with a woman, that is a bondmaid, betrothed to a husband, and not at all redeemed, nor freedom given her; she shall be scourged: they shall not be put to death, because she was not free. 21. And he shall bring his trespass offering unto the Lord, unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, even a ram for a trespass offering.—29. Do not prostitute thy daughter, to cause her to be a whore; lest the land fall to whoredom, and the land become full of wickedness.

3. *Ye shall fear, etc., i. e.,* with filial reverence, the same as 'honor' in the fifth commandment. 'Mother' is here mentioned before 'father,' to show that she is entitled to at least

equal honor; and filial duty is joined with 'keeping the Sabbath,' because these are the *central* duties of the Decalogue, and are together the foundation and support of all religion and all morality (cf. note on Exod. 20).

20. *She shall be scourged.*—The Hebrew is, 'there shall be scourging,' probably for both; but not death, which would be the penalty if she were free (Deut. 22: 23, 24).

29. *Prostitute, etc.*—This also was one of the abominations of the heathen, along with others mentioned in this chapter. We could not account for such a prohibition being deemed necessary, but from our knowledge that the heathen did this in the worship of their gods (cf. Exod. 34: 16, and note).

OTHER PENAL LAWS.

Leviticus XX. 9-21, 27.

9. FOR every one that curseth his father or his mother shall be surely put to death: he hath cursed his father or his mother; his blood shall be upon him. 10. And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbor's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death. 11. And the man that lieth with his father's wife hath uncovered his father's nakedness: both of them shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them. 12. And if a man lie with his daughter-in-law, both of them shall surely be put to death: they have wrought confusion; their blood shall be upon them. 13. If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them. 14. And if a man take a wife and her mother, it is wickedness: they shall be burnt with fire, both he and they; that there be no wickedness among you. 15. And if a man lie with a beast, he shall surely be put to death: and ye shall slay the beast. 16. And if a woman approach unto any beast, and lie down thereto, thou shalt kill the woman, and the beast: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them. 17. And if a man shall take his sister, his father's daughter, or his mother's daughter, and see her nakedness, and she see his nakedness; it is a wicked thing; and they shall be cut off in the sight of their people: he hath uncovered his sister's nakedness; he shall bear his iniquity. 18. And if a man shall lie with a woman having her sickness, and shall uncover her nakedness; he hath discovered her fountain, and she hath uncovered the fountain of her blood: and both of them shall be cut off from among their people. 19. And thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy mother's sister, nor of thy father's sister; for he uncovereth his near kin: they shall bear their iniquity. 20. And if a man shall lie with his uncle's wife, he hath uncovered his uncle's nakedness: they shall bear their sin; they shall die childless. 21. And if a man shall take his brother's wife, it is an unclean thing: he hath uncovered his brother's nakedness; they shall be childless.—27. A man also or wo-

man that hath a familiar spirit, or that is a wizard, shall surely be put to death: they shall stone them with stones: their blood shall be upon them.

9. Cf. Exod. 21: 17. Prov. 20: 20. Such severity of punishment for this and some other offenses (cf. v. 10), is not considered proper under the gospel dispensation; but it is certain that a want of reverence for parents is one of the greatest crimes, or at least causes of crime, at the present day.

14. *Burnt with fire*.—Probably after stoning, which was the ordinary method of putting to death among the Jews. The burning was designed to show the extraordinary enormity of the crime (cf. 21: 9).

19–21. *Uncover, etc.*—It is probable, from the preceding verses, that the things forbidden in vs. 19–21 do not refer to marriage like those in chap. 18, but to adulterous intercourse. Their childlessness was a special and abiding judgment of God (cf. Exod. 22: 24). God says, ‘O do not this abominable thing which I hate’ (Jer. 44: 4).

27. *Hath a familiar spirit, etc.* (cf. Exod. 22: 18, and note). King Saul’s decree in regard to such *necromancers*—the spiritualists of the present day—was in accordance with this law (1 Sam. 28: 3).

PRIESTS AND THEIR FAMILIES.

Leviticus XXI. 1–3, 7–9, 13, 14.

1. AND the Lord said unto Moses, Speak unto the priests the sons of Aaron, and say unto them, There shall none be defiled for the dead among his people: 2. But for his kin, that is near unto him, that is, for his mother, and for his father, and for his son, and for his daughter, and for his brother, 3. And for his sister a virgin, that is nigh unto him, which hath had no husband; for her may he be defiled.—7. They shall not take a wife that is a whore, or profane; neither shall they take a woman put away from her husband: for he is holy unto his God. 8. Thou shalt sanctify him therefore; for he offereth the bread of thy God: he shall be holy unto thee: for I the Lord, which sanctify you, am holy. 9. And the daughter of any priest, if she profane herself by playing the whore, she profaneth her father: she shall be burnt with fire.—13. And he shall take a wife in her virginity. 14. A widow, or a divorced woman, or profane, or a harlot, these shall he not take: but he shall take a virgin of his own people to wife.

1. *Defiled, i. e.*, by the performance of funeral rites.

3. *His sister—no husband*, who, if alive, would perform her funeral rites.

7. *A whore*.—It is worthy of remark here, once for all,

that this and several other strong old Anglo-Saxon words, which the authors of our version of the Bible have used, were not regarded as at all indelicate in their day, any more than the various euphemisms which we now employ. *Profane, i. e.*, one not a virgin (cf. vs. 9, 14).

9. *Burnt*.—Cf. 20: 14.

13. *A wife in her virginity*.—"Because," say the authors of the Assembly's Annotations, "she was a type of the church (2 Cor. 11: 2), just as her husband was a type of Christ." All these precepts, while they show that priests were expected to marry, and that celibacy therefore is not regarded as a holier state, yet show also that their marriages must be of the *purest* sort, and that their holy office forbade all defilement, even that ceremonial uncleanness which was contracted by the performance of the rites of burial. They suggest also the moral purity which should ever characterize the Christian ministry.

22: 12, 13. *Married unto a stranger*, and therefore no longer a member of her father's family. But 'if she is returned to her father's house, she may eat as before.'

THE MONGREL BLASPHEMER.

Leviticus XXIV. 10-16.

10. AND the son of an Israelitish woman, whose father was an Egyptian, went out among the children of Israel: and this son of the Israelitish woman and a man of Israel strove together in the camp; 11. And the Israelitish woman's son blasphemed the name of the Lord, and cursed. And they brought him unto Moses: (and his mother's name was Shelomith, the daughter of Dibri, of the tribe of Dan:) 12. And they put him in ward, that the mind of the Lord might be showed them. 13. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 14. Bring forth him that hath cursed without the camp; and let all that heard him lay their hands upon his head, and let all the congregation stone him. 15. And thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel, saying, Whosoever curseth his God shall bear his sin. 16. And he that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, he shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him: as well the stranger, as he that is born in the land, when he blasphemeth the name of the Lord, shall be put to death.

10. This profane youth had no better training than that of a mother, who, though an Israelite, was not too good to marry a heathen Egyptian. The occasion of this quarrel we are not informed; but it is noticeable that fighting then, as now, was connected with profanity.

11. THE NAME—the words ‘of the Lord,’ not being in the original, although obviously understood, as also in v. 16. The name *Jehovah*, which is LORD in our version, was regarded as so sacred by the Jews, that they did not utter it except on the most solemn occasions; and in the oral reading of the Scriptures, wherever this name occurs, they substitute *Adonai*, *i. e.*, *Lord*. The blasphemy, therefore, of this young man, was of the worst conceivable sort, and was most shocking to every true Israelite. It was also connected with ‘cursing’ (vs. 11, 15), which seems to have been against God, as well as against his adversary. In v. 15, ‘cursing his God’ (*elohim*), is distinguished from ‘blaspheming the NAME.’

16. *The congregation*.—By their officers, or all who heard it (cf. 1 Kings 21: 10, 13. John 10: 33, etc). ‘Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.’

THE DISTRESS OF FAMINE.

Leviticus XXVI. 26–29.

26. AND when I have broken the staff of your bread, ten women shall bake your bread in one oven, and they shall deliver you your bread again by weight: and ye shall eat, and not be satisfied. 27. And if ye will not for all this hearken unto me, but walk contrary unto me; 28. Then I will walk contrary unto you also in fury; and I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins. 29. And ye shall eat the flesh of your sons, and the flesh of your daughters shall ye eat.

26. *Broken the staff*, or cut off the whole supply (cf Ps. 105: 16. Isa. 3: 1). *Ten women*, *i. e.*, ten families, implying that they should have only one-tenth of the ordinary supply. *By weight*, with the utmost care, lest any should get more than their portion (cf. Ezek. 4: 16).

29. *Eat the flesh, etc.*—For a repetition of this most terrible threatening, and references to its more terrible fulfillment, see Deut 28: 56–58, and note. Thus evil and bitter are the consequences of departing from the Lord God, and ‘walking contrary to him’ (v. 27), instead of walking *with* him, like Enoch. This whole chapter is a very impressive one, and the reader will do well to peruse it entire.

BOOK OF NUMBERS.



THIS book receives its name from the census, or numbering, of Israel, which is found in chaps. 1-4, and 26.

THE ORDEAL OF JEALOUSY.

Numbers V. 11-31.

11. AND the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 12. Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, If any man's wife go aside, and commit a trespass against him, 13. And a man lie with her carnally, and it be hid from the eyes of her husband, and be kept close, and she be defiled, and there be no witness against her, neither she be taken with the manner; 14. And the spirit of jealousy come upon him, and he be jealous of his wife, and she be defiled; or if the spirit of jealousy come upon him, and he be jealous of his wife, and she be not defiled: 15. Then shall the man bring his wife unto the priest, and he shall bring her offering for her, the tenth part of an ephah of barley meal; he shall pour no oil upon it, nor put frankincense thereon; for it is an offering of jealousy, an offering of memorial, bringing iniquity to remembrance. 16. And the priest shall bring her near, and set her before the Lord: 17. And the priest shall take holy water in an earthen vessel; and of the dust that is in the floor of the tabernacle the priest shall take, and put it into the water: 18. And the priest shall set the woman before the Lord, and uncover the woman's head, and put the offering of memorial in her hands, which is the jealousy offering: and the priest shall have in his hand the bitter water that causeth the curse: 19. And the priest shall charge her by an oath, and say unto the woman, If no man have lain with thee, and if thou hast not gone aside to uncleanness with another instead of thy husband, be thou free from this bitter water that causeth the curse: 20. But if thou hast gone aside to another instead of thy husband, and if thou be defiled, and some man have lain with thee besides thine husband: 21. Then the priest shall charge the woman with an oath of cursing, and the priest shall say unto the woman, The Lord make thee a curse and an oath among thy

people, when the Lord doth make thy thigh to rot, and thy belly to swell; 22. And this water that causeth the curse shall go into thy bowels, to make thy belly to swell, and thy thigh to rot. And the woman shall say, Amen, amen. 23. And the priest shall write these curses in a book, and he shall blot them out with the bitter water. 24. And he shall cause the woman to drink the bitter water that causeth the curse: and the water that causeth the curse shall enter into her, and become bitter. 25. Then the priest shall take the jealousy offering out of the woman's hand, and shall wave the offering before the Lord, and offer it upon the altar: 26. And the priest shall take a handful of the offering, even the memorial thereof, and burn it upon the altar, and afterward shall cause the woman to drink the water. 27. And when he hath made her to drink the water, then it shall come to pass, that if she be defiled, and have done trespass against her husband, that the water that causeth the curse shall enter into her, and become bitter, and her belly shall swell, and her thigh shall rot: and the woman shall be a curse among her people. 28. And if the woman be not defiled, but be clean; then she shall be free, and shall conceive seed. 29. This is the law of jealousies, when a wife goeth aside to another instead of her husband, and is defiled; 30. Or when the spirit of jealousy cometh upon him, and he be jealous over his wife, and shall set the woman before the Lord, and the priest shall execute upon her all this law. 31. Then shall the man be guiltless from iniquity, and this woman shall bear her iniquity.

13. *With the manner.*—These words are not in the original, but are implied in the Hebrew word rendered 'taken.' It is an old English law phrase, equivalent to 'in the very act.'

15-18, etc. The use of 'barley meal,' instead of 'fine flour,' the absence of 'oil' and 'frankincense,' the dirty mixture of 'holy water,' or water from the laver, with 'dust from the floor of the tabernacle,' the 'uncovering of the head,' thus exposing her face to full view, and implying the absence of her husband's protection (1 Cor. 11: 5-7), and then the solemn adjuration, in connection with the foul charges against her, were all circumstances profoundly humiliating to the woman, as well as most appalling to her imagination. It was a sort of moral torture which must have constrained her to confess, if she were guilty, without swallowing the 'bitter draught'—*bitter* not so much in its taste as in its consequences. Jewish writers say, that if she did confess, before taking the terrible oath which accompanied the draught, she escaped the punishment of death, and was liable only to divorce without dowry. This is the first instance on record of the trial by *ordeal*; and there is a noticeable difference between this and the various heathen ordeals, and those of

modern times, viz: that in the latter, nothing but a miracle could acquit even the innocent, while in this, nothing but a miracle could harm the guilty. It was designed for the protection of the wife who might be unjustly suspected; and it was another powerful guard of domestic purity. Nor is it to be supposed that any husband would be permitted to subject his wife to so terrible a trial, unless there was strong ground of suspicion against her. The whole law however seems to be harsh and severe against the woman.

THE LAW OF THE NAZARITE.

Numbers VI. 1-8.

1. AND the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 2. Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When either man or woman shall separate themselves to vow a vow of a Nazarite, to separate themselves unto the Lord; 3. He shall separate himself from wine and strong drink, and shall drink no vinegar or wine, or vinegar of strong drink, neither shall he drink any liquor of grapes, nor eat moist grapes, or dried. 4. All the days of his separation shall he eat nothing that is made of the vine tree, from the kernels even to the husk. 5. All the days of the vow of his separation there shall no razor come upon his head: until the days be fulfilled, in the which he separateth himself unto the Lord, he shall be holy, and shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow. 6. All the days that he separateth himself unto the Lord he shall come at no dead body. 7. He shall not make himself unclean for his father, or for his mother, for his brother, or for his sister, when they die: because the consecration of his God is upon his head. 8. All the days of his separation he is holy unto the Lord.

We notice this law briefly, because the vow of the Nazarite might be taken by a woman as well as a man. The word *Nazarite* means 'one separated.' It was a voluntary separation, by vow, from the occupations and pleasures of the world, in order that the person might be wholly employed in the service of God. It was usually taken for a month, but might be for a lifetime. Sometimes parents dedicated their children to be Nazarites from the womb, *e. g.*, Samson (Judges 13: 5), Samuel (1 Sam. 1: 11), and John the Baptist (Luke 1: 15). The Nazarite was required to abstain from the *fruit of the grape* in all its forms, as tempting to intemperance; from cutting off the hair or beard, this being a sign of uncleanness (Lev. 14: 8, 9); also from defilement by approaching a dead body, the same that was required of priests (Lev. 21: 11). The other laws pertaining to Nazarites are

given in detail in the remaining verses of this chapter. It was a sort of asceticism appropriate to the ceremonial character of the Jewish dispensation; and it symbolized the necessity of special purity and holiness in those who would consecrate themselves wholly to the service of God. It had but little in common with Romish monkery. The Nazarites did not constitute a religious order; their vow usually was but temporary; they might marry; and they did not abstain from meats, but only from wine. The Rechabites of Jer. 35 were a sort of Nazarites, though not so called.

SEDITION OF MIRIAM AND AARON.

Numbers XII. 1-15.

1. AND Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman. 2. And they said, Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us? And the Lord heard it. 3. (Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.) 4. And the Lord spake suddenly unto Moses, and unto Aaron, and unto Miriam, Come out ye three unto the tabernacle of the congregation. And they three came out. 5. And the Lord came down in the pillar of the cloud, and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam: and they both came forth. 6. And he said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. 7. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. 8. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses? 9. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against them; and he departed. 10. And the cloud departed from off the tabernacle; and, behold, Miriam became leprous, white as snow: and Aaron looked upon Miriam, and, behold, she was leprous. 11. And Aaron said unto Moses, Alas, my lord, I beseech thee, lay not the sin upon us, wherein we have done foolishly, and wherein we have sinned. 12. Let her not be as one dead, of whom the flesh is half consumed when he cometh out of his mother's womb. 13. And Moses cried unto the Lord, saying, Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee. 14. And the Lord said unto Moses, If her father had but spit in her face, should she not be ashamed seven days? let her be shut out from the camp seven days, and after that let her be received in again. 15. And Miriam was shut from the camp seven days: and the people journeyed not till Miriam was brought in again.

1. *Miriam and Aaron.*—As Miriam is named first it is probable that she was the ringleader of this mutiny. The chief punishment also falls on her (v. 10). *The Ethiopian woman.*—In Hebrew it is the *Cushite*, referring no

doubt to Zipporah, her native country, Midian, being a part of the land of Cush. Some have foolishly supposed she was a negro.—This charge was but the pretext for the complaint against Moses; the real offense being the change in the administration of affairs, mentioned in chap. 11: 16; a change which had been suggested by Jethro, Zipporah's father (Exod. 18), and by which Miriam and Aaron had been in a measure superseded.

2. *And they said.*—Probably in a private way, when they mentioned the true grievance—‘hath he not also spoken by us?’ There was some apparent ground for this claim, as in Exod. 4: 15, God had said of Aaron, ‘I will be with thy mouth, and *with his mouth,*’ and in 15: 20, Miriam is called a ‘prophetess.’ Miriam was also older than Moses, was unmarried, and was jealous for her woman's rights.

3. *Now the man Moses, etc.*—This parenthetic clause was probably added afterward by some other hand, like the closing words of the Pentateuch (Deut. 34: 5–12). It is implied that Moses had borne himself so meekly that he had given no just ground of offense; or, perhaps, that if left to himself he was too meek to have repressed this mutiny with the strong hand which was required.

4. *The Lord spake suddenly, etc.*—These complaints no doubt found many sympathizers, and the sedition was in danger of becoming formidable. God therefore interposes at once, and in a very decided way; to check it.

5. *The pillar of cloud,* which was the *Shekinah*, or visible dwelling-place of the Angel-Jehovah (Exod. 13: 21, 22, and refs.).

8. *Apparently, i. e.,* in visible manifestation, or ‘similitude’ (cf. Exod. 33: 9, 18–23).

11. *We have sinned.*—Although the curse of leprosy had fallen only on Miriam, Aaron is ready to confess his share in her sin, and intercedes with Moses in her behalf.

13–15. At the intercession of Moses Miriam is healed, but has to submit to the usual seclusion of the leper for seven days (cf. Lev. 13: 45, 46, and refs.). *Spit upon, etc.*—Spitting upon, or even spitting in the presence of a person, was a mark of supreme contempt (cf. Deut. 25: 9). The necessity for so prompt a quelling of this sedition, will be more manifest on comparing it with the rebellion of Korah, a few years later (see chap. 16). If we have been betrayed into

improprieties of conduct, we should be prompt to repent and make confession of the wrong, as did Aaron.

WHOREDOM AND IDOLATRY.

Read Numbers XXV. entire.

THE abominations described in this chapter were instigated by the crafty advice of Balaam, who, when not permitted to curse Israel, counseled Balak, with a satanic subtlety, to tempt them in this way. Compare the preceding chapters of Numbers with 31: 16 and Rev. 2: 14.

1, 2. *Whoredom—sacrifices of their gods.*—We have here a striking instance of the close connection between these two flagrant sins; and we see why idolatry is so often spoken of in the Scriptures by the grosser name (cf. Exod. 34: 16, and note).

4. *Heads, i. e., leaders. Hang them up.*—They were first put to death by stoning, which was the proper Jewish mode of execution, and were then hung up (in some cases burnt), to make their punishment more signal (cf. Lev. 20: 14. 2 Sam. 21: 9). *Against the sun, i. e., during the day.* They must be taken down before night (Deut. 21: 23).

6. All the circumstances here tend to aggravate the turpitude of this wickedness. It was done publicly and defiantly, and while all the congregation were 'weeping before the Lord.' Both the offenders also were persons of the highest rank. Thus shameless and intolerable had this abomination become. It was time for God's judgments to descend; the plague, therefore, and the judges together, destroyed 24,000 of the criminals (cf. 1 Cor. 10: 8).

11. *I consumed not, etc.*—Notice how God 'delighted in mercy,' and regards judgment as his 'strange work.' He honors Phinehas, because he had made atonement (v. 13), so that God was not compelled to 'consume the children of Israel in his jealousy.'

13. This covenant with Phinehas was remarkably fulfilled, for the priesthood continued in his family, with scarcely an interruption, down to the time of Christ. *Made atonement, i. e., rendered satisfaction to the demands of God's justice, by the blood of those guilty parties.* It is said in Ps. 106: 31, that this deed of Phinehas was 'counted unto him for righteousness,' though not in the same sense in which that phrase is used in Rom. 4: 3-11, etc.

17. *Vex the Midianites.*—(Cf. 31: 7-9, 15-18)

18. *Their sister, i. e., countrywoman.* How hateful to God is the sin of licentiousness, and how baleful the influence of abandoned women. Their steps 'take hold on hell.' The influences which tend at the present day to the increase of this vice, are most alarming, and call for such concern on the part of Christians as that which was exhibited in Israel, when 'all the congregation of the children of Israel were weeping before the door of the tabernacle' (v. 6).

THE DAUGHTERS OF ZELOPHEHAD.

Numbers XXVII. 1-9.

1. THEN came the daughters of Zelophehad, the son of Hopher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, of the families of Manasseh the son of Joseph: and these are the names of his daughters; Mahlah, Noah, and Hoglah, and Milcah, and Tirzah. 2. And they stood before Moses, and before Eleazar the priest, and before the princes and all the congregation, by the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, saying, 3. Our father died in the wilderness, and he was not in the company of them that gathered themselves together against the Lord in the company of Korah; but died in his own sin, and had no sons. 4. Why should the name of our father be done away from among his family, because he hath no son? Give unto us therefore a possession among the brethren of our father. 5. And Moses brought their cause before the Lord. 6. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 7. The daughters of Zelophehad speak right: thou shalt surely give them a possession of an inheritance among their father's brethren; and thou shalt cause the inheritance of their father to pass unto them. 8. And thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If a man die, and have no son, then ye shall cause his inheritance to pass unto his daughter. 9. And if he have no daughter, then ye shall give his inheritance unto his brethren.

In this passage an important principle is settled by direct appeal to God, viz: that in the lack of male heirs the inheritance of a Hebrew family could descend in the line of the daughters (cf. 36: 1-12. Josh. 17: 36).

2. *The princes, or chief men* (cf. Josh. 22: 14).

3. *Died in his own sin, i. e.,* by the common law of mortality, and not by the judgment of God, as did the sons of Korah.

5. *Moses brought their cause before the Lord,* doing nothing merely by his own authority. God, and not Moses, was the lawgiver of Israel; so that they who find fault with the institutions of Moses should beware whom they condemn.

THE VOWS OF WOMEN.

Read Numbers XXX. entire.

THE making of vows was a very ancient custom (cf. Abram's vow, Gen. 14: 22, 23; Jacob's, Gen. 28: 20-22; Jephtha's, Judges 11: 30). A vow was a solemnly uttered engagement to do something in the way of service to God, which was not specially enjoined; *e. g.*, the vow of the Nazarite. But when the vow was made, if it were respecting a thing in itself lawful and by a person who was *sui juris*, or had a right to act for himself, it became binding before God (cf. Eccl. 4: 4, 5, with Acts 5: 3, 4). It may be seen from this chapter, that women who were either minors or married, were in subordination to their fathers or their husbands, without whose consent their vows were not binding.

9. *Widows* alone seem to be independent in this matter. As to spinsters, if there were such in those days, we may charitably suppose that they too were free to vow or not, as they chose. The law as here given is confined to minors, 'being yet in their father's house, in their youth' (vs. 3, 16).

15. *He shall bear her iniquity, i. e.*, after he has, by his silence or otherwise, allowed her vow to become binding, he can not disallow it, without incurring whatever guilt she herself might have contracted by a voluntary failure to fulfill her vow. Let us remember, however, that our *Christian profession* is a solemn and obligatory vow to be the Lord's, and we should allow no one to hinder us in the discharge of its duties.

VEXING THE MIDIANITES.

Numbers XXXI: 1-3, 7-9, 14-18.

1. AND the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 2. Avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites: afterward shalt thou be gathered unto thy people. 3. And Moses spake unto the people, saying, Arm some of yourselves unto the war, and let them go against the Midianites, and avenge the Lord of Midian.—7. And they warred against the Midianites, as the Lord commanded Moses; and they slew all the males. 8. And they slew the kings of Midian, beside the rest of them that were slain; namely, Evi, and Rekem, and Zur, and Hur, and Reba, five kings of Midian: Balaam also the son of Beor they slew with the sword. 9. And the children of Israel took all the women of Midian captives, and their little ones, and took the spoil of all their cattle, and all their flocks, and all their goods.—14. And Moses was wroth with

the officers of the host, with the captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, which came from the battle. 15. And Moses said unto them, Have ye saved all the women alive? 16. Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the Lord. 17. Now therefore kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman that hath known man by lying with him. 18. But all the women-children, that have not known a man by lying with him, keep alive for yourselves.

In chap. 25: 17, God had commanded Israel to 'vex the Midianites, and smite them,' for their great wickedness as there recorded. This command is here repeated, near the close of Moses' life. The cup of their iniquity was full, and they were doomed to the same utter destruction with the abandoned Canaanites; and God might employ as the instruments of his vengeance, either his immediate judgments, as in case of Sodom and Gomorrah, or the sword of his people Israel, as in this case. But the people, it seems (from v. 9), shrunk from this wholesale national execution, and spared the women and children, according to the ordinary usages of war. In this they were influenced probably by selfish motives more than by feelings of humanity. Hence Moses 'was wroth with them' (v. 14); and, for the reason mentioned in v. 16, he requires that all the women who were not virgins should be slain, as they all might be presumed guilty. Another terrible lesson was thus given of God's hatred both of licentiousness and idolatry.

8, 16. The slaying of Balaam was a most righteous retribution.

18. *Keep for yourselves, i. e., as slaves*, and not for sensual purposes, as infidels pretend to suppose (cf. Deut. 20: 10-14; 21: 10-14).

CIVILIZED WARFARE.

Numbers XXXII. 25-27.

25. AND the children of Gad and the children of Reuben spake unto Moses, saying, Thy servants will do as my lord commandeth. 26. Our little ones, our wives, our flocks, and all our cattle, shall be there in the cities of Gilead: 27. But thy servants will pass over, every man armed for war, before the Lord to battle, as my lord saith.

26. *Our wives, etc.*—The children of Gad and the children of Reuben had their inheritance given them in the land of Gilead, on the east side of Jordan; but they were required to accompany their brethren of the other tribes and assist

them in casting out the Canaanites on the west side (vs. 6, 16-24). In the meantime they were permitted to leave all behind them except the active warriors—the old men and the women and children, together with the servants necessary to take care of their large flocks and herds, remaining in quiet in the land of their inheritance. Thus the hardships of war were alleviated so far as possible. With a savage or nomadic people this could not have been allowed (cf. Deut. 3: 18-20). It was not God's design to make the Jews a warlike, but a religious people.

THE DAUGHTERS OF ZELOPHEHAD AGAIN.

Numbers XXXVI. 1-12.

1. AND the chief fathers of the families of the children of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, of the families of the sons of Joseph, came near, and spake before Moses, and before the princes, the chief fathers of the children of Israel: 2. And they said, The Lord commanded my lord to give the land for an inheritance by lot to the children of Israel: and my lord was commanded by the Lord to give the inheritance of Zelophehad our brother unto his daughters. 3. And if they be married to any of the sons of the other tribes of the children of Israel, then shall their inheritance be taken from the inheritance of our fathers, and shall be put to the inheritance of the tribe whereunto they are received: so shall it be taken from the lot of our inheritance. 4. And when the jubilee of the children of Israel shall be, then shall their inheritance be put unto the inheritance of the tribe whereunto they are received: so shall their inheritance be taken away from the inheritance of the tribe of our fathers. 5. And Moses commanded the children of Israel according to the word of the Lord, saying, The tribe of the sons of Joseph hath said well. 6. This is the thing which the Lord doth command concerning the daughters of Zelophehad, saying, Let them marry to whom they think best; only to the family of the tribe of their father shall they marry. 7. So shall not the inheritance of the children of Israel remove from tribe to tribe: for every one of the children of Israel shall keep himself to the inheritance of the tribe of his father. 8. And every daughter, that possesseth an inheritance in any tribe of the children of Israel, shall be wife unto one of the family of the tribe of her father, that the children of Israel may enjoy every man the inheritance of his fathers. 9. Neither shall the inheritance remove from one tribe to another tribe; but every one of the tribes of the children of Israel shall keep himself to his own inheritance. 10. Even as the Lord commanded Moses, so did the daughters of Zelophehad: 11. For Mahlah, Tirzah, and Hoglah, and Milcah, and Noah, the daughters of Zelophehad, were married unto their father's brother's sons: 12. And they were married into the families of the sons of Manasseh the son of Joseph, and their inheritance remained in the tribe of the family of their father.

Besides the question in regard to the right of inheritance

in cases of such women, which had been settled before (27: 1-9), another difficulty here arises as to the disposal of their inheritance if they should marry out of their own tribe. If their inheritance, which was of landed property, should still be theirs after they had married into another tribe, their own tribe would suffer just so much loss of territory (v. 3).

4. *The jubilee* was the fiftieth year, when all alienated possessions reverted to their original owners (Lev. 25: 10).

6. This vexed question was settled by the same divine authority as before, and it was ordered that females in these circumstances should not marry out of their own family-tribe (v. 8). Thus God guarded the rights of tribes, as well as of individuals and families. He doeth all things well.

BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY.



THE name Deuteronomy is taken from the Septuagint, and signifies the "second law," or the "law repeated." This book was so called because it is largely occupied with the repetition of sundry laws formerly given, and in rehearsing God's dealings with Israel. It was primarily designed for the instruction of the new generation of Israelites which had risen up during the sojourn of forty years in the wilderness. It is the "farewell address" of Moses to his people.

INTERMARRIAGES WITH THE HEATHEN.

Deuteronomy VII. 3, 4, 14.

3. NEITHER shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. 4. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly.—14. Thou shalt be blessed above all people: there shall not be male or female barren among you, or among your cattle.

The various tribes of the Canaanites were doomed to utter destruction, like the Antediluvians and people of Sodom, as being hopelessly irreclaimable, and a snare to the Israelites (vs. 1, 2). Hence of course there could be no intermarriages allowed with such a people (cf. Exod. 34: 16, and note). The necessity of this restriction may be seen in their experience with the Midianites (Num. 25), and afterward in the case of Solomon (1 Kings 11: 1, 2; cf. also Ezra 10). The New Testament also discourages intermarriages between the godly and the openly wicked (1 Cor. 7: 39. 2 Cor. 6: 14). The ungodly partner is more likely to drag the other down, than the godly one to raise the other up.

14. *Male or female barren, etc.*—All through the Old Testament dispensation barrenness was regarded as a grievous curse, while fruitfulness was a blessing which Israel was to enjoy 'above all people' (cf. Gen. 25: 21; 30: 1, 2, and notes).

SERVANTS AND HANDMAIDENS.

Deuteronomy XII. 12, 18.

12. AND ye shall rejoice before the Lord your God, ye, and your sons, and your daughters, and your men-servants, and your maid-servants, and the Levite that is within your gates; forasmuch as he hath no part nor inheritance with you.—18. But thou must eat them before the Lord thy God in the place which the Lord thy God shall choose, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy man-servant, and thy maid-servant, and the Levite that is within thy gates: and thou shalt rejoice before the Lord thy God in all that thou puttest thine hands unto.

These precepts, together with a similar one in chap. 16: 14, show the regard which God had for the religious benefit and social enjoyment, even of the men-servants and maid-servants of his people. If the spirit of these and many similar precepts was carried out still in Christian households, the troublesome 'servant question' would be a source of much less annoyance than it now is.

ENTICERS TO IDOLATRY TO BE STONED.

Deuteronomy XIII. 6-11 (cf. also XVII. 2-7).

6. IF thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which thou hast not known, thou, nor thy fathers; 7. Namely of the gods of the people which are round about you, nigh unto thee, or far off from thee, from the one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth; 8. Thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him; neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him: 9. But thou shalt surely kill him; thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people. 10. And thou shalt stone him with stones, that he die; because he hath sought to thrust thee away from the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. 11. And all Israel shall hear, and fear, and shall do no more any such wickedness as this is among you.

Even the 'wife of the bosom' is included in all these terrible judgments. Woman is not to be excused on account of the weakness of her sex, for she is the most dangerous enticer

of all. This severity of punishment against idolatry was justly due, not only because of the impious character of that sin, but because it was also treason against Jehovah as the King of Israel. The Romish Inquisition would plead this example as an excuse for their hellish cruelties against those whom they call heretics; but the gospel sanctions no such bodily punishments for religious offenses. It does, however, require that, if necessary, we forsake father and mother, wife and children, etc., for the sake of Christ and his gospel (cf. Matt. 10: 37. Luke 14: 26, 33).

GOD'S CARE FOR THE FATHERLESS AND THE WIDOW.

Deuteronomy XIV. 29; XVI. 13, 14 (cf. XXIV. 17-22).

14: 29. AND the Levite, because he hath no part nor inheritance with thee, and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, which are within thy gates, shall come, and shall eat and be satisfied; that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hand which thou doest.

16: 13. Thou shalt observe the feast of tabernacles seven days, after that thou hast gathered in thy corn and thy wine: 14. And thou shalt rejoice in thy feast, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy man-servant, and thy maid-servant, and the Levite, the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are within thy gates.

With all God's hatred against sin, and the sore judgments with which he visits it, he is still a kind and merciful Father, who is moved by the miseries of his creatures, and has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. The gospel still more inculcates that spirit of benevolence which the law required (cf. Jas. 1: 27).

FREEDOM OF HEBREW SERVANTS.

Deuteronomy XV. 12-18 (cf., also, Exod. XXI. 1-11, and notes).

12. AND if thy brother, a Hebrew man, or a Hebrew woman, be sold unto thee, and serve thee six years; then in the seventh year thou shalt let him go free from thee. 13. And when thou sendest him out, free from thee, thou shalt not let him go away empty: 14. Thou shalt furnish him liberally out of thy flock, and out of thy floor, and out of thy wine-press: of that wherewith the Lord thy God hath blessed thee thou shalt give unto him. 15. And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee: therefore I command thee this thing to-day. 16. And it shall be, if he say unto thee, I will not go away from thee; because he loveth thee and thine house, because he is well with thee: 17. Then thou shalt take an awl, and thrust it through his ear unto the

door, and he shall be thy servant for ever. And also unto thy maid-servant thou shalt do likewise. 18. It shall not seem hard unto thee, when thou sendest him away from thee; for he hath been worth a double hired servant to thee, in serving thee six years: and the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all that thou doest.

13. *Not let him go empty, etc.*—The condition of the Hebrew servant was not one of slavery proper, but was a benevolent provision for the relief of the poor, and was designed also to remind the people that they too had been bondmen in Egypt (vs. 7-11, 15): The Hebrew woman was cared for equally with the Hebrew man (vs. 12, 17). Such was not Paganism.

IDOLATERS TO BE SLAIN.

Deuteronomy XVII. 2-7 (cf. XIII. 6-11, and notes).

2. IF there be found among you, within any of thy gates which the Lord thy God giveth thee, man or woman, that hath wrought wickedness in the sight of the Lord thy God, in transgressing his covenant, 3. And hath gone and served other gods, and worshiped them, either the sun, or moon, or any of the host of heaven, which I have not commanded; 4. And it be told thee, and thou hast heard of it, and inquired diligently, and, behold, it be true, and the thing certain, that such abomination is wrought in Israel; 5. Then shalt thou bring forth that man or that woman, which have committed that wicked thing, unto thy gates, even that man or that woman, and shalt stone them with stones, till they die. 6. At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death. 7. The hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people. So thou shalt put the evil away from among you.

2. *Transgressing his covenant.*—Israel was God's peculiar and covenant people. 'I will be your God and ye shall be my people,' said God to them often; and they had solemnly avouched the Lord to be their God (cf. 27: 17, 18, and refs.). Idolatry despised and renounced this precious covenant relation, and was worthy of death, whether man or woman were the offender.

7. In the punishment of stoning, the witnesses of the crime were always to cast the first stone.

KINGS NOT TO MULTIPLY WIVES.

Deuteronomy XVII. 14-17.

14. WHEN thou art come unto the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that are about me; 15. Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the Lord thy God shall choose: one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother. 16. But he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses: forasmuch as the Lord hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way. 17. Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away: neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold.

Although God disapproved of their having a king—God himself being their king—yet knowing that they would not be restrained from it, he gives wholesome regulations concerning the conduct of their king; and among these this in regard to the multiplying of wives was one of the most necessary, as may be seen in the case of Solomon and others. The kings seem to have been as regardless of God's precepts concerning their duty, as the people were of God's disapprobation in demanding a king (cf. 1 Sam. 8: 7. 1 Kings 11: 2-5). So perverse is man even at his best estate.

BETROTHMENT AND MARRIAGE SUPERSEDE MILITARY DUTY.

Deuteronomy XX. 7; XXIV. 5.

20: 7. AND what man is there that hath betrothed a wife, and hath not taken her? let him go and return unto his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man take her.

24: 5. When a man hath taken a new wife, he shall not go out to war, neither shall he be charged with any business: but he shall be free at home one year, and shall cheer up his wife which he hath taken.

Thus carefully was the family relation cherished. God was the God of the families of Israel. Betrothment was always regarded as not less binding than marriage itself. Marriage engagements are much too lightly formed and broken off in modern days.

WAR MADE HUMANE TOWARD WOMEN.

Deuteronomy XX. 10-15 (cf. Num. XXXII. 25-27, and note).

10. WHEN thou comest nigh unto a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it. 11. And it shall be, if it make thee answer of peace, and open unto thee, then it shall be that all the people that is found therein shall be tributaries unto thee, and they shall serve thee. 12. And if it will make no peace with thee, but will make war against thee, then thou shalt besiege it: 13. And when the Lord thy God hath delivered it into thine hands, thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword: 14. But the women, and the little ones, and the cattle, and all that is in the city, even all the spoil thereof, shalt thou take unto thyself; and thou shalt eat the spoil of thine enemies, which the Lord thy God hath given thee. 15. Thus shalt thou do unto all the cities which are very far off from thee, which are not of the cities of these nations.

An important distinction is here to be noted between the law of war in regard to other cities 'afar off,' and those of these people, *i. e.*, the Canaanites who were doomed to destruction (vs. 15-18). Their 'cup was full,' and if allowed to dwell among the Israelites they would corrupt them by their wiles and their gross licentiousness. In warring with any other people, the women and children were to be spared, according to the ordinary laws of war. God's severity is exercised only when it is necessary.

OF FEMALE CAPTIVES.

Deuteronomy XXI. 10-14.

10. WHEN thou goest forth to war against thine enemies, and the Lord thy God hath delivered them into thine hands, and thou hast taken them captive, 11. And seest among the captives a beautiful woman, and hast a desire unto her, that thou wouldest have her to thy wife; 12. Then thou shalt bring her home to thine house; and she shall shave her head and pare her nails; 13. And she shall put the raiment of her captivity from off her, and shall remain in thine house, and bewail her father and her mother a full month: and after that thou shalt go in unto her, and be her husband, and she shall be thy wife. 14. And it shall be, if thou have no delight in her, then thou shalt let her go whither she will; but thou shalt not sell her at all for money, thou shalt not make merchandise of her, because thou hast humbled her.

Among other nations such captives were simply made slaves and concubines; but this law contemplates marriage, after considerably allowing the woman a whole month to bewail her separation from her father and mother. The shaving

the head, and paring (or, as in Hebrew, 'making,' *i. e.*, letting grow) the nails, were signs of mourning. So also the putting off the 'raiment of her captivity,' *i. e.*, probably the ornamental dress and jewelry in which women about to be taken as captives arrayed themselves, in order to appear attractive to the better class of captors.

14. *Let her go.*—But not without a regular divorce (cf. 24: 1). She had now become a free woman. How different from the heathen treatment of captive women.

THE RIGHT OF THE FIRST-BORN AND OF PARENTS.

Deuteronomy XXI. 15-21.

15. If a man have two wives, one beloved, and another hated, and they have borne him children, both the beloved and the hated; and if the first-born son be hers that was hated; 16. Then it shall be, when he maketh his sons to inherit that which he hath, that he may not make the son of the beloved first-born before the son of the hated, which is indeed the first-born: 17. But he shall acknowledge the son of the hated for the first-born, by giving him a double portion of all that he hath: for he is the beginning of his strength; the right of the first-born is his. 18. If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them; 19. Then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place; 20. And they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard. 21. And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die: so shalt thou put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear, and fear.

15. *If a man have* (or, have had) *two wives.*—One of these may have been taken after the death of the other; or, if both at the same time, it shows that polygamy, like some other evil things, was tolerated and regulated, though disapproved. *Hated*, *i. e.*, less regarded than the other (cf. Gen. 29: 31, and note).

16. *The first-born* of the slighted wife may not be deprived of his birthright to gratify the wishes of the favorite one.

17. *A double portion.*—It appears from this that such was one of the privileges connected with the birthright.

18-21. Such severity of punishment shows the importance attached to the maintenance of parental authority. It could not be inflicted, however, except in most extreme cases, when the offense is treated as a crime against the state. Observe

here also that the authority of the mother is recognized as fully equal to that of the father

LAWS GUARDING FEMALE PURITY.

Deuteronomy XXII. 5, 13-30.

5. THE woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the Lord thy God.—13. If any man take a wife, and go in unto her, and hate her, 14. And give occasions of speech against her, and bring up an evil name upon her, and say, I took this woman, and when I came to her, I found her not a maid: 15. Then shall the father of the damsel, and her mother, take and bring forth the tokens of the damsel's virginity unto the elders of the city in the gate: 16. And the damsel's father shall say unto the elders, I gave my daughter unto this man to wife, and he hateth her; 17. And, lo, he hath given occasions of speech against her, saying, I found not thy daughter a maid; and yet these are the tokens of my daughter's virginity. And they shall spread the cloth before the elders of the city. 18. And the elders of that city shall take that man and chastise him; 19. And they shall amerce him in a hundred shekels of silver, and give them unto the father of the damsel, because he hath brought up an evil name upon a virgin of Israel: and she shall be his wife; he may not put her away all his days. 20. But if this thing be true, and the tokens of virginity be not found for the damsel: 21. Then they shall bring out the damsel to the door of her father's house, and the men of her city shall stone her with stones that she die; because she hath wrought folly in Israel, to play the whore in her father's house: so shalt thou put evil away from among you. 22. If a man be found lying with a woman married to a husband, then they shall both of them die, both the man that lay with the woman, and the woman: so shalt thou put away evil from Israel. 23. If a damsel that is a virgin be betrothed unto a husband, and a man find her in the city, and lie with her; 24. Then ye shall bring them both out unto the gate of that city, and ye shall stone them with stones that they die; the damsel, because she cried not, being in the city; and the man, because he hath humbled his neighbor's wife: so thou shalt put away evil from among you. 25. But if a man find a betrothed damsel in the field, and the man force her, and lie with her: then the man only that lay with her shall die: 26. But unto the damsel thou shalt do nothing; there is in the damsel no sin worthy of death: for as when a man raiseth against his neighbor, and slayeth him, even so is this matter: 27. For he found her in the field, and the betrothed damsel cried, and there was none to save her. 28. If a man find a damsel that is a virgin, which is not betrothed, and lay hold on her, and lie with her, and they be found; 29. Then the man that lay with her shall give unto the damsel's father fifty shekels of silver, and she shall be his wife; because he hath humbled her, he may not put her away all his days. 30. A man shall not take his father's wife, nor discover his father's skirt.

5. The connection in which this prohibition occurs, leads

us to infer that its chief object was to guard against the temptation to licentiousness which was afforded by the interchange of the garments of the sexes. It was also, probably, one of the practices of the heathen, and was 'an abomination unto the Lord.' It was not a mere ceremonial restriction, and it is as morally binding now as then.

13-30. Whatever may appear as indelicate in these laws is excused by the necessity of explicitness in the language of all criminal law. The first (vs. 13-19) is for the protection of the young wife against the caprice and slander of a husband who has soon grown tired of her. The others show God's abhorrence of every violation of female chastity, whether in or out of the marriage relation, and whether by force or mutual consent. Not only was adultery a capital offense when committed with a married woman, but even with a betrothed virgin (vs. 22-24). All the sins here referred to are treated far too lightly now, both by public sentiment and modern legislation.

OTHER ABOMINATIONS.

Deuteronomy XXIII. 17, 18.

17. THERE shall be no whore of the daughters of Israel, nor a sodomite of the sons of Israel. 18. Thou shalt not bring the hire of a whore, or the price of a dog, into the house of the Lord thy God for any vow: for even both these are abomination unto the Lord thy God.

These are manifestly heathen customs, especially the bringing of the hire of any such abomination as an offering to God in the way of vow or worship. *A dog, i. e., a sodomite.* It is amazing that such foul deeds should ever be perpetrated under the name of religion: but not only was it done among the Canaanites of old, and by the worshipers of Baal and Ashtoreth—as it is also by the Hindoos still—but even in Catholic Italy, harlots and banditti, it is said, will not eat meat on Friday, and are otherwise ceremonially very religious. Mormonism and Free Love associations show the same vile service of the devil, in the name of religion.

LAWS OF DIVORCE, ETC.

Deuteronomy XXIV. 1-5.

1. WHEN a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favor in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. 2. And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife. 3. And if the latter husband hate her, and write her a bill of divorcement, and giveth it in her hand, and sendeth her out of his house; or if the latter husband die, which took her to be his wife; 4. The former husband, which sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled; for that is abomination before the Lord: and thou shalt not cause the land to sin, which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance. 5. When a man hath taken a new wife, he shall not go out to war, neither shall he be charged with any business: but he shall be free at home one year, and shall cheer up his wife which he hath taken.

1. *Some uncleanness.*—Not adultery, but disease, or other infirmity. The giving of a writing of divorcement was designed to correct an abuse which had before prevailed, and is said still to prevail among the Arabs, viz: the repudiation of a wife at any moment by the husband, according to his own arbitrary will, and without reason assigned. The Mosaic law in regard to this, and other matters of the same sort, was far in advance of the customs of the heathen round about; although by no means up to the gospel standard (cf. Matt. 5: 31; 19: 3-9). Many things were tolerated 'because of the hardness of their hearts' (cf. Exod. 21: 1-11, and notes).

5. This mild regulation was calculated to cement the affections of the married pair, and thus to forestall occasions for divorce; also to secure the presence of the husband at the time of his wife's first domestic *trial*; and to put more honor upon the family relation than upon war (cf. 20: 7). How wise and beneficent is all this!

THE STRANGER, THE FATHERLESS, AND THE WIDOW.

Deuteronomy XXIV. 17-22; XXVI. 12, 13 (cf. XIV. 29; XVI. 13, 14).

17. THOU shalt not pervert the judgment of the stranger, nor of the fatherless; nor take a widow's raiment to pledge: 18. But thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee thence: therefore I command thee to do this thing. 19. When thou cuttest down thine harvest in thy field, and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it: it shall be for

the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow: that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hands. 20. When thou beatest thine olive tree, thou shalt not go over the boughs again: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow. 21. When thou gatherest the grapes of thy vineyard, thou shalt not glean it afterward: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow. 22. And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt: therefore I command thee to do this thing.

26: 12. When thou hast made an end of tithing all the tithes of thine increase the third year, which is the year of tithing, and hast given it unto the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that they may eat within thy gates, and be filled; 13. Then thou shalt say before the Lord thy God, I have brought away the hallowed things out of mine house, and also have given them unto the Levite, and unto the stranger, to the fatherless, and to the widow, according to all thy commandments which thou hast commanded me: and I have not transgressed thy commandments, neither have I forgotten them.

17. *Raiment to pledge.*—In Eastern countries the poor usually have no other covering at night than what they wear during the day. Hence the poor man's outer garment, when taken in pledge for debt, must be restored to him in the evening (v. 13); while the poor widow's raiment must not be taken at all in pledge. All the other provisions in these passages show how kind and humane was the spirit of the Hebrew laws.

19. *Cuttest down thy harvest.*—Here the 'gleanings' are to be left for the classes mentioned.

THE LEVIRATE LAW, ETC.

Deuteronomy XXV. 5-10, 11, 12 (cf. Gen. XXXVIII. 8, 11, 26.
Ruth III. 9, etc.).

5. If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of a husband's brother unto her. 6. And it shall be, that the first-born which she beareth shall succeed in the name of his brother which is dead, that his name be not put out of Israel. 7. And if the man like not to take his brother's wife, then let his brother's wife go up to the gate unto the elders, and say, My husband's brother refuseth to raise up unto his brother a name in Israel, he will not perform the duty of my husband's brother. 8. Then the elders of his city shall call him, and speak unto him: and if he stand to it, and say, I like not to take her; 9. Then shall his brother's wife come unto him in the presence of the elders, and loose his shoe from off his foot, and spit in his face, and shall answer and say, So shall it be done unto that man that will not build up his brother's house. 10. And his name shall be called in Israel, The house of him that hath his shoe

loosed. 11. When men strive together one with another, and the wife of the one draweth near for to deliver her husband out of the hand of him that smiteth him, and putteth forth her hand, and taketh him by the secrets: 12. Then thou shalt cut off her hand, thine eye shall not pity her.

5, etc. This law was peculiarly Jewish, and was only temporary in its obligation. It was designed to transmit the rights of the first-born, in the line of the eldest son; and in case of the death of this son without male issue, his next younger brother was required to take his brother's wife (a connection which was otherwise forbidden), and to 'raise up seed to his brother,' *i. e.*, the first-born son of this marriage was to bear the name and inherit the property and birthright privileges of the deceased elder brother. This applied, however, only to the first-born; any other children born afterward belonged to the younger brother himself. The word 'brother' here is taken in the usual Hebrew sense as meaning any near kinsman—as in the case of Boaz and Ruth. This person, whose right and duty it was to redeem a forfeited inheritance, or to marry a wife thus left a widow and childless, was called a *goel*, or redeemer. The same was also the avenger of blood (Num. 35: 12, etc.).

9. *Spit in his face*, or in his presence, which was a mark of supreme contempt. The 'loosing of the shoe' had a similar meaning, and was an abiding stigma upon the family of the man (v. 10). In Ruth 4: 7, 8, it is used also as a sign of the consummation of a bargain. See the allusion to this law in Matt. 22: 24, etc.

11, 12. *Cut off her hand*.—Probably for the shamelessness of the act, and for the maiming which was perhaps attempted. No such laws were given without some wise reason.

THE WIDOW AND FATHERLESS AGAIN.

Deuteronomy XXVI. 12, 13 (cf. XIV. 29; XVI. 11; XXIV. 19-22).

12. WHEN thou hast made an end of tithing all the tithes of thine increase the third year, which is the year of tithing, and hast given it unto the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that they may eat within thy gates, and be filled; 13. Then thou shalt say before the Lord thy God, I have brought away the hallowed things out of mine house, and also have given them unto the Levite, and unto the stranger, to the fatherless, and to the widow, according to all thy commandments which thou hast commanded me: I have not transgressed thy commandments, neither have I forgotten them.

Here it is a share of the tithings of the third year, which is

allowed to the widow, etc., in addition to the 'gleanings' of chap. 24: 19-21, and the festivities of the 'feast of weeks' (16: 10, 11). With all these benevolent provisions for the various classes of the poor, there could be but little occasion for extreme want in the land. Thus also is it apparent that the Jewish religion was one of beneficence toward man, as well as of duty toward God. It attempted to carry out faithfully the requirements of both tables of the law.

REPETITION OF CERTAIN LAWS.

Deuteronomy XXVII. 16, 20, 22, 23.

16. CURSED be he that setteth light by his father or his mother: and all the people shall say, Amen.—20. Cursed be he that lieth with his father's wife; because he uncovereth his father's skirt: and all the people shall say, Amen.—22. Cursed be he that lieth with his sister, the daughter of his father, or the daughter of his mother: and all the people shall say, Amen. 23. Cursed be he that lieth with his mother-in-law: and all the people shall say, Amen.

These are found among the solemn curses which were to be pronounced publicly by the Levites from Mount Ebal, and to which, as they were repeated one by one, all the people were to respond *Amen*, thus making it a solemn covenant transaction, and securing them against the liability to forget these laws, in the absence of written documents.

SORE CALAMITIES THREATENED.

Deuteronomy XXVIII. 30, 32, 41, 56-58, 68.

