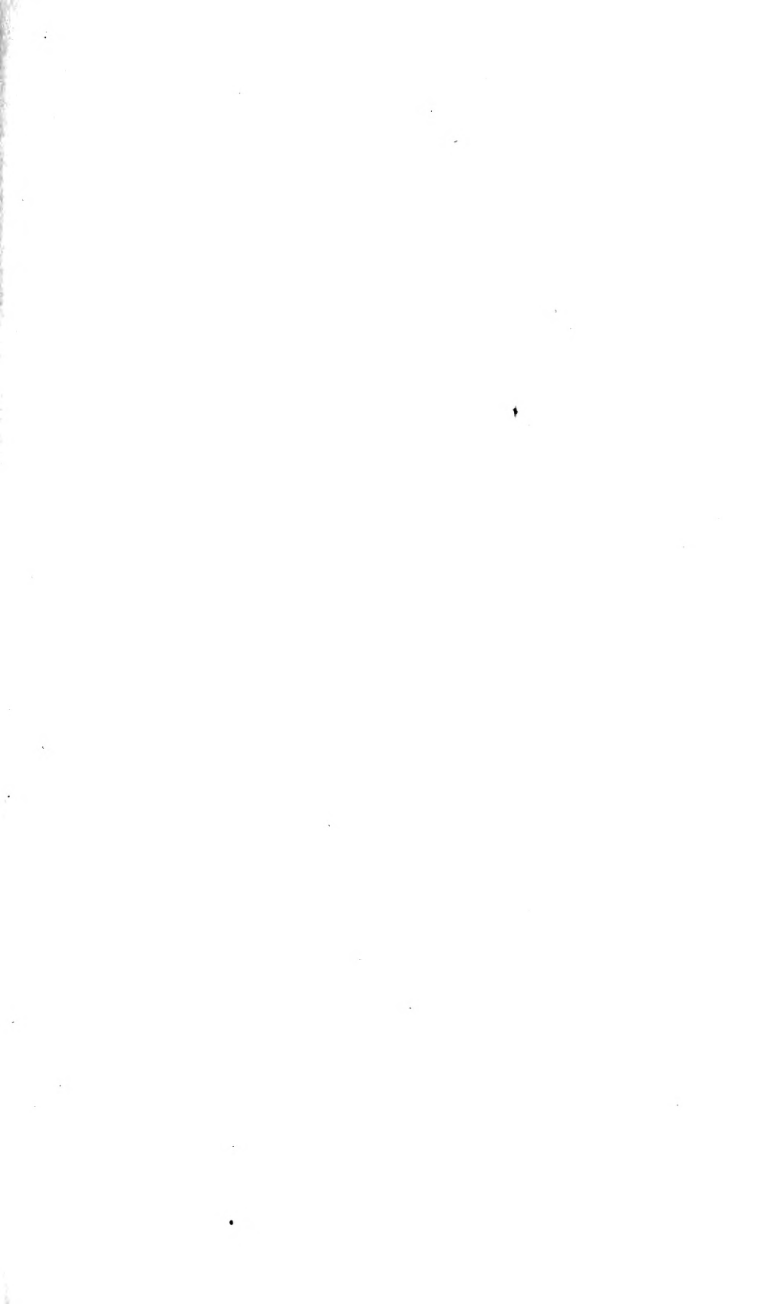
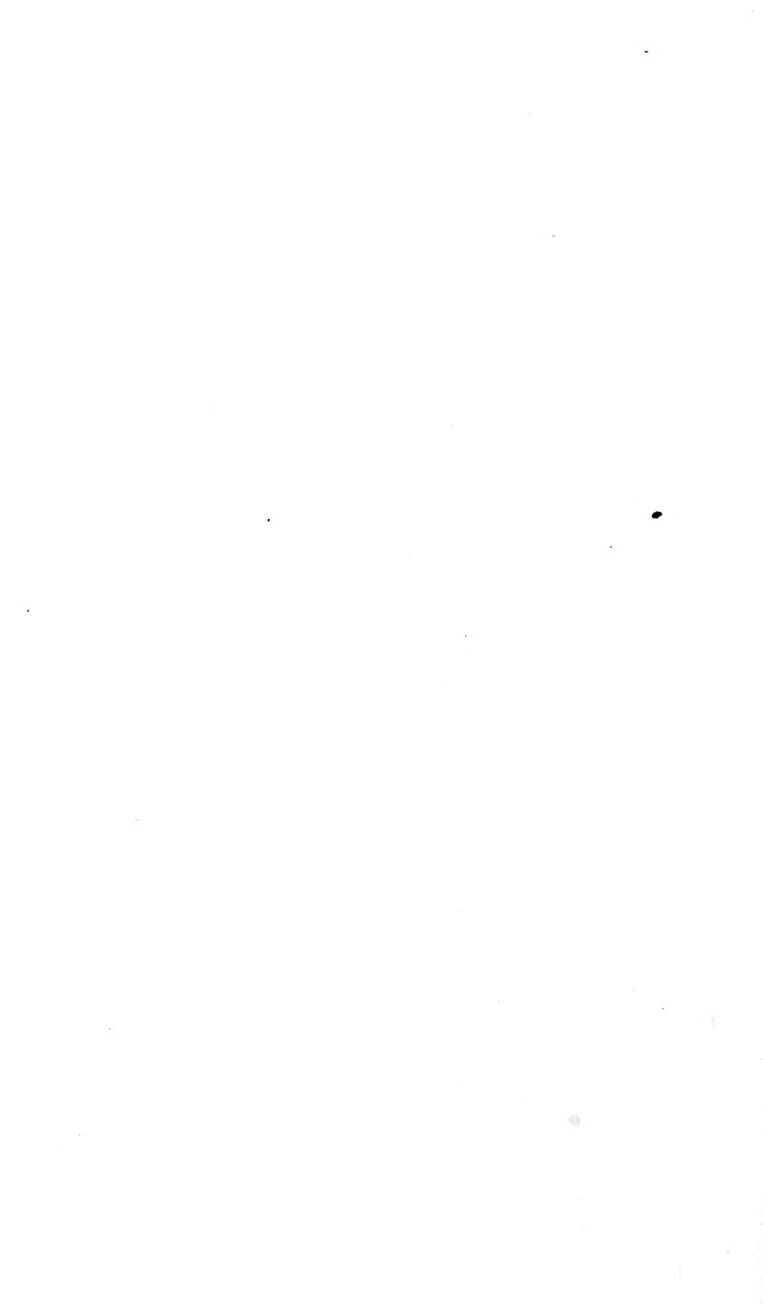




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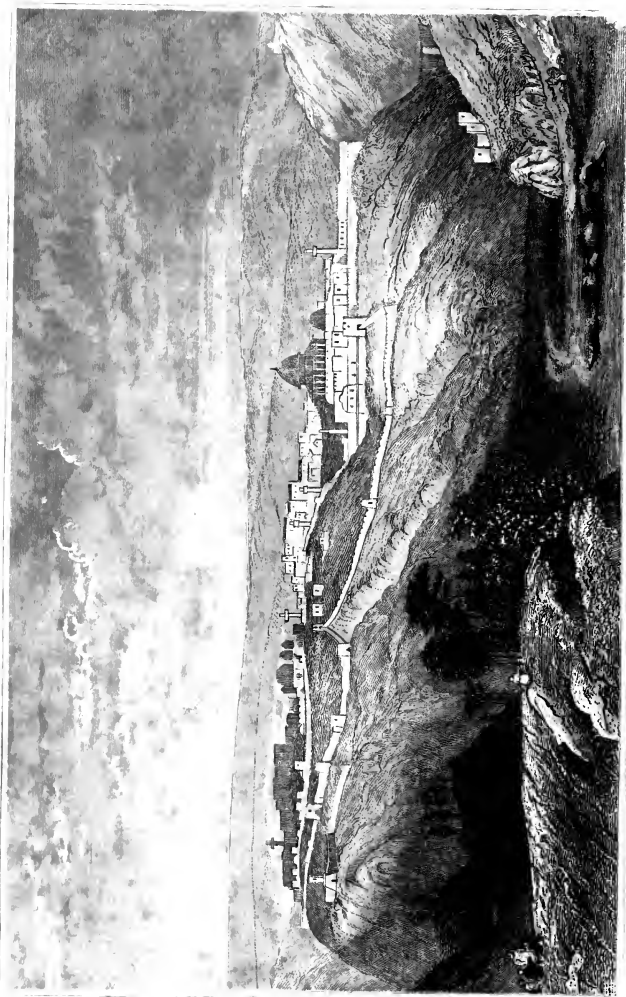
Mr. Henry Green
Princeton N.J.

October 1860

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VIEW OF THE TOWN OF ...

DAILY BIBLE ILLUSTRATIONS:

BEING

Original Readings for a Year,

ON SUBJECTS FROM

SACRED HISTORY, BIOGRAPHY, GEOGRAPHY,
ANTIQUITIES, AND THEOLOGY.

ESPECIALLY DESIGNED FOR THE FAMILY CIRCLE.

BY JOHN KITTO, D.D., F.S.A.

EDITOR OF "THE PICTORIAL BIBLE," "CYCLOPEDIA OF BIBLICAL LITERATURE," ETC., &C.

v. 2

MOSES AND THE JUDGES.

NEW YORK:
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cidents, it was supposed might be acceptably explained or illustrated as portions of the Sacred Volume. Much attention has here, by preference, been given to matters which the writers of Bible histories, and even the readers of the Bible itself—too little mindful of the special character of sacred history—do not pause to examine.

The work before the reader is, thus, not a history—not a commentary—not a book of critical or antiquarian research—not one of popular illustration—nor of practical reflection—but is something of all these; it is whatever the Author has been able, in his plain way, to make it—whatever it has grown to in his hands, under the influence of his earnest and prevailing wish to produce a work which might promote an intelligent apprehension of the Sacred Book, and contribute to encourage a habit not merely of reading, but of thinking over its contents. These objects could only be achieved by presenting, in a readably familiar form, suited for general use, some of the results, most available for this purpose, of a life's labor in sacred literature.

The warm favor with which the first volume has been received, and the extensive circulation which it has already attained, fills the Author with thankfulness, and greatly encourages him to hope for a blessing upon his labors in the direction which has now been given to them.

LONDON, *April*, 1850

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DAILY BIBLE ILLUSTRATIONS.

Fourteenth Week—Sunday.

THE CHOSEN PEOPLE.

A NEW scene now opens to us. Between the books of Genesis and Exodus there is a considerable chasm, corresponding to the interval between the time of Joseph and that of Moses. At the remoter edge of this chasm, the Israelites, few in number, are seen peaceably seated among the good things of Egypt, in the land of Goshen; flourishing under the protection of a government grateful for the eminent services of Joseph. At the nearer edge we find the nation increased to a mighty host, but groaning under the oppressions of a government that “knew not Joseph.”

But the purposes of God are ripening. And now that we enter upon a period in which the great doctrines of eternal truth—lost to the world, or smothered beneath the burden of man’s inventions—are to be seen embodied in the institutions and muniments of one of the smallest of the nations, let us for a moment glance at a few of the questions which exercise the thoughts of those who look closely at this condition of the world’s affairs.

We have already had more than one occasion, in the course of these Daily Illustrations, to intimate that the object of the revelation made to Moses was to put the Jewish people in possession of a pure religion, and to place them in a condition to maintain it amid the corruptions of the earth, and eventually to become the instruments of communicating it,

under more complete developments, to the rest of the world. It may be asked, and it has been asked : Why should so desirable a revelation, of the truths of which the whole idolatrous world stood so much in need, be limited to a single nation, and that a nation so politically unimportant ? To this it may, in the first place, be answered, that to have a pure worship of God ascend but from one corner of the earth, seems, even to human reason, to be an object in all respects well worthy of the Divine wisdom, and in itself suitable to be accomplished. But when such questions are asked, we are always too much in the habit of thinking only of man's apparent advantage, as if there were nothing else to be taken into account. We are always measuring not only earth but heaven by the standard of our own very scant knowledge, and of our own very limited ideas ; forgetting, or remembering but faintly, and expressing very delicately, as if only to round a period or to fill a sentence, the great and solemn fact, that there is One higher than the highest, whose honor is not to be the second or the third—but the FIRST matter for consideration. If we look to this, we may see that the question of man's greater or less benefit is not always to be the first, and still less the sole, object in every consideration of divine things : and although we, for ourselves, hold that man's most essential well-being has been marvellously made consistent with the highest glory to God's great name, it yet behooves us to consider whether *that* is not worthy of being an independent object—an adequate and sufficient object in itself ; and whether as such it might not most worthily be consulted by His worship not being allowed to be wholly banished from the earth.

But it is further asked, Why this revelation should have been communicated to the Jews alone, and other nations not allowed to partake of its benefits ? Now to this we have no right to expect an answer, further than as an answer is furnished by observation on the whole course of Divine providence. We might quite as well ask, why one nation enjoys a better climate than another ; why among men there are

native differences of talent and disposition ; why one man is made to live under a government which oppresses his mind, and another under social influences which give all its faculties free scope and excitement ; why one man's religious interests are made from the first to flourish under the fostering influence of parental care, while another is exposed from infancy to every kind of moral contamination. The question respecting the abstract justice of such inequalities, may or may not be a question hard to answer ; but such as it is, it relates to the whole acknowledged course of the Divine administration of the world's affairs, and cannot, therefore, with any propriety, be made a ground of distrust as to the divine origin or essential fitness of the Mosaical dispensation. It applies quite as much to Christianity as it does to Judaism ; and not more to either than it does to the endless variety of human fortunes and conditions.

This being the ordinary course of the Divine government, which carries its final adjustments by the scale of justice and truth into a world yet future, where all apparent inequalities are to be settled and explained, it would have been a deviation from that course had not one part of the world, and one people, been in this instance and for this purpose preferred before another ; and had the preference fallen on some other nation than the Jews, the same question would still have remained to be asked. The selection of that nation in particular may or may not have been arbitrary. The later Scriptures, to discourage the conceit of the Jews in the peculiar honor put upon them, seem to urge that it was at least so far arbitrary, that it was for no peculiar and distinctive merit of their own that they were chosen ; yet the same Scriptures admit the privilege of their descent from the covenant fathers as a ground of distinction, which therefore merely carries this question further back to seek the grounds on which Abraham became the root of that covenant. Still, even if there were nothing, as there may have been although undiscoverable by us, in the capacities, character, conditions, and relations of this particular people, to account for the honor

put upon them, we certainly are not historically acquainted with any other people better entitled to it on any conceivable ground of claim; and it ought to satisfy the mind to know that even if the Hebrews had no special fitness for this high destination, we know not of any nation that had more, or which could exhibit any preferable claims. Either way, there is nothing to excite surprise in our inability to see distinctly what it was that determined the Divine preference of this nation; nor does this raise any presumption against the fact that this preference was actually exercised.

It may also be observed, that in point of fact, the selection of one nation was not in this instance an exclusion of the rest of mankind. Other men, to whom the knowledge of this religion might come, were at liberty to adopt it if so inclined, and special provision was made for their admission to all the privileges of the chosen race; and we find, both in the early and later history of this nation, that proselytes from divers nations did in fact receive the religion, and came to stand in relation to it on the same footing as the descendants of Israel.

But still farther: the Mosaical institution, while it sternly refused on its own part to mingle with the various systems which corrupted the world, and strove to keep altogether aloof from them, was so far from excluding, in any conceivable sense, the mass of mankind from its benefits, that it was expressly designed to be ultimately for the benefit of all mankind, by being an introduction for Christianity—by preparing the way for a system which, in their existing state of culture, the nations could not have been made to embrace, without stronger compulsion than in his dealings with the nations, God has ever yet seen fit to exercise. Men were then universally bigoted to idolatry; and to reclaim them eventually to better views, the fittest way for God to adopt—seeing that he always works by means—was to reclaim first a portion of mankind, by subjecting them to a minute and detailed discipline, only capable of being administered to a small community. Such was the system organized under the agency of

Moses—a system well adapted to train one community to the profession of religious truth, which, when they were established in it, they would be fit instruments of communicating in an extended and spiritualized form to the world.

Far be it from us to think that God is bound to give us an account of any of his matters, or to make the path he takes plain to our understandings. Many things there are that he has not seen fit to disclose clearly to us—and many there are that we have not the capacity of understanding—because they belong to a different and a higher realm of thought and spirit than that of which we are, for the present, citizens. With respect to both, we may be content to feel, that what we know not now, we shall know hereafter. It is nevertheless pleasant to be enabled to understand the reasons of His high dealings with the sons of men; and in *this* branch of spiritual knowledge there is little that He has seen fit to withhold from us that may not be discovered in the careful consideration and comparison of his word, and of his past doings in the government of the world. In general, the reason we do not see, is more often because we are blind, than because it is dark.

FOURTEENTH WEEK—MONDAY.

THE HARD BONDAGE.—EXODUS I.

WHEN we read of the numerous facts and incidents pictorially registered in the monuments of Egypt, and understand that some of them can be traced up to the time of Moses, the question naturally arises, Whether we may not hope to find among them some record of the events, so important in Egyptian history, connected with the residence of the Israelites in the land of Egypt, and their departure from it. As the principal and most ancient monuments of this kind are in Upper Egypt, we should not look for any memorials of that

portion of public history with which the name of Joseph is connected in our minds, because that history belongs to Lower Egypt, which was not then, as we apprehend, under the same crown with the upper country. Neither should we expect to find any record of the remarkable circumstances connected with the plagues of Egypt and the exode of the Israelites ; for although the upper and lower countries were then under one crown—and although such events as the death of the first-born, and the overthrow in the Red Sea, were of sufficient national importance for such commemoration—we do not find that nations, and certainly not the Egyptians, manifest any readiness to perpetuate their own dishonor. But if there be any circumstance in the history of Israel's sojourn in the country, which tends to exalt the glory and power of Egypt, of *that* we might not unreasonably expect to find some trace on the monuments.

Accordingly, the only representation which has been supposed by the students of Egyptian antiquity to have any reference to the Israelites, exhibits them in the state of oppression and humiliation, when it became the policy of the new dynasty from Upper Egypt, "which knew not Joseph" and his services, to depress the Hebrew population, and reduce them to a servile condition, by making "their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field."

This representation, which has been regarded with great interest by scholars and travellers, is found painted on the walls of a tomb at Thebes. A copy and explanation of it was first furnished by the distinguished Italian professor, Rosellini, in his great work on the monuments of Egypt. His account of it is headed, "Explanation of a picture representing the Hebrews as they were engaged making brick." In this picture some of the laborers are employed in transporting the clay in vessels ; some in working it up with the straw ; others are taking the bricks out of the moulds and setting them in rows to dry ; while others, by means of a yoke upon their shoulders, from which ropes are suspended

at each end, are seen carrying away the bricks already dried. Among the supposed Hebrews, four Egyptians, very distinguishable by their figure and color, are noticed. Two of them, one sitting and the other standing, carry a stick in their hand, superintending the laborers, and seemingly ready to fall upon two other Egyptians, who are represented as sharing the labors of the supposed Hebrews.

This scene does certainly illustrate, in all points, the labors of the Israelites, for we are told, not only that they wrought in the making of bricks—which was a government work in Egypt, and bricks bearing the royal stamp have been found—but that the king “set over them task-masters to afflict them with their burdens;” and that, “all the service wherein they made them serve was with rigor.” We also know that the bricks were compacted like these with straw; for at a later period we are told that the crown would not allow them the straw with which to compact their bricks, but left them to provide it for themselves, without the tale of bricks previously exacted being at all diminished—“And the task-masters hasted them, saying, Fulfil your works—your daily tasks, as when there was straw.” The straw was used to compact the mass of clay, and not as some have supposed to burn the bricks. These being only dried in the sun, which suffices in a dry climate, the straw, which would be destroyed were the bricks burned, remains perfect and undischored in bricks nearly 4000 years old. That the sticks of the task-masters were no idle insignia of authority, is shown by the complaints of the Israelites,—“There is no straw given unto thy servants, and they say to us, make bricks; and behold thy servants are beaten.”—See the whole passage, *Exod. v. 7-16*.

The picture is found at Thebes, in the tomb of a person called Roscherê. The question hence arises, how, if it represent the labors of the Hebrews, it came to be there, and in the tomb of this person. It is answered, that Roscherê was a high court officer of the king, being overseer of the public buildings, and, consequently, having charge of all the works undertaken by the crown. In the tomb are found other ob-

jects of a like nature—two colossal statues, a sphinx, and even the laborers who hewed the stone-works, which he, by virtue of his office, had caused to be made in his lifetime. This high officer being entombed at Thebes, any important labor in any part of the kingdom would naturally be represented there, for the kingdom was one, and the whole department seems to have been under his control; and it is now admitted that the inscription does not so expressly declare, as was at first imagined, that the bricks were made for a building at Thebes. But even were this the case, the difficulty is not insuperable. It is true that the Israelites during their bondage occupied their ancient home (so far as the men were allowed to enjoy a home) in Goshen, which was far distant from Thebes; but we know of nothing, either in Scripture or elsewhere, which would confine their labors to Goshen. On the contrary, when they were ordered, in this very business of brick-making, to find straw for themselves, we are constrained to suppose that they were at work for the royal monopolist of this manufacture in all parts of Egypt; for in Exodus v. 12, we read, “So the people were scattered abroad throughout all the land of Egypt.” This certainly does not convey the idea that they were making bricks in Goshen only. There is indeed reason, from other testimony, to suppose that the usage in the working of the Israelites was to send them out in gangs, or classes, under overseers, for a considerable time, making these gangs necessarily relieve each other; and there can, therefore, be no objection to the opinion that some of these gangs may have been sent even so far as Thebes for the sake of their work at the place where there was most demand for it. We may be certain, that no considerations of humanity were likely to prevent this among such a people as the Egyptians. Indeed, it was evidently for the interest of the Egyptian oppressors, who alleged the numbers of the Israelites as the ground of their apprehensions, to scatter them in small bodies over all Egypt, as much as might be practicable.

Upon the whole, therefore, although it is not alleged that

anything like positive certainty can be attained, there is nothing to render improbable the conclusion to which the complexion and peculiar physiognomy of the workmen, and the age of the monument, would lead, that these brickmakers were really Israelites, and that they are represented in the execution of the very labors which the Scripture commemorates. The complexion is such as the Egyptian artists usually give to the natives of Syria. The dress might have afforded some farther and interesting evidence, as the artists were very particular in preserving the details of costume; for the figures are represented as unclad, save for the short trowsers or apron which they wear at their labor. It may be doubted, however, whether, after such long residence in Egypt—which was indeed the native country of all the Israelites of that age—they had preserved the style of dress which the single family of Jacob brought with it from Canaan. It is far more likely that they had by this time conformed, in this respect, to the habits of the country, which were better suited to the climate than any costume their ancestors could have brought from the less fervid climate of Syria. This partly also meets the objection which has been made to the want of beards in these figures. They are not to be regarded as strangers come freshly to Egypt with all their foreign usages about them, but as tribes long settled in the country, many of the customs of which they had necessarily adopted. They may to some extent have adopted the Egyptian habit of shaving the beard—or such of them as were in government employment may have been compelled to do so. We have already* had occasion to notice that the Egyptians compelled their servants, of whatever nation, to shave their beards. In this representation, however, all the figures are not beardless. Upon the whole, we see no reason why the reader should deny himself the satisfaction of believing, that in this scene he contemplates a representation, by Egyptian artists, of the very scene which the Sacred Books describe.†

* See Twelfth Week, Saturday.

† This subject is fully discussed by Rosellini, as above quoted by

FOURTEENTH WEEK—TUESDAY.

THE INFANCY OF MOSES.—EXOD. II. 10.

WHILE Israel lay under long and heavy oppression in Egypt, the man appointed to be the deliverer was born, and was undergoing the training requisite for the office he was destined to bear. This man was MOSES. The circumstances attending his deliverance by the king's daughter, have been so often explained, as to be familiar to the reader. We shall, therefore, rather call attention to another matter of no small interest, concerning which we are left comparatively in the dark. This is the youth of Moses. We know that he was nursed by his own mother—not known to be such—and that, when he was of a proper age, he was brought to Pharaoh's daughter, "And he became her son." This is all we are told. The next verse resumes the history when he is forty years of age, and we know nothing of his circumstances and demeanor during that long period. It does appear, however, that he had spent this time among the Egyptians, and not with the Israelites; for we are told that he *then* (as if for the first time) "went out unto his brethren, and looked upon their burdens." It is respecting this interval that we would inquire.

That he became "the son" of the king's daughter, or that he was adopted by her, suffices to indicate the general course of his early condition and bringing up. It must not, however, lead us to suppose that, as some fancy, he by this adoption became the heir of the crown. It is indeed very true that there was no Salic law in Egypt, and it was quite possible that the princess, who is said to have been named Thermuthis, might, in failure of male heirs, have succeeded to the

Sir J. G. Wilkinson, in his *Ancient Egyptians*; by Hengstenberg, in his *Egypt and the Books of Moses*; by Osburn, in *Egypt's Testimony*; and recently by an American writer, Dr. Hawks, in his work on the *Monuments of Egypt*.

throne. But it does not appear that there was any probable want of male heirs to the crown; and it is likely that, although the *adoption* of a foreign child of a race hated by the Egyptians, may have sufficed to render him the heir to her private estate, it yet conferred upon him no political standing with reference to the crown. We cannot, however, speak with confidence on this point,—Indian history having recently afforded some striking evidence of the full equality, in the East, of adoptive with natural rights.

It has seemed to some a difficulty, that so inveterate a persecutor of the Hebrews as this Pharaoh, should consent to the adoption by his daughter of one of the very children he had doomed to destruction. We think it a sufficient answer, that the crusade against the male children was probably over long before the time that the child was brought home, and adopted by Thermuthis. Some, however, conjecture that the princess was married but childless, and was hence led to adopt the Hebrew infant, whom she imposed upon her father as her own son.

One short verse in Stephen's address to the Jewish council, is our only further source of authentic information; and so far as it goes, it is in conformity with the traditionary accounts of the youth of Moses which have been transmitted to us, and may, therefore, to a certain extent, seem to authenticate them. The words are:—"Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds." This certainly implies that he received the most learned and accomplished education which the world could then perhaps afford; and was put in possession, under the ablest teachers, of all the highly extolled and anciently much desired wisdom of the Egyptians. It also intimates that he was enabled to distinguish himself, in some remarkable manner, both by "words" and by "deeds."

Now, the Jewish traditions which stand on record in Josephus and in the Midrash, are to this effect:—

It is clearly stated in Scripture, that Moses was a very beautiful child. His comeliness was such, Josephus says, as

excited the pleasant surprise of all who beheld him. It frequently happened, he alleges, that those who met him, as he was carried along the road were obliged to turn again to gaze after the child ; while those who were at work by the wayside, left what they were about, and stood long in motionless admiration to behold him, so astonishing were the charms of his infant countenance. Nor was his understanding less remarkably developed. It was much in advance of his years ; and when he was taught, he manifested a quickness of apprehension quite unusual at his age ; while the manliness of his conduct and demeanor bore promise of the greatness of his mature age.

Josephus, and other Jewish writers, allege that the king's daughter having adopted Moses, introduced him to her father as one to become his successor in case she were not blessed with children of her own. She is made to say : "I have brought up a child who is of a heavenly form, and of a generous mind ; and as I have received him in a wonderful manner from the bounty of the river, I have thought proper to adopt him for my son, and the heir of thy kingdom." On this, the story runs on, the king took the child in his arms, and caressed him. In a pleasant way he took off his diadem, and put it upon the child's head ; but he threw it to the ground in a seemingly childish passion, and trod it beneath his feet. On this the monarch looked grave, seeing in this boyish act an evil presage for Egypt. This was confirmed by the sacred scribe then present, who declared that this child was born for disaster to the kingdom, and counselled that he should be forthwith slain. But Thermuthis prevented this, by hastily removing the boy ; and even the king was not hasty in following such harsh counsel : "God himself, whose providence protected Moses, inclining the king to spare him."

The Jewish and Moslem legends embellish this comparatively plain statement by informing us that the king commanded two bowls, one filled with Shoham stones (rubies), and the other with burning coals, to be brought ; by means

of which it would be seen whether the child had acted thoughtlessly or from reflection. If he seized the flaming coals, he should live; but if he took the glittering gems he should die. This was done, and the child, endued with manly understanding, was about to grasp a handful of the gems; but God, watchful over his life, sent an angel, who invisibly, and against the child's will, directed his hand into the burning coals, and even to put one into his mouth. By this Pharaoh was re-assured, and apologized to Thermuthis; but Moses, it is added, was burned in the tongue, and was a stammerer from that day. This last incident is introduced to account for what Moses says of himself—Exodus iv. 10—“I am of slow speech, and of a slow tongue.”

If the words which the Jewish historian subjoins to this statement may be regarded as supplying authentic information, they are very important as showing—what we cannot learn from any other source—the point of view in which the position of Moses was regarded by the Hebrews, on the one hand, and by the Egyptians on the other. “He was therefore educated with great care. The Hebrews depended on him, and were of hope that great things for their advantage would be done by him. But the Egyptians had doubts of what might arise from such bringing up. Yet because, if Moses had been destroyed, there was no one—either akin to, or adopted by, the royal family—likely to be of greater advantage to them, and who had any pretensions to the crown by oracular predictions,* they spared his life.”

Amidst all this, one thing is very certain, that Moses was brought up as the son of the king's daughter. In regard to the ends which, in the providence of God, were secured by his being brought up in the royal palace, it may be observed that, according to the common course of things, no one,

* This alludes to an alleged previous prediction of the same sacred scribe who has just been mentioned. Before the birth of Moses he had foretold, that about this time there should be born to the Israelites one who, if he were suffered to live, would lower the power of Egypt, exalt the Israelites, and win for himself a glorious name.

either Hebrew or Egyptian, but the king's own daughter, would have been likely to have dared to undertake, in the first instance, the responsibility of preserving a child devoted by the royal decree to destruction; nor was it possible, humanly speaking, that he should by any other means, in the existing condition of this people, have obtained the high education and training which he thus secured. By the advantage of this princely education, he became a person most accomplished in his temper, demeanor and intellect; and trained in that largeness of view and generosity of spirit which are supposed to result from such relations, and which qualified him to sustain with dignity and authority the offices of ruler of a people and general of armies, which eventually devolved upon him. This education, also,—involving, as it must have done, an intimacy with the highest science and philosophy of the Egyptian sages—was well calculated to secure for him the attention and respect of the Egyptians when he stood forth to demand justice for an oppressed race.

FOURTEENTH WEEK—WEDNESDAY.

EARLY DEEDS OF MOSES.

WE know, historically, that Moses was "mighty in words and in deeds" *after* he received his commission to deliver Israel. But the declaration of Stephen clearly intimates that this was the case *before* he was forty years of age—before he visited the Israelites—and therefore while he was still at the Egyptian court, and was still regarded as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. The information furnished by Josephus and other Jewish writers is, doubtless, such as was current at the time when Stephen uttered these words, which must be regarded as referring to facts held to be true by all those who heard him, and recognized as being at least substantially true by this reference to them. Indeed, it is not

easy to see how, in the position which he occupied, Moses could be "mighty in deeds" but by rendering important public services—and that probably of a military kind—to the Egyptian crown and people. We are, therefore, somewhat inclined to take the Jewish accounts, and especially that of Josephus, as substantially true; and, consequently, as supplying an interesting *connection* of the several parts of the history of Moses. The Scripture, having only the object of setting forth those portions of his history which bore directly on his high mission, as connected with the Israelites, relates most briefly all that portion of his life which precedes his call in Horeb; and it altogether omits, or leaves to common sources of information, his life among the Egyptians. It may be added that the account given by Josephus has all the internal marks of authentic history, from whatever source the particulars were derived.

According to this account, the land of Egypt was invaded by the Ethiopians, who at first contemplated only an inroad for the sake of spoil. But having defeated the Egyptians in battle, and perceiving that the conquest of the country would be a less difficult enterprise than they had imagined, they ceased not, till they had overrun the land—one city after another yielding to them, even to the walls of Memphis and to the sea.

The Egyptians in the desperateness of their affairs consulted their oracles, which were constrained by God to declare that their deliverance could only be effected through Moses. On this the king prevailed upon him to take the command of the army; and it seems to be inferred, as is indeed in itself probable, that the Hebrews acted with the Egyptians under his orders. Indeed, the Jewish historian indicates the difference in the views with which this appointment was regarded by them. "The sacred scribes of both nations were glad." Those of the Egyptians, relying upon the oracle, hoped that the nation would be delivered by him, but trusted, that in the course of the inevitable conflict, he might by some management be slain. The Hebrews,

on the other hand, calculated that under Moses as a victorious general, they might take their departure with a high hand out of Egypt.

The course followed by Moses was to take the enemy unawares. Therefore, instead of marching along the river, he conducted his forces inland, through a region which none would expect him to traverse, on account of the multitudes of fierce and venomous serpents with which it was infested. Moses, however, met this difficulty by an ingenious stratagem. He caused a large number of crates to be provided, in which were enclosed a multitude of that serpent-slaying bird, the ibis, formerly so abundant in Egypt, where it received sacred honors for its useful services to mankind. As, therefore, the army reached the land of the serpents, the birds were let loose, and cleared the way for the safe advance of the troops. Different readers will differently estimate the probability of this story. Those who have read the *Stratagems of War* by Polynæus, will have found there accounts of contrivances quite as remarkable. This does not appear to us to offer any great difficulty. The ibis being a tame bird, might be secured in almost any number required for such a purpose; and both sacred and secular history evince that whole districts bordering on Egypt were grievously infested by serpents, so numerous as to form a very serious obstruction to the progress of armies. Being thus enabled to come upon the Ethiopians unexpectedly, and so to take them unprepared, they were soon put to the rout and driven out of Egypt, pursued by the victorious army. The fugitive host at last threw itself into Saba, a royal city of Ethiopia, rendered impregnable by strong ramparts and surrounding waters, which in a later age received the name of Meroe. While the Egyptian army lay idle before this place, unable to bring the Ethiopians to battle, Moses unconsciously won the affection of the Ethiopian king's daughter, Tharbis, who had beheld his person, and witnessed his valiant acts, from the walls. She caused a proposal to be made to him, through the most faithful of her servants, that

he should make her his wife; which he promised to do if she procured the surrender of the city. No sooner was this agreement made than it took effect. The city surrendered; Moses made the Ethiopian princess his wife; and having returned thanks to God, led the Egyptians back to their own land.

The latter incidents of this account are remarkable. Josephus, who gives this notice of the acquisition by Moses of an Ethiopian wife, says nothing in the sequel of his history of the variance between Moses on the one part, and his brother and sister on the other, on account of an Ethiopian wife that he had, Num. xii. 1. It is clear, therefore, that neither he nor his authorities devised this marriage to account for that variance. It is a fact which is not to him of any historical use. But the Scripture itself does record the misunderstanding between Moses and his relatives respecting an Ethiopian wife, without stating how that wife was acquired. This perfectly undesigned coincidence between the Scripture narrative and the Jewish historical tradition, does therefore afford a material corroboration to the latter. Nor is this the only instance in which the silence of the one account is supplied by the declarations of the other.

All our readers have felt some difficulty in realizing to their own minds the circumstances under which Moses, who had just before been described as "the son of Pharaoh's daughter," appears among his countrymen in Goshen, apparently as an unattended and powerless man. If we turn to Josephus, we at first seem to get no satisfaction, as he passes this visit altogether over, and makes Moses withdraw at once from the Egyptian court to the land of Midian. But it is yet possible to connect the reasons which he gives for that withdrawal with the actual visit to the Israelites. The historian states, that the renown which Moses acquired in this expedition, made him seem more dangerous in high quarters, and roused the fears and the envy of the king. Plots were laid against his life; and, being daily pressed by the sacred scribes, the king had nearly assented to his being

quietly disposed of. Hearing of all this, Moses withdrew secretly from the court. Josephus says he retired to the land of Midian; but we know that he went first to visit his nation in Goshen. He perhaps expected to find concealment among them, until he could prevail upon them to follow him out of Egypt. That this was his object, is clearly indicated by Stephen, who says, "he supposed that his brethren would have understood that God by his hand would deliver them; but they understood not." If the Jewish historian is to be regarded as a sufficient authority for believing that they had been prepared to regard him as a leader and deliverer, when he appeared as a victorious general against the Ethiopians, the grounds of the expectation with which he went among them may appear; neither is it difficult to understand the views upon which they now declined to place themselves in revolt under the guidance of one who, at a time when circumstances were more favorable—when their hosts were in embattled array under his orders, and ready, in the ardor of triumph and invincible might, to follow where he listed—had refused to respond to their wishes. The reason of Moses' conduct under this view would be plain. He had in the first instance been the trusted servant of the Egyptians, and could not betray the high trust committed to him; but the base return he had experienced, left him at liberty to act in freedom from the ties of obligation and public trust. He threw up his connection with the Egyptian court; he refused any longer to be regarded as the son of Pharaoh's daughter; and went to cast in his lot with the people of his fathers, whose sad condition engaged his sympathy, and whose great heritage of promises and hopes had more charm for him than all the riches, the honors, the power and the wisdom of Egypt. But the time was not fully come; and the Israelites refused to recognize in the powerless fugitive, clad only in his inherent greatness, the leader they would have hailed with shouts as the commander of armies and the son of Pharaoh's daughter.

It is thus, as we apprehend, that the Jewish accounts may

be made to supply the silence of Scripture, and that the details may be woven into one consistent and harmonious whole.

FOURTEENTH WEEK—THURSDAY.

MOSES IN MIDIAN.—EXODUS II. 15-22.

WHEN Moses repaired to the land of Goshen, we may be sure that the movements of one who, according to the most authentic accounts, must have been a person of great consequence, could not fail to be regarded with solicitude at the Egyptian court; and considering the jealousy his position excited, and the fears his national ties engendered, it is more than merely probable that it was left for his doom to be decided by any marked indication he might furnish of his intentions and course of feeling. This his slaying an Egyptian, in protecting an oppressed Israelite, soon afforded. The indication thus supplied could not be mistaken by the court. It manifested a sympathy for the oppressed Hebrews, and an abhorrence of their oppressors, which, in such a man, could not but be regarded as dangerous. It was, therefore, probably far more on this account than for the mere homicide, that the king no sooner heard of this fact than he sought his life. If any weight is to be attached to the account yesterday produced from Josephus, it is open to us to infer that this circumstance, as used by the enemies of Moses, wrung from the king that consent to his death, which had hitherto been refused. Indeed, Moses so well knew what he had to expect, that he no sooner became aware that his deed had transpired, than he fled for his life, and rested not until he came to the land of Midian, which lay upon the eastern arm of the Red Sea.

His introduction to the connections he formed in that place, and to the life he led there, is strikingly illustrative of the

usages among pastoral people ; and reminds one of Jacob's transaction with Rachel at the well of Haran. In this case Moses came to a well belonging to a place in the land of Midian. While he sat there to rest and refresh himself, the seven daughters of Jethro, the "priest," or "prince of Midian,"* came there to water their father's flock. They drew the water, and filled with it the troughs to water the sheep. All this time the stranger—known by his garb to be from Egypt, and regarded as an Egyptian—sat by, without proffering his aid, as Jacob had done to Rachel. But presently, when certain shepherds came with their cattle, and drove away the women and their flock, taking to their own use the water they had drawn—the stranger, whose hatred of oppression and high-handed wrong had been already shown, even unto death—rose in his might, and with strong words, if not with blows, scared away these churlish shepherds, and helped the damsels to water their flock. We see in this, as in other instances, a trait of the character of Moses. He is not too ready with, his courtesy does not lead him to proffer, services where they are not actually needed. The sense of duty is always needed to *compel* him ; but when thus compelled—when his aid or his services are really needed, who so zealous, who so strong, who so regardless of self as he ? We see this pervading the history of Moses. We see it here. He sat quietly by, until he had a duty to perform ; until his blood was quickened even to tingling by the tyranny of the strong ; and then he became as another man—active, powerful, valiant, polite, laborious : whatever faculty or power God had given him—whatever gift or talent he had acquired—nay, the whole man, was instantly at the service of a duty, the moment that duty became clear. If we look closely to his career, we shall see that this was the sort

* The original Hebrew word has both meanings, and it is uncertain which of them is here the correct one—perhaps both—as the offices were generally united in ancient times. It is best to regard Jethro as a sort of emir or sheikh, exercising for his people the sacrificial duties which constituted priesthood.

of person—the very man—required for the great duties which were hereafter to devolve upon him.

But we must not quit the well. Our minds linger over the scene which took place there as one of the most picturesque and interesting of the numerous indications of Eastern manners and habits which the Pentateuch contains. The immense value of water; the labor of raising it; the disputes arising from conflicting claims to preference in watering—all are points which, at this day as of old, produce transactions precisely analogous to those which the books of Moses have recorded. We could quote many examples from eastern books. A striking one occurs in an old Arabian romance, written more than a thousand years ago, and in which the customs of the pastoral tribes are most vividly depicted. The Daji mentioned in it is the head or managing slave of the king's eldest son; and the anecdote altogether is an apt illustration of the water-tyrannies practised in the Arabian wilds.

“One day the poor men, the widows, and the orphans met together, and were driving their camels and their flocks to drink, and were all standing by the water side. Daji came up, and stopped them all, and took possession of the water for his master's cattle. Just then, an old woman, belonging to the tribe of Abs, came up, and accosted him in a suppliant manner, saying: ‘Be so good, Master Daji, as to let my cattle drink. They are all the property I possess, and I live by their milk. Pity my flock; have compassion upon me; grant my request, and let them drink.’ But he paid no attention to her supplication, and abused her roughly. She was greatly distressed and shrunk back. Then came another old woman, and addressed him: ‘O, Master Daji, I am a poor, weak, old woman, as you see. Time has dealt hardly with me; it has aimed its arrows at me, and its daily and nightly calamities have destroyed all my men. I have lost my children, and my husband; and since then I have been in great distress. These sheep are all that I possess; let them drink, for I live on the milk that they produce. Pity my forlorn state. I have no one to tend them, therefore

grant my supplication, and of thy kindness let them drink. But in this case the brutal slave, so far from granting this humble request, smote the woman to the ground." When the then untried young hero Antar witnessed this, he, like in this to Moses, felt his choler roused; he struck the ruffian, and engaged in a conflict with him, which ceased not until the oppressor lay dead at his feet.

It seems that Jethro's daughters were subject to the kind of molestation from which they were in this instance delivered by Moses; for, when on their return home, their father expressed his surprise at their being so early, their answer implies that they had been this time freed from a customary hindrance: "An Egyptian delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds, and also drew water enough for us, and watered the flock." It seems difficult to understand how the daughters of one who held the station of emir or priest, should have been subject to such oppression. It may be that the shepherds were Bedouins who at this season came up with their flocks to this neighborhood; and, being stronger than the ordinary inhabitants, paid little respect to their rights of water. The Mohammedan writers suppose that Jethro (whom they call Shuib) was a worshipper of the true God, living—like Abraham in Canaan and Lot in Sodom—among idolaters who hated him, and who lost no opportunity of testifying their dislike, and of doing him harm. It is difficult to say which has the greater probability; but either supposition will very well account for the readiness with which Jethro and his family eventually abandoned this settlement, and went with the Israelites into Palestine. That they *there* retained the habit of dwelling in tents—Judges iv. 11—when the Israelites themselves inhabited houses, shows that they were tent-dwellers in Midian; and not such as—like Laban in Haran, and Job in the land of Uz—abode in houses, while they retained the essential habits of pastoral life.

It is usually understood by us that the service thus rendered by Moses to Jethro was the cause of the hospitable

treatment he received from the person. A nice perception of oriental ideas of hospitality, will teach us that it was merely the proximate cause, in so far as it led the daughters to mention the fact that there was a stranger needing hospitality; but we apprehend that had no such service been rendered, his treatment would have been the same. The eastern writers, looking at the matter from their own point of view, so explain it—clothing, as usual, their ideas in the form of an addition to the narrative: “Moses,” say they, “consumed with hunger, did not touch the refreshments which were set before him; and when Shuib inquired why he rejected his hospitality, he replied: ‘I am not of those who accept a reward for any good deed that I have done;’ ‘Neither,’ replied Shuib, ‘am I of those who show hospitality only to their benefactors. My house is open to every stranger; and as such, not as the protector of my daughters, thou mayest accept my invitation.’ Moses then ate till he was satisfied.”

It was probably in consequence of the communications he then made to his entertainer—letting him see that his journey had no definite object, and that he sought nothing but a safe and obscure home—that Jethro proposed to him to remain there and take charge of his sheep, which would prevent the recurrence of such unpleasant adventures as had that day been witnessed at the well. The circumstances are very similar to those of Jacob in Haran. The eastern writers make that resemblance greater even than it appears in the sacred narrative; for he is by them supposed to have served eight or ten years for his host’s daughter, Zipporah. As he certainly espoused the maiden, the supposition is not unlikely, seeing that the “price” of a wife is always exacted in some shape or other; and it does not appear that Moses had aught but his time and services to give. Jethro was but little likely to excuse to a stranger the payment which Laban exacted from his own nephew

FOURTEENTH WEEK—FRIDAY.

THE CALL.—EXODUS III.

FORTY years were spent by Moses in the land of Midian. This is an important period in the life of any man; but to those who, like Moses, reached the age of one hundred and twenty years, it was the middle period of life—the period of strongest action, of sternest realities, of most resolute purposes. Yet to Moses this was the period of least apparent action, in which he lived in seclusion and quiet, preferring the humble duties of pastoral life. He married; he had two sons; he led his flock to the pastures and the waters. These few acts form, as far as regards him, the history of that period of life which is to other men the time of the most vehement action. The common course of life was to him reversed. Without relying too much upon the traditional history which makes the first of the three periods of forty years each, into which his life may be divided, one of high and heroic action—it may be observed that the last period, which is one of repose to most men, was to him the most undoubtedly active in all his existence; and the days of his quiet repose and secluded rest, did, in his case, precede instead of follow the days of his labor.

Yet this period was in all probability far happier than any his life afforded—happier than when, in Egypt, as the son of Pharaoh's daughter he received the homage of servile crowds, while his heart yearned sore after his father's house, and he knew himself the object of secret dislike and envy to those who bowed before him—happier than when, in later life, the burden of Israel lay upon him, and he felt that burden most hard to bear. At least thus we may think; but the consciousness of high responsibilities and of solemn duties, although it may seem to disturb the quiet, and to be attended with great labor, has to many, and probably had to Moses, satisfactions more than commensurate to the enjoy-

ments of secluded life and humble vocations. Moses perhaps knew not this; and his seclusion was so pleasant to him, that the idea of quitting it to encounter the storms and high tasks of active life, was most alarming to him, when first presented to his mind.

It is, however, only by comparison with what afterwards devolved upon him, that the life of Moses, during these forty years, may be called obscure or easy.

“How various his employments, whom the world
Calls idle!”

COWPER.

The duties of pastoral and domestic existence—though they involve not the labors and responsibilities of him who stands out to take a part in the public life of nations—are still sufficient to occupy not unpleasantly or uselessly, the time and attention of any man of moderate desires and simple tastes. It is a life, moreover, that affords much leisure for thought and meditation; and hence the distinction which men of pastoral habits have on many occasions acquired. The two greatest men in the Old Testament, Moses and David, were both called from following the sheep to be the leaders of God’s flock, his Israel. There is nothing improbable that Moses employed a portion of the leisure, which in this state of life fell to him, in composing some of those admirable books which he has transmitted to the church, and which will form a most inestimable portion of its heritage to the end of time. It is almost the general opinion of the church, that the book of Genesis was, during this period of leisure, written by him; and those who hold him to be the author of the book of Job, think that this was the period of his life to which its composition should be assigned. Indeed, the book is throughout impregnated with the ideas and usages of the kind of life which he during this period led. But there are many who doubt that this book belongs to Moses. This is a question we have not here to discuss; but if the book was written by him, *this* is the period of his existence to which we should be disposed to assign its composition.

How Moses enjoyed the kind of life he led, and how little he desired to quit it for a wider and grander field of labor, is shown by the manner in which he received the call to proceed to Egypt for the deliverance of Israel. He had led his flock among the green pastures to be found in the valleys and barren declivities of the Sinai mountains, when his eyes were attracted by a remarkable phenomenon. He beheld a bush in flames, and although, as he watched, it burned fiercely, it remained unconsumed. This was really "a great sight;" but as he went near, to inspect it with more close attention, a Voice from the bush commanded him to show the common mark of oriental respect for a superior presence or holy spot, by taking off his sandals and standing barefoot—for the place on which he stood was holy ground. He then knew that the Lord's presence was manifested there; for it is His presence that maketh holy. He obeyed; and stood wondering, no doubt, what manner of communication awaited him. He might, however, have seen, in that moment's thought, that the bush burning yet unconsumed was an apt and striking symbol of the Israelites in Egypt, of whom it is said, that the more they were afflicted the more they grew. The communication was emphatic and solemn. The speaker announced himself as the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob. He declared that he had beheld with divine compassion the miseries of his people; and that the time, the long appointed time, for their deliverance was come. All this was well. It doubtless made the heart of Moses glad. But the closing words filled him with consternation, for it declared that HE was to go back to Egypt to present himself before the king then reigning, and to demand for Israel leave to depart. This filled him with unfeigned astonishment. "Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?" The answer was undeniable and sufficient—"I will be with thee." Still Moses was not satisfied. The difficulties of the enterprise—his own supposed unfitness for it—his reluctance to plunge into the conflicts he foresaw—all crowded upon

his thoughts, and made his heart sad. One objection after another that he produced, was condescendingly removed; yet, when he had nothing further to urge in the way of specific objection, he rolled the whole mass of reluctant feeling into one strong groan for release from so fearful a task —“ O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send.” But he was the man appointed for that task; for this he had been born; for this preserved; for this trained; and there was no escape for him. God knew his fitness better than Moses knew himself, and the command became imperative upon him.

An interesting writer thus remarks upon the reluctance of Moses to accept the most important office, the deliverance of an oppressed nation, ever offered to man: “ Many causes may be assigned for this reluctance. Moses had reconciled his mind to his condition, with which he was contented. He knew too well the court of Egypt to have any desire to return to it, especially with a hostile purpose. He had no wish to become the chief of a multitude of miserable slaves, not fit for war, and not trained to submission under a mild and equitable government. He saw no means of supporting such a multitude in a march across the desert to Palestine, even if they should escape the hostility of the Egyptians; and no probability, that at the head of such invaders he could conquer Palestine. But above all, Moses had no adequate faith in his Employer, the speaker from the burning bush. That Employer might possess all power; but could Moses rely upon being able, at all times at his need, to command the exercise of that power? It is clear that this distrust was at the bottom of the extreme reluctance shown by Moses to accept of the commission to rescue the Israelites; for afterwards, when he found himself supported and backed by that Being under whom he acted, his proceedings were prompt, and his courage and zeal never failed.” * The fact is there is a great difference as an incentive to enterprise between the

* Forsyth: *Observations on the Books of Genesis and Exodus*, pp 88, 89.

general and the particular promises of God. There may be some promises the fulfilment of which depends upon certain conditions, and there are others to which no condition is annexed. To be the Messenger of the former is indeed a glorious ministry—but it is also humbling and dangerous. He upon whom God confers it, may live in perpetual fear of promising something in God's name without effect, because they to whom the promise is made may be wanting in some of the conditions required of them. But nothing can dishearten a man to whom a commission of the second kind has been given, because the infallibility of the event strengthens him against all the obstacles he meets with in his way. Moses seems to have been afraid that the unbelief of the Israelites might in the end prove a bar to their deliverance; and it is against this fear that God encourages him, and condescendingly points out facts to satisfy him that the result is determined in his councils, independently of all events, and all conditions. He not only promises—he foretels, he particularises the nicest and minutest circumstances; he not only acquaints him that the people shall be delivered, but indicates the exact place—the very mountain before which he stood—where they shall pay their homage to their Deliverer, after their deliverance has been accomplished. This detail becomes to him a token of the certainty of the event; and then, at length, he is satisfied.

FOURTEENTH WEEK—SATURDAY.

THE DEMAND.—EXODUS V.

THE state of Egypt had so far changed during the long interval of forty years since Moses fled the country, that Moses knew that he incurred no personal danger in making his appearance. All those were dead who sought his life, or to whom he had been an object of dislike or envy: and if they

had lived, there was nothing in his existing position to awaken their ancient and forgotten resentments. It must not be supposed that, when he reappeared in Egypt, it was forgotten who and what he had been, or that he made any concealment of it. His very name, so peculiar and distinctive, and his connection with his brother Aaron, who accompanied him as his spokesman, must have suggested the fact. It is more probable that it was the knowledge of his former connection with the court, which procured him the more ready access to the king, and enabled him to speak to him with freedom, and to win from him more attention than any other Israelite could have secured. The knowledge of his thorough Egyptian education, may also have disposed them to listen to him with more respect than might have been shown to any who could not boast a privilege which they so highly appreciated. He was in their view an educated man—while all the other Israelites were probably little more in their sight than an uneducated rabble, being ignorant of that which was to them education. In all countries *education* consists in the knowledge of certain things, which he who knows not is held to be uneducated, whatever else he may know.

There were therefore no difficulties in the way of Moses but such as resulted from the nature of his mission; and he appeared under advantages which no other Israelite could claim. Nevertheless, the enterprise upon which he had entered must have seemed hopeless to him, had it not been for the strong assurances with which he had been favored. The reception which his application obtained at the Egyptian court, was calculated to discourage a less assured spirit. He preferred his request in this simple and mitigated form: "Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness." The king's answer was short and terribly decisive: "Who is Jehovah, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not Jehovah, neither will I let Israel go." We are not to infer from this that Pharaoh was an atheist. That was not the religion of Egypt—which had gods all too many—

but the king knew not the name of Jehovah as a god ; and regarding him as the special and particular God of the Hebrews, he saw nothing in their condition to convince him that this God possessed such power as commanded his obedience. It therefore behoved the Lord, through the agency of his commissioned servant, to set forth his power in the eyes of the Egyptians, and convince them that the demand came from One whose high behests were not to be despised. Thus he might show them the vanity of the idols in which they trusted, and vindicate the honor of his own great name.

This is the *argument* of the great transactions which followed. It amounted to a contest for power between the idols of Egypt and the God of Israel. The result would show with whom the power and the glory lay ; and the name of the Lord, which they knew not, and which they had despised, would be magnified in the sight of the Egyptians. The king did not deny the existence of Jehovah, or that he had authorised such a demand as Moses made in his name ; but regarding him only as the national God of the Hebrews, he considered that Egypt had stronger gods of its own, who would not fail to protect him from whatever anger the God of the Israelites might evince at the neglect of a mandate so contrary to the interests of the nation which claimed *their* guardianship. We see much of this reasoning among idolators in the sacred Scriptures—as in the case of the Philistines who supposed that their god Dagon had prevailed over Jehovah when the ark was taken—1 Sam. iv. 7 ; v. 2 ; and as in the case of the Assyrians, who fancied that they had been beaten because the God of Israel was a God of the hills, whereas theirs were gods of the valleys—1 Kings xx. 28. In both these cases, as in the present, the honor of Jehovah was engaged to protect his high name from such disparagement.

Now it appears that in all the long time Moses had been away, although individuals had been changed, the policy of the Egyptian court towards the Israelites had remained unaltered. They were kept under the same condition of op-

pression and degradation as at the birth of Moses. They indeed retained the occupation of the territories originally assigned them; and within that territory possessed the rights of private property in flocks and herds, and in the products of the ground, although, doubtless, all were subject to heavy taxations. The grievance was, that a large number were required to be constantly supplied to labor, for little more than their food, upon the public works—in the making of bricks, in the building of cities, and in the culture of the ground. They probably served a few months at a time in alternating gangs; and the intensity of the oppression must have consisted in the excessive hardships to which the persons actually out on the service were exposed, the increased labor which in consequence devolved on those at home, from the high proportion of the hands required by the government, and from the liability of the whole to serve in their turn. They were drawn, probably something after the manner of the militia with us—all being liable, but such as could afford it procuring substitutes instead of serving in person. The number required in proportion to the population, was probably such, that all were required for actual service in due rotation, excepting those who were exempted by age or infirmity, such as even the Egyptians would exempt on account of their social standing in the offices they exercised, and such as had wealth enough to pay for exemption.

In the dispensations of the Lord's providence, it often happens that the afflictions of his people become the most grievous when the day of their deliverance draws nigh, as the darkest hour is that which precedes the break of morning. So it was now. The king affected to regard this application as a mark of disaffection, created by too much leisure and too little work, and he directed new burdens to be laid upon them. The form in which the increased burden was imposed, is remarkable. Hitherto they had been supplied with the materials of their principal labor of brick-making—the clay and the straw; but it was now directed that the straw should be withheld, and yet that the exacted tale of bricks

should be in no wise diminished. This was hard. It was impossible to make bricks without straw; and the time consumed in collecting it would not allow the tale of bricks to be provided within the time appointed. This difficulty increased; for in proportion as the straw they could provide was diminished, they had to go to greater distances to gather the stubble of the fields instead. This implies that they had used up the chopped straw which had been reserved as food for their cattle, and had now to gather, with much toil and loss of time, the stubble of the distant fields, which, although useless for any other purpose, might serve as straw in the making of bricks. The story of their wrongs was thus carried throughout the land; and there is reason to suppose, that the sympathies of the Egyptians as a body were engaged on their behalf, and that the proceedings of the government were not generally approved.

The result was, that the taskmasters who were responsible to the government for the production of the bricks, reprimanded, and even beat the Hebrew overseers, who were accountable to them. The beating is a striking incident, characteristic of the people; for one needs only to look into a book of Egyptian antiquities, to see how freely the stick was administered to people of all ages, and of either sex, among the Egyptians. In fact, from the evidence this people have themselves left to the world in their monuments, it would seem as if Egypt was, as much as China or Persia at the present day, ruled by the rod. The overseers were at length urged to carry their complaints to the king, supposing, perhaps, that this rigor had been imposed upon them by the taskmasters without his consent. But if this were their impression, they were soon undeceived. The stern answer was, "Ye are idle, ye are idle: therefore ye say, let us go and do sacrifice to Jehovah. Go therefore now and work."

Thus the intended deliverer of Israel was led to experience the lot which often befalls good men in the best of causes. Their interference only for the time aggravates the evil they hoped to remove; and they themselves become odious to the

people whose hopes they had excited, and who ascribe the increase of their burdens to their blind and blundering zeal. So it was now. The people were indignant at the interposition which, however well intended, had produced such disastrous results; and hard as their condition had been before Moses came among them, they now looked back upon it with regret, as a state of comparative ease, and considered that, as they emphatically declared, the brothers had put a sword into the hand of the government to slay them. Moses himself was greatly distressed, and complained to the Lord, "Why is it that thou hast sent me?" The answer re-assured him, "Now shalt thou see what I will do unto Pharaoh," began the answer, and went on with promises of high deliverance and special favor. Moses went to make known this encouragement to the people; but, and the observation is impressingly suggestive, "they hearkened not unto Moses, for anguish of spirit and for cruel bondage."

Fifteenth Week—Sunday.

JEHOVAH.—EXODUS. VI. 3.

IN the Lord's encouraging words to Moses, we find this remarkable declaration, "I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob by the name of God Almighty (El Shaddai), but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known unto them." This declaration is calculated to surprise the reader, who, by a slight exertion of memory, will recollect occasions in which that name is so used in the history of the very patriarchs named, as to imply that it *was* known to them. Nevertheless these words are true, and the only difficulty is in apprehending the sense in which they are to be understood. There are two explanations, each of which has so much probability in its favor, that by regarding both, or rather either, as tenable, we find ourselves rather embarrassed

between the choice of two sufficient explanations, than at a loss to find any explanation. This proves to be often the case when we come to examine closely the alleged difficulties of Scripture. It will be so found in more of the cases of this nature to which we may have to call attention; and the relief afforded in these instances by the most earnest consideration of the subject, will be extended to other cases which may not come under our notice; for if explanations are found in some few remarkable examples, it will justly be deemed that other cases of the like nature are equally free from insuperable difficulty.

It is held by some that the words in question are to be taken in their most strict and literal sense, and that it is consequently affirmed that the ineffable name of Jehovah was altogether unknown to the ancient patriarchs, and was first revealed to Moses at the burning bush, where, when he asked the name which he should announce to Israel, God declared himself by the sacred designation, "I am that I am"—which is precisely of the same origin and import with "Jehovah;" and who then said, moreover, of the name JEHOVAH, "*This is my name forever, and this is my memorial through all generations.*" The advocates of this opinion are not unaware of the objection to their view, derivable from the presence of the name in the book of Genesis; but they urge, that there is no evidence that the book of Genesis was written until after the divine appearance to Moses at Horeb, where this great name was first revealed; and the mere fact of making use of the name in that book, is no sufficient proof that the name was known to those of whom he writes, any more than the mention of a place called "Dan," in the time of Abraham, Gen. xiv. 4, proves that the place, which we know was at that time called "Laish," was then known by that name. It is further urged, that since Moses wrote both for his own age, and for the ages to come, it was highly proper that in writing the history of the Hebrew nation, from the earliest period, he should use, by anticipation, that peculiar name by which the Most High was known to them as their

God—the very same God who brought them out of Egypt, and who, just before that event, had made the name known to them as that by which he would especially be called, in memory of that great event.

But still, there are passages in which the patriarchs are represented as expressly addressing the Lord by this very title of Jehovah. We have an instance of this in Gen. xv. 2, where Abraham says, “Lord GOD* (*Adonai*-JEHOVAH), what wilt thou give me?” Such passages are, under this view, supposed to be corrupted in the original text, and that later transcribers have substituted “Jehovah” for “Elohim,” or “Adonai,” which Moses probably wrote. In further support of this view, it is urged that had the name been already known before it was disclosed to Moses, at Horeb, and had been the common appellation of the God of the patriarchs, the question of Moses, “Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say unto me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them?” (Exod. iii. 15) would have been needless, for God had before told him that he was the God of his fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. It is hence clear that Moses knew not that he had any particular name; and that particular name, JEHOVAH, is now, for the first time, imparted to him, as that by which he would be known as the covenant God of the Israelites.

But there are those who rather understand the words of this declaration as implying, not that the literal name JEHOVAH was unknown to the patriarchs, but that its true, full, and complete import had not been disclosed to them; whereas, henceforward, the chosen people would come to understand it practically, experimentally, heartfully, in all its deep meaning and significance. Now, it is to be understood that the

* Here the word JEHOVAH, usually translated by LORD, is rendered GOD—because Adonai, which is also usually rendered by “Lord,” is joined to it. It would have been much better to have put it as “Lord JEHOVAH.”

name **JEHOVAH** denotes not only God's eternal existence, but his unchangeable truth and almighty power, which give life to his promises by the active performance of them. The fathers believed in the things that were promised. "They were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims upon the earth;" but they did not experimentally know them in their actual accomplishment. But now the time was come for the doing, the actual fulfilment, of that which had been decreed and promised, and the name **Jehovah** should no longer be known to them, as to the fathers, in its dead letter, but in its living and realised truth. Accordingly, in the words which immediately follow, and which may be regarded as explanatory of this declaration, the Lord proceeds to pledge himself to the immediate and complete fulfilment of his ancient promises. In corroboration of this view we are referred to divers passages in which God is said to make himself "known" under this august designation of **Jehovah**, by bringing to pass the grand predicted events of his providence.*

It is hence contended, that the words in the place before us, are not to be understood as an absolute but as a comparative negative, for that the literal name, "**Jehovah**," was known to the ancient fathers is undeniable, from the various passages in which the name occurs, and especially from Gen. xxii. 14, "And Abraham called the name of that place **Jehovah-Jireh**"—a text which it is absolutely impossible to reconcile with the hypothesis of corruption or of anticipatory use, which the other interpretation alleges. It must be admitted that such comparative modes of speech are not unfrequent in Scripture. A remarkable instance, stronger than

* These are examples: "And the Egyptians shall know that I am **JEHOVAH**, when I stretch forth my hand upon Egypt."—Exod. vii. 5. "Thou shalt know that I am **JEHOVAH**, for I will strike with the rod that is in mine hand, upon the rivers, and they shall be turned to blood."—Exod. vii. 17. "And they shall know that I am the Lord (**JEHOVAH**), when I shall have executed judgments in her, and have been sanctified in her."—Ezck xxviii. 22.

the one here contended for, may be found in Jeremiah vii. 22, 23, "I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices: But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people." Now, it is certain that such commandments, regarding ritual service, were given at the time of Israel's deliverance; but what the prophet means to say, by this strong mode of statement, is, that in the commandments which were given, far more importance was given to moral than to ritual obligations.

The reader has now the principal explanations of this important, and certainly difficult text, before him; and will be enabled to judge for himself which of the two is the most probable. Our own view is that the interpretation in this, as in other cases, is the most correct, which takes the text of Genesis as it stands, and requires no suppositions of alterations by transcribers, or of an anticipatory, but not strictly correct use of the sacred name, in that portion of Scripture. We know no better rule, in judging of various interpretations, than that the one is the most probably right which agrees best with the sacred text as we now have it in our hands. The alterations of transcribers, especially in regard to proper names, are possible, and have, in some cases, been proven; but we must not assume their existence while any other explanation, which dispenses with this necessity, is possible.

FIFTEENTH WEEK—MONDAY.

THE CONTEST.—EXODUS VII. 1-14.

THE conflict has now begun. Its object is to impress upon the mind of Pharaoh the conviction that the God of the Hebrews—the Jehovah whom he "knew not," and to whom he refused obedience—was one whose power was far

too great to be safely defied, and from which his own gods could afford him no protection. In proportion to his obstinacy, the more terrible the manifestations of Divine power must become, until at last the severity of the judgment should wring from him the consent, so long withheld, to the departure of the Israelites—the glory of the Lord having, in the process of working this conviction, been magnified in the sight of all Egypt. From the nature of the case, the conflict could only be one of miracles; which, also from the nature of the case, must increasingly become miracles of judgment. These miracles Moses and Aaron were commissioned to execute. It would then be naturally expected by the king, that the servants of his own gods should perform the like mighty works, in order to show that their gods were not less powerful and efficient than the God of the Hebrews. The conflict was precisely of the same essential nature as that between Elijah and the priests of Baal, except that the latter were unable, from the circumstances by which they were surrounded, or from their ignorance of the high secrets in art which the Egyptian priests were always famous for, even to simulate the miracle they vainly called upon their god to execute. The conflict was here between the might of the Lord and the “wisdom” of Egypt. The triumphant result had the two-fold object of compelling the king to acquiesce in the demand made in the name of Jehovah, and of assuring the minds of the wavering and timid Israelites that they might safely entrust themselves to the guidance of Moses, at whose word these wonders were wrought. Some are apt to wonder that Pharaoh’s heart was so very hard, that he was not by the result rendered a worshipper of Jehovah; nor indeed awakened to any distrust of the existence of the gods he served. But this was not the effect intended to be produced. He looked not upon these things as those who know that there is but one God—that One who by Moses and Aaron spoke to him; but he regarded the matter as a polytheist, who believed that he had gods of his own, as the Hebrews had theirs. The ultimate effect of the failure of the

Egyptian magicians, would be to convince him, either that the God of the Hebrews was more powerful than he had supposed, or, which is more probable, that he had incurred the displeasure of his own gods—that they refused to interfere—and that it was their will that the Israelites should depart. We may hence conceive that he held out so long and so obstinately in the hope that his own gods would at last relent, and put forth in the behalf of their worshippers the power he still believed them to possess. That this *was* the effect appears to be shown by the fact that after he had been compelled to consent to their departure, by the most awful judgment ever inflicted upon a nation—he no sooner heard that the Israelites had made what appeared to be a false step in the direction of their march, than he concluded that his own gods had at length begun to move in his behalf, and hastened to pursue them—to his own undoing. If the conviction of the supreme power of Jehovah had been wrought before he consented to the departure of the Hebrews, this step would hardly have been taken.

In examining the miracles which constituted the memorable “plagues” of Egypt, we are at some disadvantage from our still imperfect knowledge of the mythology of the Egyptians. We can see in one or two cases that the inflictions were such as to bring disgrace on the gods of Egypt, and we may believe that the others bore in some way not only upon the material comfort but the religious ideas of the people. From the want of this knowledge much of the intended effect of these miracles is lost to our apprehensions, as we are only able to regard them in their material relations, which were probably not to the Egyptians themselves the most significant part of them. Had the accounts been given more in detail, this obscurity would not exist: but details were unnecessary for the information of contemporaries, and the want of them, it is likely, would long continue to be supplied by the reports which went down from father to son.

It is not our intention to investigate fully all these miracles, but we shall point out some considerations in connection

with each of them, that appear likely to interest the readers of these Daily Illustrations.

Moses and Aaron again presented themselves before the king, who seems to have required them to produce some sign by which their mission might be authenticated. Aaron then threw down his staff, and it immediately became a serpent. This was a sign well suited to the understanding of an Egyptian king, considering the extent in which serpents figured among the symbols and objects of his faith. He however sent for his wise men and sorcerers; and now the contest between the Jewish leaders and the court of Egypt fairly began. The "wise men" threw down their staves in like manner, and they also became serpents. How was this accomplished? The question recurs as to the subsequent performances. Some think that, by the power of the evil one, these acts were really performed as represented, while others hold that they were acts of legerdemain, or produced by great skill in the natural sciences. The latter is our own belief. Thus, in the present case, the taming of serpents so as to conceal them about the person, and substitute them by a sudden movement for something held in the hand, is well known to be in the East at the present day one of the common arts of jugglery. This, we should say, was what was done in the present instance. The mere appearance of the transformation of a rod into a serpent by an adroit and sudden concealment of the one and production of the other, is certainly an illusion fully within the compass of the art of modern serpent charmers, and may be conceived by any as a delusion most possible to the senses. There is in fact a serpent in Egypt, which, by a particular pressure upon the neck, known to the serpent charmers, becomes so intensely inflated as to be quite rigid and motionless—not unlike a staff. It may in that state be held out horizontally, without bend or flexure; but, on being again touched in a particular manner, it recovers from its trance, and becomes as it was before. May not this serpent have been employed by those Egyptians? In his case the very operative difference be-

tween the real and the pretended miracle is, that while the real serpents of the wise men assumed the appearance of rods, the real rod of Moses became a real serpent; and when both were opposed in a state of animated existence, by the rod devouring the real living animals, thus conquering the great typical representation of the protecting divinity of Egypt.

It is seen that these men had opportunity for preparation. It is to be presumed, that in summoning them to the king's presence, they were informed of what had been done, and of what they would be expected to do. But something happened that they were not prepared for, that could not have entered into their calculations, and then they were baffled. "Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods," and we do not read that they either attempted to prevent this, or to follow it by an imitation. By this, and by the serpent reverting to a rod when Aaron took hold of it, the superior nature of the power he exercised, and that it was far above all delusive art, was shown. Even serpents do not naturally devour each other; neither, were that the case, could one serpent devour many, and, from the very nature of the circumstances, the act of one serpent eating others could not have been a delusion. The feeding of serpents is always a slow operation; and in this instance it was watched by most keen and suspicious eyes. Had the serpent of Aaron merely become a rod again, this also they might have imitated, either by jugglery, or by availing themselves of the natural qualities of the serpent, to which we have referred; but the ultimate swallowing of their serpents by that of Aaron, placed the transaction out of the reach of their experience, and beyond the resources of their art.

FIFTEENTH WEEK—TUESDAY.

THE BLOOD AND THE FROGS.—EXODUS VII. 15; VIII. 15.

THE transaction of Moses and Aaron with the wise men of Egypt, seems to have made no impression upon the king

favorable to the claim of the Israelites, although it may have satisfied him that Moses and Aaron were no common men, and were invested with extraordinary powers. Some have thought that he regarded them merely as skilful conjurors; but if, as was doubtless the case, he believed his own magicians to act by the power of the gods, it is far more probable that he regarded the brothers as acting in the power of *their* God; but if, as we believe, the magicians were themselves impostors, producing by art effects which they ascribed to the power of their idols, it is quite likely that *they* supposed Moses and Aaron merely more skilful conjurors than themselves, until at length effects were produced, so evidently, even to them, beyond the simulations of human science, as to draw from them the memorable confession—“*This is the finger of God.*”

The future acts were to be of judgment, since the one merely demonstrative had been disregarded. Considering the estimation in which the river Nile was held by the Egyptians, who regarded it as a god, it is not without meaning that the first judgment smote that god, and rendered its most pleasant and salubrious waters noisome and pestiferous. Aaron, acting as usual for his brother, “Lifted up his rod and smote the waters that were in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh, and in the sight of his servants; and all the waters that were in the river were turned into blood, and the fish that was in the river died; and the Egyptians could not drink of the river; and there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt.” We scarcely suppose that there was actual blood, but that the water became red as blood, and acquired such properties as not only destroyed the fish, but caused the Egyptians to loathe to drink from that stream which they, not without reason, regarded as affording the most delicious water in the world. Nothing was better calculated to humble the pride of Egypt. However, the magicians tried to produce the same result, and so far succeeded as to assist the king in hardening his heart against conviction. One would think that they might much better have evinced

their power by removing the plagues, than by attempting to increase them by their imitation. But this they could not do—and it better suited their policy to produce, on a small scale, something that looked like the real miracle. But that we know the extent to which confidence in persons blinds the eyes to their actions, it may seem amazing that the king found any satisfaction in their simulated operations—for they must necessarily have been on a small scale in comparison with the mighty deeds of the Hebrew brothers; and he was, in every instance, compelled to implore them for the removal of the plague. That the imitations of the Egyptian magicians were within a narrow circle, and although marvels to antiquity, were, for the most part, quite within the limits of modern science, is clear in every instance. In the present case it is distinctly stated that this blood-like water, filled the river, and consequently all the canals connected with it. This, indeed, is expressly stated, for the “streams” mentioned, besides the Nile, could be no other than these canals, seeing that Egypt has no other river than the Nile. This is further shown by the fact that the people could only obtain water fit for any use by digging for it. Now, the immense scale on which this miracle was performed, rendered any delusive imitation absolutely impossible,—and, indeed, precluded even the attempt of any such imitation. The mass of waters being already changed, all that the wise men could have to practise their impostures upon, was a limited quantity obtained by digging along the river’s bank. That—with the preparation they had been enabled to make, in consequence of Moses and Aaron having threatened the act beforehand—they should be able, with a small quantity of water so obtained, and produced, perhaps, in a vessel, to exhibit, by some red infusion, a very humble copy of what had been done, is a statement which ought to occasion no surprise. Any chemist could do the same thing at this day.

In fact, we historically know that the ancients had the means of so dealing with colorless liquids, that they should shortly, on exposure to the air or light, assume the appear-

ance of blood, or of other colors desired. A striking instance is that of Marcos, the leader of one of those sects which, in the earlier ages of the church, endeavored to amalgamate with their doctrines peculiar dogmas and rites of initiation. On one occasion, he filled wine-cups of transparent glass with colorless wine; during his prayer the fluid in one of these cups became *blood red*,—in another, purple,—and in a third, of an azure blue.* At a later period a well might be seen in an Egyptian church, the waters of which, whenever they were placed in a lamp, became of a sanguine color.†

The continued obstinacy of the king occasioned the plague of frogs. These by no means agreeable animals came up, at the command of Aaron, from the river, “and covered the land of Egypt.” They were everywhere—in the king’s house, in his bed-chamber, in the houses of his servants, upon the persons of his people, in his very ovens and kneading-troughs, so that his very food was tainted with their abominable presence. The fact that these noxious vermin were thus prompted to forego their natural habits, and instead of confining themselves to the water and moist soils, to spread over the country and make their way into the most frequented and driest places, indicates the countless numbers in which they came forth; and this is still further confirmed by the immense heaps of their carcasses which eventually corrupted the land. There is always abundance of frogs in the Nile and its marshes, and here the miracle seems to have been in compelling them, at the appointed hour, to quit the localities best suited to their nature, in swarms, and extend themselves in all directions. An active Dutch imagination might work out for itself the probable details of such a visitation, and has done so in fact, in the highly singular prints of a work, in four folio volumes, which lies before us.‡ Here one may see the people—men, women, and children—contending, with besom and staff, with fire and torch, against the monstrous

* Epiphan. *Contra Haeres*, i. 24

† Macrizi, cited by Quatremere, in *Mem. sur l’Egypte*, i. 419.

‡ *Mosaize Historie der Hebreuwse Kerke*. Amsterdam, 1700.

nuisance. They are seen upon everything of food, which people bear along, and women cast them forth in dense masses from their water-vessels and their tubs. Some flee before them, some dance them under foot. Dogs seem inclined to contend with them, but flee astonished when the frogs spring strongly against them. But the storks and cranes are fluttering with gladness, and hold a mighty feast among themselves amid the general confusion and dismay.

Here the same remark applies as was made before. We are told that the magicians produced, in some way, the same apparent results ; but it is clear that the most they could do, under the circumstances, when, in the precincts of Pharaoh's court they pretended to copy the act of Moses, was to practise their imitation on a small space of ground, artificially cleared of the presence of the offensive reptiles for this very purpose. Precisely what they were undertaking to produce already existed in noxious abundance all around them. What they proposed to bring in was with difficulty kept out ; and under these circumstances, ascribing very little indeed to their knowledge of *pharmacy* (the phrase of the Septuagint), to suppose them able to use some substance to attract into the vacant space, some specimens of an animal whose habits could not but be well known to them.

In this case also, a creature honored by the Egyptians was made the instrument of their affliction, and they were compelled to regard it with disgust and horror. In the Egyptian mythology the frog was an emblem of man in embryo. There was also a frog-headed god and goddess,—the former supposed to be a form of Pthah, the creative power. The importance attached to the frog, in some parts of Egypt, is shown by its being embalmed and honored with sepulture in the tombs of Thebes.

In the plague of blood, water for drink might still be obtained with cost and labor, but from this plague of frogs there was no respite or relief. In their houses, in their beds, at their tables, they were incessantly infested by these hateful intruders, and whatever numbers of them were destroyed

only infected the air by their stench, while their places were made good by fresh numbers, so that the very lives of the Egyptians became a weariness to them. No longer able to endure this, the king humbled himself to the brothers so far as to promise that, if they would intercede for the removal of the frogs, he would comply with their demand. This is a striking acknowledgment of the power by which he was afflicted, and may have been wrung from him to silence the gainsayers of later ages. To render the character of the visitation still more conclusively manifest, Moses allowed the king himself to name the time when the frogs should be removed. He named the morrow. It may be asked why he did not urge the instant removal of so great a nuisance? He probably thought some time was needed for the intercession of Moses and Aaron with God; or he, perhaps, cherished a latent hope, that the frogs might, meanwhile, take their departure, and that he might thus obtain some ground for distrust and disobedience. But it was not so. At the appointed hour, and not before, the frogs were—not sent back to the waters whence they came, but died away in all the places where they were found. Had they been simply driven off, it might have been urged that they had come and had withdrawn, in obedience to some natural instinct; but their sudden death closed the door, to that age and to this, against such attempts to weaken the force of this miracle.

FIFTEENTH WEEK—WEDNESDAY.

GNATS AND BEETLES.—EXODUS X.

THE third plague which the continued obduracy of Pharaoh brought upon the land was of *gnats*—for such seems to be the true meaning of the word which the authorized version renders, by “lice.” It, however, suffices to know that some small and noxious insect was intended. Aaron, in this case,

was directed to take his rod and "smite the dust of the land;" and forthwith "all the dust of the land became gnats throughout the land of Egypt." The terrible nature of this immense production of gnats can only be truly appreciated by those who know the degree in which the *ordinary* presence of these creatures tends, in the East, to embitter life. But another reason than this probably dictated the choice of this form of infliction. We find that even the magicians were baffled by it, and were obliged to acknowledge the hand of God in it; and it was probably to constrain this result, that this minute instrument of torture was fixed upon. It is very striking that the acknowledgment, not extorted by the blood-like waters, nor by the visitation of frogs, was constrained by a creature so small and insignificant. But not in this instance only has God, in the dispensations of his providence, made use of the things that are despised to bring down the pride of the high and honorable. It was such a visitation as, from the nature of things, the Egyptian magicians were unable to simulate. We can ourselves detect where their difficulty lay; and the fact of their failure, in the first case that presented real difficulty, clearly shows that all their doings were tricks and contrivances, and not, as some have fancied, real miracles wrought by the aid of demons.

On this occasion, for the first time, we do not read of any summons being sent to the wise men, or of any kind of warning being given to them, so that now they had no longer the advantage of preparation in carrying on their frauds. Further, the size of the insect, which, if they were to proceed as before, in an imitation of Aaron's work, they were to appear to produce, in some space cleared for the purpose, was such that, to discern it, the eye of the spectator would have to be brought close to the scene of their operations, increasing the difficulty of deluding the sense. Under these circumstances, after an attempt designed to sustain the appearance of confidence, on their part, in the arts they professed, the wise men were fain to give up the contest, and to aver that there was superhuman power at work. "*This*," said they, "is the finger

of God,"—or perhaps, more correctly, "of the gods,"—for the word is plural, and the use of it by polytheists gives it here a plural signification. After this admission they never afterwards ventured to renew the contest, and were probably glad that they were thus released from the necessity of exposing their credit to great danger, and their arts to detection, in the continuance of the struggle.

In the next plague the distinctness became more pointed, so as to show that it was not only the work of the "gods," but of the very God of the Hebrews, in whose name Moses and Aaron acted and spoke. This was a most important circumstance, leaving the obduracy of the king altogether without excuse. It mattered comparatively little by what agent this important distinction was evinced. And, in fact, this is more uncertain than with respect to any of the other plagues, and will never perhaps be satisfactorily determined. The word is, in our authorized version, translated "swarms of *flies*," the word flies being in italics to show that it is not in the original. In the description of this plague by the Psalmist, the same Hebrew word (AROB) is translated "divers sorts of flies"—Psalm lxxv. 45. The word is generally supposed to signify a mixture of some kind or other. By the Jewish writers it is generally supposed to denote "a mixed multitude of noisome creatures," or a swarm of different wild beasts. That they were not flies, seems to be clear from the passage just referred to in the Psalms, in which they are said to have "devoured" the Egyptians—which term seems unsuited to flies; while in the very text which denounces and describes the judgment, the ground is said to be full of them—or covered by them—a term certainly inapplicable to flying insects. It appears, however, from the manner in which the visitation is described in Exodus viii. 21, 22, that some particular *species* of creature must be designated; and, upon the whole, although no certainty is attainable, we retain the impression which we long ago had occasion to express,* that the creature designated is no other than the Egyptian beetle. All

* *Pictorial Bible*, note on Exodus viii. 22.

the indications agree therewith, and it was a most fitting instrument for the humiliation of the Egyptians, seeing that this creature, which most people regard with dislike, was held in high honor and worship among that singular people, and the figure continually occurs in their monuments; it was, in fact, a sacred creature, and a most prominent one with them. "A great portion of Egypt," Pliny says, "worship the Scarabæus (Egyptian or sacred beetle) as one of the gods of the country; a curious reason for which is given by Apion, as an excuse for the religious rites of his nation—that in the insect there is some resemblance to the operations of the sun." In fact, the beetle was an emblem of the sun, to which deity it was peculiarly sacred; and it is often represented as in a boat, with extended wings, holding in its claws the globe of the sun, or elevated in the firmament as a type of that luminary in the meridian. Figures of other deities are often seen praying to it when in this character. It was also an emblem of Pthah, or the creative power; it was, moreover, a symbol of the world; and is frequently figured as an astronomical sign, and in connection with funeral rites. In some one or other of the various acceptations in which it was honored, its figure was engraved on seals, was cut in stone as a separate object, and was used in all kinds of ornaments, particularly rings and necklaces. Some of larger than common size frequently had a prayer or legend connected with the dead engraven on them; and a winged beetle was usually placed upon the bodies that were embalmed according to the most expensive process. The beetle was not only venerated when alive, but embalmed after death, and some have been found in that state at Thebes. Considerable ingenuity has been exercised in order to discover the real sacred beetle of Egypt, and to ascertain to what extent other species may have partaken of the honors paid to that one. These questions do not require discussion here. It may suffice to observe, that the species usually represented appears to be the *Scarabæus sacer* of Linnæus, and which is

still very common in every part of Egypt.* It is about the size of the common beetle, and its general color is also black; but it is distinguished by a broad white band upon the anterior margin of its oval corselet. Perhaps the most remarkable, and certainly the most gigantic, of the ancient Egyptian representations of the sacred beetle, is that in the British Museum, carved out of a block of greenish colored granite.