30. THOU shalt betroth a wife, and another man shall lie with her: thou shalt build a house, and thou shalt not dwell therein: thou shalt plant a vineyard, and shalt not gather the grapes thereof.—32. Thy sons and thy daughters shall be given unto another people, and thine eyes shall look, and fail with longing for them all the day long: and there shall be no might in thine hand.—41. Thou shalt beget sons and daughters, but thou shalt not enjoy them; for they shall go into captivity.—56. The tender and delicate woman among you, which would not adventure to set the sole of her foot upon the ground for delicateness and tenderness, her eye shall be evil toward the husband of her bosom, and toward her son, and toward her daughter, 57. And toward her young one that cometh out between her feet, and toward her children which she shall bear: for she shall eat them for want of all things secretly in the siege and straitness, wherewith thine enemy shall distress thee in thy gates. 58. If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, THE LORD THY GOD.—68. And the Lord shall bring thee into Egypt again with ships, by the

way whereof I spake unto thee, Thou shalt see it no more again: and there ye shall be sold unto your enemies for bondmen and bondwomen, and no man shall buy you.

These are found among many other blessings and curses which Moses, by divine authority, pronounced upon the people near the close of his life.

56-58. These fearful calamities had been predicted in Lev. 26: 29, and we have an account of their fulfillment in 2 Kings 6: 28, 29. See notes on that passage.

68. *No man shall buy you, i. e.*, so many will be the slaves offered for sale, that there shall be no more purchasers for them. This was remarkably fulfilled after the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, A. D. 70. See Josephus and the various histories of this terrible event.

THE COVENANT RENEWED—WOMEN, ETC., TAKING PART.

Deuteronomy XXIX. 10-12; XXXI. 12, 13 (cf. Neh. VIII. 2; X. 28, and notes).

10. YE stand this day all of you before the Lord your God; your captains of your tribes, your elders, and your officers, with all the men of Israel, 11. Your little ones, your wives, and thy stranger that is in thy camp, from the hewer of thy wood unto the drawer of thy water: 12. That thou shouldst enter into covenant with the Lord thy God, and into his oath, which the Lord thy God maketh with thee this day.

31: 12. Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and the stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the Lord your God, and observe to do all the words of this law: 13. And that their children, which have not known anything, may hear, and learn to fear the Lord your God, as long as ye live in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it.

11. *Your wives.*—These for themselves, as well as being a part of the family of the husband, entered into covenant with God. So also on all similar occasions (cf. 31: 12. Josh. 8: 35. Neh. as above). Under the gospel, the wife is still more independent and personally responsible in matters of religion, and should never *wait for her husband* when he neglects his duty to the church. The unbelieving husband is much more likely to be 'sanctified by the believing wife,' when she proves herself an humble but decided and exemplary Christian, than when she seems to share his indifference.

31: 12, 13. *Their children, etc.*—The perpetuation of the

national religion was the special design of this. Religion is for the *family* as well as for the individual; and both church and nation are composed of families. So carefully, therefore, is the family relation guarded and hallowed both under the Jewish and Christian dispensations.

BOOK OF JOSHUA.



THE HARLOT RAHAB.

Read Joshua II. 1-22, also VI. 22-25.

2: 1. Two *men*.—Joshua had now arrived on the eastern borders of the land of which they were about to take possession; and although he depends on God to go before him and drive out the inhabitants, he does not neglect the ordinary precautions of war. He sends, therefore, these two spies before him in order to learn what are the difficulties likely to be encountered.

2. *An harlot's house*.—As the word rendered 'harlot' sometimes means *hostess*, or *innkeeper* (perhaps because the two characters were often found connected), some have attempted to relieve Rahab from the stigma of this name. But as the unequivocal term *πορνή*, is twice applied to her in the New Testament (Heb. 11: 31. Jas. 2: 25), there can be no doubt that it is to be taken in its proper sense. But that she was now a penitent and a true believer is equally undoubted, for her conduct in receiving the spies is attributed to 'faith' (Heb. 11: 31).

4. *Hid them*.—The deception here practiced is not to be judged by the gospel standard, for she had been brought up a heathen. Besides, they were strangers who had sought the protection of her roof, and according to the customs of oriental countries, she was sacredly bound to protect them (cf. Gen. 19: 8). It is also noticeable that the officers do not enter themselves in order to make search, but only demand that the men be 'brought out.' Such also was oriental usage, which prohibits any man from entering the apartments of a woman without her permission.

9. *The Lord hath given you the land, etc.*—The fame of the Israelites was already widely spread, and the people of Canaan were trembling at their approach. In v. 11 she professes her faith in the 'Lord God of Israel' as the true God, and intercedes for her own life and that of her kindred when the land should be taken possession of.

18. *This line (or rope) of scarlet.*—This was that by which she had aided in their escape, and it was to be hung up from that time forward as a pledge and token of her safety. Thus in Rahab's case we have faith, confession, and works, as evidence of her repentance and reformation (see Hebrews and James, as above). The line of scarlet has been not inappropriately regarded as representing the blood of Christ through which spiritual safety is secured, just as is the sprinkling of blood on the door-posts of the Israelites in Egypt (Exod. 12: 23).

21. *She bound the line in the window, i. e.,* she did not lay it away in reserve until the time of need, but kept it always hanging there. So should our faith be an abiding principle, and the evidence of it ever manifest.

6: 22. After the lapse of a considerable time, during which the Jordan is crossed and Canaan entered, as recorded in the intervening chapters, they now approach Jericho, and the two spies are sent again to the house of Rahab. The scarlet cord still hangs in its place, although they had only required that it be hung up at their approach (2: 18). But she has indulged in no remission of her watchful caution (2: 21), and she and 'all her kindred' were saved according to the promise of the spies. This was in honor of *her* faith, just as Noah's family were saved because '*he* was righteous' (Gen. 7: 1. Cf., also, the 'jailer and *his* house,' Acts 16: 31). Such honor does God put upon true faith.

25. *She dwelleth in Israel, etc., i. e.,* in the person of her descendants. She was a proselyte to the true religion, and she was married to Salmon, the father (ancestor) of Boaz, who married Ruth the Moabitess (cf. Ruth 4: 21. Matt. 1: 5); and thus she was honored in becoming one of the ancestors of the Messiah. The gospel does not withhold its blessings from the very chief of sinners.

OTHNIEL AND ACHSAH—HEROIC TIMES.

Joshua XV. 16-19.

16. AND Caleb said, He that smiteth Kirjath-sepher, and taketh it, to him will I give Achsah my daughter to wife. 17. And Othniel the son of Kenaz, the brother of Caleb, took it: and he gave him Achsah his daughter to wife. 18. And it came to pass, as she came unto him, that she moved him to ask of her father a field: and she lighted off her ass; and Caleb said unto her, What wouldest thou? 19. Who answered, Give me a blessing; for thou hast given me a south land; give me also springs of water. And he gave her the upper springs, and the nether springs.

(This same passage is found in Judges 1: 12-15.)

16.—Caleb was one of the spies whom *Moses had sent into the land from Kadesh-Barnea (Num. 13); and we have an interesting account of the assignment of his portion of the inheritance, in Josh. 14: 6-15. He was one of the great warriors of Israel, and although now eighty-five years of age, he is not afraid to undertake to drive out the Anakims from the region of Hebron, which Moses had promised him. From the verses immediately preceding (13-15), we learn that Caleb had been successful in driving out the three sons of Anak, but that the town of Kirjath-sepher was yet to be rescued from these mighty enemies. Probably for the double purpose of gaining the help of a younger and more vigorous warrior, and of securing as a son-in-law a hero worthy of his daughter, he makes the proclamation here mentioned. We may suppose that he already had his eye upon the valiant young Othniel, and anticipated the result. No doubt, however, there were other competitors for so attractive a prize; and as these events took place before the time of the Trojan war, there were probably deeds of daring exhibited on this occasion worthy of the Homeric heroes. But the Bible does not deal in romance, nor does it give us any account of the marriage festivities. The right of Caleb to bestow his daughter on whom he will, is not questioned. Such was the custom of the times (cf. Gen. 29: 19, etc. 1 Sam. 17: 25).

17. *Brother of Caleb.*—Othniel was Caleb's nephew (Judges 1: 13; 3: 9), and Achsah's cousin. Such marriages are still common among the Jews, but they tend to physical degeneracy.

18. *She lighted off, etc.*—Thus reverently also did Rebekah receive Isaac, and Abigail David (Gen. 24: 64. 1 Sam. 25:

23). In thus approaching her father, she intimates that she has an important communication to make. She had first 'moved' her husband to make this request, but he wisely leaves her to present it, as more likely to be successful with her father.

19. *A blessing, i. e., a present* (cf. 1. Sam. 25: 27).—Here it is an addition to her marriage portion. *A south land*—Which would probably, from its southern exposure, be too dry to be productive; and, as a provident wife, she asks for 'springs of water,' to irrigate it. He grants her request by adding another adjoining and well watered tract. Let us learn also to 'ask good things' from our Heavenly Father, who will not refuse us (Matt. 7: 11). We find afterward that the brave Othniel became the first judge of Israel (Judges 3: 9–11), the Lord having 'raised him up' for this purpose in answer to the penitent cries of the people. God has some mission for every one.

THE DAUGHTERS OF ZELOPHEHAD AGAIN.

Read Joshua XVII. 3–6.

See Num. 27: 1–9; 36: 1–12, and notes.

INTERMARRIAGES WITH HEATHEN AGAIN.

Joshua XXIII. 11–13.

11. TAKE good heed therefore unto yourselves, that ye love the Lord your God. 12. Else, if ye do in any wise go back, and cleave unto the remnant of these nations, even these that remain among you, and shall make marriages with them, and go in unto them, and they to you: 13. Know for a certainty that the Lord your God will no more drive out any of these nations from before you; but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land which the Lord your God hath given you.

This is but a repetition of the injunction solemnly laid upon them by Moses, among his last charges to Israel. Joshua also is now 'old and stricken in age' (v. 1), and he knows well the necessity of reiterating this important charge. The evil consequences of disregarding it are amply seen in the book of Judges. The great principle which lies at the foundation of these restrictions is, that unless the *fountains* be kept pure in the families of a people, the streams which

flow through both church and state will soon become corrupt (cf. Deut. 7: 3, 4, and notes).

“Acquaintance, friendship, and marriage, with persons of no religion, or false religion, have generally been progressive steps toward the mere professor’s apostasy, and the believer’s loss of all his earnestness, comfort, and usefulness.”—*Scott*.

BOOK OF JUDGES.



THIS book takes its name from the class of rulers who governed Israel after the days of Joshua. It is by no means a consecutive history of events, but only a collection of detached memoranda. Of the whole book of Judges, it may be said that it is a record of Israel's sins and punishments, with alternations of repentance and deliverance (see 2: 11-19.)

The government during the period of the Judges is not to be conceived of as an orderly, systematic administration, but as that of military chieftains raised up, from time to time, by an extraordinary divine impulse, for the deliverance of Israel out of the hand of their enemies. After this was accomplished, their influence, for the most part, seems to have been but local and temporary. The elders in each city were the local magistracy.

Othniel, Deborah, Jephthah, and Samson, were among the Judges whom it will come in our way to notice.

OTHNIEL AND ACHSAH AGAIN.

Read Judges I. 12-15.

SEE Josh. 15: 16-19, and notes. Cf., also, Judges 3: 9-11.

DEBORAH AND JAEL.

Judges IV. 4-9, 14-24.

4. AND Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time. 5. And she dwelt under the palm-tree of Deborah, between Ramah and Bethel in mount Ephraim: and the children of Israel came up to her for judgment. And she sent and called Barak the son of Abinoam out of Kedesh-naphtali, and said unto him, Hath not the Lord God of Israel commanded, saying, Go and draw toward

mount Tabor, and take with thee ten thousand men of the children of Naphtali and of the children of Zebulun? 7. And I will draw unto thee, to the river Kishon, Sisera the captain of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his multitude; and I will deliver him into thine hand. 8. And Barak said unto her, If thou wilt go with me, then I will go: but if thou wilt not go with me, then I will not go. 9. And she said, I will surely go with thee: notwithstanding the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honor; for the Lord shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman. And Deborah arose, and went with Barak to Kedesh.—14. And Deborah said unto Barak, Up; for this is the day in which the Lord hath delivered Sisera into thine hand: is not the Lord gone out before thee? So Barak went down from mount Tabor, and ten thousand men after him. 15. And the Lord discomfited Sisera, and all his chariots, and all his host, with the edge of the sword before Barak; so that Sisera lighted down off his chariot, and fled away on his feet. But Barak pursued after the chariots, and after the host, unto Harosheth of the Gentiles: and all the host of Sisera fell upon the edge of the sword; and there was not a man left. 17. Howbeit Sisera fled away on his feet to the tent of Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite: for there was peace between Jabin the king of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite. 18. And Jael went out to meet Sisera, and said unto him, Turn in, my lord, turn in to me; fear not. And when he had turned in unto her into the tent, she covered him with a mantle. 19. And he said unto her, Give me, I pray thee, a little water to drink; for I am thirsty. And she opened a bottle of milk, and gave him drink, and covered him. 20. Again he said unto her, Stand in the door of the tent, and it shall be, when any man doth come and inquire of thee, and say, Is there any man here? that thou shalt say, No. 21. Then Jael Heber's wife took a nail of the tent, and took a hammer in her hand, and went softly unto him, and smote the nail into his temples, and fastened it into the ground: for he was fast asleep and weary. So he died. 22. And, behold, as Barak pursued Sisera, Jael came out to meet him, and said unto him, Come, and I will show thee the man whom thou seekest. And when he came into her tent, behold, Sisera lay dead, and the nail was in his temples. 23. So God subdued on that day Jabin the king of Canaan before the children of Israel. 24. And the hand of the children of Israel prospered, and prevailed against Jabin the king of Canaan, until they had destroyed Jabin king of Canaan.

4. *The prophetess.*—For the import of this title, compare the notes in regard to Miriam, Exod. 15: 20, etc. *Wife of Lapidoth*, or, 'a woman' of Lapidoth—this being the place of her residence. The word has a feminine termination, and if it is the name of her husband it does not speak much for the *manliness* of the man.

5. *Dwelt.*—She most probably had her tent under a cluster of palm-trees. The locality was afterward known by her name. *For judgment.*—Her piety, force of character, and prophetic gifts, naturally drew the people to her as their

judge and umpire in cases of difficulty—now that there was no organized government in Israel. When God raises up such women, in such times, let all men recognize their right to rule.

6. *Sent and called Barak.*—The people had been groaning now for twenty years under the oppressions of Jabin, king of Canaan (vs. 2, 3). A spirit of repentance, no doubt, has been at length awakened among them (2: 16–18); and the Lord raises up Deborah—finding no man, probably, worthy of the honor—to work out their deliverance.

8. *If thou wilt go with me I will go.*—He has not himself faith enough in the ‘Lord God of Israel,’ in whose name Deborah had summoned him, to venture on the expedition without her.

9. *Hand of a woman.*—It is to be, all through, a woman’s triumph, with no credit to the redoubtable general, Barak.

15. *The Lord discomfited Sisera.*—Probably by striking his host with panic, so that Barak had nothing to do but to pursue and destroy. The victory is everywhere ascribed to the Lord (vs. 7, 14, 23; 5: 20). It is a war in defense of God’s covenant people, who are remembered for their fathers’ sakes; and it is an utter discomfiture (v. 16).

17. *Heber the Kenite.*—A famous name (like Lapidoth, v. 4), but he is immortal only as the husband of Jael, although he belonged to the same people with Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law, and his family were of sufficient consequence to have negotiated a peace with Jabin.

18–20. This was a reception on the part of Jael such as was due only to a friend; and according to all the laws of ancient hospitality, Jael’s treachery was most base and dishonorable. No excuse can be made for it, unless we suppose that she may have been moved by a divine impulse to rid the world of a monster who was unfit to live. But it must be remembered that she was not an Israelite, and her conduct is not to be judged by the Bible standard. The blessing pronounced on her, in chap. 5: 24, confirms the supposition that she acted under a special divine commission.

20. *Thou shalt say, No.*—This falsehood which he wishes her to tell, does not excuse her treachery; though she did not promise him.

21. *Took a nail, i. e., a tent pin.*—A very unwomanly act, but she was a heroine. and an instrument in God’s hand.

SONG OF DEBORAH AND BARAK.

Read Judges V. entire.

1. **DEBORAH.**—She is named first as being the author of the song, and the chief actor throughout. A 'prophetess' among the ancients was equivalent to 'poetess' (Latin, *vates*). The Greeks and Romans regarded poets as inspired. This song may be compared with that of Moses and Miriam (Exod. 15), and was probably sung responsively by each at the head of a choir of the same sex, and with the accompaniment of instruments and dances, which latter were a sort of joyous saltation.

4, 5. *The earth trembled, etc.*—By this lively imagery is represented the terror of the tribes of Seir and Edom, when the Israelites were passing through under the guidance of the Lord in the pillar of fire (cf. 1: 9. Ps. 18: 7–15; 68: 7, 8).

6. *Days of Shamgar* (3: 31)—*in the days of Jael, i. e.*, in the days of both; or, from the days of the one to those of the other. In those days the land was filled with robbers, so that the 'highways were unoccupied,' etc.

7. *Villages ceased, i. e.*, the unwall'd villages, the inhabitants having all fled to the fortified cities; or 'villages' may be read 'judges.'

Until that I Deborah arose.—This may seem like vainglory, but it is excusable; and she speaks not for herself alone, but as the leader of her band. She gives God the glory, in vs. 2, 3.

A mother in Israel.—(Cf. 2 Sam. 20: 19, where the same phrase occurs, though probably in a different sense.) 'Mothers in Israel,' now, are venerable Christian women who have done much for the cause of Christ, by training up their own children to piety, or by being instrumental in the conversion of others. May there ever be many such in the church.

12. *Awake, awake.*—She now arouses all her poetic fervor, to describe the gathering of the forces, and the battle scenes. *Lead thy captivity, i. e.*, those who held thee in captivity.

13. *Over the nobles, etc.*—Rather, 'Then came down the residue of the nobles; the people of the Lord came down to me with the mighty.'

23. *Curse ye Meroz.*—Probably a city somewhere near the scene of conflict. The *Angel-Jehovah* himself pronounces this bitter curse. He says still, 'He that is not for me, is against me;' and there is a spiritual curse still upon all who

are cowardly or inactive in the Lord's great battle against falsehood, sin, and Satan.

24. *Blessed above women.*—In contrast with the curse upon Meroz, this is a poetical compliment, suitable to a song of triumph, and due to one, who, though not an Israelite herself, 'came up to the help of the Lord,' by smiting Sisera (cf. Lev. 1: 28).

In the tent.—Jael was not a Joan of Arc, to expose herself 'on the high places of the field.' So may women still serve God and their country 'in the tent' of home life, rather than in the tented field. Even Deborah herself was not a warrior.

25. *Butter*, or curdled milk, a favorite beverage in the East.

26. *Smote off*, or smote violently. It does not imply decapitation.

27. *At her feet he bowed, etc.*—How graphic a description of his death-struggles! It is Homeric.

28–30. *The mother of Sisera.*—By a sudden shifting of these dramatic scenes we are introduced to the house of Sisera's mother, and see her surrounded by her ladies, and looking out of the lattice over the distant plain, in momentary expectation of the appearance of the victor host. As the delay becomes irksome, she fondly repeats the suggestions of her attendants, 'Have they not sped,' etc.? How truly poetic, and yet how truly heathenish are this mother's notions of a triumph for her son!

31. *So let, etc.*—Deborah again speaks in this devout and sublime conclusion of the song (cf. Ps. 68: 2, 3). The last clause is no part of the song, but a historical note.

GIDEON'S MANY WIVES.

Judges VIII. 30, 31.

30. AND Gideon had threescore and ten sons of his body begotten: for he had many wives. 31. And his concubine that was in Shechem, she also bare him a son, whose name he called Abimelech.

Some fifty years after the time of Deborah, and after the Midianites had been oppressing Israel for several years, Gideon was raised up to be a deliverer and judge. His administration also, like that of Deborah, lasted forty years. During these later years of power and ease, he is lifted up with pride, and assumes a kingly state, although without the royal title. Hence his many wives, in imitation of oriental kings, and hence, also, the name Abimelech (my father a king), which

he gives to the son of his favorite concubine, in anticipation perhaps of the attempt which this son would afterward make to play the king in Israel (chap. 9). Solomon seems to have faithfully copied Gideon's example. How dangerous is power to its possessor.

“A WOMAN SLEW HIM.”

Judges IX. 50-56.

50. THEN went Abimelech to Thebez, and encamped against Thebez, and took it. 51. But there was a strong tower within the city, and thither fled all the men and women, and all they of the city, and shut it to them, and gat them up to the top of the tower. 52. And Abimelech came unto the tower, and fought against it, and went hard unto the door of the tower to burn it with fire. 53. And a certain woman cast a piece of a millstone upon Abimelech's head, and all-to brake his skull. 54. Then he called hastily unto the young man his armor-bearer, and said unto him, Draw thy sword, and slay me, that men say not of me, A woman slew him. And his young man thrust him through, and he died. 55. And when the men of Israel saw that Abimelech was dead, they departed every man unto his place. 56. Thus God rendered the wickedness of Abimelech, which he did unto his father, in slaying his seventy brethren.

50. *Abimelech.*—This was that Abimelech, the son of Gideon, who had ‘reigned three years over Israel’ (v. 22). In attempting to storm the stronghold of Thebez he meets with this inglorious end.

53. *A certain woman.*—Hebrew, ‘one woman’ *i. e.*, no one in particular, but one of those who happened to be throwing stones over the wall. *All-to.*—As we now use this phrase it conveys a wrong meaning. It is old English for “altogether,” or “wholly.” She did not do it for the purpose of breaking his skull, more than that of any one else. Hence may be seen the providential character of the whole transaction, and how God accomplishes his purposes by means of what men call accidents. It was by the chance act of this woman that God rendered (*i. e.*, punished) the wickedness of Abimelech, etc. (cf. vs. 24, 56).

54. *A woman slew him.*—Than which nothing could be more disgraceful to an ancient warrior. And yet he did not escape the stigma, for the circumstance seems to have become proverbial. See the allusion to it in 2 Sam. 11: 21.

56. *Thus God rendered, etc.*—“Thus the world and Israel were rid of a vile murderer, usurper, and tyrant, who came in with subtlety, ruled in cruelty, and died in infamy.”—*Scott.*

JEPHTHAH'S DAUGHTER.

Judges XI. 29-31, 34-40.

29. THEN the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah, and he passed over Gilead, and Manassch, and passed over Mizpeh of Gilead, and from Mizpeh of Gilead he passed over unto the children of Ammon.

30. And Jephthah vowed a vow unto the Lord, and said, If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into my hands, 31. 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.—34. 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. 35. 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 can not go back. 36. 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. 37. 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. 38. 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. 39. 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 she knew no man. And it was a custom in Israel, 40. That the daughters of Israel went yearly to lament the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite four days in a year.

Jephthah was one of the distinguished Judges of Israel, whose achievements were confined chiefly to the country east of the Jordan, where the people had been oppressed by the Ammonites.

29. *The Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah, i. e., to endow him with capacity for the work to which he was called (cf. 3: 10; 6: 34, etc.). It does not necessarily imply a sanctifying or saving influence (e. g., in 14: 6. 1 Sam. 10: 6).* He passed over these places for the purpose of summoning the people to the war.

30. *Jephthah vowed a vow.*—Vows of various kinds were common among the Jews, and were approved of God (Num. chaps. 6, 30, and notes). This vow of Jephthah, however, was extraordinary, and the best expositors are divided as to its meaning. The general spirit of the vow may be compared

with that of Jacob (Gen. 28: 20-22). Here it was a vow intended to secure the favor of God in the war against the Ammonites. Jephthah of course must have believed that the thing vowed was acceptable to God. Did he then intend, possibly, to offer a human victim as a burnt offering?

34. *His daughter.*—She had heard of his triumphs, and comes out with a band of her companions to welcome home the victor in the usual manner (cf. 1 Sam. 18: 6).

35. *Rent his clothes, etc.*—As she was his only child, his extreme distress is but natural, if he feels himself bound by his vow to offer her up as a burnt offering. *I can not go back.*—This was the general law of vows; and he may have misunderstood the injunction in Lev. 27: 29, 'none devoted shall be redeemed; it shall surely be put to death.' He had been brought up east of the Jordan, and had lived the life of an exile (v. 3), and was therefore but little acquainted with the details of the Jewish law. He may not have known, therefore, that human sacrifices were an 'abomination to the Lord' (Deut. 12: 31). He remembered the sacrifice of Isaac, which had been commanded; and he knew of such sacrifices being offered among his neighbors, the Moabites (2 Kings 3: 27).

36. *My father, if thou hast opened thy mouth, i. e., 'hast sworn.'*—This pious and patriotic daughter gives her full consent that her father should do with her whatever his vow required.

38. *Bewail my virginity, i. e., 'my having to die childless, and leave you also childless,'* than which there could be no greater misfortune, according to Jewish notions.

39. *According to his vow.*—There was no substitution, therefore, or redemption of her from her fate, as some suppose.

40. *Went yearly to lament.*—Rather 'to celebrate.' Those who suppose that she was not sacrificed, but only devoted to perpetual virginity, render this 'to talk with,' or condole with, which is quite improbable. As, however, our translators have given this reading in the margin, and in v. 31 they give in the same way *or* instead of *and* in the beginning of the last clause, they thus admit the possibility of that interpretation which regards Jephthah as saying that whatever might come forth to meet him should *either* 'be the Lord's,' *i. e.,* consecrated to his service, *or* be offered up 'for a burnt offering,' *i. e.,* if it were a clean animal suitable to be offered. This consecration, in his daughter's case, would

then be equivalent to making her a perpetual Nazarite, or a servant of the sanctuary; and his distress is supposed to arise from her having thus to live and die childless. Many able defenses of this view have been written, *e. g.*, see Dr. Hales, in *Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*. The only *real* argument, however, against the other and more obvious interpretation, is the enormity of the deed. But this may be attributed to Jephthah's ignorance.*

"Though we can not approve of the conduct of Jephthah, we may well admire and imitate his resolution and self-denial, and still more those of his daughter."—*Scott*.

We should all 'present our bodies a living sacrifice unto the Lord.' We should also beware of making rash vows or promises.

THE MOTHER OF SAMSON.

Read Judges XIII. 2-25.

3. *The angel of the Lord* here is that same *Angel-Jehovah*, or *God-manifest*, whose appearance has been already so often noticed (cf. vs. 18, 22). The occasion now was sufficiently important for such an interposition, when Israel was undergoing an oppression from the Philistines which was to last forty years (v. 1), and a deliverer and judge was to be raised up for their relief.

4, 5. *Drink not wine, etc.*—For the law of the Nazarite, see Num. 6, and notes. In this case even the mother must practice the abstinence of the Nazarite, at least until the birth of her child.

5. *He shall begin to deliver*, showing that the final deliverance was still distant, as Samson was yet to be born and to grow up to manhood.

6. *Very terrible*—rather, 'awe-inspiring,' for he was supposed to be only an ordinary prophet, or 'man of God.'

9. *Unto the woman*.—She was the one chiefly favored with these communications, perhaps because she was the more worthy, and the chief responsibility in the early training of this child would be upon her (v. 13).

13. *How shall we order the child, i. e.*, how train him up physically and morally—a question which all parents may well ask in regard to each of their children.

* The sacrifice of Iphigenia by Agamemnon at Aulis, may have been founded upon a then recent tradition of this event.

16. *Eat of thy bread.*—And yet, in Gen. 18: 8; 19: 3, the angels are represented as eating, although perhaps he who was the *Angel-Jehovah* did not himself partake. *Offer it unto the Lord.*—Manoah still supposed him to be but ‘a man of God,’ to whom it would not be proper to offer a burnt offering (cf. Matt. 19: 17).

19. *Did wondrously.*—These words, which have no nominative in the original, refer to ‘*the Lord*’ in the preceding clause, who was also the ‘*Angel*,’ *i. e.*, the *Angel-Jehovah*.

20. *Ascended in the flame*, thus accepting the sacrifice as offered to himself, and at the same time revealing his true character to the astonished worshipers.

21. *Manoah knew, etc.*—And what he understood by ‘an *Angel of the Lord*,’ appears from v. 22, ‘we have seen *God*’ (cf. Gen. 32: 30. Exod. 33: 20).

23. *His wife said, etc.*—Manoah had said ‘we shall surely die;’ but the superiority of the wife again appears in her stronger faith and quicker appreciation of *God’s* dealings with them.

24. *Samson.*—Said to mean ‘*a little sun*,’ now beginning to dawn upon benighted Israel.

25. *Spirit of the Lord, etc.*—Stirring him up to patriotic zeal and deeds of daring, but not necessarily a sanctifying influence (cf. 11: 29, and note), yet one which fitted him for his high mission.

SAMSON SEEKS A WIFE.

Read Judges XIV. entire.

EITHER the Nazarite might marry, or Samson disregarded the parental consecration which made him a ‘Nazarite from the womb’ (13: 5).

2. *Told his father and mother.*—Showing that he recognized the authority of his parents in this matter (cf. vs. 5, 10). They remonstrate, but do not too strenuously oppose. A wise course for parents in such circumstances.

4. *Of the Lord.* Another striking instance, showing how, in *God’s* providential government, he often brings about his own wise and holy purposes through the unconscious and even wicked agency of men (cf. Gen. 50: 20. Acts 2: 23).

5. *And his father and his mother.*—This is not the modern method of courtship.

6. *Spirit of the Lord*—enduing him with that supernatural

strength which he often afterward exercised (cf. v. 19; 13: 25). *Told not.*—not being vain glorious.

7. *Talked with the woman*, but not, as we may suppose, until his father and mother had seen the damsel, and probably her parents. Such were the wholesome customs of those times.

8. *After a time.*—There was no undue haste, but usually some ten or twelve months elapsed between betrothal and marriage. *A swarm of bees* in the meantime had taken possession of the whitened bones of the lion, to which the dried skin may also have still adhered. Bees abounded in those countries, and deposited their swarms in such receptacles as they could find.

10. *His father went down.*—The father still conducts the *business* part of the negotiations, while Samson gets ready the marriage feast—very likely with his mother's aid; 'for so the young men used to do.'

11. *When they saw, i. e., 'they'* of the bride's family.

12. *Put forth a riddle.*—The feast lasted seven days, and the time was occupied (as was natural) with various amusements, of which propounding riddles, etc., was one of the more intellectual. *I will give you, etc.*—This looks a little too much like modern *betting*; but Samson is not proposed to us as a model young man. *Sheets, i. e., shirts, or tunics.* They belonged to wearing apparel.

15. *Samson's wife*, as she already was—the marriage having taken place at the beginning of the feast, as in case of Jacob's marriages (Gen. 29: 23, 27).

16. *I have not told it my father.*—Samson answers gently and satisfactorily to her somewhat provoking importunity. Such tears are trying to a young husband.

17. *She wept before him seven days*—making it no pleasant feast to him. But tears were her most powerful weapon, and she prevailed. *She told the riddle.*—It is not always safe to yield even to a wife's tears or blandishments.

18. *Plowed with my heifer.*—A proverbial form of expression, and not intended to be disrespectful to his wife.

19. *Went down to Ashkelon*, some twenty-four miles distant; far enough for the news not to return immediately. He returns in anger to his father's house, provoked to abandon his treacherous wife for the present.

20. *Given to his companion*,—as we should say, 'to his groomsman,' who was one of her own countrymen, and might claim to take her as his own, now that her husband had

seemed to abandon her. How graphically and truly does this whole account represent the domestic and social customs of those times.

SAMSON RETURNS FOR HIS WIFE.

• Judges XV. 1-6.

1. BUT it came to pass within a while after, in the time of wheat harvest, that Samson visited his wife with a kid; and he said, I will go in to my wife into the chamber. But her father would not suffer him to go in. 2. And her father said, I verily thought that thou hadst utterly hated her; therefore I gave her to thy companion: is not her younger sister fairer than she? take her, I pray thee, instead of her. 3. And Samson said concerning them, Now shall I be more blameless than the Philistines, though I do them a displeasure. 4. And Samson went and caught three hundred foxes, and took firebrands, and turned tail to tail, and put a firebrand in the midst between two tails. 5. And when he had set the brands on fire, he let them go into the standing corn of the Philistines, and burnt up both the shocks, and also the standing corn, with the vineyards and olives. 6. Then the Philistines said, Who hath done this? And they answered, Samson, the son-in-law of the Timnite, because he had taken his wife, and given her to his companion. And the Philistines came up, and burnt her and her father with fire.

1. *A while after.*—How long we are not informed, but long enough for his wrath to have cooled, and the more pleasant recollections of his wife to return. As was becoming, he takes with him a kid as a present and token of reconciliation.

2. *Younger sister.*—(Here again compare Jacob's case, Gen. 29: 28.) The father sees trouble brewing, and endeavors to forestall it by offering to Samson the younger daughter. He has still a right, however, to claim the elder as his lawful wife; as he had not divorced her, nor forfeited his right to her by a temporary desertion.

4. *Foxes, i. e., jackals*, which even yet are said to abound in that country. He had assistance, of course, in catching such a number. *A firebrand*, or torch. The torches of the East are often several feet in length, and are made of such materials as not to be easily put out by being dragged along. *Two tails.*—So as to prevent them from rushing at once to their holes, and also to give them a straggling motion, which would be more destructive to the fields of standing grain that covered those unfenced plains. There was a spice of *fun* in all this, on Samson's part.

SAMSON AND DELILAH.

Read Judges XVI. 1-20.

1. *Saw there an harlot.*—It is not to be supposed that Samson recovered his wife, after the preceding adventures; and it is melancholy—though not surprising when we consider the loose notions and looser practice of those times—that he went astray as is here recorded (cf. Gen. 38). But those who are fond of making merry over such blemishes in the characters of these Old Testament men, who are upon the whole spoken of with approbation, would do well to remember the fearful severity of the Jewish laws on these subjects, and the uniform tone of denunciation which is found in the word of God against all impurity.

2. *Samson is come hither.*—He had now become famous among them, and they watched every opportunity to rid themselves of so dangerous an enemy.

4. *He loved Delilah.*—This seems to have been more than a mere transient passion, and the connection was probably of that sort of concubinage or secondary marriage which gave to the woman the name of 'wife' (cf. chap. 19 and notes).

5-14. These several experiments need not be dwelt upon in detail. We may suppose that a considerable time may have elapsed between each of them, so that the plots of the 'lords of the Philistines' against his life might not be too barefaced. In these successive frustrations of their design, we see something of that vein of humor which appeared in the matter of the foxes. This may also excuse those harmless deceptions by which he *fooled* them.

13. *The seven locks.*—His hair may have been thus divided, and the word seven denotes *totality*.

17-20. *He told her all his heart.*—Thus he yields to her blandishments, as formerly he yielded to his wife's tears. With all his strength and courage, he seems to have lacked firmness of purpose. He had externally, at least, retained the marks of a perpetual Nazarite. This unshorn hair we are not to regard as the physical cause of his great strength; but God had chosen to connect this strength with the keeping of his Nazarite vow; and now that he has revealed his secret, and allows his head to be shorn, he forfeits that special divine aid which the 'Spirit of the Lord' had hitherto imparted to him.

20. *He wist (knew) not that the Lord was departed from him.*—A sad, but instructive, statement. 'He leaves us, and we miss him not, but go presumptuous on.' What could he have expected but that the Lord should depart from him, when even he himself had foretold it to Delilah? Or did he suppose that she would keep his secret, and is he again betrayed? What infatuation has come upon him. Or has she administered some opiate to make him sleep thus soundly upon her knees? At any rate his great strength is gone, and yet he is not fully conscious of it. How often are God's ministers, or other professing Christians, thus shorn of their moral strength when they have indulged in sin and folly; and yet they know it not. All the forbidden pleasures of the world are Delilahs, whose allurements we should shun as for our life.

SAMSON'S IMPRISONMENT AND DEATH.

Read Judges XVI. 21-31.

How is the mighty fallen! His eyes put out—bound in fetters of brass—and grinding in the prison house! Thus is he 'holden with the cords of his sins' (Prov. 5: 23). How long he may have continued in this wretched case, we know not. Long enough at least for his hair to grow again (v. 22). We may believe that in his imprisonment, he repented and sought the Lord—like Manasseh (2 Chron. 33: 12)—and that he attained now, if not before, to the character of a true believer, as he is represented in Heb. 11: 32.

27. *Three thousand men and women.*—It was a sort of grand theatrical exhibition, gotten up in honor of their god Dagon, and also for their own amusement, while they triumphed over their old enemy Samson. But 'the triumph of the wicked is short.'

28. *Samson called unto the Lord, etc.*—This was no doubt a prayer of faith, and it was answered. The suicidal character of the act which he contemplates, may seem a stumbling-block; but the case is extraordinary, and he acted under a sort of divine impulse. Samson's own private revenge on the mocking Philistines 'for the loss of his two eyes,' God makes use of for his own higher and holy purpose of avenging himself upon the enemies of Israel. Samson's work was now done, and his life was but a burden to him; and if God chooses to terminate that life in this way, rather than by any

other stroke of death, who shall judge the Lord? It should be remembered also that this great assemblage of the Philistines—'men and women'—was in the temple, and in honor of their god Dagon (v. 23), who, they say, has 'delivered Samson into their hands.' Jehovah, therefore, must vindicate his own honor by delivering them up into the hands of Samson, who is their victim but God's servant.

29. *The two pillars, etc.*—The peculiar construction of those ancient temples, which were also a sort of amphitheater, rendered this altogether practicable. Those who would see the many useful lessons to be derived from the history of Samson more fully drawn out, are referred to the '*Giant Judge*,' by William A. Scott, D. D.

MICAH AND HIS MOTHER.

Judges XVII. 1-6.

1. AND there was a man of mount Ephraim, whose name was Micah. 2. And he said unto his mother, The eleven hundred shekels of silver that were taken from thee, about which thou cursedst, and spakest of also in mine ears, behold, the silver is with me; I took it. And his mother said, Blessed be thou of the Lord, my son. 3. And when he had restored the eleven hundred shekels of silver to his mother, his mother said, I had wholly dedicated the silver unto the Lord from my hand for my son, to make a graven image and a molten image: now therefore I will restore it unto thee. 4. Yet he restored the money unto his mother; and his mother took two hundred shekels of silver, and gave them to the founder, who made thereof a graven image and a molten image: and they were in the house of Micah. 5. And the man Micah had a house of gods, and made an ephod, and teraphim, and consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest. 6. In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes.

It is admitted that this and the following chapters are a sort of appendix to the book of Judges, and are designed to show the state of things which arose in Israel after the time of Joshua through the failure of the tribes to drive out the Canaanites from among them. The things here recorded probably took place as much as three hundred years before the time of Samson; but it was convenient that the consecutive history of the Judges should first be given.

2. *Cursedst, i. e.*, by pronouncing an imprecation upon the unknown thief, or adjuring her son to tell what he knew of the money (cf. Lev. 5: 1). *And spakest of also.*—She had probably had a good deal to say about it, as it was a

large sum of money. On his making a frank confession she turns the curse into a blessing.

3. *Wholly dedicated*.—Her having made this dedication 'to the Lord,' 'to make a graven image,' etc., shows how religion had already been corrupted in Israel. The second commandment had forbidden the 'worship of God by images;' but in the absence of written copies of the Law among the people, its contents had been in a great measure forgotten. This is not surprising when even Aaron, on setting up the worship of the golden calf, proclaims it a 'feast to the *Lord*' (Exod. 32: 5). *For my son*.—She seems to regard herself as acting very piously, and for her son's benefit.—The 'images' here spoken of were not, of course, intended to represent heathen gods, but as memorials of the true God, like the Romish crucifixes.

5. *Had a house of gods, i. e., of Elohim*, which also means God. He was an idolater rather as to the manner than the object of worship. *An ephod, and teraphim*, or 'images'—the same as Rachel's images, and for the same superstitious purposes (see Gen. 31: 19, etc., and note). The ephod was a sort of priestly garment through which he pretended to consult the divine will. Micah thus sets up an independent religious establishment, and consecrates his son as priest, although he was not of the priestly tribe of Levi. In view of this is added in v. 6, *no king, i. e., 'regularly organized government'* in Israel; a statement which is often repeated in order to account for the lawlessness of these times. Micah's further history is given in the next chapter, but we have nothing more about his mother.

THE LEVITE AND HIS CONCUBINE.

Read Judges XIX. entire.

THIS and the following chapters contain a further sad record of Israel's degeneracy.

2. *A concubine, i. e., a secondary wife* (cf. Gen. 25: 1, 5, where Keturah is called both 'wife' and 'concubine'). That this woman was also regarded as a lawful wife, we learn from v. 3, where he is called her 'husband' (cf. vs. 4, 5, 9). *Whore*.—Other versions agree with Josephus in relieving the woman from this gross charge, and assign family broils (in modern phrase, 'incompatibility of temper') as the cause of her desertion.

3. *Went after her, etc.*—This also favors the view that she had not offended so grossly.

8. *Comfort thy heart, i. e., 'enjoy thyself,' etc.*

15. *No man took them in.*—According to oriental customs this was a gross lack of hospitality. How different from Abraham's and Lot's reception of strangers (Gen., chaps. 18, 19).

16. This 'old man of Mount Ephraim' was but a sojourner in the place, and had not yet become modernized and corrupted, like the men of Gibeah. He still practices the old-fashioned hospitality, which is finely portrayed in vs. 17-21.

22-25. This whole disgusting scene reminds us of Lot in Sodom (Gen. 19), and shows that some of the Israelites, at least, had become as vile as the men of Sodom.

24. *My daughter, etc.*—This revolting proposal, like the similar one of Lot, shows very forcibly how sacredly the laws of hospitality were then regarded by all except the most abandoned. In order to screen a stranger and guest from insult, no sacrifice was considered too great.

29. *Took a knife, etc.*—In the absence of any established government to bring these wretches to justice, this shocking method was adopted in order to rouse the tribes of Israel for the extermination of such monsters. Instead of fire from heaven, as upon Sodom, God now employs another method with Gibeah.

VIRTUOUS INDIGNATION OF ISRAEL.

Judges XX. 1-11.

1. THEN all the children of Israel went out, and the congregation was gathered together as one man, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, with the land of Gilead, unto the Lord in Mizpeh. 2. And the chief of all the people, even of all the tribes of Israel, presented themselves in the assembly of the people of God, four hundred thousand footmen that drew sword. 3. (Now the children of Benjamin heard that the children of Israel were gone up to Mizpeh.) Then said the children of Israel, Tell us, how was this wickedness? 4. And the Levite, the husband of the woman that was slain, answered and said, I came into Gibeah that belonged to Benjamin, I and my concubine, to lodge. 5. And the men of Gibeah rose against me, and beset the house round about upon me by night, and thought to have slain me: and my concubine have they forced, that she is dead. 6. And I took my concubine, and cut her in pieces, and sent her throughout all the country of the inheritance of Israel: for they have committed lewdness and folly in Israel. 7. Behold, ye are all children of Israel; give here your advice and counsel. 8. And all the people arose as one man, saying,

We will not any of us go to his tent, neither will we any of us turn into his house. 9. But now this shall be the thing which we will do to Gibeah; we will go up by lot against it. 10. And we will take ten men of a hundred throughout all the tribes of Israel, and a hundred of a thousand, and a thousand out of ten thousand, to fetch victuals for the people, that they may do, when they come to Gibeah of Benjamin, according to all the folly that they have wrought in Israel. 11. So all the men of Israel were gathered against the city, knit together as one man.

1. *All the children of Israel, i. e.*, the 'chief of all the people,' as in v. 2. None but a Colenso would imagine that the sacred writer meant to say that every man, woman, and child went. This universal movement among the tribes shows how effectual was the bloody token sent to each, in arousing their indignation; and it is highly creditable to the virtuous feeling still abiding among them. Very gross outbursts of wickedness thus sometimes react in favor of reformation. *Mizpeh* was a town a few miles from Jerusalem, where national assemblages were sometimes held (cf. 1 Sam. 7: 5; 10: 17).

3. *The children of Benjamin heard, etc.*—It is not to be supposed that the whole of this tribe were so much more corrupt than their brethren, but their spirit of *clan* was aroused, and they made common cause with Gibeah. Thus also they shared their destruction. 'The companion of fools shall be destroyed.'

4-6. *The Levite answered, etc.*—They had heard only the general rumor of the outrage before; now the full and authentic account is given. They will not act hastily. A lesson for us all, especially when we seek revenge.

8-11. *All the people arose as one man, etc.*—This was a solemn oath and covenant not to return to their homes until Gibeah was punished, and the sin and shame wiped out from Israel (cf. 21: 5). It might seem to be a needless array of force against one small tribe; but it was known that the Benjamites were fierce fighters (vs. 15-17), and all the tribes wished to share in this work of purgation. The sequel of the war may be seen in the subsequent verses.

WIVES PROVIDED BY STEALTH.

Judges XXI. 1, 6-15 (read 16-25).

1. Now the men of Israel had sworn in Mizpeh, saying, There shall not any of us give his daughter unto Benjamin to wife.—6. And the children of Israel repented them for Benjamin their brother, and said, There is one tribe cut off from Israel this day. 7. How shall we do

for wives for them that remain, seeing we have sworn by the Lord, that we will not give them of our daughters to wives? 8. And they said, What one is there of the tribes of Israel that came not up to Mizpeh to the Lord? And, behold, there came none to the camp from Jabesh-gilead to the assembly. 9. For the people were numbered, and, behold, there were none of the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead there. 10. And the congregation sent thither twelve thousand men of the valiantest, and commanded them, saying, Go and smite the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead with the edge of the sword, with the women and the children. 11. And this is the thing that ye shall do, Ye shall utterly destroy every male, and every woman that hath lain by man. 12. And they found among the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead four hundred young virgins, that had known no man by lying with any male: and they brought them into the camp to Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan. 13. And the whole congregation sent some to speak to the children of Benjamin that were in the rock Rimmon, and to call peaceably unto them. 14. And Benjamin came again at that time; and they gave them wives which they had saved alive of the women of Jabesh-gilead: and yet so they sufficed them not. 15. And the people repented them for Benjamin, because that the Lord had made a breach in the tribes of Israel.

6. *The children of Israel repented, etc.*—The preceding verses (2-5), show how deep was the sorrow felt for the Benjamites, now that their tribe was almost extinct. They had not fought for vengeance, but for righteous retribution, and they now remember that the offending tribe are still their brethren.

8-15. This method of providing wives for the survivors was characteristic of those times; and yet its wisdom and righteousness must be acknowledged, in the light of ancient and oriental laws of war.

16-25. There were still two hundred men to be provided with wives; and yet they have all taken an oath not to give their daughters to Benjamin. What shall be done? The device adopted may be excused, rather than justified. The responsibility is thrown upon the remaining Benjamites, of 'catching' wives for themselves, at a great annual festival which was at hand—probably the feast of Tabernacles. This scheme must have been devised secretly among the leaders, or it could not have been successful.

19. The locality is very minutely described, in order that there might be no mistake as to the place of assemblage.

20. *Lie in wait, etc.*—The neighboring vineyards would afford convenient places of concealment.

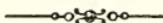
21. *Daughters of Shiloh, i. e.,* those there assembled. The dances here spoken of were of a religious and yet festive

kind, in which men took no part. These females were therefore without protectors.

22. *Ye did not give unto them.*—The emphasis is upon the word ‘give,’ which they had sworn not to do. Thus the letter of the oath was not violated. Every reader of Roman history will be struck with the resemblance between this account and the famous story of the “rape of the Sabines,” in the time of Romulus, which was some 650 years later. We can scarcely avoid the suspicion that the old Roman king may have received some tradition of this Jewish scheme for providing wives in an emergency.

25. As if by way of apology for this violence, the statement is again repeated, that ‘there was no king in those days.’ Let us rejoice that we live in more favored times, and enjoy the blessings of Christian civilization and good government; and that our persons and our homes are protected against lawless violence.

BOOK OF RUTH.



THE beautiful story of Ruth was introduced into the Sacred Canon no doubt for the sake of its many useful lessons, and especially because of Ruth's connection with the ancestry of David and of Christ. It is a sort of supplement to the book of Judges. It is here introduced entire. See appendix.

NAOMI AND HER DAUGHTERS-IN-LAW.

Read Ruth I. 1-22.

1. *In the days, etc.*—The chronology of these events is uncertain, but they most probably occurred about the time when the raids of the Midianites, recorded in Judges 6: 2-6, brought about the famine here mentioned. *The country of Moab*, which lies east of the Dead Sea.

2. *Ephrathites, i. e.*, people of Ephrath, the ancient name of Bethlehem.

4. *Wives of the daughters of Moab.*—This was not so strictly forbidden as marriages with the Canaanites; but it was contrary to the spirit of the Jewish law (Deut. 23: 3-6). In their present place of abode, however, they could marry no others; and in coming into Naomi's family these wives no doubt gave up their idolatry and embraced the true religion.

6. *Visited his people.*—The Lord is said to visit, when he interposes, either in the way of mercy or of judgment. As this was 'ten years' after their coming to that country, they must have delayed for other reasons besides awaiting the cessation of the famine. *Bread, i. e.*, food.

9. *Find rest. i. e.*, a home and comfort. *She kissed them, i. e.*, for the purpose of bidding them farewell (v. 14).

11-13. Naomi thus remonstrates with them, not so much,

perhaps, with the intention of persuading them to return, as of inducing them to count the cost. *Any more sons.*—In allusion to the Jewish custom of a brother marrying his deceased brother's wife (Deut. 25: 5).

14. *Orpah kissed (i. e., bade farewell to) her mother-in-law.*—Thus 'one is taken and the other left.' Orpah at first, equally with Ruth, professes her intention to return with her mother-in-law (v. 10), but having 'put her hand to the plow,' she looks back. She was bound to Naomi only by the ties of natural affection; but Ruth also by those of religion.

15. *Unto her gods.*—So Naomi understood her conduct, and she presses again upon Ruth a proper consideration of the step she proposes to take. It was a question of religion mainly which she was to decide. She did not wish her to go back (cf. 1 Kings 18: 21, 'if Baal, then follow him').

16, 17. These admirable words of Ruth are the most noticeable in this whole book, and are often and aptly quoted to illustrate the case of one who is ready to *give up all for Christ*, and to be joined to the people of God in an open Christian profession; while Orpah resembles those who 'draw back unto perdition.' *There will I be buried.*—To be buried elsewhere than with one's kindred was regarded as a great misfortune; and Ruth's willingness for this shows the strength of her faith and purpose. She has made deliberate and final choice of the true religion,—'thy God shall be my God.' Would that all the young readers of these notes might follow Ruth's example.

19. *All the city was moved.*—It was a small city, and Naomi belonged to an important family connection. Her unexpected return, after so long an absence, attracted much attention.

20. *Call me not Naomi, i. e., 'pleasant,' but call me Mara, i. e., 'bitter.'*

21. *The Lord hath, etc.*—She does not fail to recognize the hand of the Lord in her affliction, but it is in a tone of despondency rather than of childlike submission. She had had much to try her, and her faith was weak.

22. *Barley-harvest, i. e., early in April.* This is mentioned in anticipation of the gleaning of Ruth in the field of Boaz.

RUTH'S INTRODUCTION TO BOAZ.

Read Ruth II.

1. A MIGHTY *man*, *i. e.*, one of high standing and influence.

2. *Ears of corn*.—'Corn' in the Bible always means 'grain.' Here it is barley (v. 17). Gleaning was a very ancient custom, and was provided for in the Jewish law (Lev. 19: 9, 10. Deut. 24: 19, 21)—another mark of its benevolent spirit. The necessity of gleaning shows the poverty of Naomi (cf. 1: 21).

3. *After the reapers*.—Gleaning behind the reapers was a privilege granted only by special favor (v. 7). *Her hap*, *i. e.*, 'chance.'—It was chance to her, but, like all other chances, was divinely ordered (cf. Prov. 16: 33). We often have cause to bless God for our happenings. *A part of the field*.—Their fields were not separated by fences, but only by landmarks.

4. *The Lord be with you, etc.*—This mutual salutation of Boaz and his reapers, was probably more than the ordinary *salaam*, and meant what it expressed. It suggests, at least, the piety of Boaz and his men.

5. *Whose damsel* (not 'what damsel'), implying that she must of course have a parent or guardian.

7. *The house*, *i. e.*, shed or tent.

8. *My daughter*.—He was probably much older than she, and speaks to her as a father.

9. *Young men*, *i. e.*, servants, including, also, the maidens (v. 8), as female servants were also employed in the lighter labors of the field. *Touch thee*.—Molest thee.

10. *Take knowledge*.—Favorably notice (v. 19). *stranger*, *i. e.*, a *foreigner*, not merely one who was not acquainted (cf. v. 13, 'like unto,' etc.).

12. *Under whose wings*.—'Wings' are put for *protection* (cf. Ps. 17: 8, etc. Luke 13: 34). A gracious benediction which he himself is to cause to be fulfilled.

14, 15. *Vinegar*—A weak acid wine, very refreshing to laborers in a warm climate. *Parched corn*, *i. e.*, barley.—A viand much used in the East was wheat or barley roasted while yet soft (cf. 1 Sam. 17: 17. 2 Sam. 17: 28). Boaz had heard a good account of this interesting gleaner before (v. 11), and hence his generosity toward her.

17. *An ephah*—Nearly a bushel—Thus she was already

beginning to realize a temporal reward for her good choice. 'Godliness hath the promise of the life that now is as well as of that which is to come.'

20. *The living and the dead.*—This implies that Boaz in former years had shown kindness to her family, and it gives us a further insight into the character of the man.

23. *She kept fast by the maidens of Boaz,* during which time, no doubt, a more intimate acquaintance grew up between her and her kinsman. As 'barley harvest' was followed by 'wheat harvest,' several weeks would elapse, affording ample time for a tender intimacy to be formed.

NAOMI PLANS A MARRIAGE.

Read Ruth III.

1. *SEEK rest for thee, i. e.,* a husband and a home (cf. 1: 9). Naomi takes upon herself the responsibility of all the arrangements looking to this result.

2. *Is not Boaz of our kindred*—and therefore to be sought as thy husband? *He winnoweth barley.*—It was near the close of harvest, and the present opportunity must be embraced.

3. *Wash thyself, etc.*—She was to lay aside her garments of widowhood (Gen. 38: 14), and to array herself as if for marriage. *Done eating and drinking*—and therefore entirely at leisure, and ready for the private interview which she sought (cf. v. 7).

4. *Uncover his feet.*—To us this seems highly indelicate; but we must judge of it in the light of oriental and Jewish customs. The character of Naomi who advises it, and of Boaz who takes no advantage of it, and does not seem to think it improper, is sufficient proof that it must not be estimated according to modern notions. Boaz, during the throng of the winnowing, slept in his own threshing-floor, and, as was the custom, in the same clothing which he wore through the day, with only a slight covering thrown over him. His laborers slept near him. A servant often slept cross-wise at the feet of the master, and might draw over him part of his master's covering. This was the position which Ruth was to take. *Tell thee what to do.*—This shows that she expected no other result than this; and so it proved (vs. 10-13).

It was certainly a formal demand by Ruth upon Boaz, that he should perform the duty of the nearest kinsman, who, ac-

ording to the Levirate law, was bound to marry the childless widow of a deceased elder brother, when there was no younger brother surviving (see Deut. 25: 5, etc. Cf. also Tamar's claim upon Judah, Gen. 38: 14, 26). The making of this claim was not considered an indelicate advance; and Naomi supposed that Boaz was the next kinsman. As to the time and place of making the claim, a better knowledge of the customs and notions then prevalent, would doubtless lead us to excuse the apparent impropriety of Ruth's conduct. Boaz himself did so (v. 11).

7. *His heart was merry.*—This implies cheerful enjoyment, but not intoxication (cf. Judges 19: 6, 9, 22).

8. *Was afraid, i. e.,* was startled at finding any one lying at his feet.

9. *Spread thy skirt* (or 'wing'). (The word 'skirt' is the same that is rendered 'wing' in 2: 12.) All the circumstances show that this could not have been intended in any gross sense. To spread the skirt over any one, in oriental phrase, is to take under protection; here, of course, it is by marriage (cf. Ezek. 16: 8).

11. *A virtuous woman.*—Showing that he understood her conduct as not implying any improper design (cf. v. 13).

12, 13. *A kinsman nearer than I.*—Boaz, it seems, had been inquiring into this matter of relationship, probably with reference to the question of marriage with Ruth. His readiness to pledge himself to her with a solemn oath, shows that he is nothing loth to do the kinsman's part. *Kinsman* is in Hebrew *goel*, or redeemer.

14. *Let it not be known, etc.*—Lest it might be misinterpreted, and scandal arise. We should as far as possible abstain from all appearance of evil.

15. *The veil.*—The oriental veil is large, and of strong material. *She went into the city.*—In the Hebrew it is 'he went,' etc., and it was so rendered in the original edition of our present version, printed in 1611. The present reading is an error. Boaz went immediately into the city, in order to have the question settled at once, according to his promise in v. 13, 'in the morning,' etc.

16. *Who art thou?*—Equivalent to 'what news?'

18. *Sit still, i. e.,* quietly wait (cf. Isa. 30: 7). We are sometimes placed in circumstances where we can not do better than quietly and prayerfully to watch the developments of God's providence.

THE NEGOTIATIONS AND MARRIAGE.

Read Ruth IV:

1. *Up to the gate.*—The place where all public or judicial business was transacted.

2. *He took ten men, etc.*—This number of witnesses was necessary in a matter of such importance, involving a transfer of inheritance.

3. *Selleth*, or is about to sell, being constrained by poverty (Lev. 25: 25). *Our brother* or kinsman.

4. *Advertise thee.*—Give thee notice. *I will redeem it.*—Supposing that there was nothing but the pecuniary matter to be attended to. This kinsman must have known little of Naomi and Ruth. They were 'poor relations.'

5. *Buy it also of Ruth, etc.*, or, 'thou must buy also Ruth,' *i. e.*, take her also into the bargain (v. 10). *Name of the dead.*—The first son of such a marriage succeeded to the name and inheritance of the deceased.

6. *Lest I mar, etc.*—Possibly by having no other children to inherit his own estate, while a child that might be born of Ruth would bear the name and inherit the estate of *her* family (Deut. 25: 6).

7. *Plucked off his shoe.*—In Deut. 25: 9, spitting in the face was also a part of the ceremony; but in the present instance, as she had not made the demand of him, and he had not refused her, the spitting is omitted.

10. *From the gate, i. e.*, from among the number of the citizens.

11. *The Lord make the woman, etc.*—This was the usual form of nuptial benediction. *House of Pharez*, who was a progenitor of Boaz, and of the people of Bethlehem. He had a numerous posterity.

13. *The Lord gave her conception.*—This is always recognized in the Scriptures as the gift of God (cf. Gen. 29: 31; 30: 1, 2, 6. 1 Sam. 1: 5, and notes).

14. *A kinsman.*—A *goel*, or redeemer, although the word seems here to be applied to the grandson just born.

15. *A restorer of thy life, i. e.*, one to comfort or revive thee (cf. Ps. 23: 3), or to perpetuate thy life in thy seed. *Better than seven sons.*—An oriental compliment. These congratulations are tendered to Naomi—rather to Ruth—because this son is not to inherit the name or estate of Boaz,

but that of Naomi and of Ruth's former husband, according to the Levirate law.

17. *Obed, i. e.*, 'serving,' or a servant, from his serviceableness to Naomi and her family. *Father, i. e.*, ancestor.—Only the more prominent names are given in the following genealogy, which ends with David.—Thus God honored Ruth's filial piety and preference of God and his people by giving her a noble husband and great worldly prosperity. She becomes mother of a line of kings, and of the Messiah himself. Thus, both in Rahab and Ruth, there is hope for the Gentiles. Blessed are they who choose the God of Israel as their portion.

I. SAMUEL.



HANNAH, THE MOTHER OF SAMUEL.

Read 1 Samuel entire.

2. *HE had two wives.*—The practice of polygamy was still tolerated, having been sanctioned by the example of Abraham and Jacob. Probably in this case Hannah's continued barrenness was the occasion of Elkanah's taking a second wife (cf. Gen. 16: 1-3). The promise concerning the 'seed of the woman'—the Messiah—rendered the possession of offspring peculiarly desirable among the Jews; and barrenness was regarded as so great a calamity that polygamy early crept in as a remedy. It was tolerated, though not approved, under that dispensation (Mal. 2: 14, 15). Our Saviour restores the original law of marriage (Matt. 19: 3-6).

3. *Yearly to worship*—At one or all of the three great feasts. *Shiloh.*—Where the ark and tabernacle were kept previous to the time of David (Josh. 18: 1).

4. *Portions, i. e.,* of the sacrifice which he had brought, most of which was returned to the offerer that he might feast before the Lord (Deut. 12: 6, 7, 17, 18).

5. *Worthy, marg., 'double.'*—This was in token of his greater affection for her (cf. Gen. 43: 34. 1 Sam. 9: 23, 24). *The Lord had shut up, etc.*—Every where in the Scriptures the giving or withholding of seed is ascribed directly to the Lord (cf. Ruth 4: 13). Giving life to a new immortal being is a direct act of God. Hence the wickedness of preventing conception by artificial means (Gen. 38: 10).

6. *Her adversary,* or 'her affliction.'—The word rendered adversary often occurs, but is nowhere else applied to a person.

7. *As he did so*, or 'it,' *i. e.*, the affliction 'did so.' But if Peninnah is the 'adversary,' then 'he' refers to Elkanah, and 'did so' to his going up, etc.

9. *Temple, i. e.*, the tabernacle and the buildings surrounding it. So the Latin *templum*, which means any consecrated place with or without buildings.

10. *In bitterness of soul*.—Inasmuch as she regarded her continued barrenness as a special visitation of God's displeasure (cf. vs. 15, 16.)

11. *Give him to the Lord, etc., i. e.*, I will consecrate him as a perpetual Nazarite (cf. v. 22 and Judges 13: 5).

13. *Thought her drunken*.—Such earnest private prayer was probably unusual in those days; while drunkenness, even among women, seems not to be surprising. The degraded character even of the priests, at that time, corroborates this view (cf. 2: 12, 22).

15. *Poured out my soul*.—Such is all true prayer. Earnest devotion is sometimes mistaken for enthusiasm or drunkenness (cf. Acts 2: 13).

16. *Daughter of Belial, i. e.*, 'of mischief' or wickedness (cf. 2: 12).

18. *No more sad*.—The priestly blessing of Eli, and her own inward assurance that her prayer was heard, filled her with comfort. Such answers does the prayer of faith sometimes still receive (cf. 1 John 5: 15).

20. *Samuel, i. e.*, asked of God.

21. *His vow*.—Probably his formal assent to the vow of Hannah (v. 23) which would not be valid without his concurrence (cf. Num. 30: 6-8).

22. *For ever*.—All his life (v. 11).

24. *Weaned*.—This was not usually done under the age of three years. *Three bullocks*, or, rather, 'a three-year-old bullock,' one as old as the child. In the next verse only one bullock is spoken of. The 'flour' and 'wine' were offerings to the Lord.

27. *For this child I prayed*.—Would that there were more such praying mothers, and more infant Samuels dedicated to the Lord for the work of the ministry.

28. *Lent him to the Lord*, or 'returned him, whom I have obtained by petition, to the Lord.' *He worshiped*.—Other versions read, 'they worshiped.'

HANNAH'S SONG OF PRAISE.

1 Samuel II. 1-11.

1. AND Hannah prayed, and said, My heart rejoiceth in the Lord, mine horn is exalted in the Lord; my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in thy salvation. 2. There is none holy as the Lord: for there is none besides thee: neither is there any rock like our God. 3. Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed. 4. The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength. 5. They that were full have hired out themselves for bread; and they that were hungry ceased: so that the barren hath borne seven; and she that hath many children is waxed feeble. 6. The Lord killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. 7. The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up. 8. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and he hath set the world upon them. 9. He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail. 10. The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken in pieces; out of heaven shall he thunder upon them: the Lord shall judge the ends of the earth; and he shall give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed. 11. And Elkanah went to Ramah to his house. And the child did minister unto the Lord before El the priest.

1. *Hannah prayed.*—Her prayer, however, is turned into a song of thanksgiving. It resembles that of Mary in Luke 1: 46-55.

Mine horn is exalted.—Horns, or ornaments of a similar shape, were worn as a symbol of power and rank. Women hung their vail upon this horn, and it is said that wives, when blessed with children, wore the horn higher than before. To 'exalt the horn' became a proverb for any sort of triumph (cf. Ps. 92: 10, etc.).

5. *Borne seven* (cf. Ruth 4: 15).

8. *Pillars of the earth.*—Speaking poetically and according to ancient notions.

10. *His King—his Anointed, i. e., Messiah.*—Hannah's poetic fervor here seems to rise to prophetic inspiration, and she foretells the triumphs of Messiah, the anointed King of Zion. The word Messiah here for the first time occurs.

11. *The child did minister, i. e.,* in such simple services as a child might perform about the sanctuary.

HANNAH'S LOAN REPAID, ETC.

1 Samuel II. 18-26.

18. BUT Samuel ministered before the Lord, being a child, girded with a linen ephod. 19. Moreover his mother made him a little coat, and brought it to him from year to year when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. 20. And Eli blessed Elkanah and his wife, and said, The Lord give thee seed of this woman for the loan which is lent to the Lord. And they went unto their own home. 21. And the Lord visited Hannah, so that she conceived, and bare three sons and two daughters. And the child Samuel grew before the Lord. 22. Now Eli was very old, and heard all that his sons did unto all Israel; and how they lay with the women that assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. 23. And he said unto them, Why do ye such things? for I hear of your evil dealings by all this people. 24. Nay, my sons; for it is no good report that I hear: ye make the Lord's people to transgress. 25. If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him: but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall entreat for him? Notwithstanding, they hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the Lord would slay them. 26. And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favor both with the Lord, and also with men.

18. *A linen ephod.*—An article of priestly dress.

19. *A little coat.*—This was for ordinary wear. Ah! how would little Samuel long for those annual visits of *father* and *mother*, and for the sight of that little *new coat!* And how delightful the interviews between these pious parents and their consecrated child! What a contrast between this family and that of Eli, whose 'sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not' (cf. 2: 17, 22 with 3: 13).

20. *For the loan, etc.,* and v. 21. *She bare three sons and two daughters.*—Ample interest truly for that loan. The Lord is a good paymaster.

22. *Women that assembled,* marg., 'assembled by troops' (cf. Exod. 38: 8). This thronging of women around the tabernacle may be taken as indicative of the characteristic *religiousness* of the sex. Some, however, maintain that there was an order of religious devotees, a sort of vestals, who devoted themselves continually to certain services about the temple, that Jephthah's daughter became one of these (Judges 11: 39), and that even down to our Savior's day this class continued (*e. g.*, Anna, Luke 2: 37). If this latter supposition be true, the conduct of Eli's sons was still more abominable.

25. *The Lord would slay them,* or 'it pleased the Lord to slay them,' and, therefore, he 'gave them up to their own

heart's lusts, to work all iniquity with greediness.' Even their own father could not 'entreat for them' in his priestly character; and for such wickedness there was no atonement. Their cup was full.

26. *Samuel*—*was in favor, etc.*—Blessed contrast between this model youth and those paragons of wickedness! Blessed prototype, also, of the child Jesus (cf. Luke 2: 52.)

PHINEHAS' WIFE AND ICHABOD.

1 Samuel IV. 19-22.

19. AND his daughter-in-law Phinehas' wife, was with child, near to be delivered: and when she heard the tidings that the ark of God was taken, and that her father-in-law and her husband were dead, she bowed herself and travailed; for her pains came upon her. 20. And about the time of her death the women that stood by her said unto her, Fear not; for thou hast borne a son. But she answered not, neither did she regard it. 21. And she named the child Ichabod, saying, The glory is departed from Israel: (because the ark of God was taken, and because of her father-in-law and her husband.) 22. And she said, The glory is departed from Israel: for the ark of God is taken.

19. *Phinehas' wife.*—Although connected with so wicked a husband, she seems to have been a woman of eminent piety. The accumulation of calamities here referred to, and described in the preceding verses, was more than she could endure in her feeble state.

20. *Thou hast borne a son.*—In ordinary circumstances this would have been a joyful announcement, but now 'she regards it not.'

21. *She named the child Ichabod.*—She still had strength for this. Ichabod signifies 'where—the glory?' The parenthesis (as, also, v. 19) assigns three reasons for this despairing cry; but her own words in v. 22 mention only one: 'the ark of God is taken.' The sudden death of her father-in-law, who was the high priest and judge of Israel, and that of her husband, cut off with all his crimes upon him, were themselves overwhelming calamities; but it was the mention of the ark of God being taken by the Philistines that killed her, as it had also killed Eli (v. 18). The visible 'glory' of the Lord—the Shekinah—appeared above the ark on special occasions, and was the symbol of his presence with Israel; but now that the ark is taken, Israel is abandoned of God. So she thinks, and so thought the few pious of that day. And truly the presence of God in his sanctuaries is the glory of Israel.

WHAT THE KING WILL DO, ETC.,

Read 1 Samuel VIII. 5-22.

13. AND *he, i. e.*, the king whom ye persist in demanding in opposition to God's will (vs. 6, 7). The acts of tyranny here mentioned are such as oriental despots were wont to practice, not that they are justified (cf. Deut. 17: 14, etc. and note):

YOUNG MAIDENS AND THE SEER.

1 Samuel IX. 11, 12.

11. AND as they went up the hill to the city, they found young maidens going out to draw water, and said unto them, Is the seer here? 12. And they answered them, and said, He is; behold, he is before you: make haste now, for he came to-day to the city; for there is a sacrifice of the people to-day in the high place.

11. *Young maidens, etc.*—The same oriental custom which we found to prevail in the days of Abraham and Moses (Gen. 24: 1. Exod. 2: 16). *The seer, i. e.*, the prophet, or one who has a supernatural insight into the unseen and the future; having *visions* of God (v. 9).

SAUL'S FAMILY.

1 Samuel XIV. 49, 50.

49. NOW the sons of Saul were Jonathan, and Ishui, and Melchishua: and the names of his two daughters were these; the name of the first-born Merab, and the name of the younger Michal: 50. And the name of Saul's wife was Ahinoam, the daughter of Ahimaaz: and the name of the captain of his host was Abner, the son of Ner, Saul's uncle.

In this brief notice of Saul's family, the names of his wife and his two daughters are given. As to the wife, we know nothing of any importance about her. Merab and Michal we shall meet with again, in connection with the history of David (chap. 18).

THE MAN WHO MADE MOTHERS CHILDLESS.

1 Samuel XV. 32, 33.

32. THEN said Samuel, Bring ye hither to me Agag the king of the Amalekites. And Agag came unto him delicately. And Agag said, Surely the bitterness of death is past. 33. And Samuel said, As thy

sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women. And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal.

32. *Agag came unto him delicately*, or 'cheerfully;' not expecting death. Samuel's stern justice may seem cruel; but he was only the instrument of God's righteous retribution upon this bloody tyrant. He did it 'before the Lord.'

WOMEN WELCOME THE VICTOR.

1 Samuel XVIII. 6-9.

6. AND it came to pass as they came, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of music. 7. And the women answered one another as they played, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands. 8. And Saul was very wroth, and the saying displeased him; and he said, They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands; and what can he have more but the kingdom? 9. And Saul eyed David from that day and forward.

6. *As they came, i. e.,* Saul and his army. *The women came out, etc.*—This was in accordance with the custom, as we have seen it in the case of Miriam (Exod. 15), Deborah (Judges 5), and Jephthah's daughter (Judges 11). There is no leader mentioned here, as in those cases; but no doubt each band of musicians had one at their head who extemporaneously dictated the words of the song, and led in the simple chant of the music, and in the equally simple and inartificial movement called the dance. The women alone took part in these exercises.

7. *Answered one another, i. e.,* sang responsively, one party saying, 'Saul hath slain his thousands,' another answering, 'And David his ten thousands.' This is a fair specimen of the hyperbolical style of oriental poetry. David had slain only Goliath; but such a champion was equal to ten thousand ordinary men.

8. *Saul was very wroth.*—The women were very indiscreet in giving such superior honor to David; but they knew not Saul's jealousy toward him.

9. *Eyed David, i. e.,* looked upon him with jealousy and suspicion.

SAUL'S DAUGHTERS AND DAVID.

1 Samuel XVIII. 17-21; read, also, vs. 22-29.

17. AND Saul said to David, Behold my elder daughter Merab, her will I give thee to wife: only be thou valiant for me, and fight the Lord's battles. For Saul said, Let not mine hand be upon him, but let the hand of the Philistines be upon him. 18. And David said unto Saul, Who am I? and what is my life, or my father's family in Israel, that I should be son-in-law to the king? 19. But it came to pass at the time when Merab Saul's daughter should have been given to David, that she was given unto Adriel the Meholathite to wife. 20. And Michal Saul's daughter loved David: and they told Saul, and the thing pleased him. 21. And Saul said, I will give him her, that she may be a snare to him, and that the hand of the Philistines may be against him. Wherefore Saul said to David, Thou shalt this day be my son-in-law in the one of the twain.

17. *Give thee to wife.*—Saul does not seem to recognize the promise made in his behalf by the men of Israel (17: 25), that he would 'give his daughter' to him who should slay the Philistine. Perhaps they spake without specific authority, and only in reliance upon an eastern custom (cf. Josh. 15: 16-19). Saul now makes this ensnaring offer, in hope that David may be slain while 'fighting the Lord's battles,' as he hypocritically calls them.

18. *Who am I?*—David no doubt suspects the designs of Saul. *What is my life, i. e.,* what worthy deeds have I performed that I should be thus honored?

19. *She was given unto Adriel.*—This was obviously intended to provoke David to some act of indiscretion, instead of 'behaving himself wisely,' as he had hitherto done (v. 14).

23. *A poor man,* and therefore unable to pay the dowry which would be expected. He still sees a snare spread before him.

25. Saul meets David's objection by waiving the demand for dowry, except the military service against the Philistines, which he knew David would be prompt to accept, notwithstanding the danger.

26. *It pleased David well.*—He probably reciprocated Michal's attachment, and was eager for the adventure.

27. *In full tale, i. e.,* in full number, even doubling the number out of hatred to the Philistines and in honor of Michal.

28, 29. *The Lord was with David, etc.*—The malignity and wickedness of Saul appear the greater, because those very

things which ought to have made him love and cherish David, only make him the more 'his enemy continually.' Thus Cain hated Abel 'because his own works were evil and his brother's righteous.' Saul also remembers the words of Samuel (15: 23-28). Whom the wicked hate God loves.

MICHAL SAVES DAVID'S LIFE.

Read 1 Samuel XIX. 9-18.

12. THROUGH *a window*, while Saul's messengers were watching at the door (cf. Josh. 2: 15. Acts 9: 24, 25).

13. *An image* (Hebrew, 'a teraphim'), such as Rachel and Micah had, and which was used, no doubt, for the same superstitious purpose (cf. Gen. 31: 19. Judges 17: 4, 5, and notes).

15. *Bring him to me in the bed.*—The ancient 'bed' was nothing more than a thick quilt or light mattress, which could be easily carried (cf. Matt. 9: 6, etc).

17. *Why should I kill thee.*—This was, no doubt, about as true as the statement, 'he is sick,' in v. 14. But we shall not hold her to a very strict account in these circumstances.

PERSONAL PURITY REQUIRED.

Read 1 Samuel XXI. 1-6.

4. HALLOWED *bread, i. e.*, the 'shew bread, an account of which we have in Lev. 24: 5-9. See, also, our Lord's allusion to it in Matt. 12: 3, 4. *Kept themselves—from women* (cf. Exod. 19: 15: 'Come not at your wives.' 1 Cor. 7: 5). In circumstances of peculiar solemnity we should approach God in all purity, abstaining even from things which are lawful at other times (cf. Zech. 12: 12-14).

5. *Vessels—are holy, i. e.*, their persons are ceremonially clean. *In a manner common, etc.*—The following clause is better rendered in the margin, 'especially when this day there is consecrated bread placed in the-vessel,' *i. e.*, on the table. The old bread, therefore, which had just been removed (v. 6), and which the priests might eat, was 'in a manner common.' Thus 'God will have mercy and not sacrifice.'

DAVID AND ABIGAIL.

Read 1 Samuel XXV. entire.

2. *VERY great, i. e., rich* (cf. 'mighty' in Ruth 2: 1).

3. They were an ill-mated pair, and Nabal was unworthy of his honorable ancestor Caleb (cf. Num. 13: 30, etc).

18. This enumeration of articles gives us a specimen of the commissary supplies of those days. *Bottles.*—These were made usually of goat skins stripped whole from the animal, and held several gallons. *Parched corn* (cf. Ruth 2: 14 and note).

19. *Told not her husband.*—This was not dutiful conduct for a wife in those days, but it was an emergency in which she may be well justified in asserting her 'rights.'

22. *Pisseth against the wall.*—An idiomatic Hebrew phrase, for which may be substituted in reading, 'any male.' In the time of our translators it was not an indelicate expression, any more than any of our equivalent euphemisms. That it was considered equally proper in David's time is evident from his use of it in conversation with Abigail (v. 34).

23. *Lighted off, etc.,* according to oriental custom (cf. Gen. 24: 64. Josh. 15: 18).

25. *Nabal is his name, i. e., 'fool.'*—This is not quite respectful, but we can again excuse her.

27. *This blessing, i. e., 'present'* (cf. Judges 1: 15).

28. *A sure house, i. e., establish and prosper thy family* (cf. 2 Sam. 7: 11, 16, 27).

29. *Bound in the bundle of life, i. e., carefully preserved,* as men bind up that which they most value. It expresses the perfect security of David's life from all the assaults of his enemies (cf. Ps. 66: 9).

31. *Remember thine handmaid.*—She did not probably intend this in the sense in which David afterward fulfilled her request by marrying her. The entire speech and conduct of Abigail well sustain the character attributed to her as 'a woman of good understanding' (v. 3).

35. *Accepted thy person, i. e., I have granted thy request,* and will regard thee with favor (cf. Gen. 19: 21).

39. *Sent and communed with Abigail, etc.*—This was no doubt after a season of decent delay. The juxtaposition of events in the Scripture narrative by no means implies that they occurred in immediate succession. It was but natural,

however, that David should be much prepossessed in favor of Abigail; and her wealth was a consideration not to be despised in his present poverty. We are also reminded in v. 44, that his wife Michal had been given to another. This had probably been done at the time of his flight (19: 18).

41. *A servant to wash, etc.*—This is oriental humility, and does not mean quite all that it expresses.

43. *David also took.*—More probably ‘had taken,’ previous to this time, and after he learned that Michal was given away. For this polygamy there is no apology, except the custom of those times.

SAUL AND THE WITCH OF ENDOR.

Read 1 Samuel XXVIII. entire.

6. *The Lord answered him not, i. e.,* made not known his will by any of the customary methods. Although Saul had once been ‘among the prophets’ (10: 10–12), the whole course of his past conduct proves that it was only as Judas was among the apostles. Now he was utterly forsaken of God; and in his despair of help from either God or man he turns vainly in search of one of those dealers in satanic arts, whom the Mosaic law condemned to death, and whom he himself had endeavored to suppress while he was yet under the influence of Samuel (cf. Lev. 20: 27. Deut. 18: 10–12).

7. *A woman that hath a familiar spirit.*—Hebrew, ‘a mistress of *Ob*,’ *i. e.,* of divination. Although ‘wizards’ are sometimes mentioned, yet these occult arts seem to have been chiefly practiced then, as in later times, by *women*. Why, we can not say, unless that they are more easily duped (like Eve), or, as modern necromancers would say, ‘They are better *mediums*’ on account of their peculiar nervous organization.

11. *Whom shall I bring up, i. e.,* ‘put thee in communication with,’—as such persons pretended to do; whether by *knocks* or otherwise we are not informed. The severe punishment which was visited on this class of persons, and the great ‘sin’ which it is declared to be (15: 23), leads us to believe that, in those times at least, it was something more than mere imposture, and that Satan was permitted to assist those who had thus ‘sold themselves’ to him. It is evident that Saul fully believed in the power of this woman.

12. *The woman saw Samuel.*—It is a much disputed ques-

tion as to whether the prophet Samuel really appeared in person; and many difficulties are presented on both sides. The writer can here only show his opinion. The surprise and alarm of the woman show evidently that here was something she had not looked for. *Thou art Saul.*—She probably suspected this before, from the lofty stature and kingly bearing of her visitor; and now this supernatural apparition confirms her suspicions. She is afraid for her life.

13. *What sawest thou?*—The specter is not revealed to Saul's view, but she describes it to him. *I saw gods.*—Hyperbolically spoken for, 'one of godlike aspect.'

14. Her further description of him as 'an old man,' etc., corresponding exactly with the appearance of Samuel while alive, convinces Saul that 'it was Samuel.'

15. *And Samuel said to Saul, etc.*—Thus far it is possible to suppose that the woman was practicing an imposture, and that her alarm, etc., were assumed. But now the communication which is made to Saul is such as Samuel alone could have given. We conclude therefore that God had superseded the woman's art, and permitted the prophet himself to arise (though perhaps not visibly to Saul), and to denounce upon him his impending doom. *Why hast thou disquieted me?*—This is spoken perhaps in accordance with the notions then prevalent concerning the state of the dead, as reposing in quiet resting places (Isa. 14: 9, etc.): but it is no more incredible that Samuel should be temporarily brought from Hades, than that Moses and Elias should have appeared on the Mount with Christ (Matt. 17: 3), or that 'many bodies of saints' should have risen at the time of our Lord's resurrection (Matt. 27: 52).

15. *I am sore distressed, etc.*—This is the desperate wail of a sinner wholly given up of God, and compelled, in his despair, to seek the aid of the man of God whose counsels he had disregarded when they might have done him some good (cf. Prov. 1: 24-32).

19. *Thou and thy sons be with me, i. e., among the dead.* This was fulfilled accordingly, 31: 6 (cf. 1 Chron. 10: 13, 14).

21-25.—The womanly sympathies of the hag are awakened by witnessing the distress of Saul, and she ministers to him with commendable hospitality. As to the attempts of modern necromancers to put their dupes in communication with the spirits of the departed, we may learn what is God's judg-

ment of such things from Deut. 29: 29. Isa. 8: 19, 20, with 2 Thess. 2: 9-12.

DAVID'S WIVES TAKEN CAPTIVE.

1 Samuel XXX. 1-6; read, also, 7-19.

1. AND it came to pass, when David and his men were come to Ziklag on the third day, that the Amalekites had invaded the south, and Ziklag, and smitten Ziklag, and burned it with fire; 2. And had taken the women captives, that were therein: they slew not any, either great or small, but carried them away, and went on their way. 3. So David and his men came to the city, and, behold, it was burned with fire; and their wives, and their sons, and their daughters, were taken captives. 4. Then David and the people that were with him lifted up their voice and wept, until they had no more power to weep. 5. And David's two wives were taken captives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite. 6. And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters: but David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.

1. *Ziklag*.—This was a tower of the Philistines which Achish, king of Gath, had given to David and his men for his abode during the exile into which Saul had driven him (27: 2-7). We are told there (vs. 3, 7) that 'David and his two wives' dwelt in that country 'a full year and four months.' David meanwhile made certain raids into the country of the Amalekites, etc., in which he 'left neither man nor woman alive,' no doubt regarding himself as commissioned to destroy these doomed people wherever he could find them (cf. vs. 8, 9). It was during this time that the Philistines made an invasion of the land of Israel, and fought the battle in which Saul and his sons were slain. David accompanied Achish in this expedition; but being suspected by the Philistines he was sent back (chap. 29). On his return he finds that the Amalekites have taken advantage of his absence to avenge themselves upon him by 'burning Ziklag with fire,' and taking captive all the women and children, who had been left behind. Among these were 'David's two wives' (v. 5).

2. *They slew not any*.—In this they may seem to have acted more humanely than David in his raids upon them. But their motives were sensual and selfish rather than humane. They reduced all their captives to slavery, or held them for ransom.

4-6. *Lifted up their voice and wept, etc.*—Their wives, sons, daughters, every thing was gone! And they themselves were

not only exiles from their own country, but strangers in a land of very doubtful friends. No wonder that they were overwhelmed and despondent, and 'almost ready to stone David,' who had brought them there (v. 6). And no wonder that David himself was 'greatly distressed,' both for his own sake and theirs. *But David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.*—How instructive is this! He was never brought so low before; but 'God is his refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.' The 46th Psalm may have been composed on this occasion.

8. *David inquired of the Lord.*—This he does through Abiathar, the priest, by means of the ephod. This was a part of the priestly dress worn upon the breast, and by means of which, in some way, the will of God was consulted (cf. Exod. 28: 6, etc. Num. 27: 21. 1 Sam. 23: 2, 4, 9).

18, 19. *David recovered all.*—Having committed his way unto the Lord, he is successful; and from Ziklag, where he weeps 'until he has no more power to weep' (v. 4), he soon goes to Hebron where he is crowned (cf. 2. Sam. 2: 4). Another Jehovah-jireh (see Gen. 22: 14).

II. SAMUEL.



THE SONG OF THE BOW.

Read 2 Samuel I. 17-27.

THIS lamentation of David over Saul and Jonathan is introduced into this collection as much for its beautiful sentiments as for its casual allusions to women. It may be noticed that David's love for Jonathan leads him to forget the bitter hatred of Saul toward himself, and to couple his name with that of his dearest friend. Thus it is that sorrow allays resentment.

18. *The use of the bow.*—As the words 'use of' have nothing corresponding to them in the original, the meaning undoubtedly is, 'he taught them the bow;' that is, he (David) dictated to them this elegy, which was called 'The Bow,' perhaps from the mention of the 'bow of Jonathan' in v. 22. Similar titles are thus given to some of the Psalms, *e. g.*, 22, 56, etc. *Book of Jasher.*—This is supposed to have been a book of national songs, which has not been preserved, it not being a part of the inspired writings.

19. *The beauty* (Hebrew, 'the gazelle').—This was an animal noted for the beauty of its eyes and form. Jonathan is poetically called the 'gazelle of Israel.'

20. *Lest the daughters, etc.*—In allusion to those songs of victory which were sung by women (cf. Miriam, Deborah, etc.).

21. *As though he had not been anointed, etc.*—The words 'as though' are not in the original, and the words 'not anointed with oil' refer, probably, not to Saul, but to his shield. As shields were made partly of leather, it was customary to supple them by anointing with oil before going into battle

(cf. Isa. 21: 5). Saul, in his hurry of despair, had neglected this.

24. *Clothed you in scarlet, i. e.*, enabled you to clothe yourselves in costly attire through the wealth which he introduced into the land.

26. *Passing the love of women.*—No other words could have so vividly expressed the strength of Jonathan's love for David (cf. 1 Sam. 18: 1-4).

27. *How are the mighty fallen, etc.*—These words, which occur also in vs. 19, 25, are probably a chorus which was sung responsively to the other verses. How appropriately, from that day to this, has this elegy been uttered over fallen greatness.

DAVID'S FAMILY—RIZPAH AND MICHAL.

Read 2 Samuel III. 1-16.

THE second chapter tells of the anointing of David as king, in Hebron, and of Ishbosheth, Saul's son, as king over Israel, at Mahanaim. The 'long war' spoken of in v. 1 was a consequence of this crowning of two kings.

2-5. As David 'waxed stronger and stronger,' and his kingdom became more firmly established, he also increased his domestic establishment, as was the oriental kingly custom. When anointed he had only the two wives here mentioned first, Ahinoam and Abigail. Of the other four we know little except their names. Maachah was a princess, whom he may have married for the sake of a favorable alliance with her father, the king of Geshur. It is melancholy to see this disregard of the divine law, which forbade the king to 'multiply wives' (Deut. 17: 17). David afterward still farther transgressed in this particular, and thus set an example which Solomon far exceeded. We have no apology for them, except the kingly custom of those times. Royal display, rather than mere sensual indulgence, must have been their motive (cf. 5: 13. 1 Chron. 14: 3).

7. Abner was Saul's cousin (1 Sam. 15: 50), and had caused Ishbosheth, an imbecile son of Saul, to be anointed king, while he himself thus became virtually regent of the kingdom. Deeming himself independent of control, he sharply resented the rebuke of the king, for his having taken the concubine of Saul. This was an act calculated to awaken a

suspicion of his aiming at the kingdom (cf. 1 Kings 2: 22.) See a further notice of this Rizpah in chap. 21: 10, 11.

8. *Dog's head?*—A proverbial phrase denoting supreme contempt.

10. *To translate the kingdom, etc.*—Thus Abner's treason to Ishbosheth fulfills God's promise to David (1 Sam. 15: 28; 28: 17). 'He causeth the wrath of man to praise him.'

13-15. We have seen how ingeniously Michal secured the escape of David when Saul sought his life (1 Sam. 19: 11-17), and how she was then given by her father to Phalti (here called Phaltiel), the son of Laish. So summarily were women disposed of in those days (25: 44). David was prompted to this demand for the restoration of Michal, perhaps by some remembrance of his former attachment, and of her kindness in saving his life; but chiefly, no doubt, by a determination to assert his right to her as his wife, and to fortify still more his right to the throne, as the son-in-law of King Saul.

16. *Her husband—weeping, etc.*—This poor man was badly treated, and deserves our sympathy. The feelings of the parties were not regarded in matters of this sort, especially when political considerations were in question. This has always been but too much the case in princely marriages. We shall soon meet with this woman again.

[Chap. 5: 13.]—(Cf. 3: 2-5, and note.) It appears that David had, in all, eighteen sons. His daughters are not named, except Tamar.

DAVID DANCES AND MICHAL JEERS.

Read 2 Samuel VI. 12-23 (cf. 1 Chron. 15: 29).

THE preceding verses tell us of the attempt to bring home the ark of God from Kirjah-jearim, where it had been left after its restoration by the Philistines, who had captured it in the days of Samuel (cf. 1 Sam. 4: 11; 7: 1). After the terrible breach upon Uzzah for his unhallowed touch (v. 7), they were afraid to bring it further, and it remained three months in the house of Obed-edom,

12. *The Lord blessed, etc.*—Thus the same ark of God that brought so great slaughter upon the men of Beth-shemesh (1 Sam. 6: 19), and also the breach upon Uzzah, brought rich blessings upon this pious family. Hearing of this, David

prepared a tabernacle for it in Jerusalem (v. 17), and went himself to bring home this sacred palladium of Israel.

14. *David danced, etc.*—This he did probably as the leader of a choir of musicians, who joined him in that solemn but joyful saltation, which is here called dancing. It is probable that Psalms 24 and 68 were composed for this occasion, and were sung responsively by bands of musicians, as was the practice afterward in the temple service.

16. *Michal—despised him.*—She could therefore have had no sympathy with the pious joy of the nation on this great occasion. She had also probably transferred her affections to Phaltiel, and she thought now only of the royal dignity which she supposed to be compromised by this unusual demonstration on the part of the king. Dancing was usually practiced by females alone; and we have no account of men engaging in it, unless in profanation of the sacred exercise by certain 'vain fellows,' such as those to whom Michal alludes in v. 20.

20. *To bless his household.*—How becoming is it, after being engaged in the public worship of God, to carry a blessing home to one's own family. David had heard how the household of Obed-edom had been blessed by the presence of the ark, and he desired his own family to receive a similar blessing.

How glorious, etc.—What a reception was this to David, coming home with a heart filled with pious joy, to bless his household! His own wife meets him with this most sarcastic and disdainful address.

Uncovereth himself.—This was false as it was impudent. He was 'girded with a linen ephod' (v. 14), which would prevent such exposure. How amazing is the presumption of this haughty, heartless woman.

21, 22. David's reply is calm and dignified. He had 'done it before the Lord;' and to show how little he regards her bitter rebuke, he says, 'I will be yet more vile.'

I will play, etc.—The word 'play' is probably used like the word 'vile' in retort upon her, this being her estimate of his conduct (cf. Exod. 32: 6).

23. *No chill, etc.*—She had been contemptuous and unwisely toward her husband, and profane toward God, and thus she was justly punished.

DAVID AND BATH-SHEBA.

Read 2 Samuel XI. entire.

THIS chapter is the darkest in the history of David, and had he lived in gospel times such conduct would be utterly irreconcilable with his being called 'a man after God's own heart' (1 Sam. 13: 14). That the Bible gives us all along such honest record of the sins of good men, is one of the evidences of its divine inspiration. Such is not the manner of men.

1. *After the year*, or 'at the return of the year,' *i. e.*, in the spring when armies go forth to war. *David tarried, etc.*

—Instead of putting himself at the head of his troops, as once he would have done, he now tarries at his ease in Jerusalem.

2. *Evening-tide—his bed.*—His rising from his bed in the evening, *etc.*, will be understood when we recall the custom in hot climates of reclining during the heat of the day, and then walking abroad in the cool of the evening. David walks on the roof of his house, which was flat and surrounded with a parapet.

Woman washing, i. e., taking the customary evening bath after the heat of the day. *Saw.*—How many temptations to sin enter through the eye (cf. Matt. 5: 28). Sloth and lust are nearly allied.

4. *Took her.*—Oriental monarchs are but too apt to claim such a privilege; and the woman, perhaps, was flattered by the attention of a king. *Was purified*, or, rather, 'had purified herself.'

5. *Told David, etc.*—It was necessary to take speedy steps both to save the king's honor and her own life; for by the law the adulteress was to be punished with death (Lev. 20: 10).

8 *Go down, etc.*—Thus vainly hoping to cover up the traces of his own sin and shame. *A mess*, or portion from the king's table. This was a high honor, and would tempt Uriah the more to enjoy it with his family.

11. This reply was worthy of a true soldier. Very likely, also, his suspicions may have been awakened by his apparently causeless recall from the army, and by the king's too transparent anxiety to have him visit his own house. But the hand of the Lord was in it that such wickedness

might not go unpunished. 'Be sure your sin will find you out' (Num. 32: 23).

13. *Made him drunk.*—With the same cunning design as before. Another wicked but fruitless device of the guilty king.

15. *Set—Uriah, etc.*—The king now grows desperate, and stops at no infamy of crime. To make this brave soldier the bearer of his own death-warrant, and thus willfully to murder him! *Facilis descensus!* How does one sin drag another after it. What is man?

21. *Did not a woman, etc.*—See Judges 9: 53 and note.

24. *Uriah—is dead also.*—This was all that the king desired to hear.

25. *One as well as another.*—This savors of infidelity as well as of hypocrisy, as though Uriah's death were a mere *accident*, and neither *God* nor *David* had any thing to do with it.

26. *Mourned, i. e.,* went through with the usual outward forms of mourning. How much of the world's mourning is no more sincere than this.

27. *The mourning was past.*—It lasted a month. David's indecent haste in making this woman his wife could not conceal his crime. *The thing that David had done displeased the Lord.*—These are very emphatic words; and the whole of David's subsequent history is but a commentary upon them.

DAVID'S PENITENCE AND THE CHILD'S DEATH.

Read 2 Samuel XII. 1-23.

THE offending king was not yet in a frame of mind to receive direct rebuke. The prophet, therefore, approaches him wisely with a parable, the point of which he did not perceive until he had passed judgment upon himself (v. 5). Such also were some of our Lord's parables (*e. g.*, Matt. 21: 33-46).

1-4. Much ingenuity has been wasted in attempting to trace in detail the points of resemblance between the several incidents of this parable and David's conduct; but this is needless in any parable. The main design is all that we need be anxious to discover. This design here was to bring David to condemn conduct like his own, while supposing it to be that of another; and then by showing him the point of resemblance, to bring him to self-condemnation and repentance.

7. *Thou art the man!*—What a thunderbolt of rebuke.

But David is now prepared to receive it meekly. His own conscience echoes back the words of the prophet. How often should it be so with us when we read or hear the word of God.

8. *Master's wives, etc., i. e.*, as a part of thy royal establishment, as was the custom of eastern kings; but we have no reason to suppose that David married any of Saul's wives. The phrase 'into thy bosom' is equivalent to 'under thy authority and protection' (cf. Luke 16: 23, 'in his bosom'). *Such and such things, i. e.*, whatever more might have been desirable in order to enhance thy royal magnificence.

9. *Thou hast killed, etc.*—It was as truly David's act, although 'by the sword of the children of Ammon,' as though he had done it with his own hand. All crime lies in the intention.

10. *Sword—never depart, etc.*—This was fulfilled in the cases of Amnon, Absalom, Adonijah, etc.

11. *Thy wives, etc.* (cf. 16: 21, 22).—Thus lust is punished by lust, as well as murder by murder. Thus also God's providence employs and controls the wicked agency of men without prompting them or relieving their responsibility.

12. *Secretly, etc.*—Thus secret sin often leads to public shame.

13. *I have sinned.*—That David said this with most deep and sincere repentance, is evident from his many penitential Psalms, some of which, at least, were written about this time. Read, especially, Ps. 51.

Against the Lord (cf. Ps. 51: 4, 'against thee, thee only').—He had grievously sinned against Uriah and against all Israel; but all this is nothing in comparison with his sin as committed *against the Lord*. Such is the spirit of all true evangelical repentance. We are not to suppose that the few words recorded in this verse were all that was said either by David or Nathan. The Bible, with a sublime simplicity, gives only the 'seeds of things.' *Put away thy sin.*—To put away sin is the opposite of imputing it. The temporary consequences of David's sin were not removed, but only those which were spiritual and eternal. This absolution of Nathan may not have been pronounced immediately, but only after the genuineness of David's repentance became fully manifest. Such juxtapositions in the record of things widely separated in point of time often occur in the Scriptures.

14. *The child—surely die.*—Thus we see how God 'visits

the iniquities of the fathers upon the children.' While the death of this child was a judgment upon the parents, it was also a mercy to them that it was not permitted to live as a memorial of their sin. The child itself went to God (v. 23).

16. *Lay all night*, in deep humiliation and repentance, as well as in earnest prayer.

20. *David arose, etc.*—This conduct of David, on his learning that the child was dead, was very unusual among the Jews, as, ordinarily, such an announcement would only have led to a fresh outburst of wailing (v. 18). But David at once laid aside all signs of mourning, 'and came into the house of the Lord and worshiped.' We have in all this the very best evidence of David's sincere and intelligent piety, notwithstanding his grievous faults. His night of fasting, prostration, and prayer, had not indeed secured the sparing of the child's life, but it had secured the acceptance of the penitent's person. Having now found what was the Lord's will, he cheerfully acquiesces, and with a consciousness of pardon and acceptance resumes at once his place as a worshiper in the beloved sanctuary of God.

21-23. *His servants, etc.*—In answer to this inquiry of his surprised servants, he gives the working of his own mind, as indicated above. The words need no explanation except the clause, 'I shall go to him.' This means certainly much more than, 'I shall go to the grave to him.' That were no consolation of itself, but he expected that his own conscious spirit would, at death, join the conscious spirit of that child, and that, too, in mutual recognition, 'in the presence of God where is fullness of joy' (Ps. 16: 11). What a rich source of consolation has this assurance ever been to pious parents who have been bereaved of their children.

BIRTH OF SOLOMON.

2 Samuel XII. 24, 25.

24. AND David comforted Bath-sheba his wife, and went in unto her, and lay with her: and she bare a son, and he called his name Solomon: and the Lord loved him. 25. And he sent by the hand of Nathan the prophet; and he called his name Jedidiah, because of the Lord.

24. *Comforted Bath-sheba, etc.*—Here again there is no reason to suppose that the things spoken of were immediately consecutive upon those above recorded. Months may have

intervened. Although David's marriage with Bath-sheba had been formed in sin, it was not unlawful, and was not annulled. We may hope also that her repentance was as sincere as his. *Solomon, i. e., 'peaceful.'*—This significant name of Bath-sheba's second son is given by the father in commemoration, probably, of the peace which he feels is now restored between them and the Lord, as well as in anticipation of his future peaceful reign (cf. 1 Chron. 22: 9).

25. *Jedidiah, i. e., 'beloved of the Lord.'*—It was the Lord who 'sent by the hand of Nathan the prophet' to give him this name, as significant of the divine favor toward one who should greatly prosper in the arts of peace, and should build the Lord's temple. He may also be regarded as a type of that greater 'Son of David' who was the 'beloved of the Lord' and 'Prince of Peace.' Solomon, however, is always known in Scripture by the name which his father gave him. Perhaps this may have been because he afterward proved himself so unworthy of the more honored and sacred name, Jedidiah.

AMNON AND TAMAR.

Read 2 Samuel XIII. 1-22.

HERE we have the beginning of David's domestic troubles, and a further evidence that while his sin was 'taken away' as to his relations to God, the temporal consequences of it were not averted. So it is still. God may graciously forgive our sins and save our souls, but grievous offenses often leave behind them shame and sorrow in this world. We have no comment to make on the foul details of this chapter. It is a sad record of *incest* and *fratricide*, and shows how bitter was the cup of sorrow that David had mingled for himself. In relation to Tamar, we may observe that her skill in making 'cakes' shows that kings' daughters did not think it beneath them to be acquainted with domestic arts. Her gentle and firm, though ineffectual, remonstrances (vs. 12, 13, 16), and her whole demeanor on this trying occasion, awaken both our sympathy and admiration.

13. *Speak unto the king, etc.*—This was of course only a device to escape from present violence. She did not expect that the king would grant such a thing, although in countries where polygamy prevails, the ties of kindred are regarded as very slight between a brother and a half sister (cf. Gen. 20: 12).

20. *Remained desolate.*—Absalom was her full brother, while Amnon was but a half brother. In the East a woman would be more likely to look to a full brother for protection or revenge than even to a father (cf. Gen. 34: 25). Her 'remaining desolate,' etc., probably implies that she was never married. The same was no doubt true of Dinah. Neither of their names occurs again in the Bible. It may be observed, however, that Tamar bears the same name with the daughter-in-law of Judah (Gen. 38). The latter part of the chapter records the bloody revenge which Absalom took upon the base Amnon, and his consequent flight to the court of his maternal grandfather, Talmai, king of Geshur, where he remained three years.

JOAB AND THE WOMAN OF TEKOAH.

Read 2 Samuel XIV. 1-27.

IN the closing verse of chapter 13 it is said that 'the soul of king David longed to go forth unto Absalom: for he was comforted concerning Amnon, seeing he was dead.' The word rendered 'longed' is very strong, implying that he was *pining away* with anxiety for Absalom's return. He could not at once recall him, without disregard of the law against willful murder, of which Absalom had been guilty. And yet he loved Absalom, and in his private feelings was no doubt ready to excuse, in a measure, the revenge he had taken for his sister Tamar. In these circumstances the crafty Joab devises a scheme for overcoming the king's scruples. Another parable is concocted by Joab and this 'wise woman,' by which the king is brought to commit himself to a merciful decision in a supposed case somewhat similar to that of Absalom.

2. *Anoint not thyself.*—The use of unguents was one of the ordinary accompaniments of dress. The omission of them implied mourning.

7. *Quench my coal, i. e.,* extinguish my family.

9. *The iniquity.*—This must refer to the arresting of the course of justice which required the death of the manslayer. Even the king might not interfere in such a case without 'iniquity.'

11. *Remember the Lord thy God.*—This is equivalent to asking of him an oath, which he grants: 'As the Lord liveth,' etc.

12. *One word, i. e.,* one additional request.

13. *Wherefore then, etc.*—She still speaks ambiguously, and ventures to suggest that in what the king has said there is something which is ‘faulty’ and ‘against the people of God.’ And then, as we may suppose, in answer to his startled look of inquiry, she adds, *in that the king doth not fetch home again his banished.* Thus the whole purpose of her address is at length revealed.

14. *Must needs die, etc.*—By this she may wish to intimate that the ‘king’s banished’ can not live long, or that as Amnon is dead, his life, ‘like water spilt on the ground,’ etc., can not be restored by Absalom’s banishment. *Doth God respect, etc.*—In the margin it reads, ‘because God hath not taken away his life’ (*i. e.*, Absalom’s), ‘he hath also devised means,’ etc., *i. e.*, as God is merciful so should man be. She declares here a precious truth as to God’s sparing and restoring mercy.

15. *The people.*—She seems still to fear that the king may be offended at the artifice which has been practiced upon him, and she makes her excuse that the people had constrained her to it; and no doubt Joab did represent the popular feeling in behalf of Absalom (cf. v. 13, ‘the people of God,’ and ‘the whole family,’ v. 7).

16. *The king will hear, etc.*—This is a comparison, the protasis only of which is expressed, while the conclusion may be readily inferred. It is as if she had said: ‘If the king will save me and my son,’ etc.—‘much more—.’ Then in v. 17 she *intimates* the conclusion: ‘The word of my lord the king shall now be comfortable,’ etc., and then she flatters his penetration, as being like an ‘angel of God,’ able both to understand her meaning (although she has not named Absalom), and to ‘know what is good and bad,’ or proper to be done in this case. A ‘wise woman’ truly.

19, 20. The king does indeed understand it all, and detects also the hand of Joab in this thing. The woman assents, with another touch of flattery as to the king’s penetration.

21. *Done this thing.*—Joab well understands what ‘this thing’ is, although Absalom has not once been named until now.

22. Joab’s anxiety for Absalom’s recall, as indicated by this outburst of gratitude, was due to the personal popularity

of Absalom who was regarded as the heir-apparent, and to his own desire to stand well with the 'coming man.'

24. *Not see my face.*—This was done to save appearances, and perhaps to learn the spirit and deportment of Absalom before he should be openly restored to the king's favor.

27. *One daughter.*—It will be noticed that she bore the name of that unfortunate aunt, whom she resembled also in beauty (chap. 13).

ABSALOM'S CONSPIRACY AND BASENESS.

Read 2 Samuel XV. 10-17; XVI. 20-22.

THE rebellion of Absalom (described in vs. 1-12, chap. 15), was a most base requital of his father's kindness in recalling him from banishment. Whatever may have been his claims to the succession, his haste to possess the throne was most unseemly and treasonable.

14. *Let us flee.*—Alas! how fallen is David from his former high estate. He can not now trust his own people, whose respect he has forfeited by his sin in the matter of Uriah the Hittite; and his own ungrateful son has stolen away the hearts of the men of Israel. Psalm 55 is supposed to refer to these events. In vs. 16, 17, and chap. 16: 22, we have the climax of Absalom's baseness; but it was only what Nathan the prophet had foretold (chap. 12: 11), as one of the punishments of David's sin; while on Absalom's part it was done to show that the kingdom was already his, inasmuch as in the East a new monarch takes possession of the entire harem of his predecessor as a part of his royal establishment. There being thus no hope of reconciliation between him and his father, those who were yet wavering would be induced to side with Absalom. Compare what is said of these women in chap. 20: 3. This vile conduct of Absalom affords another illustration of the methods of God's providence, by which he *permits* the crimes of men and *uses* them as the means of fulfilling his own holy purposes.