The exhibition of these venerated vermin as their tormentors—invading them in their most private retreats, and covering the public ways, so abundant that “the land was corrupted” by their immense numbers—must have been a painful and humiliating one to the Egyptians, who had no choice but to crush under foot, to sweep away from their houses and streets, and to regard with loathing, in the aggregate, creatures that they separately adored. It may be feared, indeed, that this had little salutary effect upon them. But the Lord thus won for his great name glory over the Egyptians and their idols; and the results which they witnessed could not fail to strengthen the faith of the Israelites in the God of their fathers, and to teach them that there were none with him, nor any like him. This must, in after time, have been impressed upon all their recollections by these marvellous transactions; and as there is reason to apprehend that they had contracted, during their long stay in Egypt, some reverence for the idols of that country, and too much intimacy with its system of worship, the immediate lesson to be taught them, through the humiliation of the Egyptians and their gods, was of very great importance.

FIFTEENTH WEEK—THURSDAY.

THE MURRAIN AND PESTILENCE.—EXODUS XI.

THE peculiar nature of the fourth plague, and the intensity of the evil, brought Pharaoh into great perplexity. On the

* Wilkinson's *Ancient Egyptians*, v. 256, 257.

one hand, neither he nor his people could any longer endure this infliction, and on the other, he had no disposition to allow the Israelites to depart. He therefore struck out a compromise, or half-way measure, by which he hoped to surmount the difficulty. He sent for the Hebrew brothers, and told them that they might go and sacrifice to their God, but that they must do it in the land of Egypt. This, however, Moses most decidedly declined, on the ground that the hatred and even violence of the Egyptians would be excited were they—as must be the case—to offer in sacrifice the very animals that they venerated. This is the usual interpretation of the words of Moses: “Shall we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, and will they not stone us?” But a very acute and learned writer* has thrown some doubt on this. He argues that the designation “abomination” is not appropriate to the consecrated animals. “This indicates that the animals the Israelites slaughtered were not too good, but too bad for offerings.” To this it may be answered, that the term “abomination” is applied in Scripture to objects of idolatrous worship. Thus in 1 Kings xi. 5, Milcom is called “the abomination” of the Ammonites, and Chemosh “the abomination” of the Moabites; and in 2 Kings xxiii. 13, Ashtoreth is called “the abomination of the Zidonians.” The other objection is of more force. This is, that “the animals which were commonly taken among the Israelites for offerings, were also among the Egyptians not sacred. The only one of the other animals generally considered as sacred, the cow, was also among the Israelites, except in the case of Numbers xix., which is entirely by itself, not offered. The animals most commonly sacrificed, oxen, were also both sacrificed and eaten by the Egyptians.” This author, therefore, considers that the offence of the Israelites would rather be, that they then at least—that is, before the delivery of the law, if not after—omitted the inquiries respecting the cleanness of animals, which was practised with the greatest caution among the Egyptians. *Their particu-*

* Hengstenberg in his *Egypt and the Books of Moses*.

larity in this respect astonished the ancient Greeks, who record the matter with wonder. Of oxen, only a red one could be offered, and a single black hair rendered it unclean. They also placed dependence on a multitude of marks besides this; the tongue, the tail, were accurately examined, etc. Each victim was, after a prescribed examination in confirmation of its fitness to be sealed on the horns, and to offer an unsealed ox, was a crime punished with death.

Although we allow due weight to these considerations, it may be asked whether the Egyptians, whatever were their own practice, were likely to trouble themselves with the consideration whether the animals which the Israelites offered to a God avowedly *unknown* to them, were clean or not. Besides, although the cow only was universally sacred, oxen, and sheep, and goats—animals offered by the Israelites—were sacred in different parts of Egypt, the inhabitants of which could not endure the sacrifice of the animals they venerated; and this was in fact often a matter of serious contention among the Egyptians themselves. Besides, it is not true that oxen were most commonly offered by the Israelites. Before the law, there is no instance of the sacrifice of an ox; and after the law, oxen were only offered on great occasions, and as free-will offerings on high festivals. Sheep and goats were the common sacrifices; and we know that the goat, if not the sheep, was sacred in that part of Egypt in which the court was held. How little the Egyptians would be inclined to tolerate the destruction of the sacred animals within the districts in which they were worshipped, is shown by one of our author's own quotations from Herodotus, who states that "If any person kill one of these animals intentionally, he expiates his crime by death; if unintentionally, he must pay the fine which the priest imposes. But whoever kills an ibis or a hawk, whether intentionally or not, must die." Upon the whole, therefore, the more current view of the subject is that with which we must recommend the reader to rest satisfied.

But in connection with the objection urged by Moses for

insisting upon his original demand, a question will occur to the reader, which, we are sensible, must for some time have been present to his mind. What did Moses mean by asking for permission to take a three days' journey into the wilderness? Did he intend to return, if the permission were granted? Was not the king justified in suspecting that they never would come back, if this permission were obtained? We must avow that these are hard questions. In the first place, however, we are to recollect that Moses knew—having been so assured by God himself—that the king would not yield to even this reasonable request; and that thus the burden of the refusal would lie upon him with all its consequences. But still Moses must have been prepared for the hypothesis of a compliance with the request he made. Was he then insincere in making that request—had he such unavowed intentions as warranted the king's suspicions? No doubt he did mean to sacrifice unto the Lord at the distance of three days' journey. But was that all? Are we to suspect the great leader of Israel of the same kind of *suppressio veri* as that into which Abraham himself fell when he visited this land. We think not. There appears to us no authority for supposing that any disingenuousness was intended to be practised in the original request. Had the proposal been assented to by Pharaoh, it is to be presumed that Moses would have led the people back again in accordance with the implied engagement. In their retiring together once into the wilderness to sacrifice, a useful precedent would, as an able American writer* remarks, have been established, and an important step first taken towards ultimate liberation and nationality.

The objection of Moses extorted from the king a reluctant

* Dr. Palfrey, in his *Academical Lectures on the Jewish Scriptures and Antiquities*—a work, from many of the conclusions in which we seriously dissent, but which embodies much original and instructive thought, and much careful research—marred occasionally by imperfect study of oriental geography and eastern usages. We owe much help to this work in the early portion of the present volume.

consent to their going into the wilderness, "only," he stipulated, "ye shall not go very far away." This seems to render it quite clear that he did suppose they meant to avail themselves of the occasion of making their escape. The stipulation of itself does, however, indicate that the king meant to keep his word; but, as is too commonly the case, when the calamity which wrung this promise from him had ceased, he manifested no readiness in the performance of it.

This brought on the fifth plague, which smote the Egyptians by the loss of their cattle; mortal disease appearing among the flocks and herds, but sparing those of the Israelites. It is said that "all the cattle of Egypt died;" but this was not literally the case, as we find them subsequently still possessed of cattle. The meaning is, that there was death among all the cattle of Egypt—no kind was spared. A slight incident indicates the impression made by this on the king's mind. Not satisfied with the reports he received as to the exemption of the cattle of the Israelites, he sent competent witnesses to the district they occupied to ascertain the fact. The result must have satisfied him that the hand of God was in this matter—but no permanent good was produced upon his obdurate mind, for he still refused to let Israel go. This persistence against such an accumulation of calls, warnings, and judgments, became at every step a sin of increasing magnitude, and called for increasing severity and solemnity of punishment. The next time, therefore, the plague went home to the *persons* of the Egyptians themselves, and touched their skin and their flesh, in the form of ulcerous eruptions, from which none escaped. And for a token that it was by the power exerted through them that the plague was sent, Moses and Aaron, in the presence of the king, take the ashes of a furnace in their hand, and fling them wide into the air, declaring that they should "become small dust in all the land of Egypt,"—that is, the pestilence which this sign was intended visibly to connect with the agency of Moses, would be as extensive as if this sign were exhibited throughout the realm, instead of in the royal presence alone. The action is

very remarkable, and is not without existing parallel in the East. Mr. Roberts, in his *Oriental Illustrations*, relates that “when the magicians pronounce an imprecation on an individual, a village, or a country, they take the ashes of a cow’s dung (that is from a common fire), and *throw them into the air*, saying to the objects of their displeasure—such a sickness, or such a curse, shall surely come upon you.”

FIFTEENTH WEEK—FRIDAY.

THE STORM AND THE LOCUSTS.

THE next plague which the obduracy of the king brought upon the land of Egypt was a fearful storm of thunder, lightning, rain, and hail. Such a storm, terrible in any country, would be peculiarly awful in Egypt, where these natural phenomena are comparatively unknown. We say comparatively; for it is not correct to say, as some to magnify the miracle have said, that Egypt knows not rain nor hail. It was of the same essential character as the other plagues—an intense production, at an appointed time, of phenomena not unknown to the country; and there is no more reason for contending in this instance, that rain and hail are naturally unknown, than, in another, that frogs were unknown before that day in which swarms of them overspread the land. Indeed the scriptural statement that this storm was “such as hath not been in Egypt from the foundation thereof, even until now,” clearly intimates, that storms of inferior power had before been known, and that this was unexampled only in degree. The scene is in Lower Egypt. In that part, and especially towards the Mediterranean, rain is not uncommon in January, February, and March; hail is not unknown, though rare; and thunder is sometimes heard. Further south, towards Cairo and through Middle Egypt, these phenomena are still more rarely witnessed; and in Upper

Egypt hail is unknown, and rain is a rare phenomenon. A storm in which these elements were combined with prodigious power—the rain in floods, hailstones of prodigious size and force, thunder in awful crashes, and lightning that ran like fire along the ground—must have been a most astonishing and dreadful spectacle to the Egyptians. Nor was the terror all. The actual calamity inflicted was most serious. Those who, despite the warning, left their cattle abroad in the fields, saw them stricken dead by the hailstones, and it also smote every bush, and broke every tree of the field. It is well worthy of notice, as one of the numerous incidents which evince the authenticity of the narrative, by facts which show the writer's familiar knowledge of Egypt, and by circumstances impossible to a fabricator—that the time when this occurred is included within the period during which alone the cattle are turned out to graze in Egypt. This is in the months of January, February, March, and April. In these months only can green food be found, and during the rest of the year the animals are supplied with dry fodder. It was about the middle of this period that the recorded event occurred, and correspondingly the cattle are described as abroad in the fields. At any other period of the year this incident would have been inappropriate and untrue.

Again, we are told: "The flax and the barley were smitten; for the barley was in the ear, and the flax was balled. But the wheat and the rye were not smitten, for they were not grown up." This is one of those texts which have a bearing on the authenticity of the composition in which they appear, the more satisfactory on account of their unobtrusive character. The fact here mentioned is not of the sort which tradition would be at all likely to preserve, or an historian of any subsequent age to introduce. But in an eye-witness of the scene, excited as his mind was by its whole aspect, it was natural to record such particulars. It would have been unaccountable in a writer otherwise circumstanced. The peculiar nature of the climate and physical constitution of Egypt, produces particular conditions with respect to these

products, which do not apply to the neighboring countries ; and it is this fact which renders such indications peculiarly valuable and important. Flax and barley are there nearly ripe, when wheat and spelt are yet green. Barley is especially important in Egypt. It there comes to maturity about a month earlier than wheat, and its harvest is peculiarly abundant. Barley and flax are generally ripe in March, wheat and spelt in April, the two latter coming to maturity about the same time. In the land of Canaan the season for the ingathering of all these products is from a month to six weeks later.

Under the influence of this most serious calamity, and under the unusual terrors of "mighty thunderings and hail," the king was strong in his expressions of contrition and of good resolutions for the future. "I have sinned," he said, "and I and my people are wicked. Entreat the Lord (for it is enough), that there be no more mighty thunderings and hail ; and I will let you go, and ye shall stay no longer." But Moses knew him better than he knew himself, and placed no faith in this transient manifestation of right feeling. Yet he complied with his wish. He went out beyond the city, and spread his arms abroad unto the Lord, and forthwith "the thunder and the rain ceased, and the rain was not poured upon the earth."

Finding that the king was regardless of his promise, Moses was commissioned to go again before him, and threaten that an army of locusts should to-morrow invade the land, and consume all that had escaped the hail. Swarms of this devouring insect had often before scourged the land ; but this was to be beyond all former precedent ; and their number, size, and voracity would be such, that they should render the very ground invisible, and consume every green thing. The wheat and spelt which had escaped the ravages of the hail, would now be swept away by the locusts, and whatever trees retained their foliage, were now to be stripped bare. The idea of such a calamity appalled the minds of the Egyptian courtiers, whose property had greatly suffered, and who had

by this time learned, that the threatenings of the Lord through Moses failed not in any one point of their accomplishment. They ventured to interfere. They said, "How long shall this man be a snare unto us? let the men go, that they may serve Jehovah their God: knowest thou not that Egypt is destroyed?" These words were not without weight with the king. He could not but infer, that if his own courtiers and counsellors were of this opinion, he was no longer sustained by the concurrence of his people in the resistance which he was still disposed to offer to the demand of the Israelites. He could not but see, that they now lamented his obstinacy, and were disposed to consider that, as the least of many evils, and in order

"To gather breath in many miseries,"

it were better that the demand of the Israelites should be complied with. Perceiving this to be the feeling of his court and people, Pharaoh shrunk from the responsibility of opposing himself single-handed to it; he resolved so far to meet their wishes, as to show a disposition to let the Israelites depart, on what might appear to be reasonable terms—so as at least to exonerate himself from the odium of unreflecting resistance. He therefore sent to call Moses and Aaron back; and, although he must already well have understood their wishes, he asked who they were that intended to go? The answer was plainly, "All;"—not a living soul was to be left behind; all—young and old, sons and daughters, flocks and herds. This bold and uncompromising answer, was too much for the proud king. Highly exasperated, he commanded them to be driven from his presence, intimating that the men might go, but the women and children must be left behind as hostages. But a rod was held over him more terrible than the sword of kings. That rod was lifted up, and the locusts came. Has the reader ever seen a locust? They are common enough in entomological collections. If not, a grasshopper will very well represent it—a locust is, in fact, a grasshopper. Hard is it to think, that this not very formidable-

looking, and far from unpleasant creature, should be so terribly destructive. But it is the incredible immensity of their numbers, and the aggregate result of the intense and rapid voracity of every one of them, which renders even this small creature one of the most terrible of the plagues with which God scourges the earth. We, in our happy exemption from such an evil, can but imperfectly apprehend its force; for words cannot adequately represent it. We have ourselves seen the mid-day light darkened to evening shades as their myriads passed, layer above layer, overhead, for more than half an hour. We have seen the ground covered with them for miles around, without a visible interstice; and we have seen districts which were as the garden of Eden before them, left behind them as a desolate wilderness. Other travellers furnish points more illustrative of this plague than what has fallen within our own experience, as it is but rarely that they alight upon a house or on towns in the entire body; although a flock cannot pass without a number of stragglers alighting upon the house-tops and the trees, which would be thought considerable but for the presence of the immense host which passes on. To show the intensity of this visitation in countries bordering on Egypt, we give a few passages from a large statement on the subject, as regarding Abyssinia, which may be found in a valuable collection of travels, published in 1625.* It is translated from an account of the proceedings of the Portuguese missionaries in the dominions of Prester John or Prete Janni. "In this country, and in all the dominions of Prete Janni, is a very great and horrible plague, which is an innumerable company of locusts, which eat and consume all the corn and trees; and the number of them is so great, as it is incredible; and with their multitude they cover the earth, and fill the air in such wise, that it is a hard matter to be able to see the sun. And again, I say it is an incredible thing to him that hath not seen it. And if the damage which they do were general through all the provinces and realms of Prete Janni, they would per-

* *Purchas, his Pilgrimes*, pt. ii., pp. 1046-1048.

ish with famine, and it would be impossible to inhabit the same. But one year they destroy one province, and in another some other. Sometimes in two or three of these provinces, and wherever they go, the country remaineth more ruinate and destroyed than if it had been set on fire. . . . Oftentimes we heard say, Such a country, or such a realm, is destroyed with locusts. While we abode in the town of Barua, we saw the sign of the sun and the shadow of the earth,* which was all yellow, whereat the people were half dead for sorrow. The next day the number of these vermin which came was incredible, which to our judgment covered four-and-twenty miles in compass, according to what we were informed afterwards."

In a journey subsequently,—“ We travelled five days' journey through places wholly waste and destroyed, wherein millet had been sown, which had stalks so great as those we set in our vineyards, and we saw them all broken and beaten down, as if a tempest had been there; and this the locusts did. The trees were without leaves, and the bark of them was all devoured; and no grass was there to be seen, for they had eaten up all things; and if we had not been warned and advised to carry victual with us, we and our cattle had perished. This country was all covered with locusts without wings; and they told us these were the seed of them which had eaten up all, and that as soon as their wings were grown, they would seek after the old ones. The number of them was so great, that I shall not speak of it, because I shall not be believed: but this I will say, that I saw men, women, and children sit as forlorn and dead among the locusts, and I said unto them, Why stand ye as dead men, and will not slay these vermin, to be avenged of the mischief which their

* This is explained by what the writer had before said—that the approach of the locusts was known the day beforehand by the yellow tinge of the heavens, “ and the ground becometh yellow through the light which reverberateth from their wings, whereupon the people became suddenly as dead men, saying, ‘ We are undone, for the locusts come !

fathers and mothers have done unto you, seeing that those which you shall kill will never more be able to do you harm? They answered, that they had not the heart to resist the plague, which God sent upon them for their sins. And all the people of this country departed. We found the ways full of men and women, travelling on foot, with their children in their arms and upon their heads, going into other countries where they might find food; which was a pitiful thing to behold."

These incidents form an emphatic commentary upon the text before us: "They covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened; and they did eat every herb of the land, and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left: and there remained not any green thing in the trees or in the herbs of the field, through all the land of Egypt."

The subject is well suited for poetry; but we remember no poet who has dealt with it except Southey, whose vivid and clear description of oriental matters, must excite the wonder of those who recollect that he never visited the East.

" Here Moath painted, where a cloud
Of locusts, from the desolated fields
Of Syria, wing'd their way
'Lo, how created things
Obey the written doom!"

Onward they came, a dark continuous cloud
Of congregated myriads numberless;
The rushing of whose wings was as the sound
Of some broad river, headlong in its course,
Plunged from a mountain summit; or the roar
Of a wild ocean in the autumnal storm,
Shattering its billows on a shore of rocks.
Onward they came—the winds impelled them on;
Their work was done, their path of ruin past,
Their graves were ready in the wilderness."

FIFTEENTH WEEK—SATURDAY.

THE DARKNESS, AND DEATH OF THE FIRST-BORN.—EXODUS X.
21-29; XI.; XII. 29, 30.

Now, at length, Pharaoh sends in haste for the Hebrew brothers, and we are prepared to conclude that he can hold out no longer, and is ready to allow of their departure. But, alas! he cannot give himself up unreservedly to the stern necessities of his position. His language is indeed as strong as might be desired—"I have sinned against Jehovah your God, and against you;" but when the locusts have, at the word of Moses, been carried off to sea by "a mighty strong west wind," he is still inexorable, and refuses to let them go. Then came darkness—thick darkness—"darkness that might be felt," for the space of three days, over one of the sunniest lands of the world. The Hebrew word which expresses this darkness is the same which describes that "darkness" which covered the deep at the time of the creation; and, like that darkness, this probably consisted of thick clammy fogs, of vapors and exhalations, so condensed, that they might almost be perceived by the organs of touch. Considering that the sun was among the chief deities of Egypt, and that there *any* obscuration of the sky in the daytime is of most unusual occurrence, the consternation with which the people were seized at this infliction may easily be conceived. The darkness occasioned by the locusts was nothing compared to this. *That* was an obscuration—*this* was "a horror of thick darkness."

It is said that "they saw not one another, neither rose any one from his place for three days." This probably means, that the heavy and humid state of the atmosphere rendered any kind of artificial light useless; and that every one was, during these awful days, prevented from leaving home to attend upon his usual business. The old Dutch artist to whom we lately had occasion to allude, has depicted this plague

with considerable effect and force. He allows us, through the darkness which envelops his engraving, to discern the shadows of men stumbling along the way, running against each other, groping in vain to find their doors, coming full butt against monuments, falling over steps. Here and there are men with lamps; but they radiate no light—they are small white specks, and the men hold them close down to the ground to find their path; others, in some instances, are seen to be holding on behind to avail themselves of the guidance of the persons thus painfully and fearfully seeking the pathway. Meanwhile, in the distance, lies the favored land of Goshen under a flood of light, contrasting well with the Egyptian darkness. Until we saw this print, we had no idea that darkness could be historically depicted.

This visitation again compelled the king to send for Moses and Aaron. Nevertheless he is still bent on compromise. He will now permit the children to go, but the flocks must be left behind—he must still have some pledge for the return of the Israelites, by the retention of their property. This Moses meets by a plain and blunt refusal: “Our cattle also shall go with us; there shall not a hoof be left behind.” He assigned the very sufficient reason that from the flocks and herds the offerings must be made, and it could not be known what would be needed till they came to the appointed place. Pharaoh doubtless thought that he made a reasonable and moderate proposal, and the high-toned refusal of Moses strengthened his suspicions, and roused his indignation to the uttermost. “Get thee from me,” he said, “take heed to thyself; see my face no more, for in that day thou seest my face thou shalt die.” Moses accordingly left the presence with the ominous words, “Thou hast spoken well; I will see thy face again no more.”

The contest is now over, and Moses is directed to prepare for the last awful infliction—the crowning-stroke—which shall compel the king to let the oppressed go free; nay, to urge and command their immediate departure. This was to be no less than the sudden death, in one night—in one hour

—at one fell swoop, of all the first-born of Egypt, “from the first-born of Pharaoh that sitteth upon his throne, even unto the first-born of the maid-servant that is behind the mill; and all the first-born of cattle.”

The mind needs here to pause to contemplate the length, the breadth, the depth, the *fulness*, of this terrible doom. This is one of the great matters that cannot be taken in at one impression. The mind *must* dwell on it—must rest on the details—must penetrate to the homes and hearts of the Egyptian people—must follow the course of this infliction from the throned Pharaoh to the poor bondwoman drudging behind the mill. This is not difficult. Here is no question of Egyptian antiquities or of peculiar customs. After all, the Egyptians were men of like passions as we are, and were subject to the same griefs and emotions, the same trials and struggles, by which we are affected. Even the obdurate Pharaoh had somewhere a heart; and even he was once a little child, who sucked from a mother’s bosom the milk of human kindness—who was horrified when he first looked upon death—who wept when he first saw blood—and who hated, once, wrong-doing and oppression. The “great cry” which arose at midnight, when every house was roused to the dying agonies of its first-born, was not different from that which would have been heard at the present day, had such a calamity befallen in London, New York, or Peking. The heart—the human heart—was smitten and felt then, as it would, under the like circumstances, be smitten, and as it would feel now. It was a dreadful stroke. It was a blow that wounded where the heart was most susceptible. “The pride, the hope, the joy of every family was taken from it. The bitterness of grief in fathers and mothers, for their first-born, is proverbial. Here, in every house, were Egyptian parents ‘weeping for their children, because they were not.’ It was a woe without remedy or alleviation. He that is sick may be restored. A body emaciated or ulcerated, maimed or enfeebled, may again recover soundness and strength; but what kindly process can reanimate the breathless clay,

and give back to the arms of mourning affection an only son—a first-born—smitten with death. Hope, the last refuge and remedy under other evils, was here to be cut up by the roots. Again, the blow was to be struck at midnight, when none could see the hand that inflicted it, and most were reposing in quiet sleep. Had this sleep been silently and insensibly exchanged for the sleep of death, the circumstances would have been less overwhelmingly awful. But it was not to be so. Although for three days and three nights previously they had been enveloped in thick darkness, and none had risen up from their places; yet now they were to be roused from their beds, to render what fruitless aid they could to their expiring children, and to mourn over their slain.* All this misery was, as the same writer remarks, crowned by the keen reflection, that *it might have been prevented*. “How would they now condemn their desperate madness in provoking a power which had so often and so forcibly warned them of their danger? If Pharaoh were not past feeling, how dreadful must have been the pangs which he felt in the thought, that after attempting to destroy, by unheard of cruelties, an innocent and helpless race of strangers, he had now ruined his own country by his obstinate perseverance in impiety and folly.” All the first-born, from the man in the vigor of manhood to the infant that had just been born, died in that one hour of night. The stay, the comfort, the delight of every family, was annihilated by a single stroke. Truly this was a pity and a grief. But let it not escape our notice, that in this there is a direct but mysterious retribution—delayed, but sure. The time was, when, by the order of this government, all the new-born infants of Israel were slain by the hand of man—rent pitilessly from the mother’s breast, and cast ruthlessly into the waters. And this was not the first-born only, but all—all that drew the breath of life. But now the hour is come, and Israel is in like sort signally avenged; and we may add this to a thousand instances, which prove that no public wrong, and

* Bush, *Notes on Exodus*, i. 133.

especially no wrong against the truth of natural feeling, no savage wrong, ever fails of retribution. Scripture is full of incidents that prove it, and so is history.

Still there are some who will, with the light amid which we are privileged to live, be shocked at the general nature of this awful judgment. It may be urged, Pharaoh and his courtiers—those who had most notoriously sanctioned his miserable policy, might be thus punished; but why the whole of the Egyptians, many of whom had individually no part or voice in the matter? The answer must be, that in the common course of providence, it is in the nature and course of national sins to draw down national judgments. The sin of holding in slavery the Israelites, of destroying the innocent liberty of a free people, who had trusted themselves to their hospitality, was a crime of no common magnitude, and is chargeable upon the Egyptian nation as well as upon their monarch. He must have been countenanced and encouraged in it by their concurrence. It was a national sin, which, as far as justice was concerned, it was as fit that the Judge of all the earth should punish by some miraculous work, as by some merely providential infliction.

Sixteenth Week—Sunday.

CHRIST OUR PASSOVER.—EXODUS XII.

WE apprehend that there are very few christian readers of the twelfth chapter of Exodus, who would hesitate in supposing that the ordinance there described was designed to set forth, as by a type or prophetic symbol, the death and atonement of the Lord Jesus. If they should hesitate, the New Testament itself makes this clear, by its numerous references to the paschal ordinance, as accomplished by the various incidents of our Lord's death and sufferings. Indeed, the more one studies the *Old Testament*, with no other de-

sire than to build himself up in the faith, and to know the mind of God, the more intense, we apprehend, will the conviction become, that the old law had in itself the Gospel, veiled purposely in shadows and symbols, which the wise, the taught of God, might penetrate; but which were hidden from the many, until that day in which the veil was rent, and the broad light—the light of full accomplishment—was let in upon all the mysteries of God.

This was most eminently true of the grandest ordinance of the Mosaical dispensation, the feast of the Passover—all the types in which were accomplished—all the Gospel in which was preached to the world in that day when “Christ our passover was sacrificed for us.” Indeed, it was surely by no undesigned coincidence that the two events were made, even in time, to concur; and the Jews celebrated the passover, and consummated all its types, by bringing to his death, *on the same day*, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”*

The victim itself was to be a lamb, the most gentle and innocent of all God’s creatures; and therefore the most fitting emblem of “the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world.”

It was to be a lamb of the first year, without blemish. If it bore the mark of the slightest deformity, or even deficiency, it would have been a forbidden sacrifice, and a victim unfit to represent Him of whom it is said, “we are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”

The lamb was to be set apart four days before it was slain; not only to mark the previous designation of Christ to be a sacrifice, but perhaps also, as some have suggested, to foreshow that he should, during the four last days of his life, be examined at different tribunals, to ascertain whether there

* The Jewish day extends from sunset to sunset, not, as with us, from midnight to midnight. The night in which the passover was eaten, and the day following, in which Jesus was crucified, formed, therefore, the same day.

was the smallest flaw in his character, that so his bitterest enemies might be constrained to confess his innocence, and thereby unwittingly to declare, that he was fit to be a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world.

The lamb of the passover was to be eaten with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. The herbs were no doubt primarily meant to awaken the remembrance of the bitter bondage to which the Israelites had been subject in Egypt; but besides this, they were apparently designed to show the necessity of penitence for sin, and to shadow forth the hardships and trials that await the Lord's pilgrims in the journey to the Canaan of their rest. And it is doubtless as impossible spiritually to partake of Jesus Christ, as the paschal lamb of our salvation, without abiding godly sorrow for sin, and without a sacred resolve to take up the cross and bear it cheerfully in all the trials of life, as it is to bring light out of darkness. Equally impossible is it to partake sparingly of the mercies of the Son of God, while the leaven of any iniquity is indulged and cherished within the heart.

That not a bone of the paschal lamb was to be broken, may seem in its first signification merely to be one among the many circumstances which designate the haste with which the Israelites partook of the feast at its first institution. But it seems also to signify, that what has once been offered to God ought not to be unnecessarily disfigured or mangled. The blood must be shed, for that was the seal of the covenant; the flesh might be eaten, for that was given for the sustentation of life; but the bones, forming no part either of food or sacrifice, were to be left in their original state until consumed in the morning by fire, with such of the flesh as might then remain. But without doubt there was an ulterior allusion in this commandment respecting the paschal lamb. We read of our Lord, in the account of his crucifixion, that "when the soldiers came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs:" and that the evangelist regarded this as a fulfilment of this part of the passover institution, is clear; for he adds, "for these things were done

that the Scriptures should be fulfilled, 'a bone of him shall not be broken.'" It would thus appear, that a special providence watched over the crucifixion of our Saviour, to secure his sacred person from fracture, and thus to bring about the fulfilment of the typical prediction.

Under this view, the sprinkling of the blood of the slain lamb upon the door-posts, as a sign of safety to those within, is highly important and interesting. The Lord pledged himself, that when he saw the blood upon the lintel, the destroying plague should pass by, and not come near. So with us, the Israel of God is composed of creatures by nature fallen, and exposed to wrath even as others. In themselves they do not deserve, they have no claim to, exemption from the doom which hangs over a guilty world; and they are as much in the pathway of the Divine anger, as the dwellers in Goshen would have been, had they been unmarked for safety. But the oblation has been offered for them—the lamb is slain; and they are sprinkled with his blood, sealed by his Spirit, and may now claim the heritage of his covenant. It is very important to observe, that the blood of the paschal lamb did not save the Israelites by being *shed*, but by being *sprinkled*. In the same manner, it is not the blood of Christ as shed on Calvary, but as sprinkled on the soul, that saves us from the wrath to come.

We have indicated a few leading correspondences between the type and the antitype of the passover observances. Many more may be found in some commentaries—in others too many; for while the general purport of the ordinance, in its typical reference, is placed by the Scripture itself beyond all question, it must be admitted that the parallel has been pressed by many into more minute and fanciful analogies than the subject will bear, or than the Spirit of God appears to have intended. What place to give to the following we scarcely know, and we introduce it as a remarkable fact, without meaning to press upon the analogy as the writer does. That writer is the very learned Dr. Gill, whose *Exposition* presses more strongly than any our language pos-

esses, upon the typical import of the Old Testament ordinances. The passage forms the substance of his note on the direction that the paschal lamb is not to be "sodden at all with water, but roasted with fire." "The manner of roasting, according to the Jewish canons, was this—They bring a spit made of the wood of the pomegranate, and thrust it into its mouth quite through it; they do not roast the passover lamb on an iron spit, or an iron grate. Maimonides is a little more particular and exact in his account. In answer to the question, How do they roast it? He replies: 'They transfix it through the middle of the mouth to its extremities with a wooden spit; and they hang it in the midst of the furnace with the fire below.' Thus, then, it was not turned upon a spit, according to our mode of roasting, but was suspended on a hook and roasted by the fire beneath; and so was the more exact figure of Christ suspended on the cross, and enduring the fire of divine wrath. And Justin Martyr is still more particular, who was by birth a Samaritan,* and well versed in Jewish affairs. He, even in conversing with Trypho the Jew, who could have contradicted him had he said what was wrong, says, the lamb was roasted in the form of a cross. One spit, he says, went through the lower parts of the head, and again another across the shoulders, to which the hands (or rather fore-legs) of the lamb were fastened or hanged, and so was a very lively emblem of Christ crucified."

Whatever be thought of such details, the great truths shadowed forth by this remarkable ordinance must be allowed to form no unimportant part of that education and training, whereby the "law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ."

* Justin was a native of Samaria, but was not of the Samaritan sect.

SIXTEENTH WEEK—MONDAY.

THE FOURTEENTH OF NISAN.—EXODUS XII.

THE night of the fourteenth day of the month Nisan—that night of grief to the Egyptians—was a night of earnest waiting, of solemn preparation by the Israelites. Before that night came, they had received instructions for its observance in that form, in which it was to become a yearly commemorative festival of their deliverance to all generations. It thus, like the great Christian rite of the Lord's Supper, was instituted previous to the actual occurrence of the momentous event, the memory of which it was designed to keep alive in coming ages. Intended to be the great national festival of the Israelites, "the Passover" commemorated not only the deliverance wrought for them by their Almighty Protector, but their introduction into an independent national existence, and the solemnities with which it was to be observed were directed to be such as should call up vividly to the mind the remembrance of that event. As each house had its own special deliverance from the calamity which carried wailing into the houses of Egypt, so there was to be in each a domestic celebration. As in the night of the emancipation, no Israelitish house that had been marked with the blood of the slain lamb, had been invaded by death, so the sprinkling of the lamb's blood on the door-post of every Hebrew dwelling was to make, through all time, a part of the commemoration. As the people had hurried forth from the land of bondage, so they were to meet around the table of this festival in the attitude of haste; their sandals bound upon their feet, their girdles tightened on their loins, and their staves in their hands, as if ready for the toils of travel. They were, for the same reason, to throw away the bones of the lamb, without, as usual, breaking them to taste the marrow; and they were to eat unleavened cakes, in remembrance of the urgent circumstances which, on that memorable night, had not per-

mitted their fathers to eat bread prepared in the usual manner. Other regulations* appear to have been framed to guard against the danger that idolatrous observances should creep in among the ceremonies of such an exciting time. And to make the season in all respects august, it was ordained that the month in which it occurred should in all future time be reckoned the first of the national religious year. From this time accordingly in ecclesiastical computation, the year began in the month Nisan, otherwise Abib (March-April), while the civil year continued to be reckoned as it had been from Tishri (September-October).

Such in substance were the directions given to the Israelites in anticipation of this memorable night, and which they so duly observed, that they were in the very act of their commemorative feast at the moment when the midnight cry for the slain of Egypt arose. The Israelites had been directed to remain that night within their own doors—both to ensure that their families should be collected when the moment of departure came, and perhaps, as Dr. Palfrey suggests, to prevent the Egyptians from attaching to the people any suspicion of personal agency in the impending desolation. Further, to impress upon their minds with the utmost distinctness, that Jehovah could and would protect an obedient people, and to give to the ceremonies of the commemorative rite the liveliest power over the imaginations of the coming generations who were to observe it, the people were directed to put a mark—a mark of blood—the blood of the slain lamb (an authentic figure of Christ's ransoming blood), upon their dwellings—and were assured that all of them who should perform that first act of allegiance, God would recognize as his own, so that while ruin was raging all around them, it should pass no portal distinguished by that sign.†

* Such as those in Exod. xii. 9, 10. They are so regarded by Maimonides and other Jewish writers.

† Voyaging up the Nile, the Rev. F. A. Strauss arrived at Manfalut during the day commencing the great Moslem festival: "Into whatever

In further preparation for their departure from the Egyptian territory, which was now about to take place, the Israelites received a direction from Moses, which has been made the subject of much misconception and causeless complaint. Moses is made, by our translation, to say to the people, under the Divine direction, "Let every man borrow of his neighbor, and every woman of her neighbor, jewels of silver and jewels of gold." Here, by the use of the word borrow, meaning to ask and receive under a pledge of repayment, is conveyed an implication of the Hebrews being directed to act dishonestly. But this idea is entirely without foundation in the language of the original narrative. The word in Hebrew is an exceedingly common one, and means simply "to ask;" and as Kennicott remarks, should any one here contend for rendering it by 'borrow,' let him try to render it so in Psalm cxxii. 6, 'O, borrow the peace of Jerusalem!'" It is better and more just to preserve here the ordinary sense of the word, and the interpretation of it in that sense will not be difficult. We may understand that the Israelites were directed to ask and reclaim, before their migration, such portions of their own property as they might have lent to their neighbors; or to ask that the payment of what might be due to them, might be made in light and valuable articles, suitable for convenient carriage in the approaching journey. Or even if they were directed to ask gifts of such, as, from motives of friendship, might be disposed to bestow some token of good will at parting, still there is no recommendation of discreditable conduct. At all events, no such

house we looked the inhabitants seemed busy in the preparation of the lamb. A woman came out from one habitation with a basin containing the blood of the slain lamb, which she first sprinkled with her hand on the door-posts, and then poured the remainder on the door; forcibly reminding us of the sprinkling of the blood of the passover lamb on Israel's departure from Egypt. But no further connection could we trace between them."—*Sinai and Golgotha*, p. 63. This, it will be observed, is a Mohammedan—not a Jewish—custom in Egypt. That it has some reference to the Jewish institution we doubt not, but the process of transmission is uncertain.

idea as that of borrowing, out of which the whole question grows, is involved in the original word.

Nevertheless, if any one likes to stand out for this word of borrowing, even that may be explained without the slur upon the character of the Israelites which it has been thought to convey. When this transaction took place, there is no reason to suppose that the Israelites did know that they were not again to return to Egypt, although they certainly did expect some present advantage, and ultimate deliverance, from the step to be taken. It may be even questioned whether this was known until that decisive moment on the third day of their departure, when they were directed "to turn and encamp before Pihahiroth, between Migdol and the sea" (Exod. xiv. 2), whereby Pharaoh himself first gained the assurance that the people fled. It may be doubted whether Moses himself had any assurance until then. The strongest fact to show that he had is that the bones of Joseph were taken away; but, rightly apprehended, this may imply no more than that he felt doubtful whether they might return or be directed to pursue their journey after they had actually departed; and while there was, in this matter, the least uncertainty, it would be felt right that the remains of Joseph should be taken, lest there should be no opportunity of returning for them. Besides, the oath which Joseph had taken of them was absolute, that they should take his bones with them when they departed; and in that strict regard for the letter of an oath, for which they were honorably distinguished among the nations, the elders of Israel would feel bound to take his corpse with them, seeing they were literally about to quit the land, even though they might be persuaded that they would have to bring it back again.

This being the case, it would be in entire conformity with the customs of the East, that they should borrow of their wealthy Egyptian neighbors "jewels of gold and jewels of silver," with which to adorn themselves during this their high festival—the only one they had been for generations afforded an opportunity of commemorating. If the custom of per-

sonal adornment on such occasions existed—and it did exist—we may be certain that the Israelites would desire to appear in the utmost splendor of ornament they could command. It is in the blood of the nation; and no one who lives in a place where two Jews can be found, will need any evidence how desirable the ornaments of “jewels of gold and jewels of silver” are in their esteem. At this day, when the orientals go to their sacred festivals, they always put on their best jewels. Not to appear before the gods in this manner, they consider would be disgraceful to themselves and displeasing to the deities. A person whose clothes or jewels are indifferent, will *borrow* of his richer neighbors; and Robarts assures us, that nothing is more common than to see poor people standing before the temple, or engaged in sacred ceremonies, well adorned with jewels. The almost pauper bride or bridegroom at a marriage, may often be seen decked with gems of the most costly kind, which have been *borrowed* for the occasion. The knowledge, therefore, that the Israelites were going to hold a feast in honor of that God, whose power the Egyptians had by this time such good reason to know, would be a strong inducement to them to lend the valuables that might be required, as they themselves were, at their sacred festivals, accustomed to wear the same things (as we know from their monuments), and also, doubtless, to lend them to one another. This, on the hypothesis of borrowing—which, however, for the reasons stated, we do not entertain—may still account for the great readiness with which, as the sacred narrative assures us, the Egyptians responded to the parting request of the Israelites.

SIXTEENTH WEEK—TUESDAY.

THE DEPARTURE.—EXODUS XII. 20–40.

Good reason had Egypt to mourn that the obduracy of its rulers had brought down upon it a judgment, such as had

not been known since that day in which God brought down a flood of waters to destroy the earth. We cannot sufficiently dwell on the fact, that a judgment not less severe than this had been, by this obduracy, rendered *necessary* to produce the intended result. Let us not think only of the judgments of God, but of his mercy and forbearance. The Egyptians had, from the first, deserved the utmost severity of judgment for the most atrocious deeds of which a nation, as such, is capable—that of reducing a free and generous people, not only to political, but to personal bondage—and by murdering the children to prevent the increase of the race. Yet when the appointed time of deliverance came, God did not at once bare the arm of vindictive justice against this people. He acted forbearingly and leniently with them; and had they in time relented—in time agreed to relax the iron yoke they had laid upon Israel's neck, all had been well, and their great wrong would have passed unpunished. Wonder at the forbearance and long-suffering of God, no less than at the awful severity of his justice. The hand of man, armed with irresistible might, would not thus long have forborne to inflict the consummating horror—would not so long have endured these repeated evasions and breach of promises—not so long have tried, by successive steps, with *how little* of compulsory judgment they might be induced to let the oppressed go free. And even terrible as this last infliction—the death of the first-born—was, it was not one jot more than necessary to produce the result; for, after all this, was yet one more relapse to hardness of heart—yct one more act of bold defiance, which rendered another exterminating sweep of God's fiery sword necessary.

The immediate effect, however, of the death of the first-born, was exactly such as had been calculated. It was a strange act of faith, when an entire nation stood in the dead of the night awake, ready for a journey, in the conviction that a certain judgment was to be inflicted by the hand of Heaven, and that this infliction would infallibly ensure their departure from the house of bondage. In that conviction

much labor had been undergone, and large preparations completed—for we may conceive that it was no light matter for so vast a body of people, with all their flocks and herds, and with numerous women and children, to have completed its arrangements for a sudden departure without confusion or disorder. That all this had been done, and that every direction of Moses and Aaron was implicitly followed, show that the judgments of the Lord upon the Egyptians, and their own exemption from the plagues which had been showered upon the land, had not failed of their effect in bringing up to the proper pitch of faith, confidence, and resolution, a people whose spirits had naturally and excusably become enfeebled by the slow poison of slavery.

They waited not long or vainly. Moses had declared when he last quitted the presence of Pharaoh, that he would see his face no more; but he foretold that the time was near, when “All these thy servants shall come down unto me, and bow down themselves unto me, saying, Get thee out, and all the people that follow thee.” And so it came soon to pass. When the stroke had fallen, the people were terrified to think of the danger which the detention of the Israelites had brought upon them. In the apprehension that the visitation that rent their hearts, might be the precursor of one more dreadful, which would sweep off all the population in a mass, they became urgent for their instant departure; and, for all that appears, would have driven them out by force, had they evinced the least disposition for delay. It is clear that the people were wrought up to such a frame of mind, that it would have been as much as the king’s crown was worth for him to attempt to detain the Hebrews one moment longer. But it does not seem that even he was now so inclined. That very night he sent to Moses and Aaron a more urgent command to do at once all that they had so long and vainly sought his consent for: “Rise up, and get you from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go, serve Jehovah, as ye have said.” Nor is this all. We remember how stoutly he held out before for the retention

of the flocks. But now his imperial pride is so effectually humbled, that he hastens to remove any idea of reservation or evasion which past conduct may have awakened—and he therefore quickly adds—“Also take your flocks and your herds, as ye have said, and begone.” Still more extraordinary; he is desirous not to part in anger, he craved to be allowed to feel that he was no longer under the ban and exposed to the wrath of the great and terrible God—terrible to him—whose hand had abased him so low. Therefore his last words were—“And bless me also.” Is it then come to this—that he who declared that he knew not Jehovah, and would not obey his voice, is now constrained to crave the blessing of his servant, that the anger he has so daringly invoked may no longer hang over his head?

So now there is nothing to impede the free course of the Israelites, and forth they march. “Such an emigration as this,” as a recent writer well remarks,* “the world never saw. On the lowest computation, the entire multitude must have been above two millions, and in all probability the number exceeded three millions. Is the magnitude of this movement usually apprehended? Do we think of the emigration of the Israelites from Egypt as of the emigration of a number of families twice as numerous as the population of the principality of Wales, or considerably more than the whole population of the British metropolis (in 1841), with all their goods, utensils, property, and cattle? The collecting together of so immense a multitude—the arranging of the order of their march—the provision of the requisite food for even a few days, must, under the circumstances, have been utterly impossible, unless a very special and overruling Providence had graciously interfered to obviate the difficulties of the case. To the most superficial observer it must be evident that no man, or number of men, having nothing but human resources, could have ventured to undertake this journey. Scarcely any wonder, wrought by divine power in

* Smith's *Sacred Annals*, ii. 47. London: 1850.

Egypt, appears greater than this emigration of a nation, when fairly and fully considered."

It is said, in the authorized version, that they went up out of Egypt "harnessed" (Exod. xiii. 18), which means fully equipped for war or for a journey, in which latter sense only it is now used, and is that intended by the translators here. The marginal reading is, "by five in a rank;" but although there is, in the original Hebrew word, an obscure reference to the number five, the word probably means, as the translators in their textual rendering understood, that they went out in an orderly manner, fully equipped for the journey, as we indeed know was the fact. It is possible they may have marched in *five* large divisions, and hence the choice of this particular word; but that it meant "five in a rank" could only be fancied by those who had no real conception of the numbers of the people. At this rate, if we allow the ranks of only the 600,000 men fit to bear arms, to have been three feet asunder, they would have formed a procession sixty miles in length, and the van would almost have reached the Red Sea before the rear had left the land of Goshen; and if we add to these the remainder of the host, the line would have extended, by the direct route from Egypt, quite into the limits of the land of Canaan. This fact is stated, not only to correct an erroneous impression, but to assist the reader to a tangible idea of the vastness of that body of people which Moses led out of Egypt, and which the Lord sustained in the wilderness for forty years.

The computation of the numbers of the Israelites is formed in this way. Our information is that the efficient men in the Hebrew host amounted to 600,000. Now, it is known that the number of males too young and too old for military service, is at *least*, in every average population, equal to that of efficient men.* This raises the number to 1,200,000 males

* Strictly, the number of males under twenty is about equal to that over twenty. Allowing that the age of military services commences under twenty, the number thus gained to the class of efficient males, is counterbalanced by the number too old for military service, that the duplication is good either way.

of all ages; and then, when this number is to be doubled for the females of all ages, raising the whole to 2,400,000—or we may safely say two millions and a half—especially if we take account of “the mixed multitude,” who, we are told, went out with the Israelites. These we take to have been native Egyptian vagrants, and convicts, and foreign captives, whom community of suffering had brought into contact with the Israelites, and who, with or without their consent, quitted the country along with them. These were like the camp-followers of an army; which, in the case of an eastern army, are often as numerous as the soldiers themselves. That they were numerous is historically known. It is quite safe to calculate that they raised the whole number from somewhere about two and a half to three millions; but this number is not calculable like that of the Hebrews, which, on the data given, we feel assured must have been about 2,400,000 or 2,500,000. The presence of this “mixed multitude” proved a great inconvenience and danger to the Israelites, not only from their being foremost in all discontent and rebellion, but from their keeping idolatrous tendencies alive in the camp. If they did eventually conform to the outward observances of Hebrew worship, it is clear that the bulk of them were, in fact, idolaters, absorbed in the mere externals of their condition, and having no real share in the hope or faith of Israel.

SIXTEENTH WEEK—WEDNESDAY.

THE RED SEA.—EXODUS XIV.

THE expiration of three days from their departure was a critical time for the Israelites. It will be remembered that their application to the king was, that they might go three days' journey into the wilderness, there to worship their God. It is clear, therefore, that to continue their march any further, would indicate that intention *not* to return, which

the suspicions of Pharaoh had imputed to them. By this time they were near the head of the Red Sea ; and here they received the, for the time inscrutable, directions to turn southward, and put themselves in such a position between the mountains which border the sea on the west, and the sea itself, as would completely shut them in and stay their further progress, unless they could pass over the sea in front, or return through a valley behind them into the heart of Egypt. This command must have astonished the Israelites themselves not a little ; but they were assured that there was an ulterior design of Providence in this direction, and they obeyed—nobly obeyed, although it must have seemed to them that by this step they placed themselves at the mercy of the Egyptians, should they be induced to follow them. It is no objection to this movement, but, on the contrary, its highest recommendation, and the best proof of its divine character, that it is one which no human leader would have directed. It was taken for the very purpose that a yet more signal display of the Lord's power, in the discomfiture of the Egyptians, and the deliverance of Israel, not only from present danger, but from the future fears from the side of Egypt, by which they would otherwise have been haunted continually during their long sojourn in the wilderness. To the Egyptians, who by their scouts took care to watch the movements of the Hebrew host, this must have seemed the height of suicidal infatuation ; and no sooner did the king hear of it, than concluding that they were forsaken by the God who had hitherto been their shield, and whose power he had full cause to know, he resolved to take advantage of such egregious folly, and pursue them with all the forces at his immediate disposal. This shows that notwithstanding the humbled language he had used in allowing the Israelites to take their departure, his heart was still essentially unsoftened ; and now that the opportunity seemed to offer of regaining the upper hand, of avenging the disgrace and loss he had sustained, he prepared for action against the fugitive host. The loss of so large a body of useful slaves must have been se-

verely felt by the Egyptians, and probably, therefore, his primary object was to drive them back through the valley of Bedea. He knew that from the position in which they had placed themselves, as well as from their enfeebled character, they were unfit of themselves to resist a comparatively small disciplined force, and he might, therefore, hope to compel them to return without a struggle; or if not, what then? They were at his mercy, he could drive them forward into the sea, for there was no retreat. Blindly obdurate as this king of Egypt was, we can hardly suppose that he would have ventured to take this step, had he conceived that their God had not forsaken them, or that his own gods had now at length bestirred themselves in the cause of Egypt. But how could the former impression be consistent with the visible demonstration of the divine presence, as shown in the pillar of cloud, which became one of fire by night, and moved on before the Hebrew host, marking out the path it was to take? He could not have been ignorant of this appearance, which his scouts would not fail to report to him. But it is not likely that they, viewing it at a distance, were acquainted with its real nature. At the present day, in great caravans, such as that of the annual pilgrimage of the Mohammedans to Mecca, a large cresset containing fire, is borne aloft, before the moving host, the smoke of which by day, and the fire by night, forms an ensign, or way-mark, for the people, the most conspicuous—and therefore the most useful—that can be devised. The king probably thought the pillar of cloud something of this nature, and was, therefore, not by its presence, deterred from his enterprise.

To the student of Egyptian antiquities there is something of much interest in the two verses (Exod. xiv. 6, 7), which describe the force of the Egyptians: "He made ready his chariot, and took his people with him: and he took six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt, and captains over every one of them." Here the pursuing force is described as composed entirely of chariots. This is entirely in conformity with the existing testimony of the monuments,

which exhibit no kind of military force but war-chariots and infantry—no cavalry, properly so called, that is, warriors on horseback. But few horsemen are at all represented on the monuments, and these are not Egyptians, but foreigners. In a hot pursuit like this, the infantry could, from the nature of the case, take no part, and there being no mounted cavalry, the matter was left entirely to the chariot warriors. It is true that in verses eighteen and twenty-six we read of “chariots and horsemen,” and in twenty-three of “horses, chariots, and horsemen;” but it has been shown grammatically that the “horses” are those of the chariots, and the “horsemen” (properly “riders”) those who rode in them. Indeed, it appears from the narrative that only chariots were involved in the result. The war-chariots of the Egyptians were of very light construction, and drawn by two horses. They mostly carried two persons, one of whom managed the horses, while the other plied his weapons of war; but sometimes the warrior stood alone in his chariot, the reins being lashed around his body. They must have been expert riders to discharge arrows standing in a chariot, with the horses in full gallop, while the horses were to be guided by the movements of the body. But it is likely that the reins, which at the first view appear as a hindrance, actually afforded some support to the body in this position.

That the king was able to commence the pursuit so promptly implies the existence of a standing force, which indeed is attested by all ancient writers to have existed from the earliest times in Egypt. The number seems small. The six hundred were, however, the “chosen chariots,” that is, those of the royal guard; and besides these there were “all the chariots of Egypt,” that is, all the available chariots, which doubtless formed a numerous force. Now this kind of force was always, until a late period of their history, regarded with awe and terror by the Israelites; and no sooner did it now appear than they began to murmur against Moses and Aaron for having brought them into such a case, or indeed for having brought them out of Egypt at all, only to

perish in the wilderness. If left to themselves they would in all probability have yielded to the Egyptians, and have submitted to have been driven back like cattle before the chariots of Egypt. Resistance does not seem to have entered their minds, notwithstanding the enormous superiority of their number, under the highest calculation that can possibly be given to the pursuing force. There may be more reason than appears for this. They were probably unarmed. The Egyptians did not, as the modern Orientals do, wear arms except on actual military service. On this account, and also perhaps from their position as bondmen, the Israelites probably did not possess any, or if they did, would not, in the face of customary usage, have been likely to assume them in what was professedly a peaceful expedition.

They were with difficulty pacified by assurances of deliverance; and the Egyptians, satisfied that they had secured their prey, and that it was impossible for them to escape, were in no haste to assail them. They were themselves, also, probably, wearied with their rapid march. They therefore encamped for the night—for it was towards evening when they arrived; intending no doubt to give effect to their intentions in the morning. The Israelites were also in their encampment, awaiting with trembling anxiety the result—when to their great amazement the pillar of cloud which was in front of them, moved round in silent and stately majesty through the air, and took its station in their rear, between them and the Egyptians. Nor was this all; for whereas before it had been a pillar of cloud by day, and of flame by night—it was now both at once. To the Egyptians it remained a pillar of cloud still; but to the Israelites it became, as usual at night, a pillar of flame. The effect was that the Egyptians were in darkness, while the Israelites had abundant light, and the view of the two hosts was hidden from each other—for the opacity of the cloud towards the Egyptians would prevent them from seeing what took place among the Israelites.

And what was it that took place? Moses, at the com-

mand of God, lifted up his rod upon the waters, and forthwith a strong east wind began to blow, dividing the waters, and making a pathway through the deep. Encouraged by the light which they enjoyed, and by the marvellous interposition in their favor, the Israelites ventured into the marvellous channel thus opened, and began their march to the other side, the waters being as a wall to them on the right hand and on the left.

It was not until the morning, when the rear of the Israelites had nearly reached the other side, that the Egyptians became aware of what had taken place. Advancing then, and finding the camp of Israel deserted, they hurried on by the road which they had evidently taken. It is not clear that they knew or thought they were following the Israelites into the bed of the sea. Considering the darkness, additional to that of night, which had come between the pursuers and the pursued, it is not probable that they had any clear perception of the course in which they were moving, and least of all that they were travelling in the bared bed of the divided waters. They could hear the noise of the flying host before them, and could see confusedly a little way about their feet, but in all likelihood they were little able to distinguish the localities around them, and may even have thought that they were pursuing the Israelites up the valley of Bedea, on their return to Egypt. But by the time day broke they became aware of their position; and fearful for them did the discovery prove. They were already far advanced in the miraculous road; and the east wind ceasing towards morning, the waters piled up by its agency began to return. But the bottom, along which they were marching, had also been poached by the previous march of the people and cattle of the Israelites; and finding a heavy sea returning on them from the west, the king's army thought it high time to retreat. But it was too late. They were embarrassed by the state of the ground, and before they could extricate themselves from their dangerous position, the waters returned and covered them all—consummating, by one fearful stroke, the deliverance of Israel and the overthrow of the Egyptians.

SIXTEENTH WEEK—THURSDAY.

TRIUMPH.—EXODUS XV.

THE destruction of the Egyptian host in the depths of the Red Sea, was in every respect an event of the utmost importance to the Israelites.

It insured their safety. Suppose that they had not in the first instance been pursued, and that consequently this judgment had not befallen the Egyptians. It would have been possible at any time for the king of Egypt to have pursued them; and the dread of his doing so, during their long sojourn in the wilderness, must for many years have troubled their minds, and prevented them from enjoying the confidence of safety, unless they looked with more assurance to the certainty of the Divine protection than they were disposed to do. But now this source of apprehension was quieted forever. The death of the king, and the destruction of his forces, must have greatly crippled the resources of his successor, and may well have prevented him, had he been so inclined, from pursuing an object which had brought so much disgrace and ruin upon the nation. But the probability is that he had no inclination to follow the policy which had been maintained chiefly by the personal obstinacy of the late king. Indeed, it is not unlikely that the frequent talk of the Israelites, subsequently, of returning to Egypt, may have arisen from the conviction that the state of affairs was so materially altered in that country by this great event, that they might do so without danger of the old oppression being renewed; and they may possibly have even thought that in this weakening and confusion to Egypt, they might stand a fair chance of gaining the upper hand in that country, as the Shepherd Kings had done before.

Another result of the overthrow would be that they acquired possession of great and valuable spoil, especially in weapons and armor, which they greatly needed. The flower

of Pharaoh's army, the chivalry of Egypt, lay dead upon the shore of the Red Sea ; and offered to the Israelites a most valuable and easily acquired booty—such as has rarely fallen to the lot of any people. This must have formed a very material contribution to the wealth which the Hebrews are known to have possessed in the wilderness.

This signal display of the Divine power for their protection, had also a most important effect upon the future history of the nation, and this by the result produced upon their own minds, and upon the minds of the neighboring nations. As to themselves we cannot question that this marvellous interposition must have had a material effect in impressing them with a conviction of the Lord's goodness and power. Their tendency to distrust and unbelief must have been greatly checked by it ; and although that tendency now and then broke out in acts of discontent and rebellion, nothing can more clearly show that a strong and salutary impression was produced, than the prominent manner in which this event is set forth, and the pointed way in which it is referred to in all the subsequent literature of the people, and especially in the Psalms of David. Every nation has some one prominent point of history which it regards with more habitual attention, and allusions to which occur more frequently than to any other in the songs of the poets and the glowing words of orators ; and to the Hebrews the passage of the Red Sea, and the overthrow of Pharaoh and his splendid host, was this one point of fixed regard, which it would not have been, but through the impression originally produced on the national mind. Later ages cannot create any enthusiasm with regard to a past event, which was not experienced at the time when it was a new and living fact.

No less conspicuous was the effect produced upon the neighboring nations ; and it had much influence in protecting the Israelites from hostilities, and in facilitating their future progress, by inspiring a salutary dread of the God by whom they were so manifestly protected. It is clear that they, at least, who had the best opportunities of knowing the facts,

never in the least doubted that this event was a most stupendous miracle ; and it is only as such that it could have produced upon them the effect which is recorded. Forty years after, kings trembled on their thrones when they thought of it ; and it had even more remarkably taken a distinct place in the minds of the common people—of those who had no concern with public affairs. Thus does Rahab, a woman of the small town of Jericho, speak at the same date to the Hebrew spies :—“ I know that the Lord hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. For we have heard how the Lord dried up the waters of the Red Sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt. And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man because of you.”—Joshua ii. 9–11. Even three hundred years after the miracle, when the ark of God was brought into the camp of Israel, the Philistines were terrified by the recollection of this then ancient event, and cried, “ Woe unto us ! for who shall deliver us out of the hand of these mighty Gods, that smote the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderness ? ”—1 Sam. iv. 7. An impression thus strong and durable could not but contribute very materially to the safety of the Israelites in the wilderness, and to their ultimate conquest of the Promised Land.

A recent writer* has forcibly directed attention to the manner in which the people rejoiced at their deliverance, as not only illustrating the orderly state of the multitude, but evincing their intellectual and moral culture, and we may avail ourselves of some of his remarks. It is to be noted that they had escaped from evils as weighty in aggravated affliction, as humiliating and debasing in their effects, as had ever pressed upon any people. Yet how did these men manifest their joy, after having suddenly obtained a great accession of wealth. seen their tyrant foes destroyed, and felt themselves restored to perfect freedom ? Much as is implied

* *Sacred Annals*, by George Smith, F.S.A., ii. 67.

in the statement, it may be safely answered that they did it in a manner worthy of the great occasion. Moses composed a thanksgiving ode, which the ten thousands of Israel, both men and women, united in singing, as they exulted in their new-born freedom on the shores of the Red Sea. In this noble piece of poetry, full of sublime thoughts, breathing deeply pious and grateful feeling, and replete with enlarged views of the consequences that might be expected to result from this glorious deliverance, we have an expression of the mind of the Hebrew public on this great occasion. As the ode was adapted for alternate recitation, not only did the men of Israel shout forth their joy in sacred strains, but the women also, led on by Miriam, and accompanying their voices with the sound of the timbrel and the motions of the dance, swelled the chorus of thanksgiving, and re-echoed to the skies the bold *refrain*—"Sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he cast into the sea." "Where, in all history, do we find a great national deliverance so appropriately acknowledged? Let this public action be tested by her highest standard in regard to elevated religious devotion, striking intellectual dignity, eloquent and cultivated, and then let those who speak of these Hebrews as a horde of semi-savages, tell us what great public act, in the best ages of Greece and Rome, will bear comparison with this grateful conduct of the redeemed Israelites."

Our readers are no doubt aware that there is a dispute as to the place where the passage of the Red Sea took place. We have not here entered into the question. No certainty can be obtained on this subject; but we have always entertained the impression that they came out at or near the place called Ain Mûsa (Fountain of Moses). The sea is here about eight miles across; and the station is about twelve miles from the extremity of the gulf at Suez. A few shrubs and stunted palms are here nourished by the brackish waters of six or eight shallow pools, which appear to be scooped out in the dark hard earth deposited from the waters itself, and which, in the course of three or four thousand years, has acquired

considerable elevation, so that the waters are above the level of the grounds around. Some of the shallow wells are evidently recent, others are more ancient. From none of them does the water run freely; but the ground around is kept moist, and the scanty vegetation affords some relief and contrast to the neighboring desolation.

Why do these fountains, it may be asked, bear the name of Moses? Were they dugged by him? Did the hosts of Israel assemble around them after the passage of the Red Sea—or have they merely attracted the great lawgiver's name, which tradition has connected with almost every prominent point between Egypt and Sinai? It is not at all probable that the present pits were dug by Moses; but from the nature of the ground in which they are sunk, it is likely that they mark an important watering station for the Bedouins from time immemorial. It is also evident that they once occupied a lower level, which has been raised by constant deposition from the waters. This gradual elevation has diminished the quantity of water, and rendered it more brackish. It is reasonable, therefore, to conclude that anciently the waters were abundant and sweet. And if the conclusion be correct, that the Israelites emerged from the bed of the Red Sea at no great distance southward from these wells, and that nearly a month afterwards they had advanced scarcely fifty miles towards Sinai, we may infer that they rested for some time in the neighborhood of the miraculous passage. Yet we do not hear of their wanting any water until they had commenced their marches in the wilderness of Shur; having proceeded for three days without finding any, they began to complain; and as there is no indication of water in this vicinity, except at these wells and at the fountain of Naba, half an hour to the north, there is much probability that they remained for some time encamped around them.

SIXTEENTH WEEK—FRIDAY.

THIRST.—EXODUS XV. 22-27.

WHEN the Lord appeared to Moses in Horeb, in the bush that burned without being consumed, it had been indicated that the Israelites, after their deliverance, should render homage to God in that very place. Accordingly, when they quitted the spot where they had crossed the Red Sea, they took their course in that direction along its shores. Three days they marched without finding any water. We do not, with some, suppose that in all this time they were without water. This was impossible. They must have brought water in their leathern bottles with them from the last station. But this time having passed without an opportunity of replenishing their vessels, the supply was at length exhausted, and they began to suffer fearfully from thirst. Let us not think lightly of their distress. Thirst is a cruel thing; and is known to be such even in a humid clime, where the sensation is rarely and lightly experienced, and is very easily removed. But amid the hot sandy waste, under a burning sky, without any means of relief, the suffering is horrible. There is nothing like it. If we reflect, we see that this vast host of men, women, and children, with numerous herds of cattle, had to travel over the sandy waste mostly on foot, with the burning sun over their heads, and we may form some faint abstract idea of their condition. But if we look the individuals in the face, the unmistakable signs of suffering and misery enable us to have a more distinctive apprehension of their wretched condition. They plod moodily and heavily on—no man speaking to his fellow. Many cannot speak if they would. Their tongues are parched and rough, and cling to the roof of their mouths—their lips are black and shrivelled—and their eyeballs are red with heat—and sometimes comes over them a dimness, which makes them stagger with faintness. There is not one in all that multitude who probably would not have given all he possessed in the world—who

would not have parted with a limb, or have given up his life, for one cool draught of water. And this was suffered by a people who had been used to drink, without stint, of the finest water in the world.

But lo, their misery they think is past. In the distance they behold trees and bushes clad in refreshing green, and they know there must be water near. With glad looks and quickened steps they push joyously on.

“For sure through that green meadow flows
 The living stream! And lo! their famished beast
 Sees the restoring sight!
 Hope gives his feeble limbs a sudden strength,
 He hurries on!”—*Thalaba*.

What a rush to the water—what eagerness to gulp the refreshing flood. Whence that universal groan, and horror, and despair? The water is bitter—so bitter as to be loathsome even to their intense agony of thirst. Pity them; but judge them not too severely, if, in that awful moment of disappointed hope, with the waters of Marah before their faces, and the waters of the Nile before their thoughts, they did murmur, they did complain that they had been brought from unfailing waters to perish in that thirsty desolation. They should have trusted in God. They had been rescued from more imminent danger; and it was no arm of flesh, but the sacred pillar of cloud, which had indicated their way, and brought them to that place. They should have prayed to their divine Protector to supply their wants, as he was well able to do; and although there is much in the real misery they suffered to extenuate *this* offence, their forgetfulness and neglect was most blame-worthy. Yet, in consideration of their sufferings, God himself excused them in this more readily than man has done. It will be seen in the sacred record, that he dealt tenderly with them. He did not, as on other occasions, when they sinned in like manner without the like excuse, reprove them; but when Moses cried to Him for help, He, in the tenderness of his great pity, at once healed the waters, and made them sweet and salutary. Yet here, as usual, he

wrought by means. He showed Moses a tree, and directed him to cast it into the spring, and immediately the bitterness departed from the waters. Some travellers have innocently sought in this quarter for some tree or shrub, possessing the natural quality of healing such unwholesome waters; but they have found none. The natives know nothing of the kind. As well might they have sought near Jericho for the kind of salt with which Elisha healed the bad waters of the fountain there.—2 Kings, ii. 20–22. The tree never existed, the mere immersion of whose branches could naturally correct the bad qualities of so much water as was needed to quench the thirst of so large a host.

The sites of both Marah and Elim appear to have been identified. The former in Ain Howarah, a fountain about thirty-three miles to the south of Ain Mûsa. The site is marked by two lone palm trees, or rather bushes, in the distance, and a nearer approach discloses some ghurkud* shrubs. The fountain is a shallow pit, seldom holding more than a hundred gallons of water. The well is scooped out at the top of a broad flat mound, formed by a whitish substance deposited by the water in the course of many centuries. It is probable that when the Israelites arrived here, the hill had scarcely begun to form, and, of course, the waters were at a much lower level. The waters were also, doubtless, more abundant: for the Scripture narrative does not indicate that there was any want of water in the neighborhood, but only that it was bitter, whence the place received the name of Marah. The quality of the water, as well as the quantity, has probably been somewhat altered in the course of ages. The Arabs, however, regard it as the worst water along the coast, and only use it when it is impossible to obtain any other. Camels do not refuse it; and if formerly in its present condition, its loathsomeness to the thirsty Israelites can only be explained by its being the first decidedly bad water which had been encountered by a people accustomed to the sweet waters of the Nile. A water which,

* *Peganum Retusum.*

even at this day, the rough-tasted Arabs shun, must have been detestable to the Israelites. Its qualities, perhaps, vary with the time of the year, being worst in the driest season. We thus account for the somewhat varying statements of travellers. Its taste is, however, unpleasant, saltish, and somewhat bitter. One compares it to a weak solution of Epsom salts; and another intimates that the effects are similar. It is to be hoped, that some future traveller will secure a bottle of it for analyzation.

The next station, Elim, with its palm trees, is identified with Wady Ghurundel, about six miles south of Marah. This is a considerable valley, filled with wild tamarisk and other bushes, and also with some small trees, among which are palms. This spot seems like "green pastures," compared with the desolate and sterile tracts which the traveller has passed since quitting the neighborhood of the Nile. Wholesome and sweet water is found here, by scooping out the sand to the depth of two or three feet. The fountain itself, lying up the valley out of the direct route to Sinai, had not been visited by travellers, until Mr. Bartlett determined to find it out for himself; and he had not proceeded for more than half an hour, before he reached the principal spring. It wells out at the foot of a sandstone rock, forming a small pool of refreshing water, and bordered by sedges, and looks highly refreshing, after Ain Mûsa, and Hawarah. "There was even—delightful sight!—a little grass, and birds were hopping about, enjoying the rare luxury. The water trickling off, pursues its way some distance down the valley, forming a reedy marsh, interspersed with thickets of bushes and dwarf palm trees, and a considerable quantity of tamarisks and other shrubs: and as there are also considerable masses of similar vegetation above this point, there are probably several other springs which nourish it. Altogether, it was a reviving sight in the thirsty desert; and I saw no spot which could so well correspond with the wells and palm trees of Elim, through the entire route to Wady Feiran."*

* Bartlett's *Forty Days' Wandering in the Desert*, 33, 34. See also

SIXTEENTH WEEK—SATURDAY.

HUNGER.—EXODUS XVI.

THE people are still to be taught the great lesson of trust in God—implicit trust, which was most essential to qualify them for the great work to which they had been appointed. Without this, every step in their “march of mystery” through the wilderness, had been a stumble and a disaster; and their conflict with the embattled host of Canaan, a defeat and an overthrow.

In one point their faith was sorely tried. We have seen it tried in thirst; we next behold it tried in hunger. A military man, who has witnessed the difficulty of providing a regular supply of victuals, even in a peopled country, for a large body of men, whether by purchase or by enforced contribution, can better than any other person appreciate the faith required from Moses, when he undertook to lead into “the waste howling wilderness,” where no provisions existed, or could be obtained by force or purchase, a people whose numbers exceeded, by threefold, the largest army which the ambition or pride of man ever brought together. We have often had occasion to reflect upon this fact, and have always returned to it with new and increased astonishment, at the “largeness of heart” it is possible for God to bestow on man—in that he gave such incredible capacity of faith to Moses, as enabled him to believe, that the immense host which he had led from amid the fatness of Egypt, would, by the power of God’s bountiful right hand, be sustained in comfort in the wilderness. He acted not blindly. He knew well what he was doing. He had spent forty of the best years of his life in that very region; and he knew, better than any, the absence there of any appreciable resources for the support of such a multitude. He was quite sure when Laborde, and the American travellers—Doctors Robinson, Olin, and Durbin

he led them forth, that without a miracle, ir conceivable in its extent, and standing in its duration, the whole multitude must perish, after he and his had probably been sacrificed to the rage and disappointment of the people, who would inevitably conclude, that they had been beguiled to their ruin. It seems to us, that this is second to no act of faith which the sacred history relates.

It was soon put to a severe test. In about a month from their leaving Egypt, they came to the next important encampment after Elim, in the wilderness of Sin. But this time the provisions they had brought with them from Egypt, appear to have been wholly exhausted—and as, in all this time, they had found little or no provision in the country through which they had passed, nor saw the prospect of any in the still more wild region that lay before them, they began to speculate on the impossibility of finding subsistence for their myriads under such circumstances. The more they considered it, the more gloomy their views became. They thought of their wives and little ones, and their hearts failed them. For their sakes probably, more than for their own, they began to lament that they had committed themselves to this wild adventure, and to regret that they had left the abundance of Egypt. It is the nature of man to underrate past evils, and to overrate past advantages, in comparison with the present. So now, the Israelites thought much of the abundance of Egypt, while its slavery and its toil faded from their view; and they were keenly alive to the privations of their present position, while regardless of the manly freedom they had attained, and of the high hopes that lay before them. In fact they thought too much. They were not required to think, but only to believe. It was to try and to educate their faith that they were suffered to endure this distress. It had been as easy for God to anticipate and prevent their wants as to satisfy them when they were expressed. But so He deals not with the children to whom He is teaching the great lessons of his school. A man, it seems, limits his duty to the *feeding* of his slaves; but he tries, he trains, he disci-

plines his children—and God dealt with them as with his children.

Although, as we have said, these thoughts were natural, they are not, on that account, to be excused. Seeing what they had seen, no persons could be less excused for distrust or lack of faith. If they would think, they should have thought of what the Lord's high hand had marvellously wrought on their behalf, and from that experience have gathered hope and confidence.

The real wants of this people have probably been underrated by the consideration that they might, if they had thought proper, have lived upon their apparently numerous flocks and herds. But we have already had occasion to observe, that a pastoral people do not live upon the flesh of their flocks and herds, but upon the produce of them, and only slay their cattle for food on high or hospitable occasions; and besides, were the case otherwise, we are to recollect that their flocks and herds were not the common property of all, but were undoubtedly the private property of a comparatively small number of persons, the great body of the people being destitute of even this resource. And supposing, as an extreme case, that the owners of these flocks and herds had given them up to the wants of the multitude, the supply, however large, could not have lasted long, nor would such provision alone have been wholesome to a people who had been so much used to vegetable, as well as animal food, in Egypt. Their cry was, therefore, for both bread and meat; and they looked back with regret upon the time when, in that rich land, they not only sat by the "flesh-pots," but when they did "eat bread to their full." A miraculous supply of both was promised to them, not without a mild reproof for their murmurings and distrust, which, as Moses justly warned them, although ostensibly levelled at himself and his brother, were really directed against the Lord, who had made them his peculiar care.

The promised flesh came in the shape of a vast flock of quails, which being wearied, probably with a long flight, flew

so low that they were easily taken in immense numbers by the hand. This bird, of the gallinaceous kind, is something like a partridge. The larger species is of the size of a turtle-dove, and is still found abundantly in the spring in the deserts of Arabia-Petræa, and the wilderness bordering Palestine and Egypt, coming up at the time from the countries of the Arabian Gulf. The miraculous ordination here, therefore, was that they came at the appointed time—that they passed directly over the Hebrew camp, and that they there flew so low as to be easily taken. They were taken in such numbers as not only to serve for the present, but for some time to come. But how to preserve them for future use? The Israelites knew how that was to be accomplished. It is known that the Egyptians, from among whom they came, lived much upon wild-fowl as well as upon tame. The latter could be killed as wanted; but the former, being but occasionally caught in large numbers, required to be preserved for future use. This was done by drying them in the sun, and, perhaps, slightly salting them, and in the Egyptian monuments there are actual representations of birds, slit like fish, and laid out to dry. Great numbers of various birds, and among them quails, are still, in the season of passage, caught in Lower Egypt, especially towards the sea, and are still efficiently, though somewhat rudely, preserved. The manner of doing it now is by stripping off the feathers with the skin, and then burying them in the hot sand for a short time, by which process the moisture is absorbed, and the flesh preserved from corruption. One of these modes, most probably the former, is what the Israelites followed on another like occasion, and doubtless on this, "They spread them all abroad for themselves around the camp."—Num. xi. 32.*

The very next morning the face of the ground around the camp was seen to be covered with "a small round thing, as

* The particulars of this second supply are more circumstantially related. We have, therefore, taken some of the details to illustrate the first supply, that the reader may have, in one view, all the facts belonging to this miraculous provision.

small as the hoar-frost on the ground." The people did not comprehend it, and asked one another, "What is this?" The Hebrew of which being MAN-HU, caused the name of MANNA to be given to it. Moses was able to answer the question. He told them that *this* was the substance which, in the place of bread, God destined for their substantial food—their staff of life. It was, he told them, to fall every morning, except on the Sabbath-day; but on the day preceding that a double quantity would fall, as a supply for the two days. On other days none was to be left until the morning; and when some avaricious or distrustful persons gathered more than the day's consumption required, they found that "it bred worms and stank." Was it not, therefore, a miraculous circumstance that, although it would not ordinarily keep for more than one day, the double supply gathered on the Friday was good for two days? We incline to that opinion, the rather as it appears to be corroborated analogically by the fact, that a vessel filled with this very manna, which dissolved in the heat of the sun if left upon the ground, and which corrupted if preserved in the shade, was retained as a memorial of this transaction to future generations. Nevertheless, this matter is open to the remark that Moses directs them to boil or to bake on the previous day what was required for the consumption of the Sabbath; and although this may be, and is usually, understood to denote that this was to prevent the customary operations of dressing it on the Sabbath-day, yet it may signify that they usually ate it undressed, as gathered, but that which they gathered the day before the Sabbath was directed to be cooked *in order to its preservation*. There is some corroboration to this view in the fact that the people seem to have used it in *both* ways, from the manner in which the taste of it, as eaten raw, and as taken dressed, is distinguished. Eaten as gathered, it tasted like cakes made of meal and honey, but when dressed, it acquired the taste of fresh oil—a flavor highly agreeable to the Israelites.* In shape it was like corrander seed, but in color it was white. In Numb.

* Compare Exod. xvi. 13. Numb. xi. 6. 8.

xi. 6, the people are said to have usually prepared it by first grinding it in a mill, or pounding it in a mortar, and then baking it in, or rather on, pans, into cakes. This primitive mode of baking is still used in the East, and consists of baking the cakes upon a plate of metal, propped horizontally at a proper height, and heated by a small fire underneath. This is a peculiarly desert mode of baking cakes, the whole of which we, in recollection of this passage, have often watched with much stronger interest, than the mere desire of allaying our hunger with the bread thus prepared could inspire.

There is a kind of tree or shrub—a species of tamarisk, found in this and other regions, which yields at certain times, and in small quantities, a kind of gum, to which the name of manna has been given, in the belief that it resembled, or really was, the manna by which the Israelites were fed. If any human infatuation could surprise a thoughtful and observant mind—and especially if any folly of those who deem themselves wiser than their Bible, could astonish—it might excite strong wonder to see grave and reverend men set forth the strange proposition, that two or three millions of people were fed from day to day, during forty years, with this very substance. A very small quantity—and that only at a particular time of the year, and that time not the time when the manna first fell—is now afforded by all the trees of the Sinai peninsula; and it would be safe to say, that if all the trees of this kind, then or now growing in the world, had been assembled in this part of Arabia-Petræa, and had covered it wholly, they would not have yielded a tithe of the quantity of gum required for the subsistence of so vast a multitude. Indeed, it remains to be proved, that it would be at all salutary or nutritive as an article of constant and substantial food. To us, this explanation, which attempts to attenuate or extinguish the miracle—by supposing this natural product to have been at all times and in all places sufficient—to have fallen regularly around the camp, in all its removals, and to have been regularly intermitted on the seventh day, is much harder of belief than the simple and naked miracle—much harder

than it would be to believe that hot rolls fell every morning from the skies upon the camp of Israel. A miracle we can understand, however difficult of comprehension ; but that which attempts to elucidate a miracle on natural grounds, must make no demands upon our faith—must be full and satisfactory—must be consistent and coherent in all its facts.

Seventeenth Week—Sunday.

THE UPLIFTED HANDS.—EXODUS XVII. 8–16.

THE Sinai peninsula was not wholly uninhabited when the hosts of Israel came up into it out of the sea. There was a tribe of Amalekites which had here its head quarters, and seems to have led a life somewhat analogous to that of the Bedouins who still inhabit the same region, except that the former appear to have paid some attention to agriculture, and did not perhaps live wholly in tents. There are traces of buildings and of ancient culture in Wady Feiran (Paran), one of the fertile valleys of the lower Sinai, through which lies the main approach to the upper region. These are ascribed, by local and ancient Arabic tradition, to the Amalekites ; and without laying much, if any, stress on this, it must be admitted that the spot is well chosen for the abode of this people with reference to the history before us.

Hitherto, from all that appears in history, we might suppose the Israelites alone in the wilderness. But we now see that their proceedings were closely watched by dangerous eyes, which did not behold with indifference the sudden inroad of so vast a host into these formerly quiet solitudes. The great wealth with which they were laden, and their valuable possessions in flocks and herds, must have excited the eager cupidity of this people, if they were at all like the modern Arabs of the desert. They knew that numbers did

not constitute strength; and the construction of this host must have rendered it obvious to them that they were not likely to prove very formidable enemies in an encounter. One would think, however, that the recent miracles in their behalf wrought by the hand of God, would have been likely to deter them from any attempt to molest a people so protected and so favored. But after the examples we have seen in Egypt of the *hardness* of unbelief, we are not prepared to expect much from the forbearance of the Amalekites. And, in fact, they did attack the Israelites on their march to, or halt at, Rephidim. In Exodus it is simply written—"Then came Amalek and fought with Israel at Rephidim." But in Deuteronomy xxv. 18, further particulars are given—"Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way, when ye were come forth out of Egypt; how he met thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary; and he feared not God." The last clause is emphatically added, because such an invasion of the chosen people, under these circumstances, was a virtual defiance of the power which had so lately destroyed the Egyptians. This, with the treacherous and unmanly character of the first assault, may account for the deep resentment which was afterwards expressed against this people, and for the doom of eventual destruction which went forth against them. Upon the whole, it would seem that there were two assaults—one upon the feeble rear when the host was on the march—the result of which encouraged the Amalekites to suppose themselves fully able to meet the strength of Israel, and they therefore marched against them when encamped at Rephidim. Certainly, the fact that the rear of Israel was "smitten," might lead them to suppose that the Israelites were not so invulnerable or so sovereignly protected, and would thus encourage them to more daring proceedings.

When the Amalekites appeared in force, and manifested their intention to engage the Israelites, Moses, reserving to himself a more important post, directed Joshua—a young

man personally attached to him, and who had already probably evinced the courage and conduct proper to a commander—to choose out a number of men from the general body, and give the enemy battle on the morrow. And what did Moses purpose to do himself?—"I will stand on the top of the hill, with the rod of God in my hand." And so it was done. Joshua led forth his men to the field; and Moses mounted the hill accompanied by Aaron his brother, and by Hur, who is supposed to have been his brother-in-law. Here Moses stood, and held up his hand on high, with the wonder-working rod therein. It was no doubt held up, in the first instance, as a kind of banner or signal, to be seen by the warring host below, and designed to operate as a continual incentive to their valor and prowess while engaged in the contest: and the sight of this symbol and instrument of the power which had worked so wondrously on their behalf, could not fail to nerve their arms with new vigor every time their eyes were turned towards it. Yet it needs but little reflection to assure them, as it assures us, that there was no intuitive virtue in the rod to produce this effect; and that it derived all its efficacy from the Divine appointment, as a visible symbol of that unseen succor and strength which God was pleased to minister to his militant servants fighting his battle, and maintaining the high glory of his name.

Moses was eminently an intercessor with God for the people committed to his charge; and there can be no question that, in connection with these external appliances, fervent prayer for the Divine aid was offered; and we have every reason to believe that the uplifting of the rod was merely an accompaniment of the earnest intercessions which breathed from the lips and heart of the venerable men upon the mountain. And even if this were not the case, the circumstances and the result are strikingly suggestive of the circumstances and analogies of intercessory prayer.

It was soon seen, that while the hand of Moses was uplifted, Israel prevailed over Amalek; but when the prophet's hand was no longer raised, Amalek was stronger than Israel

Perceiving that Moses could not longer maintain a standing posture, his friends took a stone and put it under him for a seat; and that his hands might no longer fail, they placed themselves one on each side of him, and sustained his hands until the victory of Israel was achieved. In performing this office, we are not to suppose that both his hands were held up on either side at the same time; for in that case the hands of Aaron and Hur would soon have become as weary as those of Moses had been. The main object of the sustaining his arms was, that the rod might be held up. This he doubtless shifted at times from one hand to the other; and then Aaron and Hur upheld the hand which was next to him, and thus successively relieved both him and each other.

The view of the prayerful tenor of this action is not new; it is more or less hinted at by every commentator on Scripture, though less made the subject of pulpit illustration than might have been supposed. It is taken by the Jews themselves, in whose Targums we read, that “when Moses held up his hands *in prayer*, the house of Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hands *from prayer*, the house of Amalek prevailed.”

Let us then observe, that we notice here grouped together that hallowed combination of agencies which ought never to be separated—the dependence upon Heaven, with the use of appointed means. The rod in the hand of Moses, and the sword in that of Joshua; the embattled host in the valley below, and the praying hand in the mount above—all were necessary in the Divine economy to the victory of Israel over his foes. So must it be in our own conflict with the Amalek which lies ambushed within, to hinder our progress to the mount of God. We may expect no manifestation of the Lord’s power, no interference of his goodness, but as the result of a blessing upon our own zealous conflict with temptation. “Prayer without active duty is mockery of God. He who entreats deliverance from the onset and power of evil, yet never makes an effort in his own behalf, nor strives against the sin that wars within him, draws nigh to God with

his lips, but is wholly estranged from the fervor of that supplication that issues from the depths of the heart.”* Yet it was intended to be taught, and was most effectually taught, by this example, that the uplifted hand of Moses contributed more to their safety than their own hands—his rod more than their weapons of war; and accordingly, their success fluctuates as he raises up or lets down his hands. In like manner will the Christian warfare be attended with little success, unless it be waged in the practice of unceasing earnest prayer. It will never be known on this side the Lord’s second coming, how much his cause, and the work of individual salvation, have been advanced by the effectual fervent prayer of righteous men. And it is surely a cheering reflection, in the heat and burden of the day of battle, that while we are contending below, faithful servants of God have ascended the hill of spiritual prayer, and are imploring blessings upon our efforts.