WOMEN BEFRIEND DAVID, ETC.

Read 2 Samuel XVII. 15-25.

17. JONATHAN *and* Ahimaaz.—These were the spies of David whom he left behind when he fled, that they might report to him what was passing in Jerusalem (chap. 15: 27).

En-rogel.—This was a well in the neighborhood of the city to which a 'wench' or servant-maid might go for water without exciting suspicion.

18. *A well, i. e.*, a cistern in the open space around which the house was built. Such cisterns were often dry, as this one must have been now.

19. *The woman*, not the 'wench,' but her mistress, the lady of the house. *Ground corn*, as if to dry, a purpose for which the open court was well fitted.

20. *Over the brook*.—An ingenious equivocation, which may be excused as a stratagem of war (cf. Rahab's concealment of the spies, Josh. 2: 5, 6).

25. *Abigail, the daughter of Nahash, etc.*—This was not the Abigail whom David married (cf. 1 Sam. 25). *Ithra*, who married this Abigail, or 'Abigal,' is called also 'Jether the Ishmeelite,' or, as in the Septuagint, 'the Jezreelite' (cf. 1 Chron. 2: 16). This Amasa, as well as Joab, was a nephew of David, and cousin of Absalom. Some think that Nahash was the name of Jesse's wife.

THE TEN CONCUBINES.

2 Samuel XX. 3.

3. AND David came to his house at Jerusalem; and the king took the ten women his concubines, whom he had left to keep the house, and put them in ward, and fed them, but went not in unto them. So they were shut up unto the day of their death, living in widowhood.

3. *The ten women, etc.*—After the overthrow of Absalom, the king declined to recognize these women in their former relation. And yet they were not divorced—not having willfully offended, but were kept 'in ward,' *i. e.*, a sort of imprisonment, the remainder of their life (cf. chap. 15: 16; 16: 22, and note).

SHEBA AND A WISE WOMAN.

Read 2 Samuel XX. 13-22.

14. AND *he went, i. e.*, Sheba, the son of Bichri, went, who, taking advantage of the disaffection which existed among the ten tribes, had gotten up a rebellion (vs. 1, 2). *Abel* was a town in the north. *They, i. e.*, the people of these towns who joined Sheba.

15. *They came, i. e.*, Joab and his army who laid siege to Abel, and were preparing to take it by storm.

16. *A wise woman.*—She was probably a sort of judge over this city and the surrounding region, as Deborah had been in her day (Judges 4). She speaks for the city.

18. *Wont to speak, etc.*—In the margin it reads: ‘They spake plainly in the beginning, saying,’ etc. She seems to claim for the city of Abel an ‘old-time’ reputation for wisdom, which Joab ought to have respected, by first holding a conference with the inhabitants, and thus ‘ending the matter’ without the necessity of a siege. She is also supposed to refer to the law in Deut. 20: 10, by which peace was first to be offered to a city. Joab had neglected this, and was seeking to destroy a ‘faithful’ or loyal city, and a ‘mother’ or chief city in Israel. Such is probably the meaning of this obscure passage.

19. *I am one, etc.*—She speaks as one representing the city.

20. *Far be it, etc.*—Joab is not a rapacious or bloodthirsty warrior who would have delighted in sacking the city. He desires only to suppress the rebellion.

21. *His head—thrown.*—Thus confidently does she assert the loyalty of the city, although Sheba had taken possession of it; and she soon proves the truth of this, as well as the power of her own influence, by throwing the head of Sheba over the wall. Here were *woman’s rights* well employed.

THE GIBEONITES AND RIZPAH.

Read 2 Samuel XXI. 1-14.

8. *Sons of Rizpah* (cf. 3: 7).—The seven sons and grandsons of Saul were delivered up to the Gibeonites as an atonement for the sin of Saul in ‘slaying the Gibeonites’ in violation of a national compact. For this blood-guiltiness drought and famine were upon the land (v. 1, and cf. Deut. 21: 22, 23).

9. *Hanged them, i. e., gibbeted them* after they had ‘fallen’ by being stoned to death, as was the Jewish custom. The hanging of them up ‘before the Lord’ seems to have been a sort of propitiation for national guilt, ‘that the fierce anger of the Lord may be turned away from Israel’ (see Num. 25: 4).

10. This was admirable devotion not only to the remains of her own sons, but also of the other victims. This watching must have continued for several months, even from the ‘beginning of harvest,’ which was in early summer, until the

falling of the autumnal rain. It moved the sympathy and admiration of beholders; and, when reported to David, led him to remove the barbarous spectacle, and to perform another act of humanity by gathering the bones of Saul and Jonathan, who had been in like manner gibbeted, and giving them all a decent burial.

14. *God was entreated.*—The blood-guiltiness was removed, rain descended again upon the land, and the famine ceased. How few have even heard the name of *Rizpah*, although she affords so admirable an example of patient sympathy and kindness in defending from desecration the blackening remains of her kindred. She is one among several almost unknown heroic women of the Bible.

I. KINGS.



ABISHAG.

1 Kings I. 1-4, 15

1. Now king David was old and stricken in years; and they covered him with clothes, but he gat no heat. 2. Wherefore his servants said unto him, Let there be sought for my lord the king a young virgin: and let her stand before the king, and let her cherish him, and let her lie in thy bosom, that my lord the king may get heat. 3. So they sought for a fair damsel throughout all the coasts of Israel, and found Abishag a Shunammite, and brought her to the king. 4. And the damsel was very fair, and cherished the king, and ministered to him: but the king knew her not.—15. And Bath-sheba went in unto the king into the chamber: and the king was very old: and Abishag the Shunammite ministered unto the king.

David was now in his seventieth year (cf. 2 Sam. 5: 4), and his physical powers seem to have been prematurely exhausted. The device adopted for promoting his bodily comfort was truly an oriental one, and was well adapted to the end, as experience and medical testimony show (cf. Eccl. 4: 11.) Abishag was made a concubine or secondary wife, as a subsequent notice of her shows (cf. 2: 22). She seems also to have been his constant personal attendant (v. 15).

ADONIJAH ASPIRES BUT SOLOMON REIGNS.

1 Kings I. 5-7, 11-31, etc.

5. THEN Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, I will be king: and he prepared him chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him. 6. And his father had not displeased him at any time in saying, Why hast thou done so? and he also was a very goodly man; and his mother bare him after Absalom. 7. And he conferred with Joab the son of Zeruah, and with Abiathar the priest: and they following Adonijah helped him.—11. Whereupon Nathan

spake unto Bath-sheba the mother of Solomon, saying, Hast thou not heard that Adonijah the son of Haggith doth reign, and David our lord knoweth it not? 12. Now therefore come, let me, I pray thee give thee counsel, that thou mayest save thine own life, and the life of thy son Solomon. 13. Go and get thee in unto king David, and say unto him, Didst not thou, my lord, O king, swear unto thine handmaid, saying, Assuredly Solomon thy son shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne? why then doth Adonijah reign? 14. Behold, while thou yet talkest there with the king, I also will come in after thee, and confirm thy words. 15. And Bath-sheba went in unto the king into the chamber: and the king was very old; and Abishag the Shunammite ministered unto the king. 16. And Bath-sheba bowed, and did obeisance unto the king. And the king said, What wouldest thou? 17. And she said unto him, My lord, thou swarest by the Lord thy God unto thine handmaid, saying, Assuredly Solomon thy son shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne. 18. And now, behold, Adonijah reigneth; and now, my lord the king, thou knowest it not: 19. And he hath slain oxen and fat cattle and sheep in abundance, and hath called all the sons of the king, and Abiathar the priest, and Joab the captain of the host: but Solomon thy servant hath he not called. 20. And thou, my lord, O king, the eyes of all Israel are upon thee, that thou shouldest tell them who shall sit on the throne of my lord the king after him. 21. Otherwise it shall come to pass, when my lord the king shall sleep with his fathers, that I and my son Solomon shall be counted offenders. 22. And, lo, while she yet talked with the king, Nathan the prophet also came in. 23. And they told the king, saying, Behold Nathan the prophet. And when he was come in before the king, he bowed himself before the king with his face to the ground. 24. And Nathan said, My lord, O king, hast thou said, Adonijah shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne? 25. For he is gone down this day, and hath slain oxen and fat cattle and sheep in abundance, and hath called all the king's sons, and the captains of the host, and Abiathar the priest; and, behold, they eat and drink before him, and say, God save king Adonijah. 26. But me, even me thy servant, and Zadok the priest, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and thy servant Solomon, hath he not called. 27. Is this thing done by my lord the king, and thou hast not showed it unto thy servant, who should sit on the throne of my lord the king after him? 28. Then king David answered and said, Call me Bath-sheba. And she came into the king's presence, and stood before the king. 29. And the king sware, and said, As the Lord liveth, that hath redeemed my soul out of all distress, 30. Even as I sware unto thee by the Lord God of Israel, saying, Assuredly Solomon thy son shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne in my stead; even so will I certainly do this day. 31. Then Bath-sheba bowed with her face to the earth, and did reverence to the king, and said, Let my lord king David live for ever.

5. Adonijah was next in age to Absalom among the king's sons, having been born soon after him though not from the same mother (v. 6). His fine personal appearance was also

in favor of his claim to the succession, especially in those days when physical vigor and manly beauty were so apt to be associated with heroic character and fitness to rule. His claim was also supported by Joab and Abiathar, who were at the head, respectively, of the army and of the priesthood.

11. *Adonijah—doth reign, i. e.*, has assumed the state and equipage of a king.

13. *Didst thou not swear, etc.* (cf. vs. 17, 30).—When this solemn pledge was given to Bath-sheba, we are not informed. Some suppose it was at their first interview, and was exacted by her as a condition of her compliance with the king's wishes. But this is quite improbable. David himself attributes the designation of Solomon to the throne to a special divine revelation (cf. 1 Chron. 22: 8-10).

21. *Counted offenders*—And therefore be put to death as having been known to expect the kingdom.

22. *And lo, etc.*—It had been wisely concerted that Bath-sheba should first speak to the king, and then that Nathan should follow.

23. *Face to the ground.*—This obeisance, as well as that of Bath-sheba (v. 16), was probably more profound than usual, and implied that a special favor was sought.

25. *God save, etc.*—Hebrew, 'Live, king Adonijah.'

28. *Call me Bath-sheba.*—She had retired when Nathan entered, but was still within call.

29. *Redeemed my soul, etc., i. e.*, hath delivered me from my many adversities (cf. 2 Sam. 4: 9. Gen. 48: 16).

30. *Even so, etc.*—How this was done is recorded in the subsequent verses.

A NEW PLOT OF ADONIJAH.

1 Kings II. 12-25.

12. THEN sat Solomon upon the throne of David his father; and his kingdom was established greatly. 13. And Adonijah the son of Haggith came to Bath-sheba the mother of Solomon. And she said, Comest thou peaceably? And he said, Peaceably. 14. He said moreover, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And she said, Say on. 15. And he said, Thou knowest that the kingdom was mine, and that all Israel set their faces on me, that I should reign: howbeit the kingdom is turned about, and is become my brother's: for it was his from the Lord. 16. And now I ask one petition of thee, deny me not. And she said unto him, Say on. 17. And he said, Speak, I pray thee, unto Solomon the king, (for he will not say thee nay,) that he give me Abishag the Shunammite to wife. 18. And Bath-sheba said, Well; I

will speak for thee unto the king. 19. Bath-sheba therefore went unto king Solomon, to speak unto him for Adonijah. And the king rose up to meet her, and bowed himself unto her, and sat down on his throne, and caused a seat to be set for the king's mother; and she sat on his right hand. 20. Then she said, I desire one small petition of thee; I pray thee, say me not nay. And the king said unto her, Ask on, my mother; for I will not say thee nay. 21. And she said, Let Abishag the Shunammite be given to Adonijah thy brother to wife. 22. And king Solomon answered and said unto his mother, And why dost thou ask Abishag the Shunammite for Adonijah? ask for him the kingdom also; for he is mine elder brother; even for him, and for Abiathar the priest, and for Joab the son of Zeruiah. 23. Then king Solomon swore by the Lord, saying, God do so to me, and more also, if Adonijah have not spoken this word against his own life. 24. Now therefore, as the Lord liveth, which hath established me, and set me on the throne of David my father, and who hath made me a house, as he promised, Adonijah shall be put to death this day. 25. And king Solomon sent by the hand of Benaiah the son of Jehoiada; and he fell upon him that he died.

13. *Comest thou peaceably?*—This might well be questioned, as through her he had lost the throne.

15. *The kingdom was mine, i. e.*, as he claims both by birthright and by the choice of the people. He admits, however, that it was Solomon's 'from the Lord;' but the request which he makes was prompted by secret disaffection.

19. *The king rose up, etc.*—A fine exhibition of filial reverence. The 'right hand' was the highest place of honor, and to invite one to it was equivalent to giving 'the half of the kingdom' (cf. Esther 5: 6, etc. Ps. 45: 9).

20. *Say thee nay.*—He would have been safe in promising this if it had been a 'small petition,' as she regarded it. Even queen-mothers do not always understand questions of state.

22. *The kingdom also.*—To take David's concubine would be equivalent to claiming a right to the kingdom (cf. 2 Sam. 3: 7; 16: 21); and had the request been granted, the distinction which Adonijah would thus have enjoyed, together with the support of Joab and Abiathar, would have greatly endangered Solomon's throne. The proposition was ill-disguised treason, and was, moreover, a violation of his parole of good behavior, or which he had escaped death for his former offense (1: 51-53). These considerations will amply justify the summary execution which was inflicted upon him according to the custom of that day



SOLOMON AND PHARAOH'S DAUGHTER.

1 Kings III. 1.

1. AND Solomon made affinity with Pharaoh king of Egypt, and took Pharaoh's daughter, and brought her into the city of David, until he had made an end of building his own house, and the house of the Lord, and the wall of Jerusalem round about.

This affinity with so powerful a monarch would greatly strengthen Solomon's throne, and add to his importance among the cotemporary kings of the earth. It is said that there has been found on the Egyptian monuments what is supposed to be a portrait of this princess. It is charitably supposed, also, that she conformed, outwardly at least, to the Jewish religion. The 45th Psalm and the Song of Solomon are thought by some to have been composed primarily in honor of this occasion, although with an ultimate and far higher reference to the Messiah. But see notes. *Into the city of David, i. e.,* into that part of Jerusalem which was so called, and where it is supposed was 'his mother's house' (Song 3: 4). He afterward built her a house or palace in connection with the 'king's house' (cf. 7: 1, 8; 9: 24, with 2 Chron. 8: 11)

SOLOMON AND THE TWO WOMEN.

1 Kings III. 16-28.

16. THEN came there two women, that were harlots, unto the king, and stood before him. 17. And the one woman said, O my lord, I and this woman dwell in one house; and I was delivered of a child with her in the house. 18. And it came to pass the third day after that I was delivered, that this woman was delivered also: and we were together; there was no stranger with us in the house, save we two in the house. 19. And this woman's child died in the night; because she overlaid it. 20. And she arose at midnight, and took my son from beside me, while thine handmaid slept, and laid it in her bosom, and laid her dead child in my bosom. 21. And when I rose in the morning to give my child suck, behold, it was dead: but when I had considered it in the morning, behold, it was not my son, which I did bear. 22. And the other woman said, Nay; but the living is my son, and the dead is thy son. And this said, No; but the dead is thy son, and the living is my son. Thus they spake before the king. 23. Then said the king, The one saith, This is my son that liveth, and thy son is the dead: and the other saith, Nay; but thy son is the dead, and my son is the living. 24. And the king said, Bring me a sword. And they brought a sword before the king. 25. And the king said, Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one, and half to the other

26. Then spake the woman whose the living child was unto the king, for her bowels yearned upon her son, and she said, O my lord, give her the living child, and in no wise slay it. But the other said, Let it be neither mine nor thine, but divide it. 27. Then the king answered and said, Give her the living child, and in no wise slay it: she is the mother thereof. 28. And all Israel heard of the judgment which the king had judged; and they feared the king: for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him to do judgment.

This judgment between these two women is given as an example of that wisdom which Solomon had asked and obtained from the Lord (vs. 9, 11, 12). It was a case in which there was no evidence excepting the conflicting testimony of the women themselves. Solomon's method of ascertaining the truth shows a wise application of his knowledge of human nature, and seems to us simple enough now that we have seen how it was done. The bloody test which he proposes took them both by surprise, and the testimony of the true mother's instinct was at once sufficient to decide the question.

26. *Bowels*.—An idiomatic form of expression often used in the Scriptures to denote *sympathies* or *affections*, just as we use the word 'heart.'

28. *Feared the king, i. e.*, revered his wisdom.

SOLOMON'S BUILDINGS, ETC.

1 Kings VII. 1, 2, 8; IX. 24.

7: 1. BUT Solomon was building his own house thirteen years, and he finished all his house. 2. He built also the house of the forest of Lebanon.—8. Solomon made also a house for Pharaoh's daughter, whom he had taken to wife, like unto this porch.

9: 24. But Pharaoh's daughter came up out of the city of David unto her house which Solomon had built for her: then did he build Millo.

These great palaces and porticos were probably all contiguous to each other, and constituted a grand pile of buildings like other oriental palaces. The one which is called the 'palace of the forest of Lebanon,' is probably so called because of the abundance of cedar wood from Lebanon, which was used in its construction (cf. chap. 10: 17 with 2 Chron. 12: 9-11).

9: 24. This separate establishment for Pharaoh's daughter was partly built in honor of so great a princess, and partly because she was, probably, surrounded with a retinue of heathen Egyptian servants, who might not dwell in a place

hallowed by the presence of the ark of God (see 2 Chron. 8 : 11).

THE WIDOW'S SON.

1 Kings VII. 13, 14.

13. AND king Solomon sent and fetched Hiram out of Tyre. 14 He was a widow's son of the tribe of Naphtali, and his father was a man of Tyre, a worker in brass: and he was filled with wisdom, and understanding, and cunning to work all works in brass. And he came to king Solomon, and wrought all his work.

Hiram, a widow's son, was the general superintendent of all Solomon's great works. The mother is here said to be of the 'tribe of Naphtali,' but in 2 Chron. 2: 14, 'of the daughters of Dan.' She may have been originally of the tribe of Dan, and have married a Naphtalite, and after his death a 'man of Tyre,' or as the Danites had seized Laish, or Dan, on the borders of Naphtali, she might be said to belong to either tribe (cf. Judges 18: 2, 7, 27, etc.).

SOLOMON AND THE QUEEN OF SHEBA.

1 Kings X. 1-13.

1. AND when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the Lord, she came to prove him with hard questions. 2. And she came to Jerusalem with a very great train, with camels that bare spices, and very much gold, and precious stones: and when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart. 3. And Solomon told her all her questions: there was not any thing hid from the king, which he told her not. 4. And when the queen of Sheba had seen all Solomon's wisdom, and the house that he had built, 5. And the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, and his cup-bearers, and his ascent by which he went up unto the house of the Lord; there was no more spirit in her. 6. And she said to the king, It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts and of thy wisdom. 7. Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it; and, behold, the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard. 8. Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom. 9. Blessed be the Lord thy God, which delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel: because the Lord loved Israel for ever, therefore made he thee king, to do judgment and justice. 10. And she gave the king a hundred and twenty talents of gold, and of spices very great store, and precious stones: there came no more such abundance of spices as these which the queen of Sheba gave to king Solomon. 11. And the navy also of Hiram, that brought gold from Ophir, brought in from Ophir great plenty of almug trees, and precious stones. 12. And the king made

of the almsg trees pillars for the house of the Lord, and for the king's house, harps also and psalteries for singers: there came no such almsg trees, nor were seen unto this day. 13. And king Solomon gave unto the queen of Sheba all her desire, whatsoever she asked, besides that which Solomon gave her of his royal bounty. So she turned and went to her own country, she and her servants.

(See the same account in 2 Chron. 9: 1-12.)

1. *The queen of Sheba.*—It is a question much disputed whether Sheba was in southern Arabia, or in Ethiopia, the modern Abyssinia. Ancient traditions favor both views; and possibly this queen may have reigned over both countries, as they are separated only by the Red Sea. Our Savior calls her 'the queen of the south' (and both *Yemen* in Arabia, and *Saba* in Abyssinia signify south), and says 'she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon' (Matt. 12: 42). Either of these countries might be spoken of as 'the uttermost parts of the earth,' as it was then known. The discussion as to her country may be found in the Bible dictionaries, etc. Bruce, in his Travels in Abyssinia, affirms "that there can be no doubt as to this expedition, as Pagan, Arab, Moor, Abyssinian, and all the countries round, vouch for it pretty much in the terms of Scripture." There is some ground for the opinion that this queen introduced the true religion into Abyssinia, which was afterward Christianized by the Eunuch of Candace (Acts 8: 27). The Abyssinian monarchs still claim a descent from Solomon by this queen. *Name of the Lord.*—Solomon's fame was the more honorable, as being associated with that of 'Jehovah,' the God of Israel, in whose honor he erected so splendid a temple. The most desirable fame which any one can acquire is that which concerns the name of the Lord. *Hard questions.*—Enigmas, or dark sayings, the solution of which would test his reputed wisdom.

3. *Told her, i. e., 'solved' all her questions.*

5. *His ascent, etc.*—This was a magnificent viaduct connecting Mt. Zion with Mt. Moriah, the remains of which are still found. The other splendors referred to are more fully described in vs. 14-29. *No more spirit in her, i. e., she was overwhelmed with astonishment.*

9. *Blessed be, etc.*—This pious language might seem to corroborate the opinion that she embraced the true religion, but it is not conclusive (cf. 2 Chron. 2: 12). Religion does not consist in pious utterances.

10. *One hundred and twenty talents.*—This has been estimated as equivalent to \$3,600,000.

11. *Almug* (or *algum*) *trees*, a precious wood much used in ornamental work, musical instruments, etc.

13. *Whatsoever she asked, i. e.*, answered all her questions, besides loading her with presents. Let us weigh well the lesson which our Lord derives from this history (Matt. 12: 42.)

SOLOMON AND HIS STRANGE WIVES.

1 Kings XI. 1-9.

1. BUT king Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites; 2. Of the nations concerning which the Lord said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love. 3. And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart. 4. For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father. 5. For Solomon went after Ash-toreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. 6. And Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord, and went not fully after the Lord, as did David his father. 7. Then did Solomon build a high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon. 8. And likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods. 9. And the Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice.

This is another most melancholy chapter in the sacred history, which is ever faithful in its record, and proves its divinity by not concealing the faults of its heroes. The preceding chapter shows us Solomon at the height of his kingly glory, and declares that he 'exceeded all the kings of the earth for riches and wisdom' (v. 23); but here we have the beginning of his downfall. In his prosperity he forgot the Lord. These two chapters cover a period of more than twenty years. Solomon's apostasy was gradual. He first 'multiplied horses,' with, of course, chariots and equipments to correspond (chap. 10: 26). This was in violation of the divine command (Deut. 17: 16), and was intended for the purpose of mere vain display, as he had no wars. He also 'multiplied silver and gold' (chap. 10: 14, 27), which was equally forbidden (*Ib.*).

And now he 'multiplies wives' in disregard of the same divine authority, and mainly for the same purpose of vainglorious display. And how sadly did they 'turn away his heart' as God had forewarned (Deut. 17: 17).

2. See the prohibitions here alluded to in Exod. 34: 16. Num. 25: 1, 2. Deut. 7: 1-4.

3. *Princesses, i. e.*, daughters of kings or chiefs of neighboring nations, who were thus bound in friendly alliance with Solomon. He was no warrior, but a *peaceful* king, as his name indicates. The 'concubines' were women of inferior rank, and were selected, probably, more for their beauty. Thus, with this immense establishment, he vied with other oriental monarchs.

4. *Old—turned away his heart.*—He was, no doubt, prematurely old from his sensual excesses; and he gave himself up more and more to the influence of these heathenish women, so as not only to build shrines for the accommodation of each in her idolatry, but even to join them in their worship. He became a *liberal* in religion, as well as a *libertine* in morals, these things having a natural affinity with each other.—The words 'perfect' in v. 4, and 'fully' in v. 6, applied to David, in contrast with Solomon, must have reference to this matter of *idolatry*, in which David, with all his faults, never indulged (cf. 14: 8, 9).

9. *Angry with Solomon.*—Those who sneer at the Bible because it records this disgraceful part of Solomon's history, would do well to notice how strongly his conduct is condemned. The guilt of Solomon is the more inexcusable because he had been so highly favored of God, who had 'appeared unto him twice,' viz: at Gibeon (chap. 3: 5), and at Jerusalem (chap. 9: 2), at which times he was fully instructed and warned. He seems to have been given up for a time, like Peter, in order to show the weakness of man, even at his best estate. This 'wisest of men' acts with the greatest folly, just as that boldest of Christ's disciples shows himself the greatest coward.—In the subsequent verses of this chapter we have an account of the 'adversaries' whom 'the Lord stirred up against Solomon' to disturb the peace of his declining years. Although they 'meant it not so,' the Lord sent them for this purpose. We have no account of any of the wars which they waged. These were, no doubt, of a predatory character, and greatly crippled Solomon's power. As to Solomon's last days, so far as the divine record is con-

cerned, his sun goes down in clouds. We have no account of his repentance, as in the case of David. His memory, like that of Lot, is left to perish. The book of Ecclesiastes, which was undoubtedly written by him during the latter part of his life, affords our chief ground of hope concerning him. Read Eccl. 2: 1-12, 7: 25-29; 12: 13, 14. Many of his Proverbs seem also to have been written at this period, and his warnings in regard to the 'strange woman' have a fearful emphasis in view of his own experience (see Prov. 2: 16-19; 5: 3-14, etc.).

JEROBOAM'S WIFE AND AHIJAH.

1 Kings XIV. 1-7, 12-18.

1. AT that time Abijah the son of Jeroboam fell sick. 2. And Jeroboam said to his wife, Arise, I pray thee, and disguise thyself, that thou be not known to be the wife of Jeroboam; and get thee to Shiloh: behold, there is Ahijah the prophet, which told me that I should be king over this people. 3. And take with thee ten loaves, and cracknels, and a cruse of honey, and go to him; he shall tell thee what shall become of the child. 4. And Jeroboam's wife did so, and arose, and went to Shiloh, and came to the house of Ahijah. But Ahijah could not see; for his eyes were set by reason of his age. 5. And the Lord said unto Ahijah, Behold, the wife of Jeroboam cometh to ask a thing of thee for her son; for he is sick: thus and thus shalt thou say unto her; for it shall be, when she cometh in, that she shall feign herself to be another woman. 6. And it was so, when Ahijah heard the sound of her feet, as she came in at the door, that he said, Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam; why feignest thou thyself to be another? for I am sent to thee with heavy tidings. 7. Go, tell Jeroboam, etc.—12. Arise thou therefore, get thee to thine own house: and when thy feet enter into the city, the child shall die. 13. And all Israel shall mourn for him, and bury him: for he only of Jeroboam shall come to the grave, because in him there is found some good thing toward the Lord God of Israel in the house of Jeroboam. 14. Moreover the Lord shall raise him up a king over Israel, who shall cut off the house of Jeroboam that day; but what? even now. 15. For the Lord shall smite Israel, as a reed is shaken in the water, and he shall root up Israel out of this good land, which he gave to their fathers, and shall scatter them beyond the river, because they have made their groves, provoking the Lord to anger. 16. And he shall give Israel up because of the sins of Jeroboam, who did sin, and who made Israel to sin. 17. And Jeroboam's wife arose, and departed, and came to Tirzah: and when she came to the threshold of the door, the child died; 18. And they buried him; and all Israel mourned for him, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by the hand of his servant Ahijah the prophet.

In the preceding chapters, 12th and 13th, we are told how

Jeroboam came to the kingdom, and how he corrupted the worship of God (12: 28-33). Finding that God was against him, like king Saul, he has recourse to one of the Lord's prophets. But fearing a repulse should he come in person, he foolishly sends his wife in disguise.

3. *Cracknels*.—A sort of cakes. It was customary to bring a present when one went to consult the prophet (*e. g.* Naaman, 2 Kings 5: 5).

12. *The child shall die*.—The word 'child' means *a youth* (as in Gen. 21: 12, etc.). *He only shall come to the grave, i. e.*, with the ordinary rites of burial. The others were to fall by violence, and be left a prey to birds and wild beasts (cf. 21: 23, 24). 'The memory of the just is blessed.' The premature death of this pious young prince was a judgment of God upon degenerate Israel.

13. *In him there is found some good thing, etc.*—He could not then have been a mere child, but one who, by his excellent character, had already gained the good will of the people, so that 'all Israel' come to his burial and mourn for him. He was, no doubt, 'a pious prince like Josiah, and God took him away in order that he might commit the work of cutting off the house of Jeroboam into other hands (cf. v. 14).

14. *What? even now*.—This probably means that Baasha, who was to do this work of cutting off, had already been raised up (cf. 15: 27-30).

15. *Groves, i. e.*, such as were consecrated to idolatrous rites (cf. Judges 3: 7. Deut. 16: 21). At an earlier day groves were not prohibited (Gen. 21: 33). 'The groves were God's first temples.'

ASA AND MAACHAH.

1 Kings XV. 9-15 (cf. 2 Chron. XV. 16).

9 AND in the twentieth year of Jeroboam king of Israel reigned Asa over Judah. 10. And forty and one years reigned he in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Maachah, the daughter of Abishalom. 11. And Asa did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, as did David his father. 12. And he took away the sodomites out of the land, and removed all the idols his father had made. 13. And also Maachah his mother, even her he removed from being queen, because she had made an idol in a grove; and Asa destroyed her idol, and burnt it by the brook Kidron. 14. But the high places were not removed: nevertheless Asa's heart was perfect with the Lord all his days. 15. And he brought in the things which his father had ded-

icated, and the things which himself had dedicated, into the house of the Lord, silver, and gold, and vessels.

9. *His mother's name.*—She was his grandmother (v. 2), and she is thus named because she occupied the official position of queen-mother, like the English queen-dowager.

13. *Her he removed.*—Asa's firmness in removing her from her high office and honors, because of her patronage of idolatry, is worthy of all praise. *Burnt it.*—It was probably made of carved wood, a 'graven image.'

14. *High places—not removed.*—In 2 Chron. 14: 3, 5, he is said to have taken away the 'high places,' but it was probably those devoted to idolatrous worship, while there were other 'high places' which were spared even by good kings, because they were employed in the worship of Jehovah, although with some unauthorized rites (cf. 22: 43. 2 Kings 14: 4; 15: 4, 35). The attachment of the people to these high places may have arisen from a natural desire to localize their worship before synagogues were built (1 Kings 3: 2). *Heart—perfect.*—This must be understood with the same limitation as when applied to David (v. 3) when his public administration in matters of religion is chiefly referred to (cf. v. 5). Spiritually, none are perfect.

AHAB AND JEZEBEL.

1 Kings XVI. 30-33.

30. AND Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him. 31. And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshiped him. 32. And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. 33. And Ahab made a grove; and Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him.

30. *Ahab did evil above all that were before him* (cf. v. 33).—This preëminence in wickedness was owing largely to the influence of his wife Jezebel. His taking her to wife is here mentioned as quite an advance upon his former wickedness (v. 31). He seems to have renounced entirely the worship of God, and did what he could to nationalize the worship of Baal.

ELIJAH AND THE WIDOW OF ZAREPHATH.

Read 1 Kings XVII. entire.

1. *ELIJAH the Tishbite.*—This great prophet thus bursts upon us unannounced with a message terrible to sinning Israel. *Said to Ahab.*—What presumption was this to threaten to shut up heaven, if he had not been conscious that the Lord was with him. The Apostle James tells us that for this drought he had ‘prayed’ (5: 17), knowing that nothing but severe judgments would bring the wicked king and people to a sense of their sins.

4. *Ravens.*—With different vowel points, the Hebrew word may be read, ‘the Arabians,’ and so some understand it (see Kitto). God’s providential ordering is here expressed as ‘commanding’ (cf. v. 9). The ravens are birds of prey and would be likely to find meat if any could be had. All curious questions, however, are needless, as the whole was a miracle. God sent both ‘bread’ and ‘flesh.’

7. *The brook dried up.*—God did not see fit to keep up the brook by miracle; and, dispensing with the ministry of ravens, he sends the prophet to Zarephath (in N. Test. Sarepta, Luke 4: 26), to a ‘poor widow,’ who, though nameless, is immortal. She was, no doubt, one of the few worshipers of the true God that still remained; and her prayers for relief in her deep distress we may believe were thus answered. It was another *Jehovah-jireh* (cf. Gen. 22: 14).

12. *But a handful of meal and a little oil.*—Olive oil which was used both for food and medicine. *Two sticks,* i. e., ‘a few;’ as we say, ‘two or three.’

14, 15. Here was a ‘great promise’ which none but God could fulfill; but it finds in her a ‘great faith’ to correspond, and her prompt obedience was the evidence of it. *Many days,* or ‘a full year.’ She ‘received a prophet in the name of a prophet, and she had a prophet’s reward’ (Matt. 10: 41). Here was one great deliverance soon to be followed by another.

17–24. The widow’s son died (v. 20, ‘slaying’), not swooned away merely, and she deems it a visitation of God for her sins (v. 18), just as all Israel was now under visitation. Thus ‘affliction maketh the heart soft.’ She charges the slaying of her son upon him, as he had brought the other great judgment upon Israel.

20, 21. *Cried—and stretched himself, etc.*—Thus we should ever connect prayer with the use of appropriate means. The heat of his own body would impart some warmth to that of the dead boy (cf. the parallel case of Elisha, 2 Kings 4: 32-35). Elijah here does by prayer what Christ did by an immediate word of command to the widow's son of Nain (Luke 7: 14).

23. There is no *rhetoric* here to describe the surprise and joy of this mother, such as an uninspired writer would have been apt to use.

24. The effect upon her faith only is noticed, 'now I *know*,' etc. Her faith had begun to waver, when her child died. It needed to be strengthened, and the work of grace in her deepened; and thus God has done it. Her faith now is the faith of *assurance*, 'I *know*.'—Elijah's being sent to this widow, along with the case of Naaman the Syrian, is referred to by our Lord (Luke 4: 25-27), as illustrating the sovereignty of God. 'He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy' (Rom. 9: 15).

JEZEBEL THE WICKED.

1 Kings XIX. 1, 2; read XXI. 1-26.

1. AND Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and withal how he had slain all the prophets with the sword. 2. Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to-morrow about this time.

19: 1. *Ahab told Jezebel, etc.*—The preceding chapter records the signal triumph of the prophet Elijah over the four hundred prophets of Baal. Ahab now reports this to Jezebel, who sends to the prophet this fierce message in the name of her gods. Elijah would, no doubt, have stood his ground, but the Lord did not so instruct him, and he fled for his life, first to Beer-sheba, then a day's journey into the wilderness, then to Horeb the mount of God. The remarkable communication which he there received from God, the reader will do well to study (vs. 9-18).

21: 3. *The Lord forbid, etc.*—"To the mind of this simple man, full of the spirit of earlier days, it would have been an act of impiety to abandon the family home. The king of Israel paused and trembled (v. 4) before this assertion of the right of the family."—*Hyacinthe*.

7. *I will give thee the vineyard, etc.*—She takes the reins out of the hands of her less unscrupulous husband, commits forgery by writing letters in Ahab's name (v. 8), then, by perjured witnesses, brings about the murder of Naboth (v. 10), and then hands over the vineyard to her husband, (v. 15).

9. *Proclaim a fast*—As though some sacrilege had been committed which must be atoned for. Thus do tyrants often cloak their oppressions under the name of religion.

23-25. Her fearful doom is here denounced. We shall find it reiterated by Elisha in 2 Kings 9: 10, and terribly accomplished in vs. 30-37 of the same chapter (cf. Rev. 2: 20-23).

SECOND BOOK OF KINGS.



THE WIDOW AND HER POT OF OIL.

2 Kings IV. 1-7.

1. Now there cried a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets unto Elisha, saying, Thy servant my husband is dead: and thou knowest that thy servant did fear the Lord: and the creditor is come to take unto him my two sons to be bondmen. 2. And Elisha said unto her, What shall I do for thee? tell me, what hast thou in the house? And she said, Thine handmaid hath not any thing in the house, save a pot of oil. 3. Then he said, Go, borrow thee vessels abroad of all thy neighbors, even empty vessels; borrow not a few. 4. And when thou art come in, thou shalt shut the door upon thee and upon thy sons, and shalt pour out into all those vessels, and thou shalt set aside that which is full. 5. So she went from him, and shut the door upon her and upon her sons, who brought the vessels to her; and she poured out. 6. And it came to pass, when the vessels were full, that she said unto her son, Bring me yet a vessel. And he said unto her, There is not a vessel more. And the oil stayed. 7. Then she came and told the man of God. And he said, Go, sell the oil, and pay thy debt, and live thou and thy children of the rest.

1. *The sons of the prophets.*—These were the pupils of some of the more aged and distinguished prophets, who were assembled in schools at Bethel, Jericho, etc., to receive such training as might fit them for their work (2: 3, 5, 7, etc.). Although the gift of prophecy was from the Lord, yet a certain education was necessary to prepare them to be ‘vessels fit for the Master’s use,’ just as in the work of the ministry now. Bishop Patrick supposes that ‘these sons of the prophets were such ministers to the prophets as the evangelists were to the apostles, whom the prophets sent to publish their prophecies and instructions to the people, where they could not go themselves.’ *A certain woman.*—She was the *poor*

widow of a poor minister—the like of whom are still often found—in debt perhaps for rent, and whose landlord has come to seize her sons for bondmen, according to the law of those times (Lev. 25: 39. Matt. 18: 25). In her distress she applies to the prophet, and not having money of his own, such as he has he gives her (cf. Acts 3: 6). This method of relief was, no doubt, suggested by the parallel case of Elijah (1 Kings 17: 16). The miraculous supply of oil seems to have been limited only by the modesty of her faith in not having expected more. She was told to ‘borrow not a few’ vessels (v. 3), and not until all the vessels were full was the oil stayed (v. 6). How often are we thus ‘straitened in ourselves,’ and limit the abundant flow of God’s blessings by the weakness of our faith. ‘Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it’ (cf. 13: 15–19).

5. *Shut the door*—That there might be no interruption and no vain display. Thus privately, also, were some of Christ’s miracles wrought (e. g., Mark 5: 40). In this case the prophet was not even present, so that the immediate power of God was the more manifest. Christ’s miracle of multiplying the loaves and fishes was similar to this (Matt. 16: 9, 10), though not as to its privacy. Then thousands were to be fed; here only this poor woman and her two sons.

ELISHA AND THE SHUNAMITE.

Read 2 Kings IV. 8–37

8. A GREAT *woman*.—One who was wealthy and given to hospitality.

9. *Passeth continually*.—This was probably on his rounds of visitation to the ‘schools of the prophets.’

10. *Let us make*, rather ‘prepare’ or ‘fit up.’ It was a ‘little chamber,’ and very simply furnished, to suit the humble tastes of the prophet; for, although now at the head of all the prophets of Israel, Elisha was no proud and luxurious ecclesiastic, requiring much attention from his entertainers. His chamber was ‘on the wall,’ and was accessible by a stairway from without, so that he might ‘turn in’ at any time without seeing the family at all; and being the most private part of the house was suited for meditation and devotion (cf. 2 Sam. 18: 33. 1 Kings 17: 19). Many a lady hostess of ministers would be greatly relieved by finding her guests as unexact as was this great prophet.

12. *His servant.*—The attendance of a ‘servant’ upon Elisha does not comport so well, according to our notions, with the simplicity of the prophet’s mode of life. But it is still the uniform custom in the East for all respectable travelers to be so attended. They carry their own food, and the servant does the cooking, etc.

13. *I dwell among mine own people.*—A proverbial expression, implying that all her wants are supplied, and she has nothing more to ask. Happy are they who can thus say.

16. *The time of life, (i. e. after the usual period), thou shalt embrace a son.*—According to Jewish notions there could be no more welcome announcement than this. It was almost too good to be true, and, therefore, she is somewhat incredulous, (‘do not lie,’ etc.). In similar circumstances Sarah ‘laughed’ (Gen. 18: 12).

18. *To his father.*—The man was a wealthy farmer, like Boaz, and superintended his own workmen.

20. *And then died,* probably of sunstroke.

21. *On the bed, etc.*—This was in order that his death might not be known until she had made trial of the remedy which her faith suggested. Perhaps she knew of the case of Elijah and the woman of Zarephath (1 Kings 17: 17–23). The experience which others have had of the Lord’s goodness should encourage our faith.

23. *New moon, nor Sabbath.*—This shows that it was customary to meet the prophet on such occasions, no doubt, for some sort of religious service. *It shall be well.*—In the Hebrew it is simply *peace*, as also four times in v. 26.—Having full confidence in his wife, he complies with her request without further questions.

24. *Drive, etc.; slack not thy riding.*—(Hebrew, ‘restrain not for me to ride.’) The oriental custom is for the servant to run behind and drive the animal on which the lady rides. She makes all haste, as it was a journey of some five or six hours from Shunem to Mt. Carmel.

26. *It is well* (or ‘peace’).—An answer full of meaning. It expressed her confidence that her child should be restored to her through the prophet’s intercession; or, otherwise, she is submissive to the Lord’s will like Job (1: 21; 2: 10). How instructive an example to all bereaved parents.

27. *Caught him by the feet.*—This implied both humility and great earnestness (cf. Matt. 28: 9). She has not yet divulged the cause of her trouble.

28. This allusion to her son is all that the prophet needs. He divines the rest, and immediately gives orders to his servant to attend her home (v. 29), committing to him his staff, which is to heal the child.

29. *Salute not, etc.* (cf. Luke 10: 4).—Oriental salutations are tedious, and this case admits of no delay. *My staff.* She had not told him 'that the child was dead,' and he believed that God, by means of the staff, would heal any disease which he might have (cf. Acts 19: 12).

30. *I will not leave thee.*—She thus insists upon his going with her himself, not having full confidence in the efficacy of the staff, and desiring his presence in her trying circumstances. It is a blessed privilege of God's ministers to be able at least to 'comfort them that mourn.'

31. *The child is not awaked.*—God will give to the prophet himself the honor of restoring the child.

32. *The child was dead.*—Elisha now for the first discovers this, and he no longer trusts to the use of his staff, but imitating the example of Elijah in a similar case (1 Kings 17: 20–22), gives himself to earnest prayer (v. 33). It would seem that some miracles require extraordinary faith to work them, even as in our Saviour's day there were some devils which could be cast out 'only by prayer and fasting' (Matt. 17: 21). So it is with the conversion of some sinners now. No ordinary means avail.

34, 35. *He went up, etc.*—This use of *appropriate means* for the restoration of animal heat is entirely consistent with the reality of the miracle. It also helps Elisha's own faith, while he wrestles with God in prayer.

36, 37. Here again we have no *scene* portrayed, but only the sublime simplicity of inspiration. How much is expressed in this pantomimic description, 'fell at his feet, and bowed herself to the ground,' *i. e.*, in deepest prostration, not in worship of the prophet, but of God, who had given back the child's life. Altogether this seems to have been a model family, where there are perfect harmony and mutual confidence between husband and wife, the husband concurring cheerfully with the wife's suggestions, especially in matters of hospitality and religion, while the wife occupies her proper position of honor and trust as head of the domestic establishment, and yet takes pains to consult her husband's wishes in regard to all matters of importance; the husband overseeing in person the affairs of his farm, and as a kind father welcoming his

little boy on a visit to the field, and then sending him back to his mother when he was sick; the mother sustaining her great sorrow, and sparing her husband's feelings, under the pious confidence that 'all is well,' while she goes in person to the prophet for relief. The whole picture is most artlessly drawn, and yet it is one that we too seldom look upon.

NAAMAN AND THE CAPTIVE MAID.

2 Kings V. 1-4; read vs. 5-14

1. Now Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master, and honorable, because by him the Lord had given deliverance unto Syria: he was also a mighty man in valor, but he was a leper. 2. And the Syrians had gone out by companies, and had brought away captive out of the land of Israel a little maid; and she waited on Naaman's wife. 3. And she said unto her mistress, Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy. 4. And one went in, and told his lord, saying, Thus and thus said the maid that is of the land of Israel.

In the interesting narrative of Naaman it suits our plan to notice only what is said of this 'little maid.' In one of those hostile incursions which were often mutually made between the Israelites and their neighbors, the Syrians, this little girl was among the captives taken and reduced to slavery. Her 'hap' was to fall into the hands of the commander-in-chief of the Syrian army, in whose family she seems to have been kindly treated, so that she becomes interested in their welfare. Her sympathies are moved for her master's affliction in having the dreadful disease of leprosy; and having heard in her own country of some of the miracles of the prophet Elisha, she speaks of him to her mistress. *Would God, etc.*—Fully believing that if her master were with the prophet, 'he would cure him of his leprosy.' Her words are reported to her master, and then to the king; and so good a reputation has she for truthfulness that upon her simple word, the king himself writes a letter to the king of Israel on behalf of Naaman, who sets out in befitting state in pursuit of a cure. All honor to the pious little captive maid! See how much good even a little child can do, in however humble circumstances, whose word is reliable, and who is ready to tell what she knows about the way in which *leprous sinners can be saved!* The history of Sabbath-schools records many such instances in which a child has been the means of leading an unconverted parent or other sinner to Christ. See,

also, the providence of God in casting the lot of this child in the family of a man whose cure reflects so much honor on the God of Israel whom Elisha served. The whole narrative is rich in lessons.

THE HORRORS OF FAMINE.

Read 2 Kings VI. 24-33.

25. *Dove's dung*.—A species of peas, so called.

26. *Passing by upon the wall*.—Probably making an inspection of the hostile force which had long been besieging the city.

27, 28. These horrible statements reveal the extremities to which the people were reduced, and the miseries which they had brought upon themselves by their apostasy and rebellion against God, of all which they had been forewarned by the prophets (cf. Lev. 26: 29. Deut. 28: 53-57. Josh. 24: 20. 1 Sam. 12: 15, 25). Similar calamities attended the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar (Lam. 4: 10. Jer. 19: 9. Ezek. 5: 10), and still more terribly in that by the Romans under Titus (see Josephus).

30. *Sackcloth within, i. e.*, a haircloth 'shirt of penitence,' a penitence, however, we should judge, which was more on the *skin* than in the heart, otherwise he would not have sought the life of the faithful prophet. The impenitent charge their calamities upon others rather than upon their own sins, and it far easier to 'do penance' than to repent.

THE SHUNAMITE AGAIN.

2 Kings VIII. 1-6.

1. THEN spake Elisha unto the woman, whose son he had restored to life, saying, Arise, and go thou and thine household, and sojourn wheresoever thou canst sojourn: for the Lord hath called for a famine; and it shall also come upon the land seven years. 2. And the woman arose, and did after the saying of the man of God: and she went with her household, and sojourned in the land of the Philistines seven years. 3. And it came to pass at the seven years' end, that the woman returned out of the land of the Philistines: and she went forth to cry unto the king for the house and for her land. 4. And the king talked with Gehazi the servant of the man of God, saying, Tell me, I pray thee, all the great things that Elisha hath done. 5. And it came to pass, as he was telling the king how he had restored a dead body to life, that, behold, the woman, whose son he had restored to life, cried to the king for her house and for her land. And Gehazi said, My

Lord, O king, this is the woman, and this is her son, whom Elisha restored to life. 6. And when the king asked the woman, she told him. So the king appointed unto her a certain officer, saying, Restore all that was hers, and all the fruits of the field since the day that she left the land, even until now.

1. This direction of Elisha to the Shunamite was no doubt given before the famine described in the preceding chapters; but it is introduced here in order to connect it with the account of the restoration of the property on her return.

3. Her husband probably had been in the army, and was now dead; and so terrible had been the desolations of the last 'seven years,' that even in this short time the titles to estates had become uncertain.

6. In this successful application to the king, we may see the hand of God bringing a reward to one who had shown kindness to a prophet of Israel. 'He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward' (Matt. 10: 41).

ATHALIAH, OR BAD FEMALE INFLUENCE.

2 Kings VIII. 16-18, 25-27 (cf. 2 Chron. XXII. 2-4, etc.)

16. AND in the fifth year of Joram the son of Ahab king of Israel, Jehoshaphat being then king of Judah, Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat king of Judah began to reign. 17. Thirty and two years old was he when he began to reign; and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem. 18. And he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, as did the house of Ahab; for the daughter of Ahab was his wife: and he did evil in the sight of the Lord.—25. In the twelfth year of Joram the son of Ahab king of Israel did Ahaziah the son of Jehoram king of Judah begin to reign. 26. Two and twenty years old was Ahaziah when he began to reign; and he reigned one year in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Athaliah, the daughter of Omri king of Israel. 27. And he walked in the way of the house of Ahab, and did evil in the sight of the Lord, as did the house of Ahab: for he was the son-in-law of the house of Ahab.

18. *And he (i. e., Jehoram) walked, etc.*—This Jehoram was the son of the pious Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, and therefore better things might have been expected of him, but an ill-advised matrimonial alliance had been formed (probably through motives of kingly policy) with the wicked house of Ahab, king of Israel. The 'daughter of Ahab' whom he married, was Athaliah, who, in 2 Chron. 24: 7, is called 'that wicked woman,' and who made the worship of Baal the religion of the kingdom. Under the influence of

such a wife, who seems to have been a 'strong-minded' woman, it is not to be wondered at that he 'did evil in the sight of the Lord.'

26, 27. *His mother's name was Athaliah.*—We find the same record here concerning the influence of this woman over her son, as above, over her husband. In 2 Chron. 22: 3 it is expressly stated that 'his mother was his counselor to do wickedly.' Such influence is omnipotent; and woe to any son who has such a mother. The pages of the world's history abound with similar examples of the pernicious influence of evil women over the kings and kingdoms of the earth. *Daughter of Omri, i. e., granddaughter* (cf. v. 18). As might be expected she came to a bad end (2 Chron. 23: 12-15).

FATE OF JEZEBEL.

2 Kings IX. 10, 22, 30-37 (cf. 1 Kings XXI. 23-25).

10. AND the dogs shall eat Jezebel in the portion of Jezreel, and there shall be none to bury her.—22. And it came to pass, when Joram saw Jehu, that he said, Is it peace, Jehu? And he answered, What peace, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many?—30. And when Jehu was come to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it; and she painted her face, and tired her head, and looked out at a window. 31. And as Jehu entered in at the gate, she said, Had Zimri peace, who slew his master? 32. And he lifted up his face to the window, and said, Who is on my side? who? And there looked out to him two or three eunuchs. 33. And he said, Throw her down. So they threw her down: and some of her blood was sprinkled on the wall, and on the horses: and he trode her under foot. 34. And when he was come in, he did eat and drink, and said, Go, see now this cursed woman, and bury her: for she is a king's daughter. 35. And they went to bury her: but they found no more of her than the skull, and the feet, and the palms of her hands. 36. Wherefore they came again, and told him. And he said, This is the word of the Lord, which he spake by his servant Elijah the Tishbite, saying, In the portion of Jezreel shall dogs eat the flesh of Jezebel: 37. And the carcass of Jezebel shall be as dung upon the face of the field in the portion of Jezreel; so that they shall not say, This is Jezebel.

10. *The dogs shall eat Jezebel.*—The prophecy of Elijah, in 1 Kings 21: 23, is here reiterated by Elisha. The 'portion of Jezreel' is the place of Naboth's vineyard, which Jezebel had violently seized. Thus the crime and the punishment are signally connected.

22. *Whoredoms and witchcrafts.*—These two crimes were needed to fill out our ideal of Jezebel as a paragon of wick-

edness, besides those which were mentioned before (cf. 1 Kings 21).

30. *Painted her face, etc.*—Such *meretricious* arts were practiced even then as well as in late days (cf. Jer. 4: 30). But Jehu was too stern a man to yield to such allurements; besides the time of her doom was come.

32. *Eunuchs.*—A class of men much employed in oriental courts, but who are faithful to their masters only so long as it is *safe*.

34. *See this cursed.*—The word 'woman' is not in the original. 'This accursed one.'

35. *Feet and the palms.*—A traveler in the neighborhood of the temple of Juggernaut noticed that of the corpses strewed around, the dogs had eaten all the flesh except the 'palms of the hands and the soles of the feet' (see, also, Kitto).

37. *This is Jezebel, i. e.,* she shall have no place of burial, and no monument except the record of her infamous wickedness. 'Righteous, O Lord, are thy judgments.'

ATHALIAH'S OVERTHROW.

Read 2 Kings XI. entire (cf. VIII. 18, 26, and notes).

THUS another wicked woman comes to an untimely end.

1. *Destroyed all the seed royal.*—She thus committed murder by wholesale in order to secure the throne to herself. Her son Ahaziah had been killed by Jehu (9: 27), and the throne would have fallen to some one of the 'seed royal' had she not thus summarily put them out of the way. She thus unwittingly fulfilled the prophecy concerning the destruction of 'the whole house of Ahab' (9: 8).

2. *Jehosheba* (or Jehoshabeath) was not only the 'daughter of king Joram,' but also 'the wife of Jehoida the priest,' (2 Chron. 22: 11). She rescued Joash from among the number of 'the slain,' where probably he had been left as dead.

4. *Jehoida sent, etc.*—A more full account of this conspiracy, etc., will be found in 2 Chron. chaps. 22 and 23. Jehoida was by marriage the uncle and natural guardian of the infant Joash. He had him crowned in his seventh year, he himself of course acting as regent of the kingdom during Joash's minority. Joash was probably the only remaining lineal descendant of David, and was the lawful heir to the throne. Thus the providence of God secured the fulfillment

of the promise that David should 'never want a man to sit on the throne of Israel' (1 Kings 2: 4. Jer. 33: 17).

12. *God save the king.*—Hebrew, 'live the king;' in French, *Vive le roi.*

15. *Without the ranges,* or 'barriers,' so that the holy places might not be polluted with her blood.

20. *The people rejoiced* (cf. Prov. 29: 2).—'When the righteous are in authority the people rejoice, but when the wicked beareth rule the people mourn.' For the character of Joash's reign, see 2 Chron. chap. 24.

HULDAH THE PROPHETESS.

2 Kings XXII. 14-16 (cf. 2 Chron. XXXIV. 20, etc.).

14. So Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam, and Achbor, and Shaphan, and Asahiah, went unto Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe; (now she dwelt in Jerusalem in the college;) and they communed with her. 15. And she said unto them, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Tell the man that sent you to me, 16. Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the words of the book which the king of Judah hath read.

These things occurred during the reign of the good young king Josiah (vs. 1, 2). During the progress of the repairs in the house of the Lord which he had ordered, a copy of the 'law of the Lord' (the Pentateuch) was discovered, which was very probably the original autograph of Moses (cf. Deut. 31: 24-26. 2 Chron. 34: 14). The book was brought and read before the king, who, being filled with grief and alarm at the contents (*e. g.*, such passages as Deut., chaps. 28-30), gives commandment to 'inquire of the Lord' how he and his people may escape the 'great wrath' which he finds to be denounced against them (v. 13).

14. *Huldah the prophetess.*—The prophetic gift was not confined to men, but was occasionally bestowed upon women, as in the days in Miriam and Deborah. We should listen to female prophets still if they bring us satisfactory proof of a divine commission. Huldah's husband was 'keeper of the wardrobe,' probably of the royal or priestly garments, and '*dwelt in the college*' (Hebrew, *mishnah*, or 'second part'). This was not, we suppose, an institution of any kind, but a certain part of the city, so called.

16. *Thus saith the Lord.*—She speaks with authority, as one conscious of her divine mission, and to those who did not

hesitate to recognize it. Her message, which is given in the subsequent verses, while denouncing the judgment of God upon the offending nation, commends the piety of the king, and promises him exemption from the evils that should come upon the land. The following chapter shows how vigorously he continued to prosecute the measures of reform which he had already undertaken.

Scott remarks that "in communicating his special blessings, the Lord does not restrict himself to age, or sex, or order, or condition in society, but 'divideth to every one severally as he will;' and true sanctity consists in separation from sin and devotedness to God, and not in seclusion from society, or from that state which he has pronounced 'honorable.'"

FIRST BOOK OF CHRONICLES.



THE first nine chapters of this book consist chiefly of genealogies. These would be of great use to the Jews after their return from Babylon, when the different tribes and tribal inheritances were in danger of being confounded. But their chief use is to show the lineal descent of the Messiah from Adam to David. The frequent introduction of *female* names into these genealogies is noticeable as showing the honor which is put upon *maternal* as well as upon *pater-
nal* descent.

WOMEN IN THE GENEALOGIES.

1 Chronicles 1 : 32 ; 2 : 3, 4, 15-19, 21, 24, 34, 35, 49.

1 : 32. Now the sons of Keturah, Abraham's concubine: she bare Zimran, and Jokshan, and Medan, and Midian, and Ishbak, and Shuah. And the sons of Jokshan; Sheba, and Dedan.

The sons of Keturah.—These children of Abraham by Keturah were the heads of various tribes, chiefly nomadic, dwelling in Arabia and Syria. They were a part of that numerous posterity which was promised to Abraham.

2 : 3, 4. The sons of Judah; Er, and Onan, and Shelah: which three were born unto him of the daughter of Shua, the Canaanitess. And Er, the first-born of Judah, was evil in the sight of the Lord; and he slew him. 4. And Tamar his daughter-in-law bare him Pharez and Zerah. All the sons of Judah were five.

The sons of Judah.—As from Judah sprang David and the Messiah, his genealogy is given first, and more fully than that of any other of the sons of Jacob. The humiliating personal history of Judah and his immediate family is given in Gen. 38 (see notes). And yet 'our Lord sprang out

of Judah,' being thus 'made in the likeness of sinful flesh' in order that he might the more fully identify himself with us sinners whom he came to redeem. *Shua* was the father of the 'Canaanitess' (Gen. 38: 2).

15. David the seventh. 16. Whose sisters were Zeruiah, and Abigail. And the sons of Zeruiah; Abishai, and Joab, and Asahel, three. 17. And Abigail bare Amasa: and the father of Amasa was Jether the Ishmeelite. 18. And Caleb the son of Hezron begat children of Azubah his wife, and of Jerioth: her sons are these; Jeshur, and Shobab, and Ardon. 19. And when Azubah was dead, Caleb took unto him Ephrath, which bare him Hur.

16. *Whose sisters were Zeruiah, etc.*—We may notice here that those famous 'sons of Zeruiah,' who are so often mentioned in the history of David, were his *nephews* by this sister Zeruiah.

17. *Amasa.*—He, it seems, was another nephew of David and cousin of Joab, whom Absalom made 'captain of his host' (2 Sam. 17: 25).

18. *Jerioth.*—She was probably a concubine, and for some reason her sons alone are named. Other versions make Jerioth the daughter of Azubah.

19. *Ephrath.*—Same as Ephratah (v. 50).

21. And afterward Hezron went in to the daughter of Machir the father of Gilead, whom he married when he was threescore years old; and she bare him Segub.—24. And after that Hezron was dead in Caleb-ephratah, then Abiah Hezron's wife bare him Ashur the father of Tekoa.

The daughter of Machir.—She was of the tribe of Manasseh (chap. 7: 14), and was a second wife (v. 9) whom he married at sixty. *Father of Gilead, i. e.,* chief man of that town. From v. 24 we learn that her name was *Abiah*, and that she bare him a child after he was dead.

34. Now Sheshan had no sons, but daughters. And Sheshan had a servant, an Egyptian, whose name was Jarha. 35. And Sheshan gave his daughter to Jarha his servant to wife; and she bare him Attai.

No sons, but daughters.—The only daughter whose name is mentioned was Ahlai (v. 31), and his 'children' there spoken of are her descendants. If he had other 'daughters' they were not in the regular line of descent. The giving of his daughter to a 'servant,' who was, no doubt, a proselyte, was not a thing unusual then, when slaves were often captives who had been taken in war, of the same color, and of respectable character. Thus also the alienation of his inheritance

to another tribe would be prevented. The regulation recorded in Num. 36 was not yet adopted. In v. 36 we find the name of Zabad among her descendants, who was one of the 'valiant men' of David (chap. 11: 41).

49. And the daughter of Caleb was Achsa.

This is another Caleb and another Achsa, and not 'Caleb the son of Jephunneh,' whose daughter Achsah was given to the brave Othniel (Josh. 15: 17). Family names were handed down then as now. Let our lives be such that our names may be perpetuated with honor.

KING DAVID'S FAMILY RECORD.

1 Chronicles III. 1-9 (cf. 2 Sam. III. 2-5).

1. Now these were the sons of David, which were born unto him in Hebron; the first-born Amnon, of Ahinoam the Jezreelitess: the second, Daniel, of Abigail the Carmelitess: 2. The third, Absalom the son of Maachah the daughter of Talmia king of Geshur: the fourth Adonijah the son of Haggith: 3. The fifth, Shephatiah of Abital: the sixth, Ithream by Eglah his wife. 4. These six were born unto him in Hebron; and there he reigned seven years and six months: and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty and three years. 5. And these were born unto him in Jerusalem; Shimea, and Shobab, and Nathan, and Solomon, four, of Bath-shua the daughter of Ammiel: 6. Ibhar also, and Elishama, and Eliphelet, 7. And Nogah, and Nepheg, and Japhia, 8. And Elishama, and Eliada, and Eliphelet, nine. 9. These were all the sons of David, besides the sons of the concubines, and Tamar their sister.

1. *Daniel*.—Same as 'Chileab' in 2 Samuel 3: 3.

5. *Bath-shua*.—Same as 'Bath-sheba.' *Daughter of Ammiel*.—Same as 'Eliam' (2 Sam. 11: 3).

6. *Elishama and Eliphelet*.—These names occur again in v. 8. They were the children of different mothers, bearing the same name, or were called for others who had died.

9. *Tamar their sister*.—She of unfortunate beauty (2 Sam. 13: 1, etc.). The 'sons of the concubines' are not named, as they were not in the line of inheritance. We shall now notice some of the striking *memoranda* which are recorded in connection with certain families.

THE HONORABLE JABEZ.

1 Chronicles IV. 9, 10.

9. AND Jabez was more honorable than his brethren : and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, Because I bare him with sorrow. 10. And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me! And God granted him that which he requested.

This is a remarkable history to be introduced here amid these dry genealogies.

9. *Called his name Jabez, i. e., 'sorrowful,'* from some peculiar sorrow connected with his birth (cf. Gen. 35: 18). Thus many a Ben-oni (son of my sorrow) becomes a Benjamin (son of my right hand). Let afflicted and sorrowing mothers commit their Jabezses to their Lord in confidence in his covenant faithfulness.

10. *Called on the God of Israel.*—This prayer was very probably offered when he was about to drive the Canaanites out of his 'coast,' *i. e.,* the territory which fell to his lot. *Oh that, etc.*—(Hebrew, 'if thou wilt'). It is in the form of avow, like that of Jacob (Gen. 28: 20). *Not grieve me,* or 'that I may have sorrow no more,' alluding to the meaning of his name. *God granted him, etc.*—Thus God is ever a hearer of prayer when it is offered in sincerity, and proper means are used on our part. In all our undertakings we should seek to glorify God, and then devoutly invoke his help. If we compare the epithet 'honorable' here, with that of 'noble,' which is applied to the Bereans in Acts 17: 11, we may learn what is the Scripture estimate of *honor* and *nobility*.

"This instructive example, in the midst of genealogies to us so abtruse, seems like the fragrant rose surrounded by thorns, or as refreshing streams in the desert; and it appears a recompense intended for the careful student of God's word, who diligently and reverently examines the whole, comparing one part with another, without disregarding or undervaluing any."—*Scott*.

THE HAGARITES CONQUERED.

1 Chronicles V. 19-22 (cf. v. 10).

19. AND they made war with the Hagarites, with Jetur, and Nephish, and Nodab. 20. And they were helped against them, and the Hagarites were delivered into their hand, and all that were with them: for they cried to God in the battle, and he was entreated of them; because they put their trust in him. 21. And they took away their cattle; of their camels fifty thousand, and of sheep two hundred and fifty thousand, and of asses two thousand, and of men a hundred thousand. 22. For there fell down many slain, because the war was of God. And they dwelt in their steads until the captivity.

This is another instructive record, like the one above, showing how God helps those who put their trust in him.

19. *And they, i. e., the sons of Reuben (v. 8), made war with the Hagarites, or descendants of Hagar. Cried to God in the battle, being, no doubt, sore pressed by the superior numbers of the enemy. Because they put their trust in God—*He delivered the Hagarites into their hand.

21. This enumeration of the numbers and wealth of the Hagarites remarkably illustrates the fulfillment of God's promise to Hagar, Gen. 16: 10, and to Abraham, 17: 20.

22. *The war was of God, being undertaken against the enemies of Israel, and prosecuted in dependence on his providential aid. This proves that there may be lawful wars. Until the captivity.*—This was the *first* captivity, recorded in 2 Kings 15: 29, and in v. 26 of this same chapter. In v. 25 we find a sad record of the change which had taken place in the character of these same Reubenites, Gadites, etc., who 'transgressed against the God of their fathers, and went a whoring after the gods of the people of the land whom God destroyed before them.' How dangerous is worldly prosperity, and how unstable is man! 'Lord, hold thou me up, and I shall be safe.'

FAMILY OF MANASSEH.

1 Chronicles VII. 14-16.

16. THE sons of Manasseh; Ashriel, whom she bare; (but his concubine the Aramitess bare Machir the father of Gilead: 15. And Machir took to wife the sister of Huppim and Shuppim, whose sister's name was Maachah;) and the name of the second was Zelophehad: and Zelophehad had daughters. 16. And Maachah the wife of Machir bare a son, and she called his name Peresh: and the name of his brother was Shersh; and his sons were Ulam and Rakem.

14. The text, as our translators have given it, is unintelligible. Jamieson proposes to read it thus: "The sons of Manasseh were Ashriel, whom his Syrian concubine bare to him, and Machir the father of Gilead (whom his wife bare to him). Machir took for a wife Maachah, sister to Huppim and Shuppim." *Aramitess, i. e., Syrian.*

15. *Second was Zelophehad.*—'Second,' *i. e.,* from Machir, two generations having intervened. Zelophehad was the son of Hopher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, and was the father of those five daughters of whom we have an account (Josh. 26: 33).

MEMORANDA OF EPHRAIM AND SHERAH.

1 Chronicles VII. 22-24.

22. AND Ephraim their father mourned many days, and his brethren came to comfort him. 23. And when he went in to his wife, she conceived and bare a son, and he called his name Beriah, because it went evil with his house. 24. (And his daughter was Sherah, who built Beth-horon the nether, and the upper, and Uzen-sherah.)

23. *Called his name Beriah* ('in affliction') *because it went evil, etc.*—The affliction which this name commemorates, was the loss of several of his sons in a conflict with the men of Gath, in regard to cattle (v. 21). Ephraim's 'brethren came to comfort him,' as did the friends of Job in a similar affliction. All this must have occurred before the Israelites came out of Egypt, and while Ephraim yet lived. It was one of the memoranda of the family.

24. (*And his daughter was Sherah, who built Beth-horon the nether, and the upper, and Uzen-sherah.*)—Such is the only record which history gives of a woman who built three cities! And even this meager record is further belittled by being thrown into a parenthesis! Perhaps she was more distinguished for her heroism than for her piety, and therefore was not one of those whom the Bible delights to honor. The two Beth-horons were situated near together on the borders of Ephraim and Benjamin (cf. Josh. 16: 3-5). Solomon rebuilt Beth-horon the nether (1 Kings 9: 17). Uzen-sherah means 'Ear of Sherah,' and ought to have perpetuated her name. But we opine that few of our readers have ever heard of her. Building cities does not secure immortality to man or woman.

DAVID'S WIVES AND MICHAL.

1 Chronicles XIV. 3; XV. 29.

14: 3. AND David took more wives at Jerusalem: and David begat more sons and daughters.

15: 29. And it came to pass, as the ark of the covenant of the Lord came to the city of David, that Michal the daughter of Saul looking out at a window saw king David dancing and playing: and she despised him in her heart.

On the former of these passages, see notes on 2 Sam. 3: 2-5; 5: 13. On the latter, notes on 2 Sam. 6: 15.

BITHIAH, THE DAUGHTER OF PHARAOH.

BITHIAH, THE DAUGHTER OF PHARAOH.

I. Chron. IV. 17-19.

17. AND the sons of Ezra were, Jether, and Mered, and Epher, and Jalon: and she bare Miriam, and Shammai, and Ishbah the father of Eshtemoa. 18. And his wife Jehudijah bare Jered the father of Geder, and Heber the father of Socho, and Jekuthiel the father of Zanoah. And these are the sons of Bithiah the daughter of Pharaoh, which Mered took. 19. And the sons of his wife Hodiah the sister of Naham, the father of Keilah the Garmite, and Eshtemoa the Maachathite.

17. This Ezra is not the author of the book of Ezra. *And she bare, etc.*—As there is here no antecedent to 'she,' it is supposed that this clause has been transposed, and should come in at the close of v. 18. 'She' would then refer to 'Bithiah the daughter of Pharaoh.' Mered's other wife was 'Jehudijah,' *i. e.*, a Jewess (the same as Hodiah of v. 19), who 'bare him Jered,' etc.

It would appear from this passage that Solomon was not the only Israelite who married a daughter of Pharaoh. But which of the Pharaohs this was, or how Mered came to be honored with this lofty affinity, we are not informed. It may be hoped that Bithiah became a proselyte to the Jewish faith, as she here bears a Jewish name.

SECOND BOOK OF CHRONICLES.



HIRAM AGAIN.

2 Chronicles II. 13, 14.

13. AND now I have sent a cunning man, endued with understanding, of Hiram my father's; 14. The son of a woman of the daughters of Dan, and his father was a man of Tyre.

See notes on 1 Kings 7: 13, 14.

13. *Of Hiram my father's.*—In Hebrew the word *abi*, here rendered 'my father,' is probably only a distinctive appellation; the name of the man being Hiram-abi (cf. chap. 4: 16). Hiram here is the same as Hiram in 1 Kings.

2 Chronicles VIII. 11.

11. AND Solomon brought up the daughter of Pharaoh out of the city of David unto the house that he had built for her: for he said, My wife shall not dwell in the house of David king of Israel, because the places are holy, whereunto the ark of the Lord hath come.

See notes on 1 Kings 3: 1; 9: 24.

Read 2 Chronicles IX. 1-12.

See notes on 1 Kings 10: 1-13.

REHOBAM'S FAMILY, ETC.

2 Chronicles XI. 18-23.

18. AND Rehoboam took him Mahlath the daughter of Jerimoth the son of David to wife, and Abihail the daughter of Eliab the son of Jesse; 19. Which bare him children; Jeush, and Shamariah, and Zaham. 20. And after her he took Maachah the daughter of Absalom; which bare him Abijah, and Attai, and Ziza, and Shelomith. 21. And Rehoboam loved Maachah the daughter of Absalom above all his wives and his concubines: (for he took eighteen wives, and threescore concubines; and begat twenty and eight sons, and threescore daughters). 22. And

Rehoboam made Abijah the son of Maachah the chief, to be ruler among his brethren: for he thought to make him king. 23. And he dealt wisely, and dispersed of all his children throughout all the countries of Judah and Benjamin, unto every fenced city: and he gave them victuals in abundance. And he desired many wives.

21. *Maachah the daughter of Absalom.*—In regard to this favorite wife of Rehoboam there is some difficulty in reconciling the various statements. In 1 Kings 15: 2, she is called the 'daughter of Abishalom,' who may have been the same as Absalom, though some think him a different person of the same name. In chapter 13: 2 she is called 'Michaiah the daughter of Uriel of Gibeah.' It is not unlikely that her name was changed on becoming queen, and that Uriel her father married Tamar the daughter of Absalom; so that Maachah would be the granddaughter of Absalom.

22. *Made Abijah, the chief, etc.*—It is implied that he was not the eldest son, but was preferred because he was the son of the beloved Maachah.

23. *He dealt wisely, i. e.,* in dispersing his numerous sons among the different cities,—no doubt in stations of authority (perhaps as the 'captains' of v. 11)—thus to strengthen his own power over those cities; and to remove rival claimants to the throne out of Abijah's way. His desire for 'many wives,' may have been, in part, for his twenty-eight sons, as well as to increase his own royal state, after the pernicious example of Solomon. His worldly wisdom was foolishness in the sight of God. It is said of him in the next chapter (v. 14), that 'he did evil, because he prepared (or 'fixed') not his heart to seek the Lord.' That whole chapter is very instructive.

2 Chronicles XV. 16.

16. AND also concerning Maachah the mother of Asa the king, he removed her from being queen, because she had made an idol in a grove: and Asa cut down her idol, and stamped it, and burnt it at the brook Kidron.

See notes on 1 Kings 15: 13, 14.

2 Chronicles XXI. 5, 6.

5. JEHOAM was thirty and two years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem. 6. And he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, like as did the house of Ahab; for he had the daughter of Ahab to wife: and he wrought that which was evil in the eyes of the Lord.

See notes on 2 Kings 8: 18-27.

MORE OF ATHALIAH.

2 Chronicles XXII. 2, 3.

2. FORTY and two years old was Ahaziah when he began to reign, and he reigned one year in Jerusalem. His mother's name also was Athaliah the daughter of Omri. 3. He also walked in the ways of the house of Ahab: for his mother was his counselor to do wickedly.

See notes on 2 Kings 8, as above.

2 Chronicles XXII. 10-12.

10. BUT when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the seed royal of the house of Judah. 11. But Jehoshabeath, the daughter of the king, took Joash the son of Ahaziah, and stole him from among the king's sons that were slain, and put him and his nurse in a bed-chamber. So Jehoshabeath, the daughter of king Jehoram, the wife of Jehoiada the priest, (for she was the sister of Ahaziah,) hid him from Athaliah, so that she slew him not. 12. And he was with them hid in the house of God six years: and Athaliah reigned over the land.

See notes on 2 Kings 11: 1-3.

2 Chronicles XXIII. 12-15, 21.

12. Now when Athaliah heard the noise of the people running and praising the king, she came to the people into the house of the Lord: 13. And she looked, and, behold, the king stood at the pillar at the entering in, and the princes and the trumpets by the king: and all the people of the land rejoiced, and sounded with trumpets, also the singers with instruments of music, and such as taught to sing praise. Then Athaliah rent her clothes, and said, Treason, treason. 14. Then Jehoiada the priest brought out the captains of hundreds that were set over the host, and said unto them, Have her forth of the ranges: and whoso followeth her, let him be slain with the sword. For the priest said, Slay her not in the house of the Lord. 15. So they laid hands on her; and when she was come to the entering of the horse-gate by the king's house, they slew her there.—21. And all the people of the land rejoiced: and the city was quiet, after that they had slain Athaliah with the sword.

See notes on 2 Kings 11: 13-16, etc.

KING JOASH'S GOOD BEGINNINGS.

2 Chronicles XXIV. 1-4.

1. JOASH was seven years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years in Jerusalem. His mother's name also was Zibiah of Beer-sheba. 2. And Joash did that which was right in the sight of the Lord all the days of Jehoiada the priest. 3. And Jehoiada took for him two wives; and he begat sons and daughters. 4. And it came

to pass after this, that Joash was minded to repair the house of the Lord.

1. *Joash*,—the same as 'Jehoash' (cf. 2 Kings 12: 1-3), who had been rescued from among the slain by Jehoshabeath and cared for by Jehoida the priest.

His mother's name was Zibiah.—We are not informed whether his mother had access to him during the period of his concealment; but it is not improbable that her good influence was joined with that of Jehoiada to induce him to 'do that which was right in the sight of the Lord.' Thus we may contrast her with her predecessors, who were counselors of their sons and husbands to do evil.

2. *Jehoiada took for him two wives.*—We should have expected better things of this good priest; but we must judge him and the king in the light of the notions and practices of those times, and in contrast with Solomon and Rehoboam. In this view, his having but two wives showed extraordinary moderation for a king.

All the days of Jehoiada.—This implies that he afterward transgressed; and so his subsequent history proves. Young persons, when placed in positions of high honor and responsibility, are in great peril, unless they surround themselves with wise and pious counselors.

7. *The sons of Athaliah.*—Worthy sons of such a mother.

THE MOTHERS OF GOOD KINGS.

2 Chronicles XXVI. 3-5; XXVII. 1, 2.

26: 3. SIXTEEN years old was Uzziah when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty and two years in Jerusalem. His mother's name also was Jecoliah of Jerusalem. 4. And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father Amaziah did. 5. And he sought God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God, and as long as he sought the Lord, God made him to prosper.

27: 1. Jotham was twenty and five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. His mother's name also was Jerushah, the daughter of Zadok. 2. And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father Uzziah did: howbeit he entered not into the temple of the Lord. And the people did yet corruptly.

There seems to be a special significance in the mention of the *mothers* of the kings, and of the conduct of their sons, as doing good or evil in the sight of the Lord. As are the mothers, usually, so are the sons. In the training up of a child in the way he should go, so that when he is old he may

not depart from it, by far the most influential part of that training is in the mother's hands. *Napoleon I.* never uttered a truer or more weighty saying than this, "The great want of France is, *mothers.*" May God bless those of our readers who are mothers indeed.

5. It is a significant statement, that as 'long as he sought the Lord, God made him to prosper' (cf. 27: 6; 31: 21). Uzziah's reign was one of the longest on record—'fifty-two years'—but he prospered *only* 'so long as he sought the Lord;' for in vs. 16–21, we are told that 'when he was strong his heart was lifted up to his destruction,' and that 'he died a leper.'

27: 1, 2. *Jotham*—had also a good mother, 'Jerushah, the daughter of Zadok,' the priest. His early training was under her influence and that of his father Uzziah, while he yet 'continued to seek the Lord.' As might be expected, he also 'did right in the sight of the Lord;' although he had not sufficient influence to restrain the corrupt practices of his people, especially in sacrificing and burning incense on the high places (2 Kings 15: 35). He was a great builder, and a successful warrior, 'and became mighty because he prepared his ways before the Lord his God' (v. 6). *He entered not into the temple of the Lord, i. e.,* as his father Uzziah had profanely done (26: 18).

JEWISH WOMEN ENSLAVED, ETC.

2 Chronicles XXVIII. 6, 8–11.

6. FOR Pekah the son of Remaliah slew in Judah a hundred and twenty thousand in one day, which were all valiant men; because they had forsaken the Lord God of their fathers.—8. And the children of Israel carried away captive of their brethren two hundred thousand, women, sons, and daughters, and took also away much spoil from them, and brought the spoil to Samaria. 9. But a prophet of the Lord was there, whose name was Oded: and he went out before the host that came to Samaria, and said unto them, Behold, because the Lord God of your fathers was wroth with Judah, he hath delivered them into your hand, and ye have slain them in a rage that reacheth up unto heaven. 10. And now ye purpose to keep under the children of Judah and Jerusalem for bondmen and bondwomen unto you: but are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God? 11. Now hear me therefore, and deliver the captives again, which ye have taken captive of your brethren: for the fierce wrath of the Lord is upon you.

6. Another brief but most instructive record, showing how

this great multitude of 'valiant men' were slain, 'because they had forsaken the Lord God of their fathers.' Thus God punishes national sins (v. 9).

8. *Carried away captive two hundred thousand women, sons, and daughters.*—The immense number of these captives, as well as the one hundred and twenty thousand slain, shows the large scale on which the war was carried on.

10. *For bondmen and bondwomen, i. e.,* to reduce them to slavery, although they were of their 'brethren,' 'children of Judah and Jerusalem.' This was forbidden by the law of Moses, which required that their 'bondmen and bondmaids be of the heathen round about them,' while Israelites could only be made to serve six years (cf. Lev. 25: 44-46. Exod. 21: 2. Neh. 5: 5-8). For an admirable statement of the Scripture doctrine on the subject of slavery, see Scott's commentary on this chapter.

THE GOOD KING HEZEKIAH.

2 Chronicles XXIX. 1-3, 9.

1. HEZEKIAH began to reign when he was five and twenty years old, and he reigned nine and twenty years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Abijah, the daughter of Zechariah. 2. And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that David his father had done. 3. He in the first year of his reign, in the first month, opened the doors of the house of the Lord, and repaired them.—9. For, lo, our fathers have fallen by the sword, and our sons and our daughters and our wives are in captivity for this.

1. *Daughter of Zechariah.*—This was the prophet Zechariah, son of Jehoiada the priest, who crowned king Joash, and who was slain by this same Joash, because of his faithful warnings (ch. 24: 20-22). He is also that 'Zacharias, the son of Barachias' another name of Jehoiada) 'whom they slew between the porch and the altar' (Matt. 23: 35). With such a father and grandfather, we may well infer the exemplary piety of this daughter Abijah, and the sort of training under which king Hezekiah grew up.

3. *First year of his reign.*—Thus early does he enter upon that great work of reformation for which his reign is distinguished, as may be seen in this and the following chapters.

9. *For lo—fallen by the sword, etc.*—He thus recognizes their national and domestic calamities, as the fruit of the 'wrath of the Lord upon them for their sins' (vs. 6-8). In regard to measures of reform in which females were concerned,

the reader may turn to chap. 31, where we have an account of the restoration of the priests to their regular courses of temple service, and the bringing in of the tithes and offerings required for the support of them and 'their wives, their sons, and their daughters, (v. 18). Thus in any true 'revival of religion'—such as this was under Hezekiah—one of the fruits will be, that the wants of the minister and his *family* are duly provided for; so that 'being free from worldly cares and avocations,' he 'in his set office may sanctify himself in holiness' (v. 18). Let the good women of our churches see to this, and stir up their husbands to duty.

HULDAH AGAIN.

2 Chronicles XXXIV. 22-24.

22. AND Hilkiah, and they that the king had appointed, went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvath, the son of Hasrah, keeper of the wardrobe; (now she dwelt in Jerusalem in the college;) and they spake to her to that effect. 23. And she answered them, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Tell ye the man that sent you to me, 24. Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the curses that are written in the book which they have read before the king of Judah.

See notes on 2 Kings 14-16, and read the whole of the context from v. 14 to 33.

KING JOSIAH GREATLY LAMENTED.

2 Chronicles XXXV. 25.

25. AND Jeremiah lamented for Josiah: and all the singing men and the singing women spake of Josiah in their lamentations to this day, and made them an ordinance in Israel: and, behold, they are written in the lamentations.

The 'singing men and singing women' here mentioned, were professional musicians, who were employed on funeral and other occasions, and who sang responsively in mournful dirges. The good king Josiah was lamented not only at the time of his death, but probably also at the anniversary of it, which became an 'ordinance in Israel,' (cf. the anniversary of the death of Jephthah's daughter, Judges 11: 40; also the lamentation for Saul and Jonathan, 2 Sam. 1: 17. Matt. 9: 23). *In the lamentations.*—Not in the canonical book of Lamentations, but in some collection of national dirges, etc., which has not come down to us, not being a part of di-

vine revelation. It is well to cherish the memory and to celebrate in song the deeds and virtues of the good, whether they be among the kings and rulers of the earth, or those in more humble spheres, whom the world can not well spare. Let us also ourselves endeavor so to live, that many may lament for us when we are gone.

BOOK OF EZRA.



THE book of Ezra embraces the history of the return of the Jews from their captivity in Babylon, in the reign of Cyrus, 536 B. C., and of subsequent events down to the time of Artaxerxes; the whole period being about ninety years. The second chapter from which we first quote, contains a list of them that returned under Zerubbabel.

THE WIFE'S NAME ASSUMED.

Read Ezra II. 61-65 (cf. Neh. VII. 63-67).

61. *Called after their name.*—This seems to have been an instance of a man's taking the name of his wife's family, as more honorable than his own; as is still sometimes done in Europe. Barzillai the Gileadite had ennobled his family by his kindness to king David in his distress (2 Sam. 17: 27-29), and these his descendants were proud of the name. But though of a priestly family, having assumed the name of Brazillai from their mother, their names were not found in the priestly genealogies, and they were therefore excluded from the priesthood (v. 62). This was too great a sacrifice to make for the empty honor of a name.

63. *The Tirshatha.*—This was a title borne by the Persian governors of Judea (cf. Neh. 7: 65, 70). *Urim and Thummim.*—This was something in connection with the high-priest's breastplate, by means of which God chose to reveal his will to those who 'inquired of the Lord' (cf. Exod. 28: 30. Numb. 27: 21). *Singing men and singing women.*

—(Cf. 2 Chron. 35: 25, and note.) Of these a separate register seems to have been kept.

THE SIN OF MARRYING STRANGE WIVES.

Read Ezra IX. entire.

SUCH marriages with the heathen were strictly forbidden by the law, chiefly on account of their tendency to corrupt family religion, and to introduce idolatry (Exod. 34: 14-16. Deut. 7: 3, 4). The evil consequences of such marriages are every where apparent in the Bible from Gen. 6: 2, where 'the sons of God went in to the daughters of men,' down through Solomon and other kings to the record here given. In the New Testament there are still to be found solemn warnings on this subject (2 Cor. 6: 14. 1 Cor. 7: 39). The marriage of Christians with the openly wicked must necessarily be attended with degeneracy in religion, if not open apostasy.

2. *Princes and rulers, etc.*—These, who should have been examples to the people, are 'chief in the trespass.' Even the 'priests and Levites' (v. 1) are involved in the same transgression. Reform, therefore, will be difficult.

3. The three things here mentioned were all expressions of profound grief (cf. Job 2: 12, 13). *Astonied.*—This is stronger than 'astonished,' as the word is now used, being more like our *dumbfounded* or *thunderstruck*.

4. Such unusual demonstrations attracted attention, as they were designed to do, and drew together those who were like-minded with Ezra on this subject.

5. *Having rent,* probably a second time, and as he had done at first.

6. This prayer was offered up in the hearing of the multitude assembled at the evening sacrifice.

8. *A nail, etc.,* or 'pin,' that may be 'fastened in a sure place' (Isa. 22: 23).

9. *A wall, etc., i. e.,* a fence or inclosure, a permanent establishment in the land.

15. *Behold—in our trespasses.*—He thus casts himself and the people on the simple mercy of God, in all the enormity of their sins. How similar is it to the prayer of the publican, 'God be merciful to me a sinner' (Luke 18: 13); and how appropriate is such a manner of prayer to every poor sinner who would cast himself upon God's mercy in Christ.

UNLAWFUL MARRIAGES ANNULLED.

Read Ezra X. entire.

1, 2. *WEPT very sore.*—The prayer of Ezra and his demonstrations of sorrow had moved the masses of the people—‘men, women, and children’—so that they gathered around him in sympathy, and God ‘poured out upon them a spirit of grace and supplication.’ So it is ever: when ministers are deeply and sincerely moved with sorrow for prevailing wickedness, and with desire for the revival of God’s work, the Spirit of God—not mere human sympathy—will move the people also.

2. *Shekaniah.*—He was one whose father and five uncles were guilty (v. 26). He takes encouragement from the spirit of repentance which is manifest, to hope for Israel ‘concerning this thing.’

3. *A covenant with God, etc.*—Not with one another only, but with God against whom they had sinned. Thus David says, ‘Against thee, thee only I have sinned,’ etc. (Ps. 51 : 4). The ‘putting away’ of the strange wives would be ‘bringing forth fruits meet for repentance.’ It is well when there are such men as Shekaniah to come up to the help and encouragement of ministers in measures of reform.

5. *They swear.*—This was the act of the multitude; and it was wise in Ezra to get the guilty individuals thus committed in presence of the people. But there were many details to be arranged in order to the practical carrying out of the reform; and it is for this purpose that Ezra and the rulers retire for consultation into the house of Johanan.

6. *Eat no bread, etc.*—Thus adding most rigid fasting to his other expressions of sorrow. The work is as yet only entered upon, and Ezra can not afford to indulge in premature joy at the favorable indications which are apparent. We should rejoice, but with trembling, at the prospects of a revival.

8. *His substance—forfeited.*—As Ezra was a civil magistrate, it was proper that, with the concurrence of the other rulers, he should adopt such stern measures. *Within three days.*—This was too short a time to carry out the proposed separation, throughout the land; but having thus secured the consent of all concerned, at the suggestion of the people, he appoints commissioners (vs. 14, 15), before whom

the offenders should appear at 'appointed times,' accompanied by the 'elders and judges' of their several cities, in order that each case might be inquired into before these witnesses, and proper provision made, as was no doubt done, for the unfortunate wives and children who were to be put away.

17. *Made an end—by the first day of the first month.*—The first general assembling of the people was on the twentieth day of the ninth month (v. 9); and the commission being fully organized, after sufficient time had been allowed, 'sat down on the first day of the tenth month to examine the matter' (v. 16); so that three months and ten days was the whole time employed in carrying out the reform. It was a trying time in Israel; and there may have been sentimental worldlings then, as now, who, pretending to a more *humane* morality than that of the Bible, would make much ado about this whole proceeding, as being 'cruel,' 'barbarous,' 'righteous overmuch,' etc. But it must be remembered that Ezra was just now reëstablishing the Jewish people in their own land, after their return from a captivity into which they had been carried on account of their idolatry and irreligion; and that the most prominent cause of this idolatry was this very marrying of strange wives; which must therefore be suppressed with a firm hand. We may presume also that those wives who had embraced the true religion, being proselytes, would not be put away; this not being required by the law.

18. *Sons of the priests.*—These were especially guilty in setting so bad an example, and it was becoming in them to be among the first to 'give their hands' in pledge that they would put away their wives, and that in atonement for their guilt they should offer the 'trespass offering' which the law required (Lev. 5: 17, 18). The long list of names which follows shows how widespread was the evil, and how many of high rank were involved in it.

44. *Wives by whom they had children.*—These would be cases of peculiar hardship, but provision was undoubtedly made that they should not suffer; and so far as personal feelings were concerned, the duty being plain, they must not 'confer with flesh and blood.' 'He that forsaketh not all that he hath, can not be my disciple,' says our Lord.

BOOK OF NEHEMIAH.



THE book of Nehemiah takes up the history of the Jews about twelve years after the close of Ezra, or about 446 B. C. The rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem was the great enterprise in which he engaged. Ezra still remained at Jerusalem but only in the discharge of priestly duties.

SHALLUM AND HIS DAUGHTERS.

Nehemiah III. 12.

12. AND next unto him repaired Shallum the son of Halohesh, the ruler of the half part of Jerusalem, he and his daughters.

We know little more of these daughters of Shallum, than we do of that parenthetic woman Sherah, who built three cities (see 1 Chron. 7: 24, and note). But as their father was 'ruler of the half part of Jerusalem,' they must have been ladies of distinction. Scott and Jamieson suggest that they may have been 'heiresses, or rich widows.' It is not necessary to suppose that all the persons named in this chapter actually worked with their own hands in building the wall. They each 'took the contract,' so to speak, for a certain portion. So also with Shallum and his daughters. And whether they worked in person or not, it speaks well for their zeal in a great and good work. It indicates both patriotism and piety, and is an example to be imitated by all women, especially those of wealth and position, in the work of building up the walls of Zion, by their hearty coöperation in every philanthropic and Christian enterprise.

BARZILLAI THE GILEADITE.

Nehemiah VII. 63-67.

63. AND of the priests: the children of Habaiah, the children of Koz, the children of Barzillai, which took one of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite to wife, and was called after their name. 64. These sought their register among those that were reckoned by genealogy, but it was not found: therefore were they, as polluted, put from the priesthood. 65. And the Tirshatha said unto them, that they should not eat of the most holy things, till there stood up a priest with Urim and Thummim. 66. The whole congregation together was forty and two thousand three hundred and threescore. 67. Besides their manservants and their maidservants, of whom there were seven thousand three hundred thirty and seven: and they had two hundred forty and five singing men and singing women.

See notes on Ezra 2: 61-65.

WOMEN AND CHILDREN HEARING THE LAW.

Nehemiah VIII. 2, 3 (cf. Deut. XXIX. 10-12; XXXI. 12, 13)

2. AND Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month. 3. And he read therein before the street that was before the water-gate from the morning until midday, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law.

2. *Women, etc.*—This was done in accordance with the parallel passages of Deuteronomy above referred to. In all the great assemblages of Israel, for the purpose of receiving instruction, or of entering into covenant, 'women and children' were expected to be present; the former, that they might both hear and act for themselves, and might instruct their children more fully afterward in the meaning of these things; and the latter, that they might receive lasting impressions from the solemnities in which they took part, and be the more docile in receiving instruction concerning them (cf. Deut. 6: 20) How immeasurably did even the Jewish religion thus exalt woman above the position which she occupied in heathen countries. Christianity, as we shall see, elevates her still higher.

magnificence, and the 'beds' (*i. e.*, the table couches on which they reclined while eating) were spread on a tessellated marble pavement.

7. *Royal wine*, which was, of course, of the finest quality, was furnished in kingly abundance, and yet (v. 8) with a refinement of civilization much in advance of modern European banquets; no one being compelled to drink.

9. *Vashti the queen made a feast*.—The sexes then, as now, did not meet at table in oriental countries, women being kept secluded. They might feast, however, in their own apartments.

VASHTI—DIVORCED.

Read Esther I. 10-22.

11. *To bring Vashti the queen*.—In view of the customs of the East, this order was an indignity of the grossest possible kind, to which no respectable woman could submit. Only a drunken tyrant could have given it. The deputation of seven eunuchs sent for Vashti made the order the more imperative, and her refusal the more perilous.

12. *But the queen Vashti refused*.—Although at the risk of her crown and her life. All honor to the noble Vashti!

16-20.—This courtly speech of Memucan was accommodated to the king's present passion and caprice. He himself would have condemned it when sober.

18. *Thou shalt there arise, etc.*—This clause may be better rendered, 'And there shall fall out wrath and contempt,' *i. e.*, contempt on the part of wives, and wrath on the part of husbands.

22. *That every man should bear rule in his own house*.—With what we know of the extreme subjection of women in those countries, such a law could only be received as a huge joke, perpetrated by a maudlin king in the midst of his wine.

"This narrative affords a sad illustration of the truth, that the higher men are raised in power and wealth, the lower they sink in subjection to their own sensual appetites; making the gratification of these their chief pursuit. And it shows how much the gospel of Christ was needed to give woman her right place in society, and to restore marriage to its original purity."—*Ann. Par. Bible*.

The divorce of Vashti is the first in that remarkable series of *providences* which are apparent in this history, although they lie concealed beneath the deeds of the various actors.

The removal of Vashti prepares the way for the elevation of Esther.

HADASSAH THE ORPHAN JEWESS.

Read Esther II. 1-14.

1. *WHEN the wrath of the king was appeased.*—Now that he was recovered from his wine 'he remembered Vashti,' and no doubt would have recalled his foolish decree, and made reparation to his injured queen, but that 'the laws of the Medes and Persians were unchangeable' (chap. 1: 19).

2-4. This was a truly oriental device for the selection of a new queen. *Hege* (or *Hegai*, v. 8) was the chief eunuch in charge of the royal harem.

3. *Things for purification, i. e.,* those cosmetics, etc, mentioned in v. 12.

5-7. *Mordecai,—the son of Kish.*—He was therefore allied to the royal family of king Saul, and his fair cousin Esther was a maiden of high birth. *Hadassah*, meaning 'myrtle,' was her Hebrew name; while Esther, which is Persian, is said to be the name of the star *Venus*. The captivity of Mordecai, and his being left with the charge of the orphan Hadassah, were further providences in anticipation of coming events.

9. *And the maiden pleased him.*—The special favor which she receives from the surly keeper indicates the sweet, attractive grace of her character, which, as well as her beauty of person, gave her 'favor in the sight of all them that looked upon her' (v. 15). This favor of Hegai was another providence.

10. *Esther had not showed her people.*—Mordecai had so instructed her, lest the knowledge of her being of the captive Jewish race might prevent her from being chosen queen.

11. *Mordecai walked, etc.*—His doing this would not attract particular notice, as he was keeper of the gate, which was an office of distinction. He could probably communicate with her through the servants.

14. *She came in no more.*—This may throw light upon the usages of the harem, and may help to account for the great number of its occupants, as in the case of Solomon. These unfortunate women remained all the rest of their life in seclusion, and must have passed a monotonous and dreary existence. Oriental harems are thronged with such unfortunates. Thus does paganism treat women.

magnificence, and the 'beds' (*i. e.*, the table couches on which they reclined while eating) were spread on a tessellated marble pavement.

7. *Royal wine*, which was, of course, of the finest quality, was furnished in kingly abundance, and yet (v. 8) with a refinement of civilization much in advance of modern European banquets; no one being compelled to drink.

9. *Vashti the queen made a feast*.—The sexes then, as now, did not meet at table in oriental countries, women being kept secluded. They might feast, however, in their own apartments.

VASHTI—DIVORCED.

Read Esther I. 10-22.

11. *To bring Vashti the queen*.—In view of the customs of the East, this order was an indignity of the grossest possible kind, to which no respectable woman could submit. Only a drunken tyrant could have given it. The deputation of seven eunuchs sent for Vashti made the order the more imperative, and her refusal the more perilous.

12. *But the queen Vashti refused*.—Although at the risk of her crown and her life. All honor to the noble Vashti!

16-20.—This courtly speech of Memucan was accommodated to the king's present passion and caprice. He himself would have condemned it when sober.

18. *Thou shalt there arise, etc.*—This clause may be better rendered, 'And there shall fall out wrath and contempt,' *i. e.*, contempt on the part of wives, and wrath on the part of husbands.

22. *That every man should bear rule in his own house*.—With what we know of the extreme subjection of women in those countries, such a law could only be received as a huge joke, perpetrated by a maudlin king in the midst of his wine.

"This narrative affords a sad illustration of the truth, that the higher men are raised in power and wealth, the lower they sink in subjection to their own sensual appetites; making the gratification of these their chief pursuit. And it shows how much the gospel of Christ was needed to give woman her right place in society, and to restore marriage to its original purity."—*Ann. Par. Bible*.

The divorce of Vashti is the first in that remarkable series of *providences* which are apparent in this history, although they lie concealed beneath the deeds of the various actors.

The removal of Vashti prepares the way for the elevation of Esther.

HADASSAH THE ORPHAN JEWESS.

Read Esther II. 1-14.

1. *WHEN the wrath of the king was appeased.*—Now that he was recovered from his wine 'he remembered Vashti,' and no doubt would have recalled his foolish decree, and made reparation to his injured queen, but that 'the laws of the Medes and Persians were unchangeable' (chap. 1: 19).

2-4. This was a truly oriental device for the selection of a new queen. *Hege* (or Hegai, v. 8) was the chief eunuch in charge of the royal harem.

3. *Things for purification, i. e.,* those cosmetics, etc, mentioned in v. 12.

5-7. *Mordecai,—the son of Kish.*—He was therefore allied to the royal family of king Saul, and his fair cousin Esther was a maiden of high birth. *Hadassah*, meaning 'myrtle,' was her Hebrew name; while Esther, which is Persian, is said to be the name of the star *Venus*. The captivity of Mordecai, and his being left with the charge of the orphan Hadassah, were further providences in anticipation of coming events.

9. *And the maiden pleased him.*—The special favor which she receives from the surly keeper indicates the sweet, attractive grace of her character, which, as well as her beauty of person, gave her 'favor in the sight of all them that looked upon her' (v. 15). This favor of Hegai was another providence.

10. *Esther had not showed her people.*—Mordecai had so instructed her, lest the knowledge of her being of the captive Jewish race might prevent her from being chosen queen.

11. *Mordecai walked, etc.*—His doing this would not attract particular notice, as he was keeper of the gate, which was an office of distinction. He could probably communicate with her through the servants.

14. *She came in no more.*—This may throw light upon the usages of the harem, and may help to account for the great number of its occupants, as in the case of Solomon. These unfortunate women remained all the rest of their life in seclusion, and must have passed a monotonous and dreary existence. Oriental harems are thronged with such unfortunates. Thus does paganism treat women.

ESTHER MADE QUEEN.

Read Esther II. 15-23.

16. *In the seventh year of his reign.*—This was, therefore, in the fourth year after the divorce of Vashti, which took place in the third year (chap. 1: 3); so long a time was occupied in gathering together fair young virgins from all the provinces of the kingdom (v. 3).

18. *The king made a great feast.*—This was a magnificent entertainment in honor of the new queen—'Esther's feast'—and according to custom the king granted 'a release' (*i. e.*, of tribute) to the provinces, with other marks of favor.

19. *The virgins were gathered the second time.*—This may have been to grace Esther's marriage feast; or the *first time* may have been when the virgins from whom Vashti had been selected were brought together.

20. *Esther did the commandment of Mordecai.*—Her continuing to do this after she became queen shows another amiable trait in her character, and how profound was the reverence with which she had ever regarded her foster-father.

21-23. The discovery of the conspiracy here mentioned is the providential link in the chain of events which connects Mordecai's captivity with the overthrow of Haman, and the final deliverance of the Jews. His sitting at the 'king's gate' was doubly providential, in that it afforded him the opportunity of detecting this conspiracy, and of communicating it to the king through Esther. It has been suggested that this plot against the king's life may have been gotten up by friends of Vashti in revenge for the indignity put upon her.

23. *Book of the Chronicles.*—This was the public record which was kept of all the important events of the kingdom (cf. 6: 1). The entry of Mordecai's meritorious deed in these records was another providential circumstance. Nor was it less providential that while the conspirators were punished, Mordecai was not at the time rewarded. Thus God overruled even the ingratitude and forgetfulness of the king for good (cf. 6: 2, 3). Let us learn ever to do our duty without regard to any reward. God will not forget us if our fellow-men do.

HAMAN THE AGAGITE.

Read Esther III. entire.

1. *THE Agagite.*—He was probably of the royal house of Amalek, as Agag was the name of an Amalekite king whom Saul had spared, but who was slain by Samuel (1 Sam. 15: 8–33). Haman and Mordecai were, therefore, of equally high rank, and belonged to races mutually embittered. The Amalekites were descendants of Esau, and were a people specially accursed of God (Exod. 17: 14–16. Deut. 25: 17–19).

2. *Mordecai bowed not.*—He was as proud as Haman, and could not bow to an accursed Amalekite.

4. *He had told them that he was a Jew.*—This was his apology for not bowing to Haman as others did. He was an hereditary national enemy. Besides his conscience forbade it.

6. *He thought scorn, etc.*—Haman affects contempt for a single enemy, and meditates vengeance on a large scale upon the whole hated race of Jews. The hand of God is in this also.

7. *They cast Pur, that is, the lot.*—This was an oriental superstition, according to which lots were cast for a lucky day on which to undertake any enterprise (Isa. 47: 13. Ezek. 21: 21).

From day to day.—It is not to be supposed that the casting of lots was thus long continued, but that day after day, and month after month was tried by the lot until at last the 'twelfth month' was hit upon as the lucky time. Here again is the providence of God in so directing the lot that it should postpone the fate of the Jews for a whole year, and thus allow time for the working out of their deliverance. 'The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord' (Prov. 16: 33).

8. *There is a certain people.*—As these events took place after the return of the Jews who accompanied Zerubbabel and Nehemiah, the fact that this people were still found scattered 'through all the provinces' of the empire, shows how many of them had preferred to remain in the land of their captivity. A residence of seventy years had made it a home to the aged, and the native land of all the young, and few of them had piety enough to make the sacrifice of returning to the land of their fathers. Still, God remembered them as belonging to his covenant people.

9. *I will pay ten thousand talents.*—This immense bonus

which he proposed to pay for the destruction of the Jews, shows either his own great wealth, or the amount of spoils which he expected to gather from their confiscated estates. It also suggests the probable wealth of that people, and the large revenues which the king's treasury derived from them, and which Haman proposes to make good.

13. *Posts*—'couriers'—like our mail-carriers. Cýrus had introduced a regular system of posts and couriers throughout the empire. They were required to make all haste, and might press any horse or other means of conveyance into their service (chap. 8: 10).

15. *The king and Haman sat down to drink; but the city Shushan was perplexed.*—There is tragic poetry in these simple words. How little sympathy was there between rulers and people. The facile king and his wicked premier, indifferent to the consternation which they are spreading through an empire, calmly sit down to their wine, while the city Shushan, where many Jews resided, and other cities all over the kingdom in like manner, were in perplexity, no man knowing whose life was safe when such an atrocious decree could be issued. Thanks to God that the world is no longer ruled by such tyrants. Haman, 'the magnificent,' is for the time triumphant, and gloats over the grand St. Bartholomew of blood which he expects a few months to bring him; but there is One in the heavens who is 'higher than the highest.' Our text names him not, but we shall soon see his hand again.

'IF I PERISH, I PERISH.'

Read Esther IV. entire.

1. *MORDECAI rent his clothes.*—Sorrow as well as joy was demonstrative in those days. Compare Ezra's grief (Ezra 9: 3, etc.). How must Haman have been delighted with the music of this 'loud and bitter cry' of Mordecai, and with the 'fasting and weeping, and wailing' of the Jews 'in every province' (v. 3).

2. *None might enter, etc.*—Such is said to be still the custom of oriental courts. Nothing suggestive of sorrow or death is allowed to enter. Vain folly! As if the King of Terrors himself could be shut out.

4. *Her chamberlains* (Hebrew, 'eunuchs').—They told the queen of the mourning, but as yet she did not know the cause. She sends, therefore, to inquire 'what it was, and why it was.'

8. *That she should go in unto the king.*—Along with the required information, he sends her this message, although he must have seen how desperate would be the attempt to obtain any modification of a decree which he knew to be irreversible. But he trusted in God as well as in the influence of the queen. Faith can remove mountains.

11. *I have not been called, etc., these thirty days.*—The king was capricious, and had been neglecting her, and the peril of approaching the royal presence uncalled would be the greater on this account.

13, 14. This message of Mordecai is most urgent, as the case required. There was apparently no other ray of hope, but through the queen's intervention; and he would have her feel that it was a case of life and death to herself as well as to her people. He is strong in the faith that ‘enlargement and deliverance shall arise to the Jews’ from some other quarter, even should she ‘hold her peace;’ but he predicts that in that case ‘she and her father's house’ (including himself also) ‘shall perish.’ He then suggests the inquiry whether she may not have ‘come to the kingdom for such a time as this,’ which is, of course, a direct recognition of the divine providence concerned in her elevation, and of the design which may have been in it. How appropriate is such a question to all who find themselves in positions of high responsibility. ‘Who knoweth whether God has not some special design in placing me here? and what is that design?’