It is greatly our desire that we could mark, with all the emphasis of our own convictions, the feeling of the importance and value of that precious intercessory prayer which the example before us illustrates. It is, we fear, a duty too much neglected, or too languidly performed—a privilege not well understood, or too seldom claimed. How few are they who will be able on their death-beds to declare, with a late man of God, † “that the duty of intercession for others, is the one in which they have less failed than in any other.” All duty has its reward; and there is none in which the reward is more delightful than this. There is nothing which so pleasantly realizes the beautiful idea of “the communion of saints.” There is scarcely anything that more enriches the Christian than the circulation of this holy commerce—than the comfort of believing, that while we are praying for our Christian friends, we are also reaping the full benefit of their prayers for us.

If we look carefully at the passages of the Pentateuch

* Buddicom’s *Christian Exodus*, p. 366.

† Rev. Thomas Scott. See *Memoir* †y his Son

which illustrate the sentiments and character of Moses, we shall find that there was perhaps no one who felt the importance of this duty, or practised it with more persevering and vehement energy, than this man of God. On one occasion he “fell down before the Lord forty days and forty nights” in behalf of Israel—showing how deeply convinced he was of the importance of earnest and continued intercession for their welfare. Indeed, this strikes us in the history of others of the Old Testament saints; and we call to mind the remarkable words of Samuel in the like case, “As for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you,”—implying that this was regarded by him as a regular and imperative obligation of religion.

And if we are tempted at any time to faint in the discharge of this duty, or to find too little enjoyment in the exercise of this privilege, let us take to ourselves all the encouragement derivable from the assured knowledge, that He who marshals the sacramental hosts, leads them to battle, and fights in their behalf, sustains another office equally important. He has ascended to the summit of the everlasting hills, and is there employed in prevalent intercession for their success; and we may well be consoled with the assurance, that a greater than Moses is mediating for us in the mount above; and his hand is never weary, his love never faint, his voice never silent.

SEVENTEENTH WEEK—MONDAY.

REPHIDIM.—EXODUS XVII. 1-7.

NOTHING particular is recorded of the onward march of the Israelites till they reached a place called Rephidim, which appears to be just one day's journey short of their destination—which was the base of the central mountains of Sinai. Their entrance into this mountain wilderness is

generally supposed to have been through the Wady Feiran—a broad valley which is overspread with vegetation and tamarisk trees, or occupied with gardens and date plantations. It is now much frequented by the Bedouins for pasturage. Rephidim is supposed to have been at the extremity of this valley, which has now assumed the name of esh-Sheikh, where it enters by a narrow gorge into the high granite cliffs of the central region. We may suppose, then, that it was somewhere in this vicinity that the Israelites encamped at Rephidim. Here they again wanted water; their murmurings were now more violent, and their conduct more outrageous, than at Marah. We had then some sympathy for them, and were inclined to plead some extenuating circumstances in their behalf. But we have not a word to say for them now. Their behavior is most flagrant; and the harshest judgment cannot estimate their offence too severely. They had lately seen their wants relieved in a similar emergency; and at this very time they were receiving, day by day, from heaven their daily bread. Yet so strangely unreasonable was their spirit, that they reproached Moses for having brought them out of Egypt, to kill them and their children and their cattle with thirst; and their violence of manner was such as led Moses to cry unto the Lord, saying, “What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me.” Alas! and it had come to this already. Thus already—in one little month—were the ransomed people prepared to deal with their deliverer, all whose toil and thought was spent for their advantage. Thus soon did they justify the prescient reluctance with which he had abandoned for these responsibilities the safe and quiet life he loved so well. It seems to have been in order that Moses might not be plunged in deeper discouragement, that the Lord forbore to declare his own displeasure. He simply indicated the mode in which he meant to provide for their wants. There was something remarkable in this. The people were to remain in the camp. But Moses himself, attended by the elders of Israel, and having in his hand the rod with which he had smitten the Nile

to change its sweet waters into blood, was to proceed onward to Horeb. There he was to smite a rock, from which a copious stream of waters should flow out, to furnish the people with drink.

It is usually, but erroneously, supposed that the miracle was wrought at, or close by, the encampment. But if this had been the case, the Israelites, in their parched condition, would doubtless have gladly accompanied their leader on his mission. The account of the selection of the elders, and their going to Horeb, implies that there was some considerable distance to go. This is also implied in the words that follow: "And Moses did so in the eyes of the elders of Israel"—clearly in their eyes only, as witnesses, and not in those of the people also—as would have been the case had the place been near. If the camp at Rephidim were at the spot indicated, it was a good day's journey from Sinai, and so situated that a stream of water flowing from Horeb would run directly to it. The waters of the rock thus smitten, flowing in a downward stream through the valleys, is doubtless that alluded to in other passages by which this interpretation is corroborated. So, in a later day, when Moses says: "I took your sin—the calf which ye had made, and burnt it with fire, and ground it very small, even till it was as small as dust, and I wet the dust thereof with the brook *that descended out of the mount.*" The water may have flowed to the Israelites when encamped at Rephidim, at the distance of miles from the rock, as the winter torrents do now through the valleys of Arabia-Petræa. The language of the psalmist would also lead us to conclude that this was actually the case: "He clave the rocks in the wilderness, and gave them drink as out of the great depths. He brought streams also out of the rock, and caused waters to run down like rivers." "The rock, too," as Dr. Wilson thinks, "may have been smitten at such a height, and at a place bearing such relation to the Sinaitic valleys, as to furnish in this way supplies of water to those Israelites during the first of their journeyings 'from Horeb by way of Mount Seir, unto Kadesh-bar-

nea.' Deut. i. 2. On this supposition new light is thrown upon the figurative language of the apostle, when he speaks of the 'rock following' the Israelites—meaning the stream from the rock. On this supposition, also, we see why the rock should have been smitten to yield a large supply to flow to a distance, even though springs and rills may have been pre-existent in Sinai."*

It must be admitted that, bearing these considerations in view, the remarkable rock in Sinai, which tradition regards as the one which Moses smote, is at least well chosen in regard to its situation—whatever opinion we may form of the truth of that tradition, which it seems to be the disposition of late travellers to regard with more respect than was formerly entertained. It is an isolated mass of granite, nearly twenty-feet square and high, with its base concealed in the earth—we are left to conjecture to what depth. In the face of the rock are a number of horizontal fissures, at unequal distances from each other; some near the top, and others at a little distance from the surface of the ground. An American traveller says: "The color and whole appearance of the rock are such that, if seen elsewhere, and disconnected from all traditions, no one would hesitate to believe that they had been produced by water flowing from these fissures. I think it would be extremely difficult to form these fissures or produce these appearances by art. It is not less difficult to believe that a natural fountain should flow at the height of a dozen feet out of the face of an isolated rock. Believing, as I do, that the water was brought out of a rock belonging to this mountain, I can see nothing incredible in the opinion that this is the identical rock, and that these fissures and the other appearances should be regarded as evidences of the fact."†

A still later American traveller‡ declares that he visited the spot with the settled conviction that "the legend with regard to the rock was but a fable," and that the fissures

* *Lands of the Bible*, i. 233–235.

† Dr. Olin, *Travels in the East*, i. 417.

‡ Dr. Durbin, *Observations on the East*, i. 149.

had been wrought by art to give it an apparent sanction. But he confesses, notwithstanding his scepticism on this point, "This stone made more impression upon me than any natural object claiming to attest a miracle ever did." He adds: "Had any enlightened geologist, utterly ignorant of the miracle of Moses, passed up this ravine, and seen the rock as it now is, he would have declared—though the position of the stone, and the present condition of the country around should have opposed any such impression—that strong and long-continued fountains of water had once poured their gurgling currents from it and over it. He could not waver in his belief for a moment, so natural and so perfect are the indications. I examined it thoroughly; and if it be a forgery, I am satisfied, for my own part, that a greater than Michael Angelo designed and executed it. I cannot differ from Shaw's opinion, that 'Neither art nor chance could by any means be concerned in the contrivance of these holes, which formed so many fountains.' The more I gazed upon the irregular mouth-like chasms in the rock, the more I found my scepticism shaken; and at last, I could not help asking myself, whether it was not a very natural solution of the matter, that this was indeed the rock which Moses struck, that from it the waters 'gushed forth,' and poured their streams down Wady Leja to Wady esh-Sheikh, and along it to Rephidim, where Israel was encamped, perishing with thirst?"

Whether or not this were the particular rock which sent forth its streams when smitten by the rod of Moses—which, after all, it is of little importance for us to know—there can be little doubt that, from the nature of the case, it was somewhere in this upper region, to which Israel afterwards made a day's journey, and where they remained encamped for nearly a year. Had not this been the case, another miracle would have been required to furnish water for the camp in Sinai; but the fountain being placed at the head of the valley in Horeb, it formed a source of supply to the people during the whole of their stay in the vicinity, if not after they had taken their departure.

SEVENTEENTH WEEK—TUESDAY.

SINAI.—EXODUS XIX.

WE must now conduct our readers to Sinai itself, to which sacred mount the next move brought the Israelites. We will accept the guidance of a very intelligent traveller, in taking the first view of this renowned mountain. It is only necessary first to premise, that it belongs to the high central group of the Sinai mountains; and seeing that the name of Horeb seems to be given convertibly to the mount on which the law was delivered, we agree with those who take Horeb to be the general name for the entire group of mountains, and Sinai for the particular summit. The traveller we accept for our guide is Dr. Durbin; but it is right to point out, that the Israelites are regarded as having approached the plain in front of the mountain, by a somewhat more circuitous and practicable route than that of the traveller; but the results are the same. "For two hours we ascended the wild, narrow pass, enclosed between stupendous granite cliffs, whose debris encumbered the defile, often rendering the passage difficult and dangerous. Escaping from the pass, we crossed the head of a basin-like plain, which declined to the south-west, and, ascending gradually, gloomy precipitous mountain masses rose to view on either hand, with detached snow-beds* lying in their clefts. The caravan moved slowly, and apparently with a more solemn, measured tread; the Bedouins became more serious and silent, and looked steadily before them, as if to catch the first glimpse of some revered object. The space before us gradually expanded, when suddenly Tuaeib,† pointing to a black perpendicular cliff, whose two riven and rugged summits rose some 1,200 or 1,500 feet directly in front of us, exclaimed, *Jebel Mûsa!* † How shall I describe the effect of that announcement? Not a

* This is accounted for by the time of the year—February.

† The Arab guide.

‡ Mount of Moses.

word was spoken by Moslem or Christian ; but slowly and silently we advanced into the still expanding plain, our eyes immovably fixed on the frowning precipices of the stern and desolate mountain. We were doubtless on the plain where Israel encamped at the giving of the law, and that grand and gloomy height before us was Sinai, on which God descended in fire, and the whole mountain was enveloped in smoke, and shook under the tread of the Almighty, while his presence was proclaimed by the long loud peals of repeated thunder, above which the blast of the trumpet was heard, waxing louder and louder, and reverberating amid the stern and gloomy heights around, and then God spake with Moses. ‘And all the people removed and stood afar off, and trembled when they saw the thunderings and lightnings, and thick darkness where God was ; and said unto Moses, Speak thou unto us ; but let not God speak with us, lest we die.’ Exod. xx. We all seemed to ourselves to be present at this terrible scene, and would have marched directly up to the mount of God, had not Tualeb recalled us to ourselves, by pointing to the convent far up in the deep ravine between Horeb and Jebel Deir.”*

It is easily conceivable, and the history seems to require it, that the Israelites approached this place by a more convenient route, if any existed, than that which unencumbered travellers prefer. It is therefore usually understood that instead of going through the narrow and difficult mountain passes and ravines, which indeed would have been scarcely possible then, they, on leaving the Wady Feiran, swept round to Mount Horeb, by the comparatively broad valley of Wady esh-Sheikh. The author of *Forty Days in the Desert* is the most recent traveller who has passed *that way*, and we must not refuse the reader the pleasure of his company. His description is, however, somewhat marred by the preconceived notion that the Mount of God was to be sought in another quarter.

“From the descriptions of the pass which I had read, I

* *Observations on the East*, i. 132-134.

expected unusual grandeur in the scenery, as well as great difficulty in the ascent; but after our clamber up the terrific precipices of the Serbal,* those which were in this desolate ravine appeared very insignificant, while the zig-zag pathway, built up with stones, seemed, comparatively, like a broad and easy turnpike-road, which we surmounted with little effort.† Not so, however, did the camels; their piteous cries filled the air, and echoed wildly in the recesses of the shattered cliffs. Catching, as we mounted higher and higher, the still freshening breeze from the cool regions above, we felt equal to anything. * * * The narrow valley widened gradually into a high, dreary, undulating plain, hemmed in by still drearier mountains, which upreared their dark, shattered, thunder-stricken peaks higher and higher on each side as we advanced; while right before us, closing up the plain, and shutting it in, towered sheer from its level, an awful range of precipices, which seemed to bar our further progress through this region of desolate sublimity. As we still advanced, a narrow glen opened up between them, running deeper into the heart of the solitude, and at some distance up this, half lost between walls and naked rock, peeped out the high wall of the convent, and the dark verdure of its garden, looking, as some one has well described it, like the end of the world.”

The plain of er-Rahah, into which both routes thus lead, is regarded by Dr. Robinson, and by most other travellers since, as the camping ground of the Israelites. Its extent is still further increased by lateral valleys, receding from the plain itself, between the foot of the first range of mountains, and that of the grand central mass of crags—the left one being the Wady esh-Sheikh, of very considerable extent; the right, a smaller recess, altogether making a very extensive

* Another of the Sinaic mountains, which some have regarded as the Sinai of Scripture.

† This facility is, however, an argument in favor of this route for the Israelites; but, as the author remarks, the route must have presented great difficulties before the construction of the road.

open space—supposed until lately to be the only one existing in this high central region, which could at all meet the necessities of the case—but still such as a military man, accustomed to estimate the ground which a large army requires for encampment, would perhaps hardly consider sufficient for the immense host of Israel.

It so happens, however, that the identification of this plain as the site of the Hebrew encampment, required a change of view as to the summit on which the law was delivered; for the mountain which had hitherto been regarded as the scene of that solemn event is not visible from this plain, and therefore not to the host assembled there—the view of its summit being intercepted by a nearer mountain.

The reader must clearly understand, that the Horeb, taken in the largest sense, is an oblong mountain, about three miles in length, all around the base of which sweeps a deep, irregular, and narrow defile, as if the Almighty himself had set bounds around it as holy ground. Even the mountains round about, which seem thrown together in wild confusion, are cut off from any communication with the Mount of God. At the southern extremity of this oblong edge, rises a summit, in lofty and stern grandeur, to the height of about 7,500 feet above the level of the sea; and this is the *Jebel Mûsa*, which tradition regards as the Sinai of Scripture—the mount where the law was delivered. The only ground on which its claim to this distinction—which it seems entitled to by its surpassing grandeur—has been questioned, is, that it is not visible from the plain which has been fixed upon as the camping ground of the Israelites. Most of those who have on this ground questioned its claims, have done so with declared reluctance, seeing how fully in all other respects the mountain corresponds to the ideas one previously forms of the Mount of God. But finding no help, they repair to the other extremity of the oblong mount, and discover there another pinnacle, which, although lower than *Jebel Mûsa*, boldly confronts the plain of the encampment, and is visible from all parts of it. It bears the name of *Suksafeh*, and is the

“Horeb” of the traditions which gave to the two grand summits the distinctive names of Horeb and Sinai. Though inferior to the southern summit, it is not wanting in grandeur and magnificence, and it is of very difficult access, though some have contrived, with no small risk, to reach the summit. Dr. Durbin, who went to it directly from the summit of Jebel Mûsa, says: “No one who has not seen them, can conceive the ruggedness of these vast piles of granite rocks, rent into chasms, rounded into small summits, or splintered into countless peaks, all in the wildest confusion, as they appear to the eye of an observer from any of the heights. But when we did arrive at the summit of es-Suksafeh, and cast our eyes over the wide plain, we were more than repaid for all our toil. One glance was enough. We were satisfied that here, and here only, could the wondrous displays of Sinai have been visible to the assembled host of Israel; that here the Lord spoke with Moses; that here was the mount that trembled and smoked in the presence of its manifested Creator! We gazed for some time in silence, and when we spoke, it was with a reverence that even the most thoughtless of our company could not shake off. I read on the very spot, with what feelings I need not say, the passage in Exodus which relates the wonders of which this mountain was the theatre. We *felt* its truth, and could almost see the lightnings, and hear the thunders, and the ‘trumpet waxing loud.’”

SEVENTEENTH WEEK—WEDNESDAY.

SINAI DIFFICULTIES.

WE heartily sympathize in the disappointment some readers will feel in learning that the conclusions exhibited yesterday, in favor of Suksafeh as “the Mount of God,” and of the plain er-Rahah as the camping ground of the Israelites, are not after all so irrefragable as some of the travellers we cited

assumed. But the geographical inquirer must inure himself to such disappointments. There are several points in Scripture geography in which we have ourselves had to change our opinion two or three times within the last fifteen years; a position that seemed strong and invincible on the evidence before us, having appeared in the progress of discovery and of more certain information to be no longer tenable. In such cases, after carefully examining all the new information, and taking the possibilities of further evidence into account, we have repeatedly been constrained to give up our most cherished conclusions in favor of some new opinion which came before us with invincible evidence. This we have done not unreluctantly—not without much groaning of mind—but still in reasonably cheerful obedience to the claims of truth. This is a useful process. And it is not without encouragement; for it has sometimes happened that the latest and surest discoveries have permitted us to return with rejoicing hearts, and almost with exulting shouts, to our first love—to the very view of the matter which we adopted or wrought out, when our thought and labor were first engaged in the investigation. An instance of this has been seen in “Dead Sea Difficulties;”^{*} and something of the same sort occurs with regard to the Sinai mountain.

The view set forth yesterday is that which has been currently entertained since Dr. Robinson’s admirable Biblical Researches in Palestine were published—now about ten years ago; and it is likely to retain its hold on the public mind for some years to come. People will not be ready to give it up until the evidence for some other alternative assumes a very positive character. Indeed, we are inclined to suspend our own judgment; for, notwithstanding the frequency with which this region has been visited, it does not appear to us that some parts of it have as yet been adequately explored.

It has been seen that the old determination was in favor of *Jebel Músa*—the tallest and southernmost summit of the mass of mountains which, in Scripture, seems to have borne the

* See Eighth Week, Friday.

name of Horeb. Its rejection, and the selection of the lower summit at the northern extremity of the ridge was, as we have seen, founded on the impression that there was no open space before it, and in sight of it, where the Israelites could have encamped. A great number of travellers are quite positive on this point. Language cannot be more strong than their declarations. Yet it now appears, on evidence quite as strong, that there is, at the southern base of Jebel Mûsa—the old Sinai—a level valley, affording even more and better ground for encampment than that in front of the northern cliffs.

The question was raised in America, to which it properly belongs. The great geographer of the day, Dr. Carl Ritter of Berlin, in a letter to Dr. Robinson, which was printed, pointed out that a geographical commentary on Exodus and Numbers, by Laborde,* had now, for the first time, established the existence of the plain of Wady es-Seba'iyeh, *at the southern base* of Sinai, and had thus furnished an important point for the elucidation of the giving of the law. This induced a scholar and artist (Mr. M. K. Kellog), who had visited Sinai in 1844, to give the public some extracts from the journal he kept at that time, by which *this* view is strongly corroborated. It also accounts for the mistake of previous travellers, by showing that *by the path usually taken*, this important valley is shut out from view by the spurs of the mountains. The traveller's narrative is longer than we can introduce here, but the substance of it we can give.

On the 6th of March, 1844, the traveller remained behind at the convent, while his companions went to explore Mount St. Catherine; but some time after their departure with the guides, he took a little Arab boy with him, to carry his sketch-book and water-bottle, and walked up Wady Shu'eib until he came to the little mountain of the Cross (*Neja*), which almost shuts up the passage into Wady Seba'iyeh, and where he had, for the first time, a view of the southern face of Sinai. Here opened an extended picture of the mountains lying to

* *Commentaire Géographique sur l'Exode et les Nombres.* Paris: 1841

the south of the Sinaite range, for he was now some three hundred feet above the adjacent valleys.*

After much difficulty, the traveller succeeded in climbing over immense masses of granite, to the side of the Mountain of the Cross, which he ascended over five hundred feet, on its south-western face, in order to obtain a good view of the peak of Sinai, which he was anxious to sketch. "Here close at my right, rose almost perpendicularly, the holy mountain; its shattered pyramidal peak towering above me some fourteen hundred feet, of a brownish tint, presenting vertical strata of granite, which threw off the glittering rays of the morning sun. Clinging to its base was a range of sharp, upheaving crags, from one to two hundred feet in height, which formed an almost impassable barrier to the mountain itself from the valley adjoining. These crags were separated from the mountain by a deep and narrow gorge, yet they must be considered as forming the projecting base of Sinai.

"Directly in front of me was a level valley, stretching onward to the south for three or four miles, and enclosed on the east, west, and south, by low mountains of various altitudes—all much less, however, than that of Sinai. This valley passed behind the Mountain of the Cross, to my left, and out of view, so that I could not calculate its northern extent from where I stood. The whole scene was one of inexpressible grandeur and solemnity."

On returning to the convent, the traveller's friends, on seeing his sketch-book, remarked that there was no such plain as he had there represented. On being assured that he had copied what was before him, "they laughed, and remarked that none but a painter's imagination could have seen the plain in question, for they had passed entirely around the mountain that day, and could assert, *positively*, that there was no such plain." Nevertheless, one of the friends was prevailed upon to see for himself; for the next day was spent in this very valley, the existence of which had been so stoutly

* A neighboring ridge to that of Horeb, and the highest in the whole region.

denied ; and the reason was clearly seen why, by the route taken the previous day, it had not been brought into view—a point very intelligible to those who are conversant with mountain scenery. We have then a fuller description of the plain. It spreads out directly in front of the mountain, “level, clean, and broad, going on to the south, with varied widths, for about three miles on gently ascending ground, where it passes between two sloping hills, and enters another wady which descends beyond, from which it is probable that Sinai may yet be clearly seen. On the east, this plain of Seba’iyeh is bounded by mountains, having long sloping bases, and covered with wild thyme and other herbs, affording good tenting ground immediately fronting Sinai, which forms, as it were, a grand pyramidal pulpit to the magnificent amphitheatre below. The width of the plain, immediately in front of Sinai, is about sixteen hundred feet, but further south the width is much increased, so that on an average, the plain may be considered as being nearly one third of a mile wide, and its length, *in view of Mount Sinai*, between five and six miles. The good tenting ground on the mountain would give much more space for the multitude on the great occasion for which they were assembled. This estimate does not include that part of the plain to the north, and Wady esh-Sheikh, from which the peak of Sinai is not visible, for this space would contain three or four times the number of people which Seba’iyeh would hold.”

By all this it would appear that those who, in olden times, looked upon Jebel Mûsa as the Mount of God, were by no means so blind to circumstances and probabilities as travellers, in their own imperfect information, have imagined ; and now that it has been shown that the want of a camping ground, which alone created the desire to give a different locality to Sinai, does not exist, there appears no reason why the despised mountain should not have its ancient and crowning glory restored to it. It is probable that no stronger instance has ever occurred to show the necessity of the utmost caution, and the most assured data, in disturbing the

established conclusions in matters of this nature, and which may have been founded on circumstances actually existing, though hidden from us.

SEVENTEENTH WEEK—THURSDAY.

THE GOLDEN CALF.—EXODUS XXXII. 1-6.

THE Hebrews remained at their station in Horeb a few days more than eleven months. During this time theocracy was fully established ; Jehovah himself was constituted their sovereign ; his law, as such, was promulgated in dread solemnity from the mount ; and committed to them as written by the finger of God on the two tables of stone ; their government was duly organized ; their national laws and institutions were established, to separate them from all other nations as the future depositaries of the oracles of God ; the tabernacle was set up for the house or palace of their king Jehovah, who visibly dwelt among them in the glory that rested above the ark ; and the regular service of his royal court, by priests and Levites, was established. In the same interval of time, they were severely rebuked for their defection from their God and king in the worship of the golden calf ; the sanctions of the law were solemnly repeated ; the people were numbered and mustered for war ; the order for encamping, breaking up and marching, was accurately settled ; and the whole constitution of the state was completed.

Of all these transactions, the space to which we are limited allows us only to notice particularly the sin of Israel in the matter of their setting up and worshipping the golden calf during the protracted absence of Moses in the mount in his high intercourse with God. We do this the rather seeing that the transaction has been much misunderstood. Some, conceiving that it amounted to a renunciation of the God who had brought them out of Egypt, and whom they

had solemnly accepted as their King, have used this as a handle for discrediting the miracles which attended that deliverance. It is argued, in effect, that it is morally impossible that a people who had witnessed such great miracles of God, should so soon have called his being and sovereignty in question; therefore, no such miracles were witnessed by them—none such were performed. The plain answer to this is, that the Israelites did not deny their God or question his being—they transgressed, not the first commandment, but the second. They made an image after the imagination of their own hearts, or rather after the notion they had imbibed in Egypt, to represent or symbolize the Lord, debasing “their Glory to the similitude of an ox that eateth grass.” This simple view of the matter renders all the obscure parts of the history, as commonly understood, very easy of explanation.

Moses had been away in the mountain no less than six weeks, when the people began to give vent to their uneasiness at the absence of the leader to whom they looked to give effect to their new institutions, and to lead them out of the wilderness into their promised heritage. Impelled by these feelings, they presented themselves in a tumultuous manner to Aaron, with a proposal which, however deplorable, conveys no intimation of a wish to renounce the authority of Moses, or to abandon their fealty to their divine King. They said, in effect, Since Moses, who undertook to be our leader, and to whom, if he were present, we should address ourselves, delays his return so long, make thou for us an image, through which we may address our worship to the God whom we have taken for our guide. In estimating the force and purport of this application, it should be recollected that the tabernacle and the ritual worship were not yet established, nor the ark with its hovering cherubim established in the sanctuary; so that they had not then the visible symbols and forms of service which they afterwards possessed, and the need of which, *to them*, this very application strikingly manifests. In fact, Moses was at the very time receiving instru-

tions in the mount for the mode in which a form of visible service was to be established among them; ignorant of which, and yet craving something of the kind, they were resolved to set up a form of service and symbols for themselves, although they were still willing that the brother and representative of Moses should give effect to their wish. We shall fail to apprehend aright the reason for these things being recorded, if we do not see in all this a clear indication of the peculiar fitness of the material and sensible forms of worship, which were conceded to them, for a people like the Israelites. Nor can this tendency in them be estimated fairly, unless we recollect that there was not then in the world any people who could, more than they, understand or be satisfied with a worship purely spiritual.

The proposal was, however, a clear infraction of the second commandment; and Aaron, at least, could not be ignorant of this, though, from his conduct in the matter, it may be doubted whether even he was fully sensible of the criminality of their request. His conduct now lacked the simple firm-handed rectitude and singleness of purpose which we find in Moses, and shows how wisely God had chosen, between these brothers, the one who should be the leader of his people, while yet employing the other for such service as *his* more showy gifts and capacities qualified him to render. Aaron seems to have temporized in the dread that his opposition would have urged the people to cast off the authority they were still willing to recognize; or the manner in which he met the proposal may be regarded as having been dictated by policy, and conceived in the hope, that if he could not, by interposing the force of selfish motives, arrest the progress of the scheme, he might delay its accomplishment until Moses should return, and by his authority stay further proceedings. It required from them a sacrifice which he might hope they would not be very ready to make, and which could not, at all events, be accomplished without some expense of time. "Break off," he said, "the ear-rings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of

your daughters, and bring them unto me." He had underrated the earnestness of the people, if he supposed their ardor was to be thus chilled. In a very little time the required ear-rings were produced, and Aaron found himself involved in an implied engagement from which he had not the courage to recede; and he proceeded to cause a symbolical representation of the Almighty to be made in the form to which they had been used in Egypt, where the most honored of the gods was worshipped under the similitude of a bull. As to the form, called in contempt a "calf," there cannot be a doubt that it was that of the Egyptian god Apis, or the corresponding Mnevis of Lower Egypt, primarily represented by a living bull, and by various images of that bull dispersed throughout the land. An image must have some form or other—and while the familiarity of this symbol in Egypt would suggest it most readily to the mind, it is certain, that whatever symbol had been chosen, the same question might still have been raised. Why this symbol rather than another?—and probably we should not, with regard to any other, have found so obvious an explanation.

Much question has been raised as to the mode in which this image was executed. In the text we read, "He received them at their hands, and fashioned it with a graven tool, after he had made it a molten calf." The *simplest* view of this is, that this idol was a solid molten image, moulded, cast, and afterwards touched up with the graving tool, in the ordinary style of finishing. To this idea, it is admitted, that no objection can be brought, either from the particular recital of the circumstances, or from the general state of art at the time. The great quantity of precious metal requisite on this plan, and uselessly consumed, or else the very small size of the idol, presents the only ground of suspecting its correctness. It would, however, have been only a higher step in mechanical practice, and by no means beyond the existing resources, while it is equally consistent with the sacred text, to suppose that the image was a perfect molten work, cast hollow, and consequently modelled with more dexterity.

But there is another class of opinions in this matter, proceeding upon the view that the idolatrous work in question was one of *laminated* art. In such a case, the inner substance must have been formed of some soft and easily carved material, as wax in miniature, and clay or wood in large figures. The case, or frame-work, being thus quickly finished, could be rapidly covered over with thin plates of the external coating, which, in the instance before us, was of gold. These *laminæ* either overlapped at the edges, or were fitted into each other. The facility with which such a work could be executed suits the exigency in question, while the beauty and utility of similar artistic operations are abundantly proved by the earlier works of the Greeks, and by the wonderful chryselaphantine sculptures of Phidias. Of the archaic specimens of this art, we still possess such information as seems clearly to demonstrate that to this species of art belonged the sculpture of Aaron. Pausanius describes a statue of Jupiter by Learchus—the most ancient then known—having been executed in the eighth century before our era, formed of plates of brass hammered round, and fastened by rivets, with a “case” or “foundation” of wood—exactly as the calf in the wilderness is supposed to have been constructed. Of this character are all the most ancient metallic statues; and to this description of sculpture all the accounts of the art to be found in Homer refer. A head of Osiris, with the internal wooden nucleus still subsisting within the metal coating, has been published among the antiquities of the Dilettante Society; and other examples of the similar application of ivory exist. Thus the earliest classic records lead us up to Egyptian practice—for from Egypt all admit the parentage of ancient art—and thence we easily obtain the most probable idea of the true nature of Aaron’s performance—“Israel’s molten god.”*

The people received the image with gladness, and hailed it as the symbol of the God which had brought them out of

* Dr. Memes on *Fine Art among the Jews*—in *Journal of Sacred Literature*, vol. iii. pp. 69, 70.

the land of Egypt—a clear indication that they did not intend it to represent any other god.* When Aaron witnessed the enthusiasm with which the image was received by the people, he knew that they would not brook delay in celebrating the rites of worship before it; and, therefore, still bent on keeping the objects of the service in a right direction, he caused an altar to be set up before the image, and proclaimed throughout the camp that the morrow was to be regarded as a feast to Jehovah. That feast the people rose the next morning early—so eager were they—to celebrate before their new bauble, and after the fashion in which such feasts were held by idolaters. Profusely did they offer the flesh of their cattle, and the wine of drink offering; and then, as was the custom, they sat down to feast upon the remainder of that which had been offered. When they had feasted, and their senses were excited by wine, they rose to the dances, and games, and wanton sports, which formed then, and do still form, the mode in which the rites of some (not all) idols were celebrated. This was probably among the things that Aaron dreaded, but could not prevent, after his temporizing conduct had given a sort of sanction to their proceedings. How much more becoming, had he from the first raised his voice on high against their device, which he knew, however they may have glozed it, to be in direct contradiction to the commandment which had but lately been given, in an audible utterance, from amidst the terrors of Sinai. It is true they might have slain him. The probability, however, seems to be that they would not have gone so far. But what if they had? Moses would have died—we can feel sure of that—rather than have moved one inch in this evil way. And they

* The authorized version does indeed convey the impression that it did. "These be thy *gods*, O Israel, that brought thee out of the land of Egypt!" but the words rendered "gods" is simply the name of God in its usual plural form *Elohim*, and translated "God," except when supposed, by the translators, to apply to idols, as here. But the mere fact, that the image itself was but one, shows that the plural is here very improperly employed.

who undertake to lead a people into new ways of righteousness and truth—as Aaron as well as Moses did—should be at all times ready to give their life's blood to evince the earnestness of their purpose, and to show forth their own conviction of the supreme importance of the objects they set before the people. No man is truly great who has not before him great objects for which he would think it worth his while to die. Yet, nevertheless, it is true that the *real* martyr spirit is rare in every age. It was rare in that age—it is rare in this.

SEVENTEENTH WEEK—FRIDAY.

JUDGMENT.—EXODUS XXXII. 7-35.

WHERE was Moses all the time that these abominations were perpetrated in the camp? He was in the mount with God, receiving his ordinances; when suddenly the Divine voice said to him, "Get thee down; for *thy* people whom *thou* broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves: they have turned aside quickly out of the way that I commanded them." He was then told wherein they had sinned; and the Lord threatened to abandon this stiff-necked people to their doom, and to make Moses himself the heir of the promises. Some, if asked, What then would have become of the promises of God made to the fathers? The answer is, that the proposition had its purpose, and God knew that the contingency would not arise. The promises were at one time bound up in the life of Isaac, whom nevertheless his father was commanded to immolate. No one imagines, that at any part of that transaction it was actually the Divine intention to allow that sacrifice to be consummated; yet neither, on the other hand, does any one, on that account, doubt that this fact has anything to do with the fitness of the proposal as the means of trying and illustrating the patriarch's faith. So now this proposal had two obvious

effects—both salutary and important; one of affording the Hebrew leader an occasion of manifesting his disinterestedness, and the other of benefiting the people, by exciting their alarm at the possible desertion of their Almighty friend, and the forfeiture of the privileges they had deemed so secure. But, suppose Moses had accepted the proposal?—We have no right to ask what would have been the consequences, had everything taken place that did not. But if it had been so, God's promises to the patriarchs had still been fulfilled; for Moses was a son of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, and in him, and his, the promises might have been fulfilled. Where is the difficulty?

But this prospect had no charms for Moses. It filled him with consternation and grief. His earnest and humble expostulation evinced that regard for the honor of God's name, which seems to have been always the master feeling in his mind. Aware of the point of view in which the Egyptians and the neighboring nations regarded the recent conflict, as one testing the power of the God in whom Israel trusted, he urged,—“Wherefore should the Egyptians say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth?” This was a thought the heart of Moses could not endure. But he rested not there; he pleaded the ancient promises to the patriarchs, especially as regarded the multitude of their race; for that increase must be long postponed, if he and his were substituted for the existing thousands in Israel.

His prayer prevailed; and, speaking after the manner of men, the Lord is said to have repented of the evil which he had thought to do unto his people.

Moses then went down. On the way he joined Joshua, who had been left below the clouded top of the mountain, and had remained waiting patiently for his master. Together they descended—Moses bearing in his hands the stone tablets on which the substance of the moral law, as embodied in the ten commandments, was written by the hand of God. As they proceeded, the air bore to their ears the distant sounds

of the joyful shouts of the people in their jubilation before their golden idol.

Joshua, all whose instincts were martial, thought of nothing but a hostile assault upon the encampment. Like Job's war-horse, he smelleth the battle afar off. "There is a noise of war," said he, "in the camp." This is one of those small, delicate touches, which mark a historian drawing from fact—recording from nature. But Moses was not so deceived. He said, "It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome; but the voice of them that sing do I hear."

And so it proved. Their continued descent brought them in full view of the camp; and there were the chosen people seen giving themselves up to bacchanalian revelries, and dancing around the idol they had formed. At that awful sight Moses, who, with all his gentleness and patience, could endure nothing that cast dishonor upon the Lord of Hosts, was moved with holy indignation, and casting from his hands the precious tablets that he bore, brake them to pieces beneath his feet. Nor was this act without signification. This people had but lately entered into high and solemn covenant with Jehovah—He to be their God and King, and they to be his people and subjects. The tables of stone contained, as it were, on the part of God, the terms of the agreement, and formed a pledge that He would on his part fulfil all that He had promised. That covenant they had, in a most essential matter, broken and cast to the winds; and by that act, all their expectations from him were destroyed and broken, as a matter of bonded and covenanted right. Moses, by casting the tables from him, and breaking them in their sight, adopted the most proper and significant mode of representing his view of the transaction.

Consider well the moral courage of Moses. He was but one man. Yet he ventured to confront that inebriate host, armed only with the terrors of holy wrath—and the conscience-stricken crowd shrunk before him; and not a hand was lifted up in resistance, when he strode straight up to

their idol, cast it to the ground, and utterly consumed it before their eyes.

This destruction of the golden calf is particularly described, and demands a moment's attention:—"He took the calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and threw it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it." Many years after, in describing the transaction to a new generation, Moses says:—"I took your sin, the calf which ye had made, and burnt it with fire, and stamped it, and ground it very small, even until it was small as dust, and I cast the dust thereof into the brook that descended out of the mount." Much inquiry has been founded on this. A French writer* dwells on the difficulty of the operation, known to be such by all who work in metals. He argues from it the advancement in chymic art of the Egyptians, from whom he thinks Moses must have acquired the secret. "The heads of commentators," he says, "have been much perplexed to know how Moses burnt and reduced the gold to powder. Many have offered vain and improbable conjectures; but an experienced chymist has removed every difficulty upon the subject, and has suggested this simple process:—In the place of nitro-muriatic acid (the aqua regia of the alchemists) which we employ, the Hebrew legislator used natron, which is common in the East. What follows respecting his making the Israelites drink this powder, proves that he was perfectly acquainted with the whole effect of the operation. He wished to increase the punishment of their disobedience, and nothing could have been more suitable; for gold, reduced and made into a draught, in the manner I have mentioned, has a most disagreeable taste."

This is very ingenious and interesting. It proceeds, however, upon the supposition, that the image was of solid gold or at least wholly of gold. But if, as we have supposed, the nucleus was of wood, covered with plates of metal, we may then dispense with all this elaborate process, the application of which, under the circumstances, appears to us very difficult,

* Goguet in his *Origine des Loix*.

and obtain another explanation, much more directly in unison with the sacred record. The fire would of course calcine the wood, and reduce that to powder; and from the residue, the plates of metal might easily be beaten or hammered out (as the "stamping" implies) very thin, and from that form reduced to fine dust, which, with the ashes of the wood, might be easily cast upon the water. Or if the scientific appliances be at all necessary, they would be much more effectually and immediately operative in rendering friable the plates of metal than a solid or dense mass of gold. In regard to the drinking, the people were thus made to express the same contempt for it as the Egyptians would have done in eating any of their own animal gods; and it was, in this view, at the same time a punishment for their sin, and a humiliation to their idol. But it is not, after all, clear, that they were constrained to drink it as an intended punishment; but that it resulted as an inevitable incident from the fragments being cast into the stream descending from the mount, to which they had recourse for water.

It then devolved on Moses to execute judgment upon the chief offenders. When he stood in the gate, calling those who were on the Lord's side to gather to him, the Levites came. At his command they took their swords, and passed through the camp, smiting all those, to the number of three thousand, whose appearance evinced the active part they had taken in these idolatrous orgies.

Then Moses returned to the mount—and let us heed well the words he uttered: "Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold: yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin——: and if not, blot me out of the book which thou hast written." What a glorious abruption is this! How beautiful! How grand! We know nothing like it in literature. Overpowered with emotion at the mere idea of the sin of Israel remaining unforgiven, he cannot finish the sentence; and after a pause of overwhelming feeling, he declares that in that case it were better for him to die than to live, and prays that it may be so. It was usual to keep

a genealogical registry of living persons. When any one died his name was blotted out. God in this and similar expressions in Scripture, is supposed to keep such a book—the book of the living—and to be blotted from it, was to die.

SEVENTEENTH WEEK—SATURDAY.

THE STRANGE FIRE—MOURNING.—LEVITICUS X.

AMONG the incidents of Sinai which may be regarded as historical, is one which intimately concerned the family of Aaron. It occurred after he and his sons had been set apart to the priesthood, and—the tabernacle having been erected—the system of ritual worship was in full operation. Aaron had four sons—Nadab, Abihu, Eleazer, and Ithamar, who had daily duties to discharge at the tabernacle. The two former, as the eldest, enjoyed special consideration, and they had been with their father and Moses in the sacred mount, which had not been the case with their brothers. Among the priestly services was that of offering the precious incense upon the golden altar within the tabernacle, at the very time that the daily sacrifice was being consumed upon the brazen altar in the court without. At the time the ritual service had been inaugurated, the fire of the great altar had been kindled from heaven; and it was made an ordinance that this holy fire should always be kept up and preserved, and that this, and this alone, was to be used in all the sacred services. The priests who offered incense had therefore to fill their censers with fire from the great altar when they went into the tabernacle to burn incense. It was in this matter that Nadab and Abihu sinned. Treating this ordinance as of no importance—thinking to themselves that common fire would burn their incense quite as well as the other—or perhaps, as there is reason to fear, having been led into a mistake or neglect by inebriety—they filled their censers with “strange

fire"—unhallowed fire, not from the altar, and ventured to bring it into the tabernacle. The altar on which they were to lay it, stood before the veil or curtain which separated the outer chamber from that inner one in which lay the ark of God, and over which "between the cherubim" shone that Divine and burning radiance usually called the "glory of the Lord," but properly distinguished by the Hebrew term, Shekinah. No sooner did they enter the place with their strange fire, than a penetrating flash shot forth from the symbol of the sacred presence, and laid them dead. The effect was like that of lightning; for the fire which "devoured" their lives, left their sacred vestments unconsumed.

This was an awful thing. Was it not terribly severe? We must answer that it was NECESSARY. At any time the offence would have been very grievous; but at this time, when the ritual service was so newly established, and just coming into regular operation, such an infraction of it by the very persons whose official charge it was to maintain its sacredness, demanded a most rigid punishment—even a miraculous interposition, to protect the sacred service, and indeed the whole law, from that disesteem on the part of the people which might naturally have resulted from it, if passed over without the severest notice.

And what did Aaron say to this—the afflicted father, who saw the two eldest of his sons taken from him at one stroke? He said nothing. "HE HELD HIS PEACE." Never did that eloquent tongue utter words so cogent or so beautiful as was this silence then. It reminds us of him who said, "I was dumb; I opened not my mouth; because THOU didst it." This simply natural and touching circumstance raises Aaron in our esteem. We view his veiled sorrows with the respect which the most clamorous grief might vainly claim; and we feel more than ever disposed to extenuate the weakness which belonged to some parts of his career.

The occasion gave Moses the opportunity of enforcing upon the father and brothers, and in them, upon all future high-priests and priests, the obligations of public duty as limiting

the indulgence of private feeling. Eleazer and Ithamar, consecrated as they were to the Divine service, were not to adopt the usual signs of lamentation, nor so much as to suspend the offices in which the calamity found them engaged. This was obviously insisted upon, lest a relaxation of the precision of the ritual, on any account, at this early period, before habit had made it familiar, should be looked upon as a dispensation for future negligence. To the deeper feelings of the bereaved father some allowance was shown. The goat of the sin-offering, instead of being partly consumed, and partly reserved for use, to be eaten by the priests as directed, had been wholly consumed on the altar—perhaps because the grief of the bereaved family not allowing them to assemble for a repast, they knew no better way of disposing of it. Moses remonstrated with Eleazer and Ithamar on this negligence; but Aaron said that after what had befallen he had no heart for feasting, and he could not think that such a service would be demanded or accepted by the Lord; and we are told that “When Moses heard that he was content.”

The prohibition to the priests to manifest the customary signs of mourning, because the vows of the Lord were upon them, shows us what were the ceremonies or expressions of mourning in use among the Israelites. The words are: “Uncover not your heads, neither rend your clothes.” The book of Leviticus contains further regulations on the same subject. In the twenty-first chapter, first five verses, the priests are forbidden to contract the defilement involved in mourning, except for their nearest kindred; and the high-priest not even for them, not even for his father or mother. The acts prohibited are thus specified: “They shall not make baldness upon their head, neither shall they shave off the corner of their beard, nor make any cuttings in their flesh.” The priests might rend their garments—not, we apprehend, their sacerdotal vestments, but their ordinary raiment; but the high-priest might not do even this; and the priests, though so far allowed to appear as mourners, might

not do so to the extent of disfiguring their persons in any manner.

It is remarkable that the book of Job, usually considered as produced in the same age as the Pentateuch, embodies notices of nearly all the ancient and subsisting practices of eastern mourning. Two of those here indicated, are produced in one verse. The patriarch, when informed of the death of his children, as the climax of his trials, “Arose, rent his mantle, shaved his head, and fell upon the ground and worshipped.”* Other early instances are those of Reuben rending his clothes, when he found not Joseph in the pit;† and of Jacob also doing this when he understood that his beloved son was killed.‡ This is certainly not the least significant or impressive of the acts of mourning in the demonstrative grief of the East. It is, in a certain degree, a natural impulse, and as such has kept its ground while many mere conventional tokens of sorrow have passed away. It is to be recollected, that by such means the ancient as well as modern Orientals, including the Jews, sought to obtain the result which we ourselves achieve by a distinctive dress. They had no mourning dress, and therefore denoted their condition by rent clothes, by lack of ornaments, and even by personal disfigurements.

It is somewhat remarkable, that there is in Scripture no indication that any of the people, except the priests and military men wore any covering upon their heads. It would therefore seem at first view, that the clause forbidding them to “uncover their heads” in mourning, signifies that they were not to lay aside the turbans peculiar to their office. That this was included in the prohibition is very likely. But it must also mean more; for if they were not to forego this covering of the head, much less might they cut or shave away their hair, as from the instance cited from Job, and from others that will occur to the reader, appears to have been customary. Shaving the head is now common throughout Western Asia, as it was among the ancient Egyptians; and

* Job i. 20

† Genesis xxxvii. 29.

‡ Ibid. xxxvii. 34.

it has hence, as an act of mourning, become extinct. This may seem to us too deliberate an act to be a natural expression of mourning. But eastern grief, though demonstrative, is deliberate; besides that, the word does not necessarily mean shaving with a razor, but may mean any mode of cropping or shearing the hair with knife or scissors. However, there is not really more of formal deliberation in having the head shaven, even with a razor, than in being measured for a suit of mourning clothes. What is directed to be avoided may be seen in the Apocryphal book of Baruch,* where the mourning practices of heathen priests are indicated—"Their priests sit in their temples, with their clothes rent, and their heads shaven, and have nothing upon their heads; and they roar and cry before their gods, as men do at the feast when one is dead."

This, in fact, recognizes these acts as common customs of mourning among the Jews; but the writer is, as a Jew, surprised at their being exhibited by priests. Compare this with Jeremiah,†—"There came from Samaria fourscore men having their heads shaven and their clothes rent, and having cut themselves," etc. This was in token of affliction.

Much curious speculation has been applied to "the corner of the beard" which it is forbidden to "shave off." Some take it to mean that it is the beard as a whole which the mourning priest is forbidden to disfigure in mourning. It seems rather, however, to signify, that they were not to destroy the whiskers or upper extremities of their beards. This implies that the Israelites, although so recently from Egypt, did allow their beards to grow ordinarily, contrary to the practice of the Egyptians, from whom they were thus distinguished. On the other hand, it appears from the representations to be found of Syrian and Arabian foreigners upon the monuments of that people, that some of these nations did trim away the whiskers, while they allowed the beard to grow.

* Baruch vi. 31

† Jeremiah xii. 5.

The text would therefore intimate, that the practice of the Israelites in preserving the "corners of their beards," distinguished them also from these nations, and that distinction was not to be destroyed, even in the act of mourning.

The slashing of the flesh with knives or lancets in the transport of grief or enthusiasm, still occurs often enough in the East; but is not now a regular custom of mourning, though it may be found as such among some American tribes. Herodotus states, that it was not an Egyptian custom, but affirms that it was a Syrian one; and in this he is confirmed by the remarkable case of the priests of Baal, who "cut themselves, *after their manner*, with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them."* From this statement, it is easy to see how many regulations, apparently of small consequence, must have operated to *distinguish* the Israelites from the various nations among whom they were placed, and thus tend towards the maintenance of their existence as a separate people. As an act of mourning, the cutting of the flesh seems to have been retained by the Israelites,† it having been seemingly understood as forbidden only to the priests, in whom it might have been regarded as a religious act, and might so lead to the notion, that the sight of human suffering was pleasing to God, or might tend, even when self-inflicted, to excite his compassion or move his purposes. In this sense the custom is not extinct among the devotees of the Pagan or Moslem East. In the latter there are—fewer now indeed than formerly—certain calenders or dervises, who treat themselves after this fashion.

* 1 Kings xviii. 28.

† Jeremiah xvi. 6; xlviii. 37.

Eighteenth Week—Sunday.

HOBAB.—NUMBERS X. 29—32.

SEEING that Israel in the wilderness is to be regarded as a type of the church of God in its pilgrim state, and Canaan of that rest which remaineth for the people of God—the devout mind cannot but reflect with peculiar interest upon the striking words which Moses addressed to his brother-in-law, Hobab, to induce him to cast in his lot with the chosen people: “We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you; come thou with us, and we will do thee good; for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel.” Every word of this deserves most attentive consideration, and is in the highest degree suggestive of comfortable and encouraging thought. We feel that we are in the place of Hobab—that it is we ourselves to whom this invitation is given—that it is we ourselves to whom these inducements are held out. It is one of a thousand passages in the Pentateuch which open the heart and set the mind to work in such a manner as might convince us—if only by that “intuition” of which we now-a-days hear so much—that the law was indeed, in more ways than one, “a shadow of good things to come.”

Moses first states *where* Israel is going, and whither he invites Hobab to go. How does he assure him that he is able to give him a home in that land? He does not point to the numbers and the strength of Israel, or expatiate upon their resolution to conquer the land flowing with milk and honey. He gives him better ground of confidence—he tells him that the Lord *had promised* to give it. That is all. And it is highly honorable to Hobab, that Moses felt he would be, as he knew he ought to be, satisfied with that reason. He was satisfied, for he went:—and although the thirty-nine years of wandering which followed, were unexpectedly interposed between him and the fulfilment of his expectation, and might

seem to cancel the engagement—he persevered to the last, and entered with Israel the promised land, in which we find his descendants settled—Judges iv. 11. The case is, to the letter, parallel with our own. The same considerations are presented to us. Our hope has no other tenure than that of Hobab. It is not by any works or worthiness of theirs that we feel our Canaan opened to those with whom we have cast in our lot. But God has said he will give it to them. If our expectation had any other foundation than this promise, anxious and terrible would be our wilderness way. If it rested with ourselves only, there is not a day of our pilgrimage which would not leave us in peril of losing that heritage ; but now we can rest secure—rest in perfect peace under the shadow of the covenant, knowing that the promised land is secured, by every pledge that the God of love can give, to all upon whom, in token of their citizenship, Christ has written his new name. Let us not, therefore, be more distrustful than Hobab. Let us believe with him that although the way to that land, through this “waste howling wilderness,” be winding and trying—though it be much longer than we thought—and may tempt us sometimes, in the language of hope deferred, to cry, “How long, O Lord, how long?” yet it is safe ; it is really short : and when we stand on the brink of our Jordan, and are about to pass into our promised land, the way which the Lord our God hath led us these forty years, will be seen to have been not wanting in precious remembrances, or destitute of wilderness privileges. We shall know that the cloudy pillar has been our guide—that we have been fed on manna—that we have drunk of the smitten rock—that with us has been the tabernacle—with us the ark—and that amid all our cares and trials, the glory of the Lord has remained fixed upon the mercy-seat.

With this assurance before him, Moses cordially invites Hobab to come. He does not appeal to his kindness, to his good feeling, to his friendship. He takes higher ground. He speaks as one who has rich inducements to offer. He tells him to come for his own sake—“Come with us, for we will

do thee good." Moses was not a beggar to receive boons ; but a prince—"a prince of God"—to bestow them. He offers the inducement of good, great good, to the man whom he invites to accompany him—one near to him, one whose society he had daily enjoyed while he abode in the tents of Midian, and whose interests were therefore, no doubt, very dear to him. He would not have deceived him on any account, or have held out to him expectations, the fulfilment of which he doubted. For this good, Hobab had not altogether to wait for forty years. He realized much of it even in the wilderness—more, probably, than he could have enjoyed among his own people, and in his own land. It was good—it did him good—to be among a people under God's special covenant, to the privileges of which he was no doubt admitted. There were those around him with whom he might daily take sweet counsel in the things of God. That was good. He had opportunities unattainable elsewhere of *realizing* the presence of God among his people. That was good—that was a precious privilege to him. The air he breathed, the sights he saw every day—the sounds he heard—all had God in them—all were full of God. And that was very good for him ; it tended—all tended—to build up his faith—to cheer his heart—to keep him from being "discouraged because of the way." We need not apply this. It is applied, even by the terms in which it is expressed. It is very far better to be a doorkeeper in the house of God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness ; and in the conviction of the high privileges which belong to their condition, the people of God may freely and confidently say to those who go with them, that it shall be good for them—good for them in the wilderness—and good for them in the promised land.

We have the same ground of confidence, and the same authority, that Moses had. We have no other : "For the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel." What is there of possible good which the Lord has not spoken concerning his people ? all of which, by the pledge of his sacred word, is theirs now, and theirs hereafter. You may open the Book of

God at Genesis, and turn it over to Revelation, finding in every one of its leaves some precious promise of good, some high encouragement, some holy hope. Yet even this fails to convey the sum of all the blessings and privileges which belong of right to those who have been enabled to choose their "better part" with the people of God. Now God, to be heard of man, must speak in language that man can understand—and human language fails to express, human thought to grasp, the large amount, the unutterable, inconceivable sum of all the blessedness which is theirs, and shall be theirs for ever. "It is written, Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."—1 Cor. ii. 9. Yet it is added, that God may reveal them to us by his Spirit—that Spirit which bears witness with our spirits that we are the sons of God, and as such are entitled to all the blessings of his house and of his kingdom. No more, *then*, are we aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise—no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.* From this household will God withhold no good thing;† and every member of it shall "dwell on high; his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks; bread shall be given him; his water shall be sure; his eyes shall see the king in his beauty, they shall behold the land that is very far off."‡ We shall then *have right* to that tree of life,§ which was protected from the grasp of man, by the glittering swords of the cherubim, when he fell. In view of these things well may we cry, "O! how great is the goodness which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee, which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!" ||

* Eph. ii. 12, 19.

† Isaiah xxxiii. 15–17

‡ Psalm xxxi. 19, 20.

† Psalm lxxxiv. 11.

§ Revelation xxi. 14.

EIGHTEENTH WEEK—MONDAY.

THE SON OF SHELOMITH.—LEVITICUS XXIV.

THERE was another sad matter that occurred before the Israelites quitted their encampment in Sinai.

We should very imperfectly realize to our minds the idea of the great Hebrew camp, if we ignored the existence in it of a large body of Egyptian people. To their presence, their character, and the evil nature of the influence they exerted, we have more than once alluded. That they were of the lowest order of the people, in a nation where castes were distinctly marked, will be obvious from the consideration that they could have had no other apparent object in leaving with the Israelites than to better their condition ; and those whose condition could be bettered, in human calculation, by following into the wilderness the liberated bondmen of Egypt, could have had no comfortable homes in their own country. The manner in which the books of Moses mention them, confirms abundantly this impression. In Exodus xii. 38, those who went up with the Israelites are described as “a great rabble,” for such is the literal import of the Hebrew phrase. In the grosser discontents and low repinings, it is, as might be expected from a people of this low condition, “the mixed multitude” who take the lead, Numb. xi. 4 ; and in Deut. xxix. 10, the members of this great body—the strangers of the camp—seem to be described as having, in the course of time, subsided into the condition of servants to the Hebrew host : “Thy stranger that is in thy camp, from the hewer of thy wood to the drawer of thy water.”

If there is any one who asks whether it be possible that the wealthy, powerful, and luxurious Egypt contained any people so low and miserable as to be willing to cast in their lot with the wanderers of Israel, we need but look at home for an answer. In our own case, a nation, perhaps the most powerful in the world, probably the most luxurious, and cer-

tainly the most wealthy, exhibits a greater amount of abject poverty, of utter destitution, than any other nation of the world can show, excepting, perhaps, only China, which is also a very wealthy, luxurious, and powerful nation. And if we not only see this, but see tens of thousands of our naturally home-loving people, driven from our golden shores year by year, in search of bread, let us not wonder that there were among the Egyptians a multitude of people, willing and glad to quit their country with the Hebrews, in the knowledge that for them any change must be for the better, because it *could not* be for the worse. But we do not want analogies to prove that Egypt afforded a sufficiency of people in this low condition. We have facts. History concurs with the monuments in placing before us the most marked and manifest distinctions of society, resulting in part, no doubt, from the institution of castes, such as we find in India, although, as we have seen, that institution is not *necessary* to account for it. "A part of the people," says Hengstenberg,* "appears to have been in the deep degradation that now presses upon the Fellahs. According to Herodotus, the caste of swineherds, a native tribe, was unclean and despised in Egypt. All intercourse with the rest of the inhabitants, even entrance into a temple, was forbidden, and they were as much despised as the Pariahs in India. The contempt in which they were held was not certainly the consequence of their occupation, but their occupation of the disdain which was felt for them." But full light falls upon the notices of the Pentateuch, through the painting in Thebes—representing the making of bricks—to which we have already had occasion to refer. There, whether the laborers be Israelites or not, they are certainly foreigners, in an enslaved and despised condition; and among them we see native Egyptians reduced to the same condition, and sharing their labors and their stripes. In fact, so much were a certain class of Egyptians connected with the Israelites, even in Egypt, that intermarriages were formed between them; and in the chapter before

* *Egypt and the Books of Moses*, p. 83.

us, we have the case of a young man whose father was an Egyptian, but whose mother was a woman of Israel, named Shelomith, of the tribe of Dan. As this person was old enough to engage in a personal conflict with a man of Israel, the union between his mother and his Egyptian father, must have been accomplished at least eighteen or twenty years before, in the time of the hard bondage. No doubt there were many persons of *this class* in the camp, and from the mixed influence under which they were brought up, we may easily believe that although probably recognized as members of the commonwealth of Israel, and occupying higher positions than persons of wholly alien parentage, they were, as a class, the most unsteady and dangerous persons in the camp. It is precisely such a person whom we should suspect to be more apt than any "Hebrew of the Hebrews," to treat with irreverence the sacred name of Jehovah. And this was the case. The young man, in the course of the quarrel, dared to utter words of blasphemy against that holy name. In the authorized version it is written that he "blasphemed the name *of the Lord*, and cursed." The words in italics are supplied, and do not exist in the original, where it is, "blasphemed the NAME, and cursed." Perhaps it had better been left so; for there can be no doubt what is meant by "the Name;" and the intentional and reverent abstinence of the sacred writer from giving the name itself in this place, seems more strikingly and emphatically to paint the frightful profanity of the man who dared to use it blasphemously. It would seem as if he shrank from the idea of connecting that great name with the idea of its having been profaned. It is not impossible that this example may have had weight with the Jews in originating the practice which is known to have existed among them from a very early period, of regarding themselves as prohibited from uttering the name JEHOVAH, except on the sacred and solemn occasions, and scarcely on these; for it is well known that even in reading the Scriptures in Hebrew, they always pronounce the word *Adonia*, Lord, when they come to the word JEHOVAH. This practice our

own translators have imitated, so far as generally to write the word LORD (in capitals) where the original has JEHOVAH. The recent Jewish translators of Genesis into English, give a singular instance of avoidance in the only case in which it is preserved in that book by our translators, and where it seems to be indispensably required. This is in chapter xxii. 14: "Abraham called the name of that place JEHOVAH-JIREH;" where the Jewish translators have, "Abraham called the name of that place ADONAY-YER'EH." Frequently, indeed, the Hebrews did, and do, use the word *hash-schem*, "the Name," for "JEHOVAH." Ancient evidence of the custom of thus alluding to the Deity, without mentioning his name, has been found upon the marbles of Palmyra, among whose inscriptions we find such as these: "To the blessed NAME be fear forever;" "To the blessed NAME, forever good, and merciful, be fear;" "To the blessed NAME forever be fear," etc. This may remind one of a still earlier instance than the present of the direct mention of the sacred name being avoided, or rather expressed by periphrasis,—this was when "Jacob swore by the Fear (rather by the Revered One) of his father Isaac."—Gen. xxxi. 53.

It is recorded that there have been nations which had no law against parricide, because they would not that the law should recognize the possibility that a crime of such enormity could be committed. So in the present case, no law against this unparalleled offence had been given; and therefore the Hebrew magistrates, sensible of the deep enormity of the offence, but not able to measure the degree of punishment, and aware that a precedent was now to be established which would be followed in time to come, proceeded with becoming solemnity and deliberation. Nothing further was done in the matter than to detain the man in custody, "that the mind of the Lord might be showed them." This was soon known—having been ascertained, probably, by the means now regularly appointed—from the Shekinah, between the cherubim. The Divine utterance, from the supreme Judge and Sovereign of the nation, was, "Bring him forth that hath

sinned without the camp; and let all that heard him, lay their hands upon his head, and let all the congregation stone him;" and a law was given that this should hereafter be the doom of every one, whether a native Israelite or a stranger dwelling in the land, who blasphemed the name of JEHOVAH.

As the presence of the Lord among his people rendered the camp of Israel holy, the execution within its bounds of one who had rendered himself so abominable and accursed, was not to be endured; and hence the direction that he should be stoned without the camp. Thus also our Lord, who was brought to death on a false charge of blasphemy, was executed without the gate; and thus likewise Stephen, who suffered on the same charge, was "cast out of the city," and there stoned.

As to the witnesses laying their hands upon his head—this was a significant act by which those who had heard the blasphemy bore testimony to his being fully convicted, and declared that his blood rested upon his own head, and that they and the congregation of Israel were by his death freed from the stain of so great a crime. The Jewish commentators say that this ceremony only took place in the case of those convicted of blasphemy—and they are probably right, as we read of no other examples of the kind in the canonical Scriptures; and the apocryphal book of Susannah, which does contain an instance in relating the punishment of a different crime, is of too little authority, even in regard to Jewish customs, to be cited for the disproof of this assertion.

The Jews made another law for themselves, that every one who heard the name of God blasphemed should rend his clothes. According to this, the high-priest before whom our Lord was brought rent his garment when he heard what he chose to regard as blasphemy—not of course the sacerdotal garments which he wore in the temple (for that would have been a high crime, it being expressly forbidden to rend them even in utmost grief), but those which he wore on ordinary occasions, or which belonged to him in his judicial or civil capacity.

The Jews did not err in declaring that they had a law by which the blasphemer ought to be put to death; their crime was that, in order to compass the death of Jesus, they accused him unjustly, and against all evidence, of this offence—being the very one which they knew to be the best calculated to excite the rage of the people against him, and to lead them to think that they did God service by putting him to death.

EIGHTEENTH WEEK—TUESDAY.

MURMURINGS.—NUMBERS XI.

WHEN all the purposes of Israel's sojourn among the Sinai mountains had been accomplished, the signal for their departure was given. This was on the twentieth day of the second month of the second year of their departure from Egypt. It was wisely ordered by the Providence which watched over Israel, that Moses was relieved from all responsibility with respect to times of removal and places of encampment, by the whole matter being visibly ordered by an authority none could gainsay. Whenever the appointed time of removal came, the pillar of cloud, usually stationary, was seen to move. It rose: and then the direction it took indicated the course they were to take, and the spot where it again settled, pointed out the place of encampment. Thus miraculously guided, the tribes, moving in an orderly and appointed manner, proceeded for three days till they came to the wilderness of Paran, and there they were directed to pitch their tents.

At this place the people began to murmur, from what cause we are not told, but probably at the hardships and fatigues of their march in the desert. The indulgence allowed to their weakness on their first departure from Egypt, is no longer conceded to them after the training and organization they had undergone—and after the further opportu-

nities afforded them of understanding their relations to the Lord, and of knowing his care, his bounty, his power, and his judgments. All murmurings before Sinai are passed over, or merely rebuked—all murmuring and rebellion after Sinai bring down punishment and doom. They have now a law, and know what it exacts from them, and by that law they must be judged. So in this case, the fire of the Lord came, and “consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp.” Any fire sent by the Lord, is a fire of the Lord. Some think it was a fire wholly supernatural; others that it was lightning; others that it was the simoon, or hot-wind of the desert; while some reduce it to a burning of the dry shrubbery of the desert, which extended to and fired the tents on the outskirts of the camp. Any of these means might have been a fit instrument of judgment in the Lord’s hand, and the judgment was recognized as his punishment of their sin. The name of Taberah, or *the burning*, was given to the spot in sorrowful memory of the event.

As the Israelites encamped in a most orderly manner, according to their tribes, those in the outermost parts of the camp must surely have been the mixed multitude which we have had former occasion to notice. How little they profited by this correction is seen by the fact of a new and more serious murmuring which arose among them at the very next station, and which spread rapidly among the tribes. There it is expressly said to have been “the mixed multitude among whom this arose. The term hardly conveys the contemptuous force of the original. They have before been called a “rabble;” they are now called the *A-SAF-SEF*—the force of which can perhaps only be conveyed by such strictly analogous terms as riff-raff, or ruff-suff. This term, however, is applied rather to denote their moral and social disorganization, than their low estate in this world’s possessions—for poverty, low birth, destitution, are in themselves never mentioned with disrespect or contumely in the books of Moses.

And what would one suppose ails them now? There is

not now any lack of food or water for them. No: but they are become dainty. They have taken a surfeit of the manna—their soul loathes “this light food,” as they slightly call it, and they long for the fish, the flesh, the vegetables, they had eaten in Egypt. We fear that at the bottom there may be many who sympathize with them, though formally obliged to condemn the conduct which the Scripture deems so culpable. But let us consider that all their wants were provided for day by day, without their care, thought, or labor, and the poorest of them, had as much wholesome food as he could eat without cost; whereas what they had in Egypt, and which would have been less wholesome in the life they now led, had been the purchase of their stripes and hard toil. Let us see that this manna, which they had already come to contemn, was highly nutritive and wholesome food, as nearly as possible analogous to what forms the staff of life—be it rice or corn—to the present inhabitants of the desert, who rarely taste meat or vegetables, and are but too happy if they can get enough of their customary food. But more than all, let us consider that at this time they were actually on their march to the Promised Land, and had then reason to suppose that, in a few months at most, they would be in possession of all their heart could wish; and that, as free men, with heads erect in all the worth and honor of independence—if their present position had been quite as bad—if it had been ten times worse than they alleged—if the manna, instead of being “bread from heaven,” were quite unwholesome and unpalatable—all might and ought to have been cheerfully borne, in consideration of the circumstances in which they were placed—of the prospect of speedy relief, and of the high hopes which lay before them. Taking all these things into account, we shall be the better able to understand the deep displeasure this conduct awakened in their Divine King, and the intense grief and indignation which Moses himself expressed. In fact, Moses must by this time have begun to suspect, that this generation, fresh from Egypt, and enfeebled in soul by its bondage, was hardly fit

for the vocation to which it had been called. It is by some such thought, probably, that his own language becomes unusually desponding and distrustful, and for the time his strong spirit faints under the burdens that lay upon him. Hear the language of his despair and grief:—"Have I conceived all this people? Have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing-father beareth the sucking child, unto the land that thou swearest unto their fathers?" How apt the similitude—they *were* as sucking children—looking to him as dependently and as regardless of his position or resources, for food, and raising the same clamor if it were not given. But he proceeds:—"Whence should *I* have flesh to give unto all this people? for they weep unto me, saying, Give us flesh, that we may eat. I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me. And if thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favor in thy sight; and let me not see my wretchedness." And this is Moses. Alas, for the strength of man! What is it but weakness at the best? Still, we do not see that he yet distrusts God; but he gets hopeless of any good from this people. He sees that they are, in all but physical condition, children; and he feels that it is not in him to raise them to the sentiments and views of men. God can provide for their real wants; but what avails it? Nothing will satisfy them long.

The Lord had great pity on his fainting servant; and as he appeared to be breaking down under the labors which the government of a nation so newly organized imposed upon him, the aid was given to him of seventy elders, on whom was bestowed, in a public manifestation at the tabernacle, a portion of that Spirit which dwelt abundantly in him. Nor was this all: the much coveted flesh was promised—flesh not for one day only, nor for two, nor for five, nor for ten, nor for twenty, but even for a whole month. This intimation startled even the faith of Moses. "The people among whom I am," he said, "are six hundred thousand footmen; and thou hast

said, I will give them flesh. Shall the flocks and the herds be slain for them to suffice them?"

The answer was by another question, full of suggestion and rebuke to him,—“Is the Lord’s hand waxed short?”

The words of Moses are, however, well worthy the consideration of those—and there are some such—who speculate upon the possibilities that the Israelites might be, in that wilderness, supplied with food without miracle. The leader himself clearly knew and felt the impossibility of supplying so large a multitude with food, for merely a short time, in that region, even with the sacrifice of their own flocks and herds. One would think, that those who never travel beyond their own firesides, might, in this day of general information, contrive to realize this idea; even though it should be less forcibly impressed than upon the minds of those who have traversed the same or similar regions. The difficulty is still greater than appears in the sacred volume; for there we read only of the natural difficulty of supplying the people with food, with no mention of the difficulty of finding pasture for their flocks and herds, if at all numerous in proportion to the usual extent of such possessions among a pastoral people. It is indeed possible, that their wealth of this kind was much less than usually supposed, having declined during the latter years of their sojourn in Egypt, occupied as they were in bond-labor, and in the culture of the ground.

On these points we must suffer a very intelligent American traveller to speak:—“No reflection forced itself upon me so often or so urgently, as the utter and universal inaptitude of this country for the sustenance of animal life. It really seems to possess no element favorable to human existence besides a pure atmosphere, and no appearances favor the supposition, that it was ever essentially better. I am filled with wonder that so many travellers should task their ingenuity to get clear of the miracles which, according to the narrative of Moses, were wrought to facilitate the journey of that vast unwieldy host, when it is demonstrable, that they could not have subsisted three days in this desert without supernatural

resources. The extensive region, through which we were twelve days in passing on dromedaries, is, and ever must have been, incapable of affording food sufficient to support even a few thousand, or a few hundred people for a month in the year. There is no corn-land nor pasturage, no game nor roots, hardly any birds or insects, and the scanty supply of water is loathsome to the taste, promoting rather than appeasing thirst. What could the two millions of Israel have eaten without the miracles of the manna and the quails? How could they have escaped destruction by drought but for the healing waters of Marah? * * * One of the chief difficulties I met with in the narrative of Moses, is that of accounting for the subsistence of the numerous herds and flocks that belonged to the retreating host. We hear of no miraculous provision for their support, and it seems incredible that they could have subsisted upon the scanty verdure afforded by the flinty soil of the desert, after making all possible allowance for its deterioration by the physical changes of three thousand years. They were probably much less numerous than we are accustomed to suppose, from the very general and indefinite language used in the Bible upon the subject; and they were undoubtedly dispersed over the whole region lying between the long range of mountains now known as Jebel Raha and Jebel Tih on the east, and the Red Sea on the west.”*

The promised supply of flesh was provided, as formerly, by immense flocks of quails that poured into the camp, being brought up from the direction of the sea by a strong wind; and the people stood up all that day and night, and the following day, and secured an ample provision. But although their request was granted, the flesh, greedily collected and devoured ravenously, “was still between their teeth,”—when a great pestilence broke out among them, in token of the Divine displeasure, and large numbers of them—it is not said how many—died, and from their being buried there, the place took the name of Kibroth-hattaavah, “the graves

* Dr. Olin, *Travels in the East*, i. 382.

of lust." They were thus taught the wisdom of leaving the supply of their wants to the will of Him who watched over them with paternal care, and who knew what was best for them in all the circumstances of their condition. It is very possible that the inordinate indulgence in animal food, after long abstinence therefrom, became the instrument of their punishment; for it is known that dangerous, and often fatal maladies, are frequently thus produced. Some have thought that the quails themselves might at this time be "out of season," and therefore unwholesome—forgetting that a supply of the same food, at the same season the preceding year, had not been followed by any ill effects. But at that time they had been too recently from Egypt to be injuriously affected by it as a change of food.

EIGHTEENTH WEEK—WEDNESDAY.

AARON AND MIRIAM.—NUMBERS XII.

THE twelfth chapter of Numbers is full of painful matter, and offers some points of difficulty.

The substance of it is a misunderstanding between Moses on the one hand, and his brother and sister on the other, clearly indicative of low and very unexpected jealousy on their part, at the authority exercised, and the powers assumed, by Moses. One may fancy that Aaron, who had seen, not long ago, his two eldest and most favorite sons perish before his eyes, would still be too broken-hearted, too much bowed down by the weight of grief, to find room in his mind for such matters. But it is not so. This way is the way of man's life. It is with him even as with the cedar, whose great branches bend down in winter, as it would seem almost to breaking, beneath their load of snow; but, day by day, a morsel drops off, or melts insensibly away, and so they slowly rise, until at last, by one vigorous bound, each branch throws off its hoary trouble, and grows and looks green again.

Hitherto Moses seems to have had the cordial support of his own family. But one cannot help thinking that Aaron's mind had become somewhat too exalted by the very distinguished position to which he and his had been raised. Self-esteem keeps a man's mind so much awake to his own real or supposed claims, that any consideration which we can suppose likely to have arisen from that influence in any man's mind, is almost certain to have been presented to it. As it occurs to *us*, therefore, it can scarcely have escaped the notice of Aaron himself, that the position assigned to him in the commonwealth was, in some respects, superior to that of Moses himself. The function of Moses was temporary, and would pass away with his life; whereas his own was permanent in himself and his heirs, and would leave him and them the foremost and most important persons in the state. He might not, therefore, always regard with patience the degree in which the full development of his own high office was superseded by the existing authority of Moses. No doubt he remembered he was the elder brother; and we know that men seldom consider any advancement beyond their merits and their claims; it is more than probable that he overlooked the fact, that the place he had attained was, as far as we can see, given to him entirely on account of his brother, and from consideration of the part he had been allowed, for that brother's sake, to bear in the deliverance of Israel. That he was discontented is certain—that he made no secret of that discontent is clear—and that it had its principal source in the jealousy entertained of the powers exercised by Moses, is plainly stated. "It is a hard thing," says Bishop Hall, "for a man willingly and gladly to see his equals lifted over his head. Nothing will more try a man's temper than questions of emulation." And he adds well: "That man hath no true light, who cannot be content to be a candle before the sun of others."

We are sorry to see Miriam also engaged in this murmuring. For *her* a somewhat different ground of discontent may be expected and it is to her that we are disposed to as-

cribe that part of the dissatisfaction which rests upon the marriage of Moses with "an Ethiopian woman." There is a difficulty in understanding this. Some suppose that it refers to that Ethiopian princess whom Moses had espoused, according to the Jewish traditions to which we formerly referred,* before he originally left Egypt, and who now rejoins him in the wilderness. Others, chiefly old commentators, fancy that Moses actually married a new wife at this time, and that she was an Ethiopian, which some suppose to mean actually a black woman, who in their hands becomes a type of the gentile church. But it is safest to adhere to *known* facts. The facts we do know, are that Moses had a wife called Zipporah, the daughter of Jethro; that during the encampment in Sinai, she had been brought by her father and brother to Moses; and that the brother, Hobab, had been prevailed upon to accompany the Israelites, to whom his knowledge of the country might be useful. Now, if we can show that this woman might, with propriety, be called an Ethiopian, a perfectly satisfactory explanation grows out of this circumstance. And we can show this. The name translated "Ethiopian" is "Cushite," from Cush the son of Ham. This name is applied in Scripture not only to Africa but to Arabia, which is explained by the descendants of Cush having left their name in certain regions in which, on their migration from the common centre, they tarried some time prior to their final passage into Africa. Or a body of them may have remained a long time in Arabia before they eventually passed over to join the main stock of their people—if ever they did, for the descent of many of the more ancient Arabian tribes has been by no means very clearly deduced, and some of them may have been of Cushite origin. The land in which Jethro dwelt may indeed have been, at this very time, occupied mainly by such tribes, to whom belonged the hostile shepherds who wronged Jethro's daughters at the well. But it suffices that they were once in this region, and left their name in it, to understand that Zipporah

* Fourteenth Week, Wednesday.

may have been called a Cushite, not as being herself of the children of Cush, but as belonging to a country which had received from them its name. This explanation is not new. In fact it is the one that is now current—and we object not to receive it, although there *is* a difficulty which has escaped all those by whom it has been urged; and that is, that the Israelites, whose ideas were more tribal than territorial, especially at this time, ere they possessed a country of their own, denominated any people whose origin they knew, rather from their descent than from the country in which they lived.

But admitting the existence of any sense in which Jethro's daughter could be called an Ethiopian, it is obvious that her arrival might be very unwelcome to Miriam, who would find herself unpleasantly superseded in the position which as the sister of both Moses and Aaron, she had hitherto held as a mother in Israel, and chief lady in the camp. The wife of Moses would at least share, if not engross, the deference and attention which had hitherto belonged to his sister alone. The high consideration with which Jethro had been treated on his visit to the camp; the improvements in the dispensation of justice which had been made by his wise suggestions; and the influential position now taken by his son Hobab, who was to remain with them, may have been distasteful to Aaron is his present temper, as dividing the power and authority which he wished to retain in the Levitical priesthood, and which his recollection of the concentration of power in the hands of the Egyptian priesthood might lead him to regard as properly belonging to his office. Thus we see, that Aaron and Miriam might, under somewhat different influences, make common cause in their discontent at the connection in marriage which Moses had formed. But there was One who guarded the honor of Moses too well for him to be afflicted at the hard speeches even of a sister and a brother. It is emphatically remarked that "the Lord heard it." They were all three—the two brothers and the sister—suddenly summoned before the door of the tabernacle. To that door the pillar of

cloud visibly moved, and the voice of the Lord spoke to them from it, in words well suited to fill their hearts with shame. They claimed to equal powers—they were prophets no less than he—and by them also had the Lord spoken. But what said the Lord himself? To others, however highly favored, he had disclosed his will only in visions and dreams: “But my servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. 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?” The sign of his glorious presence was then withdrawn; and the proof of his anger was seen in the fact that Miriam had become a leper. This was a peculiar and striking judgment. There had been special regulations regarding the treatment of those infected with the leprous taint—under which it became the duty of the priest himself to judge of its existence, and pronounce the doom of exclusion from the camp. It is therefore not without a point, not usually noticed, remarked that “Aaron *looked upon* Miriam, and behold she was leprous!” This fact made him the very person to pronounce the sentence upon the sharer of his sin. Indeed, he may not at the moment have known but that Miriam saw the same signs of the disease in him that he saw in her—and that he also had been smitten with leprosy. Hence his intercession was for both, and he very humbly confessed that they had both been in this matter sinful and foolish. The woman, whose tongue had before been so free upon her brother’s conduct and character, was now mute with horror. She who had been so high—whose views were so aspiring—was now to be cast forth, as an unclean thing, from the camp, and live separate, she knew not for how long—for the disease seldom passed away soon, and was often never eradicated. Yet pity was shown her—and though she might not be spared this humiliation, the period of her exclusion was limited to the seven days which those once afflicted with leprosy were required to pass before they could be re-admitted. It would now be Aaron’s duty to visit her without the

camp. If the symptoms of the complaint had not disappeared, there would be no help for her. She must be reduced to the condition of confirmed lepers. These not only dwelt without the camp, but even there had the responsibility of taking care that clean persons should not come near enough to them in their walks, to be rendered ceremoniously unclean by contact with them. The eye of the stranger should be able to distinguish them by the badge they were constrained to wear upon their faces—by their uncovered heads, and by their sordid raiment. And that the ear also might supply the information which the eye might not readily take, they were bound to cry out “Unclean! unclean:” whenever they saw a stranger approach.

But if she were then free from this loathsome affliction, and declared to be so on the authority of the priest, certain ceremonial acts of lustration and sacrifice would enable her to return to the camp, and join once more in the intercourses of common life. When this took place to Miriam—after the people had remained at the place a whole week on her account—she came back to the tents, humbled no doubt in her own eyes, but strengthened in her soul by the correction she had received. The best proof of the efficacy of that correction is, that we hear no more of her until her death.

EIGHTEENTH WEEK—THURSDAY.

THE GOOD REPORT.—NUMBERS XIII.

At length the Israelites are found upon the southern border of the promised land—high in hope of soon realizing the blessing of the land “flowing with milk and honey,” which had been promised to their fathers—and which would be doubly precious in their eyes from having encountered the hardships of the wilderness.

From this point twelve men—one from each tribe—were

sent out to explore the country, and to report their observations on its advantages, and of its capacities for defence against the intended invasion. In the earlier narrative of Exodus, Moses is described as taking this measure, but from the parallel place in the later narrative—Deut. i. 22—it appears that it was on the motion of the people that he did so. This relieves us from some uneasiness, as we can conceive that a measure which he would not himself have suggested, might be such as he could not refuse to sanction, when proposed by the people for their own satisfaction. But, indeed, this step, though natural enough in men left to the resources of human prudence, was in them but feebleness of faith. God had told them that Canaan was a land flowing with milk and honey, and they had therefore no need to distrust its advantages. God had promised to give the land to them, and it was needless for them to ascertain the strength of the inhabitants—as if *their* strength could render the performance of the promise difficult, or their weakness make it easy to Him. It is profoundly remarked by Bishop Hall on this very case, “That which the Lord moves unto prospers ; but that which we move him unto first, seldom succeedeth.”

Forty days did they spend in the search, and forty years—a year for a day—of toilsome wanderings did that search cost them, connected as it was from beginning to end with distrust and unbelief. They traversed the country in its whole length even unto Hamath—probably not in a body, but in parties of twos or threes. That they were able to do this unsuspected and unmolested, would seem to show that their language was the same as that spoken in Canaan, or not materially different from it. Their general personal appearance must have been similar—there could have been nothing to suggest to the Canaanites that they were foreigners ; for had it been known that they belonged to the Hebrew host assembled in the southern frontier, they would hardly have returned with their lives.

Generally the business of a spy is in western armies entrusted to inferior persons ; but it was not so among the He-

brews, with whom, as with the Greeks of Homer, its very responsible duties were assigned to persons of consideration, the weight of whose character would give authority to their reports. So in this instance, persons of some importance in their several tribes were chosen for this task. Their names are given; but among them there are only two of historical importance, and these are Caleb for Judah, and Joshua for Ephraim; but the high position of these two men indicates the quality of the others.

It was the season of vintage and fruitage; probably they set out early in September, and returned about the middle of October. When they did return, the multitude gazed with eager and admiring eyes on the luscious fruits which they brought as specimens of the country's produce—figs, pomegranates, grapes—kinds which indeed they might have seen in Egypt, but where the climate is not congenial to them, and they attain no great perfection. Especially did a vast cluster of grapes from the valley of Eshcol excite their admiration and astonishment. It had been borne between two on a pole, partly by reason of its great size, and in part to protect it from being bruised. The statement about this vine cluster has excited the astonishment of many, and even the incredulity of some. They have inferred unwisely, that the cluster or bunch was so large, that it needed two men to sustain its weight; whereas the text indicates no more than that it was of such a size that it could not conveniently be conveyed in any other way uninjured. The statement says nothing as to the size of the grapes, but of the cluster. To produce large grapes is not the distinction of good vines, as the largest grapes are seldom the best; nevertheless, while Palestine has varieties of the vine, the grapes of which are small and luscious, there are others whose grapes are large enough to draw expressions of wonder from even the inhabitants of European vine countries. Laborde has given a figure, in the natural proportions of some that he saw, and this corroborates the assertion of an Italian traveller, that the grapes were often as large as plums.

But, in conformity with the text before us, the size, the richness of the *clusters* of the grapes in many parts of Palestine, excites more astonishment than even that of the grapes. An Italian traveller* avers, that in different parts of Syria he saw clusters that would be a sufficient burden for one man. A German traveller† declares, with some solemnity of assertion, that in the mountains of Israel he had seen and eaten from clusters of grapes that were half an ell long, and the grapes of which were equal to two finger joints in length. A very intelligent French traveller‡ is still more particular. He declares, that one who had seen the vine only in the vine countries of France and Italy, could form no just conception of the size to which the clusters attain in Syria. He had himself seen clusters weighing ten or twelve pounds; and he had reason to believe, that in the Archipelago clusters of thirty or forty pounds were not uncommon. A still older traveller of the same nation§ tells us, that travelling near Bethlehem, he found himself in a delightful valley, replete with rose-trees and aromatic plants, and planted with vines. This was that which tradition regards as the valley of Eshcol, from which the spies obtained their cluster. Not being there in the season, he did not see the fruit himself; but he was assured that clusters of ten and twelve pounds were not seldom gathered from these vines. We share the doubt, however, that this was the vale of Eshcol, which seems to have been rather near to Hebron. It was in this neighborhood that Nau saw the large vine-clusters of which he makes mention. In this quarter the hill-sides are still thickly planted with vineyards, the vines of which are laden with large clusters of delicious grapes. It is beyond a doubt that the cluster in question was gathered in the south of Palestine; for as the spies had seen these grapes in their outward way, it would have been absurd for them to have gathered any but at the last available point towards their own encampment. As striking an instance as any that we have quoted

* Mariti.

† Nau.

‡ Neitzschutz.

§ Doubdan.

has occurred in our own country, in regard to the produce of a *Syrian* vine at Welbeck, the seat of the Duke of Portland. A bunch from this vine was sent, in 1819, as a present to the Marquis of Rockingham, which weighed nineteen pounds. It was conveyed to its destination, more than twenty miles distant, on a staff by four laborers, two of whom bore it in rotation; thus affording a striking illustration of the means adopted by the explorers in transporting the Eshcol cluster. The greatest diameter of this Welbeck cluster was nineteen inches and a-half; its circumference four feet and a-half; and its length nearly twenty-three inches.

This display of rich fruit formed of itself a most emphatically good report of the land, as to natural advantages and productiveness. And the explorers confirmed it by their words. They spoke, indeed, as men who needed to say but little with the material evidence they were enabled to produce: "Surely, it floweth with milk and honey, and THIS IS THE FRUIT OF IT." But does the land indeed deserve all the praise anciently bestowed upon its productiveness? Many, looking at that land now, have been disposed to doubt this; and are even inclined to suspect that the explorers, fresh from the sterility of the desert, might unintentionally exaggerate the advantages of a land not even then remarkably fertile. But it should be remembered, that although they had spent above a year in the desert, they had not yet forgotten—they remembered but too well—the fertile banks of the Nile. That Palestine is not now a land flowing with milk and honey—that its general aspect does not correspond with the glowing descriptions left us of its fertility and abundance—is most certain. But there are manifold indications that its former state was very different; and there is nothing in its present condition which cannot be accounted for by long-continued neglect of tillage, resulting from the scantiness of the population. It is possible, indeed, that some parts of the land, once fertile, are now irreclaimable. The entire destruction of the wood that once covered the mountains, and the utter neglect of the terraces that supported the soil

on steep declivities, have given full scope to the rains, which have left many tracts of bare rock where formerly were vineyards and corn-fields. It is likely, too, that the disappearance of trees from the higher grounds, where they invited and arrested the passing clouds, may have diminished the quantity of rain, and so have exposed the whole country in a greater degree to the evils of drought, and doomed some particular tracts to absolute sterility. But apart from this, the most competent observers have declared that they do not recognize any permanent or invincible causes of barrenness, or any physical obstacles in the way of restoring the land to its pristine fertility.

EIGHTEENTH WEEK—FRIDAY.

THE EVIL REPORT.—NUMBERS XIV.

THE good report which the explorers brought to the camp of Israel respecting the land of promise, confirmed by the actual presence of its splendid fruits, must have warmed the heart of the people, and awakened an eager desire to possess a country so rich and beautiful. But the rising delight was suddenly cast down by the further report of the spies, that desirable as the land was for a possession, its acquisition was impracticable, so warlike, numerous, and powerful were the inhabitants, and so well secured in their strongholds. But let us hear their words: "Nevertheless the people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled, and very great: and, moreover, we saw the children of Anak there." This is their most moderate and prepared account. But when, observing the dismay with which this statement filled the people, Caleb (with whom Joshua concurred) attempted to soothe the multitude by saying, "Let us go up at once and possess it, for we are well able to overcome it," the other explorers contradicted him, and enforced their previous account by truly oriental exaggerations: "We be not able to

go up against the people, for they are stronger than we. * * * The land through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people we saw in it are men of a great stature. And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants; and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight." Allowing for the figures, not intended to be literally understood, but only to convey a strong impression, this account was correct enough, and the evil report of the spies was not in rendering this account, but in rendering it in such a manner as to discourage the people, by drawing the inference that the invasion of such a land, defended by such inhabitants, was sure to end in defeat. They forgot that to Him who had dried up the Red Sea before them, and smitten Egypt with all his plagues, the high walls of the Canaanites, and their tall stature, could be no obstacles to the performance of his solemn promise of putting that land in their possession. So, Caleb does not deny the facts; but, valiant in faith, denies the inference drawn from them. That the facts were correct is affirmed by the best of all authorities, that of Moses himself. Many years after, when a new and more promising generation was about to enter the land, he says to them, "Thou art to pass over Jordan this day, to go in to possess nations greater and mightier than thyself, cities great and fenced up to heaven; a people great and tall, the children of the Anakims," Deut. ix. 1, 2. This, indeed, constitutes an adoption of the precise words used by the spies, as reported orally by himself, to the same audience, in a preceding chapter, Deut. i. 28. Elsewhere, in the course of the same address or discourse, which constitutes the book of Deuteronomy, Moses describes other old gigantic tribes by a reference to the known stature of the sons of Anak. Thus, in the second chapter, the Emim and the Zamzummim are respectively described as "a people great, many, and tall as the Anakims." In the prophecy of Amos (ii. 9), there is a reference to the Amorites nearly as strong, for the purposes of comparison, as that of the explorers in describing the Ana-

kim : " Yet destroyed I the Amorite before them, whose height was like the height of the cedars, and who was strong as the oaks." We are to consider that the Hebrews had known no other towns than those in the level country of Egypt, where, although many towns were doubtless walled, the walls would make but a faint impression upon their minds. But in Canaan the principal towns and fortresses were upon the summits and declivities of such hills and mountains as they had never before seen inhabited, and, as *looked up* from lower ground, could not fail to convey to their minds the notion of impregnable strength. And this impression would be the stronger, if, as there is reason to conclude, the walls of the principal towns were of stone, whereas those of Egypt were of brick, and that perhaps of brick only dried in the sun. European readers can scarcely conceive the formidable character of a strong wall in the ages before artillery existed, and before engines of war were known. The long duration of ancient sieges, even with the advantage of the best military engines ancient art could invent, may suggest what must have been the case before such engines were known. A single piece of artillery would have probably breached in one day, or the Roman engines in a week, the Trojan city, which it took the Greeks ten years to reduce, and that only by stratagem at last.

As to the giants, if we be asked whether the race of men were, in early times, taller than at present, we must answer frankly that we do not know. No facts in favor of that conclusion have been found. All the facts in history, and art, and human discovery, are against rather than for that notion, and tend to show that the stature of men in general has not been greater than at present, within any period to which any kinds of monuments extend. That which is at the first view the most striking argument, is founded on the impression that the stature of men in the olden time may have borne some proportion to the duration of their lives. But the analogy rests on a basis which has no foundation in nature, for it is not seen that long-lived animals are generally larger than

short-lived ones. However, the case is one of which we can have no knowledge ; and further, it has no application in this case ; for if the conjecture really had all the force that could be assigned to it, it would not account for the Canaanites, or any tribes of them, being taller than the Israelites or than the Egyptians, who were their contemporaries.

But if we are asked whether there might not be gigantic races, which, however originated, increased and multiplied : we answer, Yes,—because the Scripture affirms it in the case before us, and in other cases ; and because the facts of human experience are in favor of it. We see that stature is somewhat influenced by climate, and that men are taller generally in moist and temperate climates than in those which are very hot, or very cold, or very dry : and it is on record that tall parents have tall children born to them ; and if they cared, by their intermarriages, to preserve the distinction, they might keep up a race of giants : but not generally caring for this, the stature of their descendants dwindles down to the common standard, more or less soon. Such races the Anakim and others mentioned in Scripture seem to have been. In this case their descent from a single giant, of the name of Anak, is repeatedly recorded. This race seems to have been rather numerous at the time under notice, but in the course of the four following centuries had declined so much, probably by intermarriages with persons of common stature, that only a few individuals remained, and they were all destroyed by David and his worthies. As Goliath, whom David slew, was of this race, his stature, which may be taken at about nine feet, is a good measure by which to estimate that of the Anakim, whose appearance so alarmed the Israelites. It is clear that the explorers only mean to describe these, and perhaps one or two other races, as of extraordinary stature, for, in their first statement, they carefully distinguish the Anakim as those whose appearance alarmed them ; and although in the second statement they generalize the special instance into the designation of “ the inhabitants,” they still distinguish that it was the Anakim

whose appearance had filled them with dismay. All that we can safely gather from these facts, is, that the ancients—accustomed to venerate the appearance or reality of physical dignity and prowess—were careful to perpetuate and multiply the distinctions of this kind that from time to time arose in every land. Hence the races of giants which we read of in ancient history, and of which some races existed in Palestine.

The multitude manifested the most intense and degrading consternation at this report. Caleb and Joshua, who strove to excite them to more worthy thoughts, and to rekindle their faith in their Almighty Deliverer's arm, had well nigh been stoned for their zeal. The people actually wept at the condition in which they were placed; they deplored that they had ever quitted Egypt; and they talked of appointing a new leader to conduct them back to that country. To what lengths they might have proceeded, had not their course been arrested, cannot be known; but there is nothing too preposterous to be supposed possible had they been left to themselves. But the Lord interposed. He declared to Moses his anger, and threatened to destroy them with pestilence, and make of Moses himself a great nation. But the generous leader most earnestly and prevailingly interceded for them, and their doom was respited. They were indeed to perish in the wilderness, but not yet; forty years were the adults to wander and die gradually out, never to see or enter the promised land, until they—cowardly, distrustful, unenterprising, and enfeebled by long bondage, should be succeeded by their sons, trained up under the institutions God had given them, moulded under them into a nation, and strengthened into manly character under the freedom which had been so triumphantly won for them.

It has been mentioned, objectingly, that to the Lord it could not but have been known, from the first, that the people were morally and physically incapacitated for this great enterprise, and that it was highly expedient, so to speak, that it should devolve upon a new and worthier generation, educated in the freedom of the wilderness, and under the

noble institutions of Sinai. There can be but one answer—God did know it. Why, then, was this not brought to pass by their simple detention for that time in the desert, without its being thus made to appear the punishment of their pusillanimity? The answer is—Because it *was* such; but had they proved equal to the occasion, the enterprise had not been withheld from them. And, furthermore, it was *necessary* that their unfitness should be made apparent to themselves, or at least that a sufficient or unanswerable reason should be given for their detention in the wilderness until their institutions were consolidated. Had the Israelites been detained, year after year, at a distance from Palestine, and the delay been in no way explained, there would have been no answer for Moses to give to the remonstrances of their discontent. Now, as often as they manifested impatience, he had an answer with which to seal their lips—they had shown themselves unequal to the task which they wished to hasten. Had the reason of the delay been explained as their want of preparation, still had there been no notorious fact to appeal to in proof of that want, its reality might have been denied, and the argument would have lost its force. Submission to this arrangement was now their only course—their only wisdom.



EIGHTEENTH WEEK—SATURDAY.

CONSPIRACY.—NUMBERS XVI.

THE most formidable conspiracy which was ever formed against the authority of Moses and Aaron, took place soon after the doom of forty years' wandering had been pronounced. It was precisely at such a time—if at one time more than another—that we might expect to hear of plots and conspiracies among the people. It must be remembered, that the arrangement of the sacred and political administration was still recent. It could not have been organized without

exciting disappointment and dissatisfaction on the part of some, who considered their claim as good as that of the men who had been preferred to them; and there had not yet been opportunity for time and the habit of subordination to assuage their discontent, or for the partiality of their retainers and partisans to have acquiesced in the established order of things. On the other hand, the people were depressed and uneasy, and in a fit condition to be tampered with by factious leaders. Mortified as they must have been by the recollection of their late unworthy conduct, and goaded by the thought of having been condemned in consequence to renounce for life the hope of occupying their long-promised home, the time must have been favorable for engaging them in a rebellious movement. They would now, if ever, be ready to lend an open ear to the assurance, that under the auspices of other leaders than those who had lately denounced against them the sentence of so weary a delay, they might be able forthwith to prosecute an enterprise on which their hearts had been so strongly set.

The circumstances of the time being thus so favorable to the conspirators, the conspiracy which comes before us was formed by the very persons who might be expected to move in it. The sacred writer does not, indeed, evince any solicitude to set forth the motives of the parties engaged; but his plain recital, and the circumstances and names which he sets down, give us a clear insight into the nature of the case.

We discover two interests at work—one against the sacerdotal, and the other against the political, power and pre-eminence—and we find the two coalescing to produce the objects sought by both. We do not discover that they desired to disturb the institutions as established; but that they aspired to take to themselves the power which these institutions gave to others.

Previously to its separation for sacerdotal services, the tribe of Levi, like the other tribes, was governed as to its internal matters, and as to the part it should take in general matters, by the patriarchal chief or emir—called in Scripture

the prince of the tribe, who seems to have been the representative of the eldest branch of the tribe—the one, in short, who was to be regarded as the heir of the founder. Now, to this ruling branch Moses and Aaron did not belong; and the representative of that elder branch would find himself deprived of his special and peculiar powers under the new institutions which made the high-priest the virtual head of the tribe, and saw himself and connections merged in the general Levitical body—the priesthood, which had become the part of Aaron in the tribe, being given to another family. Korah was a Kohathite, descended from a brother of the progenitor of Aaron, probably an older son of the common ancestor; and the feeling seems to have been, that the priesthood should, by right of birth, have belonged to his family, and by consequence that he should have been high-priest. This point of his personal ambition was not indeed obtruded at the first view, but seems to have been sagaciously kept back by him, in the knowledge that if he succeeded in establishing the claims of his family to become the priestly house, the other result would follow of course. Indeed, he set himself forth as the champion of the whole Levitical body, less asserting the claims of his own family, than contesting the invidious distinction conferred on Aaron's family over the whole tribe. He was aware, that if this family were deposed, it would soon become necessary to appropriate another to the particular service; and that then the claims of his own family would be paramount—for the grounds on which that of Aaron had been deposed, would leave room for no other claim but that hereditary one which he and his family could advance. We are thus enabled to sound the depths of this plot, as to the part which certain of the Levitical body took in it.

Some of the same grounds which led the eldest family of Levi to claim the rights which were conceived to belong to it in that tribe, would exist also in leading the chiefs of the eldest tribe, that of Reuben, to murmur at that *practical* deposition of that tribe from its natural birthright, which

had indeed been announced long ago by the dying Jacob—but which was now first practically enforced as a reality and an accomplished fact. Inasmuch as the chiefs of the tribes represented the patriarchal power which the sons of Jacob, during their lifetime, exercised over the tribes which sprang from them—the chief of the eldest tribe represented not only the founder of the particular tribe, but the common founder of all the tribes, whose heir he was. This gave him some general right of counsel and control over all the tribes—and of taking a certain initiatory part in measures of common concernment to the whole nation, and in his person, more than that of any other man, was found the tie which bound the tribes together. Certain rights of precedence also belonged to him; and the performance of priestly acts—that is, of taking the leading part in acts of public worship by sacrifice or otherwise—had always been considered as no mean part of the birthright of the eldest born. But in forming the arrangements of the new government, the tribe of Reuben was altogether overlooked, and its pride must have been much wounded (considering how highly the rank of primogeniture was valued) by the precedence assigned to the tribe of Judah in all the encampments used on the march—and this perhaps galled it more sorely than the absorption of all sacerdotal influence and office, as well as of considerable political power, by the Levitical tribe. Hence we are not surprised to find that the other leaders not of the tribe of Levi, were of that of Reuben; their names were Dathan, Abiram, and On, and the manner in which the Levitical conspirators keep their own private claims as much as possible in the background—generalizing them to the utmost—may strongly suggest to the mind that this was done to keep their Reubenite allies in good humor by not strongly putting forward their own claims to the exercise of a function which these allies considered as belonging of right to the first-born. In fact, no one can look closely into this transaction without perceiving that the Levitical conspirators were playing a deep game, in which not only the people generally, but their

own Reubenite friends, were little more than the tools with which they sought to work out their own objects—and that in fact they had ulterior objects of special advantage which they did not, and dared not, then openly avow, or even disclose to their companions. There may perhaps be ground to suppose that the Reubenites suspected something of this—for although we find On's name among the leading conspirators, it does not appear when the names are repeated in the subsequent proceedings, and in the final judgment, and this may suggest that he became suspicious and dissatisfied, and hence seceded from the conspiracy in good time.

It deserves to be noticed, that in a camp which must have covered an extent of many miles, the situation of the two parties in relation to one another, when encamped, was such as to afford them all facilities for exciting one another's passions and of maturing the plot. The allotted place of the tents of Reuben was on the south side of the central area in which the tabernacle stood; and between them and the tabernacle was the encampment of the Kohathites—the division of the Levitical family to which Korah belonged. Our judgment of historical incidents must often be materially influenced by small circumstances like this, which are apt to escape common notice.

Considering the nature of this conspiracy, the objects at which it aimed, and the importance of the men engaged in it, it was in the highest degree necessary that it should not only be frustrated, but brought to nothing by some such signal and terrible judgment as should effectually repress the tendency to such baleful manifestations of private ambition and popular discontent, and afford the infant state the protection needful to prevent its welfare from being subject to perpetual hazards, machinations, and broils.

On hearing the charges daringly brought against his conduct and designs by the conspirators, Moses fell on his face before the Lord, and having obtained the requisite directions, he appointed the next day for the trial of this great matter. They complained of the usurpation of the priesthood; but

to show whether this appointment had been of man or of God—let them come to the tabernacle and perform the priestly function of offering incense, and the Lord would make it known who were the objects of his choice. Accordingly on the next day, “Korah and his company” appeared at the tabernacle. Moses also sent for the Reubenite leaders—and although they returned an insolent refusal to attend, their curiosity to witness the result, induced them to come out and stand in the door of their tents, where they could command a perfect view of the proceedings. Moses then arose, awful from his supplicating knees—and directed the people to stand clear of the tents of Dathan and Abiram; and the habit of obedience to the voice of their great leader caused his command to be followed—though from the manner of encampment, these persons must for the most part have been their friends and neighbors. The man of God then spoke: “Hereby ye shall know that the Lord hath sent me to do all these works. If these men die the common death of all men, or if they be visited after the visitation of all men—then the Lord hath not sent me. But if the Lord make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up, with all that appertain unto them, then shall ye understand that these men have provoked the Lord.” From the beginning of the world unto this day, no man ever made so bold and noble an assertion of Divine approval, or subjected his claims, in the presence of a nation, to a test so immediate and so infallible. But the response to this awful appeal was not for a moment delayed. The earth did open; and Dathan and Abiram—they, their tents, and all they had, went down, and the earth closed over them—they were seen no more. At the same moment a fire went forth from the presence of the Lord, and smote down with instant death the men with their censers at the door of the tabernacle—in number two hundred and fifty. Thus both branches of the great conspiracy were at once extinguished by a judgment most signal, immediate, and miraculous.

Nineteenth Week—Sunday.

THE SIN OF MOSES.—NUMBERS XX.

THIRTY-EIGHT years did the Israelites wander in the wilderness, during which nothing of their history is recorded. This fact is favorable, seeing that it shows that nothing of serious importance had occurred to affect their condition, or to disturb the training of the rising generation in the institutions under which the nation was designed to live.

So is it well for our soul's history when there is little of this world's circumstances or adventures to record of us. The peace that passeth all understanding, which those who are in Christ enjoy, affords but little theme for the historian or biographer. It is passed by in the human records of life; but is that part of our history which is written with adamant pen in the registers of heaven.

During this long time, all but a few of those who were above twenty years old at the commencement of that period had died off, according to the sentence pronounced upon that generation; and of these few the residue, all but the two faithful spies, Caleb and Joshua, seem to have been removed before entering the promised land. Though this does not strike so strongly as if the doom pronounced upon the extinct generation at Kadesh had been suddenly executed, it was, when closely considered, little less remarkable, and nothing less than a very special dispensation of Providence. In ordinary course, a very considerable proportion of those who were at that time between twenty, or thirty-five, or forty years of age would be alive at the expiration of the period, forming the elders of the nation. But these being, with those of still more advanced years, cut off—this remarkable consequence followed, that none (with two exceptions) being above sixty years of age—there were, in fact, no aged men in the camp, no elders, none unfit by reason of age to bear arms

in active warfare. Thus, therefore, the new Israel was not only better trained, morally, for the great work before it, but was physically more equal to it; the host being encumbered with no useless members, but every man being fit to stand up as a soldier in the Lord's host.

Considering this extraordinary shortening of the life of man during this period, it is remarkable that there had been no greater decrease of the population than to the extent of 1,820. Seeing how they had increased in Egypt, we may conceive that under the same rate of progress, there ought to have been a considerable increase in the population while in the wilderness, notwithstanding the shortening of the time of life. But very many lives were lost in the repeated rebellions of the people; and the same reasons did not exist in the Divine intention, if we may reverently judge of it, for promoting their advance in numbers at this time. There were obvious reasons which made it necessary that they should be greatly and rapidly multiplied in Egypt. But the same reasons did not exist for their further increase at this time. They were already almost unmanageably numerous, whether we regard the conditions of their abode in the desert, or their intended conquest of Canaan. Seeing that they were to *occupy* the country as well as to subdue it, their numbers were but barely sufficient for *that* purpose; but for the operations of the conquest itself, and all the movements connected with it, the number could not well have been larger, humanly speaking, without occasioning embarrassment, and facilitating confusion and disaster.

After all the learned and sagacious talk about the laws of population and of human increase, there is really no law of increase in any population but the will of God. The same ratio of increase was never for any length of time maintained among any people. If it be his will that a people shall become numerous, they rapidly increase; if it be his purpose that they shall "be minished and brought low," it is done. Let us not measure our prosperity in these things. In the fat bondage of Egypt the Israelites increased; but their

spirits waxed feeble and poor. In the bare freedom of the wilderness their numbers diminished; but their souls gathered more strength, their hearts became more firm; even their bodies were dignified by the hardness they were called to endure, for there was not one feeble or diseased among all their tribes.

During these years of wandering, the Israelites must have led a purely Bedouin life—under the institutions of their law—moving from place to place according to the exigencies of the season and the needs of the flocks and herds—often probably returning to the same place in the course of their peregrination. At some places they probably encamped a long while, months together. The determination of this matter was not, however, left to themselves, seeing that the movements of the cloudy pillar directed their stations and their course.

If we try to realize the nature of their desert life, this cloudy pillar must become a conspicuous object in our view. It prevented all consultation, speculation, or debate, on what is now a fertile subject among the few topics of desert discourse—the propriety of moving the camp, and the choice of the next station. The Israelites felt their volition in this matter taken altogether away. They had only to look at the pillar of cloud, and it must have been the cynosure of every eye in the camp—the first object they looked to in the morning and the last at night. The young—easily tired and fond of change, would look to it with eager hope, that it would move soon; the old—fond of rest and indisposed to change, would regard it with some apprehension of its moving sooner than they wished; and when it did move, what stir in the camp—what excitement in those who first caught the sight—what eager running from tent to tent to tell the news, without waiting till the trumpet of preparation was blown.

How many, with whom this life has gone hard, and who find themselves entangled among the thorns and briers, or endangered in the sands of the wilderness, would rejoice in such guidance, in such relief from the peril of choosing their

own path among many paths which seem all equally to repel by their danger, or equally to invite by their promises. And, blessed be God, we are not left without help no less effectual; but we will not learn to receive it in humble faith. We have the pillar of cloud, in the Word of God, which, although it contains things "hard to be understood," is nevertheless a lamp unto our feet; and we want not the pillar of fire in the Spirit of God, which, although it burn up the hay, the straw, the stubble of our souls, is a sure guide for us into all true and holy things.

We see that in the course of the thirty-eight years which had passed, between their leaving Kadesh-Barnea and their return thither again, there had been a great and important change in the constitution of the Hebrew host. Yet it must be confessed that their proceedings on their arrival there afford no very favorable indication of this fact. Much distress was here experienced from want of water, and the people expressed their discontent in language nearly as violent and unreasonable as their fathers, under the like distress, had used at Rephidim. Moses does not seem to have been at all prepared to expect such conduct from this generation; and not only was his concern very great, but he appears to have been more excited and irritated than on any former occasion. The relief was afforded in the same way as at the latter place, by the smiting of a rock. This time, however, it was done in the presence of the assembled people, to whom Moses addressed some words before the rock was smitten by his rod: "Hear now, ye rebels! must we fetch you water out of this rock?" on which he struck the rock not once but twice—this is particularly mentioned—and thereupon an abundant and refreshing stream gushed forth. These particulars are of peculiar interest, as it appears that both Moses and Aaron sinned in this matter, so as to compromise the honor of God in the sight of the people, and they were, on that account, subjected to the sentence of exclusion from the promised land. This seems a hard doom for them; but it was important that the people should see that ever their great and honored lead-

ers, who had given forth the Lord's sentence of exclusion from Canaan against their fathers, were, in the equity of the Divine judgment, which knows no respect of persons, subject to the very same doom, when they in like manner sinned. But what was the sin? This is not clearly stated, and the subject is one respecting which different opinions have been entertained. The Lord himself says it was "Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel." In what this distrust is exemplified is not clear. It might have been in the heart only; but it is stated to have been rendered obvious to the Israelites themselves. The Psalmist in saying that on this occasion Moses "spake unadvisedly with his lips," seems to refer the offence to the words he uttered.

Upon closely inspecting the narrative, we find various circumstances on which the imputation might rest, and which, taken together or separately, may have constituted the offence. It is true that Moses only appears in them, whereas Aaron also shares the blame. But Aaron was present, and, considering the office he bore, sanctioned by his silence whatever was wrong in the proceedings of Moses. On such an occasion as this, it behooved him to speak, if a wrong against the Lord's honor were committed. First, we take notice of the immoderate and unbecoming anger which Moses expresses; then his speaking to the people when his orders were only to speak to the rock; then his smiting it at all, when he should only have spoken to it; his smiting it *twice* in the heat and flame of anger; and his smiting it with the rod, taken "from before the Lord," in the tabernacle, being no other than the rod which had blossoms, buds, and almonds, and which was therefore wholly unfit for striking, and which might be injured thereby, although its preservation was probably the reason why he was ordered not to strike, but to speak. Then, from his having been said to have spoken "unadvisedly," it may be doubted whether he ought to have spoken at all to the people, having no authority to do so; whereas he not only spoke, but spoke vehemently to them, in words involving more than one distrustful application. It

has been even thought that the words, "Must we bring you water out of this rock," is a dangerous assumption of the credit of the miracle; and although we dare not suppose that Moses had any such meaning, it must be allowed, if the emphasis claimed for the personal pronoun be conceded, that the words might be easily so misapprehended by a generation which had not the same acquaintance as their fathers with the spirit in which the earlier miracles were executed. An eminent scholar,* following the Jewish commentators, has suggested that the particular fault may have been that Moses expressed his resentment at the Israelites that their murmuring had occasioned another rock to be opened, which he regarded as portending a new and long stay in the wilderness, at a time when he and Aaron were expecting to be permitted to conduct them into the promised land. And, indeed, when we consider the long period which had been passed in waiting for this consummation, it is very conceivable that there may have been a deep anxiety on the minds of the two brothers, lest any fresh misconduct on the part of the people, should occasion the term of wandering to be still further prolonged.

All these particulars are sufficiently suggestive and indicative. But it is possible that we have not so much to look for an explanation in any one or two of them, as in that general air of impatience and petulance, and want of calm dignity and placid confidence in God, which thus betrayed itself in their acts and language, and very possibly in other particulars of their conduct which are not recorded.

* Lightfoot, on *Harmony of the Old Testament*, sub, 2553, A. M. Ness, in his *History and Mystery of the Old and New Testaments*, 1690, repeats this with approval (without giving the authority).

NINETEENTH WEEK—MONDAY.

MOUNT HOR.—NUMBERS XX. 22-29.

WHEN the Hebrew host was last at Kadesh, it had clearly been intended that their passage into the land of Canaan should be by the south. We now find, however, that this course is abandoned, and that it is intended to make the inroad from the east, above the head of the Dead Sea. The reason for this change is not given; and some have speculated that it arose from the nature of the country, or from the character of the inhabitants. But these reasons would have been equally operative against their first approach in that quarter; and the face of the country could have presented no obstacles comparable to the obstacle which the river Jordan offered to an approach on the east. It is our strong conviction, that the real reason of the change was, that the faith of the new generation might be strengthened by a miracle as signal as any that their fathers knew, and calculated to facilitate their intended conquest, by striking dismay into the hearts of the inhabitants.

In accordance with this intention, Moses sent ambassadors to the king of Edom, soliciting permission to pass through his territory, which was necessary to enable him to get into the country east of the Dead Sea and the Jordan. The message was highly conciliatory. The king was reminded of the relationship between the two nations; he was informed of their deliverance from Egypt; and he was told that they were on the way to the land which the Lord had promised them for a possession. To relieve him from any apprehensions from the passage of so large a host through his territory, he was assured that the Israelites had no hostile intentions, and would not in any way molest the inhabitants. They would only "pass through on their feet," and would pay for whatever they required; even the water they would not drink without paying for it. This is a stipulation which

would not be thought of with us; but was of very great importance in a country where the inhabitants depend, during the greater part of the year, upon the water which may be collected in the season when rain falls. The king returns a very churlish answer, not only refusing a passage through his country, but threatening to oppose them by force of arms if they made the attempt. This they were not allowed to do; but were enjoined to respect the fraternal tie which the Edomitic king was so little disposed to acknowledge. They were therefore to retrace their steps to the head of the eastern gulf of the Red Sea, where the land of Edom ended, and passing round the extremity of the chain of mountains, which constituted the chief part of that realm, put themselves on the eastern border of that territory, and so proceed northward to the region east of the Dead Sea. A reference to any map of this district, will show that the mountains of Edom extended along the eastern side of that broad valley (the Arabah), which lies between the Dead Sea and the gulf of Akabah. It is down this valley that they seem to have proceeded on their retrogressive movement. On the way they encamped at Mosera, which seems to have been at or near the present Wady Mûsa, in which lie the ruins of Petra, the city whose marvellous excavations have only within the present century been brought to light, and which have since formed the theme of many able pencils and eloquent pens. The encampment must, we apprehend, have been in the neighborhood of the mouth of this valley, and in presence of Mount Hor.

This mountain is of important Scriptural interest; for, arrived at this spot, Aaron, in obedience to his recent doom, was commanded to go up to this mount, and die. He was to be accompanied by his brother and his eldest son, who were to divest him of his priestly robes, to receive his dying sigh, and to deposit his remains safely in this high place. The spot was probably selected, not only to impress the Israelites with the solemnity of the occasion, but to enable the dying pontiff to give one last look over the camp of Israel, surrounding, in goodly rows, the tabernacle of God;

to survey the scene of his long pilgrimage; and to catch a distant glimpse of the utmost borders of the promised land, before stepping across the boundary between this world and the world to come. There is no doubt whatever about the mountain which was the scene of this transaction. Even local tradition has preserved the memory of this event, the mountain itself bears the name of Aaron (Harun); and upon the top an old Moslem tomb stands to his honor, which is much visited by Mohammedan pilgrims, few of whom quit the place without sacrificing a sheep in honor of the Jewish saint.

Mount Hor juts out in a singular manner, like an advanced post of the mountains of Edom; and from its isolated peak, the eye plunges down the rugged ribs of the mountain itself, into a maze of fathomless defiles, which, advancing out for some miles from the great central range, or back-bone of the country, and sinking gradually from the Wady el-Arabah, form the ancient territory of Edom, well styled in Scripture a "nest in the rocks," a natural fortification, enclosing narrow valleys of difficult access; some of which are seen from this exalted post. Of this wilderness of craggy summits, some are sharp and jagged, without footing even for a gazelle; others are buttressed and built up as if by art, in huge square piles rising from a narrow table-land; while the great central range from which they project, is quite dissimilar in appearance, being rounded and smooth, and covered with fine pasturage, proverbially excellent. To the west, in the view from the summit of this mountain, lies the valley of el-Arabah, like the bed of a vast river, encumbered with shoals of sand, and sprinkled over with stunted shrubs; beyond expands the desert, in which Israel wandered for thirty-eight years, until the whole host perished; to the north are seen the mountains of the promised land, upon which, doubtless, Aaron cast his last look when he died; to the south the Arabah stretches away to the Red Sea, where Israel turned eastward, and thence northward "to compass the land of Edom;" to the east a magnificent range of yellowish mountains bound the view, between which and the mountains on which we stand,

once lay nestled among the rocks the fair city of Petra. "So strongly marked are the features of this region, and so preserved by their sublime unchanging barrenness, that when we beheld at once the defiles of Edom, the frontier hills of Palestine, the Arabah, and, far stretched out to the westward, the great sepulchral wilderness, the lapse of ages is forgotten, and those touching and solemn events rise up before the mind with an almost startling reality."*

The building on the top of the mountain, called the Tomb of Aaron, and doubtless either upon or close to the spot where he died and was buried, differs little in appearance from the tombs of sheikhs in the principal villages of Egypt, and perhaps does not date farther back than many of these. It seems to have been constructed on the site of another and much better edifice, whose foundation walls are visible amid the rubbish, a part of whose beautiful mosaic pavement may be seen in the floor of the present tomb, and the sections of whose columns are worked into its walls, while a beautifully carved piece of pure white marble crowns the rude dome. The interior contains nothing but a small square tomb, about four feet high, constructed with the fragments of the former more costly building. On it, as votive offerings deposited by pilgrims, lie a few white and red rags, and above it hang some tattered garments and ostrich eggs. The panel at one end contains a long Arabic inscription. This is the visible tomb of the great high-priest, but the grave is in a vault below. Lighting a torch, one may descend into the vault by a flight of three steps, and stand before a niche cut in the living rock, and once defended by beautiful brass doors of open work, which now hang suspended by cords instead of turning on hinges. This subterranean apartment is small, filled with rubbish, begrimed with the smoke of flambeaux, and altogether of a most forbidding aspect. It would seem to have been a small subterranean chapel; and no one will, of course,

* Bartlett, *Forty Days in the Desert*. See also Robinson, Wilson, Durbin, Irby and Mangles, etc. The *first* description of the spot by Burckhardt is still well worth consulting.

entertain the notion, that it was excavated by Moses and Eleazer when they buried the high-priest of Israel here.

NINETEENTH WEEK—TUESDAY.

FIERY SERPENTS.—NUMBERS XXI.

IN pursuing the course which had been marked out for them, the Hebrew host traversed southward the arid, hot, and sandy Arabah, and passing by the head of the eastern gulf of the Red Sea, gained the equally desolate region constituting the desert *east* of the mountains of Edom. By this time “the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way.” This is not, perhaps, surprising, for after having been permitted to reach the borders of the promised land, and to look up the green valleys of Edom, they had been sent back to take another long journey through the worst parts of the desert, on which they fully supposed that they had turned their backs forever. It is possible, also, that the absence of any interposition to enforce for them a short cut through the territory of Edom, had shaken their confidence in the certainty of the Divine aid in taking possession of the land of Canaan. All this might have been the case; but their complaints took the gross form of murmurings at the scarcity of water, and of expressions of disgust at the manna. This time it is not flesh they long for but bread: “There is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light food.” We see in this that the people, confined to one kind of diet for nearly forty years, had been looking forward with eager expectation to the change of food which might be expected when they entered a peopled country; and the postponement of an expectation so eagerly entertained, must have materially enhanced the disappointment which the renewal of the journey occasioned. Even the short postponement of an expectation on the very point of being real-

ized, is a disappointment far more deep than one of larger actual amount, when the fruition is not near. Still, something better might have been expected from a people trained and tried as they had been; and as they seem to have been emboldened by the impunity of their murmurings at Kadesh-Barnea, it became necessary to remind them sharply of their covenanted duty. So "the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, which bit the people, and much people of Israel died." In another place we are informed that the wilderness in which they had sojourned, abounded in venomous creatures. It is called in Deut. viii. 15, "The great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought." Yet we never hear of their being bitten or killed by them till now. From this we infer that they had been marvellously protected hitherto from this as from other dangers of the way, but the protection which they had experienced being now withdrawn, the serpents—in this part of the region unusually numerous—had their poisonous jaws unbound, and smote them at their will. The testimony of travellers respecting the frequency of serpents in these parts is very remarkable. The ancient historian tells us, that the people who inhabited the maritime parts of the Red Sea, were subject, among other strange distempers, to one in which the flesh of their legs and arms bred little snakes or serpents, which, eating through the skin, thrust out their heads through the orifices; but as soon as touched retired again into the flesh, and in this manner occasioned most violent and dangerous inflammations.* It is added, that this was a disorder peculiar to this region, and not known in any other parts of the world—perhaps not then known, but it seems not dissimilar to the disease now occasioned in Africa by the "Guinea worm."

At a point on the shore, a little below the extremity of the eastern gulf of the Red Sea, and therefore not far from the place where the Israelites met with this visitation, Burckhardt found the sandy shore of a bay bearing everywhere the impression of the passage of serpents, crossing each other

* Agatharcides in Plutarch, *Sympos.* i. 9.

in many directions, and the bodies of some of them could not, from the tracks they left, have been less than two inches in diameter. The traveller continues:—"Avd told me that the serpents were very common in these parts; that the fishermen were much afraid of them, and extinguished their fires in the evening, before they went to sleep, because the light was known to attract them." He further observes:—"As serpents are so numerous on this side, they are probably not deficient towards the head of the gulf on its opposite shore, where it appears the Israelites passed when they journeyed from Mount Hor, by the way of the Red Sea, to compass the land of Edom, and where the Lord sent fiery serpents among them."

It was also in the region near the head of the Red Sea, and more directly in the track of the Israelites, that Laborde relates an incident which occurred in his camp. "The night passed over quietly, and the cold of the morning had warned us to rise, when we found beneath the carpet which formed our bed, a large scorpion of a yellow color, and three inches in length.* When he was detected he endeavored to effect his escape, though not with sufficient rapidity to ensure his safety; but our Arabs did not wish that he should be killed. . . . The Alaouins told us that scorpions and serpents abound in this part of the desert." After alluding to the circumstance before us, this writer adds: "The fact thus recorded in Scripture is fully confirmed by the Arabs, as well as by the vast numbers of these reptiles (serpents) which we found two leagues to the east of this place, on our return to Akabah."

It is much to be regretted, that no one has taken the trouble to ascertain the species of these serpents. This might have helped to settle the question—What is meant by the epithet "fiery" applied to them? Was it from their color, or from the burning inflammation which their bites produced?

* This is hardly "large" for a scorpion if the tail be included. We have ourselves found some, under similar circumstances, nearly twice as long.

Perhaps from both. The fact that the representative serpent was made of brass, may at least suggest that the natural serpents were of a burnished, glaring, or yellow appearance.

Under this infliction the people were speedily brought to their senses, and very humbly confessed that they had sinned—"for we have spoken against the Lord and against thee." On this the Lord directed Moses to make a brazen serpent, and set it upon a pole, that every bitten Hebrew, who looked upon it, might be healed. This was, no doubt, designed to render the cure a result of faith, for no one who doubted the sufficiency, as appointed by God, of a means so apparently inadequate, would look to this representative serpent, and he would, consequently, from his lack of faith, die of the poison in his veins. It is this that rendered the brazen serpent so lively a type or symbol of our Lord, who appropriated it to himself in the memorable words: "For as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."—John iii. 14.

In the serpent being made of brass, the Jews take notice of a miracle in a miracle—in that of God's healing against the common course and order of nature—for brass, they allege (with some Christian interpreters), to be hurtful to those who have been bitten by serpents. This they compare with the bitter wood making the water sweet at Marah. A very learned writer,* whom others have followed, thinks that this great transaction led to the heathen god of healing, Esculapius, being usually represented with a serpent by him; or holding a rod with a serpent twisted round it; to his being worshipped in the form of a serpent; and to his being enrolled among the stars under the person and name of Ophinchus. We are ourselves inclined to refer this to still earlier notions of the serpent, derived from primeval traditions, which we know to have overspread the earth. But if we might suppose that the knowledge of this circumstance had reached the heathen, and to have spread among them,

* Huet, in *Demonstr. Evangel.* Propos. 4, c. 8, sect. 6

there is nothing more strange in their turning them into acts and objects of worship, than that the Israelites themselves should, in a later age, have been disposed to render sacred honors to this very serpent of brass, which had been preserved in the holy place as a memorial of this judgment and deliverance. See 2 Kings xviii. 4.

NINETEENTH WEEK—WEDNESDAY.

KING OG'S BEDSTEAD.—NUMBERS XXI. 33—35.

It may be observed, that the wants which had driven the Israelites into murmuring and rebellion had, on former occasions, been supplied by miracle. We read of no such supply in the case of the murmuring for water and bread which had occasioned the plague of serpents. Yet they *were* supplied with all they needed. It shows the use and importance of comparing Scripture with Scripture, that quite an incidental and non-historical passage in another book (Deut. ii. 6), apprizes us of the fact, that the northward journey along the eastern frontier of Edom, which had threatened so many terrors, was relieved by the friendly disposition of the Edomites on that frontier, who readily brought out their stores, to sell for money to the advancing host, to whom the bread, the meat, the fruits, the water, thus obtained, must have formed, after their long confinement to desert fare, a most agreeable and refreshing antepast of their future enjoyments. It is remarkable, that at the present day, the inhabitants of the only inhabited village now on this frontier, supply in the same manner with refreshments, the great pilgrim caravan on its yearly march from Damascus to Mecca. This place is called Tayfle, supposed to be the Punon which is named among the stations at which the Israelites rested, probably by reason of the facilities of obtaining supplies which this place then, as now, afforded. In a short time after they had encamped, the people would bring out all they had to sell, and the

scene would become that of a market or a fair. At present, the profit derived from the large quantity of provisions they are enabled, once in the year, to sell to the caravan, forms the basis of their prosperity, and enables them to cultivate the ground with advantage. How delighted must the droughty Israelites have been to encamp among the ninety and nine* streams and rivulets of Tayfle; to behold the plantations of fruit trees, which were probably then even more extensive than at present; and to eat the fruits they yielded. Even now, apples, apricots, figs, pomegranates, and olive and peach trees of a large species, are here cultivated in great numbers.

Advancing northward, the Hebrew host, on crossing the brook Zered, which enters the Dead Sea near the southern end, ended their long pilgrimage in the wilderness, and entered into a cultivated and settled country. That country belonged to the Moabites, who had been driven into the narrow southern tract on the east of the Dead Sea, between the brook Zered and the river Arnon, by the Amorites, who had dispossessed them of a much finer and larger country to the north of that river. The Amorites, who had thus established themselves in the country east of the Jordan, seem to have been a colony sent forth by the same nation in Canaan. Probably the great increase of their numbers had rendered their possessions in the west country too narrow for them, and had induced a proportion of the most daring of them to seek, under warlike leaders, new settlements in the eastern region, then inhabited by less ancient and powerful nations than those which divided the land of Canaan, and not allied to them by the same ties of consanguinity and ancient neighborhood. The Amorites were among the nations whose territories were promised to the Israelites; yet it is clear that Moses did not consider that this applied to any but their ancient territories in the proper Canaan west of the river, and that he did not at all contemplate any acquisitions on the east of the Jordan. It had been expressly forbidden to enter

* So the Arabs express their large number.

into any treaty or compact with the people of Canaan, yet Moses sent to ask the permission of Sihon, the king of these eastern Amorites, to pass through his territory, with the same offer that had been made to Edom, of leaving the inhabitants unmolested on their march, and of purchasing all the victuals required—and he asks it as leave to pass “to the land which the Lord our God hath given us”—clearly distinguishing the western country as that alone to which their attention was directed. Sihon, however, not only refused this request, but did what the king of Edom had only threatened—came out in arms against them. The conflict which it then became impossible to avoid, was thus by no means of Moses’s seeking, or its result contemplated by him. That result was, that Sihon was utterly defeated, and the Israelites, quite beyond their calculations, found themselves in possession of a fine country, full of towns and villages. What was of more immediate importance to them, they had secured a free passage to the Jordan, and, if left unmolested, would have sought no further warfare or conquest on the east of the river. But Og, the king of Bashan, whose territories lay to the north of those of which Sihon had been dispossessed, by no means relished the presence of his new neighbors, and burned to avenge the overthrow of his friends and allies. Although, therefore, he had no immediate interest in the matter, seeing that the Israelites had nothing to ask of him, he collected his forces, and marched to give them battle. He was in his turn defeated and slain, and thus Israel became possessed of two kingdoms—whose united territories extended from the river Arnon to the roots of Lebanon—forming one of the finest countries in the world, well wooded, and full of rich pastures. Thus Israel began its career of conquest by acquiring a valuable possession over and above what had been promised to them; and by this their faith must have been much encouraged.

But there is more to be said of king Og. He was the last member of an old gigantic race, which had long held sway on this side of the river. It is in Deut. iii. 2, that we

read more of him :—" Only Og remained of the remnant of the giants : behold his bedstead was a bedstead of iron : is it not in Rabbath of the children of Ammon ? nine cubits was the length thereof, and four cubits the breadth thereof, after the cubit of a man." This length we take to be thirteen and a-half feet, at the rate of half a yard to a cubit. But a man's bedstead is usually larger than himself, yet not so much larger but that it might be taken as some indication of the length of his stature. It is so intended in the text, which clearly shows that then, as now, bedsteads were not much longer than the person who lay in them. If, therefore, the bedstead were thirteen and a half feet, the man may have been about ten or eleven feet high—a very great stature—higher than that of Goliath, but not incredible or unexampled. We have, however, engaged the reader's attention sufficiently on this subject, and shall not return to it. The modest estimates of Scripture, in all these matters in which the eastern imagination is most prone to exaggerate, may be judged from the circumstantial rabbinical traditions respecting him. They regard him as " a remnant of the giants" who lived before the flood, and to have been the only one who survived the general destruction. There are two accounts of the manner of his preservation :—one, that he was tall enough to walk by the side of the ark through the water ; and the other, that he rode astride on the top of the Noachic vessel, receiving from the inmates a daily supply of victuals. During the time he was thus their guest, he consumed a thousand oxen, and the same number of every sort of game. It is also alleged that he afterwards became the servant of Abraham, under the name of Eliezer. His stature, according to these accounts, throws into the shade all the imaginations of Gulliver and Sinbad. According to one account, the soles of his feet were forty miles long ; and Moses, though himself of gigantic stature, and armed with a spear of proportionate length, could smite him no higher than the ankle. One time, while in Abraham's service, on being scolded by his master, fear shook a tooth out of his head.

This Abraham took and made himself a bedstead of it, on which he lay and slept. Other authorities, equally credible, however, assure us that it was not a bed that he made of Og's tooth, but a chair, on which he sat as long as he lived.

As to the bedstead, concerning which some speculation has been excited, we have some remarks to offer. Many, having but a rough knowledge of the East, have imagined that there are no bedsteads, save couches or divans running along the whole side of a room, and having therefore no reference to the stature of the person lying on them. This is a great mistake. We have ourselves slept on the bedstead now in common use in Egypt, and which is of the same form and construction as those represented in the mural paintings of Egypt. It is made of the mid stem of the palm-frond, and was probably so made formerly in Palestine and Syria, where the palm tree was more common than at present, although now more generally made of boards in these countries. For sleeping on the house-top during the summer, this bedstead is of very general use. We conceive the bedstead of king Og was of this sort. But bedsteads of this kind are incapable of resisting any undue weight without being disjoined and bent awry; and this would dictate the necessity of making the one destined to sustain the vast bulk of Og, rather with bars of iron than with palm sticks. All such bedsteads bear the same proportion to the human stature that our own do, affording a sufficient reason for its dimensions being given, to indicate the stature of this gigantic king.

Our own not unfrequent use of iron bedsteads, divests the fact of Og's bedstead being so framed, of all strangeness. In the warm climates of the East, bedsteads of metal seem to have been more in use anciently than at present, for the purpose of avoiding the insects that are disposed to harbor in those of wood. Heathen writers notice bedsteads of gold and silver. The books of Proverbs and of Esther notice beds of this kind.* Herodotus and Diodorus Siculus describe

* Prov. xxv. 11; Esth. i. 6.

beds and tables of these metals, which they observed in eastern temples.* A bed of gold was found by Alexander the Great in the tomb of Cyrus.† Sardanapalus caused a hundred and fifty beds of gold, and as many tables of the same metal, to be burned with him.‡ The Parthian monarchs ordinarily slept on beds of gold, and this was counted a special privilege of their estate.§ At the time of the Trojan war, Agamemnon has several beds of brass.|| Both Livy and St. Augustine affirm, that the Romans brought beds of brass from Asia to Rome, after the wars they had in that part of the world.¶ It is related by Thucydides, that when the Thebans had destroyed the city of Platea, they took away many beds of brass and iron, which they found there, and consecrated them to Juno.** These are sufficient instances of the ancient usage; but most of them show that such beds or bedsteads were not in common use, but belonged to princes and persons of distinction.

NINETEENTH WEEK—THURSDAY.

MALEDICTION.—NUMBERS XXII.

THE overthrow of the Amorites opened the way for the march of the Israelites to “the plains of Moab,” where they remained encamped during all the subsequent transactions until they passed the Jordan into the promised land.

These plains are formed by a narrow stripe of land, scarcely two leagues in breadth, lying along the eastern banks of the Jordan, opposite to the plains of Jericho. The Dead Sea lies to the south of it, Mount Pisgah on the south-east, and the mountains on the east; and towards the north, losing its

* Herod. i. 181; Diodor. vi. 10. † Arrian, *de Exped. Alex.*, lib. 6.

‡ Ctesias apud Athenæum, l. xii. § Josephus, *Antiq.*, xx. 20.

|| Thersites apud Athenæum, xiii. 11.

¶ Tit. Liv., l. 39; August. *de Civit. Dei*, iii. 21. ** Thucydides, l. 3.

specific name, this plain continues as "the valley of the Jordan," even to the Sea of Tiberias. This plain, with that of Jericho on the opposite side, form together, in fact, an expansion of the valley of the Jordan. This side formed part of the territory which had formerly been taken by the Amorites from Moab; but, as usual in such cases, it still retained the name of the former possessors. The Moabites, who, driven from the valley, now occupied the mountains along which the Israelites passed before they entered the valley of the Jordan, were "sore afraid of the people because they were many." They did not, however, venture to impede their course, and the Israelites passed peaceably by their territory, purchasing food for sustenance, with money.—Deut. iii. 28, 29. They did not go through it, but kept along their outermost eastern border, until only the territory of the Amorites interposed between them and the Jordan, and through that territory, because their own, they now march to their destination. It is very certain that the Moabites had no good feeling towards the Israelites. Probably as they looked down from the mountains upon the long train of the wanderers from the desert, they regarded them as going on to certain ruin from their own redoubted conquerors, the Amorites; but when they beheld the busy encampment firmly established in their own ancient territory, and the northern kings utterly overthrown, their alarm became very great. They had no real cause for distrust or fear; for the Israelites had been forbidden to distress the Moabites, or to contend with them, as they were to retain their domains in consideration of their descent from Lot.—Deut. ii. 9.

"Willing to wound, but yet afraid to strike," the Moabites felt that it would be in vain to contend with them, while they so manifestly enjoyed the blessing and protection of a mighty God. But they did think that it might be possible to withdraw or neutralize the force of that advantage, by laying upon them the heavy ban of some powerful magician, and having them hence rendered weak as other men, they might be assailed with every prospect of success. It must have

been a great recommendation of the design to them, that the result would enable them to recover the territory which had once been theirs, but which the Israelites now held by right of conquest from the Amorites. Indeed, could the Israelites be exterminated, or driven back into the desert, the children of Lot might well calculate on not only recovering what they had lost, but on adding the rich lands of Argob and Bashan, which the Israelites had won from Og, to their former territories—and they would thus, with some allied tribes of Abrahamic origin, become the sole possessors of the whole country east of the Jordan.

That the Moabites apprehended that the Hebrew host, large as were its numbers, might be overcome if once divested of the Divine protection, seems to evince that even they perceived wherein its great strength lay, and that apart therefrom, its intrinsic force was by no means formidable.

Their procedure, in seeking to lay the armies of Israel under a curse, that their own arms might be successful against them, is a strange notion to us. But it is not so in the East. Even at the present day, the pagan Orientals, in their wars, have always their magicians with them to curse their enemies, and to mutter incantations for their destruction. Sometimes they secretly convey a potent charm among the opposing troops, to ensure their destruction. In our own war with the Burmese, the generals of that nation had several magicians with them, who were much engaged in cursing our troops; but as they did not succeed, a number of witches were brought for the same purpose. We may, indeed, trace it as a very ancient opinion, among all people, that the maledictions and the blessings, the charms, the incantations, and the devotements of men, who were believed to be inspired by a superior spirit, good or evil, had the most marked effects not only upon individuals but upon regions and entire nations, and even upon cattle and upon the fruits of the field. Not seldom they sought, by strong enchantments, to evoke the tutelary divinities of their enemies' cities, desiring thus to deprive them of what was regarded as their chief defence.

Hence the proper name of many great cities was preserved as a great secret, that no enemy might be able to make use of it in their invocations. The names by which cities were ordinarily known, as, for instance, Troy, Rome, Carthage, were not the true and secret names of these places. Rome was called Valentia—a name known as hers by very few persons—and Valerius Soranus was severely punished for having disclosed it.* The heathens had, indeed, certain solemn invocations, by means of which they devoted their enemies to certain divinities, or rather to malignant and dangerous demons. The following is the formula of one of these imprecations, as preserved by Macrobius:† “Dis-Pater, or Jupiter, if it better please thee to be called by that name—or by whatever name thou mayest be invoked—I conjure thee to pour upon this army (or this town) the spirit of terror and trepidation. Deprive of their sight all those who shall aim their strokes at us, our armies, or our troops. Spread darkness over our enemies, over their cities, their fields, their forces. Look upon them as accursed. Bring them under the most rigorous conditions to which any armies have ever been obliged to submit. Thus do I devote them; and I and those whom I represent—the nation and the army engaged in this war, stand for witnesses. If this doom be accomplished, I promise a sacrifice of three black sheep to thee, O Earth, mother of all things, and to thee, great Jupiter.”

NINETEENTH WEEK—FRIDAY.

BALAAM.—NUMBERS XXII.

SOMEWHERE among the highlands of Mesopotamia, upon the Euphrates, eighteen or twenty days distant from the plains of Moab, was a place called Pethor, where abode a

* Plin. *Hist. Nat.* iii. 5; xxviii. 2; Solin. cap. 2; Plut. *Problem vi.*

† *Saturnal.* iii. 9.

diviner named Balaam (more correctly Bileam), whose fame was widely spread through all this region. It had even reached the land of Moab, whose king, Balak resolved, notwithstanding the distance, to secure his services, in laying a curse upon the host of Israel, at whatever cost. He accordingly sent to him ambassadors, with the rich "rewards of divination" in their hands. Arrived upon the banks of the Euphrates, the messengers presented themselves before the soothsayer, and declared their errand, closing with the strong expression of their master's confidence—"For I *know* that he whom thou helpest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed." This declaration, in connection with the attending circumstances, clearly shows that Balaam was deemed to possess very peculiar qualifications for the task he was invited to undertake, and for rendering the curse efficient. This is further shown by the fact, that among the herd of soothsayers, he alone is desired, he alone is deemed equal to the occasion. Keeping in mind the points brought under notice yesterday, it may not be difficult to discover the nature of this qualification. It has been seen, that for the purpose of efficient invocation, it was always deemed necessary that the diviner should know the god and his true name, who presided over the destinies of the people upon whom he was required to act. This knowledge of Jehovah, who was regarded as the national God of the Hebrews, Balaam was supposed to possess; and this must, in those days, have been a very rare qualification indeed, and one that constituted his peculiar fitness for the office which the king of Moab now wished to devolve upon him. How he came to be supposed to possess this knowledge it is not difficult to understand. Distant as the region of the Euphrates was, there was much communication between it and the country east of the Jordan and Dead Sea. There are ulterior indications that Balaam was personally known among the Midianites, and had connections among them; and as we learn from the very verse (the fourth) preceding that in which Balaam is first mentioned, that the king of Moab had been in communication with

the Midianites, it is highly probable that he obtained his information concerning him from them. In the list of Edomitic kings, given in Genesis xxxvi. 37, there is notice that one Saul of Rehoboth upon the Euphrates became king of Edom. It is likely that, if not recently, yet at some time during the forty years since Israel left Egypt, this remarkable man had been in these parts, where, as we know, the mysterious march of this people had struck all the neighboring nations with astonishment. Such being the case, the wonders of Egypt, of the Red Sea, and of the wilderness, must have been a frequent and untiring subject of conversation in society, and must often have been discussed in his presence. It is certain, that on such occasions, all that was marvellous in their career was ascribed to the power of their God : and it is probable that Balaam had then, more than once, been heard to speak of their God, as knowing him far better than those with whom he spoke. Or we may reverse the line of indication, and suppose that persons from these realms visiting the place where Balaam abode, had discoursed of these matters, and had heard him so speak. It comes to the same result either way. As his peculiar fitness arose from his intimacy with the affairs of the Hebrews, and his knowledge of their God—the fact of that fitness could only be known through his own declarations, heard in such a way as to become notorious in the land.

Now the question arises, Was this knowledge a reality or a pretence? If we take the narrative in its plain meaning, and that is the meaning in which we think that all historical Scripture should be taken, there can be no doubt that he actually had this knowledge—that he not only held the truth, or much of truth, though he held it in unrighteousness—but that God did in subservience to his own high purposes, actually communicate with him. Any other explanation, however ingenious, is but a continuous and painful distortion of the whole narrative, which revolts the understanding more than do even the strong facts which it tries to mitigate, in deference to the tastes and tendencies of the age. Besides

this, the deep attention that Balaam had given (and was doubtless known to have given), to the affairs of the Hebrews, and his acquaintance with their early history, their existing condition, and their future hopes, is shown in the noble prophecy which he was eventually constrained to utter.

How he became possessed of the knowledge he held—and held with so little advantage to his own soul, is a question that looks more difficult than it is. May he not have owed something to such remains of the patriarchal religion as still existed in Mesopotamia when Jacob was there, and which his residence for twenty years in that quarter may have contributed to maintain? But the only supposition which accounts *fully* for the knowledge which Balaam possessed of Jehovah, whom he generally mentions by that high and peculiar name, is the one which adds to whatever knowledge he possessed from other sources, that which he owed to the Israelites themselves. The way in which this knowledge might be acquired is clear. There could not but be many reports concerning the Israelites during their forty years' wandering in the desert. With a mind awake to everything which concerned his profession, he would be naturally attracted by the reports of the deliverance effected by the Lord for this people who had come out of Egypt, and whose parentage could not be unknown to him. He had surely heard of the passage of the Red Sea, of the waters of Meribah, of the miracle of the brazen serpent; and, as in the case of Simon Magus, a new source of celebrity and of emolument seemed to open up before him, most enticing to his besetting sins. He then, we may conceive, adopted Jehovah as his God, and named himself as Jehovah's prophet. Nor, it may be, was this wholly with views of worldly advantage. It is quite possible, as a learned writer supposes,* that there was a mixture of a higher order of sentiments, a sense of the wants of his moral nature, which led him to seek Jehovah,

* Dr. Hengstenberg, of whose ingenious and learned disquisition on this subject there is an excellent translation by Mr. J. E. Ryland, of Northampton, under the title of *History of Balaam and his Prophecies*

and laid the foundation of his intercourse with Him. This is all the more probable fact, as we feel bound to understand that the Lord did, in the accomplishment of his own great purposes, vouchsafe unto him peculiar manifestations of the Divine character.

According to the view which we take of Balaam's character, it is not so peculiar as it seems. Separated from the external accidents of time, of country, and position—we may go into the streets, and find a Balaam in every third man we meet. He belonged to that still numerous class who theoretically know God, and who actually do fear him—but the love and fear of whom are not the regulating and governing principles of their minds. They are convinced, but not converted. They can prize and strongly desire the privileges of God's elect—they long to “die the death of the righteous,” but are unwilling to live their life. They would serve God; but they must serve mammon also: and in the strife between the two contending influences, their lives are made bitter, and their deaths perilous.

Speaking of this man, an able and pious writer* says: “It would be vain to assert, in opposition to the whole course of his history, that he had no acquaintance with the character, the will, and the dealing of Jehovah. It is indeed certain that he was a diviner, and a pretender to those magical arts and incantations so common in his age and country. But, with these abatements, he possessed, from whatever source derived, knowledge of a higher and nobler character which, improved to its legitimate end, would have gifted him with distinction immeasurably transcending every dream of worldly avarice, or all the wealth and power which the king of Moab could bestow. Unreal as his divinations and sorceries were, he had communications from the God of heaven, which might have made him wise unto salvation, and a diffusive blessing to all around him. But, alas! the illumination of the mind is by no means necessarily associated with the conversion of the heart. There are many who know God, yet glorify him

* Rev. R. P. Buldico, *Christian Exodus*, ii. 213.

not as God by a sanctified use of their attainments to his honor. He only knows God aright whose will and affections are overruled to obey him. 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. A good understanding have all they that do his commandments.' He whose knowledge of divine truth is merely theoretical, resembles the ill-assorted image of Nebuchadnezzar, whose head was of fine gold, but his feet, part of iron, and part of clay."

NINETEENTH WEEK—SATURDAY.

BALAAAM'S ASS.—NUMBERS XXII. 6-35.

HAVING yesterday considered the character of Balaam, we shall to-day be the better able to understand his conduct.

As he could not but have been aware that the people he was called upon, by the ambassadors of Moab, to curse, were the peculiar objects of Jehovah's care, a plain and decisive refusal to entertain the proposal made to him, was the only course open to a righteous man. But Balaam was not a righteous man. The rewards of divination were before him, and acted strongly upon his covetous mind; while, on the other hand, he feared to incur the Divine displeasure. He, therefore, between the two influences, parleyed with the temptation. He desired the messengers to lodge with him that night, and in the morning he would bring them word what Jehovah would have him do. That night God did commune with him, probably in a dream or vision, and in answer to his statement of the errand of the messengers told him with a distinctness which left his future conduct without excuse, "Thou shalt not go with them. Thou shalt not curse the people, for they are blessed." Balaam, accordingly, arose in the morning and sent away the messengers. But in doing this he contrives to qualify the prohibition in such a manner as to intimate how willingly he would have gone, but that

he was under the necessity of submitting to the command of God. "Jehovah refuseth to give me leave to go with you." He wished to go; he would have run greedily for reward; and restrained as he was by a servile fear of the Most High, he could not frame his lips to that positive denial which might have preserved him from further solicitation. The grounds on which his desire to go were based—his ambition and his love of gain—seem to have been manifest to the elders of Moab, and in accordance with their impression, the king, their master, was only induced by their report to send a more urgent application, by a more splendid and influential embassy—"princes more and more honorable"—with power to offer boundless rewards—all that his heart could wish.

When the new messengers arrived at Pethor, and stated their sovereign's message, "Let nothing, I pray thee, hinder thee from coming unto me; for I will promote thee unto very great honor, and I will do whatsoever thou sayest unto me; come, therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people." Balaam's answer was worthy of a prophet of the Lord; but only shows that his perception of duty was clear enough to leave him without excuse: "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of Jehovah my God, to do less or more." Then, why not at once dismiss the messengers? He already knew the mind of God, and he ought to have known that "God is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent." Instead of that he says, "Now, therefore, I pray you, tarry ye also here this night, that I may know what the Lord will say unto me more?" What "*more?*" Did Balaam fashion to himself a god after his own heart, and imagine that he also was to be moved from his declared purpose by the gifts and promises of Balak? Could he mean to insult God by his importunities? Did he hope to extort from Him, out of regard to his own worldliness, permission to bring a curse upon an entire nation, which had been so long and so notoriously the object of his covenant care? Even such was

what Peter well calls "the *madness* of the prophet." To rebuke it the Lord says to him, "Go, but yet the word that I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do." Here his going in the abstract is not forbidden, but his going in order to curse. How are we to reconcile this with the Lord's being angry with him because he went? Because He who knew his heart, saw that he did go in order to curse. His only inducement to go was the rewards which he hoped to win from Balak, and he knew that these could only be obtained by doing what he desired. To go, therefore, without the hope and desire of cursing, would have been useless. Had he also declared plainly to the messengers the full meaning of the communications he had received, and the conditions under which he went, there is little likelihood that they would have pressed for his attendance.

As it is, Balaam "rose in the morning and saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Moab." We have seen the high rank of Balaam argued from his riding upon an ass. But although princes and judges rode upon asses in those days, all were not princes and judges who rode upon asses. As far as appears, there was no other animal, except the camel, yet used in these parts for mounting; and, no doubt, differences of breed and color determined the value of the animal, and indicated the quality of the rider. The asses of that region generally are still much larger and finer animals than those we are in the habit of seeing, and some of the breeds are very handsome beasts indeed. We know that "white asses" were then (as is still the case in the East), particularly prized—as are white elephants in India—and were preferred by persons of high station. Such, probably, was the one that Balaam rode.

That Balaam *saddled* his ass, must not lead us to suppose that there were in these days any proper saddles. This is a far later invention, even for riding on horseback, and it is not even now, in the East, generally applied to asses. On this subject we have the negative evidence of sculptures. In Egypt, indeed, there are no equestrian sculptures at all.

except as to riding in chariots. Classical sculpture has no saddles or saddle cloths. We used to think the earliest saddles were to be seen in the sculptures of the Sassanian dynasty at Shahpoor in Persia—but the following passage would take them back to the last age of the Assyrian empire : —“ In the earliest sculptures (at Nineveh) the horses, except such as are led behind the king's chariot, are unprovided with cloths or saddles. The rider is seated on the naked back of the animal. At a later period, however, a kind of pad appears to have been introduced ; and in a sculpture at Kouyunjik was represented a high saddle, not unlike that now in use in the East.”*

The saddling of asses mentioned in Scripture probably consisted merely in placing upon their backs such thick cloths or mats as we see in some of the asses represented in the Egyptian paintings. Something of the same kind, or pieces of rug, felt, carpet, or cloth, are still in general use—although a kind of pad is now frequently to be seen upon asses in the large towns of Egypt, Syria, and Arabia—especially among those let out for hire. Such town asses have also bridles, and sometimes stirrups, none of which, any more than the pad, do we remember to have noticed on asses upon actual journeys, and we have known asses travel continuously on journeys quite as long as that which Balaam now undertakes, and that by persons whose position in life quite enabled them to ride a horse or mule had they so chosen. It would not be at all extraordinary, even now, that a person, expecting to be laden with riches and honors, should ride upon an ass—still less in an age and country where no other mode of conveyance, except that of riding upon camels, appears to have been known.

Well, Balaam set forth with the princes of Moab, and attended by two servants of his own. After a while the Moabites seem to have gone on before, for when the subsequent transactions occurred, the presence of the servants alone is indicated. In the East the roads are like bridle paths across

* Layard's *Nineveh*, ii. 357.

commons—and even through cultivated grounds are wholly unenclosed, except where they pass through gardens and plantations in the neighborhood of towns. Now, as Balaam rode contentedly along, he little knew that the angel of the Lord had gone forth for an adversary to oppose his progress. He saw him not. But the ass beheld him standing in the way with a drawn sword in his hand, and he turned aside out of the path, wide into the fields through which it passed. The prophet forced him back by blows into the road. But presently they came to a place where a digression from the road was not possible, seeing that it was confined by vineyard walls on the right hand and on the left. This shows that they were approaching a town or village, and suggests that the Moabite lords had gone on to prepare a place for the diviner's reception. In this narrow way the ass again saw the angel, and being no longer able to swerve into the field, or turn back (the two servants being behind), he forced himself up against the wall, and crushed the foot of his master. At this Balaam was wroth, and again smote his beast, which then moved on, the angel having for the moment disappeared. But a little further on, where the road was narrower still, the ass once more beheld the angel, and in the excess of his alarm fell to the ground under his master. On this Balaam smote him still more severely with his staff. Then, lo, a wonder! the ass spoke as with a man's voice, expostulating with him against this cruel treatment, "What have I done to thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times?" A common author would have paused here to describe the astonishment felt by Balaam at hearing his ass speak. But it is a fine and truthful trait of the sacred writer, that he represents the prophet as too much overcome by his wrath to notice the extraordinary character of this fact; but at once answered the ass, as if his utterance had been the most common circumstance in the world. He answers quite naturally: "Because thou hast mocked me: I would there were a sword in my hand; for then would I kill thee." The ass replied, in effect: "Hast thou not always ridden upon me? and have I

ever been wont to be restive and obstinate?" implying that it must be supposed he had not now acted so contrary to his habits without strong reason. Balaam was constrained to acknowledge the truth of this appeal, and at that moment the real cause of the animal's unusual behavior became apparent. Until now he had seen nothing to prevent him from proceeding on his way—but his eyes were now opened and he beheld the angel, and bowed himself reverently before him.

How is this most remarkable transaction to be understood? Some have been inclined to think that the matter took place in a trance or vision, and that although the matters were realities to Balaam, they were so to him only. In short, that they were not open to his external sense, but to his internal perception. This is implied in his eyes being said to be opened, when he saw the angel. For doubtless his external sense was open before—and what remained to be opened was the internal perception, which is inoperative without spiritual quickening. In proof of this view, it would appear that the transaction was not obvious to the sense of the servants of Balaam, who are said to have been with him. We see no objection to this view in itself, for it merely brings it into the same class of revelations which met Paul on his journey to Damascus, which is expressly said to have been *distinct* to his sense only—the words which passed being audible to him alone—the rest heard only what seemed to them the rolling of distant thunder, while the light that struck him blind by its intensity upon his quickened sense, had upon them no such effect, for they saw it only as "a great light." This explanation, however, which assumes that the circumstance did really occur, though perceptible to Balaam only, is different from that which regards it as a mere dream, which had no existence but in his imagination; and different also from that which regards all the circumstances as literal. Those who take the latter view have much to urge in favor of it. Besides the usual objections to the introduction of a vision without intimation in an historical narrative, there is the assertion of St. Peter, that "the dumb ass, speaking with

a man's voice, rebuked the madness of the prophet." Besides, what seems to us the strongest objection to any other than a literal view—and one which has escaped the notice of commentators—is this: We are told not only what Balaam did see, whether literal or not, but what he did *not* see. The angel was present, had changed his position, and had alarmed the ass no less than three times, before Balaam was aware of his presence. *Not seeing* is a mere negation of perception—and Balaam, even in a vision, could not dream that he did *not* see the angel. If there were a vision, there was therefore something literal before the vision commenced. Why do we wish for a vision? Not for the sake of avoiding the actual appearance of the angel, for such appearances we have had on former occasions. Is it to avoid the speaking of the ass? But if there were a vision, the words, "the Lord opened his eyes," must be taken to mark when that vision commenced. Then, if at all, he was thrown into a different state. But then the ass had *already* spoken. Besides, we do not suppose that the ass thought or reasoned, though there is perhaps nothing beyond the sense or comprehension of an ass in the words which were uttered; nor that the animal had any intention or volition in the utterance of these words. Words appropriate to the rebuking of the prophet were made to flow from the mouth of the ass, without any intention or consciousness on the part of the poor animal.

Balaam now confessed his error to the angel, and offered to return home. But the answer is: "Go with the men; only the words that I shall speak unto thee, that shalt thou speak." By this it is evident that this man had gone with an eager anxiety to win the rewards offered to him; and the purpose of this manifestation was not to prevent the journey, but to impress upon his mind that he was to speak only that which should be given him to declare by Jehovah, and to make him feel the peril of transgression.

Twentieth Week—Sunday.

GOD AND MAMMON.—NUMBERS XXIII. XXIV.

Who are these two upon the mountains that overlook the camp of Israel? That one who gazes with wrapt attention upon the scene is the prophet of Pethor; the other, who with eager solicitude points out all the circumstances of the scene, is the king of Moab, who has brought him from "the mountains of the east," that he may pronounce his curse upon the people whom the Lord has blessed. Oh, vain man! to think that the power which but yesterday was not sufficient to slay an ass, would to-day be able to ruin a great people. But see, the prophet seems affected. Perhaps one of his better moments is come—the moment in which the proud mind of the flesh, and the power of worldliness, relax their strong gripe upon the heart, and allow some poor natural feeling, prisoned in its dark chambers, to rush forth for one moment into the glad sunshine and the pleasant air. He sees the goodly array of the chosen people "like lign aloes which the Lord hath planted beside the waters;" he beholds in the midst of them the glorious tabernacle of the Lord; and he views the magnificent pillar of cloud spread over them as a shield for their defence against his maledictions. He sees more—again his eyes are opened, and his view extends into the great future, in which he beholds their victories over the enemies of the Most High, and is even allowed a glimpse of the remote "Star of Jacob," nor is perhaps left wholly ignorant of its deep significance. He could not be wholly unmoved. Struck with a deep conviction of the peculiar privileges and mercies of this people, and contrasting it with the dim consciousness of his own condition, he cries out—"How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob! and thy tabernacles, O Israel! Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!"

This is not a strange thing. This is not beyond the ordinary experience of the soul's life. How often is it seen that transgressors are checked for a moment by the voice of conscience; and on comparing their condition with that of the Lord's servants, are compelled to echo the words of the worldly-minded prophet. Perhaps the offender never lived who has not at times sighed for a share in the mercies and blessings, in life and in death, of the righteous, and in the gush of temporary feeling has been ready to cry out—"Bless me, even me also, O my Father." Gen. xxvii. 38.

But such temporary aspirations soon pass away, and leave no trace behind. Balaam could wish at this time to have his dying portion with the righteous; yet that wish had no abiding influence upon his conduct. The present—the gains and honors of the world, were still the subjects of his thoughts, and to win them the great object of his solicitude. Therefore his "end" was far from that. In the tents of Midian, where he lingered, or to which he returned to claim the rewards of unrighteousness, his sun went down in blood, leaving a name that has become a by-word in the world.

It is a fearful thought that a man may have "his eyes open" so wide as Balaam's were, and see as distinctly as he "the vision of the Almighty," and yet perish in practical unbelief; for that belief avails only for condemnation, which is not operative upon the heart, and allows a man still to have his portion with the world. Yet it is possible that Balaam, with his high doctrinal knowledge, and his clear vision of God, thought himself safe. We see such things daily. There are thousands now who cherish the ruinous delusion, that they may walk after their own devices, live to themselves only, and dishonor the Lord that bought them, and yet have their portion with them who have devoted themselves in holy faith to the service of religion, who have denied themselves, and have lived to the glory of their Redeemer. This fatal delusion may continue to deepen and enlarge around such men; it may even withstand the influence of the truth which a dying hour usually produces;

and he may depart, whispering Peace, peace, to his soul—when there is no peace. But darkness flies not before the rising sun so speedily and so surely, as error and self-deceit will be scattered before the glory of that light which will issue from the effulgence of the throne set up in the day of judgment. Of such our Lord himself says—“Many shall say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”

It is a significant indication of Balaam's state that his sacrifices to the Lord were offered upon the high places of Baal. While conscious of a divided spirit—with mammon, the spirit of the world, reigning, though not undisturbedly in his heart—it must have seemed a small matter that Baal's high places were appropriated for the nonce to the worship of Jehovah; but to him were applicable the words which a truer and sterner prophet addressed to men of like temper: “How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, then follow him—but if Baal, then follow him.”* And still more the words of our Lord, “No man can serve two masters. . . . Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”† Not but a man may in the literal sense serve two masters; but although he serve two, it is to one only that his heart can be devoted. To which master Balaam was devoted we need not tell. “He was,” as an old writer‡ remarks, “one of those unstable men whom the apostle calls ‘double-minded,’§ an ambidexter in religion, like Redwald king of the East-Saxons (the first that was baptized), who (as Camden relates) had in the same church one altar for the Christian religion, and another for sacrificing to devils; and a loaf of the same leaven was our resolute Rufus, that painted God on one side of his shield, and the devil on the other, with this desperate

* 1 Kings xviii. 21.

† Matthew vi. 24.

‡ Christopher Ness, *History and Mystery*, vol. i. Appendix, p. 88.

§ James i. 6-8.

inscription, *In utramque paratus*—‘I am ready for either—catch that catch can.’^{*} Or this was such a sinful mixture as was that worship of those mongrels* who ‘feared God, and feared him not;’ that is, *rightly*, for they feared him only for his lions that he sent to slay them, not truly, nor totally, for God will not part stakes with the devil at any hand.”

One cannot help thinking with delight of the quiet security in which Israel rested in their tents, while all these machinations were going on against them. So shall it be with all who truly love and serve God. No weapon that is raised against them shall prosper. Their minds may rest in perfect peace—being stayed upon him. They did not even suspect the mischief which Balaam and Balak were plotting against them, but which the Almighty threw back upon the inventors. The victory was gained for them before they knew of their danger, and their salvation was wholly of the Lord. “Who is he that shall harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good.”† “The angel of the Lord encampeth around them that fear him, and delivereth them.”‡ The enemy cannot do them violence—the sons of wickedness cannot approach or hurt them. “Happy is that people that is in such a case; yea happy is that people whose God is the Lord.”§

Compelled, notwithstanding the urgency of the king, to suppress the curse that filled his mouth—compelled by the strong power upon him even to bless where he desired to curse—Balaam was constrained to quit Moab under the strong displeasure of the king at his obstinacy, and without the honors and rewards for which he had perilled his soul. His advice, however, led to a war between the Israelites and Midianites, among whom he withdrew—and in that war he perished.||

* 2 Kings xvii. 28–34.

† Psalm xxxiv. 7.

‡ Numbers xxxi. 8.

† 1 Peter iii. 13.

§ Psalm cxliv. 15.

TWENTIETH WEEK—MONDAY.

THE MIDIANITES.—NUMBERS XXV. XXXI.

AMONG the people who had heard and discussed the doings of the Israelites since their migration from Egypt—it must have been notorious that there had been signal punishments inflicted upon them for breaches of fealty to their king. Pondering this in his mind, the infernal sagacity of Balaam led him to conclude that if they could be seduced from their allegiance to their Divine king, the protection which rendered them invincible would be withdrawn—and they easily be subdued by their enemies. This discovery he made known to the king of Moab before his departure; and it illustrates the character of the man that he could form this device, and counsel the king to act upon it—just after his mouth had poured forth—even by constraint—eloquent blessings upon the people whose ruin he now devises. And all this was purely gratuitous; for his business with Moab was ended. He could not curse Israel—and had incurred the anger, rather than the honors, of the king of Moab. He seems to have retired among the neighboring people of Midian, close allies with Moab, until he should behold the results of the course he had suggested, and in which he seems to have induced the Midianites also to co-operate. These people—however dissatisfied with the result of their sending for him—were still too deeply impressed with the notion of his superhuman sagacity, not to pay the most heedful attention to his advice. This was, in effect, that the women should be rendered instrumental in seducing the Israelites to take part in the obscene rites of Baal-Peor. It is not to be supposed that they recognized distinctly the grounds on which this course would expose the Hebrew host to the displeasure of their God. They thought that Jehovah was no doubt a true God, as the God of the Hebrews—and they acknowledged that, as his acts had shown, he was a mighty God. But

Baal-Peor they held to be no less true as their own god—and whatever wrath Jehovah might manifest against his people would not, to their understanding, be because he claimed exclusive and universal worship—but because of his jealousy that his own people should incline to render the worship to a rival god which he alone had a right to claim from them.

The policy followed was but too successful. As the Hebrews lay encamped in the plains of Moab, unsuspecting of the bad feeling of the Moabites and Midianites towards them, an intercourse gradually, and seemingly in due course, sprang up between the kindred nations. The daughters of Moab and Midian came to visit the women of Israel, and thus fell under the notice of the men. The men of Israel, also, new to a peopled country, and strange to a friendly intercourse with strangers, amused themselves and gratified their curiosity, by visiting the town and villages in the vicinity. This intercourse was perilous for them. Dazzled and bewildered by magnificent and seductive appliances of vice, to which, in their simple wandering life *they* had been all unused, although their fathers had seen the like things in Egypt, they were prevailed upon by the idolaters of Moab and Midian to take part in the riotous and lustful orgies of their gods. It does not appear to us that they meant to abjure their faith in Jehovah, or so much as adopted a belief in Baal-Peor along with it. What they did was to participate in the licentious acts by which his votaries professed to honor him. "They joined themselves to Baal-Peor"—rather "bound themselves with his badge;" for it was the custom in ancient times, as it is now, in all Pagan countries, for every idol to have some specific badge, or ensign, by which his votaries were known. As before they had by an insubordination which threatened the permanency of the state, so now, by practices which outraged the great principle and object of its institution, they created a necessity for a severe and exemplary visitation of the Divine displeasure. No miracle for this purpose was, however, needed. The corruption

was not general, and the faithful were sufficient to enforce the decisions of the Sovereign Judge against the offenders. The men of rank and authority—"the heads of the people"—who had lent the sanction of their example to this abomination, were ordered to be put to death. The direction "hang them up against the sun," does not mean that they were put to death by hanging, but that after they had been slain by the sword or by stoning, their bodies should be exposed to public view until sun-down. This being done, Moses gave the word that the different judges dispersed among the tribes, should execute the Lord's judgment upon all the offenders within their jurisdiction. It is probable they were easily known by their badges. This was done, and there fell on that day, under the sword of justice, no fewer than twenty-four thousand men.

While these things were doing, and while the people were mourning before the tabernacle, an act of high-handed daring, in one of the chiefs of Simeon, in conducting publicly to his tent one of the "fair idolatresses," by whom all this mischief had been caused, so kindled the zealous wrath and indignation of Phinehas, the son of the high-priest, that he followed them, and transfixing both the man and woman with a javelin, at one stroke. For this he was commended. He but executed the judgment which had been passed on such offenders, and in this case, at such a time, and under such circumstances, the crime was trebly flagrant. He needs no excuse, for he had his commission; but if he did need excuse, God, as Bishop Hall well remarks, sooner "pardoneth the errors of our fervency, than the indifferences of our lukewarmness."

At a later period, Moses was ordered to wage a war against the Midianites, whose devices had caused this danger and loss to Israel. He accordingly detached a force of twelve thousand men—one thousand from each tribe—who attacked some of the cities of this people, put to death a portion of its male population, and returned with numerous prisoners (women and children) and a large booty in beeves, asses, and sheep.

Among the causes which justify war, none is more unanimously asserted by public writers than an attempt on the part of one community against the political institutions, and so against the integrity and internal peace, of another. The Hebrews had therefore an undoubted right, even apart from the divine command, to attack the people of Midian, who had treacherously endeavored to withdraw them from their allegiance, and thus to remove the principles of all their union, prosperity, and peace; but to prepare them to become an easy conquest for their own arms.

Now, if it be right to wage war at all, it is not only right to wage it in such a manner as shall accomplish its object, but it would be wrong to wage it in any other manner. War is, of its nature, the infliction of suffering in order to an ulterior good; and the infliction of any degree of suffering is unjustifiable, unless so far as it tends to this result. If, therefore, in the prosecution of a war, the measures adopted are of such lenity, as to be insufficient to produce the intended end of protection for the present and security for the future, the mitigated evil becomes then uncompensated by any ulterior good. It is then a causeless and unjustifiable evil; it is not mercy, but cruelty and crime. This principle is clear, and is theoretically acknowledged; yet, when any application of it, however wise and just, tends to severities which we are not accustomed to regard as belonging to the necessities of the case, our feelings are naturally shocked. Yet these principles still operate, and are acknowledged in all our warfare, although, with the progress of civilization, it has come to be understood in civilized communities, that inflictions formerly resorted to shall be forborne. But in their conflicts with barbarous nations, who have no such understanding, they are accustomed to adopt harsher measures; and this, for the simple and sound reason, that the object would not otherwise be gained, and that if they were to allow a war to be to their adversaries a less evil than these adversaries were in the habit of expecting it to prove, such a self-prostrating lenity would tend to a speedy reverse of the contest—for among such na-

tions lenity is ascribed to weakness, and not to the pride of conscious strength. Severity, in short, is beneficent, when it is suited to guard against the necessity of its own repetition ; and how much or how little is adequate to that end, is a question to be determined by reference to some existing state of society. The Israelites conducted their warfares on the principles generally recognized in their time ; and to have done so on any other or milder principle, against such enemies as they had to contend with, would have been ruinous and suicidal. So only could it be effectual—and war not intended to be effectual should not be waged at all. It is confidently hoped and believed, that the time is coming, is near at hand, when war, as now conducted by ourselves—when any war—will be looked back upon with the same feelings of disgust and horror, as those with which we now regard the warfares of the nations beyond the Mediterranean three and thirty centuries ago.