16. *Go, gather together all the Jews, etc.*—Esther proves herself equal to the occasion. She does not shrink from the responsibility thrown upon her; but it is a perilous one, and the life of all her people is at stake. She believes in the efficacy of fasting and prayer, and calls upon all her countrymen to unite with her and her maidens (who were probably Jewesses) in a most rigid fast of three days, before she will venture to approach the king. There is no need of mentioning the *name* of God here, when it is God's providential interposition which is so plainly sought. She expects that God will incline the king to extend the ‘golden scepter’ to her, and thus she ventures.

If I perish, I perish.—How sublime is this spirit of self-sacrifice. She takes her own life and that of her people in her hand, and, trusting in God, prepares to make the dreaded approach. How appropriately have these precious words been set as a jewel in that tender hymn, ‘Come, humble sinner,’ etc. And how many trem-

bling sinners, with these words upon their lips, have approached the 'gracious King,' and found the golden scepter of his sovereign mercy extended for their welcome.—With the conduct of Esther in thus fasting and praying before she ventured to approach the king, compare that of Nehemiah (chap. 1: 4-17), who made similar preparation before he approached this same king (if this Ahasuerus was Artaxerxes), and with this same queen Esther (as some think) 'sitting at his side' (Neh. 2: 6). But be the truth as it may as to the person of this king, let us profit by these examples, and learn ever to pray so as to prevail with God before we try to prevail with men, knowing that the hearts of all men are in his hands. Compare, also, Jacob's wrestling with the angel before he meets Esau (Gen. 32: 28; 33: 4).

ESTHER TOUCHES THE GOLDEN SCEPTER.

Read Esther V. 1-8.

1. *ESTHER put on her royal apparel.*—There is more in this than appears at once. She had first prayed, seeking God's help, and now she uses *means* in order to recommend herself to the king. She puts off her garments of mourning, and arrays herself in her most magnificent royal apparel so as to heighten the effect of her beauty upon the eye of the king. Thus she adds prudence to her piety. It were well that feminine adornments were always used for so laudable a purpose; also, that the 'ornaments of grace' were sought and worn as eagerly as are those 'outward adornings' in which both men and women so much delight (cf. 1 Pet. 3: 3, 4; also, Gen. 34: 22 with note on wearing jewelry).

2. *The king saw Esther standing in the court.*—What a moment was this! She was there unsummoned, in violation of law, and even of decorum. Shall she meet the scepter or the *scimitar*? The fate of herself and of her people trembles in the balance. But God has heard those prayers, and turned the king's heart toward her. He holds out the golden scepter, and *Esther and Israel are safe!* Blessed be God.

3. *It shall be even given thee to the half of my kingdom.*—Such was the oriental style of hyperbole, in which language means less than it expresses (cf. Matt. 14: 7).

4. *Let the king and Haman come.*—There was consummate art in inviting the wily favorite to her banquet, along with

the king. It flattered his pride, and disarmed his suspicion. God gave Esther this wisdom.

8. *I will do to-morrow as the king hath said*—At the banquet the king renews his magnificent offer (v. 6); but Esther still delays to state her petition, thus intimating that it is something of unusual importance, and perhaps even yet fearful that her suit may be rejected. She, therefore, invites the king and Haman to another banquet on 'to-morrow,' promising then to 'do as the king hath said,' *i. e.*, to present her request. In the mean time, we can not doubt that the queen, and Mordecai, and the other praying Jews, were offering up unceasing supplications to God for the success of this appeal.—The scene now changes as it is presented to our eyes; but behind it the invisible web of God's providence is unfolding another scene vastly different.

"God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform."

HAMAN AND ZERESH.

Read Esther V. entire.

9. *THEN went Haman forth joyful, etc.*—Never had he been so highly honored before, and he calls his family and friends together to congratulate him on his good fortune (v. 11). He has reached the pinnacle of his prosperity.

13. *Yet all this availeth me nothing, etc.*—This is the language both of weakness and of malignity. Why need he care for that impolite Jew, who, with all his hated race, is doomed to so speedy a destruction? Why not treat him with contempt? And why so weak as to reveal his vexation to his friends? He was himself a weak and cringing man, as we shall see on the next day (vs. 7, 8), and the impassive Mordecai, who does 'not stand up nor move for him, (v. 9), shows himself to be a prouder and stronger man than Haman. That Mordecai should have adopted so different a bearing toward Haman from that of Esther, may have been owing to the difference of their circumstances or of their temperament. Esther still fears him, but Mordecai defies him. This is so galling to Haman that it embitters all the joy of his proud elevation. So insufficient is worldly prosperity to satisfy a mind ill at ease.

14. *Zeresh his wife*, seconded by his other friends, now comes to his counsel. It is a woman's extravagant passion

that proposes a 'gallows fifty cubits high,' but she meant to make the punishment of Mordecai's presumption as conspicuous as possible. Haman and his friends do not doubt that he will only have to ask the king in order to hang Mordecai, and then he will go to the banquet 'merrily.' How little do they 'know what shall be on the morrow.' 'Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein.'

A SLEEPLESS NIGHT.

Read Esther VI. 1-4

1-4. ON *that night could not the king sleep.*—(Hebrew, 'the king's sleep fled away.) 'God giveth his beloved sleep,' but that night God had something else than sleep for the king. A gluttonous repast may have been the immediate cause of this sleeplessness, but God's providence again was in it. Such are its methods, as we have often seen. The king was, perhaps, a man of books. At any rate he must pass the time, and he calls for the chronicles of the kingdom, and there he *happens* (?) to turn to the record of Mordecai's service, of which we have had an account in chap. 2: 23. Finding that he himself has been forgetful of a faithful servant, and that no reward has been given to Mordecai, he now takes immediate measures to remedy the oversight. Morning had now come, and Haman was earlier than usual in waiting in the court ready to ask for the hanging of Mordecai. The scene again changes.

THE MAN WHOM THE KING DELIGHTETH TO HONOR.

Read Esther VI. 5-14.

6. So *Haman came in*, but before he had time to offer his request, the king anticipates him with a question which seems to promise a still higher mark of favor to himself than he had yet received. Haman can not doubt, of course, that he is 'the man whom the king delighteth to honor,' and he caps the climax of his pride and folly by asking to be escorted through the city by one of the highest nobles in full kingly array (v. 9).

10. *Do even so to Mordecai!*—A thunderbolt has smitten Haman! But he dares not disobey, nor even remonstrate. With what feeling he executed his commission, or in what mood Mordecai endured these strange honors, we are left to

imagine. This is one of the many instances of the *sublime silence* of the Bible.

12. *Mordecai came again to the king's gate*, calmly seating himself there as if nothing had happened; but Haman hurries home with covered face, ashamed, confounded, and anticipating his doom. Thus 'the triumphing of the wicked is short.' The pit which he had digged for Mordecai yawns to receive himself.

13. It required no prophetic foresight in 'Zeresh and the wise men,' to tell him that he should surely fall before Mordecai. 'God disappointeth the devices of the crafty, so that their hands can not perform their enterprise. He taketh the wise in their own craftiness, and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong.—But he saveth the poor from the sword, and from the hand of the mighty' (Job 5: 12–15).

14. *Hasted to bring Haman unto the banquet*.—A most untimely summons now, for surely he was in no mood for banqueting, but again he dares not excuse himself. He goes as an ox to the slaughter. The wheel of God's providence keeps turning.

HAMAN'S DOWNFALL.

Read Esther VII. entire.

2. THE king shows his continued favor to Esther, by repeating for the third time this truly royal offer.

3. *Let my life be given me*.—Such a request must have struck the king with surprise, as he probably was still ignorant of her nationality.

4. She continues, therefore, to explain more fully her meaning, by stating the designs which had been formed against her people, but still without naming them, leaving the king to infer, if he would, whom she meant. She adroitly turns also from her own danger, and that of her people, to speak of the 'king's damage,' which is to result from the design to which she refers, thus appealing to his selfishness.

5. *Who is he? and where is he?*—The king speaks as if he had entirely dismissed from his mind the decree which Haman had induced him to pass against the Jews; and, indeed, it may be remembered that Haman had not even named the *Jews*, but had only described them as 'a certain people' (chap. 3: 8). The king, therefore, does not even yet understand Esther's allusions, but asks, indignantly, 'Who is he?'

etc. Haman, meanwhile, is trembling under the blow which he sees descending, but has no power to arrest.

6. *The adversary—is this wicked Haman!*—Another thunderbolt has fallen, and both the king and Haman are stunned by it.

7. The sudden withdrawal of the king from the banquet was a sign of his deep displeasure, as Haman rightly interprets, while he stands up to beg for his life from the queen.

8. Finding no encouragement in the looks of the unmoved queen, Haman has fallen prostrate by the side of the banqueting couch on which she was reclining, in order the more humbly to urge his suit; when the king, returning in at that moment and finding him thus near the queen, chooses to put the worst construction on his conduct, by asking a question which was a signal to the attendants to cover his face as one already condemned to death.

9. *Behold—the gallows.*—The mention of this, and that it had been made for Mordecai, 'who had spoken good for the king,' was enough. The brief sentence is, 'Hang him thereon.' The gallows had been built in the very court of 'Haman's house,' in order, no doubt, to entertain his family the more with the punishment of Mordecai; but now Zeresh and her friends are treated to a very different entertainment.

10. *So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai.*—The wheel of Providence still revolves. 'Surely thou didst set them in slippery places; thou eatest them down into destruction; how are they brought into desolation as in a moment; they are utterly consumed with terrors' (Ps. 73: 18, 19; cf., also, Ps. 7: 15, 16). 'Righteous art thou, O Lord, in thy judgments.'

MORDECAI EXALTED, AND A NEW DECREE ISSUED.

Read Esther VIII. entire.

1, 2. *MORDECAI came before the king.*—He had been merely keeper of the gate before, but had not access to the royal presence. But now that Esther has made known his relationship to her, as a recommendation additional to the service which he had before rendered to the king, the ring which had been taken from Haman is at once intrusted to Mordecai, thus investing him with the office of premier of the realm. Esther, also, makes him her factor for the management of the estates of Haman, which had been transferred to her.

3. *Esther spake yet again before the king.*—This is probably spoken by anticipation, and should be connected with v. 5. She does not forget that the laws of the Medes and Persians are unchangeable, and that the decree against the Jews is still in force. Nor is she satisfied with securing her own personal safety and that of Mordecai. She can not 'endure to see the evil that shall come on her people, or the destruction of her kindred' (v. 6). Thus true piety is ever unselfish, not content with its own salvation, but seeking with equal earnestness that of others also. She, therefore, approaches the king, as before, and at the risk of her life, as not having been summoned. Again the golden scepter is held out, and she intercedes with tears for the reversal of the bloody decree. She is successful; and although her petition could not be granted in terms, Mordecai is invested with full power to issue such a counter decree as may secure the safety of the Jews (v. 11). It was to take effect on the same day that had been appointed for the execution of Haman's decree, viz: 'On the thirteenth day of the twelfth month' (v. 12; cf. 3: 13). As no time was to be lost, in order to reach the extreme provinces of an empire which extended 'from India to Ethiopia,' extraordinary dispatch was used (v. 10), so that the Jews might be ready to defend themselves against the appointed day. We thus see more clearly how the providence of God was concerned in causing the lots of Haman to fall upon so late a day (cf. note on chap. 3: 7).

15. *And Mordecai went out.*—This splendor of array was probably the customary insignia of his high office, and was not assumed vaingloriously by Mordecai. *The city of Shushan rejoiced.*—Notice the contrast between the effect produced by the issuing of this decree and that of Haman (chap. 3: 15). Thus, 'when the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn' (Prov. 29: 2).

17. *Many of the people—became Jews, i. e.,* proselytes to the Jewish religion, some perhaps from conviction, because they saw that the Lord their God was with the Jews; but most, no doubt, from policy, because the Jews were now favorites at court, or from fear lest the Jews should avenge themselves for former injuries. Conversions which take place under the influence of any such worldly motives bring no credit to religion, and are rather to be deprecated than desired.—The revolution of the wheel of God's providence is

now complete. The Jews and their enemies have exchanged places, the former having 'light and gladness, and joy and honor,' 'a feast and a good day,' while the latter are ashamed and confounded. So will it be in the 'great day of the Lord.' How blessed then will be the favorites of the Great King.

THE BLOODY THIRTEENTH OF ADAR.

Read Esther IX. 1-16.

2. *THE Jews gathered themselves together in their cities.*—It might be supposed that after the great political revolution which had taken place, in connection with the elevation of Mordecai to power, the Jews would be left unmolested. But it must be remembered that they were a small minority; they were a despised people, 'whose laws were diverse from all people' (chap. 3: 8); their religion was a hated religion; they were rich, and the spoil of them would be tempting; besides, the still valid decree of Haman warranted their enemies in slaying and robbing them with impunity. No doubt, also, there were many other Amalekites who had been carried captive at the same time with 'Haman the Agagite,' and who would be ready to embrace this opportunity of making an assault upon their national enemies, the Jews. It became necessary, therefore, that they should band themselves together for self-defense. This concerted action, and the fear of them that fell upon all the people (v. 2), along with the support given them by the 'officers of the king (probably Mordecai's appointees) (v. 3), secured them a bloody victory.

5. *Thus the Jews smote all their enemies.*—The absurd legislation which made it equally lawful for the Jews and their enemies to slay each other on that day, brought its appropriate fruits in the slaughter by the Jews of seventy-five thousand of their enemies in different parts of the empire (v. 16). How many of the Jews themselves were slain is not stated; but as they were authorized to act only on the defensive against those 'that would assault them' (chap. 8: 11), the number of their slain enemies shows how vigorous must have been the assaults made upon them; and if none of the Jews themselves were slain, it must have been by a most signal interposition of God in their behalf.

10. *The ten sons of Haman.*—These must all have been active in the assaults upon the Jews, in which they sought to

avenge their father's blood, and they were also righteously slain as belonging to a doomed family and a doomed race.

13. This request of Esther for another day's slaughter, and for the hanging of Haman's sons, exposes her to the charge of vindictiveness; but it must be remembered that the Jews were still acting only on the defensive, and that their malignant enemies were expected to renew their assaults on the next day, when they thought, perhaps, that the Jews would not be at liberty to resist. That the assaults were renewed, we infer from the fact that three hundred more were slain on that day, besides the five hundred on the thirteenth. It was necessary also for the safety of the Jews in the future, that their bitter enemies should receive a lesson which they would not forget; and how numerous and bitter those enemies were, may be seen from the fact that 'eight hundred' of them were slain in and around 'Shushan the palace' itself, in their attacks upon the Jews during those days. As to the hanging of Haman's sons, they had been slain the day before, and this *gibbeting* of them was but in accordance with the stern methods of oriental justice, and was a disgrace put upon them which the family well deserved (cf. 2 Sam. 21: 9, and note).

10, 15, 16. *On the spoil laid they not their hand.*—The repeated notice of this fact is designed to show that the Jews sought only safety for themselves, and not the spoils of their enemies, and confirms the correctness of the view that all the slaughters of the bloody thirteenth took place while the Jews were acting in self-defense. According to the letter of Mordecai's decree (chap. 8: 11) they would have been entitled, also, to 'take the spoil' of their enemies 'for a prey.' In this it only ran parallel with the decree of Haman (chap. 3: 13); but, perhaps, they may have been specially instructed by Mordecai and Esther in a private message not to avail themselves of this permission, so that it might appear that they sought only justice, and not plunder or vengeance. All war is barbarous and bloody work, but *civil* war most of all. How happy will be that period when the nations 'shall learn war no more,' and when the full influence of the blessed gospel shall be seen in the universal proclamation of 'peace on earth, and good will to men.' The Lord hasten the day.

THE FEAST OF PURIM.

Read Esther IX. 17-32.

17. *ON the fourteenth day—rested they.*—This has reference only to the provinces, while, in the city Shushan, this fourteenth day was also a day of slaughter, and the fifteenth was a day of rest and gladness.

19, 21. *Of sending portions one to another.*—This interchange of mutual tokens of good will, and the giving of 'gifts to the poor,' are most appropriate accompaniments to our seasons of rejoicing. Gratitude to God naturally inspires us with good will to man.

20. *And Mordecai wrote these things.*—It is commonly supposed that this whole book of Esther was written by Mordecai, most of it being copied out from the records of the kingdom, although the completion of the work in its present form did not probably take place until afterward. The present writing was such an account of the circumstances connected with this great deliverance, as might be necessary to accompany the letters sent to all the provinces establishing an annual festival in commemoration of it.

21. The fourteenth and fifteenth days were both appointed to be observed, because the fourteenth had been the day of 'rest and gladness' in the provinces, and the fifteenth in the city Shushan.

26. *They called these days Purim*, from Pur, a lot—the plural *Purim* being used because two days were appointed, or because of the repeated casting of lots by Haman.

27, 31. These words indicate that the observance of this festival was introduced and perpetuated as much by the voluntary action of the Jews themselves as by the command of Mordecai and Esther. Unusual care seems to have been taken to secure its universal and perpetual celebration; for, besides the first letters of Mordecai, there was, also, a 'letter' of the queen and Mordecai, which were written 'with authority,' and perhaps some years later, when the festival was falling into neglect. This was the 'second letter of Purim' (v. 29), and is the same as the 'decree of Esther' of v. 32.

32. *It was written in the book, i. e.*, in the book of the chronicles of the kingdom before mentioned, and in chap. 10: 2. *Their cry, i. e.*, 'prayer.' This feast of Purim has continued to be observed by the Jews for more than two

thousand years, even down to the present day; and its observance is a standing proof of the truth of the history contained in this book. For the details of the manner of its celebration, we refer to other authors. Suffice it to say, that its present observance is much more festive than religious; and that many of the Jews are much more ready to imitate Esther in her banqueting than in her fasting. The authority of Mordecai and Esther, however, did not give a *divine* sanction to the feast of Purim (as, *e. g.*, to that of the Passover). It was rather a national and civil than a religious festival. Our *Christmas* festival is practically observed much in the same way. Indeed, the tendency of human nature is to turn all *holy days*—even the Sabbath itself—into *holidays*.

CONCLUSION.

Read Esther X. entire.

1. *Ahasuerus laid a tribute*.—What was the occasion of this tribute, we are not informed. If Ahasuerus was Xerxes, it may have been with reference to his grand Grecian expedition. The 'isles of the sea' are maritime countries generally, whether continental or insular. The great king may have claimed Greece as his.

2. *Chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia, i. e.*, of the Medo-Persian empire, the book already several times referred to (chap. 6: 1, etc.).

3. The character of Mordecai, as here briefly delineated, is such as ought to belong to every ruler, and shows him to have been worthy of his high elevation. The three particulars mentioned, would make him *popular, patriotic, and peaceful*. The 'wealth' of his people is their prosperity generally. His 'seed' here denotes his people, the 'seed of Abraham.'

The sudden elevation of persons of low degree to the highest stations, is nothing uncommon in oriental despotisms. Similar cases, among others, are those of Joseph in Egypt, and Daniel in Babylon. But in all these cases the hand of the Lord is clearly seen, and the methods of his providence illustrated. No miracle indeed is wrought; but the whole concatenation and arrangement of events, with such manifest reference to the accomplishment of some great purpose, and the use of things fortuitous or dependent on the caprice or even wickedness of men who are unconscious of God's control, so as in.

fallibly to work out the good and holy designs of the Most High, all show the reality of God's providential government, even more clearly than the most stupendous miracles could do. The book of Esther, as we have seen, is full of such proofs of the guiding hand of the unseen and *unnamed* Jehovah. No one can read it without having his faith increased in the covenant care of God over his own people, even in their darkest seasons, and without being ready to exclaim, 'The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice.'

NOTE.—We take the liberty of appending here the following passage from an excellent little work called "Esther and Her Times," by the late Rev. John M. Lowrie, D. D., of Fort Wayne, Indiana :

"If we are right in supposing that, besides the sons of Haman, many of those slain were Amalekites, this is their last appearance upon the page of history; and with the last effort of the Agagite, closed a long struggle with the church of God. Here, then, was fulfilled a prophecy uttered many centuries before by the lips of Baalam, 'And when he looked on Amalek, he took up his parable and said, Amalek was the first of the nations, but his latter end shall be, that he perish for ever' (Num. 24: 20). The first battle fought by the children of Israel after leaving Egypt was with Amalek (Exod. 17: 8); and as the book of Esther closes the historical records of the Old Testament, we may look back upon the warfare with deep interest. For Amalek is a type of our spiritual foes; and there is a lesson for us where our true strength lies. Amalek was no despicable foe; and had Israel stood alone, the tide of victory might have been adverse. Look back to the first battle fought by Joshua, that great Israelitish leader; and while you recall the doubtful strife, gaze up to the neighboring hill-top, where Moses holds up his heavy hands to heaven, and where Aaron and Hur prevent the prevalence of Amalek. Look back to David, greatly distressed while he pursues Amalek, and read there also, 'David encouraged himself in the Lord his God' (1 Sam. 30: 6). Remember, too, that this last strife which ends with the sword of Mordecai, began with Esther's prayer and fasting. The strength of Zion against Zion's foes is not Zion's strong right arm, but the cry of her prophets, and her kings, and her feeble women, in the ear of Zion's King."

BOOK OF JOB.



THE position of this book in the sacred volume has misled many a reader as to its relative antiquity. The arrangement of the order of the several books of the Bible, as well as the division into chapters and verses, is altogether the work of man. The order adopted in the Hebrew Scriptures is different from that of the modern versions. Job has been placed where it now is, after the historical books, because it is the oldest of the poetical books; although there is good reason for believing that it is the *oldest book in the world*; older even than the Pentateuch. As it contains but few passages suited to our purpose, we omit any discussion of the various interesting questions which have arisen concerning its age, authorship, country, object, etc., and refer the reader for further information on these topics to Barnes, or any of the special commentators on the book.

JOB AND HIS SONS AND DAUGHTERS.

Job I. 1-5.

1. THERE was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil. 2. And there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters. 3. His substance also was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she asses, and a very great household; so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the east. 4. And his sons went and feasted in their houses, every one his day; and sent and called for their three sisters to eat and to drink with them. 5. And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my

sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually.

1. *There was a man in the land of Uz.*—That Job was a real historical character, is evident from the mention of him by the Prophet Ezekiel (chap. 14: 14), and the Apostle James (chap. 5: 11). The land of Uz was a region of Arabia, to the east, or rather southeast of Palestine. In v. 2 he is spoken of as one of the ‘men of the East.’ *Was perfect and upright, etc.*—Not sinlessly perfect, but honest and sincere in his religion, and of unimpeachable moral character, such as also was Noah (Gen. 6: 9, and note). His ‘fear of God’ was that pious and filial reverence which flows from love, and leads to obedience. It also ‘eschewed (abstained from) evil,’ whether toward God or man. Job’s religion was the same with that of Abraham and Melchizedek, with whom he was probably nearly contemporary. It was the *patriarchal* religion, there being no allusion in the whole book to anything Jewish.

2. *Seven sons and three daughters.*—These appear to be all children of Job’s one wife, who is mentioned in the next chapter. As she was not barren, Job was not tempted, like Abraham, to become a polygamist.

3. *His substance, etc.*—This wealth was immense, and would place Job among the great emirs, or princes, of those days, ‘the greatest of all the men (sons) of the East.’ *A very great household.*—This consisted of the herdsmen, shepherds, handmaids, and other servants, who would necessarily be employed about so great an establishment. They occupied a position, no doubt, similar to that of the servants of Abraham and Lot (Gen. 12: 16; 13: 5–8; 14: 14).

4. *His sons—called for their three sisters, etc.*—We infer that these sons were married and settled in the neighborhood of their father, with their own flocks and herds, and each dwelling in his own house, to which, each in his turn (‘his day’)—perhaps on his birthday—invited his brothers and sisters to a feast. The sisters were probably still unmarried. These were pleasant family reunions and seasons of festivity, according to the manner of those times.

5. *And it was so, etc.*—The venerable father did not join his children in their youthful festivities; and fearing lest they might have ‘sinned and cursed (or renounced) God in their hearts,’ he follows up their round of feasting and banqueting with a special religious service at his own house.

This is implied in his 'sending for and sanctifying' them. He sanctified them probably by such bodily ablutions, and such exhortations to repentance as might prepare them for coming to God's altar, in connection with the solemn sacrifices which he offered for each.—A happy picture of the family religion of those days, and a happy example for all Christian parents when their children have been in circumstances of peculiar temptation. *Thus did Job continually, i. e.,* such was his uniform custom on all such occasions. The possession of wealth did not make him indifferent to the spiritual welfare of his children. The example of Job is the more important to them 'that have riches' in modern times, because they themselves, the Savior says, 'shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven' (Matt. 19: 23), and their children are in still more danger of being shut out.

OVERWHELMING DOMESTIC CALAMITIES.

Job I. 13-22.

13. AND there was a day when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house: 14. And there came a messenger unto Job, and said, The oxen were plowing, and the asses were feeding beside them: 15. And the Sabeans fell upon them, and took them away; yea, they have slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. 16. While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep, and the servants, and consumed them; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. 17. While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The Chaldeans made out three bands, and fell upon the camels, and have carried them away, yea, and slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. 18. While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, Thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house: 19. And, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. 20. Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshiped, 21. And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. 22. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.

13. *And there was a day, etc.*—Another round of those family festivities had commenced 'in the eldest brother's house,' when all at once four successive visitations of calamity fell upon them: 1st. A raid of the Sabeans upon the servants

plowing in the field with their 'five hundred yoke of oxen' (v. 3); 2d. A 'fire of God'—the lightning—upon the 'seven thousand sheep,' and the servants who kept them; 3d. The 'Chaldean bands' upon the 'three thousand camels,' and their keepers; 4th. 'A great wind from the wilderness,'—the terrible *sirocco*—upon the house where the young men and their sisters were assembled—so that all were 'dead' These were alternate strokes of hostile men and hostile elements; and all under the mysterious control of Satan, whom God had permitted to go forth on this destructive errand. We enter not here upon the discussion of various difficult questions which might arise in regard to the ministration of evil spirits, as the instruments of God's providential judgments. That they should be thus employed, is no more incredible than that the good angels should 'all be ministering spirits sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation' (Heb. 1: 14). Nor can we fully understand why God should permit such a visitation to befall his faithful servant Job; and that too at the instigation of the evil one. It is not a part of our plan particularly to discuss such topics. In regard to it all we may exclaim, 'Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight;' and the Apostle James teaches us to see, in this whole history of Job, 'the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy' (Jas. 5: 11).

20. *Then Job arose, etc.*—It is no wonder that Job thus gives expression to his overwhelming grief by the usual signs of mourning (cf. Ezra 9: 3). God does not condemn our tears and wailings when his hand inflicts upon us severe strokes of chastisement. He means that we should *feel* them. But when we are afflicted we should, like Job, fall down before God and worship; and, in our very sorest bereavements, should endeavor to say with him, 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.' What precious, golden words are these to all God's sorrowing people, and how precious alike are those of Heb. 12: 5-11 (which see). Notice, also, how Job recognizes in all this—not the hand of the Sabeans and Chaldeans, or of the hostile elements, or of Satan the instigator of the whole—but of the *Lord*; 'the Lord hath taken away.' Let us learn thus to understand God's providences.

JOB'S WIFE.

Job II. 9, 10.

9. THEN said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God and die. 10. But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hands of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips.

9. *Then said his wife, etc.*—Here, perhaps, is Job's greatest cross of all, *this wife*. It is significant that we have no notice of her before, as sharing in his concern for the spiritual welfare of their children, or as bowing with him before God in tender, wifely sympathy with his great sorrow, and in expression of his pious submission to God's will. And now, like another Eve, she takes the place of the tempter, and bids him 'curse God and die.' Did Satan, also, instigate this? Some, indeed, would take a more favorable view of her conduct by translating her words, 'bless God and die.' The word translated 'curse,' has indeed this equivocal meaning (like the Latin *sacra*, and the French *sacré*); but it is the same that is rendered 'cursed' in chap. 1: 5; and her words, 'dost thou still retain thine integrity,' *i. e.*, 'thy perfection' (the root of the word being the same as that of 'perfect' in chap. 1: 1) shows that she would tempt him to apostasy. Job, also, so understood her.

10. *Thou speakest as one of the foolish (wicked) women speaketh.*—It is evident, therefore, that she would have him 'curse God and die,' *i. e.*, so provoke the Almighty by blasphemous rebellion and defiance that he might smite him to death at once (cf. Lev. 24: 11 and note). Job does, indeed, afterward, in his impatience under his protracted sufferings, curse the day of his birth (chap. 3: 1-3); but he never finds fault with God. His reply to his wife on this occasion, 'what? shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil,' is another golden saying which has been a treasure to the troubled spirits of God's suffering people in all ages. *In all this, etc.*—Job is still true, and Satan a liar. Let us profit by Job's example in the matter of family religion, and in submission to the Lord's will under sore bereavements.

'BORN OF WOMAN.

Job XIV. 1; XV. 14.

14: 1. MAN that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble.

15: 14. What is man, that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?

In both these passages, 'born of woman' is a proverbial phrase for 'all that is human,' but with an implied reference to man's sinful origin, as born from sinful daughters of fallen Eve. Therefore, according to the primitive curse, is he 'of few days and full of trouble; and how can he that is born of such, whether man or woman, be clean or righteous? The parallelism of the two clauses in the latter verse, shows that the design was to express it as a universally admitted truth, that *nothing human* can be clean or righteous before Him in whose sight 'the heavens are not clean' (v. 15). Blessed be God for that gospel of Christ which brightens our few and troubled days with the hope of an endless and untroubled life above, and opens to us a fountain where we can wash and be 'clean,' and clothes us with 'a garment clean and white which is the righteousness of saints.' All this it does, too, through one 'born of woman.'

WIDOWS NOT TO WEEP.

Job XXVII. 15.

15. THOSE that remain of him shall be buried in death: and his widows shall not weep.

Compare Psalm 78: 64, and note. Among the calamities which constitute the 'portion of a wicked man from the Lord' (v. 13) is the utter destruction of his family. His survivors shall be 'buried in (or by) death,' *i. e.*, probably by pestilence, so that they shall remain unburied; and 'his widows'—if he be a polygamist—shall not survive, or shall not think it worth while to 'weep for him.' 'His,' however, may be taken collectively for *their*, *i. e.*, such as he. We have no evidence of the practice of polygamy in Job's day. Barnes compares with this passage, Jer. 22: 18, 19.

JOB MAINTAINS HIS CHASTITY.

Job XXXI. 1, 9-12.

1. I MADE a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?—9. If mine heart have been deceived by a woman, or if I have laid wait at my neighbor's door; 10. Then let my wife grind unto another, and let others bow down upon her. 11. For this is a heinous crime: yea, it is an iniquity to be punished by the judges. 12. For it is a fire that consumeth to destruction, and would root out all mine increase.

In v. 1 Job seems to anticipate our Saviour's interpretation of the seventh commandment (Matt. 5: 28), 'Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.' The eyes are the chief inlet to temptation, especially to this sin, whether the living object be presented, as in David's case (2 Sam. 11: 2), or the suggestive picture, or the impure page, or the scenic representation. It is so also in regard to intemperance, 'Look not upon the wine when it is red,' etc. (Prov. 23: 31, cf. v. 33). How firmly should we 'covenant with our eyes,' and how earnestly should we pray, 'Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity.' *Why then should I think upon a maid?* The thoughts of the heart follow the look of the eye, and are equally sinful in the sight of God. 'The thought of foolishness is sin.' Let us learn with David to 'hate vain thoughts.'

9. From sinful looks and thoughts Job refers to the overt act, and maintains his innocence by invoking upon himself a providential retribution.

10. *Grind unto.*—This may mean, 'be reduced to the most abject slavery, and grind at the hand mill,' as female slaves were required to do (cf. Isa. 47: 2, 3).

11, 12. *An heinous crime, etc.*—Not only in the sight of God, but 'an iniquity also to be punished by the judges,' as a sin against society, because it outrages the sanctity of the family relations. To the criminal himself also it is 'a fire that consumeth to destruction,' both of body and soul, and is alike ruinous to the estate, 'rooting out all the increase.' See Prov. 6: 20-35, for a similar fearful denunciation of this crime. How sad a thing it is, that this whole class of offenses, which are dragging thousands down to perdition, is made so light of by a loose public sentiment, and by neglect of 'punishment by the judges.'

THE RETURN OF PROSPERITY.

Job XLII. 10-17.

10. AND the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before. 11. Then came there unto him all his brethren, and all his sisters, and all they that had been of his acquaintance before, and did eat bread with him in his house: and they bemoaned him, and comforted him over all the evil that the Lord had brought upon him: every man also gave him a piece of money, and every one an ear-ring of gold. 12. So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning: for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she asses. 13. He had also seven sons and three daughters. 14. And he called the name of the first, Jemima; and the name of the second, Kezia; and the name of the third, Keren-happuch. 15. And in all the land were no women found so fair as the daughters of Job: and their father gave them inheritance among the brethren. 16. After this lived Job a hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, even four generations. 17. So Job died, being old and full of days.

10. *The Lord turned the captivity of Job.*—This is a proverbial expression, equivalent to 'restored him to prosperity.' This was done after he had 'prayed for his friends,' which implies his restoration to his patriarchal priestly functions, which had been interrupted during the period of his affliction (v. 8). After this public manifestation of God's returning favor to him in spiritual things, he is also blessed by a gradual return of his worldly prosperity, so that ultimately 'God had given him *twice* as much as he had before' (cf. 1: 3, with 42: 12). We need not suppose that this enumeration is exact, but the general import is, that 'God rendered unto him double' for all his losses.

11. *Then came there unto him all his brethren, etc.*—These seem to have stood aloof from him during his period of trial; and he complains bitterly of their desertion (19: 13-19). Thus it is that returning prosperity brings back forgetful friends. The neglect of his sisters is so unwomanly, that we must conclude that they shared in the mistaken opinion of Eliphaz the Temanite and the other friends of Job, that God was punishing him for some grievous crimes. *An ear-ring of gold.*—Rather a 'ring,' or 'vessel' of gold. This was one of the early forms of money. Their returning sympathy thus assumes a practical shape.

13. Although the number of his flocks and herds was doubled, only the same number of children as before, are

given to him. This leads us to infer that his former wife had died, and that these were the children of a second marriage; for as she had borne him ten children before, it is not probable that these, also, were hers. And although Job twice alludes to his wife during the time of his suffering (chaps. 19: 17; 31: 10), which implies that she still survived, yet we can not but believe that along with the return of his prosperity in other respects, God may have favored him, also, with a more congenial mother for his children. That no mention is made of this change in his domestic relations is not surprising, for such is the manner of Scripture. For example, the names of his daughters are given, but not those of his sons. The supposition that he may have married another wife during the lifetime of the former, is quite improbable, as there is no allusion to polygamy in any part of the book.

14. These names are all significant. *Jemima*, day or dove; *Kezia*, Cassia, an aromatic plant; *Keren-happuch*, horn of plenty, or vessel of eye-paint, it being a common custom in the East for ladies to blacken the edge of the eyelid so as to give the eye a more large and lustrous appearance.

15. These peerless daughters, being princesses, and of distinguished beauty and wealth, must have been the admiration of the times, and a treasure to their father, more cherished than all his other possessions. In saying this, we charitably hope that they were as good as they were beautiful. That this was so, we have some evidence in the fact that their father so favored them that 'he gave them an inheritance among their brethren,' *i. e.*, made them equal with the sons in their share of his estate. This was unusual, if we are to judge from what we know of the customs of the East, or from Jewish usage subsequently introduced (cf. Num. 27: 8). Perhaps in those earlier and purer patriarchal times, the rights of women in this respect were more regarded than they have been under either Jewish or Christian law.

16. *After this Job lived an hundred and forty years.*—How long he had lived before we are not informed, but it was long enough to have grown up, and to have had ten children born to him. This was a longevity that would correspond with that of the time of Abraham, who lived one hundred and seventy-five years (Gen. 25: 7), and it confirms the opinion that Job lived about that period. It is not in accordance with the plan of this work to deduce lessons from Job's his-

tory considered as a whole, but in view of what has been before us, we may well exclaim with the Apostle James (5: 10, 11), 'Take, my brethren, the prophets who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. Behold we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy.' Let God's afflicted ones ever remember that 'whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth.' And yet, such chastisement is often a paternal discipline which we need. Job betrays a leaven of self-righteousness in his vindications of himself; and he needed to be humbled, as he was, when he exclaims (42: 5, 6), 'I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.' From this moment of deep humiliation begins the restoration of God's favor and of his former prosperity. Let us profit by the lesson.

NOTE.—One of the best commentaries on Job is that of the Rev. John Fry, of England. It contains a new translation, and many learned notes. It has not been republished in this country.

BOOK OF PSALMS.



To the devout soul no portion of the word of God is more precious than the book of Psalms, and none is so frequently read, after the New Testament. But as we find very few passages pertaining in any way to 'woman,' we need not make further introductory remark.

GOD OF THE INFANT.

Psalm XXII. 9, 10.

9. BUT thou art he that took me out of the womb :
Thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts.
10. I was cast upon thee from the womb :—
Thou art my God from my mother's belly.

9. *Thou art he who took me out, etc.,—i. e.,* who brought me alive into the world. Conception and birth are altogether from the Lord, and the new immortal existence which is begun should be recognized as from his hand. *Thou didst make me to hope,—i. e.,* didst keep me alive and in safety. How like a flickering taper is helpless infancy, and how vain is all a mother's care, to cherish the feeble life, unless God preserve it.

10. *I was cast upon thee, etc.*—Perhaps by pious parents who pled God's covenant promise to the 'seed' of his people, and perhaps also by his own early consecration of himself to the Lord. Though 'in sin did his mother conceive him' (51: 5), yet from his very birth he claims the Lord as 'his God.' The bloody rite of circumcision sealed to him his interest in God's covenant with Abraham.

So let the children of the saints
Be dedicate to God.

But as this is one of the Messianic psalms, the words may have an ultimate reference to him who is mentioned in v. 18, 'They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.' Even he, in his dying agonies, pleads his infant consecration to God as a present ground of trust, 'when there was none to help.' 'Thou hast been *my God* from my mother's belly,' and now, '*My God, my God*, why hast thou forsaken me?'

A MARRIAGE SONG.

Psalm XLV. 9-17.

9. KINGS' daughters were among thy honorable women :
Upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir.
10. Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear ;
Forget also thine own people, and thy father's house ;
11. So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty :
For he is thy Lord ; and worship thou him.
12. And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift ;
Even the rich among the people shall intreat thy favor.
13. The king's daughter is all glorious within :—her clothing is of
wrought gold.
14. She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework :
The virgins her companions that follow her—shall be brought
unto thee.
15. With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought :—
They shall enter into the king's palace.
16. Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children,—
Whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth.
17. I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations :
Therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever

This whole psalm carries with it the imagery of a joyous nuptial song, but its spiritual import is to be regarded as *primary*. The Song of Solomon is a more extended poem of the same lofty and spiritual import, the imagery only being drawn from the familiar accompaniments of marriage, while all low and earthly suggestions will be spurned by the devout reader who can enter into the spirit of its holy communings.

9. *Kings' daughters, etc.*—The scene presented is a royal court, where princesses are seen moving among the maids of honor attendant upon the queen, who, according to custom, is at the king's right hand, in her gorgeous array ; her outer robes all brilliant with 'gold of Ophir,' and her other garments 'all glorious within' (v. 13).

10, 11. Her father is represented as presenting her to the king, while he exhorts her to 'forget her own people and her

father's house,' and thus by her exclusive devotion to her royal husband, to win his reciprocal affection. The following words, 'for he is thy Lord, and worship thou him,' seem to combine the literal with the figurative meaning; and though they admit the lower reference to the homage which a queen owes to her 'lord' the king, yet they are obviously intended to leave upon our minds the grand spiritual idea which is, all through, shadowed forth; namely, that the 'king' here spoken of is he of whom it is said in v. 9, 'Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever,'—words which in Heb. 1: 8 are applied to the *Messiah*, and that the queen is the *Church*—composed of the whole body of God's redeemed people—which is 'the Bride, the Lamb's wife' (cf. Rev. 21: 9). A more detailed exposition of the passage is deemed unnecessary, as this whole subject will be more fully considered when we come to the Song of Solomon. Let us all seek to be incorporated, by an inward regeneration and a living faith, into that true spiritual church, which Christ will honor at last as his affianced bride: and so shall we be permitted to sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

DETACHED PASSAGES.

Psalm LXVIII. 11, 12.

11. THE Lord gave the word:—great was the company of those that published it.
 12. Kings of armies did flee apace:—and she that tarried at home divided the spoil.

11. *Company—published.*—(Hebrew, 'of female publishers.') Gesenius renders thus: 'Females announced the glad tidings to the mighty host.' The allusion is to the songs of triumph accompanied with timbrels and dances, which Jewish women were accustomed to sing on the return of a victorious army (cf. v. 25. Exod. 15: 20. 1 Sam. 18: 6, 7). The Psalmist is celebrating some great victory, the 'word' or report which the Lord had caused to be given to his people.

12. *Kings—did flee.*—(Cf. Num. 31: 8, 9.) *She that tarried, i. e.,* the women who remained behind, the singular being put collectively for the plural, as is common.

Psalm LXXVIII. 63, 64.

63. THE fire consumed their young men;—and their maidens were not given to marriage.

64. Their priests fell by the sword;—and their widows made no lamentation.

These verses occur in the midst of an enumeration of judgments which befel Israel because of their sins.

63. *The fire.*—This may be used figuratively for great slaughter, which destroyed them like a consuming fire. As a consequence of this, *their maidens were not given in marriage.* (Hebrew, 'were not praised,' *i. e.*, in nuptial songs. Cf. Isa. 13: 25; 4: 1, 2, and notes). According to Jewish notions this would be regarded as a much greater misfortune than it is with us.

64. *Their priests*, as in the case of Hophni and Phinehas (1 Sam. 4: 11). *Their widows made no lamentation* (cf. Job 27: 15). Perhaps this was because such husbands were not worthy of being wept for, or because they were forbidden to weep (cf. Ezek. 24: 16, 17, 23). These are pictures of utter national desolation, prophetic, perhaps, of the time of the captivity (v. 61).

Psalm LXXXVI. 16.

O TURN unto me, and have mercy upon me;

Give thy strength unto thy servant,—and save the son of thine handmaid.

Save the son of thine handmaid.—This psalm is entitled a 'Prayer of David;' and here, among the arguments with which he fills his mouth, is, that he is not only himself the Lord's servant, but the 'son of an handmaid,' born and brought up a servant in the Lord's house. It is only a more distant allusion to his pious mother than that which we found in Ps. 22: 10. What a vantage ground do the consecrated children of parents who have been in covenant with God occupy in their approaches to a throne of grace? Mothers! shall your children be able to encourage themselves thus in prayer?

Psalm CIX. 9.

LET his children be fatherless,—and his wife a widow.

His wife a widow.—This passage is applied to Judas, in Acts 1: 20, but probably only by way of accommodation, as

we have no evidence that Judas had a wife or children. It was a proverbial form of malediction against the wicked, implying a wish that they might be prematurely cut off and their families reduced to beggary. The imprecations in this and some other psalms are justly regarded not as expressing the personal desire of the Psalmist against his enemies, but as prophetic denunciations of God's wrath which should overtake them. This and the preceding verse are thus applied to Judas. The gospel requires us to 'love our enemies' and to 'pray for them that despitefully use us.'

Psalm CXIII. 9.

HE maketh the barren woman to keep house,—and to be a joyful
mother of children.
Praise ye the Lord.

The barren woman to keep house.—The meaning of the phrase 'keep house,' is conveyed in the parallel clause, 'to be a joyful mother of children.' We have often had occasion to notice the peculiar anxiety of Hebrew women for children, chiefly on account of the great Messianic promise; and how heavy a misfortune was barrenness. Hence the joy 'when a man-child was born into the world.' The ultimate reference of this passage is probably to the multiplication of converts in the Christian Church (cf. Isa. 54: 1. Gal. 4: 27).

Psalm CXXIII. 2.

BEHOLD, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters,
And as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress;
So our eyes wait upon the Lord our God,—until that he have mercy
upon us.

In Eastern countries servants were so trained, that they could know the will of the master or mistress from the motion of the hand or fingers. The maiden 'looked to the hand of her mistress,' not only for the necessary supply of food and raiment, but in a spirit of humble and dutiful obedience. 'So let our eyes ever wait upon the Lord our God.'

FAMILY BLESSINGS.

Psalm CXXVII. 3-5.

3. Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord:—and the fruit of the womb is his reward.
4. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man;—so are children of the youth.
5. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them :
They shall not be ashamed,—but they shall speak with [or, subdue] the enemies in the gate.

In regard to the sentiment so prominent in this and the next psalm, we may refer to the note above on Ps. 113: 9.

3. *Children are an heritage of the Lord.*—This is the doctrine everywhere taught in the Scriptures; and while the peculiar anxiety for children which we have noticed may be Jewish, it is also human, and the absence of it indicates low and sensual views of the marriage relation. And if the ‘fruit of the womb is God’s reward,’ we may readily infer how *horribly wicked* are the various methods of *virtual infanticide* which are said to be largely practiced even in civilized and Christian communities.

5. *They shall speak with their enemies in the gate.*—‘The gate,’ in Jewish phrase, is the place of judgment or public discourse. He who has his quiver full of such arrows as are here mentioned, has in his family of dutiful and well trained children, a defense in his old age against all the assaults of his enemies. Would that all children were thus dutiful.

Psalm CXXVIII. entire.

1. BLESSED is every one that feareth the Lord;—that walketh in his ways.
2. For thou shalt eat the labor of thine hands :
Happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee.
3. Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house :
Thy children like olive plants round about thy table.
4. Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the Lord.
5. The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion :
And thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life.
6. Yea, thou shalt see thy children’s children,—and peace upon Israel.

This beautiful psalm needs no elucidation. It is full of poetry, and of God’s blessing upon the families of Israel. Where else can be found on earth such personal and domestic happiness as the scene here pictured groups before us! But

it is only in families truly Christian, and where parents and children together 'fear the Lord and walk in his ways,' that the poetry becomes prose, and the picture a living reality. May all our families be thus blessed!

THE CHILD WEANED OF HIS MOTHER.

Psalm CXXXI. 2, 3.

2. SURELY I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother:

My soul is even as a weaned child.

3. Let Israel hope in the Lord—from henceforth and for ever.

Another beautiful family picture, but with a different lesson from that which we have just looked at. It is that of the 'child' of God, in circumstances which try his faith and spirit of submission. He is like the babe in process of weaning,—nestling down into the mother's bosom, in submission to her refusal of that which he so much desires, and in absolute dependence on her for all that he needs, and thus sobbing himself to sleep in that dear refuge! Thus let 'Israel hope in the Lord from henceforth and forever.' Mother! learn a lesson from your babe when God would *wean* you from your earthly joys.

BOOK OF PROVERBS.



WE have in this book a portion of the 'three thousand proverbs' which Solomon is said to have spoken (1 Kings 4: 32). This selection, at least as far as through chap. 24, was, no doubt, made by Solomon himself, and under a special divine guidance. The five subsequent chapters (25-29) contain a further selection, 'which the men of Hezekiah copied out' (25:1). The last two chapters (30, 31) are attributed to Agur and the mother of king Lemuel. The whole was incorporated into the Sacred Canon under the guidance of that Spirit of inspiration by which 'all Scripture was written' (2 Tim. 3: 16). The first nine chapters seem to be specially addressed to the young, particularly to young men, who are earnestly invited to listen to the words of heavenly wisdom, which is personified as a mother tenderly instructing her sons. The solemn and repeated warnings against the seductive arts of the 'strange woman,' are such as Christian mothers would do well to press upon the attention of their sons. The whole book is wonderfully rich in maxims of wisdom adapted to all times and all people.

THE VOICE OF WISDOM.

Proverbs I. 8, 9, 20-23.

8. MY son, hear the instruction of thy father,—and forsake not the law of thy mother :
9. For they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head,—and chains about thy neck.
20. WISDOM crieth without ;—she uttereth her voice in the streets :
21. She crieth in the chief place of concourse,
In the openings of the gates :—in the city she uttereth her words,
saying,

22. How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity?
And the scorners delight in their scorning,—and fools hate knowledge?
23. Turn you at my reproof:—behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you,
I will make known my words unto you.

8. *Forsake not the law of thy mother.*—Next to the ‘fear of the Lord which is the beginning of knowledge’ (v. 7), the young are exhorted to regard the instruction and authority of their parents. ‘Honor thy father and thy mother.’ This is ‘the ‘first commandment with promise,’ viz: ‘that thy days may be long,’ etc. It is especially worthy of notice that both in the law and in this and other proverbs, the mother is placed on a full equality with the father in her right to honor and obedience from her children. Indeed her authority is here the more distinctly recognized—the *law* of thy mother.’

“It is worthy of remark that no ancient system but that of the Bible recognizes the just and equal claims of the mother” (cf. 6: 20; 15: 20, etc.).—*Bridges*.

Let mothers endeavor so to train their children, that their word shall be law to them, and that love rather than fear may prompt to obedience.

9. *Ornament of grace, i. e., a graceful ornament.* *Chains, i. e., a necklace* (cf. Gen. 41: 42): Piety and filial duty are ornaments of character, more attractive than all outward adornments.

20-23. *Wisdom crieth without.*—This passage is quoted because of the honor it does to woman by personifying wisdom as a female; a figure which is retained in the subsequent chapters. Wisdom, in the Bible, is but another name for *true religion*. It is sometimes applied to Christ himself, but by an intermingling of the literal and the figurative which is quite common in the Scriptures; *e. g.*, v. 23, ‘I will pour out my Spirit unto you’ (cf. chap. 8: 23, etc.). Let the unconverted reader most solemnly ponder the remaining verses of this chapter. The ‘fools’ of v. 22, and many other passages, are those who reject wisdom. ‘Folly,’ in the Bible, is irreligion and wickedness; there being no other folly like this.

WISDOM AGAINST THE 'STRANGE WOMAN.'

Proverbs II. 10, 11, 16-19.

10. WHEN wisdom entereth into thine heart,—and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul ;
11. Discretion shall preserve thee,—understanding shall keep thee :
16. To deliver thee from the strange woman,
Even from the stranger which flattereth with her words ;
17. Which forsaketh the guide of her youth,—and forgetteth the covenant of her God.
18. For her house inclineth unto death,—and her paths unto the dead.
19. None that go unto her return again,—neither take they hold of the paths of life.

10. *Heart—pleasant.*—True religion must have its home in the heart, and become the chief pleasure of the soul. Then it becomes a defense against the 'evil man' (v. 13) and the 'strange woman,' and against all other temptations.

16. *The strange woman—the stranger.*—The latter word means 'foreigner,' and the former phrase was, no doubt, originally of the same import, because the class of persons here referred to were chiefly foreigners, or heathen, *e. g.*, the Moabites (Num. 25: 1). It is used, however, in this book as equivalent with harlot of whatever nation, and whether married or unmarried.

17. *The guide of her youth, i. e.*, her husband, to whom she was early married. *The covenant of her God.*—This refers, also, to the marriage covenant, which should ever be made solemnly as in the presence of God. It is a most pestiferous doctrine that marriage is a mere civil contract. It loosens and degrades the relation. Marriage is God's ordinance, and for the highest and holiest ends.

18. *Inclineth unto death.*—They who enter on this path seldom return from it. Disease and death to the body, and everlasting death to the soul, are its legitimate consequences.

19. *None—return, i. e.*, comparatively none. Let those who would escape these snares, and go in the 'paths of life,' hearken to God's gracious words: 'Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth' (Jer. 3: 4).

FURTHER WARNINGS.

Proverbs V. 3-21

3. FOR the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb,
And her mouth is smoother than oil:
4. But her end is bitter as wormwood,—sharp as a two-edged sword.
5. Her feet go down to death;—her steps take hold on hell
6. Lest thou shouldest ponder the path of life,
Her ways are movable, that thou canst not know them.
7. Hear me now therefore, O ye children,—and depart not from the
words of my mouth.
8. Remove thy way far from her,—and come not nigh the door of
her house:
9. Lest thou give thine honor unto others,—and thy years unto the
cruel:
10. Lest strangers be filled with thy wealth;—and thy labors be in the
house of a stranger;
11. And thou mourn at the last,—when thy flesh and thy body are
consumed,
12. And say, How have I hated instruction,—and my heart despised
reproof;
13. And have not obeyed the voice of my teachers,
Nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me!
14. I was almost in all evil—in the midst of the congregation and as-
sembly.
15. Drink waters out of thine own cistern,—and running waters out
of thine own well.
16. Let thy fountains be dispersed abroad,—and rivers of waters in
the streets.
17. Let them be only thine own,—and not strangers' with thee.
18. Let thy fountain be blessed:—and rejoice with the wife of thy
youth.
19. Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe;
Let her breasts satisfy thee at all times;—and be ravished always
with her love.
20. And why wilt thou, my son, be ravished with a strange woman,
And embrace the bosom of a stranger?
21. For the ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord,—and he
pondereth all his goings.