These remarks are appropriate to the war usages which are about to come under our notice ; and they are especially appropriate to the present occasion, as the circumstances of this war with the Midianites have been exposed to much animadversion. It is certain that the Israelites gave no quarter to the men. It was not the custom of the age to do so, except perhaps among the Egyptians, and other civilized nations, which had much use for the labor of slaves. Nevertheless, the words, that “they slew all the males,” does not mean that they exterminated all the men of the nation, as some have thought, but only that they slew all who withstood them—for the nation itself subsisted in considerable strength—and was able in a few generations to bring the Israelites themselves under subjection.

A more difficult point is the command of Moses that the adult females and the male children among the prisoners should be put to death. Pained as we are by the recital of such horrors, and rejoicing that such usages have passed away from the practices of war, a close examination would enable us to see that the principles which have been laid

down supply an adequate excuse for a course which Moses himself must have regarded as distressing. His course was designed to act *in terrorem*, with a view to future security. It is clear that he had no satisfaction in the task. On the contrary, he appears to have been strongly excited when he beheld the array of prisoners, and to have uttered a rebuke, which shows that he would far rather that whatever severity needed to be exercised, should have been finished in the furious haste of onset, than that it should be left, as it was, for his execution in cold blood. As it was, however, the prisoners were upon his hands, and he had to dispose of them as the recent hazards, and the present condition of the state demanded—in an age when the necessities of the world's government involved the use of a much harsher instrumentality than is now requisite. Taking these considerations with us, it may be asked, What was to be done with these prisoners? Should they be sent home unharmed, or should they be welcomed, on an equal footing, to the hospitality of Israel? Then, if the views already stated are sound, the war ought not to have been undertaken. This follows, even without insisting upon the by no means unessential facts, that in the latter case, the youthful sons of the Midianitish warriors would soon have grown up to be a sword in the bosom of the still feeble state, and possibly to compel the hazards and hardships of another conflict. Then, with respect to the adult females, it is to be considered, that it was their wicked instrumentality which had led Israel to sin, and had given occasion to the recent war; and, on the other hand, the danger from them if allowed to try again their seductive arts upon the Israelites, had just been proved to be such as the infant state could by no means tolerate.

Standing, therefore, in the time and country that Moses did, and amid the circumstances by which he was surrounded, it will be a bold thing for any one to say, that as a man entrusted with the welfare of a nation, he acted wrongly. That he acted only from a strong sense of duty, every one who has studied his character must know—and who among us, in

this altered time, is better able than he was, to judge of what his duty exacted? But if in this case he did err, in judging that the stern obligations of political duty allowed him to show no pity upon more than one class of his prisoners, let him alone bear the blame of the deed. He appears to have acted upon his own judgment, and does not, as usual, adduce the command of the Lord for the course which was taken.

TWENTIETH WEEK—TUESDAY.

DEATH AND CHARACTER OF MOSES.—DEUT. XXXIV.

THE day approached when Moses must die. The people for whom he had so long cared, and whom he had so anxiously led, were now ready to enter the promised land; but he was forbidden to go in with them. His work was done; his great task was accomplished; and it only remained for him to render up his life.

Yet it was fit that before this venerable servant of God laid down his charge, he should see that part of it which could be transmitted, deposited in proper hands, that he might die in the comfortable assurance, that the great work he had undertaken might be vigorously prosecuted after his decease. Ever since the fatal day of Meribah, the prophet knew that he was doomed to die, without setting the sole of his foot upon the land which was to form the heritage of his people. But now he receives a distinct intimation, as his brother had before, that the appointed time was come, and like him, he is directed to ascend the neighboring mountain, there to render up his life. Observe well how he receives this intimation. What is the foremost thought in his mind? Nothing that concerns himself—no regret of his own; all his thought is for the welfare of the people:—"Let Jehovah, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, who may go out before them, and who may go in before them, and who may

lead them out, and who may bring them in ; that the congregation of the Lord be not as sheep which have no shepherd.' Here is the same loftiness of spirit, rising above every thought of self—the same zeal for the honor of God—the same devoted concern for the welfare of the people, which had hitherto marked his whole career. “ We may wade through folios of history and biography, narrating the mighty deeds of warriors, statesmen, and professed patriots, before we find another case equal to it in interest.”*

The suit of Moses was heard ; and Joshua, who had already had opportunities of distinguishing himself by his faithfulness and his courage, was directed to be solemnly inaugurated at the tabernacle as the future leader of the Hebrew host. Nothing then remained for Moses to do, but to pour out his heart before the people in lofty odes and eloquent blessings. Then he retired to the appointed mountain, that he might, before his death, survey the goodly land in which the people were to establish that noble commonwealth which he had so laboriously organized.

This was the only privilege allowed him, when, in the most touching language, he had, at the time his sentence was first pronounced, deplored this exclusion from the consummation of his hopes: “ I pray thee let me go over and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon.”—Deut. iii. 25. Who can tell the eagerness of the glance which he now threw westward, and southward, and northward, over the magnificent country that opened to his view. Following with his eye the course of the Jordan upon his right hand, he beheld the hills of Gilead, and the rich fields of northern Canaan shut in, upon the remote distance, by the dim and shadowy Lebanon. Upon his left, below where the Jordan is lost in the Dead Sea, the vast and varied territory, afterwards Judah, detained his view, until it was lost in the haze of the southward deserts. At his feet, upon the other side of the Jordan, he beheld Jericho amid its palm trees ; and, traversing the hills and plains of Benjamin and Ephraim.

* *Smith's Sacred Annals*, ii. 104.

his undimmed eye* might, perhaps, discover the utmost limit formed by the clouds which rise from the waters of the Mediterranean Sea. Upon this scene his eye closed, and in the recesses of the mountain, out of the sight of the host, in a hollow of the hilly region, where he died, his corpse was deposited. Had the spot been known, it would, without question, have become first the goal of pious pilgrimages, and then, perhaps, by the apotheosis of one so venerated, a scene of idolatrous worship. It is in harmony with the self-renouncing spirit which his whole life displayed, that means were taken to prevent the place of his last rest from being visited by the coming generations, which would have such good cause to revere and bless his name.

Here we leave him. But we quit with reluctance the man whose career and character, as connected with, and developed in, a large and important part of Scripture, have engaged so much of our attention. The various incidents which have passed under our notice, and the principles of action we have had occasion to examine, leave us but little need to expatiate upon the character of one whom all must regard as the greatest of woman born—with the exception of ONE only, and that One more than man. As the mind tries, however, to rest, as it were unconsciously, upon the prominent points of the character which his career evinces, and which we discover in most other men, we find ourselves unexpectedly baffled. All the great men of sacred as well as of profane history, possessed some prominent virtue or quality, which stood out in bolder relief than their other perfections. We think of the faith of Abraham, of the conscientiousness of Joseph, of the contrition of David, of the generosity of Jonathan, of the zeal of Elijah—but what do we regard as the dominant quality of Moses? It is not to be found. The mind is perplexed in the attempt to fix on any. It is not firmness, it is not perseverance, it is not disinterestedness, it is not patriotism, it is not confidence in God, it is not meekness, it is not humility, it is not forgetfulness of self. It is not any one of these. It is

* "His eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated."

ALL of them. His virtues, his graces, were all equal to each other ; and it was their beautifully harmonious operation and development which constituted his noble and all but perfect character. This was the greatness of Moses—this was the glory of his character. It is a kind of character rare in any man—and in no man, historically known, has it been so completely manifested. The exigencies of even those great affairs which engaged his thought, did not, and could not, call forth on any *one* occasion, *all* the high qualities with which he was gifted. It is rarely possible to see more than one high endowment in action at the same time. But we find Moses equal to every occasion—he is never lacking in the virtue which the occasion requires him to exercise ; and by this we know that he possessed them all. When we reflect that Moses possessed all the learning of his age, and that he wanted none of the talents which constitute human greatness—while we know that such endowments are not invariably accompanied by high character and noble sentiments—we honor his humility more than his glory—and above all, venerate that Divine Wisdom which raised up this extraordinary man, and called him forth at the moment when the world had need of him.

TWENTIETH WEEK—WEDNESDAY.

ESPIALS.—JOSHUA II.

It must have been very evident to Joshua that the large and strong city of Jericho, which lay embosomed among its palm trees on the other side of the river, must be the first object of his operations on entering the land of Canaan. Very much depended upon the result of this initiatory step. Jericho was, for that age, a strongly walled town ; and we have already had occasion to observe that the Israelites were considerably afraid of walled towns—though such as lay in plains, like this Jericho, were, doubtless, less formidable to them than

such as were stationed upon the hills. It was obviously desirable, therefore, that, before commencing operations, they should endeavor to receive such information as might tend to their encouragement in this great enterprise. We cannot, indeed, question that the Hebrew host had been put in good heart by its victories on the east of the Jordan; but still they probably entertained, from the traditions of the spies, most exaggerated notions of the power of the proper nations of Canaan, and they very probably supposed those whom they had overcome on the east of the river to be less mighty than the ancient nations on the west. It was evidently under the influence of such considerations, and less for his own information than to give confidence to the people, that Joshua concluded to despatch two men on the delicate and dangerous task of entering the city, and of bringing back a report of its condition. The expedition is full of curious and interesting indications of Eastern manners and usages—some of which well deserve to engage our attention.

Although it is likely that considerable vigilance was exercised in the presence of an enemy separated from the city by little more than the breadth of the river, yet the two spies succeeded in getting into the town. As there was no friend in the place to receive them, and as it might have been dangerous to go at once to a public khan or caravanserai, they went to lodge at the house of a woman named Rahab. They had not been there long, before an alarming intimation reached them that their presence, not only in the town, but in that very house, was known, and that their errand also was more than suspected; for messengers came from the king of Jericho requiring the woman to produce them. In modern Europe the officers of the government would have entered the house without wasting the precious time in parley. But formerly, as now, in the East, the privacy of a woman was respected, even to a degree that might be called superstitious; and no one will enter the house in which she lives, or the part of the house she occupies, until her consent has been obtained, if, indeed, such consent be ever demanded. In this case it was

not asked. Rahab was required not to let the messengers in, but to bring out the foreigners she harbored. The keen-witted woman, gathering, from what the messengers said, who her guests were, at once determined to save them ; for, from a consideration of the wonders the Lord had wrought for Israel, her confidence in their ultimate success was so strong, that she concluded to take advantage of this opportunity, by laying the men under such obligations as would ensure the safety of herself and friends. She withdrew from the window, whence probably she had heard the messengers for a moment ; and hurrying the spies to the flat roof of the house, hid them under the stalks of flax which had been laid out there to dry, probably informing them at the moment, that the king's messengers were at the door inquiring for them. In this we see, what has not hitherto appeared, that the houses were at this time, as they still are, flat or terraced ; and then, as now, formed an important part of the economy of oriental life. This is the place where, in the cool of the day, the fresh air is breathed, by a people who never walk out expressly for air or exercise. Here they sleep during the nights of summer, when the interior apartments are too hot and sultry for refreshing repose, and when the coolness then enjoyed, enables the constitution to bear up against the heat of the day. These were especially important matters in the almost tropical climate of the plain of Jericho. Here, also, such matters as required to be dried by the heat of the sun are laid out in a situation which effectually protects them from depredation or even notice, and at the same time exposes them in the completest manner to the action of the solar heat.

The woman then returned to the messengers, and assured them, that although the two men had come to her house, they had not tarried till then. In the dusk, just before the time for shutting the town gate, they had departed. Whither they went she knew not, but they had gone so recently, that she thought they would be overtaken if vigorously pursued. The men believed her ; for not only could there be no per-

ceivable reason to them why she should seek to shelter such deadly foes—but the falsehood was ingeniously framed to deceive, for nothing could be more natural than that the men should take their departure at the time she indicated, when the shades of evening would allow them to pass out without any close inspection. Some have thought from this instance that gates were shut only in time of war—or when danger was apprehended from a foe: but it appears to us that gates were then—as at present in the East—always shut in the evening and opened in the morning, it being necessary even in times of peace, to guard against the night incursions of plunderers and beasts of prey. Not only are the gates in the East habitually thus closed in the evening—generally, as in this case, when it becomes dusk—but so rigidly is the keeping them closed enforced, that the guards themselves usually cannot open them to admit any persons without a special order from the governor of the place, which is not often obtained unless by persons of some consideration. Hence it not seldom happens, even in winter, that persons arriving too late are obliged to spend all the night outside the walls—and the apprehension of being shut out of the place to which they are going, makes all travellers push on briskly towards the close of day.

But what is to be said of Rahab's being so ready with a lie—declaring that the men were gone, when they were really in the house? That sense of truthfulness which is the growth of Christian culture, is shocked at an untruth so circumstantial—and we cannot allow the motive as an excuse, seeing that it is forbidden to do evil that good may come. It has been urged that by her act she had taken part with the Israelites, and that what would have been done by them in regard to their enemies might be done by her—it being lawful to deceive an enemy in war, as was often done by good men among the Israelites. Without discussing this closely, and simply observing, that the mere fact that the state of war renders “lawful” so many practices which the truth of Christian principle condemns, is one of the strongest argu-

ments against war itself—we pass on to observe that among the ancient Heathen, as among those which still remain in the world, lying was scarcely regarded as a venial error, much less as a crime. There was no *principle* of truthfulness; and although men generally spoke truth where there was no benefit to gain or evil to avert by telling an untruth, as without this the common intercourse of social life could not be carried on—yet the slightest inducement was sufficient to drive them to the resort of a lie. An oath was obligatory—and for the most part a man might be believed as to what he affirmed on oath—but a mere word was but lightly regarded. It is observed by missionaries among the heathen, that so weak is the feeling of obligation as to the observance of strict veracity, that even apparently sincere converts have the greatest difficulty in freeing themselves from the habit of equivocation, and need continual watching and admonition in that respect. It is among the most important of the many *social* advantages which Christianity has conferred upon mankind, that to its teaching we owe the feeling—prevalent among all Christian nations—that a falsehood is a disgrace and a sin; and that a man is bound no less, religiously and morally, by his word than by his oath.

All this was unknown, however, to poor Rahab; who, having been brought up among a people so unprincipled as the Canaanites, had probably never heard that there was the least harm in lying—much less when an apparently good end was to be answered by it. These considerations may be fairly urged in extenuation of Rahab's falsehood. God himself claims from us according to what we have, and not according to what we have not. In us, who have opportunities of better knowledge, untruthfulness must be judged by a different standard here and hereafter.

When all was safe, Rahab went to the men, and relieved them from the flax. She told them that the people of the land were stricken with terror at the presence and known designs of the Hebrew host—having fully heard of all the marvellous deeds which had been wrought in their behalf. She

was perfectly assured that by the might of their God they must prevail—and in that confidence she exacted a pledge of safety for herself and for hers in consideration of the aid she had afforded. This was readily given by the men. She was to tie a scarlet cord which they gave her to a particular window of her house. This was to enable them to recognize the house; and they pledged themselves for the safety of all who might be in that house when the city should be taken. We have little doubt that the sign was chosen by the spies with some reference to their own passover solemnity, when the door-posts were sprinkled with blood, to denote that the destroying angel had passed by the doors so marked when the first-born of Egypt were slain.

Meanwhile the gates had been shut after the pursuers had gone, and they were probably guarded with unusual care to prevent the escape of the spies should they still be in the city. But the house of Rahab being situated upon the town wall, at a distance from the gate, she was enabled to let them down by a cord from one of the windows, in the very same manner as that in which Saul made his escape from Damascus. 2 Cor. xi. 33. They made their way to the wild mountains which border the plain of Jericho, as Rahab had advised; and when the pursuit after them had cooled, they returned to the camp. They felt they had discharged their mission; for the intelligence they brought as to the alarms of the Canaanites was in the highest degree encouraging to the people.

TWENTIETH WEEK—THURSDAY.

THE PASSAGE.—JOSHUA III.

DURING great part of the year the waters of the Jordan are so low that the river is fordable in many places. But in spring and early summer, or “in all the time of harvest,” the river is in flood. It then “overflows all its banks,” and is a

strong and rapid stream. It had probably been supposed by the Israelites, and expected by their enemies, that the host would ford the river when the stream was low. The operation might, we believe, have been practicable, though certainly not very convenient to a large and encumbered host; and might have held out to the Canaanites the hope of meeting them at disadvantage on the other side. Nevertheless we see that the taking a course which necessitated the passage of the Jordan, the same consequences were not involved as when they took a step which left them no other way of progress or escape but the passage by miracle through the depths of the Red Sea. The step was not at all inexplicable or even strange in this instance. They might either wait till the river fell, or as the whole country along the eastern bank of the stream was by this time in their possession, they might march northward, and either cross the lessened stream at the spot, where, being in the common and ancient caravan track, there was probably a bridge as now; or by a still further progress pass towards the source, where the river, there a brook, offers no obstacle even at the time of flood. All the indications must have seemed to the Canaanites in favor of the former alternative, for the Israelites evinced no sign of moving northward, and besides it would not have been in reason that they should undertake a long and toilsome march to attain an object which might in a few weeks be realized where they remained. If we ourselves inquire the reason why the course of proceeding northward to a point of the river always practicable was not taken—the answer is, that it was intended in the Divine wisdom that their entrance into the promised land should be effected in such a manner as essentially to promote the object in view. It was also designed that the southern part of the country should be first subdued. The same reasons, beyond these, which prevented them from being allowed to enter the land by the southern frontier, were still more cogent against their entrance on the north.

The Canaanites thus, no doubt, felt secure by the intervention of the full stream of the Jordan, from any immediate

incursion of the Israelites. There was thus a solemn pause. The doomed nations on the one side—and the commissioned exterminators on the other—could look upon each other separated, impassably for the present, by no greater distance than that of a wide street.

But one morning a strange movement was observed in the Hebrew camp. The tents are struck—the tabernacle taken down and packed up for removal—the standards advance—and the tribes dispose themselves in their usual marching order. This must have been altogether unintelligible to the people on the other side. Do they after all mean to take the northern route? May they not, after all, have been ordered to go round the Dead Sea, and enter the land on the south? Perhaps their heart fails them—perhaps they have heard of some mighty host coming down from the north, and they are retiring once more into the desert, which has been so long their home? Who knows but that they may have got some news from Egypt, which encourages them to think that they have the chance of a better home in that country than Canaan offers? Any cause, any possibility might have been imagined by those who witnessed the movement, except the truth. But the truth soon appeared. “The ark of the covenant of the Lord of the whole earth,” borne by the priests, is seen moving down in solemn state towards the river, followed at becoming distance by the vanguard of the Hebrew host. What will they do? Is it some great lustration of the host, some solemn baptism, about to be performed upon the river’s brink? No. The priests, bearing their holy burden, march on, without perceptible shrinking of the flesh, without start or pause—into the river. But, lo! no sooner did the first foot touch the stream, than the waters parted—they stopped in full career—and a way was opened for the Lord’s people to pass through. The ark went on, and rested in the mid-channel, and there stood between the heaped-up waters and the people, who, strong in faith, passed on below without halt or fear.

From the description, it would seem that the waters below

where the priests' feet touched the stream, ran off to the Dead Sea, while those above stood still—waited—until the Israelites passed over. When all were safe on the other side, the priests also, with the ark, went up out of the channel, and the moment that they came out from it, the imprisoned waters, like a strong steed relieved from the restraint of a master-hand, bounded forward in their course, and rushed in a mighty torrent to the sea.

This seems to us even a more signal miracle than the passage of the Red Sea; and it appears as if expressly framed not only to effect its own objects, but to relieve the other from all naturalistic interpretations. In the course of the Red Sea passage, we hear travellers and scholars talk learnedly about east winds, and tides, and shallows, so that, whether intendedly or not, the fact, as a demonstration of Divine power, is explained away or attenuated. But nothing of this is possible in the case of the passage of the Jordan. The fact must be taken as it stands. It was a miracle or it was nothing. There has not been, and there cannot be, any explanation of it on natural grounds. And if, therefore, men are obliged to admit this—unless they would deny the authority of the narrative altogether—it becomes scarcely worth their while to tamper with the Red Sea miracle.

But what was the use of this miracle? As it seems that the Hebrews could have entered the land without crossing the Jordan at all; and as a little earlier, a little later, or someway higher up, they could even have crossed the Jordan without a miracle—what need was there for this gratuitous display of that Divine power, which is said to be never vainly or idly exerted? We have not far to seek for an answer. In the first verse of the fifth chapter, the reason for the miracle is shown in the result which is produced. "And it came to pass, when all the kings of the Amorites, which were on the side of Jordan westward; and all the kings of the Canaanites which were by the sea, heard that the Lord had dried up the waters of Jordan from before the children of Israel, until they were passed over, that their heart melted:

neither was there spirit in them any more, because of the children of Israel." To produce this impression was, beyond question, the primary object of the miracle. We can ourselves, in some measure, judge of the importance of this impression being made upon the minds of the people with whom the Israelites were about to commence a terrible warfare; but any military man will be able to tell us, with great intensity of conviction, that for the purposes of the war, such an impression upon the mind of any enemy, however produced, is equal in value to a succession of victories; for it is seldom until an enemy has been repeatedly beaten, that he can be brought into that state of enfeebling discouragement which this verse describes.

TWENTIETH WEEK—FRIDAY.

THE HEBREW RIGHT TO CANAAN—WHAT IT WAS NOT.

SOME of our readers have been tired by the questions—What right had the Israelites to Canaan, a country already occupied? What right to disturb the inhabitants in the peaceable possession of it? What right to wage a war of extermination against nations who had never given them any offence? These questions are in certain points of view difficult. We have, however, in these daily papers, rather preferred than evaded difficult questions, in the wish to put the reader in possession of the best or most authentic mode of regarding them; and therefore we turn to the questions now asked, notwithstanding the difficulties which they appear to present. It will probably be found, that these difficulties lie not so much in the questions themselves, as in the considerations with which they have become invested.

Without attempting to state all the explanations which have been offered—for the purpose, as it seems to us, of turning the edge of the real difficulties—we can only notice

the two or three which have acquired most prevalency, and in one or the other of which, most inquirers have been advised to rest.

It is urged by many, that in point of fact, the Israelites were *not* commanded to exterminate the Canaanites, without exception. They were, on the contrary, to offer terms of peace to all the Canaanitish cities, and only in the event of the rejection of this offer, were the inhabitants to be destroyed. Whatever cities accepted the proposals, became the vassals of Israel; a lot which, according to the mild laws of servitude among that people, was by no means intolerable. In proof of the correctness of this opinion, we are referred to Deut. xx. 10–14.* It is very singular, that so pleasant a theory should have been built upon this passage; for we have only to read on to find its incorrectness, and to see that this was the law for foreign warfare; that is, with countries not within the limits of Canaan, and therefore not included among the doomed nations: “Thus shalt thou do unto all the cities which are *very far off from thee*, which are not of the cities of these nations;” that is, of the very nations, the treatment of whom by the Israelites is alone under question. And if this does not suffice, let us read on: “But of the cities of these people, which the Lord thy God hath given thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth; but thou shalt utterly destroy them, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee.”† One would think that

* “When thou comest nigh unto a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it. 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. And if it will make no peace with thee, but will make war against thee, then thou shalt besiege it: And when the Lord thy God hath delivered it into thine hands, thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword: 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.”

† Deuteronomy xx. 15–17.

nothing could be plainer than this. But if we want further evidence, there is the case of the Gibeonites, who, under the pretence of coming from a far country, stole a peace from the Hebrews, knowing well that no peace would have been granted had they been known for Canaanites. And that it was no erroneous impression of theirs, is shown by the demeanor of the Israelites when the truth became known to them. Joshua ix. 24.

There are other views which, while admitting the plain character of the war which the Scripture states, deem it to require more justification than the word of God directly supplies. According to one of these views, Palestine was originally, and from time immemorial, a land of Hebrew shepherds; and the Israelites, who had never surrendered their rights, required it again of the Canaanites as unlawful possessors. Under this view, this people were not the original occupants, but coming up from the countries of the Red Sea, gradually, in the course of their traffic, spread into Canaan, establishing commercial towns and factories, and by degrees spreading over the country, superseding the former inhabitants. Who were they? This is not clearly stated. But we apprehend that the country is supposed to have been peopled by Eber or Heber, from beyond the Euphrates, from whom all the Hebrews, including the Israelites, derived their name,* and who held it in pastoral occupation; and whose heir or representative Abraham is regarded as having been, although his migration was of later date, and not until the Canaanites had gained ground in the land. In this view, it is not without significance that it seems to be made a matter of complaint in Genesis xii. 6, that "The Canaanites were then in the land"—seemingly as if their encroachments had rendered the land too narrow for the flocks and herds of the patriarchs. Bearing in mind that, among other incidental corroborations, the land of Canaan is called, in Genesis xl. 15, "The land of the Hebrews." This view is entitled to much consideration. To still more atten-

* See Vol. i.—Thirteenth Week, Thursday.

tion is that modification of it entitled which does not deny that the Canaanites originally settled in this country; but urges that they had not taken possession of the whole. The pasture lands lay open for those who wished to appropriate them. This was done by the ancestors of the Israelites. During their sojourn in Egypt, the Canaanites unlawfully occupied them. After leaving Egypt, the Israelites again asserted their claims, and since the Canaanites would not acknowledge them, the Israelites took possession of part of the country by virtue of their ancient occupancy of it, and of the other part by right of conquest. Now, this matter of territorial and pastoral right in the East, is one of which we may claim to know something—and we think that some have gone too far in denying that the Hebrews could acquire any rights of the kind here demanded for them. A pastoral tribe has a right to appropriate to its own real and exclusive use lands not occupied by any other pastoral tribe which has digged wells therein; nor by any settled people by whom it has, within any recent period, been subject to cultivation. The feeling is, that no one has a right to lands which he cannot use. We have no doubt, therefore, that the Israelites established a right to the possession of certain unoccupied lands in Canaan, in which they not only digged wells, but grew corn and planted trees, as at Beersheba. Those who oppose this view, by urging that the Hebrews *purchased* sepulchres and lands of the Canaanites for money, and therefore had no right but to lands thus acquired and secured, do greatly err. The lands thus bought were such as other persons before them had appropriated, and to which, therefore, they could only by purchase acquire a legal and permanent right. But again, the eastern territorial law does not recognize the fitness of any persons to maintain a right to the lands acquired in the way indicated, longer than they are able to keep them in occupancy. Since the land is God's gift to man and beast, they would count it sinful to exclude the land from use, and suffer it to be idle and unappropriated, out of regard to the abstract and conventional rights of par-

ties who have been away one, two, or three centuries, merely because they were the first to use them. Whatever pastoral, or even agricultural, rights they had acquired, would long ago have been foreclosed by their absence. If they had themselves laid any stress upon such rights, we should have heard of it. But, indeed, it were absurd to think of three millions of people claiming the right to settle in the small pasture grounds which, some generations back, had sufficed for as many hundreds. Such a claim would simply have been a ridiculous and insulting pretence for conquest. But no such claim was urged by the Israelites. They took far higher ground.

TWENTIETH WEEK—SATURDAY.

THE HEBREW RIGHT TO CANAAN—WHAT IT WAS.

ALTHOUGH it is not to be denied that some of the considerations advanced yesterday, as urged by various parties to show the human claims of the Israelites to the Land of Canaan, would be of considerable weight in the absence of any any other grounds advanced in the Sacred Books, they lose all their importance in the presence of the repeated and clear declarations in Scripture of the point of view in which the whole matter was to be regarded. We may, or may not, like the view thus stated. That is not the question. Is any clear ground of claim stated or not? That is the real question. If any ground be stated, that, and no other, is the view which we are bound to adopt and to explain. To set aside the view presented to the Israelites themselves, and on which they acted, in order to seek others not once presented to *their* minds—not once alluded to in Scripture—may be very ingenious, very satisfactory to our own understandings, but is, in fact, tantamount to a denial, in so far as this matter is concerned, of the truth and authority of the record which is the only source of our information.

We, therefore, recur to the old and authentic belief in these matters, seeing that it rests entirely on the Scriptural declarations—and which is certainly none the worse for being the received opinion of the Church from the most ancient times—and not, as the others severally are, the speculations of a few learned individuals.

In the first place, be it observed, then, the possession of Canaan by the Israelites is constantly set forth as a free gift of the Divine favor, by which all ideas of human right are completely excluded. This is clearly stated in the original promise to Abraham, made immediately upon his entering the land, and before any human rights could have been acquired: “Unto thy seed will I give this land;”* and again, soon after, “Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art, northward and southward, and eastward and westward, for all the land that thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever.”† And that this was not limited to the land in actual occupation of his flocks and herds, and to which alone Abraham could acquire any kind of human right, is shown by what immediately follows: “Arise, walk through the land, in the length of it, and in the breadth of it, for I will give it unto thee.”‡ These passages appear so conclusive in showing that the land was so entirely the free and absolute gift from God to his people, of that to which they had no sort of human claim, that it seems needless to cite the numerous passages in the Pentateuch, by which that view is corroborated. In fact, no other view is presented. The uniform tenor not only of the Pentateuch, but of the whole Scripture, is in conformity with these original intimations.

But while, on the one hand, the donation of this land was an act of the Lord’s free favor to the Israelites, the deprivation of it was no less an act of his retributive justice—of such justice as it behoved the moral governor of the world to administer against a people laden with iniquity. Genesis xv.

* Genesis xii. 7.

† Genesis xiii. 14, 25.

‡ Genesis xiii. 17.

13-16, is a passage which proves this clearly.* Abraham is there informed that before his posterity would receive that goodly heritage, a long period of four hundred years must elapse, the great part of which would be spent by them under oppression, in a land which was not theirs. Eventually they should be brought forth with great substance; and in the "fourth generation they shall come hither again." Why so long deferred? Why not until the fourth generation? Hear the reason, "*For the iniquity of the Amorites† is not yet full.*"

These last words are important for more than one reason. First, they exclude all human right of the Hebrews to Palestine, for if such a right had existed, why, for its being enforced, should the filling up of the iniquity of the Amorites be required? Secondly, if the cause why Abraham's descendants were not now, but after a long interval, to obtain possession of the promised land, was, that the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full, it is thereby equally intimated that this filling up of their iniquity would justify, if not demand, the Divine judgment, which, under existing circumstances, would have been unjust,—exactly as God, before he destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah by his immediate decree, first of all permitted the abandoned depravity of the inhabitants most notoriously to manifest itself.

When the time was fully come, the Canaanites became a doomed people—doomed to expulsion or extermination by the Israelites, to whom was committed the sword of judgment, and who were the destined inheritors of the land of

* "And he said unto Abraham, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years: And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge; and afterward shall they come out with great substance. And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full."

† That is, of the Canaanites generally—one of the principal nations being put for the whole, to avoid a long enumeration.

which the Canaanites had, by that time, proved themselves unworthy. This solemn doom is expressed in the Hebrew by a peculiar word (*CHEREM*), which is always applied to such devotement to destruction in vindication of the Divine justice; and this is the term constantly applied to the Canaanites, as to a people who, by their enormities, had dishonored even the moral government of God, and were therefore to be constrained, by the judgment inflicted upon them, to glorify that government, and thereby to set forth the great truth, that there is a pure and holy Ruler of the nations.

Then, again, the Israelites, favored as they were for their fathers' sake, were warned that even they held the land by no other tenure than that which the Canaanites were to be destroyed for infringing. Over and over again were they warned that if they fell into the same dreadful transgressions, for which the Canaanites had been cast out, they would subject themselves to the same doom—be like them destroyed—like them cast out of the good land which they had defiled. We are not left altogether in the dark as to the nature of the abominations which pervaded the land, and which cried to God to show himself as abhorring iniquity, and to prove that the world was not left fatherless of his care. In one place the sacred text, after enumerating various cases of unchastity and impiety of the grossest kind, goes on to say, "Defile not yourselves in any of these things, for in all these things the nations are defiled which I cast out before you. And the land is defiled; therefore I do visit the iniquity of the land upon it, and the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants."* In another place the Israelites are solemnly warned against imitating the conduct of their predecessors, lest they incur the same penalties: "Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them. Thou shalt not do so unto the Lord thy God; for EVERY ABOMINATION TO THE LORD WHICH HE HATETH have they done unto their gods; for even their sons and their daughters have they burnt in the fire to

* Leviticus xviii. 24, 25.

their gods.”* What more emphatic testimony can be required than this?

This is the view of the case set forth in the Scripture, and the grounds on which it rests appear sufficient and satisfactory in themselves, although we are not prepared to affirm but that there may have been other reasons, not necessarily produced to the Israelites. But if those produced are sufficient, there is no need to seek for any more. It seems to us that the most serious objection to this view of the case, lies in the alleged danger that a nation should take upon itself to judge of another and act towards it as the Israelites did to the Canaanites. But there is no such danger. The Israelites did not act upon their own judgment, but upon the distinct commission which they received, and which was attested by the miracles which attended their career. The passage through the Red Sea and through the Jordan—the miraculous overthrow of the walls of the first city of Jericho, to which they laid siege—the hailstones at Gibeon, which, without touching the Israelites, slew more of their enemies than the sword—and the remarkable phenomenon in the heavens, likened to the standing still of the sun and the moon—were all so many proofs of their commission, and of the authority by which they acted. That authority and commission was attested by the belief of the very enemies against whom they warred, and who were very far from thinking that they had mistaken a fancy of their own for a Divine commission. They found it all too real.†

* Deut. xii. 30, 31.

† On the subject of this Day there is a large and able article by Hengstenberg, excellently translated in a volume of his *Dissertations on the Pentateuch*, by Mr. J. E. Ryland, of Northampton. This Dissertation has, to a considerable extent, formed the framework of our consideration of the matter.

Twenty-First Week—Sunday.

OLD CORN.—JOSHUA V.

It is a very remarkable circumstance, that during all the sojourn of the Israelites in the wilderness, two of the prominent institutions of their law were entirely neglected. These were the rite of circumcision and the celebration of the passover. The former had, it seems, been entirely dispensed with, perhaps in regard to their pilgrim state; and the latter had been observed twice only since its institution—once in Egypt, and once in Sinai. Now, however, that they have entered the promised land, and were no longer in the pilgrim state—the reasons which had prevented these observances, whatever these reasons were, no longer existed; and their first care, on establishing the camp at Gilgal, was to impress themselves with the sign of the covenant, by circumcision; then followed the passover—celebrated, no doubt, with peculiar solemnity, from its being a new rite to most of the existing generation, and from its following so immediately the rite of the covenant.

It will be remembered, that the time when the Jordan overflowed its banks was the time of harvest; and it was at this time that the river had been crossed. Indeed, the passover corresponded with the commencement of the barley harvest; and on “the morrow after the passover,” they were required (Lev. xxii. 10, 11), to wave a sheaf of the first-fruits before the Lord as an offering, after which they were allowed to gather in and use the rest. Now, in conformity with this, we are told, that “they did eat the old corn of the land on the morrow after the passover, unleavened cakes and parched corn on the self-same day.” It was necessary to eat unleavened bread during the passover—and in this case it was made of the old corn of the land—such, no doubt, as had been found stored up in the defenceless villages from which the inhabitants had fled when the Hebrew host appeared in the

plain. The parched corn was corn of the new harvest, burnt in the ear, which at the same time burns those parts that cannot be eaten, and parches the edible grain. This was like the "parched corn" which Boaz handed to Ruth at the meal eaten in the harvest-field. Corn thus parched is still much relished in Palestine, and is regarded as something of a delicacy peculiar to that season of the year; for it is new corn only that is parched. This must have been an interesting day to them; for probably more than two thirds of the people, that is, all not above forty years of age, had never eaten bread before in all their lives. It is true they had manna, and the manna was probably better than bread; but bread was a change, and therefore delightful to them.

The very morning after, the manna, which had not (except on the Sabbaths) ceased one day to fall for forty years, was no more found around the camp. This discontinuance of the supply by which the people had been so long sustained, no less marks the signal providence of God, than the original grant of it, and its long continuance. It came not one day before it was needed; and it was continued not one day longer than was really required by the wants of the people. This strikingly showed the Lord's care, and evinced the miraculous nature of the supply. Such indications as this of the Lord's presence and power, were little less than visible manifestations of Deity.

The life of the Christian believer does not lack similar experiences. In tracing his life back through its varied scenes, how plainly can he see that—however his heart may at times have failed him—his Lord has, under all circumstances, cared for him, even in the matters which belong to his daily bread. He can see that one resource has not failed him until another has been ready to open. Sometimes he has been supplied as by miracle; help was raised up for him, he knew not how, except that it was the Lord's doing, and it was marvellous in his eyes. But then, as soon as he had learned the great lesson of child-like dependence upon his Father's care, and had realized the assurance contained in the words, "I will

never leave thee nor forsake thee," the extraordinary sources ceased, and ordinary ones, sufficient for all his wants, were opened. Oh! what tranquillity of mind, what blessedness of rest, may be realized—what slavish fears, what harassing anxieties, may be avoided—if we will only let such experience have its perfect work, by inducing us to cast all our care upon Him who careth for us, leaving him to determine what we shall lose or what retain, in the firm conviction, that he will decide well for us—better for us than we, who often know not what we ask, and who can never determine with certainty what may be eventually good for us, could decide for ourselves.

Again, "The manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither did the children of Israel eat manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year." Thus extraordinary resources fail, when the common course of God's providence becomes equal to the necessities of his Church. To have continued both together—to have had the old store of natural food and the manna—would have been a needless profusion of the Divine bounty, a waste of goodness and power such as we do not discover in the ordinary operations of the Lord's providence. Had the manna been, in the first instance, bestowed in the midst of plenty, it had been viewed as no very striking interposition of Providence, nor have been very thankfully received: so now, had it been continued amid the fulness of Canaan, it had grown into disesteem, and have been regarded rather as an ordinary production of nature than as a special display of the riches of the Divine goodness. If the people had wantonly disparaged the manna, even in the time of their necessity, when they had no other food—if even then what was lightly obtained was lightly prized—how much more would they have contemned it in a land flowing with milk and honey? God will not be too prodigal of his favors, in so lavishly expending them as to allow them to be scorned as superfluous things. The manna ceased, never to be renewed again. It was no longer needed. To have continued

the supply, or even to have afforded it under the exigencies of occasional scarcities, would have bred indolent and luxurious habits in the people. It would have been ruinous to their industry and to the cultivation of the ground; for men will not adequately labor in cultivating the soil, when it is not necessary to their subsistence and their safety. What can no longer serve the purpose of its bestowment may well be dispensed with. The Lord best knows how long and in what measure his supplies will be needed, and will regulate his dispensations accordingly. Many things—good things—have ceased never to be again renewed to any of us; but we have not found that there has been, in this case, any reason to complain. We have been no losers. Other blessings have been given in the place of those taken away, which have rendered their continuance or renewal needless. It may be that the things taken from us—the things of our first love—the things of our glowing youth—the things of our golden prime—are sweeter than those that remain to us, and we regret their loss. But if we consider closely, we shall find that, although these things were proper and becoming in those former states, and although we had blessings then which we have not now—yet we must not forget that we have others now that we had not then; and that we now enjoy, in ripened fruits and corn of old store, advantages which become the condition to which we have attained, and which strengthen our souls, and fit us for usefulness, as well, perhaps better, than the sweet and tender manna with which we were nourished when the dews of our youth were fresh upon us.

TWENTY-FIRST WEEK—MONDAY.

FALL OF JERICHO.—JOSHUA VI.

THE Israelites commenced their military operations in Canaan in a very extraordinary manner. No city was ever be-

sieged or conquered after the mode which they were directed to adopt. But there were reasons. It was highly important that the Israelites should succeed in this enterprise—to them a difficult one—because their failure would embolden the enemy and discourage themselves; and yet, on the other hand, there was great danger that in the event of success in the use of ordinary means, their deeply-seated presumption might induce them to cry, in total forgetfulness of the Lord of Hosts—“Our sword, and the might of our arm, hath gotten us the victory.” It was therefore the Lord’s purpose to assure them the victory, and yet to do this in such a manner as should exclude all high notions, and leave to himself the undivided glory. The whole army was to march around the city once daily, for six days together. They were to be preceded by the ark, before which were to march seven priests, bearing “seven trumpets of rams’ horns.” These trumpets were the same that were used in the sacerdotal services, and particularly in proclaiming the Jubilee. It has been disputed whether they were really made of the horns of rams, or merely in the shape of such horns. In favor of the latter opinion it may be remarked, that with us a well-known musical instrument of brass is called “a horn,” from its shape; and another “a serpent,” for the same reason. One reason urged for supposing this to have been the case, is that no one ever heard of trumpets really made of rams’ horns, which seem unsuited for the production of musical sounds. But this is somewhat hastily affirmed. We cannot indeed call to mind an instance of a ram’s horn trumpet, but we can of a goat’s; and in Syria, as well as in Greece, the horns of the common breeds of rams and goats are very similar. Dr. E. D. Clarke relates, that when at Corinth, he saw “an Arcadian pipe, on which a shepherd was playing in the streets. It was perfectly Pandean, consisting simply of a *goat’s horn*, with five holes for the fingers, and a small aperture at the end for the mouth. It was extremely difficult to produce any sound whatever from this small instrument; but the shepherd made the air resound with its shrill notes.” It is probable that instru-

ments of this sort were originally of horns of animals, and retained the original names when they came to be made of metal in the same shape.

Every day the Israelites, having accomplished their march, returned to the camp, without any apparent result from their strange procedure, which must have been most amazing to the people of the beleaguered city. We do not, with some, think that the proceeding was likely to awaken their mirth—more likely was it to make a solemn impression upon their minds—as the host, preceded by that which was regarded with awe as the symbol of the presence of that God so terrible to the enemies of Israel—marched firmly on, silent, save from the stately tramp of their numerous feet, and the sound from the sacred trumpets. The people of Jericho had seen and heard too much already of the great results connected with the seemingly strange proceedings of the Israelites, to find much amusement in a measure which, whatever its exact meaning might prove, was clearly leveled against their city.

But why this delay? The six days' operations seem to contribute nothing to the result, which might as well have been accomplished the first day. So men judge. So perhaps many among the Israelites themselves judged; for men, at least men in large bodies, are ever prone to precipitate measures; but God moves deliberately, and he would have his people abide in patient faith His time. "He that believeth shall not make haste." In the present case, the time seems to have been lengthened out, both to afford a continual exercise of the faith and patience of the people, and that both the besieged and the besiegers might be the more deeply impressed by the supernatural power by which the result was to be accomplished. The delay also afforded time for the news of this extraordinary proceeding to spread through all the country around; and the result was no doubt watched for with intense solicitude and curiosity by the princes of Canaan; and upon whom it must have made a deep impression when it actually occurred.

The seventh day was the great day. On that day the city was compassed not once, but seven times; and on the completion of the seventh circuit, the priests blew a peculiarly long blast, on hearing which the army, as instructed, raised a mighty shout, and the wall of the city fell down flat, affording free and open access to the Israelites.

The faith of the people was throughout rigorously tried and exercised in this matter—not only in the march and the delay, but in their implicit obedience to the directions they received, the precise object of which they do not appear to have then seen. For, even as the people do not seem to have been informed how they were to cross the Jordan until they came to the river's brink, so now Joshua seems to have forborne disclosing to them how they were to become masters of the city until they had compassed it six times, or till he gave the final command—"Shout, for the Lord hath given you the city." Their implicit obedience, therefore, in this case, is worthy of all commendation, and gives us a favorable impression of the spirit by which the new generation was animated. Indeed, the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews bears distinct and strong testimony on this subject:—"By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they had been compassed about seven days." Heb. xi. 30.

The fact, that the Hebrew host made the circuit of the city seven times on the seventh day, proves that the town could not have been very large. It proves, also, that the whole host could not, as some have fancied, have been engaged in this operation. As the fighting men alone amounted to 600,000, and the mass of the people could not well have been less than two millions more, it is obviously impossible that this could have been the case. No doubt a select body of men, sufficient for the occasion, was alone employed. This was not only the most obvious course of proceeding, but that which was distinctly said to have been followed in other cases, as in the wars with the Amalekites and the Midianites, and in the siege of Ai. It was therefore probably followed in all other cases, although the fact is not particularly men-

tioned. Indeed, in the subsequent operations, it appears clear that the great body of the people remained encamped at Gilgal, until some progress had been made in the conquest of the country, the men-at-arms serving in turns in the different expeditions. No occasion appears to have arisen in which they could all have been employed at once.

It may be well to point out, that the siege of Jericho had commenced in due form before this remarkable course had been taken. We are told that "Jericho was strictly shut up because of the children of Israel: none went out, and none came in." In fact, they had commenced a blockade; and but that they were supernaturally helped, they would probably have wasted months before the town, until they had starved it into a surrender. This was the usual course of ancient sieges; and is still the common course in many parts of the East. Thus it is recorded, that when the Mahrattas intend to besiege a town, they generally encamp around the walls; and having by that means deprived the garrison of all external means of assistance, the besieging army waits with patience, sometimes for several years, until the garrison is starved into a capitulation.* From such protracted operations the Israelites could in this case scarcely have been spared by less than a miracle.

TWENTY-FIRST WEEK—TUESDAY.

THE NUMBER SEVEN.—JOSHUA VI. 3-6.

THE most cursory attention cannot fail to be struck by the prevalence and continual recurrence of the number *seven*, in the sacred Scriptures. It is very true that in very many instances it is, as a number of completeness or perfection, used in an indefinite sense—an indeterminate number being expressed by a determinate one, just as we say *ten* or a *dozen*

* Forbes' *Oriental Memoirs*, ii. 63.

—but in the greater number of instances the actual number of seven is expressed by it. Indeed it may well be considered that the adoption of this number, in that indeterminate sense which is expressed by our phrase, “a good many,” as distinguished from a few on the one hand, and from a vast number on the other, must have grown out of the frequency of its use in the determinate sense, and out of the ideas of perfection and completeness in this number in which that determinate use originated.

We find this remarkable regard for the number seven not among the Hebrews only, but among all ancient people. It pervades all ancient literature, and is found among all nations. It seems to us impossible that universal regard for the number seven, evinced in every possible way, could have originated in other than primeval facts and ideas, common to all the races of man. It seems to us that the one great fact, in which all originated, is that of the creation in seven days—six days, so to speak, of labor, and the seventh of rest from completed work. This fact was once common to the knowledge of all mankind; and however it may have been eventually lost sight of among many of the nations into which they became divided, the institutions and ideas which the fact impressed while it was generally known, would remain among these nations. This universal regard for the number must have existed before the races, which trace their common origin to Adam, were dispersed abroad. But it is difficult to understand how a fact of revealed knowledge, anterior to, and beyond the scope of, human observation and experience, could alone have made this deep and abiding impression. We do not find it so. It is not the abstract knowledge of a great fact which establishes universal usages and makes ineradicable impressions—but it is by iteration, by frequency, by the idea being kept continually before the mind. Although, therefore, we make no question that the peculiar distinction assigned by all nations to the number seven, had its origin in the seventh day of completed creation, we are persuaded that this fact alone, without some institution which

kept it constantly before the mind, and made it part of life's pulsation, could not have been operative to the extent we witness. Such an institution is the Sabbath—an institution designed to commemorate the creation—and abundantly adequate, but not more than adequate, by its recurrence at short intervals, to produce a regard, so diffused and permanent, for the number seven. This is to us one strong proof that this institution of the seventh-day rest, did from the earliest times exist, and was not, as some have supposed, a merely Jewish institution. If the seventh-day Sabbath was observed from the time of man's creation, an observance which made so large a part in his life adequately accounts for all those phenomena in regard to the number seven, which we witness. But if that institution had no existence, we are completely at a loss on the subject—we have nothing to say—nothing to conjecture.

But if this account be taken, the revival of the sabbatic institution among the Hebrews, and the distinctness with which the doctrine of creation was presented to their minds, after many other nations had lost sight of it, sufficiently explains the more prevalent regard and familiar use of the number seven, which we find among them. And this regard for the number was not among them a matter of mere habit—not a vain superstition—but was in many respects a matter of prescribed observance, with the apparent intention of strengthening the impression with regard to the creation, which the sabbatic institution itself was framed to produce.

These remarks are suggested by the very remarkable manner in which the number seven is produced in the account of the siege of Jericho. The city was to be compassed on seven successive days, and on the seventh day seven times; and the procession was to be headed by seven priests, bearing the seven trumpets of rams' horns. The progress during the six days, and the twofold production of the number seven on the seventh day, at the moment of whose consummation the work was completed, seem to involve a very distinct reference to the period of creation, and thence to seven as the number

of completion—of perfect consummation. Seven was, in fact, in some sort, a sacred number, whence the solemnity of an oath is enhanced by connection therewith. Indeed, in the Hebrew language, as in the Sanscrit, the words for “an oath” and for “seven,” are the same. In the former language SHEBA has that twofold meaning—hence the question, whether the name Beer-sheba, where Abraham and Abimelech confirmed their covenant by a solemn oath, means “the well of the oath,” or “the well of seven,” or “seven wells.” If, in this remarkable instance, we dispense with the allusion in the name to the number seven, that number is still present, for before the oath was uttered Abraham set apart *seven* ewe lambs in so marked a manner as to attract the inquiries of the king, to whom the patriarch answered, “These seven ewe lambs shalt thou take at my hand, that they may be a witness unto me that I have digged this well.” From this it appears that there was but one well, and seven lambs were set apart, not as one for each of seven wells, but because seven was a number appropriate to the solemnity of the occasion. We may therefore understand the name as “the well of the seven,” that is, of the seven lambs which confirmed the oath, or the “well of the oath,” from the oath itself, “because there they swear, both of them.” It seems to us that the two sevens merge into each other, and that both are included in the single designation. This connection is not peculiar to the Hebrews. We find it among the ancient Arabians, of whom we learn that when men pledged their faith by oath to each other, blood drawn from an incision near the mid-finger of the contracting parties, was sprinkled upon seven stones, placed between them, and while this was done, they called upon their gods.* So among the gifts with which Agamemnon proposed to seal a covenant of peace with Achilles, we find,

“Seven tripods unallied yet with fire;”†

and further on, seven female captives, skilled in domestic

* Herodotus, iii. 8.

† *Iliad*, ix. 123

arts, the latter specially intended as an atonement-offering to the wrathful hero, for *one* of which he had been deprived. Even at the present day the number seven is curiously regarded in Germany in matters of evidence.* Nor is the number unknown to ourselves in matters of land and legal obligation, as in the term of seven years for leases of houses, for apprenticeships, for the transportation of criminals, and other matters of the kind.

In some of the sacrifices of Scripture we find also a prominent reference to the number seven. So Balaam erects seven altars, and offers a bullock and a ram on every altar.† So when Asa reformed his kingdom and renewed the national covenant with God, seven thousand bullocks and seven thousand rams were offered unto the Lord at Jerusalem;‡ and on a like occasion, king Hezekiah offered seven bullocks, seven rams, seven lambs, and seven he-goats, as a sin-offering for his kingdom.§ Here the reference to a fixed idea respecting the special fitness of the number seven is remarkably produced. Apart from that, he might have chosen twelve, as representing the tribes comprising the house of Israel, or two, if he had regard to only his own kingdom. But the large ideas connected with the number seven, and the veneration in which it was held, caused that to be regarded as the more appropriate and significant—the general fitness of that number overpowering the special fitness of twelve or of two.

We may trace this connection further. The altar itself, at its original establishment, was to be consecrated for seven days to render it most holy.|| A young animal was not held to be fit for sacrifice until it had remained seven days with its dam;¶ and so likewise the male child among the Hebrews was, after seven days, that is, on the eighth day, consecrated to the Lord by circumcision. These instances seem designed to indicate that nothing was considered perfect until the num-

* Grimm, *Rechtsalterthum*, pp. 807, 858.

† Numbers xxiii. 29. ‡ 2 Chron. xv. 11.

§ 1 Chron. xxix. 21.

¶ Exod. ix. 21. 2 Chron. vii. 9.

¶ Exod. xxii. 30.

ber seven had been completed. On the same basis we find the number seven involved in all the rites of uncleanness and purification. Whoever became defiled by various kinds of uncleanness from the living or from the dead, or from leprosy and other diseases, must spend seven days before his state of ceremonial purity could be recovered. As seven days was the period of uncleanness for contact with a corpse, so also was seven days the period of mourning for the dead.* The number seven was, in other respects, connected with the idea of purification; or rather, as we apprehend throughout, of six as a process, and seven as the consummation. So the Syrian leper was directed to dip seven times in Jordan; and it was, no doubt, at the seventh plunge, that his leprosy departed from him.

With uncleanness and with sorrow is connected the idea of punishment, and in these also the number seven is reproduced. So the memorable words of Lamech: "If Cain shall be avenged seven-fold, surely Lamech seventy and seven."† And it is scarcely needful to remind the reader of the seven days of impending judgment at the deluge;‡ of the seven Canaanitish nations consigned to the sword of Israel; of the death of David's child on the seventh day;§ of the choice offered to him between seven years' famine and three days' pestilence;|| of Pharaoh's seven lean kine, and seven stunted ears, as signs of seven years of famine; of the Lord's delivering the Israelites into the hands of Midian seven years in punishment for their sins;** of the seven "times" or years that passed over the Babylonish king in his bestial state.†† Look also at the seven apocalyptic plagues;‡‡ the seven troubles named by Job;§§ the seven things displeasing to God specified by the wise man. Proverbs vi. 16.

In fact, time and space fail us to point out the most re-

* Genesis i. 10. 1 Samuel xxxi. 33. 1 Chronicles x. 12, etc.

† Genesis iv. 27.

§ 2 Samuel xii. 8.

** Judges vi. 1.

†† Revelation xv. 1 · xxi. 9.

‡ Genesis vii. 4.

|| 2 Samuel xxiv. 13.

‡‡ Daniel iv. 32.

§§ Job v. 19

markable alone of the allusions to this number in the Scriptures, much less the parallels which may be found among the ideas and usages of ancient and modern nations. We must, however, call to mind the seven years' release of bondmen under the law ; and the seven-times-seven years' general release of mortgaged lands. Then there are the seven locks of Samson in which his great strength lay ; the ten times seven years of the Babylonish exile ; the seven branches of the golden candlestick ; and in the Apocalypse, the seven golden candlesticks, the seven churches, the seven seals, the seven trumpets, the seven vials, the beast with seven heads, the seven mountains, the seven kings, and the seven angels.

TWENTY-FIRST WEEK—WEDNESDAY.

THE RIVER JORDAN.

THE manner in which the Jordan has lately come under our notice, and the prominence given to that river in the Sacred Books, awaken the desire to know something of that famous stream. This desire we are enabled to gratify with more advantage than at any former period ; for the portion of the river which is alone of any Scriptural interest, and which, until lately, was known at only two or three points, has now been explored through its whole length. This portion is that which extends between the Lake of Tiberias and the Dead Sea ; and the explorer is Lieut. Lynch of the American navy, who, at his own request, was sent by the government with a party of picked men, and with proper boats, on this particular and very interesting service. This was in 1848. It is true that, in the preceding year, the whole of this portion of the river had been explored by one of our own officers, Lieut. Molyneux, of H. M. S. Spartan. But the river was too low to enable him to pass down in his boat from the one lake to the other, as the Americans did. It was carried part-

ly on a camel, and this officer made his journey by land. Besides, even if he had done this, the public would not have reaped the benefit, for his untimely death prevented the results of his observations from being imparted to the world. The notes which he left were also in cypher, and not likely to be rendered available; and their value is now, indeed, superseded by our acquaintance with the more complete exploration by Lieut. Lynch and his companions.

The boats provided in America for this service were of metal—one of copper, and the other of galvanized iron. These were mounted on trucks, and drawn by camels from the sea-shore across the country to the Lake of Tiberias. Here the only native boat upon that once populous lake was taken into the service of the party, and the three proceeded together to thread the whole course of the lower Jordan to the Dead Sea.

There was, in fact, an important geographical problem to solve. It had been ascertained that the Dead Sea was more than a thousand feet below the level of the Lake of Tiberias—and as the distance between the two was but sixty miles, this would give a fall of about twenty feet per mile—greater, it was then thought, than any river in the world exhibited. The Mohawk river in America was held to be the one of greatest fall, and that averages not more than four or five feet to the mile; but it is *now* known that the Sacramento in California has a fall of two thousand feet in twenty miles, or an average of one hundred feet to a mile. It was then, however, thought that such a fall as it seemed necessary to suppose in the case of the Jordan, from the difference of level between the two lakes which it connected, was without example; and as its course was presumed to be tolerably straight, and as it was not known to contain any rapids, an error in the calculation of the difference of level between the two lakes was more than suspected. This problem it was left for Lieut. Lynch to set at rest. In the first place the river is full of rapids. The boats plunged down no less than twenty-seven very threatening ones, besides a great number of lesser magnitude.

and then, although the direct distance does, as stated, not exceed sixty miles, the course of the river is made at least two hundred miles by the exceedingly tortuous course of its stream. This reduces the fall to not more than six feet in the mile, for which the numerous rapids in the river sufficiently account.

The descent by the river occupied no less than a week. So great were the difficulties caused by the rapids, that in two days not more than twelve miles were accomplished ; and on the third day the wooden boat brought down from the sea of Galilee was abandoned on account of her shattered condition. None but metal boats could have stood the severe work of this passage. It was, nevertheless, made at the time of flood—at the same season that the Israelites passed the river—and which, although the most unfavorable without boats, should be the most favorable with them. In fact, it is stated, that a few weeks earlier or later the passage down the river in boats would, as in the case of Lieut. Molyneux, have been impracticable, from the want of sufficient water to carry them over the rapids.

The wide and deeply depressed plain or valley (Ghor) through which the river flows is generally barren, treeless, and verdureless ; and the mountains, or rather cliffs and slopes, of the river uplands, present, for the most part, a wild and cheerless aspect. We have no generalized description of the river ; but the following condensed description, which applies to the central part, may be taken as sufficiently indicating the general character of the whole.

“The mountains towards the west rose up like islands from the sea, with the billows heaving at their bases. Deep rooted in the plain, the bases of the mountains heaved the garment of earth away, and rose abruptly in naked pyramidal crags, each scar and fissure as plainly distinct as if it were within reach, and yet we were hours away ; the laminations of their strata resembling the leaves of some gigantic volume, wherein is written, by the hand of God, the history of the changes he has wrought. The plain, that sloped away from

the bases of the hills, was broken into ridges and multitudinous conelike mounds, resembling tumultuous water at the meeting of two adverse tides; and presented a wild and chequered tract of land, with spots of vegetation flourishing upon the frontiers of irreclaimable sterility. A low, pale and yellow ridge of conical hills marked the termination of the higher terrace, beneath which swept gently this lower plain with a similar undulating surface, half redeemed from barrenness by sparse verdure and thistle-covered hillocks. Still lower was the valley of the Jordan—the sacred river! its banks fringed with perpetual verdure, winding in a thousand graceful mazes; the pathway cheered with songs of birds, and its own clear voice of gushing minstrelsy; its course a bright line in this cheerless waste. Yet, beautiful as it is, it is only rendered so by contrast with the harsh calcined earth around.”*

The waters of the Jordan are described as being clear and transparent, except in the immediate vicinity of the rapids and falls; and numerous fish are seen in its deep and steady course. There is no trace of the lions and bears which once were found in the thickets; but the tracks of a leopard† were observed, and several wild boars were noticed.

On approaching the Dead Sea, the mountains on either hand recede, or rather, the cleft which forms the valley of the Jordan widens, having a broad plain traversed by the river—the portion on the west being called “the plain of Jericho,” and that on the east the “plains of Moab.” It was here that the Israelites crossed; and here, probably, that Jesus was baptized of John, when multitudes resorted to his baptism. In that belief, and in the persuasion that the same spot was the scene of both events, a pilgrim host comes yearly from Jerusalem at Easter to bathe in the Jordan. This part of the river has, therefore, been the most visited, and is the best known. The American expedition adds nothing to

* Lynch's *Narrative of the Expedition to the Dead Sea and the Jordan*, pp. 232, 233.

† They say “a tiger,” ignorant that Palestine never had tigers.

the information previously possessed respecting this portion of the river. The lofty mountains that bound the valley of the Jordan on both sides, continue to bear the same essential characteristics which have been already indicated. Those to the west are the most precipitous ; while the eastern, rising by a more gradual slope, attain to nearly double their elevation. The plain, generally, is bare of vegetation ; but about a mile from the river, a meagre sprinkling of shrubs begins to appear, giving the plain here much the appearance of the more verdant parts of the Arabian desert. Half a mile further we descend to a lower stage of the plain, into what may be properly regarded as the outermost channel of the river. This is separated from the higher level by a bank of marl or clay, from thirty to forty feet in height, generally precipitous, but cut through in many places by channels, formed perhaps by the passage of the water that falls in the rainy season upon the upper plain. The plain, along the base of this high bank, is covered with mud, but clay predominates towards the river, on approaching to which, one is soon involved in a jungle of luxuriant shrubs and low tangled bushes. The immediate banks of the river are covered with a low luxuriant forest of willows, oleanders, tamarisks, and canes. The highest of the trees do not attain an elevation of more than thirty or forty feet, and few of them are more than five or six inches in diameter. The willow is held in high estimation by the pilgrims, who prefer it for staves, which they dip in the river and preserve as sacred memorials. It is this part of the channel, this lower terrace, covered towards the stream with jungle, which is overflowed with water when the river is in flood. Hence the Scripture alludes to the wild beasts driven from their retreats in the thickets by "the swellings" of the Jordan. Jer. xlix. 19. The inundation does not now, nor is there any probability that it ever did, extend beyond the wooded verge of this lower terrace. Just beyond this narrow fertile tract, the ground rises several feet, and the region extending thence to the high bank, is quite too elevated to allow of the supposition of its

being inundated by the overflowing of the river. It exhibits no traces of such inundation ; and although the river is usually visited at the season of flood in the spring, no traveller has ever seen the waters extend beyond the narrow verge already described. The language of the text, "Jordan overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest" (Joshua iii. 15), does not necessarily imply an inundation of greater extent than this.

In its proper channel, when the bed is full, but not overflowed, the river is in this part from thirty-five to forty yards wide. The stream sweeps along with a rapid turbid current. The water is discolored, and of a clayey hue, not unlike that of the Nile, and although muddy, is pleasant to the taste. It has the appearance of being deep ; but we do not know that the depth has been ascertained. Persons entering the stream are soon out of their depth, and are borne rapidly towards the Dead Sea by the current.

It will from these particulars be seen, that although only relatively and historically an important river, the Jordan still satisfies abundantly all the statements made in reference to it by the sacred writers. It still "overfloweth all its banks in harvest ;" and a miracle would be no less necessary now than in the days of Joshua, to enable an immense multitude of men, women, and children, and flocks and herds, unprovided with boats, to pass it at that season.

TWENTY-FIRST WEEK—THURSDAY.

THE ACCURSED THING.—JOSHUA VII.

THE city of Jericho was decreed, even before it was taken, to be wholly an accursed thing, or rather a thing *devoted to destruction*, according to the explanation lately given,* of the meaning of the Hebrew word CHEREM. Not only the city

* Twentieth. Week, Saturday, page 242.

itself, but everything that it contained, was to be consumed—all, except the articles of precious metal, which could not well be destroyed, and the devotement of which to the Lord, was, therefore, to take the form of an appropriation thereof to the service of the sanctuary.

It has seemed to some rather a severe exaction that the soldiers should have been forbidden, under the severest penalties, from appropriating to themselves the least benefit from the spoil of this rich and wealthy city. But there may be seen many reasons for it. The principal seems to have been to impress upon them in the most lively manner, the fact that the conquest of the city was not in any respect due to the power of their arms, and that, therefore, they had no right to any portion of the spoil. Nothing was so well calculated as this privation to remind them to whom alone this important conquest was due. It was also a prudential measure. On the one hand it tried the obedience of the people—and, all things considered, it is certainly a wonderful instance of the religious and military discipline of the troops, that an order of this stringent nature was so well obeyed—while, on the other hand, it would have been inexpedient that the soldiers should be allowed, at the outset, to glut themselves with the spoils of a rich city, whereby they would have been more disposed for luxury and idleness than for the severe labors which lay before them in the martial conquest of Canaan. The city had also been won without the exhausting toils or feats of valor which might seem to demand such recompense. It may be added that it has been at all times usual in military operations to deal severely with the first town taken by storm, the garrison of which has held out to the last, in order to strike such a dread into the people as may facilitate further conquest, or induce submission in order to avoid a similar doom. Upon the whole, Jericho was to be regarded as the first-fruits of conquest, and as such offered up to the Lord as a burnt-offering.

Joshua meant that the city should stand in its ruined condition as a monument of this transaction. He therefore pro-

nounced this solemn adjuration: "Cursed be the man before the Lord that raiseth up and buildeth this city, Jericho: he shall lay the foundation thereof in his first-born, and in his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it." No one was bold enough to defy this doom until the ungodly reign of king Ahab, when one Hiel of Bethel rebuilt the city; and in him that doom was accomplished. His eldest son died when he commenced the work by laying the foundation—others during the progress of the work—and the last of all, the youngest, when he finished it by setting up the gates.* This course, of making a monument of a conquered and destroyed city or building, by solemnly interdicting the restoration thereof, has not a few parallels in ancient history. Thus the Romans made a decree full of execration against any who should dare, at any future time, to rebuild Carthage,† which had been their rival in empire, and the situation of which was so advantageous as to create the fear that it might be restored. Similar imprecations were pronounced by Agamemnon against such as should rebuild Troy, and by Croesus against those who should restore Sidene, "according to ancient custom," says Strabo, by whom the fact is reported.‡

The other prohibition, respecting the spoil, was transgressed by one man only; but this single transgression infringed the covenant of devotement, and brought disaster upon the army of Israel in the next operation, which was against the town of Ai. As a military man Joshua was deeply and painfully sensible of the injurious effects of such a stain upon the hitherto irresistible arms of the Israelites. He, and the elders of Israel, with rent clothes, and dust upon their heads, lay prostrate before the ark till even-tide. In reply to the words in which the hero expressed his dejection and dismay—perhaps more of both than we should have expected from him—he was informed of what had taken place, and was told that Israel could not prosper while "the ac-

* 1 Kings xvi. 34.

† Zonar, *Annal.* lib. ix. 409.

‡ *Geograph.* lib. ix. 13.

cursed thing" remained among them. He was then instructed in the steps to be taken for the discovery of the offender. God could at once have named him to Joshua, but this was not in accordance with the usual course of his providence. Yet as the offence had been without human witness, it was necessary to resort to an extraordinary process. This was the lot, conducted in the same manner as that by which, in a later age, Saul was chosen king. First the lot selected the tribe, then the family, then the household, then the individual. How this lot was conducted is not known, nor is the matter of much importance; but we incline to the opinion of those who conceive that tickets, marked with the names of the twelve tribes, were put into an urn, and the lot fell upon the one that was taken out; that then they cast as many tickets as there were ancestral families, or clans, in the tribe whose name was drawn; then as many as there were households in that family; and lastly, as many as there were heads in that household. However this may be it is certain that the lot, for the decision of uncertain, and the discovery of hidden things, was much in use among the Jews,* and was highly esteemed by them.† Its use among the pagans is shown in Jonah i. 7. That it was lawful is clearly shown by its being used in other cases, divinely appointed,‡ and more than all by its having been apparently resorted to by the Apostles to fill the vacancy in their number.§ The pagan superstitions, which eventually became intermingled with the practice, and the evil purposes to which it was applied, rendered the practice so dangerous and criminal, that it was discountenanced by the church and fell into disuse. It is very possible that this expedient was resorted to in the present case, partly to afford the culprit an opportunity of staying the proceedings, by a repentant avowal of his crime. There would have been some show of penitence in this, but nothing of the kind occurred; and some obduracy and unbelief seem to be indicated in his remaining silent to the last, as

* 1 Cant. xx. 21. 2 Sam. xiv. 41.

† Prov. xviii. 18.

‡ Lev. xlvi. 8. 1 Chron. xxiv. 5, 7.

§ Acts i. 24-26.

if to take the chances of any error in the appointed process of detection. He could only escape by a wrong indication of the lot. And if he were willing to assume the possibility of such an error in the sacred lot, he must also have been willing that some other person should suffer for the crime he had committed.

By the process directed, the tribe taken was that of Judah, the family that of the Zarhites, the household that of Zabdi. That household was then brought, man by man, and Achan the son of Carmi was taken. This person, on being spoken to by Joshua, verified the indication of the lot by confessing his crime. He said, "When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold, then I coveted them and took them; and behold they are hid in the earth, in the midst of my tent, and the silver under them." In the place he pointed out all those articles were accordingly found. They were things of value, and well suited to tempt such a man as Achan. The ingot of gold, somewhat in the shape of a tongue (not a wedge), must have been worth, at the present value of gold, about ninety-six pounds, and the silver about eight pounds. "The goodly Babylonish garment" awakens some interest. Bochart,* with his usual erudition, proves by authorities that robes of various colors were made at Babylon, adorned with colored patterns, in the style of Turkey carpets, very shining, rich, and much sought after in all the eastern world. The Babylonians had the credit of inventing this sort of work, made in the loom with the needle, and of several colors, at one and the same time. Their money value was very great even at a comparatively late period, and judging from the other plunder of Achan, he coveted the article more for what he might get for it than for its beauty. He could not use it without detection, and therefore must have designed to turn it into money when opportunity offered. We know not that any one has been able to describe a Babylonish robe of this sort, from actual representation of it. But it is likely

* *Phaleg*. i. 6.

that they differed little, if anything, from the equally prized robes of their Assyrian neighbors, of which the newly-discovered monuments have enabled Dr. Layard to furnish a description; indeed, from the vague manner in which the term "Babylonish" was applied to anything from the countries bordering on the east of the Euphrates or Tigris, we lean to the opinion that what Achan calls a Babylonish garment may have been an Assyrian one. "The Assyrians were celebrated," says Layard, "for the magnificence and luxury of their apparel. 'The Assyrian garments' became almost a proverb, and having first been borrowed by the Persians, descended at a later time even to the Romans. The robes, as portrayed in the sculptures, confirm the traditions of their beauty and costliness. The dress of the king consisted of a long flowing garment, descending to the ankles, and elaborately embroidered, and edged with fringes and tassels. It was confined at the waist by a girdle, to which were attached cords with large tassels, falling down almost to the feet. Over this robe a second, nearly of the same length, but open in front, appears to have been thrown. It was also embroidered and edged with tassels."* This agrees very well with the description which Herodotus gives of the dress of the Babylonians.

After the confession which Achan had made, there was but one course of dealing with one who had troubled Israel, and brought so deep a stain upon its honor, and disgrace upon its arms. He was stoned, and the corpse was consumed by fire, along with the accursed things, and with **all that** belonged to him.

* *Nineveh and its Remains*, ii. 319.

TWENTY-FIRST WEEK—FRIDAY.

THE CRAFT OF THE GIBEONITES.—JOSHUA IX.

IN the ninth chapter of Joshua, we have a very singular illustration of the terror which the wonderful success of the Hebrew arms inspired.

There was an important city called Gibeon, a few miles to the north of Jerusalem, the inhabitants of which, expecting that their turn would speedily come, and despairing of being able to hold out against the invincible host, resolved to try to escape the doom which hung over them. In ordinary cases, they would have thought of submission to the invading force. But they knew that the submission of no Canaanite city would be accepted. Coupling this with the knowledge, that the Hebrews were not forbidden to enter into treaty with, and accept the submission of distant nations, they resolved to save their lives, at least, by inducing the invaders to enter into a treaty of alliance with them, under the pretence of belonging to a far country. For this purpose, they would send to the camp of Israel an embassy, invested with every circumstance tending to confirm the intended delusion, by affording every indication of their having made a long and weary journey. Let us examine for a moment the nature of their equipment, and look to the articles of which it was composed. These we find to be the same which are still required for a journey in the East.

First, "*they took old sacks upon their asses.*" What were the sacks used for? Interpreters seem at a loss with regard to these "sacks," having no clear notion of their use. It appears to us, that they were the same as the large bags, usually of hair, in which the orientals pack away, for convenient transport on the backs of animals, all the baggage and commodities required for the journey, excepting only water-bags and large kettles. Beds, boxes, provisions, pots, packages of goods, all are carried in such bags, slung over the

back of the animal, one hanging at each side. Being a good deal knocked about and exposed to the weather, these saddle bags—as one might call them but for their size—suffer in a long journey; and hence the Gibeonites took old bags, to convey the impression that a long journey had been made.

The *wine bottles* which they took with them are also said to have been “old, and rent, and bound up.” At present, in Western Asia, we do not meet with wine-bottles, but only water-bottles—wine being interdicted by the Moslem law, and therefore, although enough used, not being publicly carried about—and in the farther, pagan East, the vine does not grow, and neither wine nor wine-bottles are used. The bottles were of leather, or rather of skins, like those in which water is now, and was indeed formerly, carried about. Classical antiquity has afforded many representations of these wine-skins, for the use of them was by no means confined to the East. At the present day, the same kind of bottles are used for keeping, as well as for conveying wine, in Spain and in the Christian country of Georgia beyond the Caucasus, where, at the city of Teffis, we beheld them for the first time; and found at once every example of the ancient wine-bottles of skin, to which there are so many allusions in Scripture. This, indeed, we imagine to be the native country of the vine: for here only have we beheld it growing wild in the thickets beside the rivers, affording small but very pleasant grapes. The people here have no casks, but preserve their wine in earthen jars and leathern bottles. The latter are made of the skins of goats, oxen, and buffaloes, turned inside out, clipped with the scissors, washed, and rubbed over with warm mineral tar or naphtha. The openings are closed with a sort of wooden bung, except at the feet, where they are only tied up with a cord. The wine is drawn at one foot, merely by opening or closing the noose. It is a very strange and whimsical sight in the eyes of a stranger, to behold oxen and buffaloes full of wine lying in the wine-booth or about the streets, with their legs stretched out. These skins, however, are very convenient for home use or for carriage; for

they may be found of all sizes, some very small, the skins of young kids, holding only a few of our bottles. It is thus seen how *suck* bottles might be "rent," and the rents mended temporarily by being "tied up;" and the nature of the bottles explains the caution of our Saviour against putting new wine into old bottles, lest the bottles should be burst by the wine.

In further confirmation, their "shoes were old and clouted." For "shoes" read "sandals," such being in most cases denoted by the word translated "shoes" in the authorized version. Now, although little more than a sole of some kind, fastened to the foot by thongs, the sandals might need clouting or patching, as may be seen by the figures of ancient Egyptian sandals, to which those used in Syria were probably similar, unless, from the greater roughness of the country, we may suppose them to have been of stouter make and materials. Of such we have not only figures in sculpture and painting, but actual specimens in cabinets of Egyptian antiques. They are seen to vary somewhat in form. Those worn by the upper classes and by females, were usually pointed and turned up at the toes like skates, and indeed like the Eastern slippers of the present day. They are mostly made of a sort of woven or interlaced work of palm leaves and papyrus stalks, or other similar materials, and sometimes of leather, and they were frequently lined with cloth. In Syria they were probably more exclusively of hide. They were seldom mended, being of so little value that they could be easily renewed when the worse for wear. We have seen a man make himself a new pair out of a piece of skin in a few minutes, for sandals are not wholly disused in the East. The mere fact, that articles so easily renewed, were patched in this instance, was well calculated to suggest a long journey, in which the convenience of purchasing new ones, or materials for making new ones, had not been found—whence, and whence only, they had been obliged to make their old ones serve by patching. It was a singular thing to see sandals clouted at all, and only a journey could explain the fact.

The garments of these pretended ambassadors were also old. It behooves ambassadors in the East to do credit to their master, and show becoming respect to those to whom they are sent, by making a clean and decent, or even a splendid appearance. This was so essential, that their appearance with old and travel-stained clothes could only, upon any common principle, be explained by the assigned reason, that they had come direct from a long journey ; and as the place to which they came was a camp and not a town, they had not the opportunity of repairing the damage to their attire which the journey had occasioned.

Lastly, their bread, which they affirmed to have been hot from the oven when they left home, had become "dry and mouldy" by the length of their journey. This transaction conveys a somewhat erroneous impression. The Hebrew word translated "mouldy" is the same which is rendered by "cracknels" in 1 Kings xiv. 3. This is an obsolete word denoting a kind of crisp cake. The original term (*nikuddim*) would seem, from its etymology, to denote something spotted or sprinkled over ; and it is supposed, from the old Jewish explanations, to denote a kind of biscuit, or a small and hard-baked cake, calculated to keep (for a journey or other purpose) by reason of their excessive hardness and freedom from moisture ; or perhaps by being *twice* baked, as the word *bis-cuit* expresses. Not only are such hard cakes or biscuits still used in the East, but they are, like all biscuits, punctured to render them more hard, and sometimes also they are sprinkled with seeds—*either* of which circumstances sufficiently meets the etymology of the word. The ordinary bread, baked in thin cakes, like pancakes, is not made to keep more than a day or two, a fresh supply being baked daily. If kept longer it dries up, and becomes excessively hard—harder than any biscuit that we ever knew. It was this kind of common bread that the Gibeonites produced, and indicated its hardness—"hard as biscuits"—in evidence of the length of the journey they had taken.

The device of these Gibeonites was managed very skilfully

The evidence thus furnished seemed to the Israelites so strong, that although aware of the danger of being imposed upon, they entered into a covenant of peace, and bound themselves by the oath of their elders to its observance. A few days after the error into which they had been led was discovered. The people were then indignant at the conduct of their leaders in this business—especially seeing that they could have guarded themselves from all mistake by consulting the Divine oracle. This especially they ought to have done in regard to the first treaty of any kind into which, as a people, they had entered. This came of trusting too much to appearances—of leaning too much to their own understandings—and fancying that it was impossible to mistake such plain evidence as the guileful Gibeonites produced. We do not, however, suppose that the people of Israel had that thirst for blood which some have ascribed to them on account of the displeasure they expressed on this occasion. It is far more likely that they regretted being thus deprived of the spoil of one of the richest cities in the neighborhood; and they may not have been without apprehension that such an infraction of the law given them respecting the conquest of the land, might not be unvisited by some tokens of their Divine King's displeasure. Such, however, was the respect felt by all the Israelites for the oath which had been taken, that no one supposed there was any other course now to be followed but to spare the lives and respect the property of the Gibeonites; yet, to punish their deception, it was directed that they should henceforth be devoted to the service of the tabernacle, and be employed in the servile and laborious offices of hewing the wood and drawing the water required in the sacred offices, from which the Israelites themselves were thenceforth relieved. It is not to be supposed that the whole or the greater part of them, were thus employed at once. A certain number of them performed it in rotation, while remaining in possession of their city and of their goods.

TWENTY-FIRST WEEK—SATURDAY.

JOSHUA'S MIRACLE.—JOSHUA X.

A CONSEQUENCE that could hardly have been foreseen, resulted from the league which had been formed with the Gibeonites. It seems that Gibeon belonged to a confederacy of southern states, in which the small kingdom of Jerusalem took the lead. We assume that these states were independent of each other, but that one of the number was regarded as entitled to take the initiatory part in all matters of common interest to them all. These states regarded with high displeasure the defection of the Gibeonites from the common cause. To them it wore the aspect of treachery to the patriotic cause of the defence of the country against the invasion, and they could not but see that the transaction was calculated to damp the spirits of the people. It was, therefore, concluded by the confederates, on the call of Adonizedek king of Jerusalem, to bring them to severe punishment for the step they had taken. This was no less than to march against Gibeon with their whole united force—a display of strength needed, not only by the relative power of the Gibeonites, but by the probability of their being aided by the Israelites. In fact, no sooner did the Gibeonites see the united host encamped before their walls than they sent to demand the help of Joshua. This was readily granted. Notwithstanding the fraudulent manner in which the compact had been obtained, the Israelites shrunk not from the duties which it imposed. Besides, their sacred oath had been pledged before the Lord; and to slight the obligation which it imposed would have been a dishonor to that name in the eyes of the heathen. Joshua, therefore, with a large body of picked men, departed from the camp at Gilgal to raise the siege. This was, in a military point of view, the most important action in which the Israelites had yet been engaged. It was to be a conflict in the open field between the army of

Israel and the greatest force which the powers of southern Canaan could bring into the field. The result could not but have the most important effects upon the Canaanites on the one hand, and upon the Israelites on the other. Joshua was well aware of the serious responsibilities which rested upon this transaction; and it may be that he regarded them not without some anxiety. To relieve him, the gracious promise of victory was given to him before he set out, and thenceforth he suffered not his mind to rest upon the apparent insufficiency of his comparatively untrained force to contend with the disciplined troops and glorious chivalry of Canaan, but reposed in the faith that what God had promised He was able to perform. Yet he did not, therefore, neglect any human means of securing the results which he desired, but took all the measures which might become a general who supposed that all depended upon his skill and the valor of his troops. He made a forced march all night from the camp at Gilgal to Gibeon, and seems to have fallen at once upon the allied force by which the city was invested. Inspired with terror at so fierce and sudden an assault, their strength was broken, and they fled. The interest of this great day lay not in the battle, but in the pursuit. It was in every way most essential that the victory should be effectual, which would be by no means the case if the fugitives were allowed the opportunity of rallying their scattered forces, or of making their way back to the strongholds from which they had issued. And the Lord helped the Israelites. There came down a tremendous fall of hailstones—of such hail as is known only in the East, whereby great numbers of the fugitives were stricken down—more than had fallen by the sword at Gibeon. Bearing in mind the havoc which had been committed by the hailstones in Egypt, and recollecting the, to our notions, immense size of the stones of hail in the East, we may well understand this effect. This was, doubtless, an extraordinary storm, and the hailstones of size unusual, even in that country; or, perhaps, wholly of the largest size of hailstones that are known in Syria. But let us hear what is said of ordinary

hailstones. "Hail falls most commonly in the latter part of spring in very heavy storms ; and the hailstones are often of most enormous size. I have seen some that measured two inches in diameter ; but sometimes irregularly shaped pieces are found among them weighing above twenty drahms."* Sometimes there are falls of such hail as work ravages fully equal to that of the Egyptian plague, and by no means inadequate to the result described in the case before us. There was such a storm at Constantinople in 1831. Many of the hailstones, or rather masses of ice, weighed from half a pound to above a pound, and in their fall appeared as large as the swell of a large water decanter. Under this tremendous fall, the roofs of houses were beaten in—trees were stripped of their leaves and branches—many persons who could not soon enough find shelter were killed—animals were slain, and limbs were broken. In fact, none who know the tremendous power which the hailstones of the East sometimes exhibit, will question, as some have questioned, the possibility that *any* hail should produce the effect described. That a fall of hail thus severe and extraordinary, though not unexampled, occurred at this precise time, could only have been, as it is said to have been, of the Lord's doing, which is also shown in its partial character, for the fugitives were alone visited by it, while the pursuers, who could not have been at any great distance behind, suffered nothing.

Still the pursuit continued, and as the day began to decline, the fugitives hoped that the approaching shades of night would give them safety, and enable them to reach their strong towns undisturbed, if not to collect their scattered forces in the field. Joshua, on his part, regarded the decline of the sun towards the horizon with concern, fearing that the approach of night, by compelling him to abandon the pursuit, would leave his victory incomplete, and the power of the enemy less entirely broken up than he desired. Aware of the immense importance of the results which this victory, if completed, must produce, he longed for a few hours more of day

* Russell, *Natural History of Aleppo*,

Then the thought was suggested to him—"Is anything too hard for the Lord?" and strong in the faith which that consideration inspired, he cried aloud, "Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, moon, in the valley of Ajalon." And the Lord heard him, for "the sun stood still, and the moon stayed until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies." But the sun does not revolve around the earth—but the earth around the sun. No doubt. Yet we, whose greatest philosophers in their popular discourses, no less than the common people, speak of the sun's rising and setting, can have no ground for cavil at the mode in which Joshua expressed his wish that the day might be prolonged. That was all he meant; and his object could only *apparently* be attained in the way he indicated, and which therefore he did indicate. There is no reason to suppose that Joshua had any better knowledge of the system of the universe than was generally possessed at that time. But if he had been a very Newton, he would have been mad to have expressed himself in any other language than this. If he had expressed himself with philosophical precision, his language would have perplexed the understandings of men far more for three thousand years, than they have done in the three hundred years since the truth of the world's system has been known.

But, admitting the propriety of the expression, it will be asked *how* this miraculous fact was brought to pass? To this we answer plainly, we do not know. It is not necessary to know. The day was prolonged, for all the essential purposes which Joshua had in view, when his strong faith impelled him to utter these great words. But after what manner this was effected must be open to conjecture, until the time to come discloses the knowledges that are hidden in its womb.

It has been supposed by some that the motion of the earth upon its axis was for the time arrested. This, no doubt, would effect the result intended. But it would—without an additional and equally stupendous exertion of Almighty power—have produced other and very tremendous effects upon the

whole earth. The natural consequence of such a sudden check to the earth's motion would have been, by means of the atmosphere, to crush at once all animal and vegetable existence—to level with the ground the loftiest and most massive structures, and, in fact, to sweep the whole surface of the globe as with the besom of destruction. God might have prevented this. But while there is a mode of producing the effect which Joshua desired, which does not naturally involve such consequences, it may be best, in the present state of our knowledge, to suppose that it was so effected. It answers all the conditions of the question—while it remains a most stupendous exhibition of the power of the Almighty in that day when “he hearkened to the voice of a man,” to suppose that the *light* of the then setting sun was supernaturally prolonged, through the operation of the same laws of refraction and reflection, by which the sun's disc is ordinarily seen above the horizon some time after he has really sunk below it. He who created the heavenly luminaries, and established the laws which transmit their light—could at this time so have altered the medium through which the sun's rays passed, as to render it visible above the horizon long after it would, under ordinary circumstances, have disappeared. This, to the apprehension of the Israelites, would have had all the visible effects of staying the career of the sun; and to ours, that of arresting the earth's revolution on its axis; and this is all that the sacred text requires—all that Joshua required—all that we need require.

Twenty-Second Week—Sunday.

CALEB.—JOSHUA XIV. 6-12.

THE distribution of the southern land which had been conquered, although some strong cities in it remained unsubdued, was attended with one interesting incident. The allotment to Judah brought forward the pious old Caleb, one of the twelve spies who explored the land forty and five years before, and whose concurrence with Joshua in an encouraging report, not only exempted them from the doom which befel the other spies, but made them the sole survivors of that generation. This is the very man whom we should wish to come forward to tell us his experience and his impressions—and we hail his address with all the satisfaction with which it seems to have been received by Joshua and the elders among whom he sat. The strain of familiarity which he adopts in addressing his old companion and friend, is exceedingly natural and becoming—"Thou knowest the thing the Lord said unto Moses, concerning me and thee, in Kadesh-barnea. Forty years old was I when the Lord sent me from Kadesh-barnea to espy out the land: and I brought him word again as it was in mine heart." We may pause a moment to note these words. From all that appears, the motion to search the land was made by the Israelites, and only conceded by Moses; and the appointment of the spies seems to have been by each tribe, one for itself. Indeed, the appointment of them by Moses in the name of the Lord, might have seemed invidious. How, then, does Caleb say that the Lord sent him? There is but one answer. Whatever a man undertakes with the desire to serve God, and executes so as to obtain his approval, is a work of the Lord, a work on which he was sent—to which he was appointed. Again, he would consider that circumstances were overruled, in the Lord's providence, to lead to the appointment of himself among the twelve, that

the truth might not be left without witnesses. When he perceived that, according to his wish, he had done the Lord's work, he could not but look out from the external circumstances of his appointment—to the inner guidance, and supreme direction, which, through the outward form of man's appointment and choice, orders and directs the whole matter. He may have been aware of circumstances which, at the time, rendered it as likely, or more likely, that another should have been appointed by the tribe of Judah to this service—but that the choice fell on himself would, when he came to look at the result, have seemed a special ordination of Providence, and doubtless was such.

Well, then, on what plan and policy did he undertake this charge? Did he go with the purpose of framing his report according to the desires of Moses—and according to what he pre-supposed to be the mind of the Lord? Not so. He had no plan—he had no purpose but that of telling the plain and simple truth: “I brought them word again, as it was in mine heart.” Therefore that what came from the simple impulses of his heart—of a right judgment, was well pleasing to God, shows that his heart was right with God; and that he had formed true conceptions of his character, his designs, and his covenant relations to Israel. The other spies spoke no less, we may suppose, from their heart than he did from his. But their hearts were *not* right with God—they were filled with fear and unbelief, and although they did speak from their hearts the truth as it appeared to them—they spoke wrongly and falsely, because there was a disharmony between their spirits and the spirit of God. A good understanding have all they that seek God—all they that love him; and they can venture to speak all that is in their hearts, knowing under what influence their judgments have been formed. This was the case, as we apprehend, with Caleb.

Again, he goes on—“Nevertheless, my brethren that went up with me made the heart of the people melt, but I wholly followed the Lord my God.” In this all his secret, all his distinction, lay. He wholly followed the Lord—he had

no reserve, no secondary objects, no low fears, no regard to human influence, or man's opinions. He wholly followed the Lord. And he had his reward, as those who follow the Lord wholly always have. Let us hear what that, in his case, was.

“And Moses sware on that day, Surely the land whereon thy feet have trodden shall be thine inheritance, and thy children's forever, because thou hast wholly followed the Lord my God.” Such was the promise, and now, after forty-five years, when the companions of his prime have perished around him—he is alive and strong, to claim its fulfilment—“And now behold the Lord hath kept me alive.” It was the Lord that did everything for him. He does not exult in the strength of his constitution, on which time had made so slight impression. It was the Lord that kept him alive when, in the ordinary course of things, he would have been dead; and it was in spite of the tendencies of nature to dissolution and decay, that he now stood among the living in so much health and strength. His present existence, under all the circumstances, was a kind of resurrection from the dead. Therefore he glories in it—this old man—twenty years older than the eldest (except Joshua) in his nation—he glories in it as a thing of God. “The Lord has kept me these forty and five years, even since the Lord spake this word to Moses, while the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness; and now, lo, I am this day fourscore and five years old. And yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me: as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out and to come in.” By this he not only glorifies God, who had so preserved him, and who was the strength as well as the length of his days, but intimates to Joshua that the grant of his application for the inheritance which Moses promised to him, and which was still in the hands of the Canaanites, would not be throwing away a portion upon a weak old man, unequal to the task of either taking or retaining it. On the contrary, if, as was the case, it were to be taken from the hands of giants—for it was Hebron,

where the sons of Anak were seen—and would require the utmost prowess, energy, and nerve of the youthful warrior, he was still able to put it forth; and he was not afraid to cope at eighty-five with the same power which he would readily have encountered at forty. Yet after all he does not too implicitly rely upon the prowess of his green old age. His confidence lies elsewhere. Let us hear him: “Now, therefore, give me this mountain, whereof the Lord spoke in that day; for thou heardest in that day how the Anakims were there, and that the cities were great and fenced; *if so be the Lord will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out*, as the Lord said.” Notwithstanding his consciousness of strength even in age—he does not venture to think himself equal to this great enterprise, unless the Lord were with him.

But there is one point to which an interesting writer directs attention,* and which deserves especial notice. It is that the inheritance was “a mountain that he had himself seen, and that must have been present to his mind’s eye during the whole forty years of wandering. He had seen the mountain when a spy, and notwithstanding all that unbelief did object, believed it would become his, now forty-five years before possession. This singular felicity was the reward of his singular piety. No doubt the thought often proved sweet to his mind, and made his future inheritance so present to view, as to give rest in wandering, and make him feel rich, while as yet he had nothing. The believer in Jesus, though he has not yet seen it with his eye, may claim a part in the portion of his people, and with much satisfaction leave it to his covenant God what that part shall be. Oh, to pass through time with general but lively impressions of that fairer inheritance mercy has entailed upon the faithful, that when the time of the promise shall draw near, and we are ready to enter into rest, we may be able to put in an humble claim, and say to him who is the divider of his people’s por-

* *The Church in Canaan*. By William Seaton London, Holdsworth Edinburgh, W. Oliphant 1823. Vol. i. pp. 199, 200.

tion: —‘Give me this mountain, whereof the Lord spake in that day Sweet is it to come to a period that fills the mind with the expectation of long-promised blessings, when just about to receive what the Lord, many years since, has spoken of concerning his people—to realize in old age what has been their hope in youth, and has been their support and solace in the pilgrimage of a lengthened life.’”

TWENTY-SECOND WEEK—MONDAY.

THE BOOK-CITY.—JOSHUA XV. 15.

ONE of the towns taken by the Israelites in the course of their war for the conquest of Canaan, was KIRJATH-SEPHER. It is historically famous as the strong city, for the capture of which Caleb, in whose lot it lay, held forth the hand of his daughter Achsah as the prize—which prize was won by his gallant nephew Othniel, afterwards a judge in Israel. But a still higher interest—not very obvious to the general reader—lurks in this city, and that merely in its name. Kirjath-sepher means “the Book-City.”

To those who like to look back into ancient things, this name—found at a date so remote—excites the most intense curiosity, and suggests a thousand questions. While scholars are disputing whether any literature—or any but the scantiest—existed at a date so ancient, we come quietly upon a great fact lurking in a name. We read here, in this name, not only of a book, but of a book-city—a city distinguished in some way or other for its connection with literature. It is difficult to conceive that it was so called for any other reason than because it was either eminent for books or archives, or for its being the resort of men who were conversant with literature—such, whatever it was, as existed in that age. In some sort, then, it was a place of literature. Was it a place of libraries, of archives, of academies? Either alternative

implies the presence of such literature as the age afforded among the Canaanites—and at least proves that they were not an illiterate people. The Targum calls the place Kirjath-arche—or the city of the archives, in which were laid up the public records of the Canaanites. This is not unlikely. We know that there were in a later age special cities in which the archives of kingdoms were deposited, and it might be particularly desirable in a dominion of small states like those of Canaan, that the public records, in which all had an interest, should be deposited in one place.

This Kirjath-sepher is again, undoubtedly, the same which is further on called Kirjath-sannah (verse 49). This *Sannah* means, in Arabic, and in the old Phœnician or Canaanitish dialect, law, doctrine, manner of life, and is applied by the Moslems to the secondary law of the Koran, answering to the Jewish Mishnah. The Greek translators render it by the “city of letters.” It seems, therefore, that the one name denotes the general character of the town as a city of books, and the other the nature of these books, or the objects to which they tended, which were indeed the objects of all ancient literature.

Think as we will—reason as we will—it remains clear that if there was a city called the Book-city, there must have been books of some kind or other. By the dear love we bear to books, which place within our grasp the thoughts and knowledge of all ages and of all climes, we exult in this inevitable conclusion. Let us not, however, form any large ideas of the collections of books which the Book-city contained. The mere fact that a city was distinguished by its very name for the possession of books, implies that books were rare and uncommon. It is not for qualities or possessions common, but rare, that cities or persons acquire a name. There was no Bodleian or Advocates’ Library—no British Museum; a small closet or a box might perhaps contain all the manuscripts which the Book-city possessed. But whatever their quality or number, they were precious in the eyes of the Canaanites; and in ours, this bundle of books, and their ap-

preciation of its value, do them far more honor than all their chariots of iron. What a treasure they would have been to us now ! What stores of ancient knowledge they would have opened ! What light would have been thrown upon many dark matters, all the more important from their connection with the early history of our sacred books ! We should have been able to read them, had they been preserved, and their value to us would have been beyond all price. We can feel this—we see this at a glance. How much more, then, would this have been the case had the books which comprise our Bible been lost, though known to have existed. How we should have grieved over that loss. How sensible we should be of their unutterable value—how highly we should estimate the privilege of being acquainted with the high knowledge they comprise. But we have these books in our hands ; all the treasures of human and spiritual knowledge which they contain, lie as an open page in the hands of our very children—here are books as old, and books far more precious, than any the Book-city of the Canaanites contained. Some are sensible of its value—some devote all their days to the study of it—and to many every word of the Sacred Volume is more precious than gold. But these are few in number compared with the thousands by whom this volume, so accessible to all, and so worthy of all our thoughts, is neglected like any common thing, or to whom it is as a sealed book. In the contemplation of this far more rich possession, we may soothe our regrets at the loss of the library of Kirjath-sepher.

But, after all, what did become of these books ? When Caleb acquired the city, did he preserve or destroy them ? It does not seem to us likely that he would treat with much respect books which, however precious they might be to us, in our day, for the illustration of ancient history and ethnography, would, in his eyes, exhibit much that was profane and abominable. The whole had probably the flavor of idolatry, and much must have had reference to the superstitious rites and acts to which the Canaanites were addicted ; and these

things, however interesting they may be as materials of antiquarian investigation into matters long since extinct, are received differently as living and actual things. At the present day, a nobleman will give large sums for a collection of the very broadsides and chap-books, with which, at the time of their publication, one or two centuries ago, a gentleman would have scorned to soil his fingers. Besides, the collection very probably included records and covenants respecting the ancient arrangements of estates and territories, which a conquering people could have no interest in preserving, but had a very obvious interest in destroying. So it is by no means unlikely that old Caleb threw the entire bundle of books that formed the library of Kirjath-sepher into the fire. We may the rather think so, as, although the name of Kirjath-sepher is a perfectly intelligible one in Hebrew, the conqueror evidently regarded it with no favor, for he hastened to change its name to Debir, by which it was afterwards known. Yet we should not like to press too much on this. For even the new name seems to have some analogy to the old reputation of the place. Debir means a "word," or "oracle," and is applied to that most secret and separated part of the temple—the holy of holies—in which the ark of God was placed, and where his oracles were delivered from between the cherubim. It is, therefore, not unlikely that this, equally with the old name, although in another form, communicates the fact that Debir had been some particularly sacred place or seat of learning among the Canaanites, and the repository of their books and records. It is, indeed, quite possible that it was not, at a later day, without some regard to the old reputation of the place as a seat of ancient learning, that it was made a city of the priests. The town appears to have lain a few miles to the west of Hebron, but no trace of it has yet been discovered.

TWENTY-SECOND WEEK—TUESDAY.

SURVEYING.—JOSHUA XVIII.

THE war which commenced with the defeat of the confederate kings ceased not until the whole of the south country had been subdued by the Israelites. This portion of the land was assigned by lot to the tribe of Judah and Ephraim, and the unprovided half-tribe of Manasseh. The withdrawal of three populous tribes to take possession of their allotments, must have caused a sensible diminution of the numbers encamped around the tabernacle at Gilgal, and have made it inconvenient as a place of resort to those who were becoming settled at a distance. It hence became advisable to remove the tabernacle to a more central position. The spot selected—probably by Divine appointment—was Shiloh in the territory of Ephraim, to the north of Bethel. The spot, if correctly identified by Dr. Robinson with the present Seilun, is surrounded by hills, with an opening by a narrow valley into a plain on the south. After this, there was a considerable interval of time during which little or nothing was done by the unprovided tribes to gain possession of the rest of the country. The cause of this “slackness” is not stated. But as the portion allotted to Judah was soon found to be too large, and that assigned to Ephraim too small, the probability is, that they were unwilling to make the imperfect survey, on which that appropriation had been founded, the basis of a further distribution. At least this may have been an excuse by the people for their own slothfulness in a matter of so much importance. At present they did not feel the need to bestir themselves in the matter. They were enriched by the spoils of the country already won, and enjoyed abundance from the stores laid up for the use of the former inhabitants. They were thus living at ease in the midst of their brethren, while the lands which remained to be divided were remote from the station around which they were clus-

tered, and if they went to take possession of them, they must break up their present connections, disperse their flocks and herds, change their habits of life, and convey their families to strange places, and undergo new hardships and trials. Besides, the unappropriated districts were well filled with warlike Canaanites, who were disposed to leave them unmolested at present, but who could not be expelled without great exertion and peril. So they sat still, contented with things as they were, and disposed to let the future take care for itself.

But Joshua at length came forward to rouse them from this state of mind. He urged them no longer to delay taking possession of their heritage; and that there might be no excuse, he ordained that there should be a new and more systematic survey of the country in its entire extent. Hitherto the distribution had only had regard to the land actually possessed. But now the whole was to be first surveyed, and then distributed, without regard to the present state of its occupancy; and the several tribes would naturally be stimulated to exertion by the heritage appropriated to their possession being placed in this distinct form before them. Three men from each of the unprovided tribes, twenty-one in all, were to go through the length and breadth of the land, to take proper note of the particulars, and to divide the whole into seven parts, the special appropriation of which among the tribes was afterwards to be determined by lot. When we look in the map to the unequal extent of the allotments made on the basis of this survey, we may presume that the interpretation which Josephus put upon their instructions is correct. According to him, they were to take careful note of the relative advantages of the several districts, and as it oftener happened, especially in Palestine, that one acre of some sort of land was of equal value with a thousand other acres, they were to make the division under the careful consideration of these circumstances.

This was an arduous and difficult operation. To be of any value it must have been a scientific survey—and that it was such is shown by the minute description of the bounda-

ries of the several portions, as assigned to the tribes by lot. In fact, this seems to us the most interesting scientific operation recorded in the early Scripture, and, indeed, the only one of the kind of which very ancient history has left any record. It is out of all sight the earliest example of land-surveying of which we have any knowledge—and that it was undertaken in the circumstances, shows that there was more of scientific knowledge among the Israelites at this time than they have usually credit for, and that they were by no means so rude a people as some have conceived.

Josephus says that the survey occupied seven months, and to be so particular and accurate as it was, it could not well have been done in less time. We are told that “the men passed through the land, and described it by cities, into seven parts, in a book.” For “book,” read “tablet,” and understand a kind of map or chart, accompanied, perhaps, by a written description of the leading features of the country. What a treasure beyond price would a copy of this map and of these notes be to us now! But the substance of the latter is probably embodied in the description of the boundaries of the tribes, which we eventually obtain, and which was doubtless stated from these materials.

The explorers must have been acquainted with geometry, or rather, perhaps, as Josephus says, some geometers were sent with the responsible explorers, whose skill insured a correct statement and division of the land. This knowledge had doubtless been acquired in Egypt, to which country all ancient authorities concur in ascribing the origin of land-surveying and geometry. It took rise from the peculiar exigencies of that country, in the continual necessity for adjusting the claims of persons with regard to the limits of lands, under the changes annually produced by the inundation of the Nile. It is reasonable to suppose that much litigation arose between neighbors, respecting the limits of their unenclosed fields: and the fall of a portion of the bank, carried away by the stream during the inundation of the Nile, frequently made great alterations in the extent of the land near the river-

side. We, therefore, readily perceive the necessity which arose for determining the quantity which belonged to each individual, whether to settle disputes with a neighbor or to ascertain the tax due to the government. It is, indeed, difficult to ascertain when this science of land-mensuration commenced in Egypt; but there is evidence that it was already a well-established science in that country before the age of Sesostris (to which Herodotus ascribes the invention), and even in and before the age of Joseph.

The operation now under consideration was of a larger nature, and involves no less the observations proper to geography than the demonstrations which belong to geometry. Here again we are referred to Egypt. Not as unimportant, but as beside our object, we can afford to neglect the traditions which assign to the Egyptians, in the most remote ages, a knowledge of geography such as no other nation possessed, and which, among the writings ascribed to the first Thoth or Hermes, finds one of cosmography, including the chorography of Egypt, and a description of the course of the Nile. We are content with the intimations of Scripture, which indicate the existence of this knowledge, in the fact that Egypt was already divided into provinces, or nomes, which Joseph visited in succession, to take such measures as the particular resources of each province might afford, against the impending famine.* We wish some one would collect all the intimations of ancient geographical knowledge which exist in the early Scriptures. Such a person will not get beyond the second chapter of Genesis without finding matter for admiration in the geographical peculiarity with which the site of Paradise is described. It has all the characters of a geographical description. It was situated in the land of Eden, towards the east. A river went out of it which became divided into three branches. The course of each of these branches is described, and the countries watered by it are named. Even the different and more remarkable productions of these coun-

* Gen. xli. 46. Compare the further mention of such provinces in verse 57.

tries are mentioned in a very special manner. The historian not only says that the land of Havilah afforded gold, but adds, that the gold of that land was very pure. There, also, he continues, were found the bdellium and the onyx. It is impossible to read these details without apprehending that geographical science and description had made much progress before the age of Moses, and that there might well be Israelites qualified to furnish a satisfactory topographical survey and description of the land of Canaan.

TWENTY-SECOND WEEK—WEDNESDAY.

THE ALTAR OF THE REUBENITES.—JOSHUA XXII.

WE have sometimes wondered that no traveller in Palestine has ever thought of looking for the great monumental altar which was erected near the Jordan by the men of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh, on their return to their own land. As it was "a great altar to see to," that is, a very conspicuous object from afar, and was produced by the united labor of no small army of men, it was in all probability a vast heap or mound of earth and stones; and as such constructions last for ages, and this was intended to endure to future generations, it is by no means unlikely that it is still in existence. That it has not been recognized is, probably, from its having become, in the course of ages, covered with mould and overgrown with shrubs, so as to be scarcely distinguishable from a natural hillock, to the inexperienced. But its form and position would probably suggest its true character to those who have had opportunities of observing such monuments, or tumuli, in other countries; and careful excavations in it might lead to some curious conclusions.

The occasion of the erection of this altar is very remarkable, and in the highest degree honorable to all the parties concerned.

It will be remembered that the tribes of Reuben and Gad, with the half tribe of Manasseh, had received their inheritance beyond the Jordan, on the express condition of sending their warriors to assist their brethren in the conquest of Canaan. They very faithfully and honorably performed this engagement. We do not suppose that they were for so many years, seven at least, without seeing their families, or visiting their homes. That would have been an absurd and needless self-denial. They doubtless went home while the camp lay in winter quarters; and they could, moreover, seeing how short the distance between them was, go home on leave, when particular domestic occasions required their presence. Still, they must have been truly glad when Joshua called them before him, and after commending their conduct, and reminding them of their duties, dismissed them, with his blessing, finally to their homes.

They had not been long gone when it was whispered tremblingly among the people at Shiloh that these men had no sooner crossed the river to their own country, than they had set up a great altar on the cliffs overhanging the eastern border of the Jordan, visible from afar. Well; where was the harm? There was, in fact, room for much dangerous suspicion in this act, which however free from evil intention, was not remarkable for discretion under all the circumstances—at least unless a previous explanation had been given. The harm is, that the law, to repress all danger of that plurality of worship which was the bane of all ancient religions, as well as to preserve the unity of the tribes, had decreed that there should be but one altar—that at the tabernacle—for all the people. The act of the returning warriors was therefore open to the suspicion that they meant, if not to adopt another worship, at least to set up another and independent establishment for worship, on their own side the Jordan, which, besides the obvious tendency to idolatry, could not fail in the event to destroy the connection by which the tribes were linked together. The obligation of all the Israelites to resort three times in the year, for worship, to the same

altar of the people, was admirably suited to retain them as one people, by continually keeping before their minds their common origin and common obligations; but if a separate establishment were allowed to exist on the other side the Jordan, there could be no difficulty in divining that they would cease to put themselves to the trouble of visiting the parent establishment in Canaan, and would, in no long time, come to regard themselves as a separate people.

This was precisely the view of the case which struck the minds of the people; and those who heard it in the several places of their abode, seriously and sadly buckled on their arms, and repaired to Shiloh for orders, resolved, if so commanded, to call to a severe account for their disloyalty, the brethren side by side with whom they had lately fought in the battles of Canaan. Their holy jealousy on this occasion for the glory of God and for the honor of the institutions he had given them, is most becoming, and gives us a favorable opinion of the character of this generation. The sequel bears out this impression. The task which lay before them, though clear, was painful: and they resolved in the meekness of wisdom, not to proceed hastily, or without proper inquiry, in a matter of such deep importance. True, the facts seemed scarcely capable of other than one interpretation; but still, it was just possible that they were mistaken; and at all events, they would not have it laid to their charge, that they had condemned their brethren unheard. They resolved to send a deputation to inquire into the affair, and remonstrate with the transjordanic warriors. Phinehas, the son of the high-priest, and with him ten of the great family chiefs, one from each tribe, were chosen for this important office. They were thus persons of great weight of character and approved discretion, entitled, by their high position, to demand an explanation, and less likely than younger men to have their judgments warped or compromised by the hasty impulses of passion.

The delegates proceeded on their mission, and on their arrival in Gilead stated the grounds of complaint; prefaced

by the impressive words which they were fully authorized to use—"Thus saith the whole congregation of the Lord."

On hearing to what constructions they had laid themselves open, and how the transaction had been viewed, the two and a half tribes were overwhelmed with grief and astonishment; and with becoming warmth, amounting to horror, disclaimed the injurious imputation, and declared the views on which they had really acted. They commenced by invoking God himself to witness the innocency of their intentions. The form in which they did this is the most emphatic that language can express, and such as can scarcely be represented in a translation. There are the three principal names of God in Hebrew—El, Elohim, Jehovah,—and all three are used together by them, and repeated twice. "El, Elohim, Jehovah—El, Elohim, Jehovah,"—he knoweth, etc. If translated at all, it might be perhaps thus:—"Almighty God, Elohim, Jehovah," etc.; for the first term involves the idea of might or strength.

The two and a half tribes proceed to declare, that their object was in all respects the very reverse of that imputed to them. Instead of meaning a separation, they had set up their altar as a monument to future ages of the connection between the tribes separated by the river; so that if, at any time to come, their descendants should attempt to cast off the connection and assert their own independence, or if the Israelites should hereafter attempt to disown their union, and declare that the people beyond the river had "no part in the Lord," this monument might be pointed to in evidence of the fact. Some have thought from this, that the altar set up had an actual resemblance to the altar of burnt-offerings at the tabernacle. That could not be the case, for the altar there was of brass; but, as it is said to have been after the same pattern, there was no doubt a general resemblance to that altar produced in heaped earth, and stones, and of vastly larger proportions. Its general purpose, as explained, was the same as all such erections. Its presence would excite inquiry; this would produce the history of the circumstances

in which it originated, and the purpose for which it was established, the knowledge of which would be thus transmitted to future ages, and kept alive in all generations. To this no kind of resemblance is necessary. If the monument in London were entirely without sculptures and inscriptions to denote its object, still that object would not be forgotten, so long as a people lived around its base. The child would not be able to see so remarkable an object without asking his father what it meant; and the answer which he received he would in a later day give to his own son, when asked the same question. We have a remarkable example of this in the case of the stones taken up out of the bed of the Jordan, and set up at Gilgal:—"That this may be a *sign* among you. And it shall come to pass, that when your children shall ask their fathers in time to come, What mean ye by these stones? Then ye shall answer them, That the waters of Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord; and these stones shall be for a memorial to the children of Israel forever." Joshua iv. 6, 7. The object, and probably the construction, of this monument set up by the tribes in the present case, was almost precisely similar to that, and still more similar to the heap which Jacob and Laban set up as a memorial of the covenant between them. That heap was in fact in this same land of Gilead, probably not far from the altar now set up, the establishment of which may indeed have been suggested by the older monument. This seems to be indicated also by the name they gave to the altar, and the terms in which they described it. They "called the altar Ed (a witness) for it shall be a witness between us that Jehovah is God." Compare this with the other case: "Laban called it Jegar-sahadutha; but Jacob called it Galeed"—both names meaning "the heap of witness;" and then the reason, "This heap is a witness between me and thee this day." Gen. xxxi. 47, 48. Joshua himself, at a later day, gave his sanction to this kind of memorial. After the people had, at his instance, renewed their covenant with God, he "took a stone and set it up under an oak that was by the sanctuary

of the Lord. And Joshua said to all the people, Behold this stone shall be a witness unto us; for *it hath heard* all the words of the Lord which he spake unto us; it shall be therefore a witness unto you, lest ye deny your God." Joshua xxiv. 27. This is a fine idea, going into the region of high poetic conception. The stone would become an enduring monument of that which it had *heard*, when the men who also heard it had descended to the tomb. This invests the stone with a living presence, such as that which the mind insensibly gives to some old rock or tree upon the site of great deeds, of which it stands the sole existing witness. The consciousness of this was present to the mind of the warrior who told his troops "that forty centuries looked down upon their exploits from the pyramids of Egypt."

TWENTY-SECOND WEEK—THURSDAY.

JOSHUA.

AFTER a long career of victorious warfare, followed by an old age of comparative repose, during which, upon his estate at Timnath Serah, in the mountains of Ephraim, he was permitted to enjoy the blessings of the land he had conquered, Joshua consciously drew near to the term of his existence, and, like Moses, determined to give to the assembled Israelites the advantage of his parting counsels. The tribes were convened at Shechem, where the tabernacle seems at this time to have been, and where on a former occasion, between the mountains of Ebal and Gerizim, they had entered into covenant with God. Nothing can be conceived more impressive or more sublime, than the circumstances of this last public interview of the aged leader with the people whom he had put in possession of the goodly land of Canaan, and who had so often followed him in his victorious path. In the midst of the elders, the chiefs, and magistrates of Israel; sur-

rounded by a respectful people, formerly bondsmen of Pharaoh, but now in possession of a rich and beautiful country, and sole survivors of an untoward generation, their illustrious and venerable commander—the oldest man in all their nation—spoke to them as to his sons. And of what did he speak? He was a soldier, and his career had been essentially military; but he spoke to them, not of conquest—the sound of the trumpet and the gleam of the sword cannot be recognized in his address—but of the holiness and the obedience which become the people chosen of God. It is such a discourse as a patriarch might have given on his death-bed, or a prophet might have uttered from the valley of vision. He called to mind the benefits which, age after age, had been showered upon the race of Abraham; he humbly summed up the victories to which he had himself led them, in a single allusion; and concluded with the impressive words—“Choose ye this day whom ye will serve, but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” The entire people, with one voice, responded to this call, by loud and hearty declarations of their determined faithfulness to their covenant with God; and the aged Joshua, after he had written these words in the book of the law deposited in the ark, set up a stone under a tree that grew near the tabernacle, as a memorial of this renewal of the covenant. His work, both of war and peace, was then done. He could now lay down his head and die in thankful peace. So he died, and was buried in his own grounds at Timnath-Serah.

The character of Joshua is not only one of the finest in Scripture history, but one of the most remarkable that the world ever saw. There is scarcely any other great conqueror, and certainly no Asiatic conqueror, like him—without personal ambition, without any desire of aggrandizement. His whole heart was in the highest degree PATRIOTIC, under a system which required patriotism to take the form of religious obedience. In the distant view, the personal and even public character of the man is overshadowed by the very greatness of the events and circumstances in which he is

placed. The events are greater than the man, and engage the attention more; and hence individually he appears with less eclat, and attracts less attention, than an inferior man among events of less importance. This, when rightly viewed, is not a dishonor to him, but a glory; for it shows how accurately he measured, and how truly he understood, his right position. A lesser man, in all the attributes of true greatness, would have been seen and heard more; but it is the magnanimous character of real greatness to shroud the power it exercises. Littleness is more demonstrative; greatness is quiet in the calm repose of conscious strength and influence.

Looking more closely, we appreciate the character of Joshua better. We see that it is only his essential *fitness* for the place he filled—for the great work which devolved upon him, that prevents him from being more seen. We, then, behold in him that rare combination of the highest qualities of the statesman and the warrior. We see that he is quite equal to every emergency under which he has to act; and that he puts forth just that degree of power—just that degree of the qualities suited to the occasion, and which may be required—no more, for that would be scarcely demonstrative; no less, for that would be incompetency. If his gifts were less brilliant than those of Moses, they were such as befitted *his* successor; and few men have lived to whom it would not be high praise to say, that they succeeded such a man as Moses with credit. We find Joshua valiant without temerity, and active without precipitation. No care, no advantage, no duty is neglected by him. In the passage of the Jordan, in the judgment of Achan, in the siege of Ai, he forgot nothing which might tend to deepen the impression the miracle produced—nothing which might render the justice of the doom apparent—nothing by which the victory might be assured. The generation which he led was better and wiser than that which came forth from Egypt, and yielded to him a more willing obedience than Moses had obtained from their fathers. Towards the enemy alone was his coun-

tenance terrible; for, regarding himself as the minister of the Divine anathemas against a guilty people, he executed his awful commission with no shrinking hand; but at the same time with calmness and without fury. His piety is, however, gentle, while his faith is impregnable, and his confidence in God unshaken.

In short, no man that ever lived need desire a higher or more honorable character than that given to this great man by the sacred writer who records his death, and whose words form a striking epitaph upon the hero, and the most appropriate memorial of his career:—"And it came to pass after these things, that Joshua the son of Nun, THE SERVANT OF THE LORD, died, being a hundred and ten years old."

TWENTY-SECOND WEEK—FRIDAY.

THUMBS AND GREAT TOES.—JUDGES I. 1-7.

ONE is shocked to learn that when the Israelites had taken captive Adoni-bezek the king of Jerusalem, they cut off his thumbs and his great toes. The man who has studied the war usages of ancient times cannot, indeed, feel much surprise at anything of barbarity or savageness of which he can read, although the distress of his feelings may be not less than that of the person of less knowledge to whom such things are new. For the reasons already stated, we have no just grounds for expecting that the Hebrews should carry on their warfares more mildly than their neighbors; yet it must be admitted that this treatment of a captive king is, at the first view, regarded with pain and with something like abhorrence. But wait a little. Let us read a few lines more of the record. How did this king himself regard this treatment? How did it affect his mind? Did he fill the air with outcries at this cruel indignity, and call down upon them all the curses of all his gods? Did he fold his arms in calm

dignity upon his breast, and submit his outraged majesty to the insults of a barbarous people? Nothing of the kind! He was humble, he was contrite. He regarded himself as an offender brought to justice, and confessed that he richly deserved the doom inflicted upon him. Hear his words: "Three score and ten kings, having their thumbs and great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table. As I have done, so God hath requited me." Do the Hebrews, after this, need any excuse? Why, the man they thus roughly handled is himself their apologist and vindicator. So far from taking pleasure in such barbarities, it was precisely to express their abhorrence of them, as exercised by him, that they had subjected him to the very same treatment, that he might learn there is a God that judgeth in the earth. And he did learn it. Nothing can be more shocking than the scene this wicked king depicts. Seventy kings, not only thus mutilated, but reduced to a condition worse than slavery—their misery paraded at the conqueror's court—and instead of sitting at his table, constrained to gather their food, like dogs, below it. This helps us to some insight of the state of the country under the native princes, whom the Israelites were commissioned to expel. Conceive what must have been the state of the people among whom such a scene could exist,—what wars had been waged, what cruel ravages committed, before these seventy kings—however small their territories—became reduced to this condition, and behold in this a specimen of the fashion in which war was conducted, and of the treatment to which the conquered were exposed. Those are certainly very much in the wrong who picture to themselves the Canaanites as "a happy family," disturbed in their peaceful homes by the Hebrew barbarians from the wilderness. Behold how happy, behold how peaceful, they were!

It may not be clear to many of our readers what may have been the special object of this form of mutilation. We have read often enough, of various kinds of mutilations inflicted upon prisoners of war, but this kind is new to us. **It is still,**

however, not less significant than blinding and other modes of privation adopted in such cases. The object was, in the first place, to disable the kings from taking part in war, without so impairing any of their faculties or functions as to lessen or deaden the sense of suffering and humiliation. This incapacitation was a great matter, when kings were expected to lead their armies in person, and to take an active part in the conflict. It is clear that no man deprived of his thumbs could handle any weapon, and that one destitute of the great toes could not have that firmness of tread in walking, racing, and climbing, which were essential to a military chief, particularly among a people who went barefoot, or who at least wore only such feet-coverings as permitted the full natural action of the toes, among which the great toes are of the highest importance. We almost think that this privation must have operated as a disqualification for any future restoration to the throne, and was intended so to operate. There can be no doubt that when the Israelites proceeded with their miserable captive to his city of Jerusalem, they restored to their liberty the seventy kings whom they had thus avenged, and with whom they had, in this uncouth manner, expressed their sympathy. Nor can there be any doubt that when the seventy discrowned princes beheld their old oppressor thus brought low, they rose from the dust to greet him, crying, "Art thou also become like unto us—thou that didst weaken the nations—thou that madest the land to tremble!" A mutilation which the threescore and ten survived, was not likely to be in itself mortal, and it was therefore more probably from humbled pride than of his wounds that Adonibezek died at Jerusalem.

It is observable that in the Hebrew the great toe is called the thumb of the foot, and hence the phrase here is, "the thumbs of the hand and feet." This is the case in other Oriental and in some European languages. In the Hindoo the thumb is called "sevia viril," the great finger of the hand, and the large toe is named the great finger of the foot. Mr. Roberts, in his curious "Oriental Illustrations," states that

this punishment was in ancient times very common in India, and was inflicted principally upon those who had committed some flagrant offence with the hands or with the feet. Thus, those convicted of forgery or of numerous thefts, had their thumbs cut off. The practice is now extinct, but the memory of it still exists, as it is now one of the bugbears of the nursery and of domestic life: "If you steal any more I will cut off your thumbs;" "Let me find out the thief, and I will soon have his thumbs," and the like.

TWENTY-SECOND WEEK—SATURDAY.

GOVERNMENT.—JUDGES II.

ATTENTION has more than once, in the course of these papers, been called to the fact, that before the time of Moses the Hebrew tribes had been severally governed patriarchally by their own chiefs, and under them by the heads of the great families or clans into which the tribes were divided; and then, again, by the heads of houses. This internal organization appears to have been regarded as sufficient for all common purposes of government, for it still existed under Moses and Joshua, and in the times of the judges and the kings. There are exact parallels to it still subsisting among the Arabian and Tartar tribes. The alteration made by the law did not consist in the abrogation of this institution, but in the establishment of a general government over all, and through which the tribes might be bound more effectually together as one nation. This general government centered in the person of Jehovah himself, who condescended to become, in a special sense, their sovereign, and dwelt among them in a sensible and living presence in the tabernacle. To him, through his high priest, they were to refer in all high matters that concerned the interests of religion and the welfare of the nation—in all, in fact, that lay beyond the scope of those

functions which the tribal chiefs exercised. To him, while they sacrificed to him as their God, they rendered tribute as to their king, as a rent to the sovereign proprietor of the land which he alone had given to them, and which belonged to them only in grant from him ; and to maintain the vitality of their allegiance, they were bound to repair three times in the year to render suit and service to him as their king in the place where he sat on his throne “between the cherubim,” and held his court in the tabernacle.

Under the government thus established, the functions of Moses, and after him of Joshua, were extraordinary, and altogether temporary. Moses was to bring the nation forth out of the house of bondage, and to organize its institutions in the wilderness ; Joshua was to conduct them into the land of Canaan, and to give it to them for a possession. To fulfil such special missions these men were invested with extraordinary powers, which gave them a sort of place between the heads of tribes on the one hand, and the Divine King, whose commissioned servants they were, and for whom they acted, on the other. They were themselves most anxious to keep before the minds of the people this character of their office, and this truth of their position, by taking no step of the least consequence without reference to the Lord’s will, and by acting on all occasions as the ministers of the will thus ascertained.

It will, therefore, appear that those who marvel that Joshua did not, like Moses, appoint a successor, and who are disposed to ascribe to that omission the disorders that ensued in the commonwealth, do utterly misconceive the true nature of the case. Moses did not appoint Joshua to succeed him, or rather to carry out the work he had left unfinished, of his own mere will, but by the Divine command. If any successor to Joshua had been needed, he would have been commanded to appoint one, and without such a command, this was not to be expected from him. The truth is, that the functions of Moses, and after him of Joshua, formed one grand initiatory operation—which was completed by the

latter, and the completion of which left the Hebrew state on its proper and permanent foundations—a theocracy, with the Lord at its head, as the Divine King, abiding among them in his tabernacle; with the high-priest as the medium of intercourse with him, and the official interpreter of his will; and with the heads of tribes, of families, and of houses, as the instruments of local government. It is by our losing sight of the presence of this latter feature of the constitution that all the difficulty arises. But its importance and general sufficiency may, in some degree, be illustrated from our own municipal institutions, which are found to be sufficient, under the general operation of the laws, for all local purposes throughout the land, leaving but little occasion for reference to the general government, except when something goes seriously wrong—when some calamity has occurred—or when some large improvements are contemplated.

The object of this institution obviously was, to keep the nation in a state of direct dependence upon the providence and care of the Divine King, who had condescended to become, in this special manner, their sovereign, and the head of their polity. The intervention of any vicegerent, under whatever name, would materially have impaired, if not destroyed, the directness and essential purposes of this government; for it is in man's nature, and especially was it in the Hebrew nature, to look from the unseen to the seen; and with a visible and human vicegerent, invested with the external attributes of power and government, the invisible King would have soon become, as to the *practical* recognition of his government, a mere abstraction, a name, a ceremony.

We are not to inquire whether this was in itself the most perfect form of political government. It was a special and peculiar government, adapted to a peculiar people, and framed for the accomplishment of peculiar ends; and being chosen by God himself as adapted to that people, and suited to these ends, it was the most perfect to them, without being *necessarily* on that account the best for, or indeed possible to, any other people. But it may be, and it has been, asked

—If this were the best government for the Hebrews, how comes it to pass that they did not thrive under it? The answer is plain—The proper operation, which would have led them to prosperity and power, was frustrated by their own disloyalty and disobedience. They allowed themselves to be seduced into the very connections with the remaining Canaanites, which had been most solemnly interdicted; they mixed with them in marriage, in traffic, in social intercourse, and eventually in the solemnities of worship and superstition. They then became alienated from their Divine King, and forgot or neglected the invaluable privileges to which they were entitled under his government. How then was that government to be carried on? Were the terrors of the Divine power to be incessantly manifested, to restrain them forcibly from yielding to their vicious and idolatrous propensities? Such is not the method of the Divine government; and it would, indeed, have been contrary to the very idea and use of a moral governor. Was he, then, to abandon them altogether to the influence of their own corrupt tendencies, which would soon have plunged them into remediless idolatry, and thus have defeated, so to speak, all the purposes for which they had been set apart among the nations? If neither of these courses could be taken, there only remains that course which the Lord's providence actually took in dealing with this people. When any portion of the nation—any section of the tribes—became so far gone in idolatry as to adopt the public worship of other gods, the Lord withdrew his protection from them. Then, forsaken of their strength, they soon fell under subjection to some neighboring state, and had to endure exactions and oppressions of intensity proportioned to their offences. This position, so grievous to a conquering people, generally brought them in time to their senses. They humbled themselves before their offended Sovereign; and, mindful of his old deliverances, they implored him to appear once more in their behalf. And he heard them. The fit man was found and appointed to act as the Lord's vicegerent for the occasion. Under his conduct

the deliverance was effected, and the Lord's providence and sovereignty magnified. The deliverer, after he had, in the Lord's might, broken the foreign yoke from their necks, continued to act upon the commission he had received, and exercised such authority over that portion of the nation which had needed his services, as enabled him to maintain them in their allegiance to Jehovah during his lifetime: nor did the influence of his exertions always disappear with his own existence and that of the generation to whom this experience of judgment and mercy had been given. The Lord enforced the authority of his law, by thus visibly controlling the nation, and proportioning their prosperity and adversity to the degree of obedience which they yielded to it; and they were hence led to look immediately to him for protection, without interposing any permanent human authority, on which they might be apt too exclusively to depend, and thus forget their God.

Although it must be admitted that the Israelites did not, during the period under notice, maintain the position which belonged to them, had they proved worthy of it—yet it may appear that the impression of their prevalent misconduct and unfaithfulness during that period—or, as some view it, of the insufficiency of the government under which they were placed—goes considerably beyond the facts of the case. By a superficial observer, as Dr. Graves well remarks,* “the whole period under the judges may easily be mistaken for an unbroken series of idolatries and crimes, from his not observing that the lapses which incurred punishment, and the Divine deliverances which attended repentance, are related so fully as to occupy almost the whole narrative; while periods when, under the government of the judges, the people followed God, and the land enjoyed peace, are passed over in a single verse, as productive of no event which required a particular detail.” This writer enters into a calculation by which it appears that out of the 450 years under the judges (without including the forty years' government of Eli), there

* *Lectures on the Pentateuch.*

were not less than 377 years, during which the authority of the law of Moses was acknowledged in Israel. Of the state of things which existed during this period, a charming picture, incomparable in the hearty piety, and the pure and simple manners which it exhibits, is to be found in the book of Ruth, on which we forbear to expatiate only because its indications must soon engage our full attention.

Twenty-Third Week—Sunday.

THE REPENTANCE OF GOD.—JUDGES III. 18.

GOD is more than once described in Scripture as repenting of something that he had done. In the text before us, it is said, when his people had been allowed to fall under the oppression of their enemies, to punish them for their sins, and they at length turned to him—the Lord repented because of their groanings, and raised them up a deliverer. An equally strong case is that of the antediluvians—whose crimes were such that it is said the Lord repented that he had made man upon the earth.* So he “repents” of having made Saul king; † repents of the evil he had said he would bring upon the Ninevites; ‡ and in various places is described as “repenting” § of the evil he had thought to do, on certain occasions, and did it not. In fact, that God should thus “repent for his servants,” seems to have been promised to the Israelites by Moses in Deut. xxxii. 36. Yet it is very remarkable that in one of the strongest of these instances—that of Saul—the very same chapter which contains one of the most signal instances of repentance ascribed to God—contains also the strongest declaration that he never repents. In 1 Sam.

* Gen. vi. 6.

† 1 Sam. xv. 35.

‡ Jonah iii. 10.

§ 2 Sam. xxiv. 16. 1 Chron. xxi. 15. Jer. xxvi. 10.

xv. 11, the Lord says, "It repenteth me that I have made Saul to be a king, for he is turned back from following me." In the 29th verse we read, "the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent; for he is not a man that he should repent." Even the Pentateuch, which contains some of the strongest instances of this mode of expression, declares "God is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent." Num. xxiii. 19.

How are we to understand these things? Is there anomaly or contradiction here? By no means. Whatever the Scriptures positively assert of the character of God is to be taken plainly as it stands—it is part of the Scripture doctrine of his being and his attributes; but when, in the description of God's part in human history, certain sentiments are ascribed to him, seemingly inconsistent with those more general and abstract characters of the Divine Being, we are to understand that these expressions are used for the purpose of man's clearer apprehension. Man cannot well grasp anything beyond the range of his own intellectual or sentient experience—the utmost stretch of his mind cannot grasp the vast idea of God's nature and infinite perfections; and it is in the knowledge of this, that He, in his great condescension, and for the sake of his conduct being made intelligible to man's understanding, has allowed Himself to be set before him as moved by the feelings and passions which man himself experiences. In so far as we are enabled to realize by the later light of the Gospel, some faint notions of the perfections of the Divine nature, the more we are struck by the unutterable love, the tender consideration, the infinite condescension, which, for man's good, allowed, in ages of unrefined intellect, these humanized representations of himself to be set before men. The height of this condescension was reached, when, in the depths of the Divine wisdom, a plan was devised, perfect for man's salvation, but which required Him to assume the very nature of man, and as a man to live and suffer.

Still, then, what does the "repenting" of God really mean?

It is clear that we are not to ascribe to God's immutable mind the fickleness of human purposes, or to suppose that he on any of the occasions specified really repented, or was grieved or disappointed. This is not possible to God—with whom there is no variableness nor shadow of turning.* These and similar expressions are taken from what passes among men when they undergo change of purpose, or are disappointed in their expectations and endeavors. As a potter, on finding that a vessel on which he has spent his utmost care, does not answer his purpose, regrets his labor, and casts the worthless object out of sight—so, at the deluge for instance, God is represented, in accommodation to our feeble apprehensions, as repenting and being grieved at heart that he had bestowed upon man so much labor in vain. So also as a man, when he repents, changes his course of procedure—God, when he changes his procedure, is said to repent, seeing that such change would be in man the result of repentance. Yet there is here a change, not as in man, of the will or purpose—but of the work of procedure only. Repentance in man is the changing of his will as well as of his work; repentance in God is the change of the work only, and not of the will, which in Him is incapable of change. Seeing that there is no mistake in his councils, no disappointment of his purposes, no frustration of his expectations—God can never change his will, though he may will to change his work. The decrees and purposes of God stand like mountains of brass.† Always immutable, God is incapable of the frailty or fickleness which belongs to man's nature and experience. So also in that singular phrase where, on account of the wickedness that brought on the deluge, God is said not only to repent, but to be "grieved at his heart"—the very phrase, emphatic as it sounds to our human experience, indicates the real sense in which such expressions are to be understood. In strict propriety of speech God has neither heart nor grief. He is a most pure Spirit—an uncompounded Being, far above the influence of human passion. He is im-

* James i. 17.

† Zech. vi. 1

passible—and it is wholly impossible that anything should grieve or work repentance in him. The cause is, in all these cases, put, by metonymy, for the effect.

It has often occurred to us that all these expressions, whereby God is presented to the mind as invested with human parts and passions, involve a sort of looking forward to that period in which they would all become proper and appropriate, by our being permitted to view God in Christ, who has carried the real experiences of our nature into the very heavens, where he sits, not as one who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but as one who has been tempted like as we are, yet remained without sin. Had God been, in the Old Testament, set before our mind wholly in the abstract qualities of his being—there would have been a lack of unity in the mode in which he is presented to the apprehension of the heart (we say not of the *mind*) under the two dispensations. But the Lord, knowing from the beginning the aspect in which he would be eventually presented to the church in Christ, permitted beforehand these humanized indications of himself, that there might be under both dispensations that oneness of feeling in regard to him, which enables the most enlightened servant of Christ to make the language of ancient David his own when he thinks and speaks of God.

TWENTY-THIRD WEEK—MONDAY.

SUBJECTION.—JUDGES III. 1-17.

THE first subjugation under which the Israelites fell was to a foreign prince named Chushan-rishathaim, king of Mesopotamia. As early as the time of Abraham, we see princes from the Euphrates undertaking expeditions and making conquests in this quarter, and the present is but another instance of the same kind. It is much to be regretted that we have not more full information respecting the regions beyond the

river at this early time, that we might more perfectly understand the nature of the relations which subsisted between its people and those of the countries towards the Jordan. There are hints, here and there in the early Scriptures, of a degree of connection—of peace sometimes, and sometimes of war, that we have no means of tracing or understanding. Indeed, as our most ancient history takes little or no notice of any other nations than those of Egypt, Arabia, Canaan, and Israel, we almost grow up in the notion that these nations formed the world in those days. We know them only; and it is with something of surprise that we occasionally catch a slight glimpse of other and more remote nations, great and strong. What was the nature of the oppression to which this conqueror subjected the Israelites, is not very clear. There is no reason however to suppose that he remained in occupation of the land; but he more probably exacted heavy and oppressive tributes, which they were constrained to pay under the penalty of another devastating visit from his armies; and by which the wealth of the nation was drained, and the people kept in a state of poverty and wretchedness.

Eight years did the Israelites remain under Chushan-rishathaim, and then, on their repentance, found a deliverer in Othniel, that gallant son of Kenaz, whose exploit, which won him the hand of Caleb's daughter, we have already had occasion to notice. Under him the land enjoyed rest for forty years. Then the people, after Othniel's death, again fell into sin, and for that sin were delivered into the hands of the Moabites. This was a more terrible judgment than the other. The dominion of a near neighbor, whose resources are close at hand, is always more fearful than that of a stranger, the centre of whose power is far off. In this case we may also presume, that something remained of that old animosity that induced a king of Moab to hire the Chaldean soothsayer to lay a curse upon the Israelites, with a view to their overthrow. Baulked then, the Moabites are now successful. The Protector, who would not suffer even the impotent curse of Balaam to light upon his people's head, has now withdrawn

his interposing hand, and left them to their own resources—and they are lost. Now Moab may vent at will the gathered envy, hatred, and malice of sixty years.

We feel some interest in knowing what had become of the tribes beyond the Jordan. Nothing is said of them. We should suppose that they would have interfered to prevent this motion on the part of the Moabites. But it seems likely that they were previously subdued, as it is scarcely credible but that the Moabites would desire first to recover their own ancient possessions beyond the Jordan, before carrying their aggressions into the country west of the river.

The king of the Moabites at this time was Eglon, described as “a very fat man.” Of all the numerous personages brought under our notice in the Scriptures, this is the only one distinguished as being “fat.” This seems to imply the rarity of this bodily characteristic. Corpulency is indeed very rare in Western Asia, among men. Few instances of it occurred in our own somewhat extensive experience, although we less frequently saw persons who might be called stout from largeness of build. The obesity of Eglon would, however, probably not have been noticed, but from the fact afterwards mentioned, that when he met his death, the dagger thrust into his body could not be again drawn out, from his fatness closing over it.

This conqueror made his subjugation of Israel the more oppressive, by his actually remaining in the land, with a military force to hold the people in awe. He retained in his actual possession the plain of Jericho, which, as formerly described, forms, when viewed geographically, part of the same plain with that of Moab on the other side of the river. On that account, no doubt, he remained there, for the facility of communication with his native territory—both for obtaining prompt reinforcements from thence, or for retreating thither in case of emergency. His retaining the command of the fords of the Jordan, would also enable him to prevent the tribes beyond the river from affording any succor to their oppressed brethren, if they were in the condition to render any.

We can see that, although he desired to secure his supremacy by remaining in the land, and maintaining a force there sufficient, as it seemed, to repress all attempts to resist or shake off the authority he had established, he was prudent enough not to venture into the mountainous interior of the land, and so afford the Israelites an opportunity of cutting off his communication with his own country.

The presence of a foreign prince, ruling over them in the plain of Jericho—ever present and watchful—could not but have formed a far more harassing oppression than that to which they had been previously subject. But the aggravation of a second offence required this heavier punishment. This state of things lasted eighteen years, during which the dominion of Moab acquired something like the character of an established authority from the quiet submission of the Israelites. The grievance on the part of the latter lay, we may suppose, in the heavy tribute demanded by their masters, and in the lawless conduct of the occupying force towards the conquered people. The tribute of the tribes held under the yoke, seems to have been carried periodically to the Moabitish king in the plain of Jericho, at “the city of palm trees,” a name that once belonged to Jericho, but which seems now to have been appropriated by some other town that had arisen in another part of this palmy plain. From the description we have of the manner in which this tribute was on one occasion presented—the various matters of which it was composed appear to have been borne by a great number of persons, who, marching in orderly procession, successively laid down their valuable burdens before the king. This is in perfect conformity with modern eastern manners. Tributes, the products of provinces, the gifts periodically or occasionally tendered to a sovereign, are always presented in great state, and with much solicitude to enhance the apparent extent of the offering. Four or five men on horses are laden with what might most easily be carried by one; and jewels, trinkets, and other articles of value, which one tray might very well hold, are displayed in ten or fifteen. So it was also, in ancient times, as we find by the sculp-

tures of Persia and the paintings of Egypt, in which interesting exhibitions of these processions of tribute-bearers are found. In the latter we see the various offerings received by the king on his throne, then borne away to the stores, and duly registered by the proper officers.

TWENTY-THIRD WEEK—TUESDAY.

EHUD AND EGLON.—JUDGES III. 18-30.

It is remarkable that although the name "Benjamin" signifies the "son of the *right* hand," yet, from some cause or other, multitudes of persons belonging to this tribe were *left*-handed. This is one of the most curious examples of that sort of discrepancy between names and characters, which has often given occasion to amusing remark. In the original Hebrew this contrast is more distinctly noted than in the translation, seeing that the word rendered "left-handed," signifies "short," or "obstructed in the *right* hand." This being the true meaning, it is erroneous to suppose, as some have done, that the seven hundred left-handed men of Benjamin (mentioned in Judges xx. 16), every one of whom could sling stones at a hair and not miss, were ambidexters—that is, who were not literally *left*-handed, but could use *both* hands equally well—the left hand no less than the right. Yet this is the impression which both the Septuagint and the Vulgate translations convey. It is much that men whose right hands are torpid (which is the elegant translation of the Syriac in this case), should be able to use the left hand with the same advantage as men commonly use the right; but it is more—it is a bold and noble triumph over infirmity, turning it into a gain—when men, as in this case, cultivate the powers of the wrong member to the extent of making their left-handed operations more skilful than the right-handed deeds of other men.

One of this body of left-handed Benjaminites was Ehud, the second judge of Israel. He seems to have been a man of consequence in his tribe before he rose to this distinction, for he was the person appointed on one occasion to command the party which bore the tributes of Israel to king Eglon, at the city of Palm-trees. It is well to note that this city of Palm-trees, with the whole plain of Jericho, was in the lot of Benjamin, and that tribe must therefore have been more particularly than the others, aggrieved by the Moabitish oppression. They paid tribute like the other tribes; but, beside, they had the immediate presence of the conquering power among them, reigning in part of their territory, and were therefore continually subject to the annoyances, insults, and special exactions which the presence of an occupying soldiery, and of a greedy and insolent court, never fails in the East to impose upon a conquered country. It is in the course of nature, therefore, that the Benjaminites should have been the first to move against this oppression, and that the deliverer should have been a chief man of this tribe. The animus of personal hatred, which was thus engendered, also helps to account for the unscrupulous measure which Ehud adopted in giving the first blow to the oppressor.

Having delivered his present in the way which we yesterday described, Ehud withdrew, and accompanied his men so far as the "quarries that were by Gilgal," on the way homeward. There is, perhaps, some point intended in this mention of the "quarries." The verb, from which the word so translated comes, means "to cut out," or "to carve as a sculptor," and hence some have supposed that it was a place of graven images, which the Moabites had set up in the sacred land; and connecting this with the fact that Gilgal had long been the place of the Hebrew encampment, when they first entered the land, and where the twelve memorial stones, taken out of the bed of the Jordan had been placed, it has been deduced that the Moabitish idols had been set up in a spot thus memorable, and in some degree hallowed, in studied contempt of the religion and worship of the Israelites. The

more the reader considers the peculiar estimation in which, from historical and religious associations, this spot was regarded by the Israelites—and the more he studies the peculiar modes in which the ancient heathen expressed their triumph over a fallen foe, and over *his gods*, the more reason there may be to see some probability in this seemingly fanciful conclusion. Recollecting how the Philistines triumphed by sending the ark of the Lord to the temple of their Dagon, nothing can be more likely than that if the Moabites regarded the place as a sacred one of the Hebrews, and looked upon the stones as religious monuments of theirs, they would inflict upon them the insult of setting up their own idols in this very spot.

The ensuing actions of Ehud may therefore appear to have been stimulated, or his wavering purpose strengthened, by the view of this profanation. We at least know that, on arriving at this place, he turned again, and went immediately into the presence of the king. Having been there just before, on an errand so agreeable to the king and those about him, he would find easy access, on pretence of having some forgotten part of his mission to discharge. Such, indeed, was Ehud's pretence. He had, he said, "a secret errand" to deliver. On this the king commanded his attendants to withdraw, and he remained alone with the avenger. Ehud appeared to be unarmed. It was probably a rule that no one, and especially no Israelite, should appear armed in the presence of the king; but this man had a long two-edged dagger girded upon his *right* thigh, under his raiment. Such weapons were usually worn of course upon the left thigh, to be drawn by the right hand; but Ehud being left-handed, was enabled to wear it for efficient use upon a part of his person where its presence would not be suspected. He was aware of the danger of giving an alarm; and his anxiety therefore was, as Josephus alleges, to find the opportunity of giving one fatal stroke, that the king might perish without cry or struggle. This could not be achieved while Eglon remained seated; therefore, drawing near at the same time,

and to make him rise, he said, "I have a message from God unto thee." On this the king, heathen as he was, rose to receive such a message with becoming respect, and that instant the dagger of Ehud was buried in his bowels. So terrible was the stroke, that the haft went in after the blade, and could not be withdrawn. Leaving it there, Ehud "went forth through the porch, and shut the doors of the parlor upon him, and locked them."

It had previously been noticed, that the king was "sitting in a summer parlor, which he had for himself alone." The term "summer parlor," scarcely conveys the full sense of the original. The marginal reading, "parlor of cooling," is nearer. Of the two words employed, one denotes that the room was an *upper chamber*, and the other, that it was constructed for the purpose of *coolness*—a provision that must have been very needful in the almost torrid climate of the plain of Jericho. The fact is interesting, merely as a point of antiquities—that measures were in this early age found for promoting coolness in certain parts of the house during the heats of summer. Taking into account the peculiarly warm climate of the plain of Jericho, we may conceive that the provision made was probably such as we find in the corresponding climates of the valley of the Nile and the plains of the Tigris and Euphrates. These methods were two-fold.

There is first, then, in most good houses, a chamber in the upper part of the house, often thrown considerably apart from the general mass of building in order to secure the principal object of its appropriation. This is, that at the end opposite the entrance, there shall be a large oriel or projecting window, occupying the entire end of the room, thrown forward and overlooking the most open situation that can be commanded, whether it be a street, a river, or a garden. The recess formed by the window is raised a foot or so above the general level of the room, and is fitted with cushions, where the master of the house reposes during the heat of the day, refreshed by the air which is admitted through the fine lattice work of wood, which is so close as to exclude the

glaring light and heat, as well as to prevent the interior from being seen from without, while the person within can command a perfect view through the interstices. There can be no question about the antiquity of such arrangements, for such a window, thus latticed, is expressly mentioned in Judges v. 28, where Sisera's mother and her ladies are watching through the lattice for the return of his chariot. All the arrangements of this room are adapted to promote coolness, and to form a pleasant and refreshing retreat during the heat of the day. These sitting apartments are sometimes seen thrown quite across the street, joining the houses on either side, forming a pleasing variety to the architecture, particularly when seen, as they often are, half shaded by the leaves of the palm tree that overshadows them from the court within.

Another mode of promoting coolness in this and other rooms is by means of the *mulquf*, or wind conductor. This is a construction rising above the roof, and open to the wind, so that a constant stream of cool air passes down into the apartments below. In the region of the Tigris these constructions, always open to the prevailing winds of the locality, are substantially built with bricks covered with plaster, and present the appearance of low towers or chimneys; but in the region of the Nile they form a kind of shed or dome, consisting of a strong frame-work, to which several planks of wood are nailed, according to the height and breadth proposed; and if required of cheaper materials, the place of planks is supplied by reeds or mats, covered with stucco, and protected and supported by wooden rafters. That this arrangement is by no means of modern date, that it is, at least, as ancient as the time of Eglon, is shown by its being distinctly exhibited in the ancient tomb-paintings, wherein the early domestic arrangements of the Egyptians are exhibited. Indeed, the ancient inhabitants of Egypt seem to have had this arrangement in greater perfection than the modern, as their wind conductors, like those of Chaldea at the present time, were adapted to catch the wind from different directions, whereas those now in use are open only to the north-west.

The retiredness of these "cool parlors," and the use to which they were appropriated, is shown by the fact that the servants of Eglon, although aware that Ehud had departed, and surprised at the time which had elapsed without their being called, did not venture to intrude upon their master's privacy. They supposed that he was taking his afternoon's sleep; but when at length the unusual lapse of time roused their alarm, and they opened the door with a key, on finding it locked, they found their master dead on the floor—long since dead—with the dagger of Ehud in his bowels. The consternation this deed inspired was not lessened, when they soon found Israel in arms. Ehud, escaping to the mountains, had blown the trumpet of revolt, crying, "Follow after me; for the Lord hath delivered your enemies the Moabites into your hands." Following him they hastened to seize the fords of the Jordan, so that when the Moabites awoke from the stupor which the loss of their king inspired, they found themselves hemmed in by eager enemies, without a leader, and the retreat to their own country cut off. Under these circumstances they seem to have been too much dispirited to make any vigorous stand; and they were slain by thousands—not one of them escaped—and Israel once more was free.

Such deeds as that of Ehud, when, as in his case, they have no other object than patriotism, have won the praise of men in the case of Brutus, and others. We cannot praise it, or sympathize with it, attended as it was by circumstances of barbarity and deceit. Some allowance may be made for the views different from ours, but into which human nature is still prone to relapse, of the obligations or rights of patriotic enthusiasm. But since space does not allow us to discuss the subject fully, we can only say that God has often in the history of the world, as in the case of Jehu, made the wrath and cruelty of man to praise him, and to accomplish his decreed purposes.

TWENTY-THIRD WEEK—WEDNESDAY.

THE HUSBANDMEN.—JUDGES III. 31.

THE Philistines were not among the nations devoted to the sword of Israel. They were not, in fact, Canaanites; but foreigners who had at an early period possessed themselves of a portion of the Canaanitish territory. They were there, as we formerly saw, so early as the time of the Hebrew Patriarchs. The fact of their exemption shows how it is that this warlike people have not hitherto appeared upon the scene of the Hebrew history, in which they were destined eventually to make a conspicuous figure. They were not molested by the Israelites; and, therefore, do not seem to have cared whether the territories to which they did not themselves advance any claim were possessed by them or by the Canaanites. Indeed, the nations of Canaan themselves, considering the wonders which the Lord had wrought for Israel, would not probably have attacked the Israelites until put upon their defence; and the Philistines, not being so put upon their defence, may well have been restrained by what they saw and heard, from interfering with a people so signally favored of heaven. We see, also, how their distinct origin, and their appearance in the land as an originally hostile race, prevented such alliances between them and the Canaanitish tribes as might have brought them into conflict with the Hebrews. In time, however, as their power and population increased, they began to manifest a disposition to repel the Israelites from their frontiers, if not to bring such as bordered on that frontier to subjection. Much of the original terror with which the Israelites were regarded would by this time have been abated—if only from the consideration that this favored people had already been twice in a state of subjection—the second time to no greater a people than the Moabites, who seem to have found ten thousand men sufficient to keep in subjection the very tribes—the southern

ones only, against whom the Philistines themselves desired to act.

They appear as the next disturbers of Israel—and that merely in the south—after all the tribes had enjoyed eighty years' peace since the yoke of Moab had been cut off by the dagger of Ehud. There had been probably before this some small operations and petty bickerings, which the sacred historian has not recorded. In the narrative they appear with startling abruptness in the territory probably of either Judah or Dan. They are espied by the husbandmen at work in the fields, who under the conduct of one Shamgar gather together and give them battle with their agricultural implements—having no time to provide themselves better; and the grim Philistines, struck with terror from God, or amazed at this sample of the spirit of the nation, speedily took to flight, and left six hundred of their number dead on the field. This recital gives what we conceive to be the correct interpretation of the single verse of Scripture which records this exploit: "And after him [Ehud] was Shamgar the son of Anath, which slew of the Philistines six hundred men with an ox-goad." This seems to make it the deed of Shamgar alone—but as one man would find it somewhat heavy work to slay six hundred men with an ox-goad, even if they stood still for the purpose—we presume that, as is often the case in all history, the exploit of Shamgar and the rustics he got hastily together is, for conciseness, ascribed to the single arm and weapon of the leader. Still, some of the exploits of Samson, in a later age, come up to this—and it is impossible to affirm positively that this is the more correct interpretation.

We do not know that our own agriculture supplies any implement so well suited to be used as a weapon of war as the ox-goad of Palestine. This may be seen by the description given of the instrument by Maundrell, who was the first to apply his actual observation to the illustration of this passage of Scripture. He says: "The country people are now everywhere at plough in the fields, in order to sow cotton. It was

observable that in ploughing they use goads of extraordinary size ; upon measuring of several I found them eight feet long, and at the bigger end eight inches in circumference. They were armed at the lesser end with a sharp prickle for driving the oxen, at the other end with a small spade or paddle of iron, strong and massy, for cleansing the plough from the clay that encumbered it in working. May we not from hence conjecture that it was with such a goad as one of these that Shamgar made that prodigious slaughter related of him. I am confident that whoever shall see one of these instruments will judge it to be not less fit, perhaps fitter, than a sword for such an execution. Goads of this sort I always saw used hereabouts, and also in Syria ; and the reason is that the same single person both drives the oxen and manages the plough, which makes it necessary to use such a goad as is above described, to avoid the encumbrance of two instruments." This implement also engaged the attention of Buckingham, who, in describing his journey from Tyre to Acre, remarks of the ploughing which he witnessed, "Oxen were yoked in pairs, and the plough was small and of simple construction, so that it was necessary for two to follow in the same furrow, as they invariably did. The husbandman, holding the plough with one hand, by a handle like that of a walking crutch, bore in the other a goad of seven or eight feet in length, armed with a sharp point of iron at one end, and at the other with a plate of the same metal shaped like a calking chisel. One attendant only was necessary for each plough, as he who guided it, with one hand spurred the oxen with the point of the goad, and cleansed the earth from the ploughshare by its spaded heel with the other."

It claims to be noticed that some versions, such as the Septuagint and the Vulgate, make the instrument employed by Shamgar to have been the coulter of his plough. We do not believe this to be a correct interpretation of the original, and most of our readers will smile at it as an absurdity. Yet it is not quite so absurd as it appears. The hollow

piece of pointed iron, which arms the point of the wooden ploughshare, might easily be taken off, and when fitted to a staff as a handle would become a formidable weapon of war. It was no doubt this easy adaptation of agricultural implements to warlike purposes, coupled with a keen remembrance of Shamgar's ox-goad, which led the Philistines, when they had the upper hand in a later age, not only to disarm the Israelites, but even to deprive them of the means of sharpening their instruments of husbandry: "But all the Israelites went down to the Philistines to sharpen every man his share, and his coulter, and his axe, and his mattock. Yet they had a file for the mattocks, and for the coulters, and for the forks, and to sharpen the goads." 1 Sam. xiii. 20, 21.

TWENTY-THIRD WEEK—THURSDAY.

THE OPPRESSED LAND.—JUDGES V. 6-10.

THE victory of Shamgar over the Philistines seems, as we have seen, to have occurred eighty years after that of Ehud over Moab. In the history nothing is said of the condition of the country and people during the period which intervened between the exploit of Shamgar, and the oppression of the northern Canaanites under Jabin, king of Hazor. Indeed, of the state of the people during that period, which lasted twenty years, no information is furnished. But in the noble song of Deborah there is a statement which applies to the whole period, and is a most graphic and interesting indication of the condition of an oppressed people in the East. It deserves to be considered well. We confine ourselves to these particulars now—the song itself will in a day or two claim our notice.

It may be premised that in introducing this description, Deborah speaks of a judge called Jael, not named in the history itself. Shamgar is supposed to have died in the same year

in which he performed that great exploit, for which alone he is remembered. The brevity of the Scripture notice of him, without any reference to the time of his rule, confirms the intimation of Josephus to that effect. Jael probably occurred in the interval between Shamgar's death and the commencement of the northern tyranny—and it is impossible to speculate safely upon the circumstances which have left the mere existence of his government to be gathered from two words in an ancient poem.

The poetess says, that in the days of Shamgar and of Jael, and, by implication, in the years that followed, "The ways lay desert, and travellers went by winding by-paths."* This is a very striking and natural circumstance. The people were so much subjected to violence and insult upon the common and frequented roads—smitten, plundered, stripped, and perhaps often slain—that they gradually abandoned the high-roads altogether, and stole from place to place by obscure and unfrequented routes. The same idea is expressed in a much later age by the prophet Isaiah:—"The highways are desolate, the traveller ceaseth." This indeed heightens the picture; for only, as here, do people travel by unfrequented paths, when constrained to leave their own towns, but travelling itself becomes greatly diminished and almost ceases, people leaving their homes as little as possible, and only on occasions of the extremest urgency. We have ourselves known in the East, in unsettled times, persons afraid to stir, for months together, beyond their towns and villages, and for still longer periods, travelling wholly abandoned, or undertaken only in large and well-armed bodies. In point of fact, this was the general state of Palestine even until our own time, before a somewhat more orderly state of things was established in Syria by Mohammed Ali, when travelling became comparatively safe. The danger in this

* The quotations, when not from the authorized version, are from the admirable translation of Dr. E. Robinson, in the *American Biblical Repository* for 1831—to the notes accompanying which we also owe obligation.

case is from the Arab tribes who occupy the open country, who greatly endangered, by their aggressions upon travellers, the communications between different parts of the land.

Another circumstance is, that "the villages ceased."* Villages are the characteristics of a settled country. In unsettled countries the people are collected in walled towns, at wide distances from each other, the intervening space unrelieved by villages. In times of trouble, the rural population, subject as they are to continual annoyance and plundering, against which they have no defence, gradually withdraw into the nearest towns with their movables, leaving the villages deserted, and abandoning all cultivation but such as can be carried on within reach of the towns. Thus, therefore, not only the villages, but the peasantry ceased, as a necessary consequence, in countries thus troubled. Hence Luther was indirectly right, though not so directly, in translating the word by "peasants" (*bauren*).

But there was not safety, even in towns, for "war was then in the gates;" which doubtless has reference to the hostile incursions in which the cities of Israel were surprised and plundered by their watchful and daring foes. We may find a specimen of this in a later age, in the case of Ziklag, which, in the brief absence of David, was surprised, fired, the women and children carried away captive—no doubt to be sold for slaves—and all the property taken for spoil by the Amalekites. The deprivation of peaceful life and regular government is still farther indicated in this by the fact, that the gates were the places where the magistrates administered justice, and where the public business of the community was transacted. But the continual incursions of the enemy deprived the magistrate of his dignity, and the people of the benefit of government. There being no peace to him that went out or him that came in, the stated administration of justice must have been grievously interrupted in these times.

* Here we adopt the common version, not being satisfied with the reasons Dr. Robinson advances for translating "the leaders ceased."

We are next told, that "a shield or spear was not found among forty thousand in Israel." The shield and spear were the principal weapons of ancient warfare, and here stand for weapons of all kinds. The inference is, that they had been disarmed by their enemies, and sometimes masters—an obvious policy, much used in ancient times, and which we had yesterday occasion to notice. A round number, forty thousand, is used for an indefinite one, to express that the people were altogether without arms. This destitution of arms may account for the small number which eventually came forward to strike for the deliverance of Israel, and the general reluctance to appear in the field which the song of Deborah indicates. Some have thought that the passage only declares the reluctance of the Israelites to take arms by this poetical form of expression; and point to the fact, that the ten thousand who actually took the field, must have had arms. To this it may be answered, that no search for arms is ever so effectual, but that some are concealed, and appear in the hands of their owners when occasion for their use is found. Besides, we do not know with what weapons Barak's warriors fought. Shamgar's husbandmen had defeated the Philistines with ox-goads.

In the sequel there is a beautiful apostrophe to certain classes of the people—from the highest to the lowest—calling upon them to exult in their deliverance from danger. The verse in the common version is—"Speak ye that ride on white asses, ye that sit in judgment and walk by the way." Robinson's is—

"Ye who ride upon white asses,
Ye who recline upon splendid carpets,
And ye who walk the streets,
Prepare a song."

We had occasion, not long ago,* to remark on the use of asses for riding, and on the distinction of riding on white asses. At the present day, when in the East, no man of the

* Nineteenth Week, Saturday.

least note moves a few yards from his own door but on the back of some animal ; and where horses are in very general use, men of grave judicial functions, or religious character, affect to ride on asses and mules, as if appearing on horse back scarcely befitted their character. When, however, no animals were mounted but asses by any, the riding of these animals could not have been indicative of condition or character. The distinction of judicial dignity, therefore, lay in the riding on white asses. Asses of this color being scarce, are valuable ; and hence to possess one is still a mark of easy circumstances.

White asses are very uncommon in Europe, and rare in Syria and Egypt ; but they are not absolutely so scarce as some report. In Arabia, and the towns on its frontiers, they are often seen. In Bagdad, for instance, one of the things that must strike a stranger, is the number of white asses. There is thus quite a fashion for asses of this color ; and we can scarcely meet a person of respectability, man or woman, who is not mounted on one of these valued quadrupeds, except perhaps one of the more warlike classes, who despise anything under the grade of an Arab steed. Most persons belonging to the learned and sacred professions prefer the meeker animal, and so do all the ladies ; so that the number in use is very great. These asses are, we believe, of a peculiar breed, and fetch very high prices—from forty to fifty pounds sterling (a very important sum there) being no unusual price for one of large size, good blood, and fine paces. They are richly caparisoned, and they all have their nostrils slit, which is believed to make them longer winded. As to the “ judges” riding these asses, the term may signify nobles, princes, magnates—the first class of the people, and not merely magistrates, as distinct from these. We read further on, that thirty sons of Jair, who judged (or ruled) Israel, and the seventy sons and nephews of Abdon who also judged Israel, “ rode upon asses’ colts” (Judges x. 4 ; xii. 14), which seems to be mentioned as a circumstance proper to their rank. Then, the first class of the people had, during

the oppression, been prevented from riding about, as in former times, upon their white asses; but now that the oppression is over, they might ride forth in honor and safety, amid the salutations of those who pass them on the way.

The next class are "those who sit in judgment,"—which, if the previous clause be understood of judges merely, would be a mere description of the same class by another phrase—but not so, if that be understood of the chiefs and nobles, and this of the magistrates. We take this to be the case; for to *sit* is the proper characteristic of this class, as to *ride* is of the other. The phrase is, however, one hard to be understood. Robinson takes it, as we see, to mean, "those who sit on splendid carpets;" and there is reason and authority for this interpretation. The word, however, should be taken for anything extended out to sit upon, whether a carpet or not; and if the Hebrews, like the modern orientals, sat upon the ground, or on low divans or couches, these were doubtless carpets, or something serving the same purpose. Those who so sit are the opulent, the persons in good circumstances, but not in high authority; and therefore here particularly distinguished, on the one hand, from the nobles who ride, and on the other, from the poor who walk. From the general sense of the word, even thus understood, it supplies no evidence for the antiquity of carpets, properly so called, but only of something spread out to sit upon. Then opulent persons could not, amid such troubles—with their lives and property in jeopardy every hour, enjoy the ease which their condition in life allowed; but when the time of oppression was passed, they could recline securely, without starting in alarm at every sound, expecting to learn that the destroyer was at the gates.

Even the poor people walking the way are called upon to rejoice that their dangers are also ended. If "the way" means the roads beyond the town, it is explained by what has been already stated in regard to the insecurity of the roads. If of the streets, it implies the presence of their enemies in the very towns; and there were many in which the

Israelites and Canaanites lived together. The latter, formerly tributaries, would now gain the upper hand in these towns; and to appear, even in the streets, would be unsafe. The disposition of the orientals to inflict wanton and cruel wrong in such cases, upon those they pass in the streets, must be witnessed to be understood. We have known cases of poor and inoffensive persons wantonly maimed and wounded in passing the streets; and of even females being assaulted, and the ornaments of their ears and noses violently rent from them. By the indication of their various classes, the sacred poetess describes the condition of the whole nation, and calls upon it as a whole to rejoice in its deliverance.

TWENTY-THIRD WEEK—FRIDAY.

A MOTHER IN ISRAEL.—JUDGES IV. 4, 5.

UNDER the circumstances described yesterday, Israel was not destitute of a judge, and that judge was a woman, being the only one who ever held that high office, if office it may be called, being rather a function or position. In this instance, also, as in some others, the position was not, as generally the case, acquired by some warlike exploit tending to the deliverance of Israel, but seems to have grown out of the respect and honor paid to her as one taught of God, and eminent for her sagacity, her wisdom, and her high utterances. This led to her being much consulted and referred to, and to the eventual establishment of a recognized influence and position, which made her virtually the judge of the nation. She calls herself, "a mother in Israel," which is in fact the most striking and emphatic description of her position which could be given.

She is called "Deborah the prophetess." The name Deborah means a bee, being one of a class of names, such as are derived from material objects, not uncommon in Scripture.

Thus we find Rachel, a lamb ; Chasidah, a stork ; Hadessah (Esther), a myrtle ; Tamar, a palm-tree ; Caleb, a dog ; Nehushta, a serpent ; Irad, wild ass ; Achbor, a mouse ; Agabus, a locust ; Cephas, a rock or stone ; and many others. Nor are such names unknown to us. Thus we have Margaret, a pearl ; Agnes, a lamb ; Phillis, a green bough ; Penelope, a species of bird (turkey-pheasant ?) ; Rose ; Giles, a little goat ; Lionel, a little lion, &c. Then, still more analogously, there are our surnames, in which almost every material object is represented.

Of Deborah an old writer quaintly remarks that she was indeed a bee, having honey for the friends and a sting for the enemies of Israel. Then she was a "prophetess." The words "prophet" and "prophetess" are of very extensive and somewhat ambiguous signification in Scripture, being sometimes applied to persons extraordinarily endowed by God with the power of foretelling future events, or of working miracles, or of chanting or singing forth the praises of God under supernatural influence, and sometimes to those who were remarkably instructed in divine knowledge by the immediate inspiration of the Spirit of God, and therefore appointed to act as interpreters of his will. The reader will easily call to mind personages in Scripture who class themselves under these different kinds, but who are all equally called "prophets." To which of these classes does Deborah the prophetess belong ? It seems to us that in her, as in some others, two or more of these different sorts of prophecy were united. The last formed, probably, the foundation of her credit, and led the people to resort to her for guidance. But that she was also a prophetess in the sense of a foreteller of things to come, is shown by the assurance of victory she gave to Barak, and more clearly by her prediction that the commander of the enemy's forces would fall by a woman's hand ; while the high poetic inspiration, which is sometimes called prophecy, is not more clearly evinced in any portion of Scripture than in that most noble ode in which Deborah celebrates the praise of the Lord for the victory of Israel

over king Jabin's host. Of that fine hymn, which we find in the fifth chapter of Judges, it is impossible to speak in language adequate to the peculiar merits and beauties which render it one of the most illustrious examples of early Hebrew poesy. Even in a translation, which in a composition like this can be but a pale reflection of the original, its strong claims to our highest admiration are apparent to every reader. It abounds in traits, some of which we indicated yesterday, of the age in which it was written and the circumstances in which it originated, and is full of warmth and animation. The natural gradation and progress is more observed in this than in most other sacred songs, while the solemn and unexpected, though not abrupt close—"So let thine enemies perish, O Lord!" may be indicated as being, in the connection in which it stands, unsurpassed by anything of the kind that was ever written. "Her strains are bold, varied, and sublime; she is everywhere full of abrupt and impassioned appeals and personifications; she bursts away from earth to heaven, and again returns to human things. She touches now upon the present, now dwells upon the past, and closes at length with the grand promise and results of all prophecy and of all the dealings of God's providence, that the wicked shall be overthrown, while the righteous shall ever triumph in Jehovah's name."*

There is, as Dr. Chalmers well remarks, "a beautiful and antique simplicity" in the description of Deborah's dwelling, under a remarkable and noted tree still known as "the palm-tree of Deborah," at the time the book of Judges was written. The situation of this palm-tree is particularly pointed out, "between Ramah and Bethel, in Mount Ephraim." But whether this is designed to intimate that her settled habitation was in this place, or that it was the spot in the open air, shaded by the tree, to which she repaired for hearing the applications that were made to her, it may not be quite easy to determine.

It is worthy of notice that Deborah is stated to have been

* Dr. Robinson in *Biblical Repository* for 1831, p. 569.

a married woman, and, probably, from her calling herself "a *mother* in Israel," somewhat advanced in years. She is described as the wife of Lapidoth. Much curious consideration has been bestowed upon this. The word is in the feminine plural in Hebrew, whence some have doubted that it can be a man's name. But those who thus doubt have not agreed what Lapidoth shall be. Some take it to be the name of a place, and apprehend the phrase to mean that Deborah was "a woman of Lapidoth," while others look to the signification of the name, which is "lamps," and therefrom infer that she was "a woman of lamps," supposed to mean one who made wicks for the lamps of the tabernacle! Again, others, looking to the metaphorical sense of the word, which has the material sense of "lamps," considers that we should translate the phrase into a "woman of lights, illuminations, or splendors," that is to say, an enlightened woman; and we should be disposed to incline to this, did we see any good reason for questioning the common interpretation. The only objection has no solid foundation, seeing that there are other instances of men's names with the feminine plural termination, such as Shelomith, in 1 Chron. xxiii. 9; Meramoth, in Ezra viii. 33; and Mikloth, in 1 Chron. xxvii. 4.

Deborah's position, in this respect, reminds one of another "mother in Israel," "Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum," 2 Kings xxii. 14. As the Hebrew word for wife may apply either to one who has been or is married, it may be, however, as some suppose, that Deborah was at this time a widow; and that the husband, although named, does not in any way appear, and that she seems to have an independent existence, are circumstances in favor of that conclusion—for under the ancient as well as under the modern notions, and institutions, and ideas of the East, the separate existence of a married woman is rarely apparent to the world. It has also been thought by some that Barak was the son of Deborah, but for this we are unable to see any evidence. It is a pure conjecture, which nothing in the history requires, and nothing sustains.

TWENTY-THIRD WEEK—SATURDAY.

Jael and Sisera.—JUDGES IV. 6–22.

IN the time of Joshua the most powerful of the Canaanish sovereigns ruling in the northern part of the land had been Jabin, whose seat was in the strong city of Hazor, not far to the north of the lake Merom. This city had been taken and destroyed about one hundred and twenty years before by Joshua, after a most decisive victory over Jabin and the northern princes confederate with him. Jabin seems to have been a common name of the princes of Hazor, like Pharaoh in Egypt, and Abimelech among the Philistines; for we now find the city and the realm restored, and a mighty king called Jabin again reigning there. This Jabin was evidently the greatest of the princes known to the Israelites. The indications are, indeed, those of a very formidable and well-organized military power for that age. We are with marked emphasis informed that this king possessed "nine hundred chariots of iron," that is, probably, chariots armed with iron hooks and scythes, which committed cruel execution upon the adverse army against which they were forcibly driven. Such means of assault would not now be regarded as very formidable, or inspire much alarm; and were eventually found to create so much confusion among those who used them, that they were discontinued among all nations in which war became a science. But they were much dreaded by those who were not acquainted with them, and were formidable against the ancient means of defence and mode of fighting. Especially were they dreadful to the Israelites, who were peculiarly apprehensive of chariot warfare of all kinds—and more than all of these "chariots of iron." It is highly probable that the possession of these chariots, by the mere terror which they inspired, and the idea of formidable strength they conveyed, rendered the subjection of the Israelites an easy task to king Jabin, who held

them in severe bondage for twenty years. To the same terror may also be ascribed the utter prostration and discouragement under which the tribes fell, so that it became exceedingly difficult to rouse them from their despondency and induce them to take the field against the oppressor. From the gratitude which Deborah evinces towards the people for the effort which they finally made, we are warranted in concluding that she had long endeavored to instigate them to this step in vain. At length she sent for Barak the son of Abinoam, from Kedesh, a city of Naphtali, on a mountain not far from Hazer, and made known to him the will of God, that he should undertake an enterprise for the deliverance of his country. But such was his disheartened state of feeling, and, at the same time, such his confidence in the superior authority and character of Deborah, that he assents to go only on condition that she shall accompany him. To this she at length consented, not without a gentle rebuke for the faintness of his faith. They then repaired together to Kedesh, and collected there, in the immediate vicinity of Hazer, ten thousand men. There was deep wisdom in thus first seeking support in the very quarter where the tyranny of Jabin was most strongly felt. Many would have supposed it better to have raised a revolt in a distant quarter of the land. But so judged not Deborah. Even here, this comparatively small force was got together not without difficulty, and with it Barak marched southward and encamped on Mount Tabor, being the first time that celebrated mountain is named in Scripture.