3. *Her lips—mouth, i. e.,* her words are wily and deceitful.

4. *Her end,* or, 'her future.' O that those who are tempt-
ed might think of that future which is 'bitter as wormwood.'

6. *Her ways are movable, i. e.,* she is fertile in devices to
hinder thee from 'pondering the path of life,' while she con-
ceals her ends 'so that thou canst not know them.'

8. *Nigh the door, i. e.,* keep as far as possible out of the
way of temptation; shun the impure novel, the lascivious
dance, the theater, etc.

9-13. How true a picture of the impoverished, diseased, despairing, and dying libertine!

14. *I was almost in all evil, etc.*—‘I was made a public spectacle of misery for all men to gaze at, and almost utterly ruined.’—*Assembly’s Annotations*. The impure are apt to be in the midst of all evil.

15. *Drink waters, etc.*—All these figurative counsels are plainly designed to recommend a pure wife and home enjoyments as a great safeguard against the temptations here spoken of. It is not necessary to press the interpretation of such figures to their minutest details. *Fountains*, in v. 16, are commonly supposed to refer to children, known to be legitimate—‘only thine own,’—and *rivers* to the number of them (cf. Ps. 127: 5). Instead of, ‘Let them be,’ etc., we may render, ‘So shall they be.’

18. *Rejoice with the wife of thy youth.*—Here is an instance of the transition from the figurative to the literal, which so frequently occurs (cf. note on 1: 23).

19. *Hind—roe.*—These and similar comparisons of females to favorite animals are in perfect accordance with oriental taste (cf. Song 1: 9, 15, and note). *Ravished.*—Hebrew, ‘err,’ or ‘be intoxicated.’ Indulge thyself, but not with sensual excess.

21. Let it ever be remembered, whether in the midst of our joys or in moments of temptation, ‘that the ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord,’ that ‘He pondereth our ways,’ and ‘for all these things he will bring us into judgment.’

STILL FURTHER WARNINGS.

Proverbs VI. 20-35.

20. MY son, keep thy father’s commandment,—and forsake not the law of thy mother;
21. Bind them continually upon thine heart,—and tie them about thy neck.
22. When thou goest, it shall lead thee:—when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee;
And when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee.
23. For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light;
And reproofs of instruction are the way of life:
24. To keep thee from the evil woman,—from the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman.
25. Lust not after her beauty in thine heart:—neither let her take thee with her eyelids.

26. For by means of a whorish woman a man is brought to a piece of bread:

And the adulteress will hunt for the precious life.

27. Can a man take fire in his bosom,—and his clothes not be burned?

28. Can one go upon hot coals,—and his feet not be burned?

29. So he that goeth in to his neighbor's wife;—whosoever toucheth her shall not be innocent.

30. Men do not despise a thief,—if he steal to satisfy his soul when he is hungry;

31. But if he be found, he shall restore sevenfold;—he shall give all the substance of his house.

32. But whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding:

He that doeth it destroyeth his own soul.

33. A wound and dishonor shall he get;—and his reproach shall not be wiped away.

34. For jealousy is the rage of a man:—therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance.

35. He will not regard any ransom:—neither will he rest content, though thou givest many gifts.

20. A disregard for parental counsels or authority is an open door to all evil.

21. *Bind them continually, etc.*,—as a cherished keepsake. *Tie them about thy neck*—as an ornamental chain (cf. 1: 9).

22. *When thou sleepest, it (i. e., this parental counsel—especially this 'law of thy mother') shall keep thee*—shall even purify thy dreams. *It shall talk with thee*—speaking with silent voice of admonition.

25. *Her eyelids*—which females were accustomed to paint in order to enhance their beauty (cf. 2 Kings 9: 30. Job 42: 14, and note).

34. *He, i. e., the enraged husband.*

MERETRICIOUS ARTS.

Proverbs VII.

1. MY son, keep my words,—and lay up my commandments with thee.

2. Keep my commandments, and live;—and my law as the apple of thine eye.

3. Bind them upon thy fingers,—write them upon the table of thine heart.

4. Say unto wisdom, Thou art my sister;—and call understanding thy kinswoman;

5. That they may keep thee from the strange woman,
From the stranger which flattereth with her words.

6. For at the window of my house I looked through my casement,

7. And beheld among the simple ones,
I discerned among the youths, a young man void of understanding,
8. Passing through the street near the corner;—and he went the way
to her house,
9. In the twilight, in the evening,—in the black and dark night :
10. And, behold, there met him a woman—with the attire of an harlot,
and subtle of heart.
11. (She is loud and stubborn;—her feet abide not in her house :
12. Now is she without, now in the streets, and lieth in wait at every
corner.)
13. So she caught him, and kissed him,—and with an impudent face
said unto him,
14. I have peace offerings with me;—this day have I paid my vows.
15. Therefore came I forth to meet thee,—diligently to seek thy face,
and I have found thee.
16. I have decked my bed with coverings of tapestry,—with carved
works, with fine linen of Egypt.
17. I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon.
18. Come, let us take our fill of love until the morning:—let us solace
ourselves with loves.
19. For the goodman is not at home,—he is gone a long journey :
20. He hath taken a bag of money with him,—and will come home
at the day appointed.
21. With her much fair speech she caused him to yield,
With the flattering of her lips she forced him.
22. He goeth after her straightway,—as an ox goeth to the slaughter,
Or as a fool to the correction of the stocks;
23. Till a dart strike through his liver:—as a bird hasteth to the snare,
And knoweth not that it is for his life.
24. Hearken unto me now therefore, O ye children,—and attend to
the words of my mouth.
25. Let not thine heart decline to her ways,—go not astray in her
paths.
26. For she hath cast down many wounded:—yea, many strong men
have been slain by her.
27. Her house is the way to hell,—going down to the chambers of
death.

1-4. All these forms of expression imply the most careful cherishing of the instructions of wisdom—such as are found in the Bible.

2. *The apple of thine eye.*—The pupil of the eye is more sensitive and more carefully guarded than any other part of the body.

3. *Upon thy fingers*—as if engraved on a ring.

4. *Thou art my sister.*—Besides the figurative meaning, which recommends that wisdom be made an intimate and pleasant companion, like a sister or near kinswoman—the thought is also suggested, that the young man may find one of his best safeguards against these dangerous allurements in

the society of his sisters, cousins, or other virtuous females. Sisters! consider this, and make your society attractive to your brothers, as well as to other young gentlemen.

9. *In the twilight—evening—dark night.*—Perhaps at these different hours at different times.

11. *Loud and stubborn.*—A shrew at home, but putting on all her blandishments when abroad.

14. *I have peace offerings.*—This probably means, 'I have a feast prepared for thee,' as the Jews feasted off the remains of their sacrifices (Lev. 7: 16, etc.). It may seem strange that such shameless effrontery should be connected in any way with religious observances; but it is said that in Italy, among the most punctilious observers of the outward ceremonies of the church, are harlots and banditti. Phariseeism and ritualism require neither piety nor purity of heart.

15. *Came I forth to meet thee.*—She pretends that her preparations are all for him.

19. *The goodman.*—An old English word for husband. It is probable that this class of women were more apt to be faithless wives than unmarried girls, who were more secluded and less exposed to temptation in those days.

22. *He goeth after her*—stupidly as the ox, or the fool, 'knowing not that it is for his life.' Such is the desperate infatuation induced by this sin.

24. *Hearken unto me therefore.*—Thus pressing and earnest again are the entreaties of wisdom to those who are exposed to this sort of temptation. O that they might hearken, before they enter upon that course which is 'the way to hell, leading down to the chambers of death!' Let the reader ponder, in this connection, the opposing invitations of wisdom, who also sitteth like a woman 'at the gates,' etc.,—occupying the same places where the strange woman was apt to be found (read chap. 8 throughout). These golden sayings have the more emphasis when we read them as intended to be in contrast with those of the former chapter.

THE FOOLISH WOMAN.

Proverbs IX. 13-18.

13. A FOOLISH woman is clamorous:—she is simple, and knoweth nothing.
14. For she sitteth at the door of her house,—on a seat in the high places of the city,

15. To call passengers who go right on their ways :
 16. Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither :
 And as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him,
 17. Stolen waters are sweet,—and bread eaten in secret is pleasant.
 18. But he knoweth not that the dead are there ;—and that her guests
 are in the depths of hell.

The first twelve verses of this chapter are in continuation of the invitations of Wisdom, in opposition to those of the syren Pleasure. She also has prepared her feast, and sends her maidens forth, saying, 'Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither' (vs. 2-4). It would almost seem that Socrates must have had these chapters before him when he represents Virtue and Vice as two females, each trying her allurements upon the listening Hercules (Xenophon's Mem. B. II. 1).

13. *The foolish woman* here is but another name for the 'strange woman.' Foolish is used here in the Scripture sense of wicked (cf. 1: 22, and note). *She knoweth nothing, i. e., nothing good.*

14. *She sitteth—in the high places of the city, i. e.,* in the most public places of resort, just as Wisdom does, and with the same cry, 'Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither' (cf. v. 16, and 3: 4).

17. *Stolen waters are sweet.*—How true to human nature is this! So perverse is man that forbidden things are sweeter because forbidden. We see it in children. The scholar will recall the familiar *Nitimur in vetitum semper, cupimusque negata.*

18. But how solemn again is the warning 'He knoweth not that the dead are there, and that her guests are in the depths of hell.' 'O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end' (Deut. 32: 29)!

SUNDRY PROVERBS PERTAINING CHIEFLY TO WOMAN AS A WIFE.

Proverbs X. 1.

THE Proverbs of Solomon.

A wise son maketh a glad father:—but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother.

1. *The proverbs of Solomon.*—Here commences the second part of the book, which extends to 22: 16. It consists of brief antithetic aphorisms, the two clauses of each verse being parallel to each other, and on this account the more easily remembered. The *wise son* here, of the former clause,

is opposed to the foolish son of the latter; the words wise and foolish being both used in the Scripture sense—the one as equivalent to pious, virtuous, good—and the other to ungodly, vicious, etc. The ‘father and mother’ of the two clauses, however, are not opposed, but only parallel; each parent being alike interested in the gladness or the heaviness produced by the conduct of their children. Let every child commit this verse to memory, after the parent has explained it (cf. also chaps. 15: 20; 17: 25; 29: 15)

Proverbs XI. 16, 22.

16. A GRACIOUS woman retaineth honor:—and strong men retain riches.
 22. As a jewel of gold in a swine’s snout,—so is a fair woman which is without discretion.

16. Scott says: “A pious and discreet woman is as careful of her chastity and reputation, as any worldly men are of their riches; and she will acquire and preserve the esteem and affection of her husband and of all around her, when old age has effaced her beauty; even as strong men keep possession of the wealth which they have once obtained.”

22. Oriental women wore nose-jewels; and beauty without virtuous discretion in a woman, is as incongruous as such a ‘jewel in a swine’s snout.’ It is admitted that beauty is a ‘jewel of gold,’ for it is the gift of God, and discretion is the sparkling gem which should be set in it; but alas! to what vile purposes is it often degraded.

Proverbs XII. 4.

A VIRTUOUS woman is a crown to her husband;
 But she that maketh ashamed is as rottenness in his bones

A *virtuous woman*—in all the extensive meaning of the term—woman as she ought to be—such as was Ruth (chap. 3: 11), and such as she whose character is more fully drawn in chap. 31. Such a wife is a *crown to her husband*—his highest ornament and honor—making him ‘happy as a king.’ While she who is of an opposite character, and ‘maketh him ashamed,’ is a source of pain and distress to him like *rottenness in his very bones!* What greater contrast could be imagined! Piety, prudence, good sense, and pure affection are essential elements in such a character.

Proverbs XIV. 1.

EVERY wise woman buildeth her house:—but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands.

The *wise woman*, here, does not differ from the 'virtuous woman' above. *Her house* is put for her family. She is the architect of her husband's prosperity, and she trains up her children in the right way. The *foolish* wife, who is improvident, extravagant, or vicious, frustrates all her husband's endeavors, and ruins her children. "Of how little account," says Bridges, "are birth, fortune, external accomplishments, compared with godly *wisdom*?" And how apt the proverb, 'A fortune *in* a wife is better than a fortune *with* a wife.'

Proverbs XVIII. 22.

WHOSO findeth a wife findeth a good thing,—and obtaineth favor of the Lord.

Compare with this chap. 19: 14, 'A prudent wife is from the Lord.' The *wife* here spoken of is of course such a one as is described in the preceding passages—a good wife,—as is implied in the words, 'findeth a good thing.' The finding implies diligent search, as for a hidden treasure (cf. 31: 10: 'Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies'). In no process of search does a man so much need the guidance of Divine Providence; for such a gift is 'from the Lord,' and a mistake here may be a source of life-long unhappiness. They, of either sex, who contemplate marriage should guard against the impulses of mere passion or fancy, and should make the matter a subject of earnest prayer.—It is not too much to say that all that is affirmed in this book in regard to the good wife, is also true in regard to the good husband.

SUNDRY PROVERBS.

Proverbs XIX. 13, 14, 26

13. A FOOLISH son is the calamity of his father:
And the contentions of a wife are a continual dropping.
14. House and riches are the inheritance of fathers:—and a prudent wife is from the Lord.
26. He that wasteth his father, and chaseth away his mother,
Is a son that causeth shame, and bringeth reproach.

13. *A foolish son*—and *the contentions of a wife*—are the evils here characterized, the one as 'the calamity of his fa-

father,' and the other as 'a continual dropping.' Unhappy man indeed is he who has both these calamities dropping upon him at once. The 'foolish son' here is the opposite of the 'wise son' of chap. 10: 1, etc. (see note). The 'continual dropping' is explained by chap. 27: 15, where the dropping of the rain through a leaky roof 'in a very rainy day' is the thing referred to. The clay roofs of the humbler sort of oriental houses were very liable to this defect, which well illustrates the extreme annoyance occasioned by the 'contentions of a (scolding) wife.'

14. As a happy contrast to such a wife, we are here referred to the 'prudent wife' who is from the Lord, and who, as a divine gift, is contrasted with a 'house and riches' which may be 'an inheritance of (from) fathers' (cf. 18: 22).

26. *Chaseth away his mother.*—This he may do indirectly, by making her home so uncomfortable as to constrain her to leave it; or directly, by driving her from his doors, in order to escape her unwelcome remonstrances, or the burden of her support. Such monsters are sometimes found.

Proverbs XX. 16, 20

16. TAKE his garment that is surety for a stranger:

And take a pledge of him for a strange woman. —

20. Whoso curseth his father or his mother,—his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness.

16. Garments were taken in pledge for the payment of debts (Exod. 22: 26). Trust not, without security in hand, one who is so improvident as to become 'surety for a stranger;' and more especially if that stranger be a 'strange woman.' Licentiousness is the high road to ruin; as the history of many a defaulting clerk is witness. This verse is repeated in chap. 27: 13.

20. *Whoso curseth, etc.*—All filial undutifulness, whether toward father or mother, is severely denounced in the word of God. By the Jewish law, the cursing of either parent was punishable with death (Lev. 20: 9). The 'making light of' and 'despising' of parents, is elsewhere denounced: but the cursing of them is the climax of wickedness. He must be a monster indeed who can *curse his mother!* To put out the lamp (or candle) in obscure darkness, is a proverbial phrase of frequent occurrence, and is an image of utter desolation (cf. Job 18: 5, 6, and chaps. 13: 9; 24: 20). It is God's dark frown in this life, and 'blackness of darkness forever.'

Proverbs XXI. 9, 19.

9. It is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop,
Than with a brawling woman in a wide house.
19. It is better to dwell in the wilderness,—than with a contentious
and an angry woman.

9. *A brawling woman* (Hebrew, 'a woman of contentions,') the same as the one spoken of in chap. 19: 13. In v. 19 she is a 'contentious and angry woman.' This seems to be a character against which Solomon has a special antipathy (cf. chaps. 25: 24; 27: 15). He had, no doubt, much experience of such among his multitude of 'strange wives' in the days of his folly. And yet these are the expressions of God's displeasure against the woman who so far forgets her native female gentleness and her duty as an helpmeet to her husband as to become a noisy and contentious brawler, pursuing him from room to room of 'a wide house,' with the scourges of her tongue until he is ready even to 'dwell in a corner of the house-top,' in garret, cellar, or any where, or even 'in the wilderness,' rather than endure the annoyance. It is a happy thing that such wives are rare; that there are any such is owing, no doubt, in most cases, to unkindness, intemperance, tyrannical exactions, or similar faults, on the part of husbands. What a contrast between such a woman and the wise, virtuous, loving, and prudent wife, who is 'a crown of glory' to her husband. Let husbands and wives learn their duty toward each other, not only from these Old Testament teachings, but from that gospel view of marriage which makes it a symbol of the union between Christ and the church. Read and ponder Eph. 5: 22-33 (cf. Col. 3: 18, 19. 1 Peter 3: 1-7).

Proverbs XXII. 14.

THE mouth of strange women is a deep pit:
He that is abhorred of the Lord shall fall therein.

(Cf. 23: 27, 'a deep ditch,' a 'narrow pit'). *The mouth, i. e.*, the 'flattering words,' and 'lips that drop as an honey-comb' (2: 16; 5: 3, etc.). The 'ditch' and 'pit' are such as were dry and covered over for the purpose of catching wild beasts, and from which there was no escape (cf. 2: 19).

FILIAL DUTIFULNESS A SAFEGUARD.

Proverbs XXIII. 22-28

22. HEARKEN unto thy father that begat thee—and despise not thy mother when she is old.
23. Buy the truth, and sell it not;—also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding.
24. The father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice:
And he that begetteth a wise child shall have joy of him.
25. Thy father and thy mother shall be glad,—and she that bare thee shall rejoice.
26. My son, give me thine heart,—and let thine eyes observe my ways.
27. For a whore is a deep ditch;—and a strange woman is a narrow pit.
28. She also lieth in wait as for a prey,—and increaseth the transgressors among men.

22. What picture is more beautiful than that of an aged and venerable father and mother surrounded by loving and dutiful children; and how lost must that son or daughter be who can despise such parents, especially such a 'mother when she is old!'

23-25. None but parents who have been so blessed, can know the joy of seeing their children 'righteous' and 'wise.' Such are they who 'buy the truth and sell it not;' a 'merchandise which is better than silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold' (3: 14).

26. *My son, give me thine heart.*—In order that the youth may be such a source of joy to his parents, Wisdom here presses her claims upon his 'heart' and 'eyes,' *i. e.*, his cordial approval and practical obedience. True piety in heart and life is implied in this; and she goes on to urge his compliance with her invitation, on the ground that her friendship is his best safeguard against the lures of that syren who holds out to him in one hand the cup of sensuality, and in the other that of intemperance (vs 28, 33, and 29-32). O that the young would hearken!

PROVERBS REPEATED, WITH ADDITIONS.

CHAPTERS 25 and 29 contain an additional collection of proverbs which 'the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied out' (v. 1). These men may have been scribes employed under the supervision of the prophets Isaiah, Hosea, and Micah, who lived in the time of Hezekiah, and would be his

most hearty supporters in the great religious reformation which was wrought in his day. The multiplying of copies of the word of God, so far as then written, would be among the means of this reform (cf. 1 Chron. 31 : 21). These proverbs were copied out, probably from an uninspired collection of the three thousand which Solomon had spoken; he himself having copied and arranged those in the preceding chapters. The collection being thus the work of different hands, may account for the repetitions which we find in this part.

Proverbs XXV. 24.

24. IT is better to dwell in the corner of the house-top,
Than with a brawling woman and in a wide house.

See note on chap. 21 : 9, 19.

Proverbs XXVII. 13.

13. TAKE his garment that is surety for a stranger,—and take a pledge
of him for a strange woman.

See note on chap. 20 : 16.

Proverbs XXVII. 15, 16.

15. A CONTINUAL dropping in a very rainy day and a contentious wo-
man are alike.
16. Whosoever hideth her hideth the wind,
And the ointment of his right hand, which bewrayeth itself.

See notes on chap 19 : 13, and 21 : 9, 19.

15. *A very rainy day*, and v. 16 are here added to the former notices of this character. Her contentions are not only a 'continual dropping,' uninterrupted by any gleams of sunshine, but they are a 'heavy rain' that falls all day long, and when the 'goodman' can not be abroad. The heavy rain from without that wets the flesh, and the heavier rain from within that penetrates to the very soul, are alike, in the annoyance they occasion, and the impossibility of escape from them.

16. *Whosoever hideth her*, i. e., attempts to restrain her, or, rather, tries to cover up from the knowledge of his neighbors such domestic disgrace, might as well blow against the wind, or attempt to hide the evidences of its blowing. She is 'loud and stubborn,' and has no regard for appearances. *The ointment of his right hand bewrayeth* (Hebrew, 'calleteth,' or 'proclaimeth'). With the present rendering it means that she

can no more be restrained than perfume on the right hand can be kept from diffusing its odor. Some prefer, 'she is slippery as oil.' The meaning however is uncertain. Husbands of the like spirit are also sometimes found, whose perpetual fault-finding is a 'continual dropping' upon wife and children. Alas! for poor human nature! Such people are not wanting even among professing Christians. As a preventive of so sad a marring of domestic happiness, let the marriage relation be entered upon in the fear of God and with prayer for divine direction; and let both husbands and wives cherish their first mutual love, be patient and silent toward each other's infirmities, and dwell together as heirs of the grace of life.

Proverbs XXVIII. 24.

WHOSO robbeth his father or his mother, and saith, It is no transgression;
The same is a companion of a destroyer.

(Cf. Matt. 15: 4-6, and note). Parents may be robbed not only by direct theft, but by involving them in unnecessary expense, or by idleness which robs them of the service which is due. To rob a father is bad enough, but to rob a 'mother' adds meanness to dishonesty; and then to justify it by saying, 'It is no transgression;' 'what is theirs is mine,' etc., is the height of impudence. Such a son is ready for violence and murder, 'the companion of a destroyer.' Micah robbed his mother (Judges 17: 1, 2), and the prodigal son robbed his parents by prematurely demanding his share of the estate, and by depriving them of his services (Luke 15: 11, etc.).

Proverbs XXIX. 15.

THE rod and reproof give wisdom:—but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.

The rod and reproof.—(Cf. chaps. 13: 24; 19: 18; 23: 13, etc.). Solomon's repeated recommendations of the use of the rod show what was his deliberate opinion on the subject; and his language is of divine inspiration. It is, of course, only a *proper* use of the rod that is intended, such as a pious, prudent, and loving parent would employ. Even our Heavenly Father 'chasteneth whom he loveth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth' (Heb. 12: 6). Modern sentimentalism thinks it has grown wiser than Solomon. Even 'reproof' must be laid aside for weak persuasions. How many chil-

dren who are thus 'left to themselves' bring their mothers to shame. The 'mother' is mentioned rather than the father, because the proper use of the rod is during that *early* childhood when the training is chiefly in the mother's hands, and because her natural tenderness disposes her to undue indulgence. Fathers, however, are exhorted not to 'provoke their children to wrath,' as may be done by undue severity. The 'rod and reproof' (including proper counsel), prudently administered, and accompanied with prayer for God's blessing, tend to give wisdom; while the foolish son who has been allowed to have his own way, is both a heaviness and a shame to his mother (cf. 10: 1, and note).

THE WORDS OF AGUR.

THE last two chapters of Proverbs are a sort of appendix. Chapter 30 consists of certain 'words of Agur,' who was probably an ancient sage, and had written instructions for his sons or pupils, Ithiel and Ucal. Chapter 31 contains the 'words of king Lemuel.' Each of these is called a prophecy, which means any instruction divinely inspired. Agur is chiefly known to us by his wonderfully wise prayer, 'give me neither poverty nor riches,' etc. (vs. 7-9). There is also a peculiar sort of parallelism in his poetry (cf. vs. 11-14; 15, 16; 18, 19; 21-23; 24-28; 29-31).

Proverbs XXX. 17 (cf. Deut. XXI. 18-21).

THE eye that mocketh at his father,—and despiseth to obey his mother,
The ravens of the valley shall pick it out,—and the young eagles shall eat it.

The eye that mocketh, i. e., of him that mocketh. This is an extreme statement of the terrible end to which the undutiful son is sometimes brought in the righteous retributions of God's providence. He shall come to an untimely end and be left unburied to be eaten by birds and beasts of prey (cf. 1 Sam. 17: 44. 2 Sam. 21: 10). The very eye which expresses his scornful contempt shall be picked out by the ravens. Let the young hear and take warning. In each of these parallels the first two or three particulars are illustrative of the last.

Proverbs XXX. 18-20.

18. THERE be three things which are too wonderful for me,—yea, four which I know not:
19. The way of an eagle in the air;—the way of a serpent upon a rock; The way of a ship in the midst of the sea;—and the way of a man with a maid.
20. Such is the way of an adulterous woman; She eateth, and wipeth her mouth,—and saith, I have done no wickedness.
21. For three things the earth is disquieted,—and for four which it can not bear:
22. For a servant when he reigneth;—and a fool when he is filled with meat;
23. For an odious woman when she is married;—and an handmaid that is heir to her mistress.

The eagle, the serpent, and the ship, each *leave no trace* behind, and so is the way of the seducer and the adulterous woman. The one makes his approaches insidiously, concealing his aim until his hapless victim has fallen; the other conceals her crime, and wipes her mouth in hypocritical pretense of innocence.

21-23. These are four intolerable things, the last two being the most odious of all. *Filled with meat* denotes the wealth and worldly prosperity to which the worthless sometimes attain. *The odious woman, i. e.,* one who has concealed her hateful disposition under fair appearances until 'she is married,' and then turns out to be such a shrew as the brawling and contentious woman so often referred to in the preceding chapters. *The handmaid that is heir to her mistress* may be such an one as Hagar, who attempted to supplant her mistress in the affections of her husband, and thus brought about great family trouble (Gen. 16: 1-9). Each of these instances is that of a person exalted to a position altogether above that for which he or she is fitted by education or character. Such incongruous elevations always bring about mischief. 'Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not' (Jer. 45: 5). But 'covet earnestly the best gifts' (1 Cor. 12: 31).

THE COUNSELS OF KING LEMUEL'S MOTHER.

Proverbs XXXI. 1-3

1. THE words of king Lemuel,—the prophecy that his mother taught him.
2. What, my son?—and what, the son of my womb?—and what, the son of my vows?
3. Give not thy strength unto women,—nor thy ways to that which destroyeth kings.

1. *The words of king Lemuel.*—We know no more of Lemuel than of Agur. Some suppose, but without reason, that both are names given to Solomon. *The prophecy that his mother taught him.*—It was the inspired counsel of a queen mother to her royal son.

2. *The son of my vows*, or 'prayers'—given perhaps, like Samuel, in answer to the prayers of Hannah (1 Sam. 1: 11, 27). She was a pious mother.

3. *Give not thy strength, etc.*—She gives him three distinct counsels, of which this is the first. Its import is sufficiently obvious. If Lemuel was Solomon, he must have sadly disregarded his mother's counsels in this particular.

She continues, in vs. 4-7, to warn him against indulgence in wine and strong drink; and in vs. 8, 9, she enjoins clemency and justice. Would that all kings and rulers had such mothers, and would regard their counsels. The mother of Washington was such a mother, and he was such a son.

THE MODEL WOMAN.

Proverbs XXXI. 10-31.

10. WHO can find a virtuous woman?—for her price is far above rubies.
11. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her,—so that he shall have no need of spoil.
12. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life.
13. She seeketh wool, and flax,—and worketh willingly with her hands.
14. She is like the merchants' ships;—she bringeth her food from afar.
15. She riseth also while it is yet night,
And giveth meat to her household,—and a portion to her maidens.
16. She considereth a field, and buyeth it:—with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard.
17. She girdeth her loins with strength,—and strengtheneth her arms.
18. She perceiveth that her merchandise is good.—her candle goeth not out by night.

19. She layeth her hands to the spindle,—and her hands hold the distaff.
20. She stretcheth out her hand to the poor:—yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy.
21. She is not afraid of the snow for her household:
For all her household are clothed with scarlet [or, double garments].
22. She maketh herself coverings of tapestry;—her clothing is silk and purple.
23. Her husband is known in the gates,—when he sitteth among the elders of the land.
24. She maketh fine linen, and selleth it:—and delivereth girdles unto the merchant.
25. Strength and honor are her clothing;—and she shall rejoice in time to come.
26. She openeth her mouth with wisdom;—and in her tongue is the law of kindness.
27. She looketh well to the ways of her household,—and eateth not the bread of idleness.
28. Her children arise up, and call her blessed;—her husband also, and he praiseth her.
29. Many daughters have done virtuously,—but thou excellest them all.
30. Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain:
But a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised.
31. Give her of the fruit of her hands;—and let her own works praise her in the gates.

This admirable passage may be regarded as the portraiture which Lemuel's mother gave him of the wife she would have him choose. In the Hebrew each verse commences with a successive letter of the alphabet; a device to assist the memory.

10. *Who can find, etc.*—Implying that such a treasure is hard to be found. Such a wife is 'from the Lord' (cf. 18: 22; 19: 14). Many a husband, however, has had occasion to be thankful that he has found this 'favor of the Lord,' and can testify that 'her price is far above rubies.' She is a *diamond*; and the mines in which such jewels sparkle, are not so rare under the blessed influence of the gospel, as they were in Solomon's day (cf. Eccl. 7: 28, and note).

11. *The heart of her husband, etc.*—She has not disappointed his expectations—as is but too often the case after marriage—but the jewel is the brighter for the wear. His heart trusts in her, wholly and safely. She needs no jealous espionage. His property, children, and reputation, are all safe in her hands. *No need of spoil.*—With her wise

coöperation his worldly affairs prosper, so that he has no need of unjust gain, or to seek the spoils of war.

12. *Good and not evil.*—She is an unmingled blessing; better than Eve, or Sarah, or Rebekah, or Job's wife, who did their husbands harm. And such a blessing is she to him 'all the days of her life'—and how deep are his sorrows for her when she is gone! *Haud inexpertus!*

13. Her general character has been given in the preceding verses. Here begins a more detailed account of her doings. They are such employments as were common among ladies even of the highest rank in those days. *Worketh willingly.*—She is no domestic drudge. Her nimble hands are set in motion by a cheerful heart.

14. *Bringeth her food from afar.*—She is able to purchase whatever foreign luxuries may be needed; and this too out of the earnings of her own industry (v. 24).

15. *While it is yet night, i. e.,* before day, as is more common in oriental countries than with us. She is up before her servants, in order to give them their meat (food), and assign them their portions, or tasks of labor.

16. She even conducts some business on her own account; so safely does her husband trust her (cf. Abigail, 1 Sam. 25: 18, 19; and the Shunamite, 2 Kings 4: 8–10, 22; 8: 1–6, and notes). The position of the Jewish wife was far more elevated, and more cognizant of the rights of women, than we find in Eastern and Pagan countries, whether in ancient or modern times. There was something like it in the days of Homer. But it is Christianity alone that can secure for woman her true position.

17. *She girdeth her loins, etc.*—To 'gird up the loins' is a phrase of frequent occurrence, and alludes to the ancient custom of wearing loose garments, which needed to be girded up in order that the wearer might be unobstructed for work or travel. It seems to be used here in its figurative sense, of engaging vigorously in any undertaking. She uses her bodily strength industriously, and invigorates it by the exercise. How different from the lazy daughters of ease and luxury, who think themselves degraded by work.

18. *She perceiveth* (Hebrew, 'tasteth').—She is careful to purchase good articles, and to see that her own manufactures are such. *Her candle—by night.*—The cool of the evening as well as of the morning (v. 15) is employed in useful

industry, rather than in receiving company, or in seeking fashionable amusements.

19. *The spindle—the distaff.*—Such were the employments of ladies of the highest rank. They thus wrought in the midst of their maidens. The ancient Greek and Roman poets often allude to such ladies and their domestic employments; and history shows us that these poetic pictures were not all poetry. The ‘virtuous Lucretia,’ so celebrated in Roman story, is a signal instance in point. She was found spinning at night, surrounded by her maidens.

20. *To the poor.*—Her industry is not from mere love of gain, but that she may have means of her own for charity to the poor and needy, without drawing upon her husband’s purse. *Her hands* (Hebrew, ‘both hands’), *i. e.*, with generous liberality.

21. *Not afraid of the snow.*—Snow sometimes falls in Palestine. *All her household*—both children and servants—*are clothed in scarlet*,—not for ornament only, but chiefly for comfort, as the word scarlet also means ‘double garments.’

22. *Coverings*—for beds and table couches. *Tapestry* was a costly and difficult sort of ornamental work. *Her clothing—silk, etc.*—She dresses in a style becoming her means and her position. Thus she has a proper regard for ornament both of her person and her furniture. Elegance in dress and household array is not unbecoming in a Christian woman, provided she be a worker and still have enough for charity. God’s works are full of ornament.

23. *Her husband—in the gates.*—Some say, ‘Her thrift gives him leisure for public duties;’ but more probably, as her own dress has just been referred to, these words refer to the clothing which she provides for her husband. Even kings and princes of old boasted of the garments wrought for them by the hands of their wives. She is honored for the good appearance which her husband makes when ‘he sitteth in the gates among the elders of the land’ (v. 31). We have some women in modern days who would like to take their places among those elders.

24. *Fine linen—girdles.*—Her industry and manufacturing skill are again commended. She not only provides for her own household, but she makes costly articles for sale. We learn now how she ‘buys a field’ (v. 16). The style of dress adopted by the ancients, rendered girdles universally neces-

sary, and they were often very costly and ornamental (cf. 2 Sam. 18: 11).

25. *Strength—her clothing.*—The figurative rather than the literal meaning here seems most natural (cf. v. 17). Her outward array has been already spoken of; here it is the clothing of her character that is ‘strength and honor.’ She is as conspicuous for her energy and honorable virtue, as for the good appearance of her person, home, and husband (cf. 1 Peter 3: 3–5). Her ‘rejoicing in time to come,’ may mean that she has no apprehensions for the future,—or, that in future years she shall rejoice in the fruit of her labor, and in the honor and veneration extended to her by children, husband, etc. (v. 28),—or, that in a future and better world she shall rejoice in the reward of a ‘good and faithful servant’ (cf. Luke 16: 9. 1 Tim. 6: 17–19).

26. *Her mouth—her tongue.*—Woman’s tongue has the reputation of not being always *musical*. But not so with her. Her utterances are ‘wisdom,’ rather than gossip or foolish talk, and are subject to an abiding ‘law of kindness’ rather than to the momentary promptings of envy or jealousy. How pleasant to the ear, and how powerful for good is such speech in woman.

27. *The ways of her household.*—She is as careful for their welfare as for their services. She makes them feel at home; and for her servants, as well as for her children, she ‘looketh well’ that their ‘ways’ may be those ‘in which they ought to go,’ even ‘wisdom’s ways,’ which are ‘pleasantness’ and ‘peace.’ *Idleness.*—She is again, as in former verses, relieved from this charge. There are but too many modern ladies who claim it as their rightful privilege to ‘eat the bread of idleness.’ For this, however, foolish mothers are probably most to blame.

28. *Her children—her husband.*—Happy children! happy husband! to have such a mother and wife. No wonder that her children rise up in reverence before her, or grow up around her so as to appreciate her excellence and ‘call her blessed;’ and no wonder that her husband, if he is at all worthy of her, ‘praiseth her.’ Good mothers and wives hear too little of such words of commendation and praise. Let husbands and children remember this. But let husbands praise their wives at home, and not ostentatiously abroad—like the husband of Lucretia,—to her cost.

29. *Many daughters, etc.*—These may be regarded as the

words of praise in which both husband and children unite. They know her virtues best, and to them she seems to 'excel' all other excellent women. This is often said of the good woman after she is dead, when it had better have been spoken to her living ears.

30. *Favor—beauty.*—As these are classed together, favor is probably that grace of manner which wins admiration, and often 'deceitful' homage; while beauty of face or person, however attractive in themselves, are 'vain' and evanescent qualities, which expose to temptation and trouble, as in the case of Sarah, Rebekah, Tamar, etc. But the climax and crown of good qualities of this virtuous woman is that she *feareth the Lord*. This is the 'beginning of wisdom,' both for this world and the next. This, above all things else, entitles her to 'be praised.' Nothing in all this sketch has been said of her *piety*; and in this respect such a woman is not necessarily demonstrative; but seldom, if ever, can such a combination of excellent qualities be found without true religion. Such a woman, besides her outward virtues, is like the king's daughter, 'all glorious within' (Ps. 45: 13).

31. *The fruit of her hands.*—Let such a woman be rewarded with all that honor and commendation which she so well deserves, and let her be held up as an example to our daughters, and 'let her own works praise her,' when they shall be spoken of even 'in the gates,' or public places of concourse (cf. Acts 9: 39. 1 Tim. 5: 10). Such is the *model woman* of the Bible. How different a character from the ideal of some modern clamorers for the 'rights' of their sex.

"Thus is shut up this looking-glass for ladies, which they are desired to open and dress themselves by; and if they do so, 'their adorning will be found unto praise, and honor, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ.'"—*Matthew Henry*.

BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES.



THIS name is given to the book by the Greek translators. It is used as equivalent to the Hebrew title, 'Koheleth,' and is rendered by our English translators, 'The Preacher.' It seems to be a formal public discourse delivered by Solomon in his later years, and after his recovery from his grievous apostasy.

"The grand 'conclusion' of the 'whole' book is, that seeing there is a coming judgment, and seeing that present goods do not satisfy the soul, 'man's whole duty is to fear God and keep his commandments' (chap. 12: 13, 14), and meanwhile to use, in joyful and serene sobriety, and not abuse, the blessings of the present life (chap. 3: 12, 13)." — *Fausset*.

There are but few passages in this book that suit our purpose.

SOLOMON'S EXPERIENCE OF VANITY.

Ecclesiastes II. 7-11.

7. I GOT me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me: 8. I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts. 9. So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me. 10. And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labor: and this was my portion of all my labor. 11. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labor that I had labored to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.

7. *Servants and maidens.*—These servants are mentioned as a part of Solomon's great wealth. They were obtained

either by purchase or as captives taken in war. They are distinguished from those born in his house, who were the children of his maid-servants, such children always following the condition of the mother.

8. *Men singers and women singers.*—Music, both vocal and instrumental, was one of the luxuries of oriental courts, being among the 'delights of the sons of men.' *Musical instruments, etc.*—These would be naturally connected with the choir of men singers and women singers. But there is much doubt as to the true rendering of this clause. In the Hebrew, the words are *shiddah* and *shiddoth*, the one being in the singular masculine, and the other the same word in the plural feminine. They do not occur elsewhere in the Scriptures. The Septuagint renders them, 'a cup-bearer and (female) cup-bearers.' Buxtorf, 'symphony and symphonies.' But other good authorities derive them from an Arabic root which allows the rendering, 'a wife and wives,' the former being his queen, who was Pharaoh's daughter, and the others his numerous concubines. This is the more probable meaning of the words, for otherwise there is no mention of this particular sort of 'delights of the sons of men' in Solomon's enumeration of his various sources of worldly enjoyment.

9. *My wisdom remained with me.*—This can mean only his worldly wisdom, which God gave him in answer to his request in the beginning of his reign (1 Kings 3: 5-12). He professes to have observed a certain moderation in his indulgences, so as not to stupefy himself with lust and wine (v. 3). But surely he can not mean that sort of excellent wisdom which he so highly commends in the book of Proverbs. In this respect none ever acted more foolishly than he who is called the wisest of men.

11. *Behold, all was vanity, etc.*—Not only vanity—'emptiness'—but *vexation of spirit*. Earthly enjoyments, when they are made a man's 'portion,' or chief good, not only fail to satisfy, but they bring vexation in the shape of satiety, disgust, shame, and remorse. Such is the signal testimony of one who tried the experiment in the most favorable circumstances, and who 'withheld not his heart from any joy (v. 10).

No profit under the sun.—He frequently uses this expression in order to show that even in the present life there is 'no profit' or real satisfaction in mere worldly joy. We should, therefore, seek to have our 'treasure laid up in heaven;' and they who have their *capital* deposited in that

safe treasure-house, will find a largely remunerative interest even in the shape of present enjoyment. How great is the infatuation of those who put their treasure 'into a bag with holes,' by making the world their portion! 'There is no profit under the sun.'

THE WOMAN WHOSE HEART IS SNARES.

Ecclesiastes VII. 25-29.

25. I APPLIED mine heart to know, and to search, and to seek out wisdom, and the reason of things, and to know the wickedness of folly, even of foolishness and madness: 26. And I find more bitter than death the woman, whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands as bands: whoso pleaseth God shall escape from her; but the sinner shall be taken by her. 27. Behold, this have I found, saith the Preacher, counting one by one, to find out the account; 28. Which yet my soul seeketh, but I find not; one man among a thousand have I found; but a woman among all those have I not found. 29. Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.

25. *To know—search—seek out, etc.*—This combination of terms implies most diligent and careful search. *Wisdom.* What constitutes true wisdom was one object of his search. *The reason*—or true estimate of things; or, the principles which underlie the facts in human experience. He sought especially to attain a deeper realization of the 'wickedness of folly,' even of that 'foolish madness' and infatuation which is in the sons of men, who degrade their nobler nature by wallowing in the mire of sensuality.

26. *I find, i. e.*, as the result of my own guilty and humiliating experience, that the fascinations of an artful woman, 'whose heart is snares and nets,' and 'whose hands are bands' to hold in captivity those whom she has ensnared, are 'more bitter than death.' The best comment upon these fearful words is found in such passages as Proverbs 2: 18, 19; 6: 26-28; 7: 26, 27; 9: 18, etc. *Pleaseth God.*—More than human strength is needed to withstand such allurements. They only are safe who can say with Joseph, 'How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God' (Gen. 39: 9). *Taken by her.*—(Cf. Prov. 22: 14.)

27, 28. *Counting* (or reckoning) *one by one.*—Perhaps by running over in his mind the names of the women of his acquaintance; and still seeking, if possible, to come to a more favorable judgment. *One man, i. e.*, one truly good and wise, worthy of the name of man. We are at once reminded

of Diogenes and his lantern which he carried through the streets of Athens in daylight, saying, 'I seek a man.' Solomon admits that one in a thousand might be found, probably among the courtiers who surrounded him. But we are startled when he says, after such deliberate search, *A woman—I have not found!* This language sounds strange—like that of libertines who pretend to suspect the virtue of all women. But we can not understand Solomon as intending to cast a stigma on all the sex, after the beautiful encomiums upon woman which we have been examining in his book of Proverbs. He admits there that such treasures as a 'prudent wife,' and a 'virtuous woman,' are to be found (chap. 18: 22; 31: 10), even though so rare that their 'price is far above rubies' (see notes). The true key to his meaning here is, in the words 'among all these,' *i. e.*, the thousand wives and concubines whom he had introduced into his harem (1 Kings 11: 3). As seven hundred of these were princesses, there ought to have been among them some of the best specimens of the sex which that age could afford. But they were 'strange wives,' *i. e.*, from foreign and heathen nations; and heathenism has afforded but few examples of the *true woman*. It is no wonder then that Solomon's search was so unsuccessful 'among all those,' for such a woman. What a priceless blessing is the gospel of Christ, which in all ages has produced so many Marys, and Marthas, and Lydias, and Dorcasas, and Eunices, and Loises—and in our own days, such a long list of honored names that it would be invidious to select from them,—that Solomon's language, broadly taken, seems now to us little better than a foul slander on the sex.

29. This sad degeneracy of mankind, both male and female, he traces to the effects of the fall. 'God made man upright'—holy; but 'they'—Adam and Eve and their descendants—'have sought out many inventions,'—"by which to sin—by which to obtain happiness irrespective of God."—*Young*. Let no sinner say that he is as God made him, and thus excuse his own sinful inventions and devices. But leaving the troublesome question, 'How came I to be born a sinner?' let him seek to be 'born again,' and become a 'new creature in Christ Jesus.'

MARRIAGE RECOMMENDED.

Ecclesiastes IX. 9.

9. LIVE joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity, which he hath given thee under the sun, all the days of thy vanity: for that is thy portion in this life, and in thy labor which thou takest under the sun.

Live joyfully (Hebrew, 'enjoy life') *with the wife whom thou lovest.*—Solomon's long and bitter experience has taught him several lessons which he here comprehensively states, doubtless as one of the 'conclusions of the whole matter' (chap. 11: 13). Although human life is a scene of 'vanity'—a truth which he here emphasizes by repetition—yet there is such a thing as 'enjoying life.' But not in king's palaces and harems, where no joy is withheld. There are things there 'more bitter than death.' Man's highest earthly enjoyment is in domestic life 'with the wife,' the one wife only—Solomon has had enough of polygamy—'whom thou lovest.' And that true and pure love which makes the marriage bond a holy union, such as God designed it to be, can exist only between one man and one woman, according to God's original institution. *All the days of thy life,* with no thought of divorce or separation. *That is, thy portion in this life.*—No truer happiness can be found under the sun; and nothing so lightens the burdens of 'labor' and toil as that each one of the loving pair should endure that labor for the sake of the other. O that all our homes were such. For the final and grand 'conclusion of the whole matter,' see chap. 12: 13: 'Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.'

SONG OF SOLOMON.



INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

THE above is the title by which this book is most commonly known. The title, however, as given in the first verse, is, 'The Song of Songs,' which is the Hebrew superlative for 'the most excellent of songs.' It is, also, sometimes called 'The Canticles,' which is a word of equivalent import with songs.—It is a book 'hard to be understood,' as is evident from the multitude of discordant interpretations found in the many commentaries upon it. Without troubling the reader with any of these, we turn from them all to the Bible itself. The *key* to the true interpretation is found in the forty-fifth psalm, on which see notes.

That psalm is called 'A Song of Loves,' and it celebrates the nuptials of the 'king' and 'queen' therein described. Who that king is we are not left to conjecture, but are distinctly informed in Hebrews 1: 8, where it is said—quoting the words of v. 6 of the psalm—'Unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever,' etc. The king then, is 'the Son,' the Messiah, and the queen is 'the Bride, the Lamb's wife' (cf. Rev. 19: 7-9; 21: 2, 9). To her 'it is said in v. 11 of the psalm, 'He is thy Lord: worship thou him.'

The Song of Solomon is—only more largely—such a 'song of loves,' viz: of the mutual loves of Christ and his church. The allegorical or spiritual meaning, then, of the Song, we take to be its true and *primary* meaning, and not one that is only mystical and secondary. Nor is the marriage of Solomon and Pharaoh's daughter, as some suppose, the event immediately referred to. It is true that the imagery, all through, is that of love and marriage; and much of it, if

taken only in its literal sense as given in our translation, is suggestive of low and sensual ideas, and would therefore, if so understood, render the book unworthy of its place in the sacred canon. But if we remember that this imagery is only the drapery of the thought, while the things immediately set forth are the mutual love subsisting between Christ the King and Husband of Zion, and his redeemed church, who is the spouse—and that it is also expressive of the highest and holiest communings between the soul of the individual believer, and his beloved Saviour and Friend—we shall find it to be a book altogether worthy of God, and of the high estimation in which it has ever been held by the most devout of God's people.

This sort of imagery abounds in the Scriptures. Jehovah is the husband, and the Jewish Church his wife, and her frequent lapses into idolatry are so many adulteries. So familiar was this language to the Jewish mind, that no Jew, and we may add no Oriental, would ever think of regarding the Song as other than an allegory (cf. Exod. 34: 15, 16. Ps. 45. Isa. 54: 5; 62: 5. Jer. 3: 20. John 3: 29. 2 Cor. 11: 2. Eph. 5: 23–27. Rev. 21: 2, etc., with notes and references).

Having before us this general view of the import of the Song, we are not much concerned to find out its exact plan and divisions, about which commentators differ so widely, nor shall we attempt to spiritualize all the details of its imagery. Each of its scenes, taken as a whole, teaches us great and important lessons, while much of the filling up may be intended only to give completeness to the picture.

It has been a question whether by the bride is intended the Jewish Church, or only the Christian Church, and whether the church, collectively, in any form, so much as the individual soul of the true believer, is the subject of the varied experiences described.

On this subject the opinion of the writer is, that the Song, as a whole, is designed by the Holy Spirit to have a wide application, and that it was written for the edification of Old Testament saints, so far as they might be able to divine its meaning, and as it gave utterance to their longings for the coming of the Messiah; but its more special application is to the New Testament Church, whose members, with their gospel light, can better understand and appreciate its deeply spiritual teachings; also, that what is true of the church, as a

whole, is true of her individual members, and that the most precious and delightful application of much of this book is to the various phases of individual Christian experience.

There is, also, a further and yet unfulfilled application of the Song, to which the writer thinks far too little attention has been given by the commentators. The *marriage of the Lamb has not yet been consummated* (see Rev. 19: 7, 9, etc., as above referred to).

Much of the language of the Song, therefore, is that of chaste and ardent lovers, betrothed indeed and bound to each other as sacredly, according to Jewish usage, as if already married, but still longing for the full consummation. This will account the more naturally for the romantic fervor of much of the language, which is not so appropriate to the calmer interviews of wedded love.

The church, like the individual believer, is still in the wilderness, looking forward, as did Israel in her wanderings, to 'a better country even an heavenly,' the earthly Canaan prefiguring the heavenly Canaan—and the first coming of the Messiah adumbrating his glorious second advent, in whatever form and at whatever time it may be manifested.

This is the final 'marriage of the Lamb' to which the whole body of believers are represented in the New Testament as looking forward with intense longing—'looking for and hasting unto the coming,' etc., and exclaiming at the close of Revelation, 'Even so, come Lord Jesus, come quickly,' just as the spouse, at the close of the Song, cries out, 'Make haste, my beloved,' etc. The Song then is in part prophetic, having that 'springing and germinant fulfillment' which Bacon attributes to many other prophecies.

LONGINGS AND COMMUNINGS.

Read Song of Solomon I. entire.

1. *Song of songs*.—The Hebrew superlative for 'most excellent of songs.' *Which is Solomon's*,—or, 'for Solomon.' The Hebrew preposition rendered *of*, or *for*, may not only denote authorship, as in many of the psalms which have a similar heading, '*of (or for) David*,' but may also mean 'concerning' Solomon. It is generally admitted, indeed, that king Solomon was the author, but it was (as Delitzsch says), "his soul that was the harp on which the Holy Spirit played this Song;" while it has reference, we believe, primarily, to

the heavenly Solomon, or Prince of Peace. *Sholomoh* is the name in Hebrew, while the spouse is *Shulamith* (6: 13), both meaning peace.

2. *Let him kiss me.*—Thus abrupt is the beginning of her song. It is the utterance of a full soul that can no longer contain itself. She does not name *him*, for there can be none but he (cf. John 20: 15). It is the kiss of chaste affection which will give her a full assurance of his love, that she desires. Such manifestation does the church—and the soul—long to receive of the Saviour's love; even repeated 'kisses of his mouth,' or sweet promises of his word, sealing her 'full assurance of hope.'

Thy love (Hebrew 'loves')—*than wine.*—More refreshing than wine to the 'heavy heart.' He returns the compliment to her with emphasis in chap. 4: 10.

3. *Savor—ointments,*—or 'fragrance of thy rich perfumes' (Ps. 45: 8).

Thy name.—The graces of thy person and character. 'To them that believe he is precious.' *The virgins.*—The pure ones 'unspotted from the world' (cf. Rev. 14: 4). It is no earthly love that is described, or there would be jealousy here.

4. *Draw me.*—She feels her need of quickening grace (cf. Jer. 31: 4. Hosea 11: 4).

We will run.—She promises to improve the grace given; and the church in her individual members (*we*) makes this promise. The spouse is one, but, like the body of Christ, is composed of many members (1 Cor. 12: 12, 27).

Me—we.—'I and my virgins.' *Haith brought—chambers,* *i. e.,* into most close and intimate communion. Thus her prayer is already answered (cf. Ps. 45: 14, 15). *The upright love,*—or, 'They love thee uprightly,' purely, and sincerely.

5, 6. *Black—comely,* *i. e.,* black as the 'tents of Kedar' but comely as the 'curtains of Solomon.' The Arabs of Kedar had tents made of black goatskins, or haircloth. The curtains of Solomon were the beautiful hangings of his royal pavilion. 'Black by nature, but comely by grace.'—*Aug.* Some suppose the allusion to be to Pharaoh's daughter when she was brought as a bride to Solomon; but the employment attributed to her in the next verse is not consistent with this. She had been blackened by the sun while in her servile state as a 'keeper of vineyards.' She speaks as one cast out and persecuted by her own brethren—'mother's children,'—and compelled to neglect her own vineyard and her own personal appearance, while the sun was scorching her in her hard toil.

The figurative application may be to any humiliating or trying circumstances of the church, or of the soul, in which it is brought into a condition of conscious unworthiness of the Lord's favorable regard. 'Look not upon me.*' *The daughters of Jerusalem.*—A phrase frequently occurring in this book, and variously interpreted. The 'daughters' of a city or country are usually its people or inhabitants; as 'the daughters of Shiloh,' 'daughters of Moab,' etc. Here the daughters of Jerusalem may be any spectators whom the spouse may have the opportunity of addressing. It is a part of the filling up of the picture. The attempt to spiritualize every particular in the Song, has led to innumerable idle fancies in the writers, and to much tedium and perplexity in the readers, of the various commentaries.