Hitherto we have seen the kings leading their armies in person, and owing, indeed, their power to their military skill. The Philistines, back in the time of Abraham, had "a captain of the host," or commander-in-chief, separately from the king. But this is the only instance before the present of a custom which afterwards became very general. Jabin was not wont to lead his troops to the field in person—the command of the army being committed to a far-renowned general named Sisera, who was stationed at Harosheth, and who was

obviously a person of high dignity and authority in the state. This great commander, on learning that the Israelites had taken to arms under Barak, gathered a formidable army, and with his nine hundred chariots of iron moved southward, encamping in the plain of Esdraelon. Then Deborah, who was with the Hebrew forces, said to Barak, in words stirring as a trumpet's blast, "Up ; for this is the day in which the Lord hath delivered Sisera into thy hand. *Is not the Lord gone out before thee?*" Inspired by these noble words, which conveyed to him the assurance of victory, Barak no longer thought—if he had ever thought—of maintaining the post which he had chosen, with all its advantages, upon a mountain inaccessible to the iron chariots of the enemy, but courageously went down with his far inferior force into the plain, thus giving every possible advantage to Sisera, and thereby enhancing the glory of that victory which, in the strength of the Lord's might, he expected to win. The bold and unexpected charge of Barak seems to have been made instrumental in the Lord's hand of inspiring the enemy with a supernatural panic, a dread of spirit, which soon threw men, horses, and chariots in wild disorder, so that they fell quickly under the keen edge of the Hebrew sword, and soon sought safety in flight. It was thus "the Lord that discomfited Sisera, and all his chariots, and all his host, with the edge of the sword before Barak." In Deborah's triumphal song we are told that "the stars in their courses fought against Sisera." This has probably been rightly explained in the description of the battle which Josephus has given. He says, that when they came to close action, there came down from heaven a great storm, with a vast quantity of rain and hail, and the wind blew the rain in the faces of the Canaanites, and so darkened their eyes that their slings and arrows were of no advantage to them ; nor would the sharp coldness of the air permit the soldiers to use their swords, while the storm did not so seriously incommode the Israelites, as it came upon their backs. This account, as to the great rain, is confirmed by the further statement that numbers of

the fugitives were drowned in the river Kishon—a stream of no consideration in ordinary weather, but liable to be swollen into a wide and deep flood by heavy rains.

The great Sisera himself, that invincible commander, was among the fugitives, and what is more, he lighted down from his chariot and fled on foot. He might, indeed, have fled more swiftly in his chariot; but the chariot would have been a marked and conspicuous object of pursuit or arrest, and would have exposed him to be recognized, and taken or slain; whereas on foot he might hope to get beyond danger undiscovered. It may remind one of Bonaparte's quitting his chariot, on the escape from the field of Waterloo, to be taken by the pursuers, while he continued his flight on horseback. Sisera, in his flight, came to the encampment of Heber the Kenite, who was of the descendants of that portion of the family of Jethro which had accompanied the Israelites into Palestine. He had some time before quitted the main body of the tribe, and had settled his camp away northward in this part of the land, still leading the ancient nomade life of his people. Recollecting that there was no hostility between his sovereign and this tribe—but forgetting, as Matthew Henry remarks, “that although they did not themselves suffer from Jabin's power, they sympathized with God's Israel that did,”—Sisera bethought him of claiming from this tribe of Arabian habits, the *dakheel* or protection, which is rarely sought in vain, and which, when once granted, is never dishonored. The chief himself was absent; but his wife Jael, who seems to have known the person of the fugitive warrior, waited not to be asked—she went out to meet him, and invited him into her own tent, the sanctity of which he knew well that no pursuer would dare to violate; for the tent, or part of a tent or house occupied by the women, is, as its very name (*harem*, sacred) implies, so protected from all intrusion of men by public opinion, that to enter it forcibly or uninvited, would be to inflict such a disgrace and insult upon the whole tribe as to exact undying vengeance and bloodful hatred. Knowing this, Sisera entered with confidence; but to render

assurance doubly sure, he asked for drink, not only because he was thirsty, but because he knew that among these people to give a person drink is to give a pledge of protection, even with life, against all danger and wrong. Jael readily granted this favor—she did more than he asked. He asked for water, she gave him sour milk, a drink much used in the East, and very wholesome and refreshing. Fully assured, he then desired to take some rest, which he so much needed, and she covered him up, and left him to sleep. He had desired her to stand by the door, and to answer in the negative in case any one passed by and asked if a man were in the tent. It does not appear that Jael promised to commit an offence held so venial in this “not at home” age; but she certainly left him to infer, that she would do as he desired.

We are strongly inclined to think that, up to this time, the woman had been sincere in her Arab faith, and intended to protect Sisera. But his quiet sleep gave her time to think. She saw the great oppressor of her kindred people lie helpless as a child before her. She began to reflect how easily that strong life might be struck out—even a woman’s arm might do it. Then, what safety to Israel lay in that deed; what glory to herself as the deliverer; what gratitude for so great a service from a people now triumphant, and who would, it might be feared, become full of anger if they even learned, as they were likely to do, that while they had been seeking their great enemy, he had all the while been safely sheltered in the tent of Jael. Strange thoughts wrought in her mind; until at last, to avert the anger of Israel, and to win their favor, became her only thought. The means were not wanting. She seized one of the long nails which fasten the tent cords to the ground, and with this in one hand, and a mallet in the other, she approached the sleeping chief. She applied the point of the nail to his temple—she smote; and, knowing the doom that lay in that stroke, she smote with such force, that the nail passed through, and pinioned his head to the ground.

The deed was done—a deed for ages to wonder at; and

soon after, this woman had to invite another man into her tent. This man was Barak himself, who came that way, still in pursuit of Sisera. Without waiting to be asked questions, she said, "Come, and I will show thee the man whom thou seekest." The conqueror accordingly entered, and there beheld the redoubted warrior, the scourge of Israel, dead, with the nail still in his temples, dishonored by death from a woman's hand, and happy only in that he died ignorant of that deep disgrace.

Twenty-Fourth Week—Sunday.

THE SUN-LIKE COURSE.—JUDGES V. 3.

IN reading the fifth chapter of Judges, we have always found occasion to pause upon the final clause of the song of Deborah. We quote the whole sentence, but the latter portion of it alone arrests our present attention:—"So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord: but let them that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might." This comparison of those that love the Lord to the sun going forth in his might, strikes every one as being a bold figure; but few pause to consider in what sense the progress of those who love the Lord—that is, of believers—may be compared to that of the sun.

The comparison, we see, is not merely to the sun, but to its *going*—its course. There is a very parallel passage in Prov. iv. 18:—"The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." There is this difference, that the comparison to light necessarily ceases at high noon, when the light is perfect; whereas the comparison to the sun itself contemplates the whole of the believer's course, from the rejoicing rising in the morning, to the glorious setting in the evening. The Scripture is full of

images and expressions which, like this, describe the believer's life as one of progress—progress in knowledge, holiness, and grace. The Psalmist compares the course of the sun to a race:—"The sun, which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race," Ps. xix. 5; and in like manner, this our Christian course is repeatedly in the new Testament compared to a race, which has for its goal and object "eternal life." There is in this life, thus characterized—the inner life—no standing still, no rest in present attainments or degree of progress—we must go on, growing into greater conformity to the Divine image, until that day when our own race is run, and we awake *satisfied* with his likeness. The fruit that does not go on to ripen, rots or falls to the ground; and this our present life, is but a ripening of the soul for the life to come. Let us not, therefore, rest satisfied with any present experience in the divine life, however precious; let us go on, continually on, in earnest prayer for the ripening influences of God's Spirit upon our souls; in shunning whatever may stain the white robe—the wedding garment, which has been given to us; in seeking whatever things are lovely, true, and of good report; and in cherishing every holy thought, every sacred purpose, every pious impression. To whatever we have reached in this our course, let us not think we have already attained or are already perfect. He who was not behind the very chiefest of the apostles in grace and knowledge, thought not so of himself. "Brethren," he writes to the Philippians (iii. 13-15), "I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." He adds, "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be like minded." But let us well mark these words. Perfection, then, is not in having reached some high point where we can sit still, resting in what has been already attained; but in the most earnest vigor of pursuit, of race, of sun-like *progress*. He says not "let the imperfect," but "let the perfect be

thus minded." That is, minded as he describes himself to be ; minded to press eagerly onward to lay hold on eternal life.

It is not perhaps necessary that this course should be always *visible*, even to our own eyes, much less to the eyes of others. It is not perhaps necessary that the soul itself should be exactly conscious of it. The Spirit of God casteth the seed into the ground, and it groweth, by night and day, we know not how, bearing first the blade, then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear. It may be with the soul, even as with the youthful body, which grows from day to day, making great progress, and undergoing most important changes, and yet we know it not—are by no means conscious of all the gradations of this progress, and become sensible of it only when we find that our old clothes have become too strait for us, or when we try to realize the idea of what we were a few years ago.

It may often happen that, in the confusion which the world and the evil one try to raise around us, our sense of perception becomes obscured, and it may appear to ourselves that we have made no progress, or are even going backward—have lost ground in spiritual things. This often tries the soul. It is a grief, and we must bear it. Yet let us strive to be of good cheer. If we know that God has given to our souls a movement in the right direction, and feel that we have striven to avoid whatever might impede, and sought whatever might expedite, our course—if we are sure that " God, who caused the light to shine out of darkness, hath *shined in our hearts*, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ"—let us not be too greatly cast down, even though the path of our onward course may not be so obviously clear to our own eyes as we might wish. If we have the treasure of this knowledge—that we are in Christ, let us remember that we hold this treasure in earthen vessels, and that the excellency of the power may be of God, but not of us ; and therefore, although we may be troubled on every side, yet let us not be distressed ; though perplexed, let us not be in despair ; though persecuted, let us feel

that we are not forsaken ; though cast down, that we shall not be destroyed. It may be

“Through danger’s path and sorrow’s gloom,”

that we march in our heavenward course, but let us be content to feel that we do march, yea, let us be content even if we feel it not. Here also the parallel of the sun’s course holds good. How often is he hid by clouds from our view for hours together ! We see not his progress, we cannot find his place in the heavens, yet he has steadily pursued his course behind the clouds that hide him from our view—not less steadily or less speedily than if his glorious career had been all day apparent to us ; and at the appointed hour, no less on the gloomy than on the cheerful day, he reaches with unflinching certainty his bourne. Besides his course, which figures forth our own, cannot be always hidden from our consciousness. We know that the sun is there, and that he pursues his way behind the clouds that hide his face. We know that these clouds abide not there forever, that they abide not long. In a certain sense the words of the poet are in this case beautifully applicable, and to every human or infernal enemy of the Christian’s sun-like course, might well be spoken :

“Fond impious man, think’st thou yon sanguine cloud,
 Raised by thy breath, has quenched the orb of day?
 To-morrow he repairs his golden flood,
 And warms the nations with redoubled ray.”—GRAY.

TWENTY-FOURTH WEEK—MONDAY.

NOMADE AGGRESSIONS.—JUDGES VI. 1-6.

THE next oppression under which the Israelites fell for their sins, after forty years of rest, well deserves our consideration, involving, as it does, a form of calamitous visitation still but

too well known in settled countries bordered by tribes of nomade habits, always on the watch for any signs of weakness which may enable them to enter the land.

The old enemies of Israel, the Midianites, had, in the course of two hundred years, recovered strength. Living on the borders, between cultivated countries and the desert, between settled nations and Arabian tribes, they showed the habits of both. Their semi-nomade character is indicated, at the time of their overthrow by Gideon, where "the ornaments that were about their camels' necks" formed no mean portion of the spoil. They now began to move against the Hebrews. The remembrance of Israel's ancient might made them feel, probably, that they were not strong enough to act by themselves; besides which they might apprehend that the engagement of their forces in a distant expedition, would tempt the neighboring tribes to ravage their own land. They therefore engaged these tribes to unite with them in an undertaking so congenial to their habits, and so promising of the kind of spoil they most desired. The presence of these tribes, among whom were the most ancient and inveterate enemies of Israel, the Amalekites, gave, by the predominance of their numbers in the united host, an entirely Bedouin character to the expedition.

It does not appear that there was any general action in opposition to them, when they came up with their flocks and herds to devour the land. Their numbers seem to have been too enormously great to allow the thought of opposition to this dreadful incursion to be entertained. It is emphatically stated, that "they came up like locusts"—an image which conveys a lively idea of both their countless numbers and their cruel ravages. Like locusts "they destroyed the increase of the earth; and left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass." They came up, doubtless, as is now the custom, at the commencement of summer, before the time of harvest—which they gathered, or appropriated to their own use, after the peasants had cut it down—and remained till after the season of autumnal fruits, which they in

like manner appropriated, their flocks and herds meanwhile consuming all the herbage of the land. To this would be added severe exactions in money from the people, and the violent seizure of whatever seemed good in their eyes. At the present day, something of the same state of things prevails in the different parts of Syria, and particularly in the country beyond the Jordan, once occupied by the people of Moab, and by the tribes of Reuben and Gad. One cannot take up a book relating to that region without being able to gather from it abundant facts in illustration of Israel's oppression under the Midianites. We will produce some of these presently; but let us go on now to observe, that these things occurring—the peasantry finding it useless to sow what they may not reap, after a few years abandon the culture of the ground, whence arises the utmost extremity of want. They consider, however, that since they must want, it is as well to want without, as with, bestowing their strength upon the culture from which they are allowed no benefit—and they may also hope that the spoiler will desist from that degree of violence which destroys the source of his own gains. Their only resource is then to abandon their homes, and repair to the mountains, if in them they can find or make habitable retreats, however wretched, in the caves and dens. With such retreats Palestine is abundantly provided; and we read, accordingly, that “because of the Midianites the children of Israel made them the dens that are in the mountains, and the caves and strongholds.” In general, when the Arab tribes suspect things are coming to this extremity, and in order not thereby to cut off their own resources, they agree to accept a kind of annual ransom for the harvest—which is generally very heavy, and aggravated by extraordinary extortions and violences—no limit being sought but just that between what shall induce cultivation for a mere existence—a scanty and miserable one—and what shall cause all cultivation to be abandoned in despair. The Midianites had overstepped this limit, and had caused the cultivation to be given up, except in some remote places, and had thus driven the

people to their retreats in the mountains—returning to their homes, probably, in the winter, when the enemy had for the time retreated to his deserts. But had this domination continued, the Arab tribes, having grown into the habit of periodical occupation of this rich land, would have found it their interest, so far to relax the rigor of their oppression as to enable the people to resume the cultivation of which they were to reap the substantial benefits.

It is, with good reason, supposed to have been during the scarcity occasioned by this abandonment of cultivation, that Elimelech and his family withdrew into the land of Moab—and that to the discontinuance of the oppression and the return of plenty, we are to refer the return of his widow and her daughter-in-law, Ruth, to the land of Israel.

We now give a few notes from travellers in illustration of the state of oppression which has been indicated:—

We may begin with the latest—Lieut. Lynch, the commander of the American expedition for the exploration of the Dead Sea. The party made a trip to Kerak, a place of historical celebrity, about twelve miles to the east of the southern extremity of the Dead Sea, the main body of the inhabitants of which are Christians. The writer repeats the information he obtained from Abd'Allah, the Christian sheikh of the town:—"They are kept in subjection by the Muslim Arabs, living mostly in huts outside the town. He stated that they are in every manner imposed upon. If a Muslim [Arab] comes into the town, instead of going to the house of another Muslim, he quarters himself upon a Christian, and appropriates the best of everything; that christian families have been two days together without food—all that they had having been consumed by their self-invited guests. If a Muslim sheikh buys a horse for so many sheep, he makes the Christians contribute till the number be made up. Their property, he said, is seized at will, without their being any one to whom to appeal; and remonstrance on their part only makes it worse. Already a great many have been driven away—poverty alone keeping the remainder. . . . The lo-

custs and the sirocco have for the last seven years blasted their fields, and nearly all spared by them has been swept away by the Muslims.”*

So Buckhardt, in speaking of the Bedouins of the Haouran, beyond the Jordan, says that they are of two classes—those who are resident, and those who visit it in the spring and summer only. “By resident, I do not mean that they have fixed habitations, but that their wanderings are confined to the Haouran, or some particular districts of it.” But besides these, “in May the whole Haouran is covered with swarms of wanderers from the desert, who remain there till September. They come for a twofold purpose, water and pasturage for the summer, and a supply of corn for the winter. The oppressions of the government on the one hand, and of these Bedouins on the other, have reduced the fellah (cultivator) to a state little better than that of the wandering Arabs. Few individuals die in the same village where they were born. Families are continually moving from one place to another. In the first year of their new settlement, the sheikh acts with moderation towards them; but his vexations being in a few years insupportable, they fly to some other place, where they have heard that their brethren are better treated; but they soon find that the same system prevails over the whole country. This continued wandering is one of the principal reasons why no village of the Haouran has either orchards, or fruit-trees, or gardens for the growth of vegetables. ‘Shall we sow for strangers?’ was the answer of a fellah to whom I once spoke on the subject.”† All these tribes, whether resident or visitant, consider themselves entitled to certain tributes from all the villages, in consideration of which they abstain from touching the harvest of the village, and from driving off its cattle and camels, when they meet them in the way. The amount of this tribute is continually increasing, for the Arab sheikh is not always contented with the quantity of corn he received the preceding

* *Narrative of Expedition to the Dead Sea*, p. 362.

† *Travels in Syria*, pp. 306–308.

year, but asks something additional as a present, which soon becomes a part of his accustomed dues. Besides this, depredations are often committed beyond the possibility of redress.*

TWENTY-FOURTH WEEK—TUESDAY.

GIDEON.—JUDGES VI. 11–23.

NOTHING can more graphically illustrate the circumstances which distinguished the Midianite oppression from others to which Israel had been subject, than the operations which we find under the hand of the next deliverer of Israel, when the Lord was pleased to call him to his great work.

We see a young man of Ophrah, in Manasseh, west of the Jordan, engaged in “threshing wheat by the wine-press, to hide it from the Midianites. How it was thus to be hidden from the Midianites does not strike the reader unversed in the customs of the East. It may here be observed that corn is usually threshed near the field where it is grown, on an open area prepared and levelled for the purpose. The wine-press would necessarily be at a good distance among the vineyards, and would be on many accounts the least likely place for any one to suspect the threshing of corn. The time was come when the culture of the ground was for the most part abandoned, and the little corn that was therefore raised in a few places was guarded with the more care on the one hand, and sought for with the more avidity on the other. Further, corn was usually threshed by oxen, either by simple treading—as seems to have been generally the case in Scriptural times—or by their drawing over it a rude apparatus of logs, by which the grain was crushed out and the straw broken; only smaller seeds were beaten out by the flail. Isaiah xxviii. 27. Yet in this case not only was the corn threshed at the wine-press, but it was done not by the usual

* *Travels in Syria*, pp. 301, 302.

treading of oxen, but by the flail. This does not appear in the translation. But it does in the original, where the word translated "threshed" indicates not only the fact but the mode of threshing. Why was this? Clearly for the sake of silence. The lowing of the oxen in so unusual a place might betray the thresher. But surely a flail makes noise enough? Yes, with us—but in the East, no wooden floor resounds beneath the strokes of the flail. The regular threshing floor even, is of trodden earth merely, and the place by the wine-press, was no doubt merely a smooth and clean spot of ground.

The sudden appearance of a stranger to Gideon under these circumstances, must have given much alarm to him in the first instance. An unexpected witness of what one wishes to conceal, is always startling. The first words of the stranger must, however, have re-assured him—"The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor!" One would think from this that Gideon had already found the opportunity of distinguishing himself by some well-known display of high courage or personal prowess. Assuming that the visitant had no appearance other than of an ordinary stranger, we suppose this to have been the case, rather than that the words form an anticipatory designation of his future exploits. The words "the Lord is with thee," are not at variance with this—for it was but the ordinary form of salutation in religious and truthful times—as one may see by the same salutation being given in the very same generation by Boaz to his reapers. Ruth ii. 4. However the place was idolatrous, and a high seat of Baal's worship. The name of Jehovah was seldom heard, therefore; and hence this once ordinary salutation sounded strangely in Gideon's ears. Being strange, it struck him with a degree of emphasis and force such as the words always possessed, but which are not so readily recognized in phrases of daily and familiar iteration. His mind grasped the full significance of the phrase which in other days had passed with feebler impression upon his ear. They seemed like a cruel irony to him. The nation had forsaken Jehovah

--and being therefore, for the time, forsaken of him, they came to confound cause and effect—and to trace their misery to his absence as a Protector, rather than to their sins by which that absence had been occasioned. Trace this in Gideon's answer: "O my Lord, if Jehovah be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of?" The stranger did not argue the matter with him. He looked earnestly upon him—and in the words of authority and power said—"Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have not *I* sent thee?" What a disclosure was in that "*I*!"

Gideon understood it partly; but although he no longer dared question that Israel might be saved—he, under views yet clouded, still, like Moses of old, demurred at the felt insufficiency of the instrument, whose fitness his modesty led him to underrate. "O my Lord, wherewith shall *I* save Israel? Behold my family is poor in Manasseh, and *I* am the least in my father's house." Here there is another sort of "*I*"—the mortal and the immortal Ego confronted with each other. The immortal and the omnipotent is then more distinctly and authoritatively disclosed, bearing down, as it should do, the weakness of the mortal—"Surely *I* will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man." What did the matters of such great concernment to him—the position of his family in Manasseh, and his own position in his family—signify then? How small the whole matter seems in presence of that grandly simple assurance "*I* will be with thee!" Still Gideon's ideas were so much bewildered, through the corruptions of the times—which had raised up so much false pretence, as rendered the presence of the true difficult to recognize by the spiritual sense—that he was not yet free from misgivings, and desired some sign, some work of supernatural power, by which his faith might be relieved from the hesitancy under which he still labored. And He who denied any other sign than that of Jonah to a hypocritical age—refused not to the sincere man the sign.

which was required to strengthen his faith for the great work he was called to undertake.

But before he ventured to prefer his request, Gideon besought leave to offer the "present" which usage exacted of one who made a request, to which he had no right, of a superior, and such also as the hospitable usages of the East required him to offer to any stranger who came to him. Abraham, in the like case, had asked permission previously—and the reason in both cases was the same—that the knowledge of an intention which demanded some time to execute, might induce the stranger to wait until it could be performed. In this case the stranger must have waited at least an hour while Gideon made ready the meal which he brought forth. It was however such as might be most readily prepared, and such as, in substance, forms the meal usually presented in the like circumstances. A kid was dressed, and thin cakes of unleavened bread were baked for the occasion. This unleavened bread was more quickly got ready than any other, which was probably the reason for the form of bread chosen.

There is some noticeable particularity in the relation of the presentation of the meat. "The flesh he put in a basket, and he put the broth in a pot, and brought it out unto him under the oak." The Orientals do not use broth in which meat has been boiled as soup, as we do. But they do use stews, such as the "pottage" for which Esau sold his birth-right; and such as the sons of the prophet were preparing when they put into it by mistake some poisonous herb. Thus, we apprehend, part of the kid was prepared, and was the part brought up in the pot. While this was in preparation over the fire, the other part had been cut up into slips, and roasted before the fire upon skewers, in which way meat is very rapidly dressed in the East into what is called *kaboobs*, which, for extemporizing a meal, stands in the same place as chops and steaks with us, only that the pieces are very much smaller. This, we apprehend, was what was brought in the basket. Some have thought that this was *intended* as a meat-offering to a Divine Being, and not as a meal to be

eaten; and have remarked that the ingredients were the same as in a meat-offering. True, because a meat-offering was a meal; composed of such ingredients as were in use for a meal—hence the resemblance. The interpretation has arisen probably from what subsequently happened; but we apprehend that Gideon meant to show his respect and attention in the usual way, without thus looking further. The basket and the pot together were simply modes of preparation suggestive of a meal more than of an offering. Into an offering, and that by fire, the Heavenly Stranger however turned it, by directing Gideon to place the food on the top of a rock that was near. He then touched it with the end of his staff, and forthwith fire arose out of the rock, and consumed it all. This marvellous sight engaged the amazed attention of Gideon; and when he turned, the stranger had disappeared. That the result had not been expected by him—and that he had not been fully aware of the character of his guest—is clear from the amazement with which he now realized the conviction that he had spoken with one from heaven. “Alas, O Lord God!” he cried, “for because I have seen an angel of the Lord face to face.” This was founded on the old and very prevalent notion that no one could behold a visitor from heaven and live; or that the appearance of such was a sign of approaching death. Nor was this notion unsanctioned by the Lord’s declaration to Moses—“No man can see my face and live!” But that had regard to the beholding the fulness of his glory—and not to those manifestations which, in condescension to man’s weakness, he might choose to make of himself. In this case Gideon was relieved of his fears, for the Lord said to him, “Peace be unto thee; fear not: thou shalt not die.”

TWENTY-FOURTH WEEK—WEDNESDAY.

BAAL.—JUDGES VI. 24—32.

WE now become acquainted, as it were incidentally, with the lamentable fact, that the worship of the gods of the heathen was freely practised in Israel, and that among the very family from which the appointed deliverer was chosen. We have been told this in general terms before ; but it is now that we have it presented to us as a scene in idolatrous Israel, by which we are enabled to realize a more distinct conception of the actual state of affairs, and of the depth of corruption by which such severe corrections had been rendered necessary.

The very night after the Divine appearance, a message came to Gideon, well calculated to test his faith, and the extent of his obedience. He is commanded to throw down the altar of Baal that his father had, and to cut down "the grove" that was by it. The altar, it seems, although belonging to Gideon's father, whose name was Joash, as being in his grounds, was destined for the common service of the town. But for the part he eventually took, one would suppose that Joash was a prime leader, if not the actual priest, of this idolatry ; and it is not clear from the part he did take, that he was not. Under new influences, and the excitements of other circumstances, or under the action of Divine grace, the most active promoters of a cause or an invention, often become its most vehement opponents. Having thrown down the altar and cut down the grove, Gideon was to build an altar to Jehovah, and offer sacrifice thereon. For the sacrifice he was to take his "father's bullock, even the second bullock of seven years old." This expression about the second bullock has somewhat puzzled commentators. It seems to us probable, that as the Midianites took away all the cattle of the Israelites that they could lay their hands on, Gideon's father had very few left, the second of which, in point of age, he is

directed to offer for sacrifice. Why one, however, of seven years of age?—one three years old being by the law declared the most fit for sacrifice. Perhaps there was some reference in this to the seven years which the oppression of the Israelites had lasted; or, it may be, that of the few cattle of Joash, the second, although seven years old, was the youngest over three years.

Gideon could not but be well aware of the danger of the task thus imposed upon him. To a man of weaker faith it would have seemed like tempting certain destruction; but he wavered not. He had a command, and was determined to obey it. His only solicitude was to do it effectually; and therefore, not from fear, but in order that he might not be prevented, he, aided by his servants, executed his commission in the night.

The next morning, when the inhabitants of the place came to render their customary service at Baal's altar—lo! the altar was demolished; the trees that grew around it were cut down; and, conspicuous upon the rock at some distance, appeared the altar which Gideon had erected to Jehovah, with the marks thereon of a recent offering. Seeing that the mode of constructing an altar to the Lord is laid down in the law, it is probable that they could at once perceive that this altar was dedicated to Jehovah. This fact may have been more likely to moderate than to strengthen their wrath; for, much as they had neglected their Lord, they had not come to hate him or to reject him, but had transgressed in rendering to other gods, which indeed were no gods, the worship due to him only. Rather, perhaps, they cherished a vague reverence for the establishment at Shiloh, and still regarded as their true paternal God, Him who was there served with offerings and sacrifices; but had come to think they wanted *also* a local god and a local service, in honor of some god whose claims, they fancied, might not interfere with His. But they soon found this local worship to fill their thoughts and minds; and while Baal had at Ophrah all the real and practical worship that was offered, their own true God, in his distant holy

habitation, was removed more and more from them—away in the cold regions of dim abstraction.

To the first blank amazement with which this devastation was regarded, followed eager and angry inquiry as to the perpetrator of the deed. It soon transpired, that this had been the work of no other than Gideon; and instantly a hundred clamorous voices cried to Joash—"Bring forth thy son, that he may die." Paternal affection, strengthened perhaps by some internal convictions that his son must have acted with sufficient authority, and that he was right, at once prompted Joash to stem or divert the torrent of barbarous wrath. It may be, even, that the son, aware of what was likely to come, had, before this time arrived, apprized his father of what had taken place, and of the commission he had received; and had thus prepared and engaged him to interpose his authority and influence for his protection. There was no reason why Gideon should not do this, and every reason for his being likely to do it. Be this as it may, Joash executed his part with consummate ability and address. The argument of his brief oration amounted to this:—"Do nothing rashly against my son. If Baal be really a god, he will know how to avenge this affront; but if he be not a god, then it is they who plead for him, and not my son, who deserve to die." This reasoning was sufficiently cogent. It put Gideon in the position of one standing forward, not to excuse, but to vindicate his act, and to defy the utmost wrath of the god he had treated with so much contempt. What could they say to this? They knew that Jehovah had often vindicated his own honor by manifest and signal judgments; and no reason could be urged why Baal, if he were a god, should not do the same. They perhaps looked on in expectation that Gideon would have been smitten down dead. But nothing followed; and the people dispersed with thoughtful faces to their houses.

As to the Baal, whose worship had been adopted from their heathen neighbors by this people, it has been rightly observed, that the word means "lord," and is hence, in a certain sense, applicable to any of the different gods wor-

shipped in this part of the world, and is, in fact, so applied in Scripture. But, on the other hand, it seems to be generally agreed, that when the word has the definite article in the original language (not preserved in translation) a particular idol is meant—namely, the one worshipped by the Phœnicians of Tyre and Sidon, and whose worship spread with the power and influence of that people, and which was at its height in Israel after the marriage of king Ahab with the king of Tyre's daughter, and continued only in Judah during the usurpation of Athaliah. The Baal of this passage has the definite article, and therefore, according to the rule, denotes this Phœnician idol. He is not here first mentioned. We have him before in Judges ii. 13, where the addiction to his worship throughout the period of the Judges is clearly stated. "They forsook the Lord, and served Baal and Ash-taroath." The latter was distinctly a Phœnician idol also, and is not subject to the same large interpretation as Baal; and their being joined together, strengthens the reference of the one, as of the other, to a Phœnician idol. It is generally agreed, that under Baal the power of the sun was personified, and under Ashtaroth that of the moon. Some of the rites with which both were worshipped, together or separately, we shall have some future occasions of noticing. Baal had temples and images, as well as altars and groves; but in this case we read only of the elementary apparatus of his worship—the altar and the grove. In time, if not checked, the images would have appeared, and the temples have been erected.

TWENTY-FOURTH WEEK—THURSDAY.

TESTS.—JUDGES VII. 1-15.

At the proper moment the spirit of the Lord "clothed"* Gideon, and he knew the time for him to work for the deliverance was come, and he felt within a heart equal to the

* Such is the real meaning of the word rendered "came upon."

work to which he was called. He caused the trumpet to be blown for volunteers. The Abi-ezrites, the men of his own clan, were the first to join him, which is highly favorable both to his character and to theirs. The northern tribes alone were summoned to the war; which is to be noted, seeing that the midland tribes—especially Ephraim—were greatly affronted at being overlooked.

Now having around him what seemed to him an adequate number of troops, Gideon wished for a sign—perhaps the same he had formerly been prevented from proposing by the sudden disappearance of the angel. He now, however, required it; not, perhaps, so much for the confirmation of his own faith, as to authenticate his commission in the eyes of the strangers who had responded to his call. Yet, taking into account the weakness of human nature, it is not incredible, that although clothed with the Spirit of the Lord, and after all the evidence he had received, his own faith needed some further strengthening in presence of the countless hosts of Midian overspreading the vast plain of Esdraelon. The sign he made choice of was remarkable, and well calculated to make an impression upon the minds of his followers. The tenor of the request is expressed in such a manner as would have been offensive to any man of spirit, who had given solemn assurances to another; but the Lord is very merciful, very long-suffering—more of both than man—and he complied without a rebuke. Perhaps, also, the terms employed are to be regarded as not so much the emanation of his own feeling, as his mode of stating the case for the understanding of his people. “If thou wilt save Israel by my hand, and do as thou hast said, behold I will put a fleece of wool on the floor, and if the dew be on the fleece only, and it be dry upon all the earth beside, then shall I know that thou wilt save Israel by my hand, as thou hast said.” This is an experiment natural enough to occur to a man of few and simple ideas, and these connected chiefly with agriculture and cattle. That it is such as would not be at all likely to be thought of by us inhabitants of towns, only proves its natural truth.

The thing came to pass as Gideon had desired, for "he rose up early in the morning and thrust the fleece together, and wrung the dew out of the fleece, a bowl full of water." It is remarkable the correlative part of the miracle is not mentioned, that the ground about the fleece was quite dry; but this is implied. Gideon, for further assurance, and with a becoming apology for his presumption, ventured to ask that the miracle might now be reversed—this time the fleece to be dry and the ground wet with dew. This, of the two, was the stronger proof of supernatural interposition, seeing that it is the property of wool to absorb whatever dew may fall, and its dryness when the ground about was wet with dew, was altogether a miraculous thing. The dew itself was not preternatural, we should think; but only the mode of its exhibition. Dews fall in Palestine, as we know from Scripture and from travels. It depends much upon locality, however—the dews being heavy in the highlands, but scarcely perceptible in the low and even plains. In travelling in some parts of Western Asia, we found the difference remarkable, as affected by high or low-lying situations. In the former we have often found cloaks of sheep-skin, exposed to the open air, as heavy with dew as if they had been dipped in water; in the latter we have slept all night upon the house-tops without finding, in the morning, any trace of dew upon the bed-clothes. Dew would seem not naturally abundant, at least at the time of the year, in the neighborhood where Gideon was favored with this sign, for the quantity of dew on the fleece, in the first sign, is certainly pointed out as a most extraordinary circumstance.

Immediately upon receiving the assurance he desired, Gideon marched with his men to the nearer neighborhood of the enemy's camp. If he had any remaining misgiving, it probably was, that his warriors were too few to cope with the myriads of Midian.* How much, therefore, must he have been astonished to receive the intimation that they were

* 135,000, *at least*, of "men that drew sword," not to speak of others, with women and children. See Judges viii. 10.

too many! And why *too many?* “Lest Israel vaunt themselves, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me.” The enforcement was therefore required of the very remarkable law of Moses, which was admirably calculated to secure the presence of none but efficient and courageous men, in an army, while apparently diminishing its strength. This consisted in the making of a proclamation that whoever was fearful and faint-hearted might withdraw to his home. Considering that all of Gideon’s army were volunteers, it speaks much for the impression which the nearer approach to the host of Midian had produced, that more than two thirds of his army withdrew. Twenty and two thousand went away, and only ten thousand remained. We cannot but suppose that Gideon was regarding this result with amazement and concern, when he was told that they were still too many, and that another experiment for reducing their numbers must be made. The mode of reduction adopted in this instance was very singular. The whole army was to be taken down to the water, and every one that “lapped the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth,” was to be set apart from those who bowed down on their knees to drink. Some difficulty has been found in identifying the first of these processes. The explanation which we give is founded upon our own observation of the different modes in which men drink in haste when coming to a stream on a journey, without being provided with vessels wherewith to raise the water to their mouths. It is to be observed that this class is further described as “the number of those that lapped, putting their hand to their mouth.” The chief distinction between them and the others is, that they did not bow down on their knees to bring their mouths near the water, and luxuriate in a more leisurely manner. They continued standing, stooping so far only as to be able to reach the water with their hands, the hollow of which they filled, and then brought it rapidly to the mouth, jerking in the refreshing contents. The motion, compared to a dog’s lapping, cannot apply to the tongue, first, because the human tongue is not framed for lapping; and secondly, because if

so, it would be an action belonging rather to those who brought their faces down to the water than to those who stood upon their feet. Supposing lapping with the tongue at all a possible action to a man, it would certainly not be resorted to by one who had succeeded in bringing a handful of water so far as his mouth. It would have been a needless, if not silly, delay in quenching his thirst. The motion expressed by "lapping," must therefore apply to the hand, the rapid motion of which, between the water and the mouth, might be not unaptly compared to the rapid projection and retraction of a dog's tongue in lapping. This last action, if taken as apparently meant, for an indication of character, would denote men of rapid and impulsive action, too earnest in the work before them to endure to satisfy their animal wants with the leisurely action of men at ease; a few hasty handfuls of water was all that the impatience of their spirit, in the great interests before them, allowed them to partake. These were the men to save Israel. They were but three hundred in number; and all the rest of the ten thousand were, to their great amazement, sent away, and Gideon remained alone with his small band of men.

Gideon had asked signs of God—and had been forgiven; and now, again, God gives him other signs suited to strengthen his faith—beautifully illustrating the Divine consideration for the frailty and feebleness of man—"for that he also is flesh." First, there was the sign which pointed out to him the men on whom he might rely; and as their number was but small, he has another sign to show him that even this small force is sufficient. He receives an intimation that he is to go down by night to the very camp of the Midianites—and, for his encouragement, he is allowed to take with him Phurah his armor-bearer. So the two stole down to the camp in the darkness of the night. It was too dark to see anything, and the chief may have been perplexed to know wherefore he had been sent. He had been sent to hear, not to see. Presently he heard one of the out-posts speaking to his fellow respecting a dream that had troubled him that

night—remarkable enough to awaken his attention, and suggest to him that it was no common dream—though he knew not how to discover its purport. He dreamed that as the host lay there encamped, a cake of barley meal rolled down from the hills and smote the tent against which it came with such violence that it fell down. Josephus says it was the royal tent, which is not unlikely, for the word rendered “tent,” with the definite article, which the original has, means the fairest and strongest tent. The man to whom the dreamer told his dream readily undertook to interpret it. The barley cake, he said, was the sword of Gideon—“for into his hand hath God delivered Midian and all the host.” This was enough for Gideon. It was of no importance to him whether the interpretation was correct or not—one thing was true and certain, that the Midianites were afraid of him, and themselves believed, not only in the possibility, but the probability—the certainty, of their own overthrow. In that conviction of theirs, the victory was already his.

It is curious that the man should have seen in the humble cake of barley meal a symbol of Gideon. It was, however, an apt and recognizable symbol of the condition of the Israelites, whose representative he was to be regarded. Hear Volney as to the condition of Syria in our own times, under the like state of things. “From all these causes we may easily imagine how miserable must be the condition of the peasants. They are everywhere reduced to a little flat cake of barley or dourra; to onions, lentils, and water.”*

TWENTY-FOURTH WEEK—FRIDAY.

THE STRATAGEM.—JUDGES VII. 16 TO VIII. 17.

AMONG all the stratagems in ancient military history, which abounds in stratagems—in the entire volume of in-

* *Travels in Egypt and Syria*, ii. 412.

stances collected by Polynæus—we find none so remarkable as that to which Gideon resorted, or having the slightest resemblance to it. The device strongly manifests that faculty of inventiveness which appears to have been a prominent feature in Gideon's character. We see this not only here, but in the device of the fleece, and in some other incidents of his after career, such as his punishment of the men of Succoth, and in the dangerously novel use to which he applied his portion of the spoil. The Lord, who employs those faculties in man which may best promote the purposes of his will, seems to have wrought with and stimulated the inventiveness of Gideon. Thus, in the trial of the men by the drinking of water, there was a contrivance after his own heart, and the gratification which it afforded to his imagination, could not but have inclined him, with the less reluctance, to acquiesce in the result which it determined.

Never, surely, before or since, did a general lead three hundred men against a hundred and thirty-five thousand, with only a trumpet in one hand, and a pitcher containing a lighted torch in the other. His object, however, was not to fight them, but to frighten them—or rather to raise into a panic the fears of him, which he knew that they already entertained. He divided the men into three equal bodies, each of which, in the darkness of the night, silently approached the enemy's camp in a different quarter. At a given signal, they all threw down their pitchers with a loud crash, raised their torches on high, blew their trumpets, and shouted "the sword of the Lord and of Gideon." The soldier had interpreted the barley cake to be no other than "the sword of Gideon." The hero adopts that as his war-cry; but, with becoming piety, he avoids, even in a war-cry, to claim the glory for his own sword, by introducing the name of the Lord. As the enemy dreaded *his* name he could not withhold that; but he added another name, the dread name of JEHOVAH, which the remembrance of ancient judgments rendered still more terrible to them. The result of this fearful din on all sides, with the sudden glare of torches upon the margin of the camp, had

precisely the effect which Gideon had calculated. In being thus suddenly awakened from their sleep it seemed to the Midianites that they were surrounded on all sides by enemies who had perhaps come from distant parts in aid of Gideon—the crash of the pitchers seemed to them as the noise of chariots—so many trumpets must imply the presence of a vast host—the glare of light must have led to the impression that the camp had been already set on fire in different parts. In the terror and the confusion they therefore fell foul of one another, and fought and slew as an enemy every one whom they encountered. To estimate this effect, it is to be remembered that the camp must have extended for many miles, and that the light of the torches must have appeared as a distant glare, but not an enlightening blaze, to all but those on the outskirts of the camp. And even if they had given light—which they could not—to all the host, there were not such distinctions of dress between the parts of the variously composed host, or between them and the enemy, as might enable them, in the confusion, to distinguish friend from foe. There was hence a frightful slaughter, without the Israelites striking a blow. Then followed a tumultuous flight; but by this time the country was roused, and the fugitives found enemies at every turn. The men who had been sent away the day before, probably also rendered good service this day upon the flying host. They were still out in arms, for it is not likely that many of them had yet reached their homes, or had, indeed, hastened to withdraw from the neighborhood; for they were not of the number which had claimed exemption on the ground of being “faint-hearted.” The passes of the Jordan were also seized, at the request of Gideon, by the Ephraimites, who, although offended at not having been at first called into action, forbore not to obey, for the public good, the man by whom they deemed themselves slighted. Thus it came to pass, that of all the vast host not more than fifteen thousand were able to make good their escape to the land beyond the Jordan, under the conduct of two of their princes, Zebah and Zalmunna. Gideon

was not minded that even these should escape, and he crossed after them, being joined in this pursuit by the Ephraimites, who brought him the heads of two kings, Oreb and Zeeb, of the allied host, whom they had slain. They could not, however, refrain from complaining warmly of the manner in which they—proud as they were, and important as they deemed themselves—had been overlooked at the outset. The incident is worth noticing, as marking an early indication of the pretensions of this great tribe to a leading place in the nation. Had the movement commenced in the great rival tribe of Judah, or had the leader been any other than of their own kindred tribe of Manasseh, they would not perhaps have been so easily pacified by the soft answer with which Gideon turned away their wrath. He knew the arrogant temper of this tribe, and soothed their wounded vanity by magnifying their exploits in comparison with his own.

The pursuit beyond the Jordan reveals an important fact, that a lack of sympathy had already grown up between the tribes separated by that river. For when Gideon applied at two towns on his way for refreshment for his weary troops, he was refused by both with insult. He stayed not to argue or punish, but threatened what he would do on his return. Still displaying his ingenious inventiveness, he does not, like a one-ided warrior, threaten to destroy them, or to burn their cities—but he tells the men of Succoth that he will humble their chief men with the scourge, and that with a new kind of scourge—"the thorns and briers of the wilderness." The offence of the men of Peniel was precisely the same, but he does not threaten to scourge *them*. No: he will "break down this tower"—the tower which was the strength and ornament of the place, and in which they trusted. He performed both promises to the letter, and perhaps something beyond, when he returned soon after victorious, with the two kings as his prisoners. He not only pulled down the tower of Peniel, but "slew the men of the city;" and it is not clear that he did not subject the men of Succoth to the same doom, after having dealt with them according to his threat. He

might have done it, indeed, in the execution of his threat; for there was an ancient punishment in which death was inflicted by laying the naked bodies of the offenders under a heap of thorns, briars, and prickly bushes, and then drawing over them threshing sledges and other heavy implements of husbandry. A remark in connection with this subject, which we made some years ago, has often since been quoted:* “In northern nations, where the body is completely covered, the idea of such punishments with thorns on the naked person, seems a far-fetched device; but in the East, where the clothing leaves much more of the person exposed, and where, in consequence, men are constantly lacerating their skins in passing through thickets, the idea of such laceration is always kept present to the mind, either by the actual experience of the suffering, or by the constant observation of it. Thus tearing the flesh with thorns comes to be a familiar idea of penal infliction, and as such, is still popularly mentioned in the East as among the punishments which evil-doers deserve, or will obtain, not only in this life but in the life to come.”

TWENTY-FOURTH WEEK—SATURDAY.

A KING.—JUDGES IX.

THE history of the Israelites exhibits one peculiarity which does not seem to have been duly noticed. Nothing is more frequent in both ancient and modern history than the real or alleged ingratitude of the people to those who have rendered them signal services. The histories of Greece and Rome teem with instances of this, which will present themselves to the mind of every reader; and the modern histories of the nations with which we are best acquainted—our own not excepted—are not wanting in them. But this is exceedingly rare among the Israelites. There may be some touches of

* *Pictorial Bible*, on Judges viii. 16.

the kind in the histories of Moses, of Samuel, and of David ; but any ungrateful feeling towards them was but temporary—the permanent feeling towards them was good and proper—and the final estimation of these personages by their nation manifests a high appreciation of their character and motives, and an intense recognition of their services. In fact, *all* the great names of their history are to this day held by them in more intense respect, than we find to be the case among any other people. We almost think that the disposition of the Hebrews lay all the other way—and that they were more inclined to err on the side of man-worship than of man-neglect. In the time of the Judges, by one great service, a man—from whatever rank in life—so secured the gratitude and respect of the people, that he remained in power as their governor all the rest of his life—however long that life might be. In the case of Gideon they went further. The service rendered by him, in delivering them from so grievous an oppression, was in their view so eminent, that they were not only willing and desirous that he should be their governor during life, but were anxious that the government should be made hereditary in his family—in short, that he should be their own sovereign, and should transmit his power to his descendants. This was a most extraordinary proposal. It shows that the Israelites had already begun to crave after a human monarchical government, and that they imperfectly understood or did not adequately prize the advantages they enjoyed under their peculiar constitution, which brought them into so near a relation to their Divine King. To his great honor—far more to his honor than even his victory over the Midianites—the patriotic virtue of Gideon was not moved by this great temptation. He was mindful of what they had forgotten ; and to the invitation, “Rule thou over us, both thou, and thy son, and thy son’s son also,” his prompt answer—in the true spirit of the theocracy, was, “I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you : the Lord shall rule over you.” Considering that the love of power is one of the strongest passions in man, and that Gideon was the father of a large

family of promising sons whose advancement might seem a reasonable object of paternal solicitude—this refusal, solely on principle, to become the first monarch of the Hebrew state, deserves to be ranked with the most illustrious examples of patriotic self-denial which history has recorded.

Unhappily, all his sons—and he had many—were not like-minded with their father. There was one of them—son of his concubine, or secondary wife—who, on the death of Gideon, many years after this, determined to grasp the distinction which his father had declined. His mother was a woman of Shechem; and through the connection of her family, his influence was very strong in that quarter. He repaired thither on the death of his father, and, opening his design to his mother's family, urged them to prevail upon the people of the place to give him the kingdom. He assumed that some of his brethren would govern, notwithstanding Gideon's disclaimer on their behalf; indeed, he assumed that *all* of them would govern. Whether this was or not, as we suspect, an imputation devised by himself to advance his own objects, or was founded upon some resolution among Gideon's sons as to the division of power among, or the common administration of power by, themselves, it is impossible to say. The argument, however, was "Whether it be better for you, either that all the sons of Jerubbaal,* which are threescore and ten persons, reign over you, or that one reign over you?" Anticipating the answer to this plain proposition, which, as usual in such cases, presumed no other object than the public good, he proceeded to insinuate that *he* should be the one person so distinguished. This intimation was conveyed with astute indirectness—"Remember *I* am your bone and your flesh." These words were not spoken in vain. Local ties are all-prevailing in the East; and the hearts of the men of Shechem inclined to follow Abimelech, for they said: "He is our brother." Being so inclined, they were not likely to be restrained by regard for the considerations which withheld Gideon from accepting the throne; for we find in fact

* A name acquired by Gideon, as stated in Judges vi. 32.

that idolatry had gained ground in this and probably in other places during the lifetime of that judge.

There was here a "house of Baal-berith," which, if it mean a temple, as it probably does, is the first of which there is any mention in Scripture—in fact the first on record. Temples must therefore have existed among the heathen nations of Canaan before this date, or they would not have been thus early imitated by the idolatrous Israelites. Not very long after we find other instances of temples, also called "houses," among the Philistines. Out of the treasures accumulated in this house from the offerings of the votaries, the people of Shechem, after having chosen Abimelech king, supplied him with money, which enabled him to attach a considerable number of loose and idle vagabonds to his person and service, by whose aid he was enabled to assume some of the state, and exercise some of the power, of a king. It will occur to the reader to ask what right the people of Shechem had to nominate a king, by their sole authority. In the first place, it must be remembered that the land had formerly been governed by a number of petty kings, ruling over some strong town and its immediate district and dependent villages; and it is likely that the Shechemites claimed no more than to appoint Abimelech as such a king over themselves, assuming that they, for themselves, whatever might be the view of others, had a right to choose a king to reign over them. Besides, Shechem was one of the chief towns of the tribe of Ephraim—and that proud and powerful tribe always claimed to take the leading part in public affairs, if not to determine the course of the other tribes—except, perhaps, of those connected with Judah in the south. It was under the influence of this desire for supremacy, that the revolt against the house of David was organized in that tribe, and resulted in the establishment of the separate kingdom for the ten tribes—in which kingdom Ephraim had the chief influence. Indeed, that establishment of a separate monarchy was accomplished at this very place where Abimelech is now declared king. Taking all this into account, it may

seem reasonable to conclude that the Shechemites had the support of the tribe in this transaction, or might, at least, reckon with reasonable confidence upon its not being withheld. Then, again, a king chosen at Shechem, and supported by this powerful tribe, might reasonably calculate that the other tribes would soon give in their adhesion, seeing that, in the time of his father, their monarchical predilections had been so strongly manifested.

Abimelech was certainly a king. He is called such by one who had reason to hate him; and his government is called a reign. He, therefore, was the first king in Israel, though it is usual to give Saul that distinction. He was inaugurated with some considerable ceremony "by the plain of the pillar that was in Shechem"—or rather, as in the original, by the "oak of the pillar"—which, we strongly incline to think, alludes to the tree near which Joshua erected a pillar, as a witness of the covenant renewed between God and Israel. We need not be amazed that worshippers of Baal-berith should seek the sanction of so venerable an association; for, as we have already had occasion to remark, their idolatry did not consist in an absolute rejection of Jehovah and his law, but in the adoption of other gods beside him, resulting in the neglect of his worship and ordinances. This inauguration at a pillar in some sacred place became afterwards part of the regular ceremonial of what we should call a coronation, for we read that the young king Joash stood by a pillar in the court of the temple at his solemn inauguration by the high-priest Jehoiada.—2 Kings xi. 14.

After all, it does not appear that Abimelech was able greatly to extend his kingdom—for after three years, we find him besieging towns, not very distant from Shechem, that refused to submit to his authority. In one such siege he met death, for as he advanced to set fire to the gate, a woman cast down upon him the upper mill-stone (called "the rider," because it is made to revolve upon the lower one). Finding himself mortally wounded, he got his armor-bearer to run him through with his sword, lest it should be said that a

woman slew him. This has been curiously, but perhaps needlessly, illustrated as a peculiar point of ancient military honor. But we apprehend that an officer of our own, or any other army of modern Europe, would quite as little relish, as did the ancients, the idea of its being said of them that they died by a woman's hand, although they may not resort to the same means of evading so great a stain upon their heroic fame.*

Twenty-Fifth Week—Sunday.

A PARABLE.—JUDGES IX. 8-16.

It seems to us very probable that one cause of the success of Abimelech's attempt to establish a kingdom, lay in the general abhorrence at the deed which he committed when he had secured the adhesion of the men of Shechem. Attended by the unprincipled men he had attached to his person, he went down to the abode of his father's family at Ophrah, and there put to death all his brethren, the sons of Gideon, probably by beheading, "upon one stone." There is, however, some danger of measuring by our own feelings—and, therefore, too strongly—the impression such a deed was likely to make upon an ancient oriental people. The fact, that Abimelech did commit this barbarous and unnatural atrocity, seems to show that the policy, which has had numerous later examples in the East, had already become usual in the kingdoms around Palestine, from which it was adopted by Abimelech. This aims to secure the throne to the person who

* "As we returned into the town (Ceuta) a stone, nearly of the size of a man's head, was shown to us, by which the skull of the Portuguese commander who first entered the place, was, like that of Pyrrhus broken by a woman from a tower. A Moorish sovereign, who was so wounded, despatched himself, like Abimelech, with his own sword, to cover his disgrace."—URQUHART'S *Pillars of Hercules*, 1850, i. 96.

ascends it by destroying all his brothers—that the people, if discontented, may be deterred from dethroning or slaying their king by the feeling that there is no one of the royal race to prefer in his stead. This was, for centuries, the regular policy of the Ottoman court, and has only been abandoned within the memory of man. It was also, from a far earlier date, the policy of the Persian court, until it was found that the object might be attained by destroying the eyes, instead of taking the life, of all the sons of the king but the one who reigns. It is on record, that all the sons of Fattah Ali Shah, whose reign terminated only in 1834, grew up in the belief that their eyes would be taken from them on the death of their father. There is a touching incident of one of the boys being seen by an English lady walking about the haram blindfold, in order, as he said, that he might know how to walk when blind, as he knew that his sight would be taken from him when the king his father should die.

One young son of Gideon—indeed the youngest—did, however, escape the massacre. His name was Jotham. One would think that he would have gone and hid himself in the remotest part of the land, striving to keep even his existence a secret from his blood-thirsty brother. But with the astonishing hardihood which we sometimes witness in men in his circumstances, he no sooner heard that the elders of Shechem were going to make Abimelech king, than he determined to take a very extraordinary part in the ceremony. At the time when they were assembled in the valley to inaugurate their chosen king, a voice was heard calling to them from Mount Gerizim. They looked up; and, behold, it was Jotham standing boldly out upon a cliff of the mountain, and inviting their attention to his words: "Hearken unto me, ye men of Shechem, that God may hearken unto you." Instead of the eager remonstrance or warm protest which they probably expected, he gave them a *fable*—the most ancient in his story, and, in all respects, the first specimen of this kind of composition. It is seven hundred years older than *Æsop*, the most ancient heathen name in parabolical literature; and it can-

not be denied that it is at least equal to anything which that great fabulist produced. As in most works of this description the earliest are the best, we may be prepared to admit that Jotham's parable, though the oldest that has been preserved, is a perfect specimen of its kind, and in every respect a model for this species of composition.

The trees, he said, went forth to choose a king. First, they went to the olive tree, but the olive tree refused to quit its fatness to go to be promoted over the trees; then they went to the fig-tree, which, in like manner, declined to quit its sweetness; the vine refused also to leave its gladdening wine; and the trees, in their despair, went to the bramble, which considered the matter sagely, and consented to reign on certain conditions which the rich olive or the fruitful vine would not have exacted: "If in truth ye anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust in my shadow; and if not, let fire come out of the bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon." The terse and biting application of this parable to Abimelech is obvious, and was made by Jotham himself ere he fled. There are other applications of it which we may very well make for our own profit.

The reluctance of the trees generally to desert the useful station in which they were planted and fixed, to move to and fro (as the word rendered "promoted" signifies), and to reign over trees, is a wholesome lesson to us of contentment in the stations and lines of private usefulness we respectively fill, without that eager grasping after public honor and authority, attended with responsibilities which we may not be so well able to discharge, and with cares in which we are untried. These, from their engrossing nature, and from the public notice they involve, cannot often be discharged without much neglect of private affairs, and the sacrifice of much ease and comfort, amounting to an abandonment of the fatness, the sweetness, and the wine of life—of all that renders our existence really useful to others, and really happy to ourselves. Happiness is *suitableness*; and he who abandons the means of usefulness which have grown with his growth in the sphere

in which he moves, for untried, and therefore probably unsuitable responsibilities and powers, is likely to pierce himself through with many sorrows, and forego all that has blessed his past existence. It is well to note, that the trees considered the promotion offered to them involved the abandonment of all that was proper to them, and that constituted their usefulness. In this age and country, men have not the offer of crowns; but in this age and country, more perhaps than in any other, there is an extensive craving after public honors and powers—political, municipal, ecclesiastical, commercial—which renders these considerations far from inappropriate. In the state, in the city, in the church, in the club, in the company, and even in the workshop and the school, there is a general seeking after the power and dominion involved in the idea of “reigning,” and which is justly open to the caution which this parable contains. There are, indeed, legitimate objects of the highest ambition, and of the most exalted aspirations. Crowns and kingdoms lie beneath the feet of him who pursues with steady pace his high career towards the city of the Great King, where he knows there is laid up for him a crown of glory that fadeth not away—a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, will bestow upon all that love his appearing.

Consider also the eagerness of the bramble to accept the honors which the nobler trees declined, and the arrogant pretensions which it connected with its acceptance of them. By this we may learn, as Jotham intended to teach, that they are men of an inferior order of capacity, usefulness, and thought, to whom these earthly distinctions are most precious, and by whom they are most earnestly coveted. A good man may accept honors and powers, which have occurred to him out of his high labors and eminent services. Were it otherwise, the power which man exercises over man, would be in the hands only of the worthless. But to seek the honors themselves, to make them the direct object of ambition and of thought, or even to accept them without the right which high services confer, is low, is mean, is brambleish. Now a

bramble is not only one of the most useless of plants ; but it is offensive by its thorns, so that the silly sheep who accept the shelter to which it invites them, escape not without leaving some of their fleece behind them. So also, from its very worthlessness, it is much used in the East for the light fuel which in such climates is alone required. Yet, as such, it may kindle a flame which may prostrate the very cedars of Lebanon. Hence it is not the highest of men, the lofty and the gifted, who crave after the dominion over their fellows, and invite them to put their trust in their shadow—but the low, the hurtful, and the unworthy—who take what they cannot use, and offer what they cannot give. The bramble Abimelech was the only one in the line of the Judges who attained to greatness without any public services ; and yet he claimed higher honors and powers, in his mere unworthiness, than the greatest of those Judges ever exercised or would have accepted. There have been, and there are many such Abimelechs ; and generally, in all their insatiate cravings after power, the arrogance of the pretension is proportioned to the scantiness of the desert.

TWENTY-FIFTH WEEK—MONDAY.

JEPHTHAH.—JUDGES X.

THE next defection of the Israelites into idolatry was very grievous. The tribes in the different districts seem to have adopted the worship of the nearest heathen nations on their borders. For this they were subject to a twofold oppression, for, while the Philistines afflicted the south, the Ammonites oppressed the tribes beyond the Jordan, and at length crossed over, and extended their incursions into the country west of the river. The deliverer at this time was of Gilead. His name was Jephthah, a man who having, as the son of a concubine, been, upon the death of his father, cast forth upon

the world, had put himself at the head of a set of brave but lawless men, who led the life of free-booters, making excursions into the territories of the bordering nations, and living upon the spoil thus acquired. This kind of life was such as David led during his wanderings, and was far from being accounted discreditable in those times, nor is it indeed at present in the East. Although the nation generally had long remained in idolatry—which, with his wild habits of life, must have left Jephthah's notions very imperfect and confused as to many points of duty and legal obligation—there is no doubt that he had a true zeal for the Lord, and faith in the sufficiency of his protection. His mode of life necessitated many daring exploits, and gave him such opportunities of distinguishing his courage and abilities, as no other person in that age possessed; and hence it was natural that, when the people had resolved to strike for their deliverance, and felt the want of an experienced leader, they applied to Jephthah to take the command against the Ammonites. After some demur he consented, and was completely successful in his great enterprise; and Israel once more was free. The great point of interest in this transaction, is that which resulted from the rash vow made by this commander when he set out to lead his host against the children of Ammon. He then "vowed a vow unto the Lord, and said, if thou wilt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into my hands, then shall it 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."

The terms of this vow seem to us altogether such as to show the extremely limited nature of the knowledge which Jephthah possessed as to the law of Moses, and especially of its regulations concerning vows. Throughout, it savors far more of the superstition which might be expected from the long night of sin and sorrow through which Israel had passed, than of the correct religious faith which one who had been nourished with marrow of the covenant, might have

been expected to entertain. The idea of bargaining with God in this manner for his assistance, is offensive to the rightly nurtured mind, and has a heathenish savor—such things being exceedingly common under every pagan system. Almost every important undertaking was accompanied among them with similar vows of offerings and sacrifices to some god, to bribe him, as it were, to give the undertaking the advantage of his assistance. An instance of this has been given in p. 201 of this volume. Upon the whole, one who has closely studied the character of the times, and the circumstances of the man, will readily perceive that Jephthah might think to propitiate Jehovah, even to the extent of a human sacrifice, by such kind of offering as was sometimes made, in great emergencies, by the heathen. Among the doomed nations of Canaan, as well as among the surviving nations around, human sacrifices were far from uncommon, it being held that what was most valuable and precious in the sight of man—that which was dearest to him—that which it would cost him most to part with—was the most fitting expression of his zeal for the gods—the fullest possible manifestation of his devotion and gratitude. No doubt the law declared such sacrifices to be abominable to God; but it is easy to conceive that such a man as Jephthah, living in the time he did, was far better acquainted with the leading facts of the history of his people, than with the details of the law. Of the former he evinces much knowledge in his answer to the remonstrance of the Ammonites. Men of the class of minds and capacities which his life evinces, readily possess themselves of broad facts, but heed little the details of such laws as are not embodied in tangible institutions. In that age, the law would have been little taught or studied, and although the tabernacle institutions may have remained in outward operation at Shiloh, we cannot suppose that what was neglected on the west side of the Jordan was not far more neglected on the east. Few of the people resident there had probably ever been at the tabernacle on they early festivals, or had access to such instructions as the priests and Levites might have been able to af-

ford. Knowledge of these matters, by private intercourse with those who knew the law, could not have gone far in that corrupt generation; and in such a time, not many, probably, beyond the Jordan, had even *heard* the law read, once in seven years, at the feast of tabernacles. It may, therefore, be quite possible that Jephthah was wholly ignorant that such sacrifices were unlawful, while his recollection of facts may have helped him to a very erroneous conclusion in the matter from Abraham's intended sacrifice of Isaac by Divine command.

We say this because we cannot resist the conviction that Jephthah, when he uttered his vow, did contemplate the possibility that the sacrifice which he would be called to offer, according to his vow, might be the sacrifice of a human life. Look at the terms of his oath. What could he suppose would come out of the doors of his house *for the purpose* of meeting him, but a human being? He did not keep sheep or oxen in his house; nor do *they* come forth to meet their returning owners. A dog might do so; but the Israelites did not keep dogs in their houses. In his house he had many human beings, servants, slaves, followers—no relations, for he was the son of a harlot, and his father's connections had cast him off. Yet, there was one, a daughter—the only child he had; and although he may have contemplated the mere possibility that she might be the one to meet him, he could not nullify the supposed virtue of his vow, by formally excepting from its operation the one who was dearest of all to him.

Yet, when the moment of trial came, when, as he drew nigh his house, his daughter appeared, leading the damsels, who with timbrels and with dances, greeted the triumphant return of her now glorious father, the hero shrunk beneath the blow. "Alas, my daughter," he cried, "thou hast brought me very low, for I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back." We cannot but sympathize in his grief, while we deplore his ignorance. The very words he uses now, show, in a degree, that he had contemplated from the first the possibility of such a sacrifice, and did not

know it to be unlawful; for, had the vow, as uttered, involved a result forbidden by God, and therefore sinful, so far from being obliged to perform his vow—so far from being restrained from going back, he would, notwithstanding his vow, have been obliged not to perform it. The original sin, of making such a vow, which might lead to unlawful consequences, was great; but that sin would not be diminished, but aggravated, by his performing the unlawful act. That his daughter did not know such a vow had been made, is another proof that we have rightly interpreted its tenor. To have made it known to her, or to any of his household, would have been to make it a mockery, with the possibility of a human sacrifice in view: but had an animal sacrifice only been in his thoughts, there is no reason why he should not have made it known; indeed there was every reason why he should do so, for these things were usually declared openly for the encouragement of the troops.

When, therefore, we are told that “Jephthah did with his daughter according to his vow,” we, in full recollection of all the ingenious explanations which have been produced, and which we regret that our space does not allow us to examine, see no alternative but to conclude, although we would gladly avail ourselves of any fair ground of escape from that conclusion, that he offered her up in sacrifice. This is the sense conveyed by the ancient versions, and by the text of our own. It is also the statement of Josephus, though he is prone to extenuate or suppress that which he holds to be not for the honor of his nation; while, at the same time, he considers it a deplorably mistaken and unlawful act. We may sympathize in the wish of vindicating the memory of one of the heroes of Scripture history from such gross ignorance, resulting in so foul a crime; but still we feel bound to take the narrative in its plain and simple meaning, which is that taken at the first view, and apart from all note and comment, by any reader of the original narrative, as well as by that very correct translation of it which our own version supplies. The considerations at which we have hinted may tend to diminish

our surprise, but not our grief, by showing how the very mistaken view under which Jephthah acted, is not at all incredible in the age in which he lived, and under the circumstances in which he was placed. Let not the reader, however, take up the absurd fancy of the painters, that this deed was perpetrated by the high-priest at the altar of God. The high-priest would have known his duty better. All our surprise is, that whatever may have been the alienation between the tribes on the opposite sides of the Jordan, he did not send, or go, to prevent, by such little authority as he had left, so dreadful a consummation. We have, however, a reason for this also. The Ephraimites, in whose tribe the tabernacle was, had actually at this time come to blows with Jephthah, through the offence they had, as in the time of Gideon, conceived, at not having been summoned to take part in the war with Ammon. This would tend to cut off all communication between the opposite sides of the river, for the time; and while the high-priest would have been less likely to hear of the matter, he would be the less able, if he had heard of it, to interfere with any advantage. The awful sacrifice was doubtless made on some one of the old altars, or, perhaps, on a new one, in Gilead. But we can pursue the consequences of the case no further, being most glad to draw a veil over the possible circumstances of the last scene, when, perhaps, the father's own hand struck down the life that was dearer to him than his own.

TWENTY-FIFTH WEEK—TUESDAY.

THE NAZARITE.—JUDGES XIII.

THERE is no judge in Israel whose history is so fully related as that of Samson. It occupies four of the twenty chapters which compose the book of Judges. It is full of striking and marvellous incidents, arising from the great physical

strength and the great moral weakness of the hero—mixed up with a prevailing and childlike trust in the Lord, in which lies all of greatness that belongs to his character. The history, in its main features, is familiar to all our readers from childhood. We need not, therefore, occupy our shortening space in the recapitulation of it, but may select for observation the facts which seem to us suitable for remark in these Daily papers.

Samson's history commences before his birth. He is introduced with great pomp, which awakens expectations scarcely satisfied by the ultimate facts and real results of his career. This may not strike us at first, the events being so far uncommon as to appear great by their very singularity. But, closely considered, there are none of his feats, or all of them together, of near so much importance as the simple victories of Barak, Gideon, or Jephthah. This, we think, can only be accounted for by his great destinies having been marred by his vices and indiscretions, which incapacitated him from acting efficiently as the leader of the people, by rendering it impossible for them to trust in him, leaving him only to display the most astonishing acts of individual prowess that the world ever witnessed. Some have blamed the Israelites for not placing themselves under his guidance and crushing the Philistines, who were, in his time, the oppressors of Israel. But it seems to us that they were completely justified in withholding their confidence from him. A mere slave of the senses like him, who could repeatedly sacrifice or endanger the most important interests to a woman's sigh, was not one into whose hands the elders and warriors of Israel could entrust their lives and fortunes. Had he wrought out the possibilities of his destiny, and had his character been equal to his gifts, there is no knowing to what greatness he might not have attained; but as it is, he left a name which is at once a miracle and a byword, a glory and a shame.

Of persons whose births were solemnly disclosed by angels before their birth, there are but two in the Old Testament, and Samson was one of them. This was a great and splen

did distinction. In both instances the mothers were barren women, and had abandoned the hope of children, which, to both, greatly enhanced the importance of the communication. In the case of Isaac, the announcement was made to Abraham in the hearing of Sarah; in the case of Samson, it was made to the woman in the absence of her husband. The man to whose wife the angel came was of Zorah in the tribe of Dan, a place close upon the borders of the Philistine territory. His name was Manoah. We do not know that the appearance of an angel is anywhere in the historical Scriptures described with so much particularity as in this account. The wife herself, in describing him to her husband, says: "A man of God came unto me, and his countenance was like the countenance of an angel of God, very terrible: but I asked him not whence he was, neither told he me his name." By this it appears she took him in the first instance for a prophet sent from God, yet entertained the suspicion that he might be something more than human. A favorite old poet well describes the heavenly seen through the earthly, which must have given rise to this impression—

" In his face

Terror and sweetness labored for the place.
 Sometimes his sun-bright eyes would shine so fierce
 As if their pointed beams would even pierce
 The soul, and strike the amaz'd beholder dead:
 Sometimes their glory would disperse and spread
 More easy flame, and like the star that stood
 O'er Beth'lem, promise and portend some good:
 Mixt was his bright aspect, as if his breath
 Had equal errands both of life and death:
 Glory and mildness seemed to contend
 In his fair eyes."*

Again, in relating the same to Manoah—

" Appeared before mine eyes
 A man of God: his habit and his guise

* Quarles: *History of Samson.*

Were such as holy prophets used to wear;
But in his dreadful looks there did appear
Something that made me tremble; in his eye
Mildness was mixt with awful majesty."

The angel, not yet fully known to be such, not only foretold the birth of a son, but gave directions as to the manner of his bringing up, seeing that he was to be "a Nazarite unto God from the womb." His vocation as one to deliver, or rather, "to begin to deliver," Israel from the Philistines, was indicated.

The law of Nazariteship is laid down in the books of Moses;* but this is the first instance we have of its practical application. The Nazarite (or separated one) was to be considered as in a special manner separated from ordinary life to religious purposes; and whose condition, as consecrated to the service, worship, and honor of God, was to be manifested by certain personal peculiarities and acts of self-denial. The chief personal peculiarity consisted in the hair being suffered to grow during the whole period—even if for life; and the chief self-denial in abstinence from wine and all strong drink. The obligation against the drinking of wine was secured from evasion by the fruit of the vine being forbidden in every shape from the kernels to the husk. This was a very mild asceticism—unlike what we now witness in the Pagan East, and even in Christian Europe. A Nazarite might eat, and drink, and marry, and possess, and mingle in society—and his condition, as under vows to the Lord, was manifested only by a becoming peculiarity, and by a wholesome abstinence. He was to take special care to keep himself from ceremonial pollution—particularly from such as was involved by contact with a dead body. He was not to make himself unclean by touching even the corpse of a relative. But if he did contract accidental defilement, he was to shave his head, and counting as lost all the time of his separation which had previously passed, was to begin anew. The obligation was usually undertaken for a limited time, but sometimes for the

* See Num. vi.

remainder of life. It might be imposed by parents upon their children, even before their birth—as in the case of Samuel; and in this case of Samson, as well as in that of John the Baptist, the condition was imposed, before birth, by Divine appointment. In these cases there was of course no such discharge from the obligations of the vow as existed when it was voluntarily undertaken, and for a limited time.

Although Samson was obviously made a Nazarite to indicate his being specially set apart to serve the Lord by the gift to be given to him—yet there was a peculiar fitness in its being imposed upon one to be so gifted with the utmost perfection of physical strength. For the hair was a sign and symbol of manly strength—inasmuch as men possess it more abundantly than women, and strong men more abundantly than weak. Wine and strong drink also impair the strength and clearness of the intellect. The retention of the hair, therefore, and the abstinence from vinous drinks, expressed the highest perfection of body and mind—the full possession of all his powers and capacities in the individual. This had an analogical conformity with the law which required that animals offered to the Lord in sacrifice, should be free from all blemish and defect.

It is worthy of note that when Manoah received from his wife this information, he fully believed that the angel's promise would be fulfilled. Every one else to whom such a promise was ever made, whether by prophet or angel, received it with distrust. Abraham and Sarah "laughed;" the Shunamite woman said to Elisha, "Nay, my lord, do not lie unto thine handmaid;" and the father of John the Baptist, although a priest, and addressed by an angel under the most solemn circumstances, said, "Whereby shall I know this?" and was struck dumb for his unbelief; even the Virgin Mary said, "How can this thing be?" But Manoah, the only one who received no direct intimation from angel or prophet, had no hesitation in believing that what had been promised to his wife would come to pass. He was, however, not without fear that she might not clearly have apprehended the di-

rections given to her; and therefore he implored the Lord that another interview with "the man of God" might be afforded. His suit was granted. The angel came again, when he was absent in the field. But his wife ran for him, and to him the seeming prophet repeated the instructions already given to the woman. Perfectly satisfied, Manoah proposed to offer the usual hospitality to the stranger, requesting him to tarry until a kid could be got ready for his entertainment. The stranger agreed to remain; but suggested that the kid should rather be presented as a burnt-offering to the Lord. During the delay Manoah entered into conversation with the stranger, and among other things ventured to ask his name, with the view, as he said, of rendering him becoming honor when his prediction should be fulfilled—probably by spreading the fact abroad, and also by presenting him with some proper token of acknowledgment. But the angel answered, "Wherefore askest thou after my name, seeing it is secret?" By this time Manoah may have suspected the heavenly nature of his guest, and all doubt was removed, when the kid was presented; for the angel then disappeared, ascending upward in the flame and smoke of the offering.

TWENTY-FIFTH WEEK—WEDNESDAY.

THE LION—JUDGES XIV. 1-10.

AFTER Moses, the only eminent persons of the Old Testament whom we are permitted to know from their birth, are Samson, Samuel, and Solomon. Of the three the early life of Samuel is the best known. Of that of Samson we only know—and it is much to know—that "the child grew, and the Lord blessed him." By this, having his destination in view, we may understand that the Lord gave evident proofs that the child was under his peculiar protection; and, by the gifts he bestowed, gave sign that he was preparing him for

something great and extraordinary. We should have liked to possess a few details of his boyhood. He whose manhood was so extraordinary could not pass an undistinguished boyhood among his playmates in the streets of Zorah. How that long-haired, lion-like boy, must have been looked up to among his young companions. What sweets of power he enjoyed—for there is no admiration in the world, no reverence, comparable to that with which a set of boys will look up to supreme bodily prowess in any one of their companions—no authority so despotic as that which he may, if he wills it, exercise—no subjects so willing and devoted in their obedience as those who receive his command. The homage which all covet, is by no *man* of full age received in such large and unreserved measure, as that which such a boy receives.

It is worthy of note that when Samson grew up all the attachments which he successively formed were to females of the Philistines—the power that held southern Israel in bondage. No daughter of his own people appears to have engaged his attention at any time. There was, as intimated, a providence in this, that thereout might accrue circumstances which should bring him into collision with the Philistines, disgraceful and disastrous to them. Samson's first attachment to a young woman of Timnath, was highly distasteful to his parents. This, however, must have been solely on the ground that a marriage into an idolatrous and foreign nation was adverse to the principles of the law and the feelings of the people, for this was not one of the Canaanitish nations—marriages into which were absolutely interdicted. As the Israelites had been much in the habit of contracting even such marriages, notwithstanding this prohibition, a marriage with a Philistine woman must have seemed no very heinous offence; and although the parents of Samson did somewhat demur to the match, and did suggest that he had better seek a wife among the daughters of his own people, they were easily prevailed upon, not only to give way to their son's inclination, but to go down to Timnath and make the proposal to the damsel's family in due form. Some commentators,

unacquainted with the customs of the East, assume that the parents went down to see how they liked the young woman who had won their son's regard, and whose consent had been by him already obtained. This would have been in the highest degree indecorous. They went to make the proposal and to arrange the conditions with the parents of the damse—all these matters being settled by the parents, or through some confidential retainer, before the young pair have any near access to each other.

A singular adventure happened in the way down. Samson had digressed from the road into the vineyards, "probably to eat grapes," Matthew Henry supposes, but Quarles more poetically conjectures that he had stept aside

"To gain the pleasure of a lonely thought,"

when a "young lion came and roared against him." By "a young lion" is meant not a young whelp, for which the Hebrew has quite a different word; but a young lion arrived at the fulness of its growth, and therefore more full of animal spirits and vigor than at a later age, and consequently a more dangerous enemy to encounter. A lion, in presence of prey or of an enemy, only roars when it springs, and Samson, therefore, only became aware of the presence of this fierce adversary in the very moment of onset. But the weaponless hero received the strong beast in his sinewy arms, and "rent him as he would have rent a kid," leaving the carcass dead upon the ground. He then rejoined his parents, and said nothing of what had happened, which is certainly a singular instance of discretion, modesty, and self-control, the more so when we consider that it is not at all, in the East, considered unseemly for a man to speak vauntingly of his own exploits.

This is the first instance which occurs of the presence of lions in Palestine; but the frequent allusions to lions by the sacred writers, and the familiar acquaintance with their habits evinced by them, as well as the variety of names by which the various circumstances of the lion's growth and age are distinguished, show how common in former times, in Syria,

was this noble animal, now not found nearer in Asia than the banks of the Euphrates, and there very rarely. Its presence, indeed, is shown by historical incidents, such as David's combat with a lion in defence of his flock;* the slaughter of two lions, in a pit, on a snowy day, by one of David's worthies;† the destruction of the disobedient prophet by a lion;‡ the notice of the lions being driven up, by the swellings of the river, from the thickets of the Jordan;§ and the remarkable instance of the rapid increase and ravages committed by the lions when the land became thinly occupied, through the slaughter and departure of the Israelites.¶ This strikingly illustrates the reason given why the Lord would not at once drive out the Canaanites before the Israelites, when they entered the promised land, "Lest the beasts of the field should increase upon them."¶¶ If in the later period, much more in the earlier, must lions have been included. The lion lives to above fifty years; and consequently, having annual litters of from three to five cubs, they increase very rapidly when the depopulation of any country in which they are found, leaves them comparatively unmolested.

European readers will expect that Samson would marry the damsel of his choice, and take her home with him. Not so. The contract of betrothal was then to be entered into, and it was, and is still, a custom among the Jews, and one probably of the Philistines, for an interval of some months, commonly not less than a year, to elapse between the betrothal and the marriage.

It was after some such interval that Samson went down once more to Timnath to celebrate the nuptials. On the way his curiosity prompted him to turn aside to see whether any traces existed of the lion he had some months before slain. To his astonishment he found the dead carcass replete with life:

* 1 Sam. xvii. 23.

† 1 Kings xiii. 24.

‡ 2 Kings xvii. 25.

† 2 Sam. xxiii. 20. 1 Chron. xi. 22

§ Jer. xlix. 19.

¶ Deut. vii. 22.

" His wond'ring ear
 Perceived a murmuring voice ; discerning not
 From whence that strange confusion was, or what,
 He stays his steps and hearkens. Still the voice
 Presents his ear with a continued noise.
 At length his gently moving feet apply
 Their paces to the carcass, where his eye
 Discerns a swarm of bees, whose laden thighs
 Reposed their burdens, and the painful prize
 Of their sweet labors, in the hollow chest
 Of the dead lion, whose embowell'd breast
 Became their plenteous storehouse."—QUARLES.

It has seemed to many, judging from what happens to the dead body of a beast in our own climate, scarcely credible that so sensitively clean and neat a creature as a bee should establish itself in so offensive a domicile. The answer is—that it was *not* offensive. In the East, vultures and insects, particularly numerous swarms of ants, and these abound in vineyards, will, in an astonishingly short time, clean completely out all the soft parts of any carcass, leaving the skeleton entire, covered by its integuments, for the flesh having been *picked out*, the skin would not be rent and destroyed. This would happen rather in the country than in a town, where the dogs would not be likely to leave the outer form of the animal in this state. The circumstances are therefore entirely appropriate to the situation in which they occurred. All the softer parts being thus removed, the bones and skin will rapidly be deprived of all their moisture by the heat of the sun ; and the skeleton covered over with the dry parchment into which the skin has been turned, becomes a sweet and very convenient habitation in which a swarm of bees would be very likely to settle, especially in a secluded spot, among the shrub-like vines. In the East, bees establish themselves in situations little thought of by us ; many wild swarms being left to find homes for themselves, fix in any hollow which seems to them suited to their wants. Often in the clefts of the rock, whence the mention of "honey out of the rock," Deut. xxxix. 13 ; often in trees, whence the men-

tion of the dropping of the honey-comb—a singular instance of which we have in the case of Jonathan, who found honey dropping from the trees to the ground, in his way through a forest—1 Sam. xiv. 25, 26. In this case, Samson took some of the honey-comb, and gave some of the honey to his parents when he rejoined them, without telling them how it had been obtained. The whole of the affair of the lion is mentioned in the sacred narrative not merely as an exploit, but on account of the circumstances which grew out of it. Samson doubtless performed many mighty feats which are not recorded; those only being mentioned which directly influenced the current of his history, and brought him more or less into collision with the Philistines. No one would have thought that out of this slaughter of the lion, and the finding a swarm of bees in the skin-enveloped carcass—occurring while the hero was engaged in forming amicable relations with the Philistines—occasion for the exertion of his destroying energies against the oppressors of Israel would have arisen. But so it came to pass. The most unlikely agents—lions, bees, honey-combs—may become the agents of accomplishing the purposes of God, and of leading or driving man to his appointed task, when he thinks not of it.

TWENTY-FIFTH WEEK—THURSDAY.

THE RIDDLE.—JUDGES XIV. 11–19.

THE account of Samson's marriage feast is given with unusual detail, and we are thus enabled to distinguish some of the ancient marriage customs of Palestine, most of which are such as still exist in the East. As the law of Moses did not affect any customs of this sort, nor establish any special set of usages for the Hebrews, it is not probable that their own usages differed from those of their neighbors. In the present case, Samson, celebrating his marriage as a stranger

in a Philistine town, and leaving the particulars to be managed by the Philistines, doubtlessly followed the customs of the place; and that most of these customs can, at later or earlier periods, be discovered among the Hebrews themselves, shows the essential identity of their marriage customs.

First, then, we are informed, that "Samson made there a feast, *for so used the young men to do.*" Such feasts are still celebrated throughout the East, during which all kinds of merriment prevail. This feast, as we learn further on, lasted for *seven* days, exactly the same period as the feast with which, six hundred years before, Jacob celebrated his successive marriages. Considering that Samson was a stranger at Timnath, his feast was no doubt held at the house of a Philistine acquaintance. The common reader may suppose that the feast was held at the house of the bride's father, after the nuptial ceremonies. But this would have been contrary to all the ideas of the East. There would be indeed a feast there; but it was the feast of the bride, her female relations, and her fair companions. The sexes do not eat together in the East, and did not feast together, even among the Jews, although, in matters that concern women, we find among them more liberal and less unsocial usages than now prevail among the Orientals. On such occasions they did not, and do not now, feast in the same house, unless under circumstances that render this unavoidable. Some would fancy that this separation of the sexes renders such feasts more decorous than they might be otherwise. We apprehend not. Men are most indecorous when unrestrained by the presence of women; and in every nation, those feasts are always the most proper and becoming in which women take part. This is in favor of our own usages, in the balance between the East and the West.