7. *Tell me.*—She addresses her beloved as if he were a shepherd (and Christ is the Shepherd of Israel), and wishes to know where she may find him reposing with his flock during the heat of noonday, which was a time of rest and leisure. The most favorable opportunities should be sought for communion with our Lord. *Turneth aside.*—Hebrew 'is veiled,' as an harlot, or as a strange sheep in thy flock. Why this present estrangement of my soul from thee?

8. *Know not.*—Thus he answers her. She ought to know, but her faith is weak. The 'footsteps of the flock,' *i. e.*, the straight paths in which true disciples go, will guide her to that enjoyment of her beloved's presence which she has lost while in forbidden paths.

9, 10. *O my love.*—By this affectionate address he would restore her confidence. *Horses.*—Beautiful and eager for the race or conflict. She who is compared to 'a company,' is the church in her membership, or if we adopt the more literal rendering, 'to my mare in the chariots of Pharaoh' the

* A certain historical interpreter applies this to the Old Testament Church planted in Palestine. "She was made the head and guardian of all the churches that were to cover the earth. Put in trust for the world, she had betrayed that trust, and had failed to keep the vineyards of others by neglecting her own. She had permitted her own Palestine to be overrun with Pagan rites, and defiled with the altars of the heathen gods."—*British and Foreign Evangelical Review.*

The writer would suggest that if this interpretation be adopted, v. 6 would more naturally apply to the time of Israel's enslavement in Egypt, when she grew black with the toil of her enforced labor, while her own vineyard of Palestine was neglected. The allusion to Pharaoh's chariots, in v. 9, might also confirm this.

comparison is one which according to oriental usage is highly complimentary, and commends the beauty, grace, and activity of the subject of it.

11. *We*—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (?)—will adorn thy present beauty with ‘borders,’ or circlets, ‘of gold.’ ‘He giveth more grace.’

12. *At his table*,—or, in the circle of his friends. *My spikenard*.—Said to be the emblem of humility. We are here readily reminded of sweet communings with Christ at his own table, when his presence enlivens the odor of our graces.

13. *A bundle of myrrh*, *i. e.*, as a costly and abundant perfume, is Christ to her. Myrrh is also said to be the emblem of death. How sweet the perfume of the Lord’s death.—*He* (rather, *it*, the bundle of myrrh) *shall lie, etc.*—Perfumes were thus worn in the bosom. *All night*—Always. I will keep him ever near my heart.

14. *Camphire*.—Hebrew, *copher*. An aromatic shrub, used for its fragrance, and as a dye of beautiful orange color for the nails, etc. The Hebrew *copher* also signifies covering, or atonement, of which this plant becomes the emblem.

“Thus as the last verse had testified to the church, of the preciousness of Christ’s death, so this testifies of the preciousness of redemption wrought by his death.”—*Thrupp*.

15–17. *Fair*.—Not ‘black,’ in my sight (v. 6). *Doves’ eyes*.—Soft, large, and clear, as in the doves of Palestine. Christ appreciates the ‘beauty of holiness’ in his people. It is his own gift, as she seems to admit in her response (v. 16). *Thou art fair*—and all that thou seest fair in me is but the reflection of thine own loveliness (cf. Ps. 45: 2. Ezek. 16: 14).

Bed—green.—The place of repose where we sit at noon (v. 7) is the greensward, upon which is pitched thy *kiosk*, or summer tent, whose timbers are ‘cedar’ and ‘fir,’ or cypress; or the bed may be the table couch on which the ancients reclined, and its covering here is green, to suit the rural surroundings. Such calm and happy communion with her beloved does the spouse enjoy in his ‘house’ which is also hers (‘our house’), while the time is passed in mutual endearments. The ‘chambers,’ of v. 4, may denote the more private exercises of devotion, while the ‘house’ here may refer to the more public ordinances, especially the supper.—*Fausset*.

COMMUNINGS CONTINUED.

Read Song of Solomon II. 1-7.

1. *Rose* or 'daisy'—*lily*.—The bride compares herself to these lowly plants among the flowers of the field, in contrast with the noble 'apple-tree,' or, rather, 'citron-tree,' whose golden and fragrant fruit so fitly represents the excellence of her beloved (v. 3).

2. *As the lily, etc.*—The beloved here takes up her comparison; and though she be but as the wild 'lily of the valley,' he admires her modest purity and grace amidst the rugged 'thorns' which surround her in the world.

3. *The sons*.—As he finds none like her 'among the daughters' of men, so, also, is he 'among the sons,' in her estimation.—fairer than the children of men' (Ps. 45: 2). *I sat down*.—It is with 'great delight' that the soul of the believer 'sits down' and abides under the shadow of the Almighty (Ps. 91: 1), and finds the 'fruit' that falls from the tree of life sweet and refreshing (Rev. 22: 2).

4. *Banqueting house*.—In allusion to that of Solomon 'all the vessels of which were of gold.' *Banner—love*.—'His love is better than wine,' and hangs like a banner over her in the pavilion where she banquets. "The transition is from holy retirement to public ordinances, church worship, and the Lord's Supper."—*Fausset*.

5. *Flagons, or 'grape cakes.'* *Sick of love*.—Some understand this of the overpowering joys of this banquet of love as being almost more than her spirit could bear; others, of the longing of her soul for still more full manifestations (cf. 5: 8).

6. *Is under—doth embrace*,—or, 'shall be under,' etc. It may be taken as present, or as in the preterite prophetic, according as the preceding words are understood (cf. 8: 3). We must here rise above the earthly imagery, and let our thoughts dwell on the divine comfort and support which the church as a whole, or the individual believer, are represented as enjoying in communion with the Lord.

7. *Roes, hinds*.—These are very timorous animals and easily startled from repose. So is the sensible presence of Christ easily lost. Although the pronouns *you* and *ye* here refer to the 'daughters of Jerusalem,' they are masculine in the Hebrew; so also the verb rendered 'he please,' referring

to the beloved, is feminine. This confounding of genders may perhaps be designed, in order to intimate that the literal meaning is to be overlooked for the spiritual. The 'daughters of Jerusalem' are all Christians, and they are addressed as masculine; while in the charge which she gives to them—'nor awake my love,'—*my* is not in the original, and the word here rendered 'love' is feminine, and is different both from 'beloved,' and from '(my) love' as applied to the spouse. It means *love*, in the abstract, and the exact rendering would be, 'nor awake love till she (or it) please;' or, as Moody Stuart says, "until love itself shall please." He adds: "The love that is not to be disturbed is chiefly that of the beloved, so that the awakening of the love and of this beloved is the same." As in Prov. 8: 27-31, Christ is *wisdom*, so here he is *love*. 'God (in Christ) is love.' The general sentiment appears to be, that the spouse calls upon herself and upon all around her to be hushed in silence, lest her present calm enjoyment in the arms of her beloved may be in any way disturbed.

My willing soul would stay
 In such a frame as this;
 And sit and sing herself away
 To everlasting bliss.

This is manifestly the close of one of the divisions of the Song (cf. 3: 5; 8: 4). Those who would find in it a historical application to the Jewish Church, refer these 'longings' (of chap. 1) to the eager expectations of the spouse of that period for the Messiah's coming; and, then, the 'communings,' to the joy of the shepherds and of Simeon, Anna, etc., when he actually appeared. In accordance with this view, v. 7 might express the anxiety of the disciples of Christ to detain him with them, and their unwillingness to hear of his going away (cf. Matt. 16: 22. John 13: 33; 14: 1-5; 16: 6, etc.).

THE SPRINGTIME OF LOVE.

Read Song of Solomon II. 8-16.

8. *The voice of my beloved!*—A new scene opens here. We left the spouse and her beloved, in vs. 6, 7, in the calm repose of mutual affection. After we know not what interval, or what interruption of their sweet communion, she seems here to be suddenly startled by hearing his voice in the distance as he comes 'leaping upon the mountains,' etc. This is

an extravagance of speech which even oriental hyperbole could not employ with reference to any earthly lover. It can refer only to the Beloved of Israel, and describes the alacrity of his return after a season of absence. He may, in his sovereignty, or for offenses on their part, withdraw himself from his people; but he feels the pain of the separation more than they do, and is eager to manifest his love to them (cf. 6 : 12, and notes. Rev. 3 : 20).

9. *The roe (or gazelle) and hart* are celebrated for their beauty, gentleness, and agility. *Behind—wall—windows—lattice.*—Christ does not present himself at once in full manifestation, but obscurely. We ‘see men as trees walking.’ ‘We see through a glass darkly.’ *Forth at,* rather ‘through,’ for he is on the outside of the wall. The church now sees Christ only in the *glances* of himself (as the word ‘showeth’ implies) through the lattices of his ordinances. Such, also, were the obscure manifestations of himself to his church during his earthly ministry; and should we adopt the historical interpretation which refers all this to that period, it will describe the very imperfect apprehensions of Christ’s character which even his own disciples had while he was yet with them.

10. *My beloved spake.*—She then reports his address to her (vs. 10–15). It is an invitation to her to come forth, as from her wintry seclusion, to the enjoyment of the bright spring season.

11. *Winter—rain.*—The winter in Palestine is also the rainy season.

12. 13. *Flowers, etc.*—All these are accompaniments of spring, and denote the joys which he has in readiness for her if she will listen to his gentle wooings. *Arise, my love, etc.*—If she has been remiss and sluggish during the winter of her declension, he has no words of reproach. She is still his ‘love,’ his ‘fair one,’ and he will have her come away (vs. 10, 13), forsaking all that has kept her from him, and it will be again a joyous springtime to her soul. Thus ‘he remembereth our iniquities no more.’ ‘He restoreth my soul.’

14. *My dove.*—How tender his entreaties! *Clefts—stairs,* or ‘cliffs,’ where doves concealed themselves. Christ seeks the development of the graces of his people, and would bring them out of themselves and from their hiding places of inaction, that he may hear their voice lifted up to speak for him and to praise him,—and may see the beauty of their

countenance, comely with his own reflected loveliness. Then is religion revived, and the springtime of Zion has come.

15. *Foxes*,—'jackals.'—Christ thus reminds us that we are keepers of a vineyard, in which we have work to do, especially in the way of 'keeping our hearts with all diligence' against those easily besetting sins, and those peccadillos of temper and conduct, which like foxes and little foxes, spoil the vines and the tender grapes of our religious character. The church also must see that proper discipline be exercised. In the springtime of revival, these foxes are most mischievous.

16. This is the bride's response to the foregoing address. *Mine—his*, or, 'for me' and 'for him' (cf. Hosea 3: 3, where the same words are used). It is the language of assurance, which it is the blessed privilege of God's people sometimes to use, when they have heard his voice, and have come away (as above, v. 13). *Feedeth*, *i. e.*, his flock. *Lilies*, emblems of purity. If her beloved is not just in sight, she knows he is not far off. She has now learned the 'footsteps of the flock' (1: 7, 8) and is ever ready to join them in the 'green pastures and beside the still waters.'

17. *Till*, or against, *i. e.*, by the time that, etc. *Break*,—rather, 'breathe,' with freshening winds at the approach of evening. *Shadows flee away*,—rather 'lengthen,' as the sun goes down, or disappear when the sun is set. *Turn*—withdraw not thyself from me. Come quickly, like a gazelle or hart, from the 'mountains of Bether,' *i. e.*, separation. Thus she looks forward to the evening of life, and desires that her beloved may turn, or return, and come leaping over the mountains of separation which stand between her and his immediate presence. So also the spouse, the church, looks forward to the glorious consummation of her final nuptials, when the 'marriage of the Lamb is come,' Rev. 19: 7, etc. (cf. chap. 8: 14, where the 'mountains of Bether' have become 'mountains of spices'). Those who follow the present version would make the time referred to be, 1st, (in the Jewish Church) the morning of the gospel day, or of Christ's first coming; and 2d, (in the Christian Church) the morning of the resurrection, or of Christ's second advent,—of which it is said, 'The night is far spent, the day is at hand' (Rom. 13: 12).

THE BELOVED SOUGHT AND FOUND.

Read Song of Solomon III. 1-5.

1. *By night*,—or, 'nights,' implying a somewhat protracted season of desertion. If this passage is to be taken in close connection with the preceding, it shows us how soon a spring-time season of joyous assurance may be succeeded by one of declension and darkness. The truthfulness of this to the painful experiences of many of God's people, has always led to this interpretation of the passage. *On my bed*,—and therefore, perhaps, but too slothfully. When those who are 'at ease in Zion,' have lost the sense of Christ's presence, he is not to be found by inactive wishes. Or, 'on my bed,' may denote the sleeplessness of her anxiety and longing (cf. Ps. 63: 6-8, 'I remember thee upon my bed,' etc., 'My soul followeth hard after thee'). *Found him not*.—Thus her remissness was rebuked. Even when Christ is he 'whom our soul loveth,' he may awhile hide himself from us, in order to humble us, try our faith, and call forth more earnest seeking.

2. *I will arise*,—in order to engage in more diligent search. *In the streets, etc.*,—or places where he is most likely to be found. But even yet she 'finds him not' (cf. 5, 6). She needs to be still more earnest.

3. *The watchmen*.—She has been perhaps too self-reliant, and must have the help of Zion's watchmen. *Found me*. They should be on the lookout for such benighted inquiring souls; and such troubled ones should be communicative. 'Saw ye him,' etc. The silence of the watchmen here has been referred to the cessation of prophecy during the four hundred years preceding the coming of the Messiah.

4. *But a little*.—"Christ is generally 'found' near the watchmen and means of grace."—*Fauss*. (Cf. Jer. 29: 13, 'Ye shall find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.')

Held him.—"Jesus made as though he would have gone further,' but I held him, and would not let him go; he plead, 'Let me go, for the day breaketh,' but I held him and said, 'I will not let thee go except thou bless me.'"—*Moody Stuart*.

Mother's house, i. e., my house, that he might abide with me. She dreads any further experience of his absence. The mother's chamber was that into which Isaac introduced Rebekah, when she became his wife (Gen. 24: 67).

5. *I charge you.*—Thus supremely happy again in the enjoyment of his manifested love, she repeats the charge given in 2: 7 (see note). This is the close of the second canticle. The whole of the preceding part of the Song, is applied by some, primarily, to the close of the Jewish dispensation, and to the ministry of John the Baptist. (See Stuart, Thrupp, Fausset, etc.) Another says: “The imagery in this part of the Song is precisely that by which Jeremiah and Ezekiel describe the declension of Israel and Judah, and their subsequent desolation during the night of the captivity.—*J. A. W. in British and Foreign Evangelical Review.* But we think it will strike the reader that such a ‘springtime of love’ could not have been enjoyed by the church during either of those periods.

THE MARRIAGE PROCESSION.

Read Song of Solomon III. 6-11.

6. *Who—this?*—*is* is not in the original, and *this* is feminine. An entirely new scene is here presented. A procession is seen approaching in the distance, indicated first by a rising column apparently of dust or smoke, but, as it draws nearer, found to be fragrant with perfumes such as were burned in connection with marriage processions. The bystanders—whether they be the ‘friends of the bridegroom,’ or the ‘daughters of Jerusalem,’—inquire ‘Who is this?’ or rather, ‘What is this?’ *i. e.*, this company; for we can not refer it to the bride, who is not yet in sight.

7. *His bed*, or ‘sedan.’ This is not the word for ‘bed’ which is used in v. 1, but denotes a traveling litter, canopied over, and borne usually on the shoulders of men. It comes from the direction of the ‘wilderness’ of Jordan, and is surrounded by a double guard of sixty swordsmen (thirty having been the number of king David’s ‘valiant men;’ 2 Sam. 23: 13, 23). These were for protection against the roving bands of Bedouins who were wont to assail such companies at night.

9. *Chariot.*—Rather ‘palanquin,’ the same as the ‘bed’ of v. 7, but now recognized as king Solomon’s splendid palanquin, which he was known to have made, perhaps for this occasion, out of the most costly materials. The ‘pavement of love,’ is supposed to be the variegated covering of the seat

and back of the vehicle,—a gift of 'love from (not for) the daughters of Jerusalem' (cf. 1: 3).

11. *Go forth.*—These waiting virgins—perhaps a select company of daughters of Zion (like those of Matt. 25: 1),—are exhorted to 'go forth and meet the bridegroom,' and to behold the crown, or marriage chaplet, with which his mother had crowned him in this 'the day of the gladness of his heart.' The difficulty of arriving at any satisfactory conclusion as to the precise spiritual meaning of all this, may be estimated when we state that, in regard to the 'bed' of Solomon, it has been variously interpreted to mean Christ's 'body,' the 'hearts of believers,' 'Christ himself,' 'his cross,' the 'happiness of saints in glory,' the 'Scriptures,' the 'church of Christ,' the 'covenant of redemption,' the 'chariot of salvation,' etc. A similar diversity of view prevails in regard to all the other details of this description. This would seem to be enough to convince us that the general import of the whole is all that we may expect to ascertain, while the several particulars are only the filling up of the picture.

It is not probable that any reference is intended to be made to the marriage of Pharaoh's daughter, or to any other marriage of Solomon, 'king of Jerusalem;' but rather to the consummation of that divine marriage of the true Solomon, Christ, and his church, to which the whole song refers. This passage is one of the various matrimonial scenes which are successively presented to our view in this book; but none of which have a strictly defined historical application, either past or future. These scenes, it is true, find their counterpart, in a measure, in the history of the church, both of the Jewish and of the Christian dispensations, as also in the various phases of individual Christian experience; but the complete and final application of the whole will not be understood until it is witnessed in the developments of the great coming 'Day of the Lord.'

It may be noticed that neither the bridegroom nor bride are spoken of as being *seen* in this procession, although it may be presumed that both are occupants of the royal palanquin, and are coming home to the king's palace in Jerusalem. The beloved and the spouse are both *invisible* as yet. They are coming up from the 'wilderness' of their present state of imperfect manifestation, and are yet in their *militant* condition. Christ was with the church in 'the wilderness' of old (Acts 7: 38), and he is with her still, as his affianced bride,

and will be 'with her always even unto the end of the world' (Matt. 28: 20). She is guarded by valiant hosts of mighty 'angels who are all ministering spirits for those who shall be heirs of salvation.' The 'bed,' or 'chariot,' in which her beloved is conveying her homeward, may be any or all of the things above mentioned, provided they be among the means by which the comfort and safety of her journey heavenward are secured.

The application of any part of this passage to the experience of individual Christians, except so far as each believer is a part of the whole church, is not very obvious.

THE BEAUTY OF THE BRIDE.

Read Song of Solomon IV. 1-15.

1. *THOU art fair.*—Here follows a glowing description, in the oriental style of hyperbole, of the many beauties which the bridegroom beholds in his bride. The commentators laboriously spiritualize all the details. This seems scarcely necessary. All together they form a *tout ensemble* of beauty, which is characterized in v. 7 by the comprehensive words, 'Thou art all fair—no spot in thee.' *Doves' eyes* (cf. chap. 1: 15, and note)—*hair—flock.*—Her dark tresses are like the flocks of black goats that seem to hang from the mountain side.

2. *Shorn*, or 'shearing,' for which they are prepared by washing. They are all white, symmetrical, perfect.

3. *Lips—and speech*, or 'opening of the mouth.' These are the same—ruby lips, closed, or opening in smiles. *Temples*—Like the blushing slice of a ripe pomegranate.

4. *Neck*—Round, stately, and hung around with a necklace, like the trophy shields around the tower of David.

5. *Breasts.*—These were exposed to view in the oriental style of dress. Some find here the double breastplate of 'faith and love' (cf. 1 Thess. 5: 8). All these beauties of the spouse are the adornments of grace which the beloved himself has bestowed upon her; and he admires his own excellence in her (cf. chap. 1: 16, and note).

6. This verse seems to be a parenthesis between vs. 5 and 7. Its abrupt introduction is difficult to be accounted for. The first clause is the same as chap. 2: 17, on which see note. Some suppose the 'myrrh and frankincense' to refer to his approaching death and burial, of which these spices, which

were used in embalming, are said to be the emblem. He proposes to retire for a time to the 'mountain of spices' (chap. 8: 14). 'I go to prepare a place for you' (see *Thrupp* and *Faussett*). It seems more natural, however, to regard it as a momentary proposal to withdraw, which he at once recalls as he gazes on the attractions of her beauty (cf. Matt. 26: 39). He loves to tarry with his church, even as an ardent lover with his betrothed, and sees nothing in her that is not 'all fair' and 'spotless.' What cheering words are these to the believer in his conscious unworthiness. Christ looks upon us not as we are in ourselves, but as 'complete in him.'

8. *My spouse*.—This is the first time that he addresses her by this title, and we might take this as the opening of a new scene, but that it is so much in the same strain as the preceding. He now formally acknowledges her relation to himself, and invites her to 'come with him from Lebanon,' from whose high peaks Amana, Shenir, Hermon, dangerous at the base as the hiding places of lions and leopards, she may look down upon the kingdoms of the world, and be content to leave them all behind, and to escape from those scenes of danger, to accompany her beloved to the heavenly hills, the 'mountains of spices,' whither he was about to ascend. In regard to the words 'come with me,' etc., Scott remarks that "the original is future, not imperative, and implies not merely an invitation, but also a promise that the true church shall be brought out of every scene of danger and suffering to the enjoyment of consummate felicity in the presence and full favor of her beloved."

9. *Ravished*, or 'taken away.' *Sister*—here first used. Another proof that no earthly love is described. The spouse is also 'sister' to her beloved, because partaker of the same nature. *One (glance) of thine eyes—one chain, or 'ornament,' of thy neck.*

10. *Fair*—attractive. *Love*—Hebrew, 'loves,' tokens of love. *Wine—spices* (cf. 1: 3, 4).

12. *Inclosed—shut up—sealed*—Denoting seclusion and separation from the profane world, as wells and fountains were kept shut up on account of the scarcity of water (cf. Gen. 29: 2, 3). Some take this as an intimation that the time had not yet arrived when the church should become universal and fill the earth.

13. *Orchard* (Hebrew, 'a paradise') filled with fruits and

aromatic spices, the latter, however, differing from those so named by us, being more fragrant and precious.

15. *Of gardens*, or 'a bubbling fountain;' or one flowing full enough to water many 'gardens.' All these attractive images, drawn from the paradise-like gardens of the East, represent the loveliness of the bride in her spiritual beauty, and show the wonderful condescension of our Lord in being thus pleased with his poor people, who, though worthless and vile in themselves, are clothed with all these adornments of grace through their union with Christ.

THE GARDEN PREPARED AND ENJOYED.

Read Song of Solomon IV. 16; V. 1.

THESE verses should not have been separated in the division of chapters.

4: 16. *Awake, etc.*—The foregoing complimentary address to the spouse, in which she is compared to a garden, etc., awakens in her a consciousness that her spiritual condition is not such as to deserve the praise, and she therefore invokes the 'north wind' and 'south' to breathe their freshening influences upon her. The wind is the Holy Spirit (cf. Ezek. 37: 9. John 3: 8. Acts 2: 1, 2). The 'north' and 'south' winds are the diversified operations of the Spirit as awakening, quickening, soothing, etc. The languishing spices of grace need to be developed and diffused so as to be more worthy of the beloved, and to attract his visits. *My garden—his garden.* It is *hers* as to the responsibility of keeping it, as to its present state of neglect, and as to the enjoyment it affords her. It is *his* as to the preparation and planting of it, as to the right of ownership, and as to the delight which he condescends to take in it.

5: 1. *I am come.*—The response to her prayer seems to be immediate, although this is not necessarily implied in the juxtaposition of the words. Sometimes a protracted season of humiliation, prayer, and renewed spiritual culture is necessary before the beloved comes into his garden with such cheering manifestation of his presence. His words, 'myrrh,' 'spice,' 'honeycomb,' etc., refer to his own enumeration of her graces in chap. 4: 10–15. The Spirit has been breathing upon them, and they now afford fit entertainment to him. He enjoys the feast, and invites his 'friends' to come and share in its abundance (cf. Rev. 3: 20, 'I will sup with him,

and he with me'). The experiences of the Lord's Supper best illustrate all this.

"Thus closes the bridal supper of the Song; thus (also) closes the covenant supper of Jesus with his disciples. In neither is it the marriage feast, but the feast of espousal in seal of the future marriage; in both it is the solemn farewell in pledge of abiding union, but in prospect of immediate separation the hour the feast is over."—*Moby Stuart*.

THE UNBECOMING SLEEP.

Read Song of Solomon V. 2-8.

HERE begins, says Thrupp, the second part of the Song. The former part he refers primarily to the ancient church, up to the epoch when her longings were satisfied by her espousal with the Messiah. "But the end was not yet. The Christian Church, now wedded to Christ and sanctified by his Spirit, was to pass through a new career of expectation and trial, the counterpart of the career of the older dispensation."

Says another: "It is, beyond doubt, the darkness which brooded over the church and the world during the night of the 'great apostasy' which we see reflected from this part of the Song."—*J. A. W.*, as above.

But the whole has an obvious fitness of application also to individual Christian experience.

2. *Heart waketh*.—After the supper scene just mentioned, the beloved had withdrawn 'to the mountain of myrrh,' etc., as he had proposed in 4: 6. Ecclesiastically and historically this may be considered as covering the period of Christ's sufferings and absence from his disciples. They were despondent and 'sleeping for sorrow.' It was a night of dismal gloom with them. See them in the garden (Matt. 26: 40-43), Mary weeping early at the sepulcher (John 20: 11), and the two disciples on the way to Emmaus (Luke 24: 17, 21), etc. Yet their hearts were still 'awake' toward him in a trembling love and trust. (See more of this in *M. Stuart*, etc.) Others would refer it to the long sleep of the church during the 'great apostasy,' while the few faithful witnesses who were found here and there—as among the Scottish Hebrides and the Alpine valleys—were the 'waking heart' of the church.—*J. A. W.*, as above.

But the personal application is the more obvious, as well as the more common. After seasons of high spiritual enjoy-

ment, the believer is but too apt to relax in watchfulness, and to sink unconsciously into spiritual slumber. Still his 'heart waketh' toward his Savior; otherwise he were dead in sin. The 'voice of the beloved' is indistinctly heard, as by one half asleep. Even the wonderful tenderness of the address, 'my love, my dove,' etc., does not shame the slumberer into wakefulness; neither is she aroused by his equally wonderful patience in waiting until his 'head is filled with dew,' etc. (cf. Rev. 3: 20, where the Laodicean backslider is addressed).

3. *Off my coat.*—This is her drowsy reply (cf. Prov. 24: 33). Thus reluctant are we to be aroused from our 'ease in Zion.'

4. *Hole.*—Through which, in ancient doors, the key was inserted. He has various ways of touching and awaking the slumbering soul. *Bowels—moved for him* (others, 'in me'), i. e., affections awakened, as e. g. were Peter's when the 'Lord looked on him and he went out and wept bitterly,' or as Thomas (John 20: 27).

5. *Rose up.*—Having now become thoroughly awake.—*Myrrh.*—Her revived actings of love, penitence, etc., were as the dropping of unguents from the hands.

6. *I opened—was gone!*—Thus she was chastised for former remissness. *Failed—spake*, or, 'for what he had spoken;' others, 'till he should speak.' *Not find him.*—(Cf. John 7: 34; 13: 33). This is not God's ordinary method,—for 'they that seek shall find,' etc.;—but in the way of fatherly discipline his face is sometimes hid from us.

7. *Watchmen.*—Some say, the Jewish priests, or unsympathizing ministers. The 'watchmen' of chap. 3: 3, may be the prophets of the Old Testament; and these abusive 'keepers of the walls,' the persecuting priesthood of the gospel dispensation, who, in times of reformation, have treated as harlots Christ's true disciples who were crying after him. In general, the discouragements which are found in the way of inquiring souls may be represented.

8. *Sick of love.*—(Cf. 2: 5); but the 'love-sickness' there and here seems to be from different causes. There it was from an overpowering fullness of enjoyment; here it is from excessive and unsatisfied longing. Thrupp applies it also to 'too eager and impatient millenarian expectations.'

PORTRAIT OF THE BELOVED.

Read Song of Solomon V. 9-16.

9. *WHAT is, etc.*—This disparaging inquiry affords an occasion to the longing spouse to descend on the matchless excellencies of her beloved. *Fairest.*—While her own beauty is thus appreciated, she the more willingly commends to their admiration him who is ‘altogether lovely.’ It is unnecessary to examine in detail all the particulars of this description. It is another *tout-ensemble* of matchless excellence that is presented to our view.

12. *Eyes as doves.*—Gentle, pure, and lustrous,—the pupil dark, in the setting of its milk-white surrounding.

14. *Belly, or ‘body,’ i. e., his person, in raiment white as ivory.* *Sapphires.*—Referring. says one, ‘to the bright colored girdle over the white robe of royalty.’

15. *Sockets, or pedestals, which supported ‘the pillars.’* Thus we have ‘fine gold’ both at his head and feet (v. 11). *Countenance, or aspect—as Lebanon,*—majestic and princely, as the cedar-crowned Lebanon among the mountains.

16. *Mouth, or ‘palate,’ is most sweet, or ‘sweetnesses.’* *Altogether, or, all over, lovely, i. e., from head to foot he is all loveliness.* There is ‘no spot in him.’ Christ’s character is absolutely perfect, having in it all divine and all human excellencies mysteriously blended. Such is her answer to the question of v. 9, ‘What is thy beloved,’ etc? And though he is still out of sight, it is her blessed privilege to claim him as *hers,*—‘*my beloved, and my friend*’ (cf. 2: 16; 6: 3). And thus does the church still commend him to the admiration and acceptance of all the ‘daughters of Jerusalem.’ *Ecce homo! Ecce Deus!*

“It is impossible not to be struck with the similarity between the description of Christ’s person, given in the Song (chap. 5: 10-16), and that given in the Apocalypse (Rev. 1: 13-16; 10: 1-3; 11: 11-16).”—*J. A. W.,* as above.

THE SPOUSE COMMENDED.

Read Song of Solomon VI. 1-12.

1. WHITHER, *etc.*—Her glowing description of him awakens the curiosity of her hearers, and their desire to seek him with her. Even in times of spiritual desertion, we should be ready to point others to Christ.

2. *His garden*—His ordinary place of resort among his church and people, whom he ‘feeds’ in the ‘gardens’ of ‘spices’ and ‘lilies.’ Those who can not find Christ themselves can sometimes tell others where to find him.

3. (Cf. chap. 2: 16). The order of the clauses is here reversed. Formerly her assurance was objective, first claiming the beloved as *hers*; now it is subjective, having an inward consciousness that she is *his*, although as yet she sees him not. I know that I love him, and therefore that he loves me—‘he is mine,’ and he is not far off; ‘he feedeth among the lilies’ (cf. chap. 7: 10).

4. *O my love.*—Now he is present again and speaks to her. Her zeal in commending him to others has awakened in her a renewed consciousness of her covenant relation to him, so that she can say ‘I am his and he is mine;’ and she is thus prepared for fresh manifestations of his favor. *Tirzah*, which means *pleasant*. It was long the capital of the kingdom of Israel, as Jerusalem was of Judah (1 Kings 16: 8, 15). *Terrible*, or ‘awe-inspiring.’ This description seems to refer to the church as a whole. As a collective body she combines in herself the pleasantness of Tirzah and the comeliness of Jerusalem, the latter being ‘beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth’ (Ps. 48: 2); and when united into one church as the true ‘body of Christ,’ she will be terrible to the enemy as an ‘army with banners’ (v. 10). Some commentators say that, ‘historically, this represents the restoration of Christ to his church at the resurrection, and his sending her forth with new powers.’ ‘Go teach all nations.’

5. *Turn away* (cf. chap. 4: 9). *Thy hair, etc.*—This and the two following verses are repeated from chap. 4: 1-3 (see notes). His love and admiration for her are still the same, notwithstanding her remissness.

8. *Queens, etc.*—This imagery is drawn from the harem of oriental courts. Though there might be other attractive ‘vir-

gins without number,' they were nothing in comparison with the spouse.

9. *But one*—my *only one*, the 'only' and 'choice' one 'of her mother.' Isaac was called Abraham's 'only son' (Gen. 22: 2), and Christ himself is the Father's 'only begotten.' Thus he reciprocates to the spouse her profession of exclusive love for him (v. 3).

Daughters, etc.—praised her.—All that saw her acknowledged her peerless excellence (cf. Ps. 45: 13, 14). This, however, may be prophetic of the future glory and honor of the church, when she shall come up from the wilderness robed in such beauty as shall attract the nations to herself (see Isa., chaps. 54 and 60).

10. *Who is she, etc.*—The daughters of Jerusalem, perhaps, ask this somewhat incredulously; for although they call her the 'fairest among women,' they do not yet see in her that fullness of glory which is implied in his description (v. 4, etc.). This thy spouse, who so lately sought thee sorrowing, in the darkness of the night—is it she who is 'as the morning, fair as the moon,' etc.? These several particulars are supposed to denote the successive stages of Zion's advancement.

"The church Patriarchal, the 'morning;' Levitical, the 'moon;' Evangelical, 'the sun;' Triumphant, the 'bannered army.'"—*Fausset*. *J. A. W.* refers this to the period of the Reformation.

11. *I went (or had gone) down.*—The beloved here seems to account to the spouse for his absence. He had gone to his garden, his usual place of resort, where he is ever present with his church, though sometimes out of sight to individual believers; and like a careful gardener, he looks after the 'fruits,' the 'vines,' etc.

Nuts.—This, probably, has no special significance. Nuts were one of the products of the garden, along with fruits, spices, etc.

12. *Ammi-nadib.*—The explanations here are very various. Scott says: "Ammi-nadib was probably a chieftain noted for driving with great rapidity." The words literally mean 'my willing people.' If thus translated, it would seem to be the language of the spouse, as would also v. 11. But we prefer to apply it to Christ, as expressive of his eagerness to join himself again to his mourning and forsaken spouse. He is more ready to return unto us than we are to him. See the parable of the prodigal—"saw him a great way off, and ran," etc. (Luke 15: 20. Cf. chap. 2: 8, and note, and Rev. 3: 20).

THE SHULAMITE ADDRESSED.

Read Song of Solomon VI. 13; VII. 1-9.

6: 13. RETURN.—In the Hebrew Bible this is the first verse of chap. 7. *O Shulamite.*—Hebrew ‘Shulamith.’ It is the feminine of Solomon, and means also the peaceful one. The spouse is here first addressed by this title, and if the following question is hers,—‘What will ye see?’ etc.,—while she modestly accepts the appellation, she wonders what there is in her to attract such admiration. The true believer sees himself rather in his weakness and infirmity, than in the reflected beauty of Christ, of which he is a partaker. *Company*, or ‘dance,’ of *two armies*.—Hebrew *Mahanaim* (cf. Gen. 32: 2). Zöckler, in Lange, says, “They see in her something that resembles the ‘dance of Mahanaim,’—something as magnificent and transporting as the dance of the angel host east of the Jordan, on Jacob’s return home from the promised land.” It seems to be the reply of the chorus of virgins to her question, ‘What will ye see in the Shulamite?’—“We shall behold the church of God celebrating with appropriate rejoicings the victory which, through the presence of God’s spiritual army with her army, through divine might uplifting her natural weakness, she has been enabled to achieve” (cf. Ps. 34: 7).—*Thrupp*. Various other explanations are given, but the meaning is quite uncertain.

7: 1-9. This description, again, is to be taken as a whole, and as presenting, along with the portrait of the ‘head,’ in 6: 5-7, a completed ideal of female loveliness. The beloved is himself the artist. He begins at the feet and ascends to the head (1-5), and then gives the general impression made by the whole figure (6-9). It is, however, a word portrait, and not a statue or a painting; and even if we understand the undraped person to be described, it is but as a work of art, and “no parts of the female form are described but what a sculptor would imitate, in order to display the full symmetry of the human figure.”—*Thrupp*.

1. She is a *prince’s daughter* (cf. Ps. 45: 13. 2 Cor. 6: 17). Her feet are incased in shoes, or sandals, such as a princess would wear, richly jeweled. The joints, or roundings of the hips, present a full and graceful curve, as if wrought by the skillful hands of a jeweler. As the feet are clothed, we may suppose the same of the other parts of the

person which modesty conceals, and that it is the outward drapery which is described.

2. The *navel* may be the girdle-clasp or waist; and the *belly*, that part which is beneath the waist. Burrowes says, "The beauty of the waist expanding upward into the fullness of the bosom, is most aptly illustrated by a 'round goblet,' to the natural beauty of which is added the beauty of the richest spiced wine ('liquor'). The beauty of the form below the waist, is set forth by a 'heap of wheat inclosed with lilies'—a heap of wheat in a bed of full-blown lilies rising round and drooping over it."

3, 4. The *breasts* and *neck* are the same as described in chap. 4: 4, 5, except that what was there the 'tower of David,' is here a 'tower of ivory.' Her *eyes*, which in 4: 1 were doves' eyes, are here 'the fishpools of Heshbon,' full, clear, quiet, deep. Her *nose*, or *face*,—a 'tower of Lebanon,' of kindred aspect with that of her beloved (5: 15).

5. *Head upon thee*—must be the head-dress—a 'crown' that flourishes upon her with the 'excellency of Carmel.' The *hair*, that was before compared to a 'flock of goats' (4: 1; 6: 5), is here (with a different word, meaning locks, or tresses) as *purple*, the symbol of royalty. *The king—in the galleries*.—This is quite obscure. The word for galleries may also mean 'flowing ringlets,' and with these the king is captivated. The spiritual import of all these things we do not pretend to explain. The *fancies* of commentators are as numerous as the writers.

6. *How fair*.—Some take this as a summing up, like chap. 5: 16—a burst of inexpressible admiration. *For delights*, or 'daughter of allurements.'

7. Some, also, suppose that the chorus of 'daughters of Jerusalem' here speaks, using the singular 'I,' as did the Greek chorus, expressing their desire to be closely united with the spouse. Moody Stuart heads this passage, "*The betrothing of Jerusalem's daughters.*" *Palm-tree*.—On account of her majestic beauty. *Clusters*—whether of dates or grapes.

8. Either the beloved himself thus expresses his desire for closer union with his spouse; or the daughters who wish to become one with her would climb up to gather dates from the overhanging palm-boughs, and clusters of grapes from the clinging vine. Thus Ruth 'clave unto Naomi,' and 'certain—clave unto Paul and believed, among whom was—a wo-

man named Damaris and certain others' (Acts 17: 34). *Breasts* (cf. Isa. 66: 10, 11, 'breasts of her consolations').

9. *My beloved*.—The 'daughters' here seem, for the first time, to identify themselves with the spouse in the use of this language. They are now one with her. Thus her commendations of Christ have brought others to him. *Mouth* (cf. chap. 5: 16). There *his* mouth was 'most sweet,' here it is *hers*. She speaks his words. The imprint of such lips 'causes the lips of sleepers to speak.' So does the 'best wine' of the gospel awaken sleeping souls.*

* We quote here the following comprehensive passage from *J. A. W. in British and Foreign Evangelical Review*:

"What greatly corroborates the view we have taken of the import of the Song, is the manifest progression which we are able to trace in it. That progression exactly corresponds with the development of divine revelation and the growth of the church. We begin amid the night shadows; at length comes the daybreak; and last of all, the sun reaches meridian splendor. By a second and similar train of imagery is the progressive development of divine truth put before us: there is the passing away of winter, the opening of spring, when the vine flowers, the pomegranate buds and the fig-tree putteth forth her green fig. Then comes summer, and at last autumn, when the fruits are ripened. By a third train of imagery is the same thing brought before us. First. The bride hears only the bridegroom's voice; she rests upon the *promise* of the advent. Second. She comes into his house and sits at his table: there is now a typical worship which foreshadows Christ's coming. Third. She sees himself. He comes in the flesh. But again he departs, and when at last he returns, it is to abide.

"By yet other symbolizations is the correspondence shown between the development of the truth and the progress of the church. At the opening of the Song the church is seen as a single individual; toward its close she has become a multitude, an embannered host, she is, 'as it were, the company of two armies.'

"In the second chapter the church is described as a 'lily,' lowly and scarce seen by the world; but in the seventh chapter she has shot up into a goodly tree, and attracts the sight, for it is said, 'Thy stature is like to a palm-tree.' At the beginning she is 'black' and can not enlighten the world, but by and by she begins to shine with a light like that of the sun at noonday. At the outset she has neither defense nor organization, she is 'among thorns,' and she is seen smitten and bleeding from the sword of the 'watchmen;' but before all is over, she has swelled into an embattled host; she is fully armed, thoroughly organized; she marches under banners, and, as a victorious 'army,' strikes terror into her foes."

THE CHURCH AGGRESSIVE.

Read Song of Solomon VII. 10-13.

10. *His desire*.—This so far differs from the similar statement in 2: 16; 6: 3, that it presents, along with her own consciousness of her being her beloved's, a more full assurance of his interest in her. This she might infer from the preceding words (8, 9), if we suppose them to have been spoken by the beloved. Not only his affection, but his longing desire is toward her (cf. Gen. 3: 16. Ps. 45: 11). Such is the condescension and strength of the Saviour's love toward his people, that he can not do without them.

11. *Come—forth into the field*.—She will no longer tarry in Jerusalem, in luxurious spiritual enjoyment, but will go forth to work in more distant places. Thus the 'joy of the Lord is our strength,' and thus prompt is the spouse for aggressive work when she knows that 'the Lord has need of her.' We may regard this as the missionary cry of the church,—*forth into the field!* Thus 'the disciples were all scattered abroad, —and went everywhere preaching the word' (Acts 8: 4, 25; 11: 19-25).

12. *Early*.—It was for this that she proposed to 'lodge in the villages,' so that she might be early at the work, and no time be lost.

Let us.—She can not work alone, but relies upon the promise, 'Lo! I am with you always,' etc. (Matt. 28: 20; cf. Acts 5: 12; 14: 3).

Vine flourish.—She looks carefully after her home work (Acts 15: 36, 'see how they do').

Bud.—Especially would she know whether the budding plants of youthful piety are carefully nurtured.

My loves.—As shown in those labors and sacrifices which are the best evidences of love to Christ.

13. *Mandrakes*.—(Cf. Gen. 30: 14, 16, and note.) "This fruit is to her innocence and simplicity merely the symbol of love. She does not mean to intimate an intention to prepare a magic potion from them, to excite her lover to a higher degree of affection."—*Zöckler* in Lange.

It is doubtful if the *atropa mandragora*, or love-apple, of the commentators, be the plant here meant. That is said to have a disagreeable odor, while this 'gives a smell,' no doubt pleasant. Augustine says of the plant so called in his day, "It is of a very sweet smell."—*Gill*. It is one of the 'all manner of pleasant things' laid up for her beloved. *At*

our gates.—Laid up in store. *New and old.*—Perhaps Jewish and Gentile converts.

“While this clause sets forth the desire of the church to consecrate her every work as a love offering to Christ, it serves also as an introduction to that expression of desire for his more entire presence, to which we now proceed.”—*Thrupp*.

CLOSER INTIMACY DESIRED.

Read Song of Solomon VIII. 1-4.

1. *OH that, etc.*—Hebrew, ‘How wilt thou give thyself,’ etc. *Of my mother, i. e.,* an own brother, born of the same mother,—one to whom the most chaste and unreserved manifestations of affection might be given. *Without.*—In the streets (3: 2; 5: 7). *Despise me.*—Deem it a weak enthusiasm, as the world and worldly Christians do, when the highest communings of the soul with Christ are openly uttered. Moody Stuart finds here the desire of the Jewish Church for the incarnation, when the Messiah, being ‘born of a woman,’ becomes as a ‘brother,’ etc., with an ultimate reference to his appearing again as the First-born among many brethren. *Thrupp* says, “She desires his outward coming, or *παρουσία*; she desires to behold him once more in the human body which he assumed when at his incarnation he became the brother of mankind.”

That such expectations were universally cherished by the ancient church, no one can doubt (Acts 1: 11. 1 Thess. 1: 10. 2 Pet. 2: 10-14, etc.). *When or how* these expectations are to be met, is the great problem of the church at the present day. Individual weak and trembling believers also long thus for more fraternal manifestations of Christ’s spiritual presence.

2. *Mother’s house.*—(Cf. 3: 4, and note.) *Instruct me, i. e.,* ‘that thou mightest instruct me.’ For this the Comforter was promised (John 14: 26, etc). ‘Now we see through a glass darkly.’ The church has much yet to learn from God’s word. *Spiced wine.*—Wine mingled with the juice of the pomegranate was a most refreshing drink. ‘I will afford thee the best entertainment possible.’ ‘Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?’

3. *Left hand, etc.*—The words here, though rendered differently from 2: 6, are the same. Already she seems to have reached—perhaps in the way of assured expectation—that

state of calm and tranquil enjoyment which these words express. Thus in apostolic days 'had these churches rest' etc. (Acts 9: 31), and thus in times of gracious spiritual visitation does the spouse enjoy the embrace of her beloved. No earthly thoughts are designed to be suggested here.

4. This is the same charge as that given in 2: 7; 3: 5, though without the allusion to the roes, etc. (see note). The church even now sits together 'in heavenly places in Christ Jesus,' and wishes not to be disturbed in this repose of love:—but still, this is not our rest (cf. 1 Peter 1: 8, 9). These words seem to close another canticle, as the same words do the first and second. Some call this the third, others, with more propriety, the fourth,—the third ending with chap 5: 1. We find a new scene introduced here, with similar words to those of chap. 3: 6. As it is near the close of the Song, we naturally look for its application chiefly to the future.

THE SEALING OF LOVE.

Read Song of Solomon VIII. 5-7.

5. WHO—*this?*—The spouse again comes up from the wilderness, as in chap. 3: 6. There she occupied a royal palanquin along with her beloved, here she comes leaning affectionately on his supporting arm. Those who would refer that passage primarily to Christ's coming in the flesh, will, of course, apply this to his second coming. Neither passage, however, will have its complete fulfillment until amidst those latter-day developments which still await the expecting church. The spouse has always been 'coming up from the wilderness,' both in Old and New Testament times, and always will be, until her beloved shall be ready for his final marriage with her. She has always been 'leaning upon his arm' for support; and will be, until her identification with him shall be complete. The present scene shows her in nearer approximation to her final union than before. *I raised thee up* (Hebrew, 'awaked thee').—It would be easier to put these words in the mouth of the beloved, but the Hebrew forbids it. The *I* is feminine and *thee* masculine. It seems to be the first address of the spouse to her beloved on meeting him. 'I awaked thee under the citron-tree' (cf. chap. 2: 3). In those Old Testament times, when I 'sat under thy shadow with great delight,' I awaked thy affection toward me. From thy very infancy (which we may find in

that first gospel promise, Gen. 3: 15, or in the birth at Bethlehem), from the earliest exercise of thy Messianic office, thou hast loved me, and now I claim thee as more than ever mine. "It is no marvel, saith she, that I long for thy company, for by former experience I have found the good of it." —*Durham*. Past experiences of the Saviour's love are a ground for larger expectations. 'To him that hath shall be given.'

6, 7. *Seal—heart—arm*.—Signet rings were thus worn (Gen. 38: 18. Cf. Hag. 2: 23). In the East, when a husband is going to a distant country, the wife says to him, 'Ah! place me as a seal upon thine heart.' The spouse would now have the mutual affection of herself and her beloved so *sealed* as to be forever sure, and liable to no more such interruptions as she had experienced. She then mentions some characteristics of a love such as she would wish to have thus sealed to her: *Strong*, or inseparable *as death*; *jealousy*, rather 'zealous love' *is cruel* or 'unyielding' as the grave—'hades;' *coals—flame*—a 'fire-flame of Jehovah' (v. 6), a flame which 'many waters can not quench,' and too costly to be purchased with all riches (v. 7). Such love is that of which the apostle speaks in that noble passage, Rom. 8: 35–39 (read). Such is the Love that is better than Faith and Hope, and that 'never faileth' (1 Cor. 13). The church will continue to experience more and more of this love as she becomes more ready for her final marriage.

THE LITTLE SISTER.

Read Song of Solomon VIII. 8–10.

8, 9. THE 'little sister' is generally admitted to be the church of the Gentiles. In Jewish times she was yet an immature virgin.

We.—The spouse now regards herself and her beloved as one, and to her inquiry, 'What shall we do for her?' he joins in the response, "We will build up our Gentile sister in full proportions, and with all that is needful for her; and every part of her framework shall be of the costliest. As for her wall of inclosure, we will fence her round with silver; as for her doors, of cedar alone, and of no inferior wood, shall they be constructed."—*Thrupp*.

All this is still applicable to the nations yet to be brought in. All God's chosen ones, not yet gathered, belong to the little immature sister. The 'middle wall of partition' be-

tween Jews and Gentiles shall be broken down, and all shall be one body in Christ.

10. *I am a wall.*—The little sister has caught these words of conference concerning her, and already speaks for herself. The nations have heard the gospel—and *she* too is ready now in full development, 'for the favor' of the beloved. The Lord hasten it in its time!

SOLOMON'S VINEYARD.

Read Song of Solomon VIII. 11, 12 (cf. Isa. V. 1-7).

11. SOLOMON—It is still the heavenly Solomon who is intended. *Baal-hamon, i. e.,* 'Lord of a multitude, *i. e.,* of Christians in the wide world, which is to be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord. The vineyard is the church universal. *Keepers, i. e.,* all church officers, and indeed all who have a vineyard in their own hearts to keep (cf. Matt. 21: 23-43, parable of the vineyard). *Was to bring.*—This is said perhaps of the former Jewish keepers, who were cast out of the vineyard (cf. Isa. 7: 23).

12. *My vineyard—mine.*—The whole of Solomon's vineyard is now 'before' the church, and is hers to keep and to enjoy, while it is all to be cultivated for him (cf. note on 4: 16). *A thousand, i. e.,* the full revenue which was required of the former keepers. The whole revenue is *his*, but he allows two tithes (the proportion which the Jews paid) to the present keepers. It recognizes the principle that 'the laborer is worthy of his hire.' Still, all that is given to the keepers is but a part of the 'thousand' which belongs to Christ. 'The Lord loveth a cheerful giver;' and when all the tithes and offerings shall be brought in, then shall the windows of heaven be opened, and an overflowing fullness of millennial blessings shall be poured out (Mal. 3: 10).

CONCLUSION.

Read Song of Solomon VIII. 13, 14.

IF the Song is a drama, this is the epilogue, and it is an expression of mutual longing for intercourse and communion.

13. *Thou that, etc.*—The beloved hails the spouse with this greeting. She had complained before that 'her own vineyard she had not kept' (chap. 1: 6), but now she 'dwells,' or abides permanently in it, unceasingly employed in her work.

She sings cheerfully as one delighting in her labor, and her companions, no matter who, 'hear her voice.' 'Let me hear it,' he cries (cf. chap. 2: 14), 'for sweet is thy voice.' All the church's hearty utterances of prayer, praise, teaching, etc., are pleasant to Christ. If we are to notice the word 'gardens' in the plural, it may refer to the different fields of the one great vineyard, divided, perhaps, still by denominational hedges, but with no impassable barriers. The voice of the bride is heard loudly ringing from every field where faithful laborers work.

14. *Make haste*.—Such is the bride's response. *Bride* we call her now, for such, indeed, she is soon to be, when the 'marriage of the Lamb' shall have come, and 'his wife hath made herself ready' (Rev. 19: 7). 'Haste thy coming,' she cries, 'like a gazelle or a young hart,' no longer upon the 'mountains of Bether' (see chap. 2: 17, and note), but upon the delectable 'mountains of spices,' the 'mountain of myrrh,' and the 'hill of frankincense' (chap. 4: 6). 'Come quickly, and carry me with thee to those heavenly hills.' 'Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly.' Amen.

In the conclusion of these notes we can not withhold the following passage from a work by an English writer entitled "*Meditations on the Song of Solomon*."

"If it be both comforting and strengthening to the believer to contemplate a picture of his failings and infirmities drawn by Him who alone knows thoroughly their character and extent, when at the same time he reveals a love which, unquenched by many waters, tenderly wins back the spoiler of his own peace to lost yet longed-for happiness, such a picture and such love are exhibited in the Song of Solomon. Variableness and more or less unfaithfulness mark the path of the best and holiest of the Lord's people, but Jesus is the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever; and he is presented to us here in the exercise of unwearied grace. The bride may leave her first love, her spikenard may no longer send forth the smell thereof; she may forsake the retreats where alone her beloved is to be found, and vainly expect to meet him in worldly scenes never countenanced or gladdened by his presence; the spirit of slumbering may cause him to miss many a happy season of communion; she may so act that though ever able to say, 'Lord, thou knowest that I love thee,' the reality of her love, appreciable indeed to Him who knows all things, might at times be questioned, if her out-

ward conduct were the sole criterion. But although her course be strangely diversified by intense love and forgetfulness, faithfulness and inconstancy, she finds him ever unaltered, always indulgent to her failings, ever courting her love.

“Howsoever many her wanderings and mistakes, and however humiliating the results of her folly, he never ceases to be the admirer of her person, the sharer of her joys, the guardian of her rest. She can say, ‘I am my beloved’s, and my beloved is mine,’ even when she has willfully wandered from the lilies where he feeds.”