It was usual that the bridegroom should have a certain number of companions, who were always with him at his service during the period of the feast, and who exerted themselves to promote the good humor and hilarity of the entertainment. These are in the New Testament called the

“friends of the bridegroom,” and “the children of the bride-chamber,” Matt. ix. 15; John iii. 29. One of these, usually an intimate friend of the bridegroom, and distinguished for his social qualities, and by his capacity for keeping the guests at their ease, and for his tact in repressing disorderly conduct, presided over the whole, and managed all the business that grew out of the protracted entertainment, that the bridegroom might be left free from all the distracting cares which are apt to beset the man who gives a feast. This important bridal officer is called, in the account of the marriage at Cana, “the governor of the feast;” and in the Baptist’s discourse to his disciples, “the friend of the bridegroom” that rejoices to hear the bridegroom’s voice.

Such “companions” and such a “friend” were not wanting at the marriage feast of Samson. Of the former there were no fewer than thirty; and as he was a stranger in the place, the choice of them was left much to the Philistines. Looking at the subsequent conduct of these men, there is probably an intended emphasis in its being stated, “*when they saw him, they brought thirty companions to be with him.*” We may perhaps gather, that when they observed the stature, form, countenance, and demeanor of the strong Hebrew, they thought him a man to be watched; and therefore, under the show of enabling him to give his feast with the customary honor and observance, really stationed these young men as spies and guards upon his person. Israel was in bondage; and an Israelite who exhibited a resolute bearing, joined to formidable powers, was likely to be closely watched. They would have watched Samson still more closely, had they been aware of his exploit with the lion, which he had hitherto most studiously concealed.

Among the amusements common at such festivals, was that of proposing riddles, the non-solution of which involved some kind of forfeit, and the solution a reward. They were particularly common among the Greeks, who were wont to call riddles, contrived to puzzle and perplex, by the significant name of “banquet-riddles,” or “cup-questions.” This

was altogether a very favorite exercise of ingenuity among the ancients; and perhaps, taking into account the ingenuity required to devise them, and to discover their significance, with the faculties they keep in pleasant exercise, and the small surprises they involve—this species of wit has fallen into undeserved neglect among our sources of social entertainment. There may, however, be something in the fact, that our festal entertainments are so comparatively short, as to need fewer and less varied sources of ingenuity to prevent them from becoming a weariness. If we held feasts of seven days long, without the society of our womankind, we should betake ourselves to riddles and other resources of the sort, for beguiling the long hours; and, as it is, the numerous people among us who cannot get through the brief space of our own entertainments without having recourse to cards, have small reason to regard the riddles of the ancient feasts with disrespect.

This kind of sport had been going on probably for some time, and Samson had perhaps been somewhat chafed by some defeats in this play of wit; when he at length declared, that he would now, in his turn, put forth a riddle, the terms being, that if they, that is, any one of the thirty, could make it out, he would forfeit to them thirty dresses of a superior description, that is, one to each; but if they could not solve it, each of them should forfeit a dress of the same kind to him. Thus the hero put himself and his riddle as it were against the whole body of his companions. If the riddle were not solved, each of them lost but one dress; if it were solved, he singly, had to provide thirty. The advantages were all on their side; but it suited Samson's humor that it should be so. In these, as in other matters, he liked to have the odds against him. It is possible, however, that he might not have made so unequal a bargain, had he not felt assured in his mind, that it passed the wit of man to find out the riddle he meant to propose, seeing that it was founded on his recent discovery in the carcass of the lion, with which he was quite sure that none but himself was acquainted. It was indeed soluble; but it depended upon a combination of incidents of very rare oc-

currence, and which was not likely to present itself to any one's mind. It was—

“ Out of the devourer came forth meat ;
Out of the strong came forth sweetness.”

The antithesis is, in the first clause of this riddle, clear enough, but scarcely so in the second, seeing that the opposite of sweetness is not strength, but sharpness or bitterness. It is satisfactory, therefore, to find, that in the original the word for “bitter,” is occasionally used for “strong” and “sharp” or “sour” for both. Hence some translators have, “ Out of the bitter (or else *sour*) came forth sweetness.” A word thus equivocal required to be used : for if a word distinctly denoting ferocity had been used, a stronger clue to the meaning would have been given than the proposer meant to furnish. No sooner was the riddle proposed than every mind rushed to seize the meaning, but the nearer they approached the more misty it appeared—the more it eluded the grasp of their understandings. After trying it in every possible way, they concluded that the attempt to reach its meaning was hopeless. Yet they were not willing to lose so great a forfeit, and still less to own that they were defeated, even in the play of wit, by this rough and long-haired Hebrew stranger. Whether they had, in their daily festal intercourse, discovered Samson's weak point—the yieldingness in a woman's hand of him whom man could not withstand—or whether their bow was shot at a venture, cannot be said. But they concluded to persuade the bride to extract the secret out of her husband. The argument they used with her was none of the gentlest. They simply threatened to “burn her and her father's house with fire” unless she got them out of this difficulty. But men do not resort to threats, even in the East, with a lady, until arguments have failed ; it is, therefore, but just to this young woman, to draw the inference that she had, in the first instance, indignantly refused the treacherous task they sought to impose upon her, so that they were driven to this cruel threat, by which they at length prevailed.

The first attempt upon Samson was somewhat sternly met : “Behold I have not told it to my father nor my mother, and shall I tell it unto thee?” We perhaps do not see quite so much cogency in this argument as an Oriental does. But to him, *especially* while he is still young and newly married, his parents are first in his confidence, and his wife only second. Polygamy and the facility of divorce together, had, no doubt, something to do with this ; but so it is.

The poet Quarles—for he *was* a poet, and that of no mean order—works up the scene between Samson and his bride with great effect and poetic fire. He makes the chorus plead extenuatingly for her—

“May not her tears prevail? Alas, thy strife
Is but for wagers; hers, poor soul, for life.”

Her tears did prevail—the strong Samson could never stand out against a woman’s tears. We blame him not for giving way on this occasion—or we should not do so, but we see in this that same fatal facility of temper which eventually led him to

“Give up his fort of silence to a woman,”

in matters of solemn and sacred obligation. Few would, any more than Samson, have held out in this matter of the riddle—though the woman’s importunity must have looked suspicious to a less open mind than that of his; who is now supplied with an experience, which renders subsequent transgression, under the like influences, the less excusable. His seems to have been one of those natures whom no experience can teach to suppose a woman capable of treachery or harm—or that a fair face can hide a black or selfish heart. This unsuspectance—this reliance upon the tenderness and truth of woman’s nature, is not in itself a bad quality—nay, it is a fine, manly, and heroic quality,—and we may be allowed to regret that Samson fell into hands which rendered it a snare, a danger, and a death to him.

When, at the appointed time, the companions, in whose

sure defeat he was grimly exulting in his thoughts, came boldly before him and interpreted his riddle in the questions—"What is sweeter than honey? What is stronger than a lion?" Samson saw at once that he had been betrayed. But he scorned to complain. Having bitterly remarked, "If ye had not ploughed with my heifer, ye had not found out my riddle," he proceeded to find the means of paying his forfeit, which he resolved should be at the expense of the Philistines. He, therefore, went down to the Philistine town of Askalon, and smote thirty persons whom he found in the neighborhood, and returning to Timnath, deposited their raiment in redemption of his forfeit. The great odds of one man against thirty, relieves this procedure from some of the odium it excites as done against a people of a town which had given him no offence—but it still can only be excused by the supposition that he felt himself acting in his proper vocation as the commissioned avenger of Israel upon the Philistines generally—a commission he was but too apt to forget, when not acted upon by the external stimulus of a personal grievance.

TWENTY-FIFTH WEEK—FRIDAY.

THE FOXES.—JUDGES XV. 1-7.

SAMSON did not see his wife on his return to Timnath from Askalon, but went straight home to Zorah, when he had paid his forfeit. This is usually attributed simply to his resentment. But pondering lately, with deep admiration, upon the masterly picture which the chief of poets has drawn of the self-consciousness of impulsive ferocity in Achilles, which renders him solicitous to prevent Priam from saying or doing anything to provoke his terrible wrath, and cast him loose from his little self-control, it struck us that Samson feared to see his wife for the same reason—lest he should be tempted by her presence, while the sense of his great wrong was still

warm within him, to commit some outrage upon her, if he trusted himself into her presence. The very singular vengeance he took upon the Philistines when he found, after a while, that his wife had been, in his absence, given away in marriage, to the very man who had acted as his "friend" at the wedding-feast, has engaged much attention. The fields were white for harvest, and Samson determined to set this harvest on fire. As his aggressive movements upon the Philistines seem to have been commissioned even before his birth, we cannot say anything against this. But any other man who did this would deserve to be hanged. BREAD is in our eyes, as in that of the Orientals, so precious a gift of God—the staff of man's life—that it looks like *both* a religious and social sacrilege, deliberately to waste and destroy it. We must confess that we never read this fact without horror—too forgetful, perhaps, of the commission under which the hero acted, to do to the Philistines all the harm in his power.

He caught, probably by the help of others, no fewer than three hundred foxes—animals which, to this day, abound in the same region. These, at the time he had chosen, he tied tail to tail, fixing a slow firebrand, likely to be kindled into flame by the air in rapid motion, between each pair of tails. Being then let loose, the alarmed animals naturally sought shelter among the standing corn, and soon set it in a blaze in every direction.

Some difficulties have been started with regard to this account. As to the number of foxes collected, it is admitted that in this there was no insuperable difficulty. But it is asked, why foxes at all? could it not have been done better without any foxes? We answer: the tendency of foxes to run to cover when in trouble, rendered them peculiarly suited to this service. Dogs, for instance, would, in the like case, scour the open roads, and not run to shelter among corn. Still, it is asked, why should the foxes be tied tail to tail? They would surely then attempt to run in opposite directions, and so not run at all. The answer is that the bushy tail of the fox rendered it well qualified for this service. Any brand

tied to the tail of one only, would drag on the ground and be extinguished, whereas between two it would be sustained at tension by their mutual exertions. Besides, a single fox, with a brand at its tail, would, in its alarm, have run to its hole, which was rendered impossible by two being attached together, not only because they would have different retreats, but because the same hole could not be entered by both. As to their pulling in opposite directions, we wish the experiment were tried. In this and in many other matters, people write large dissertations to prove or disprove points which might be determined in five minutes by a simple experiment. We certainly never saw two foxes fastened tail to tail, but we happened lately to see two dogs somewhat similarly attached, and in the recollection that Samson's foxes would shortly come under our consideration, we paused to see how they would act. They certainly did pull in opposite directions, and wasted some minutes in rather awkward movements. But finding the futility of their efforts, they inclined their heads to each other, and after a hasty consultation, turned round so as to bring their bodies parallel to each other, and then ran off with considerable speed. Now foxes have not the reputation of being duller than dogs; we have no doubt that they would, and that Samson's foxes did, hit upon the same device, in the execution of which the length of their tails would give them much advantage, while the same length of tail, by enabling them to run more apart, would render their operation with the brands the more destructive. Still, it must be supposed that, even thus, they would so thwart each other in running as, by occasional pauses, to give the fullest effect to the intentions of the destroyer. It will appear, therefore, upon the whole, that Samson did not adopt a senseless or ill-considered means of effecting the object he had in view.

To estimate the full effect of the destruction thus produced, the reader must recollect that the cultivated lands are not separated by hedgerows into fields as with us, but are laid out in one vast expanse, the different properties in which are

distinguished by certain landmarks known to the owners, but not usually obvious to a stranger. Thus, as the time of harvest approaches, the standing corn is often seen to extend as far as the eye can reach, in one vast unbroken spread of waving corn. Hence the flames, once kindled, would spread without check till all the corn of the locality was consumed; and we are further to remember that there were three hundred foxes, forming a hundred and fifty pairs, let off, doubtless, in different parts. The operation seems, however, to have been confined to the neighborhood of Timnath the whole harvest of which, for the year, was destroyed. The flames would cease when they reached the limits of local culture, for at the time of harvest, the herbage, in Palestine, is not in that parched state which would enable it to transmit the fire to distant fields; and we should suppose that the brands, with which the foxes were furnished, would die out before they could carry them any considerable distance.

The Philistines were at no loss to discover that this was the work of an incendiary. Indeed, the mode in which it was effected may very probably have been rendered obvious to them, by some of the foxes having been found, nearly disabled or dead, with their tails scorched, and the remains of the brand between them. Their inquiries would disclose the occasion of this mischief; and on learning that it had been produced by Samson's indignation at the treatment he had received from his wife, her father, and his own "friend," the popular feeling found vent in setting their house on fire and burning them to death therein. Thus the miserable woman found, in the end, that very death, the mere threat of which, by the bridesmen, had caused her to sin so deeply against the faith she owed her husband. We see also that the Timnites themselves were made to suffer by the very agency which they had invoked for the purpose of drawing Samson's secret from his wife.

The hero does not seem to have considered himself bound by this to abstain from farther aggressions upon the Philistines; for he probably thought, as we do, that this was not

so much intended as an act of justice to himself, as an outbreak of popular fury, of which he would himself have been the object had he been within reach. He soon after, therefore, found an opportunity of assailing a large body of Philistines. The occasion is not stated; but his assault was perhaps provoked by an attempt to seize his person, which was by this time well known to the Philistines. We are told, that on this occasion "he smote them hip and thigh with a great slaughter." This phrase of *hip and thigh*, seems to have been one of those proverbial expressions which exist in every language, and the *precise* signification of which eludes detection when it has passed out of living use. Many such expressions, now obsolete, engage incessant inquiry in our periodicals as to their real import; and many still exist in popular use, which will be inscrutable should the English ever become a dead language. Lexicons and grammars avail little for their solution. The phrase is literally "leg upon thigh." One learned interpreter* makes this to mean, that he cut them in pieces in such sort, that their limbs, their legs and thighs, were scattered and heaped promiscuously together. This is too literal, and wants point. If that were the meaning, "leg upon arm" would have been more significant; and in fights of this sort, arms are more frequently lopped off than legs, and would therefore have been more obvious to notice in a popular phrase. Others take it to be a phrase equivalent to "horse and foot;" seeing that the riders sit on their hips, and the latter are on their legs. But it is forgotten, that men do not appear to have yet in this country rode on horseback, and even in fight they rode in chariots; and besides, that in fight men did not sit in chariots, but stood in them. One further explanation which we may adduce, is the quaint one of Christopher Ness:—"Thereupon he falls pell-mell (as we may say) upon them, and *smote them hip and thigh*, a proverbial expression, denoting that he laid upon them with his heavy hands and lusty legs, cuffing and kicking them, so that he not only knocked to the ground all

* Gesenius, in his *Thesaurus*.

that felt his fatal blows and spurns, but also he lamed them by putting their hips and thighs out of joint, so rendering them incapable of any military employ against Israel, which peradventure was the only design of Samson in this present expedition : and although we read *with a great slaughter*, yet the Hebrew may be read *with a great stroke*, and possibly his blows were mortal unto some—his mauling them with his hands and punching them with his feet (for he had no weapon in his hand), might give passport (as we say) to a few, yet at this time he aimed only to maim and lame them, so as to render them useless for war.”*

TWENTY-FIFTH WEEK—SATURDAY.

THE JAW-BONE. THE GATE.—JUDGES XV.—XVI. 3.

THE fact that the people of Judah, in whose tribe Samson afterwards found a retreat in a cleft or cavern of some unknown rock then called Etam, actually delivered him up bound at the demand of the Philistines ; and the anxiety they feel and express lest these proud heathen should take offence at their harboring their own great champion, is a most humiliating spectacle, and shows how completely the nation had lost heart and spirit. Something may be allowed for the fact, that Samson was not in his native tribe ; and that, as before remarked, there was much in his character to repress that confidence in his leadership, without which they could not hopefully have marched out under him against the Philistines, as seems to have been the only alternative. Still, it makes one shudder to hear the hero stipulating with the elders of Judah before he consents to be bound, that they shall not themselves “ fall upon him,” that is, kill him ; but deliver him to the Philistines. To this he made them swear ; but did not deign to answer their rebukes, that his proceed-

* *Histor and Mystery*, ii. 148.

ings had exposed them to the wrath of their masters. How the Philistines exulted when they saw the redoubted champion brought down from the rock towards their camp, bound with strong new cords! With a most savage shout of vengeful triumph they made the valley ring as he approached. The noise of that shout was to him the signal for action. He rent his strong bands from off his wrists with as much ease as if they had been "flax burnt in the fire." A rope or cord of flax or hemp that has been burnt in the fire retains its form when taken out; but it has no strength, it is a mere cinder, which falls to pieces at the slightest touch—such, in point of strength, became the cords with which the hero was bound. But he had no weapon. Casting his eyes rapidly around, he espied upon the ground "the new jaw-bone of an ass," which he forthwith seized, and with it flew upon the Philistines. It is not without reason mentioned, that the jaw-bone was "new;" for, in that state it was better suited to his purpose, being not only heavier, but less liable to be broken by the fierce blows he dealt. With this strange weapon he ceased not to deal his terrible strokes, until "a thousand" men lay dead upon the field. It is not necessary to suppose that the number was exactly a thousand. A large round number is used to express a large uncertain quantity, or to denote the greatness of the exploit—just as the damsels of Israel ascribed the slaughter of "tens of thousands" to David, when, for all that appears, he had slain not more than one person—but that one was Goliath!

This exploit drew a short triumphal pæan from the victor himself; it being by no means unusual in the East for a man to celebrate his own exploits.

"With the jaw-bone of an ass, heaps upon heaps;
With the jaw-bone of an ass have I slain a thousand men!"

There is in the original an effect which is lost in the translation. It is an elegant play upon the words—a paranomasia, founded upon the identity of the Hebrew word for an *ass* and

for a *heap*, whereby the Philistines are represented as falling as tamely as asses.*

Samson then cast away the jaw-bone; and justly thinking the exploit worthy of commemoration, purposed that the place should be called Ramath-lehi (hill of the jaw-bone,) or, for shortness, Lehi (the jaw-bone). Being then sore athirst from the heat, and from his superhuman exertions, he cried to God for help. It is highly in favor of the reality and active vitality of his faith that he did so. Not many would have had such strong persuasion of the Lord's providential care as would lead them to cry to him for water to supply their personal wants in the like exigency. This, therefore, is one of the incidents which enabled the author of the epistle to the Hebrews to put the name of Samson among the heroes of the faith. The incident shows what manner of man, essentially, he was, and indicates the kind of spirit in which his great operations were conducted.

The Lord heard him, and suddenly a spring burst out from a cleft in the hill to which he had just given the name of Lehi, or the "jaw-bone." It is very unfortunate that our translators have perplexed the passage by *translating* the proper name, thereby making it appear as if the spring arose out of the jaw-bone of the ass, which he had cast away from him. For this there is not the least foundation in the original. Indeed, this is clear from what follows, for it is said of the fountain thus created, that it "is in Lehi unto this day;" but if the spring arose from the "jaw-bone" before, we ought to retain it here, and instead of saying, that it was "in Lehi unto this day," say, that it was "in the jaw-bone unto this day." But the translator saw the absurdity of this, and therefore retained as a proper name the very word which he had *translated* before.

It is immediately after this that we are told "Samson judged Israel in the days of the Philistines twenty years;"

* The reader may catch this effect even by the eye, in the first clause.

Bi echi ha-chamor chamor chamorathayim.

and as we see no signs of his being recognized as a judge in Israel before the late events, it must probably have been after them that a sort of authority was conceded to him, on account of his services in holding the Philistines in check, in those south-western parts of the land which suffered most from their oppression. It was "in the time of the Philistines"—for their general domination still subsisted during his lifetime, and was not entirely subverted till the time of David.

From the statement of the duration of his government being interposed at this place, it was probably not until after some years that we come to his next exploit. In the interval he had, no doubt, performed many illustrious deeds, tending to hold the oppressors in check, and to keep alive in their minds their dread of him and hatred against him. The next exploit, however, at whatever interval it occurred, shows that Samson was still the same man in his strength and in his weakness. Indeed, his weakness becomes more and more manifest. Hitherto, though unwise and indiscreet, there has been nothing to allege against his personal purity—but the remaining transactions of his life were stained with vice.

It looks like astonishing and needless hardihood in Samson that he should have trusted himself in Gaza, the strongest and wealthiest of the Philistine cities. However, such a man as he was not likely to weigh nicely the question of safety; and as this southernmost city of the Philistines lay somewhat remote from the main scene of his past exploits and of his usual residence, he might suppose that he could pass in the crowd of that busy commercial town unrecognized. In fact, he did enter and wander about the town unmolested; but perhaps not unsuspected. His life-long growth of hair pointed him out for a Hebrew and a Nazarite, which, with his stalwart figure, might well suggest that this was Samson, but for the utter unlikelihood that Samson would venture there. It is possible that he might have been also seen by some from Timnath and Ashkelon, who were better acquainted with his person. At all events, it was soon whispered about Gaza that Samson was in the town. The lion was then at last

caged, they thought; and as they knew not where to find him, they set a strong force at the gate to destroy him when he should attempt to make his egress in the morning—for the gates being now shut for the night, they had no thought that he would attempt to depart till then.

But where was Samson during all the commotion which the knowledge of his presence could not but occasion? Alas! in the house of a harlot, by whose beauty he had suffered himself to be ensnared as he passed carelessly along. He was not however so absorbed in gross enjoyments, as to be altogether unwatchful. At midnight he seems to have found cause to suspect what was going on without. Perhaps, as Quarles supposes,

“He heard a whispering, and the trampling feet
Of people passing in the silent street.”

He then arose and went forth, making his way straight for the gate. Whether the guards, not expecting him till the morning, were asleep or unwatchful, or whether they were terrified at his unexpected appearance, is not stated, but he does not at any rate seem to have been opposed. He might now, we should think, have kicked open the gate if had liked; but instead of that, and in strong and insulting derision at the attempt to restrain him by bolts and bars, he lifted it off with all its ponderous appendages, by sheer force of arm, and bore it away upon his shoulders to a considerable distance on the road towards Hebron. When they afterwards came to take it back, the number of men required to restore it to its place, must have impressed upon them a very lively conviction of the vast strength with which the hero was invested.

But a word remains to be said of the gates. Mr. Urquhart, in his recent work,* speaking of Moorish buildings, and their analogy to those of ancient and modern Asia, observes: “They have such gates as Samson carried from Gaza, or Lord Ellenborough sent for to Cabul, and are traced in the sepulchre of the kings at Jerusalem; they do not fit into the

* *Pillars of Hercules*. London, 1850. Vol. ii. p. 259

wall, but lie against it. They are not shaped to the arch; they close, but rectangularly and folding. They cover it as the hurdle did the orifice of the rush mosques I saw along the lake. There is no hinge, but the joints of the door descend into a socket in the stone, and in like manner the door is secured above in a projecting bracket of wood. In the smallest buildings it is colossal." This kind of door is still used in Egypt; and its antiquity there is evinced by the monuments. It is also the kind of door used in Syria, and in the countries of the Tigris and Euphrates. All the doors, large and small, of the different houses in which we have lived, were of this construction. There is no difficulty, but in the *weight* of the larger doors, in lifting them out of their sockets; and the feat of Samson consisted in thus lifting out both the valves at once—for they were barred together—of the heavy town gate, and carrying them away.



Twenty-Sixth Week—Sunday.

RETROSPECT.

IN the rapid survey we have thus far taken of certain points in the remarkable career of Samson, we have not been able to refer to the topics of profitable reflection which it suggests. This day they may very properly engage our attention.

It may occur to us that it is almost always to barren women that angels and prophets are sent to announce the promise of a distinguished son. Why is this? There are several reasons. First, that the child may be more manifestly the gift of God. All children are the gift of God—although, unhappily, we do not always so receive them. But it is important to mark this fact, by special arrangements, which shall make it conspicuously apparent in the case of those to whom a peculiarly high function or vocation is assigned.

God also desires his highest gifts to be appreciated; and therefore, as in these cases, the gift of a son is bestowed on those who, from long privation and disappointment, will know how to prize it most. Besides, God is very pitiful—He likes to visit with some surprising joy the afflicted soul; and to a Hebrew woman there was no affliction comparable to that of being sonless. It might be safely predicated of any woman of Israel, if she had already many sons, that the gift of another would still be great joy to her—how much more then to her who had none? But again, how is it—owing to what vice is it in our social system, or in ourselves, that there are among us tens of thousands to whom the promise of children would be a sorrow and a trouble, rather than a comfort and a joy? There are tens of thousands among us who would be by no means thankful for such an intimation as that which the angel of God brought to Manoah and his wife. How is this? Alas, for our faith! which will not trust God to pay us well for the board and lodging of all the little ones he has committed to our charge to bring up for Him. Good old Quarles, who was himself the father of eighteen children, enters feelingly into this matter:

“ Shall we repine,
Great God, to foster any babe of thine!
But 'tis the charge we fear; our stock's but small:
If Heaven, with children, send us wherewithal
To stop their craving stomachs, *then* we care not.
Great God!
How hast thou crackt thy credit, that we dare not
Trust thee for bread? How is't we dare not venture
To keep thy babes, unless thou please to enter
In bond for payment? Art thou grown so poor,
To leave thy famished infants at our door,
And not allow them food? Canst thou supply
Thy empty ravens, and let thy children die?”

The idea of Manoah and others that they should perish because they had “seen the face of God,” or of an angel of God—this horror and dread of soul at the presence of a heavenly nature—we may take as a very affecting illustration

of the fall, showing that we are the true sons of that father who, when he had sinned, no longer dared look upon God, but hid himself among the trees, "because he was afraid," when he heard "the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden:"

"O whither shall poor mortals flee
For comfort! If they see thy face, they die:
And if thy life-restoring count'nance give
Thy presence from us, then we cannot live.
On what foundation shall our hopes rely,
See we thy face, or see it not, we die."—QUARLES.

When Cain raised the lamentable cry, "From thy face I shall be hid,"* he had a strong, if not an effectual, sense of this penalty of sin. Well is it for us if we are of those who are even now permitted to "behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ;"† and are privileged to realize the assured conviction, that although we can see but as through a glass darkly now, the time is near when we shall see face to face, and know also even as we are known.‡

Most commentators are apt to think that Samson somewhat infringed the strictness of his Nazarite vow of ceremonial purity, by taking the honey found in "the foul and putrid carcass of a dead beast," but we have shown that the remains of the lion were perfectly clean and wholesome; and it is forgotten that it is not the dead body of a beast, but the corpse of a human being, that imparts defilement under the law of Moses. Had it been otherwise, a man could not have eaten his dinner without defilement. Nevertheless the pious inferences founded on this misconception are correct and beautiful. So Bishop Hall: "Good must not be refused, because the means are accidentally evil. Honey is honey still, though in a dead lion. Those are less wise, and more scrupulous than Samson, who abhor the graces of God because they find them in an ill vessel. It is a weak neglect not to take the honey, because we hate the lion. *God's children have a right to their father's blessings wheresoever they find them.*"

* Gen. iv. 14.

† 2 Cor. iv. 6.

‡ 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

Most of the old writers are very sharp upon Samson and his Timnite wife—upon her for beguiling him, and upon him for yielding to her entreaties. Christopher Ness quaintly remarks that since his first experiment with Adam and Eve, “Satan hath broke many a man’s head with his own rib.” Bishop Hall sorrowfully observes that “Adam the perfected man, Samson the strongest man, and Solomon the wisest man, were betrayed by the flattery of their helpers. As there is no comfort compared to a faithful yoke-fellow, so woe be to him that is matched with a Philistine.”

Quarles leads us to a still more practical conclusion. After contemplating the perils of a man’s life between open foes and bosom enticements, he bursts out into the fine prayer :

“Lord, clarify mine eyes, that I may know
 Things that are good, from what is good in show ;
 And give me wisdom, that my heart may learn
 The difference of thy favors, and discern
 What’s truly good, from what is good in part ;
With Martha’s trouble give me Mary’s heart.”

Without entering into the frequent inquiry of old writers in how far Samson may in some things have been a type of Christ, it is pleasant when in these histories we find any circumstance or any expression which wing the thoughts irresistibly to Him. There is a very striking incident of this kind in the surrender of Samson bound to the Philistines by the men of Judah. Whom is there that this does not remind of Jesus delivered up bound to the Romans, that he may die. But the end is very different, and magnifies the glory of our Divine Saviour. Samson submits to be bound by his own countrymen, knowing that he could, by the power given to him, victoriously free himself—Jesus, that he might die, yielding himself up a sacrifice for sin.

Both were victorious—Jesus by dying, Samson by inflicting death. It was not that the Lord’s hand was so shortened that he who had saved others could not save himself. He had far mightier power for his own deliverance than Samson

had. One word, one wish, would have brought twelve legions of angels from the Father to his rescue—but how then had the world been saved? That thought made Him more than conqueror over all the malice of his enemies, over all the agonies of the cross, over all the terrors of the grave.

“O thou that art
The Samson of our souls! how can the heart
Of man give thanks enough that does not know
How much his death-redeemed soul doth owe
To thy dear merits.”—QUARLES.

Pursuing this line of thought and comparison, Bishop Hall, with reference to Samson's unaided victory, observes: “It is no marvel if he were thus admirably strong and victorious whose bodily strength God meant to make a type of the spiritual power of Christ. And, behold, as the three thousand of Judah stood still gazing, with their weapons in their hands, while Samson alone subdued the Philistines; so did men and angels stand looking upon the glorious achievements of the Son of God, who might justly say, ‘I have trod the wine-press alone.’”

TWENTY-SIXTH WEEK—MONDAY.

THE BEGUILEMENT.—JUDGES XVI. 4–18.

As Samson judged Israel twenty years, and as these twenty years could not well have commenced before that great action in which he singly smote the Philistines in the presence of the three thousand magnates of Judah by whom he had been delivered up, the remaining scenes of his life belong to the close of that period, when, one should suppose, he could not well be under, and was probably somewhat above, forty years of age. He is, therefore, now no longer young; but he is the same man—as strong as ever, and as weak as ever. “The princes of the Philistines knew already

where Samson's weakness lay, but not his strength."* His strength was so manifestly superhuman, that it was clear to them, that any ordinary means taken to destroy him must prove abortive. This admission on their part, incidentally indicated, is very important, and ought alone to satisfy those who incline to think that Samson was merely a very strong man. It shows that he was much more than this—that he was, for special purposes, endowed with powers far above any that can naturally belong to the strongest of the sons of men.

In the conviction they had attained, the object of the Philistines was to discover wherein lay his great strength—whether it consisted in the possession of any charm or amulet, the loss of which would divest him of his supernatural powers, and leave him nothing more than a strong man. We do not read of any king among the Philistines till the time of David, and then only at Gath. Yet in the time of Abraham they had a king. At this time each of the five great cities, Ashdod, Gaza, Askelon, Gath, and Ekron, seems to have formed, with its dependencies, a separate state, presided over by its own Seren†—but united to each other by their common origin and interests, for general purposes. All these *Seranim*‡ now made common cause against Samson. It was useless to bring armies into the field against an individual, and such an individual; but they were determined to support each other in the attempt to crush him, and to share among them whatever expense and trouble the attempt might involve. So they lay watchful for any advantage the proceedings of the Hebrew champion might offer. The careless hero was not long in affording them all the advantage they could have desired. They heard that he had become devoted to a woman named Delilah, inhabiting the vale of Sorek. The history does not say that she was a harlot, like the woman of Gaza; but nei-

* Bishop Hall—*Contemplations*, x. 5.

† A *peculiar* title, rendered by "lord" and "prince" in the authorized version, and probably denoting a chief or magistrate.

‡ The title only occurs thus in the plural.

ther is she called his wife ; and had she been such, she **would** have been taken to his own house, and we should not find him visiting at hers. Nothing could have occurred more opportunely for the Philistine Seranim. They repaired to her, or sent to her in one of the intervals of Samson's visits, offering her a large bribe to entice from him the secret of his strength. The sum was eleven hundred pieces of silver from each of the five. The pieces were probably shekels, in which case the whole sum amounted to something more than six hundred pounds of our money—a sum not inconsiderable even now, and a very large one for that age and country.

In reading the record of this enticement, we should bear in mind that the facts are related with extreme brevity. In the conversations between Samson and the woman, results only are stated—the final purport only given, without any notice of the little artifices of conversation and dalliance, the watching for favorable moments and natural turns of thought and incident, which disguised the wickedness of the design, and gave a seemingly natural turn to the woman's attempt to get possession of his secret. The various attempts on her part to betray the confidence she supposed Samson had reposed in her, are so related, also, as to appear to have followed in rapid and immediate succession. But the form of Scriptural narrative does not require us to suppose this was necessarily the case ; that it was so, is against the probable truth of circumstances and natural analogies. It is far more likely that these attempts were made at different visits of Samson to the vale of Sorek, when a sufficient interval had passed to blunt the keenness of any suspicions that may have been awakened in his mind. Simple-minded and confiding as Samson was, he was not altogether so silly as an unintelligent mode of reading the narrative may make him appear.

Samson very clearly indicated his consciousness of what became him, by the siege he stood before his great trust was surrendered. He did this after a manner of his own, however ; and his conduct is less becoming than formerly with his wife at Timnath. Her he told plainly that he could not

disclose his secret, although that was one of small importance in comparison. But to Delilah he seems incapable of giving a distinct refusal. He shrinks from the importunity to which it would expose him; and therefore he tries to amuse her by one invention after another, which, but for the immediate test to which she subjected them—that is, if she had been, as he supposed, sincere—might have passed off with her for the real secret.

First, he told her that if he were bound with seven green withes which had never been dried, then he should become weak as another man, and unable to rend them asunder. This is interesting, as showing that ropes of crude vegetable fibres were in use among the Hebrews of that age, as they are now in many countries, composed of such things as vine tendrils, the tough fibres of trees, pliable twisted rods, oziers, hazels, and the like. Such ropes are strong enough; although less compact, and of greater bulk in proportion to their strength, than those of spun flax or hemp. The strength of such ropes may be estimated from the fact, that the legs of wild elephants and buffaloes are usually bound with them, when newly caught, in India; and it is rarely indeed that they give way to the force of the most powerful animals that the whole creation can supply. Such ropes are strongest, and less liable to break, when green—that is, newly made; but we suppose that it was not on this account Samson was led to name them, but because of some occult relation to his own strength which they might be supposed to bear. Not doubting that she should now win her reward, the faithless woman then bound him, probably while he slept, with the green ropes, which the Philistines very gladly provided. She then roused him with the words—“The Philistines be upon thee, Samson.” This was no vain alarm. They were there, probably in an adjoining room, and were to have rushed in on a preconcerted signal, were it found that he was properly secured. But Samson sprung up, and rent the green ropes from his arms like burnt tow. The Philistine liars in wait, finding this to be the case, probably did not show themselves; and

the woman was thus enabled to pass the matter off as a fond attempt to test his truthfulness. This supposition, that the Philistines did not show themselves, and that Samson was not aware of their presence, relieves the transactions from much of their apparent difficulty, and explains that Samson could still go on dallying with the danger. The authorized translation unreasonably places the liers in wait in the *same chamber*; but this needlessly perplexes the subject, and has no warrant in the original, which signifies that "liers in wait sat for her in an inner chamber."

The second time, when he seemed to yield to her importunities, he told her that new twisted or spun ropes would do—showing that such ropes were known, although those of crude vegetable had not yet gone out of use. Flax, we know, was before this time an object of culture in both Egypt and Palestine, and with this, such ropes seem to have been made. Hemp was also probably cultivated, although the fact is not so distinctly mentioned in the sacred books. The result in this instance was precisely the same as before.

In the next invention by which Samson tried to amuse the importunity of Delilah, he approached dangerously near his great secret. His infatuation was like that of the moth, approaching gradually nearer and nearer to the flame which destroys it at last. This device was suggested by the presence of the small loom in which the women of those days wove their household stuffs—a kind of industry from which it would seem that females even of Delilah's stamp, did not hold themselves exempt. These looms, as shown in Egyptian sculptures, and as still subsisting in the East, are very simple, and comparatively light, and must by no means be confounded with the ponderous apparatus of our own hand-loom weavers. Samson told her that if the long locks of his hair were woven in with the web, he would become as powerless as any other man. This was done; and to make the matter more certain, the guileful woman actually fastened the web, with the hair thus woven in it, with a strong pin or nail to the wall or to the floor. But this availed not; for

when the alarm was given, although he could not disengage his hair from the web, he rose and went forth dragging the weaving frame, the web and the pin—the whole apparatus—after him by his hair.

At length, worn out by the woman's importunities, who protested that his repeated deceptions, and his obstinacy in refusing to gratify her curiosity with the knowledge of a secret, of so little consequence to her but for the love she bore to him—and, above all, seeing that there was nothing in the past to give him that knowledge of the treachery which we possess—he yielded—"he told her all that was in his heart." His hair, he informed her, was the sign and seal of his consecrated condition from the birth, by which alone he held all his superhuman strength. To take off his hair would be to cut him off from that consecrated condition, and divest him of the powers he held in virtue of it. He would then "be like any other man"—not necessarily a weak man—but not stronger than any man of his thews and sinews might be expected to be. The woman saw, from the earnestness of his manner, that this time he had not deceived her. One might think she would have been moved from her fell purpose by this strong proof of his regard for her—but no: the use she made of it was to revive the, by this time, wavering faith of the Philistine Seranim as to the success of their scheme, by causing such strong assurance of success to be conveyed to them, that they hurried down with the money, for which she had sold Samson into their hand. The terms of the message would almost imply, that they had given up the enterprise, at least in this form, and determined to be fooled no more as they had been—"Come up *this once*, for he hath showed me all his heart."

TWENTY-SIXTH WEEK—TUESDAY.

THE SECRET.—JUDGES XVI. 19-21.

THE last scene in the history of Samson is a drama in itself, and, as such, has been taken by Milton as the basis of his "Samson Agonistes"—perhaps the grandest dramatic poem, after the ancient model, that our language contains. It is not however in its historical developments that we have to regard it. For this, space will fail us. We have to seek in it those indications of character and manners, to the explanation of which our task is limited.

The woman of the valley of Sorek having possessed herself of Samson's secret, and all her arrangements for turning it to account having been perfected, she delayed not the consummation of her crime. In the heat of the day, probably, when men in the East take a short repose, she made the hero sleep with his head upon her lap. This is still not unusual in the East in the case of a full-grown son, or a husband. The women sit cross-legged upon the carpet or mat; and the man having laid himself down, pillows his head upon her lap, and she gently taps, strokes, sings, and soothes him to sleep. Samson being safe asleep, a man was introduced, who soon deprived him of his invincible locks. This man was probably a barber. The business of Eastern barbers lies in shaving the head rather than the beard, and they do it so skilfully and gently, that, so far from a sleeping man being awakened, a waking man is lulled to sleep under the operation. Considering the great mass of hair of which Samson had to be deprived, he would probably have been roused by inexperienced hands, which may be the reason why Delilah herself did not operate upon the recumbent Nazarite, as painters falsely represent that she did. In that operation his strength passed from him. No mighty heaving of the strong man's frame, no convulsive sob, disclosed the fact. He still slept on, unknowing that he had indeed "become as other men," which

was to *him* a degradation and a scorn. He had to be roused as usual; and this time it was not to him a false alarm as it had on previous occasions seemed. He arose. The altered appearance he presented—his vast head, once clouded with those terrible locks, now shorn to the skin, must have been very striking. But he was not conscious of it; and none else had time to consider it then. The Philistines *were* upon him. The signal was given, and they now appeared indeed; and Samson, struck with horror and remorse at finding he had indeed “become weak as other men,” was soon overpowered by them.

“Even as a dove, whose wings are clipt for flying
Flutters her idle stumps, and still relying
Upon her wonted refuge, strives in vain
To quit her life from danger, and attain
The freedom of her air-dividing plumes;
She struggles often, and she oft presumes
To take the sanctuary of the open fields;
But, finding that her hopes are vain, she yields:
Even so poor Samson,” etc.—QUARLES.

Poor indeed! Behold him. That is he trudging wearily along upon the way to Gaza, whose gates he not long since bore away triumphantly upon his shoulders. His once strong arms are bound with cords, which yesterday one pulsation of his wrists would have broken like a thread; and the escort, now sufficient, would yesterday have fled at the mere lifting of his hand. His glorious locks are left behind, trodden in dust; and his head, once shrouded by them from the light, is now exposed and bare to the sun's pitiless rays. See his firm and vigorous tramp exchanged for a stumbling, feeble, and uncertain trail. Alas, he is blind—newly blind—and experience has not yet taught him how to walk without the guidance of his sight. The first thing the Philistines did, when they had secured him, was to disable him past hope, by extinguishing the light of those eyes which had so often struck terror into their souls. In this they did not even wait till the destination should be reached, but did it on the

spot, to preclude all hope of rescue or escape. Perhaps but for the possession of this resource for securing him and rendering him helpless, they would have put him to death, but they thus were enabled to keep him alive in order to magnify their triumph. This is the first instance of blinding which occurs in Scripture; and the instance is an apt illustration of the principle on which this doom has been inflicted—less as a judicial punishment and formal infliction, than as a mode of incapacitating a dangerous person from further power of harm, without taking his life. In this point of view we had occasion but a few days ago to remark upon it.* Besides, the instances were very few in which it was desired to detain persons in permanent custody; and there being consequently no regular prisons, a privative infliction of this nature was resorted to, not only to lessen the chances of escape, but to render the man harmless if escape should be made. In this guise the prisoner was led to Gaza—the strong Samson, helpless, bowed down, and blind. Those who know the sort of treatment a great captive receives in the East, and the savage insults to which he is exposed, may apprehend the sort of reception which the fallen hero found at Gaza, and the commotion his arrival excited.

On his arrival the cords which had bound him on the journey were exchanged for “fettters of brass.” In modern times, the possession of strong prisons enables us to dispense with chains and fettters; but in the absence of regular prisons, the incarcerated are, for the most part, chained or fetttered for greater security. The emphasis here lies in Samson’s being put in bands of *metal*, instead of thongs and cords like other prisoners. It is not on the *brass*, or rather copper; for that metal was more common than iron, and was used for numerous purposes to which iron is now applied. Not only chains and fettters, but instruments of labor, culinary vessels, knives, axes, and almost every kind of utensil for which metal is desired, were made of this metal. The Psalmist speaks of “binding kings with chains, and nobles with fet-

* Twenty-fourth Week—Saturday.

ters of brass, Psalm xlix. 8; and in a much later age, the last king of David's royal line was treated much like Samson—his eyes were put out, and he was laden with fetters of brass, 2 Kings xxv. 7. In the monuments of Egypt and Nineveh, prisoners are represented as bound with fetters and manacles, obviously of metal. Layard says, that the latter were of *iron*. We doubt this, and as the figures are sculptures, not colored paintings, there is no evidence for deciding that they were not of brass. Samson was destined, not merely to be detained as a captive, but to be treated with ignominy as a slave; and yet such a slave as was of too great importance, if only as a monument, to be allowed to pass into private hands. He was hence to be regarded as a public slave—the worst of all conditions into which a man can be brought. That is the condition not only of a slave, but of a slave in a state of punishment. It was the custom anciently, and it is so still in countries where slavery exists, for slaves who had committed any serious fault to be shut up in chains. An ancient writer (Apuleius) has given a striking picture of these unhappy men in their sad abode. They were, he says, quite livid with bruises; and all their skin showed deep traces of the cuts of the lashes which had been inflicted on them. Many were only partly covered with some scanty piece of sordid raiment; others were wholly naked, save as to the parts which all men seek to cover; and all were so ill clad that their scarred flesh was everywhere visible; while their faces showed marks impressed in the flesh, not only as a punishment for their offences, but as a means of recognition. As to “the prison-house,” this is the first time we have read of a prison since Joseph's imprisonment in Egypt. Indeed it is surprising to note how many things came under observation among the Philistines, which we had last occasion to observe in that country, did we not know that the Scripture itself deduces their origin from Egypt—at least, their proximate origin as regards Palestine. Genesis x. 13, 14. The prison-house was, in all probability, such as existed there, and

in which the inadequacy of the building was made good by the greater stringency of personal restraint.

TWENTY-SIXTH WEEK—WEDNESDAY

THE AVENGEMENT.—JUDGES XVI. 21-31.

THE Orientals have too few prisoners—imprisonment not being a *judicial* punishment—to make it worth their while to think of turning their labor to account. Yet in the case of those whom they wished deeply to humble, or grievously to punish, the inconsistency of allowing them to remain in idleness could not fail to be seen. Therefore some species of labor was occasionally devised. In the whole of Scripture, however, Samson's is the only case of imprisonment with hard labor; and this fact shows the aggravating and unusual humiliation to which he was subjected by the hatred of the Philistines. He was set to "grind in the prison-house." This, while it may show that considerable natural strength—the strength of a strong man—remained to him, evinces less the desire of the Philistines to turn his strength to account, than to inflict upon him indignity and humiliation. In itself grinding was very suitable for prison labor, being performed by hand-mills, the uppermost of which, called "the rider" by the Hebrews, was made to revolve upon the other by strength of hand. Being usually performed by females, the Philistines, studious of insult, regarded it as well-suited to disgrace a man, and particularly such a man as Samson had been; while by providing stones of sufficient size and weight, the work might be made laborious even for him. The humiliating character of this labor is shown by the allusions to it in Scripture, as a disgrace which the Chaldeans would inflict upon such of their Hebrew captives as they meant to chastise and degrade.* The Romans condemned to work the public

* Isa. xlvii. 2. Lamentations v. 11.

mills of the city, those who were convicted of crimes not worthy of death. The mill-stones in common use are seldom more than a few inches above two feet in diameter, though we have sometimes seen them larger. They are circular and flat. The upper stone is made to turn upon the other by means of a handle of wood, which is inserted into it, and by means of which two women, seated opposite to each other, are able to keep it in rotatory motion without excessive labor. The grain falls upon the surface of the lower stone, by means of a trough or hollow in the middle of the upper one, the circular movement of which spreads it over the lower one, where it is crushed and reduced to meal. This meal, escaping at the edges of the mill, is received upon a board or cloth, and is then collected for use. It is a general prejudice in the East, whether well or ill founded, that the meal ground by the hand-mill has a much better flavor than that ground by mills worked either by wind or water.

Among a pastoral people, the preparation of milk answers in some degree to the grinding of corn among an agricultural people. We have, therefore, been much struck by the description which Herodotus gives of *blinded* slaves being among the Scythians employed in this labor. He says, "The Scythians drink milk; and all the slaves who attend to the business of milking are deprived of sight. Two slaves are employed together; for while one milks the mare, the other, by tubes formed of bone, causes an inflation of the udder. This process, as they think, increases the quantity of milk. When they have obtained the milk they pour it into deep hollow bowls. The blind slaves are then stationed around these bowls, and give a whirling motion to the milk. That which swims on the surface they remove, deeming it the choicest part, while that which subsides is accounted of less value. It is for performing this operation that the Scythians put out the eyes of all the prisoners they take in war."* By this he probably means that they would not be able to execute this whirling work unless blinded, which is likely. Al-

* *Melpomene*, cap. 2.

though other nations may not have put out the eyes of captives *to enable them* the better to perform those rotatory labors, it may have seemed one of the few kinds of labor which the blind were qualified to fulfil, even better than those who could see. There is nothing in grinding corn with the hand-mill that requires attention which a man deprived of sight cannot give; while he has the advantage that his head is not fatigued by the rotatory action which he gives to the upper stone. We ourselves employ blind horses, or blindfold those that can see, when we employ them in rotatory labor.

In his captivity the hair of Samson "began to grow again," as might be expected; and it is implied that his strength grew with it, and with his repentance of the sin and weakness—and the weakness of the strong is sin—which had brought all this calamity upon him. The loss of his hair had deprived him of strength, only because it took him out of that condition of Nazariteship with which his strength was inseparably connected; so that from the return of his strength with the growth of his hair, we can only understand that he repented, and renewed voluntarily the vows of devotement which had been imposed upon him before his birth, and which he had so miserably broken. This important fact the Philistines probably did not know, nor would it consist with his object to disclose it to them. They knew that he was still a strong man; but they knew not that his more than human strength was returning to him.

A day at length came, delayed perhaps on account of the needful preparation for so grand an occasion, or because it was reserved so that it might fall at the time of some periodical festival; but that it was delayed appears from the growth of Samson's hair,—when the Philistines held a high feast and sacrifice to Dagon their god, in the belief that he had delivered Samson their enemy into their hand. It is likely that there was a great resort of Philistines from all parts on this great occasion; and the importance that was generally attached to the fact that they held him so completely in their power, is evinced by the exultation and thankfulness they

manifested "when they saw him. They praised their god, for they said, Our god hath delivered into our hands our enemy, and the destroyer of our country, who slew many of us." These cries must have struck upon Samson's heart. He now saw with deep intensity of shame and sorrow, how the name of the Lord had been dishonored through his misconduct, seeing that they ascribed to their own god that triumph over the covenanted servant of Jehovah, which they owed only to his own folly and sin. He knew that in the view of the Philistines the triumph over him was equivalent to a triumph of their god over the God whose servant he professed himself to be, whose protection he claimed, and whose people he, in some sort, represented. Yet out of this despair he gathered hope. He was aware, that Jehovah was a jealous God, and that he knew well how to vindicate the honor of his own great name. The question was now put upon a different ground. It was no longer a matter between Samson and the Philistines, but between Dagon and Jehovah; and he might venture to think that, fallen as he was, he might yet hope for the Divine assistance in any effort which occasion might present, to strike one great blow in discharge of his mission as THE DESTROYER, seeing that thereby he would vindicate the superiority of the Lord over the miserable idol which the Philistines worshipped as their god. The opportunity he desired was offered, and in such a shape as to confirm his purpose, by his being compelled to be present at their odious triumph, and by being himself the object of their keen taunts and bitter scorn.

After the sacrifice there was, as usual, much feasting, amid the exhilaration produced by which there was a proposal to "call for Samson that he may make us sport." He was accordingly brought from the house used as a prison, and set in the enclosed area of the building, the roofs and galleries of which were thronged with men and women, seemingly those of the highest quality, for "all the lords of the Philistines were there." What "sport" he was expected to make is not clear; but he did make it. Some think that he was

merely there that he might be seen by this great assembly, and become the object of their mockeries and insults; but others conceive that he was required to exhibit some feats of strength for their amusement—of strength still great, though no longer supposed by them to be formidable. We do not see why both opinions may not be right, but that the last was in any case included, we incline to think from the consideration that in the East athletic sports and feats of strength in the area of the palace, form a conspicuous part of the entertainments at high festivals; and because it was evidently under the excuse of weariness, after he had “made them sport,” that he desired to lean against the pillars, which supported the superstructure of the building upon that side of the area to which he had been withdrawn for rest. Having thus secured possession of the two middle pillars on which chiefly the house stood, Samson felt that the hour of great and terrible “vengeance for his two eyes,” was come. Holding them with his hands, he breathed a prayer to the Lord, to help him but this once, and then with the cry, “Let me die with the Philistines,” he bowed himself with all his might, the pillars gave way, and the house fell upon him and upon all the people—three thousand in number—that were there. Thus, as the sacred historian remarks, “The dead that he slew at his death, were more than they which he slew in his life.”

Some difficulty has been felt in understanding how the whole building, and a large building too, could be supposed to rest upon two pillars. But this is scarcely said; for that Samson took hold of the *two middle pillars*, implies that there were other pillars which contributed to the support of the building; though if the two middle ones, on which the others depended, or with which they were connected, gave way, the connection and dependence of the whole arrangement would be unable to support the superstructure alone. As most of the explanations which have been offered—including, we must confess, some that we have given ourselves—overlook the fact, that there were more pillars than the

two—and the supposition that there were but two creates the difficulty—we might pause here, without providing for the stricter exigency. But it is not difficult to provide even for that. In very many Eastern buildings, the whole centre of the principal side of the enclosed area (towards which all parts of the general building front), is made so to rest upon one or two pillars, so that their removal would most certainly involve the downfall of that part; and from the connection of the parts, this would involve the overthrow of the whole range of building on that side at least. And if this be the obvious result in ordinary cases, much more certain would it be here, when the roof, and no doubt the galleries, if any, looking towards the court, were crowded with people, whose weight must have created so great a strain and pressure, that the withdrawal of any single prop must bring the whole to the ground in an instant. If the reader examine the figures of Oriental buildings with a view to an explanation, he may not be able to find any one which meets, in all respects, his ideas of what sort of building that overthrown by Samson ought to be; but he will find many—not in other respects answering to his idea—which will abundantly satisfy the only point in question, how a building might be pulled down, by the support of one or two pillars being withdrawn. For the rest, under the change of religion, and in the absence of such festivities as were connected with paganism, such buildings—except royal palaces and mosques—as would accommodate three thousand persons on their roofs and galleries, are not found. Some think this was a temple; but although it is probable that the Philistines had temples, as we find such not very long after, when the ark of God was taken, we doubt if such festivals as these were celebrated in the temple courts, or that such multitudes assembled on their roofs; and we feel quite sure, that if Dagon and his temple had been included in the overthrow, a circumstance of so much importance would not have been passed unrecorded. It may have been a sort of palace, but scarcely a royal one, as the Philistines had no king, and the chief magistrate of the small sep-

arate state of Gaza, was not likely to reside in any very extensive or magnificent palace. It is probable that it was a large building, in which public business was transacted, assemblies held, and feasts and games celebrated, constructed probably on the general plan of dwelling-houses, but with special accommodation for spectators on the galleries and roofs. Even in the large structures framed for some of these purposes by the Romans, illustrations of the fact before us might be found. Pliny speaks of two theatres built at Rome by Caius Curio, which were large enough to contain the whole Roman people; but were so constructed as to depend each upon one hinge or pivot.* And in Tacitus we read of a destruction by the fall of an amphitheatre, very similar to this occasioned by Samson.†

TWENTY-SIXTH WEEK—THURSDAY.

THE LEVITE.—JUDGES XVII. XVIII.

THE five last chapters of the book of Judges form a sort of appendix thereto, relating incidents which, in their chronological place, would come nearer to the commencement than to the close of the book. The incidents are of a very different complexion; but they are very important, from the distinct impression they enable us to realize of the loose condition of society during the anarchical period which intervened between the death of "the elders who outlived Joshua," and the government of Othniel. To that period it is generally conceived that these events should both be referred; and we acquiesce in the conclusion, without feeling it necessary here to state the grounds on which it seems to us probable. We turn rather to note the information which may be gleaned from these transactions.

There was an old woman dwelling with her married or

* *Hist. Nat.* xxxvi. 15.

† *Annals*, vi. 62

widowed son,* Micah, in Mount Ephraim, who one day missed a treasure of eleven hundred pieces of silver, probably the savings of her life, which she had carefully laid up. Her imprecations upon the thief were so awful, that her son, who had really taken the money, fearing lest some of that dreadful thing—a mother's curse, might unknowingly alight on his head, informed her that it was he who had removed her silver. In him this, under the circumstances, was a comparatively light offence, the money being what he supposed must soon come to him by inheritance. His mother did not therefore reproach him, but rather blessed him; and proceeded to explain, that her anxiety in the matter had proceeded from the special destination which she had made of the money, and which, she supposed, would not be less advantageous to him than the inheritance of it. She had "wholly dedicated it to Jehovah;" and she now invited him to take the money and give effect to her intention. He, however, preferred to leave the money in her hands, while he wrought with her in carrying out the design. This was no less than to set up a small establishment like that at the tabernacle, the service of which seems to have been at this time much neglected, and the access to it, from the troubled state of the country, difficult. Micah and his mother seem to have thought, that the restriction to one place of ceremonial worship, respected only sacrifice: and that, while he abstained from setting up an altar for offerings of blood, he should not only be committing no offence, but doing a laudable action acceptable to God, by setting up a place for his service by prayer, and perhaps by bloodless offerings.

So he soon had what he conceived to be "a house of God." † He had a chamber, it would seem, set apart for this

* He had grown-up sons, and must therefore have been the one or the other. That the woman was advanced in years is proved by her grandsons being of adult age.

† "A house of gods," in the authorized version—but it is more agreeable to the circumstances that the plural form should here, as usual, be understood in the singular sense.

service ; and in it was a priest's dress ("an ephod"), and "a graven image and a molten image." For "image," some read indefinitely "thing," which the original will admit ; and suppose that imitations of the sacred utensils, or of some of them, are intended, such as the candlestick, &c. Whether so or not, there were certainly images, for "teraphim" are presently mentioned. As these teraphim occur in Scripture in somewhat diversified applications, some of which indicate a resemblance to the human figure,* we incline to the supposition, that they were designed to represent the cherubim of the tabernacle.

Micah was now a happy man. His chapel was intended not only for the advantage of his household, but to form a centre of worship and prayer to the neighborhood. There was nothing idolatrous in it, as regarded the intention of Micah, who deemed that he was doing God service, being unable to discover the idolatrous *tendencies* which placed it among forbidden things. One feels a kind of sympathy for this obviously sincere man, while deploring his grievous and dangerous error of judgment.

There was one want. There was the framework of a little ecclesiastical settlement ; but the animating spirit, in an officiating minister, was wanting. A patriarch would have been content to suppose that he might becomingly lead the devotions of his household ; but the idea of a distinct priesthood being by this time established, nothing would satisfy Micah but the presence of some one specially set apart for the service of his house of prayer. Not being able, however, to get a priest or even a Levite, he remembered that the Levitical tribe were taken into the Lord's service in lieu of the first-born of all the tribes, and therefore he set apart his own son probably his first-born, for this duty.

Though he adopted this resource, Micah was aware that this was not altogether correct, and desired to have a Levite for his officiating minister. He was not long unsatisfied. One

* As in respect to the image or teraph which Michal put in David's bed, and passed off for himself, sick.

day a wandering Levite called at his house, either from having heard, as he passed, of the establishment there, or to claim the hospitality usually shown to strangers, and which the law particularly enjoined to be shown to the Levites. His name was Jonathan, and he belonged to Bethlehem in Judah. This at the outset seems an irregularity, for the Levites had cities of their own among the different tribes, and Bethlehem was not a Levitical city. But it would seem that, in times of confusion like this, the regulation was not much heeded, and the Levites, or a considerable proportion of them, were dispersed over the land, as necessity, convenience, or private connections suggested. Indeed, seeing that in their towns they derived their subsistence from the provision made for them by the law, and that they were not, like the men of other tribes, landowners, they would be obliged, in unsettled times, when the payment of the dues on which they depended was neglected, or became insufficient for the whole body, to leave their towns and go to other places in search of a maintenance. This would be especially the case with the younger Levites; and, indeed, the Jewish writers intimate, with sufficient probability, that even in good times—and perhaps as a characteristic of good times—the Levites went much about the country as teachers of the law and educators—which were, indeed, the same function: for education among the Hebrews consisted, primarily, of instruction in the law and the capacity of reading it. The function of the priesthood was to offer sacrifices, not to teach; the function of the Levites, besides assisting the priests in the lower departments of their duty, was to teach, and not to sacrifice. They were the teachers of the law; and, although not stated in Scripture, there is reason, from the mere probability of the case, to believe that the Jewish writers are not wrong in affirming that zealous Levites dispersed themselves about the country, and went from place to place, tarrying wherever their services seemed to be required, in discharge of this important branch of their functions. The subject is interesting, but is too large for incidental discussion

here; and therefore we pass it, with the remark that, seeing the function of a Levite was to teach—seeing that he exercised no trade or profession, it must have been only as a teacher, an educator of the people, a guide in religious matters, that a Levite could seek employment; and when, therefore, we find one travelling in search of an opening for his services, this implies that such openings were to be found, and that in various localities a demand for such services existed.

This was the case with our Levite. He told Micah that he was in search of a place where he might settle—"I go to sojourn where I may find a place." On hearing this, Micah gladly seized the opportunity of completing, as he conceived, his establishment, by engaging this Levite for his minister. This person seems to have been no more conscious of the gross irregularity of the proceeding than Micah himself, who, in the joy of his heart, exclaimed, "Now I know that Jehovah will bless me, seeing that I have a Levite to be my priest." Alas for him, if he had no other hope of a blessing than this!

The terms on which Micah engaged the services of this young Levite are remarkable. "I will give thee ten shekels of silver by the year, and a suit of apparel, and thy victuals." We are startled at the smallness of the sum, which does not exceed five-and-twenty shillings at the present value of silver. But the worth of the money with regard to the cost of commodities, by which the real value is determined, must have been much greater, relatively, in that age and country. Even at the present day, money is, in that relation, of three or four times the value in Syria that it bears with us—that is, it will go three or four times as far in the purchase of necessaries; and Burekhardt informs us, that thirty years ago, about six pounds by the year was all the income which the bishop of Kerak* derived from his see—it is probably not so much at present, as his see is certainly in a less flourishing condition. We are also to consider, that in a simple age, and in a coun-

* Mentioned before at p. 344.

try then without commerce, a young man was held to have little occasion for expense when provided with clothing and food. Micah evidently made what he conceived to be a liberal offer—and as the Levite himself received it as such, we have no reason to consider that it was otherwise. The *suit* of apparel does not, as our use of the word implies, consist of a single dress, but a complete set-out of apparel, meaning probably an ordinary dress, and another to use in the services of the office he had undertaken.

The engagement, however, was not so splendid, but that the Levite, somewhat too eagerly for any strong sense of gratitude to his patron, accepted an offer to exercise the same functions for that division of the tribe of Dan which passed this way, in going to find a new settlement in the north—at Laish, afterwards called Dan; and there is reason to apprehend that he did not very eagerly protest against the abstraction, by the strong-handed Danites, of the whole paraphernalia of Micah's establishment, on which a little fortune had been expended. Micah was absent at the time; but he soon discovered his loss, and pursued the party with the people of the neighborhood, who were equally interested in the support of his establishment. They found, however, that the Danites were too strong for them, and reluctantly returned, after Micah had received a rough hint as to the danger he incurred by not putting up quietly with his loss. It may be hoped that the loss was his eventual gain. But the original of this remarkable establishment, as well as the eagerness of the Danites to appropriate it to themselves, is very painfully demonstrative of the loose notions of the age; and it is of importance as supplying the link in the downward progress to that direct idolatry into which the nation not long after generally fell. In the leading narrative the transition seems very abrupt. There were intermediate corruptions and ignorances, and here their nature is indicated, and the connection is in this and the following narration supplied.

TWENTY-SIXTH WEEK—FRIDAY.

THE OFFENCE.—JUDGES XIX.

IN the three last chapters of the book of Judges we have another illustration of the disorders that prevailed in the same age, to which the transaction considered yesterday has been referred. That transaction evinces the religious disorder and uncertainty into which that age had fallen. The one now before us equally illustrates the social disorders of the time, while it instructs us that the theocratical institutions had fallen into irregular action even at head-quarters. But besides, and indeed, probably, as its main object, it serves to account for the great diminution of importance which the warlike tribe of Benjamin underwent, and the small figure it makes (except for its dependence on, and connection with, Judah) in the subsequent history of the nation. In both transactions a Levite occupies a conspicuous place. In this case the name of the Levite is not given; but it seems noticeable that his abode was in the same quarter, "on the side of Mount Ephraim," where Micah, not long before or after, had set up his very questionable establishment, and that the woman who is painfully engaged in the transaction, belonged to the very town of Bethlehem-judah, from which the other Levite came. That woman was his "concubine"—a name of more odious import now than even at the time it was used by our translators. The original word (*pilgash*) has no ill-sense in Scripture; and it ought not to be represented by a word which expresses an infamous condition. In the Scripture, it denotes the condition of a secondary wife—such as Hagar, and the two handmaids of Leah and Rachel, to whom several of the twelve tribes traced their origin. The wives of this class differed from those of the first chiefly in being not so well connected, and from an inferior condition of life—often captives—that is, slaves promoted thus to the side of the master. The marriage was contracted with fewer ceremonies and legal

obligations than that with a wife of the first class—nor did the husband enter into any contract to endow her, or to make her children his heirs. She was, however, as much entitled to sustentation, raiment, and matrimonial rights as the other wives, and her position was in no respect discreditable. Her children might share the paternal heritage, if the father so appointed; and, in any case, they were entitled to a portion of his goods, according to circumstances. These two ranks of wives were not only allowed by the law of Moses, but a man might take as many of either as he thought good, or considered himself able to maintain. This, however, was practically a sufficient limitation; so that, among the Hebrews, as is still the case in the East, a man is seldom seen to have more than one or two wives, except among the princes and magnates of the land. All the incidental allusions in Scripture to matrimonial life, assume that a man has but one wife; and, in all the post-patriarchal history of the Bible, the only man below the rank of a ruler or prince, who is recorded to have had even two wives, is the father of Samuel, and, in that case, a reason is furnished in the fact that one of the wives was childless.

Well, this Levite of Mount Ephraim had a “concubine-wife;” and she proved unfaithful to him, and went home to her father at Bethlehem. By the law, both classes of wives were equally obliged to be faithful to their husband; but whether, in case of infidelity, the second class was liable to the same capital punishment as the first, is not agreed. But if found guilty, after full proof, the husband was obliged to divorce her forever from him, if not to prosecute her for adultery. It was, therefore, altogether an irregular and unseemly thing—however it may bespeak his affection—that, after four months of separation, he resolved to go in search of her, and bring her back to his home. He accordingly went to Bethlehem “to speak friendly to her”—or, as the original has it, “to speak to her heart”—that is, to conciliate her affection, to rekindle her tenderness, to whisper forgiveness to her, and to implore her to return to the home she had

left desolate. He had perhaps heard that she was penitent ; for the phrase often denotes the giving of comfort to one who is in sorrow. He was so confident of the result, that beside the ass he rode he took another with him to bring her back. He had also a servant with him to drive the asses from behind. He might, perhaps, have dispensed with this for himself ; but a servant is indispensable to drive the ass that a woman rides.

The woman's father was glad, indeed, to see his son-in-law arrive on such an errand, which promised a much less painful result of this distressing affair than he could have supposed probable. The satisfaction was such that he detained him for three days as a guest ; and even on the fourth day, when the Levite fully purposed to set out on his return, he was delayed so late in the day by the kind urgencies of his entertainer, that he was constrained to tarry over another night. The next morning he arose with the firm purpose of not losing another day, but was prevailed upon reluctantly to stay till the afternoon was far advanced, when he was entreated to remain another night ; but fixed in his purpose, he set forth, late as it was. All the painful results grew out of this detention, and late out-setting, and may help, if every day did not supply lessons enough, to teach us the danger and weakness of allowing our better judgment to be overcome by even the kind importunities of others.

Owing to the late hour of the departure, the travellers had got no further than Jebus (afterwards Jerusalem), which was but six miles from Bethlehem, when, as there was a woman of the party, it became necessary to seek a place to lodge in for the night. The servant suggested that they should go into the town ; but this place was still in the occupation of the Jebusites, and although, from the relations which by this time had grown between the nations, there was no reason to apprehend any personal danger or molestation, the Levite preferred to push on some miles further to Gibeah or to Ramah, which were in the sole occupation of Benjamin, than to turn aside into the city of a stranger. Gibeah stood upon

a low, conical, or rather round eminence, about five miles north by east from Jerusalem. By the time they got near this the sun went down, and the Levite concluded to turn in there. As he had no acquaintance in the place, and there seems to have been no lodging-place or khan to which he could repair, he tarried, as the custom was, in the street, sure that some one would soon invite him to his house. We do not think there is any charge against the men of Gibeah on *this* account merely, for no one could receive him till it was known that he wanted reception, and this was the proper mode of making his want known. The same practice still exists in the East, under the like circumstances, and it is not long that any one has to wait before entertainment is offered to him. But in this vile place it is expressly stated that "no man invited him to his house," and he was left waiting in the street, until, at last, an old man, who was also of Mount Ephraim, and who very possibly recognized the Levite, saw the party as he returned from his work in the fields, and invited them to his humble dwelling.

It is a beautiful circumstance that the exercise of hospitality was not, as we see, confined to the rich and great, but was a gratifying and honorable duty which even the laboring poor did not consider themselves exempt from discharging. That this old man had been laboring in the fields would not, indeed, imply that he was in low circumstances, did not the fact of his not belonging to the place show that they were not his own grounds on which his labor was expended. It is to be noted, however, that the Levite told the old man that he wanted only lodging—he had everything required for the refreshment of the whole party: "There is straw and provender for our asses; and there is bread and wine also for me and for thine handmaid, and for the young man which is with thy servant." This shows that the Israelites did then, as the Orientals do now, take with them the provisions for themselves and beasts, that they require during a journey, replenishing their stores from time to time, when they come to a town that can supply them. The "straw" was chopped

straw, used in the East instead of hay ; and the “ provender” barley. This is carried in hair-bags, something like the mouth-bags of our horses, but of larger size. We must not also neglect to observe the deferential courtesy of the language which this prosperous Levite uses towards the poor old laboring man. From this and other instances, such as the salutations exchanged between Boaz and his reapers, in the book of Ruth, one cannot but entertain a most favorable opinion of the polite and courteous manners of the Israelites in this remote age, which some regard as barbarous.

The gross neglect of the duties of hospitality must have given the Levite some misgiving as to the character of the place, seeing how highly these duties are considered in the East, and seeing that his Levitical character gave him a more than common claim to kind and generous entertainment. The result justified his misgivings. A crowd of worthless fellows soon beset the place, with the most offensive intentions against the person of the stranger ; and in the morning his wife lay dead upon the threshold, from the usage she had received at their hands.

The Levite said nothing. It was not a time for words ; which were all too feeble to express the terrible thoughts that burned within him. He took up the dead body, and placing it on an ass, proceeded to his home. The crime which had been committed, and the state of that miserable place, seemed to him such that only a great and signal act of public judgment could avert from the nation which owned such miscreants, a judgment like that which, in old time, overwhelmed the Cities of the Plain. That judgment he therefore determined to demand, after a fashion which was sanctioned by ancient custom, though startling even to the Israelites, from its infrequency or disuse. He divided the corpse into twelve pieces, and sent one piece to each of the tribes of Israel, the messengers being, no doubt, commissioned to give therewith a circumstantial account of the transaction. Shocking as this resource appears, it seems to have been in accordance with the notions of the time, as a resort,

in extreme cases, for calling into united action distinct tribes, in the absence of any general authority for summoning them to action. It is, therefore, not without purpose, stated that at this time there was no king, "ruler, or chief magistracy, in Israel; but every man did what was right in his own eyes." This then was, at such a time, the most stringent resource the Levite could resort to for calling them to avenge this wickedness in Israel. Judging from some parallel instances, it seems that this proceeding on his part laid them under an anathema, solemnly binding them, under pain of being themselves dealt with in the same manner, to avenge this dreadful and infamous deed. This was usually done with pieces of a bullock, that had been sacrificed or devoted with peculiar solemnities; and that the Levite used the dead body of the victim of this outrage, was calculated to deepen the horror and strengthen the obligation. It may be justly objected that, as a private man, the Levite had no right to lay the whole nation under the anathema—That so might it be done to them and theirs, unless they avenged the wrong. This right to summon them authoritatively could only belong to a king, a judge, and perhaps the high-priest. We see Saul resorting to it in order to call the people to the relief of Jabesh-Gilead. "He took a yoke of oxen, and hewed them in pieces, saying, Whosoever cometh not forth after Saul and after Samuel, so shall it be done unto his oxen, 1 Sam. xi. 7. A private person could not do this. But he could, and did, send or offer the pieces, and those who accepted them came under the obligation, and regarded themselves as solemnly devoted to carry it out. Burder, in his "Oriental Customs," cites a somewhat apposite, or at least illustrative custom, from Lucian, who, speaking of the Scythians and Molossians, says, "When any one had received an injury, and had not the means of avenging himself, he sacrificed an ox and cut it in pieces, which he caused to be dressed and publicly exposed. Then he spread out the skin of the victim, and sat upon it with his hands tied behind him. All who chose to take part in avenging the injury that had been done, took up

a piece of the ox, and swore to supply and maintain for him, —one, five horses—another, ten—others, still more; some, infantry—each according to his strength and ability. They who had only their persons, engaged to march themselves. Now an army composed of such soldiers, far from retreating or disbanding, was invincible, as it was engaged by oath.”

TWENTY-SIXTH WEEK—SATURDAY.

THE FIRST TRIBAL WAR.—JUDGES XX. XXI.

It behooves us to point out some strange irregularities in the behavior of the tribes who undertook the avengement of the Levite's wrong, not only to show how ill the true working and obligations of their theocratical system was understood by the Israelites in this age, but to account for some results which surprise the reader of these chapters no less than they confounded the Israelites themselves.

A deep horror thrilled through all the tribes when the message reached them; and they declared that no such dreadful wickedness had been seen among the nation from the time they quitted Egypt to that day. From northern Dan to southernmost Beersheba, and in the region beyond the Jordan, the agitation was most intense. Then there was the hurried march of innumerable feet from all parts of the land to the place of concourse at Mizpeh. No less than four hundred thousand men of the strongest and bravest of all the tribes, proceeded thither in arms, headed by their tribal chiefs. Here the Levite appeared in person, and related his cruel wrongs, referring the matter to their decision. That decision was prompt and earnest. All the people arose as one man, and declared that they would not return to their homes till this great iniquity was purged from Israel. Their first step was to appoint ten men out of every hundred, among all the tribes, to keep the camp supplied with victuals. The next

was to send to the tribe of Benjamin, to require them to deliver up, for judicial execution, the men in Gibeah, who had wrought this guilt in Israel. Instead of doing this, or rather, instead of offering themselves to execute this judgment upon the men who had brought this disgrace upon their tribe, the men of Benjamin resolved to take up arms in defence of Gibeah, against the united forces of all the other eleven tribes. Much as this astonishes, it is entirely in keeping with other actions of this fierce and turbulent tribe, whose character well sustained the prophetic description of it given by the dying Jacob: "Benjamin shall raven as a wolf."—Gen. xlix 27. The number this tribe was able to bring into the field against the four hundred thousand of Israel, did not exceed twenty-six thousand men, including seven hundred left-handed men, "who could sling stones at a hair and not miss."

On learning that the Benjamites were thus resolved to adopt the quarrel of Gibeah, the Israelites were highly exasperated, and pledged themselves, by a solemn vow, that none of them would give their daughters in marriage to any man of that tribe—which, in effect, amounted to a determination to extinguish the tribe altogether. They expected and hoped to destroy the greater number in the war, and this vow pursued those who might escape, making them aliens from the commonwealth of Israel.

The tribes then repaired to Shiloh, where we apprehend they ought to have gone at first, to inquire, not as they were bound to do at the Divine oracle, whether they should enter or not upon this war with Benjamin, which threatened the extinction of a tribe in Israel—but only what tribe should take the lead in the campaign. This shows that in thus deciding upon war with Benjamin, without trying further means of conciliation, they acted much less from the result of a cool and deliberate conference upon the most effectual means of extirpating such shameful impieties from the commonwealth, than from the heat of resentment against the Benjamites, for daring to undertake the defence of the miscreants of Gibeah

against the whole congregation of Israel. Had they given themselves time to think coolly upon the matter, they might have recollected that it was not permitted them to engage even in a war against strangers without consulting their Divine King, through the high-priest; much less could it be right for them to engage in a war against one of their own tribes, and to pursue it with such furious zeal. Although, therefore, they got an intimation that Judah was to take the lead—being all they required to know—it must be well understood that their engagement in this war was entirely on their own responsibility, without any authority from the Lord, and in direct contravention of the prerogatives which he had specially reserved to himself. Nothing can be clearer than that they never once thought of consulting the Divine oracle till the war had been fully resolved upon and settled beyond recall by solemn pledges and oaths. The enterprise seemed to them so laudable, that they could not doubt of success, and the immense advantage of their numbers assured them of victory. They forgot that their own hands were not clean. They had got into such a state as to tolerate if not approve such establishments as that of Micah, afterwards adopted by a large division of one of their tribes. By this indifference they indicated the same want of a proper sense of the specialty of their relation to their Divine King, as they show throughout the present transaction; and it was important that they should be brought round by a sharp correction to a right understanding of their position. It was doubtless on this account, and to punish them for their presumption in thus undertaking the excision of a tribe without consulting the Lord's will in the matter, and without exhausting all pacific resources—and for making themselves both judges and executioners in what appeared to be God's cause, without his authority, advice or consent—that they were allowed to sustain a most disastrous and disgraceful defeat in their first battle with Benjamin at Gibeah, into which place the force of the tribe had thrown itself, and from which it readily came forth to give the vast host of Israel battle. Of that host twenty-two thousand—not

far from equal to the whole army of Benjamin—were left dead upon the field.

This result naturally filled them with consternation. It brings them to the tears and prayers with which it had been well for them to have commenced so deplorable an undertaking. They now begin to consult God, not about a commander, as before, but upon the lawfulness of the war. Finding that the war itself was approved, they gathered confidence, and again went out against Benjamin; but with no better result than before—for they lost this second time no less than eighteen thousand men. If they had been as much as they ought to have been, in the habit of consulting the Divine oracle, which was instituted for their guidance as a people, they must have seen that the approbation of the war gave no promise of success—and they would have humbled themselves until that promise had been obtained. The full and *customary* answer, “Go up, for I will deliver them into thy hand,” was not given: only, “Go up”—without any promise as to the result. This alone ought to have awakened their apprehensions that something was still wrong, and to have caused them to inquire diligently wherein that wrong lay.

The second defeat produced the effect that was intended by it. It led them to consider wherein they had erred, and brought them to a proper sense of their relation to their Divine King, and of the obligations which that relation involved. From the particularity with which their regular course of proceeding is now described, it may be doubted whether they had previously appeared before God for the purpose of consulting him in a proper *manner*, as they certainly had not in a proper *spirit*. It is now first plainly stated that they all went up unto the house of God, where they not only fasted and wept until the evening, but prefaced their address to him by the usual sacrifice of burnt and peace-offerings. Then the high-priest, Phinehas, the grandson of Aaron—whose name helps to fix the time—stood before the ark to ask counsel of God, with the usual solemnity, in their name:

“Shall I once more go to battle against the children of Benjamin, my brother, or shall I cease?” Under the circumstances what a sad and touching emphasis is there in the term, “the children of Benjamin, *my brother*”—and what a heart-rending consciousness of the horror of this fraternal conflict it implies. The answer was now given freely, fully, and explicitly: “Go up, for to-morrow I will deliver them into thy hand.” They are now in fact in a proper frame for victory; and this is incidentally evinced by the fact that the promise thereof, instead of leading them into wild presumption, induces them to renew their hostilities in a more cautious and orderly manner. Benjamin was now made to pay dearly, not only for the lives of the forty thousand they had slain, but likewise for daring to take up arms in defence of the impious Gibeathites, while the fire consumes the cities, and the sword devours the lives of these rebellious miscreants. The whole tribe was in fact reduced to about six hundred desperate fugitives, who went and fortified themselves upon a barren rock; and would in all probability have perished there, to the utter extinction of the whole tribe, had not God inspired the Israelites with returning sentiments of pity towards that small but unfortunate remnant, and with remorse for having so nearly destroyed one of the twelve tribes out of Israel.

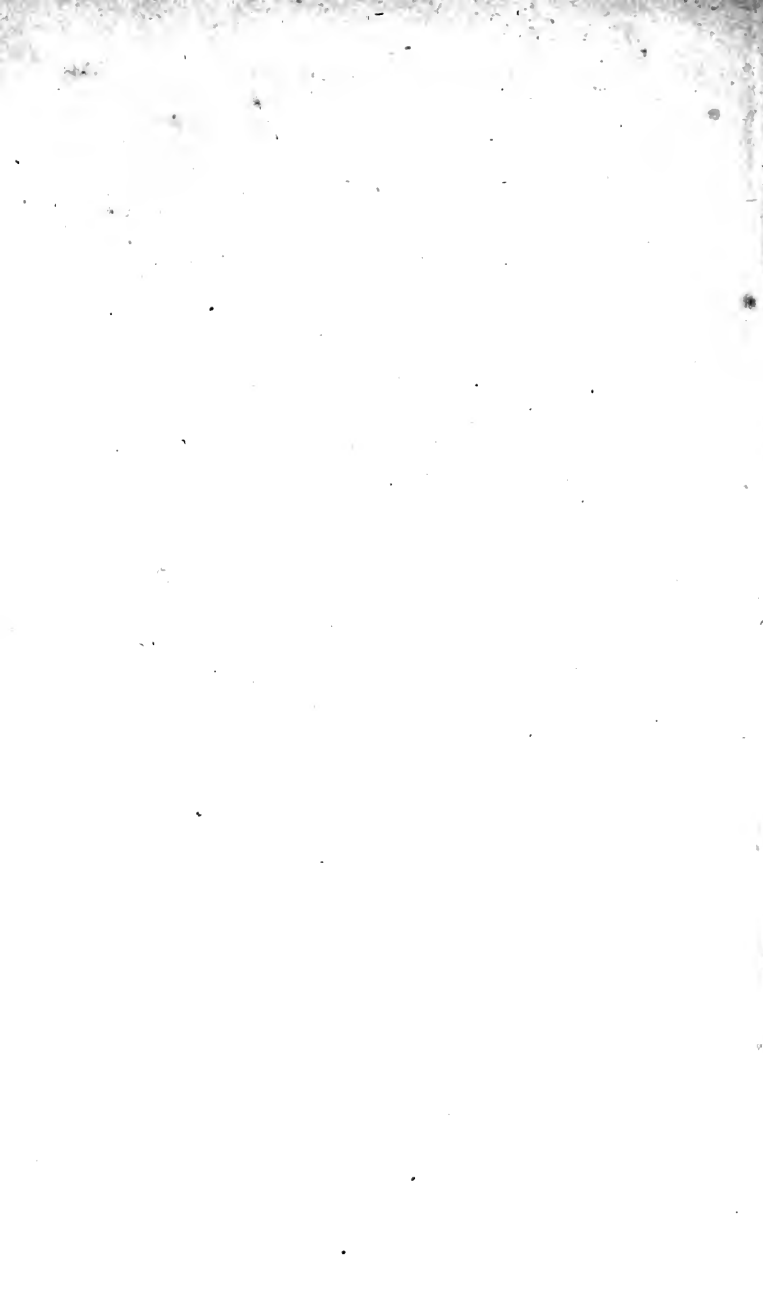
This result seemed indeed still unavoidable, by reason of the solemn curse which in their rash and precipitate zeal they had at the first pronounced upon any who should give a daughter in marriage to a Benjamite—while they had suffered their furious zeal to transport them so far as to destroy all the women of that miserable tribe. Thus, although they resolved to spare these six hundred men, it was seen that this could have but little effect in the ultimate preservation of the tribe, unless they could find means of supplying them with wives, by whom to raise up a new offspring. Some blame them for thinking themselves bound to keep such a vow—or for not applying to the Lord to excuse them from the obligation they had so unwisely incurred; but we must confess that we cannot regard with favor any alternative which would, on the one

hand, lead them to think more lightly than they did of the solemn obligation of an oath once taken, or which, on the other, might tend to an encouragement of rash and fatal oaths, by enabling them to relieve themselves from the consequences. Besides, the only oaths that appear fairly entitled to be regarded as dispensable, are such as involve injurious consequences not reckoned upon or foreseen at the time the oath was taken ; but this was by no means the case here: the oath, if it had any meaning at all, having been plainly taken *for the very purpose* of securing the result which is now deplored. Still there can be no doubt that, seeing they had gone too far in the heat of their wrath, their duty was to have sought counsel of the Lord in the way he had appointed —and we cannot doubt that some proper remedy would have been indicated. But instead of this, they proceeded in their old irregular way ; and while lamenting that so much blood had been shed, they can think of no remedy but by the shedding of more. An anathema had been laid upon all who should not join the crusade against Benjamin, and it being found that the inhabitants of Jabesh-Gilead had absented themselves, they must all be destroyed, in order that all the unmarried females found among them may be obtained for the Benjamites.

Still these were not sufficient. Two hundred more were still wanting, and to secure these, the unprovided Benjamites were instructed to lie in wait and carry off the required number of brides for themselves from among the damsels of Shiloh, when they went forth, during one of the great festivals celebrated there, to solace themselves in the gardens. There are not in eastern towns places where assemblies can be held for such festivities. It is therefore usual to assemble in such pleasant spots as may be in the neighborhood—in any small valley through which a stream flows—near some secluded fountain—in gardens or plantations. The women especially affect this mode of enjoyment, which agreeably diversifies their somewhat monotonous existence. A few years ago the ladies of Aleppo bribed an astrologer to pre-

dict a coming plague, for no other reason than that they might—as they knew to be usual in such cases—be sent out of the way into the suburban gardens.* The plot was in due time discovered, and the astrologer put to death; but the women had secured their enjoyment. That these festivities are held by the different sexes apart, explains that there were no men present to oppose the Benjamites in carrying off their daughters and their sisters. The feat was successfully executed; and when the men of Shiloh began to complain of this outrage, the elders of the congregation interposed with gentle counsels; and by intimating that it had been done at their suggestion, and by pointing out that in this way the tribe would be preserved without the oath being slighted—seeing that the brides had not been given by their fathers, but had been taken from them—they were prevailed upon to submit quietly to this wrong. Thus the poor remains of Benjamin were reinstated among the tribes; and one of the most remarkable and ominous transactions in the history of Israel was brought to a close.

* In the East the private gardens are not connected with the houses in towns—but are apart in the suburbs, and are only occasionally visited.





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