

divine will—conducted in the spirit of devotion—prosecuted under divine direction, and rendered successful by direct interpositions of divine power. And these songs seem to have been composed to celebrate victories or in some instances to mourn defeats. All nations have been in the habit of celebrating national victories or lamenting national calamities in songs. But as Israel was the Lord's people, and their wars his wars, the songs referring to such events among them were expressions of piety as well as of patriotism. They were at least sometimes composed under divine inspiration and might be regarded as acts of worship to God. As early as the days of Moses such songs seem to have been collected into a book, entitled as above mentioned, the book of the wars of the Lord. A fragment of it is preserved in which they celebrated an interesting period in the history of their wanderings. When after thirty and eight years wandering—when the last man capable of bearing arms at the time of the departure from Egypt had died—and when they had pitched beyond Arnon, the boundary between Moab and the Amorites, and the first stream they had seen since they had drunk of the River of Egypt, and were about entering upon the conquest of the land, they sang:—

"What he did in the Red Sea,*
And in the torrents of Arnon,
And in the pouring forth of the brooks
Which turns to the dwellings of Ar
And leans upon the borders of Moab."

—Numbers xxi. 14, 15.

Their first halt presented an interesting scene, which gives occasion to an outburst of the people's gratitude, in a beautiful specimen of primitive Hebrew poetry. No longer supplied miraculously with water from the rock that followed them, now by natural springs as at Marah and Elim, they resorted to the mode of supply characteristic of a cultivated country, viz.: digging

* The meaning of the original phrase here is very uncertain. In the margin it is "Vaheb to Suphab." Several of the best interpreters translate it—"Vaheb in storm," i.e. Jehovah advancing in storm (see Nah. i. 3.) takes Vaheb, supposed to be an Amorish fortress on the borders.

a well. Hence the place was known as Beer, a well, probably the same as that known afterward as Beer-elim, the well of the heroes.—(Isa. xv. 8.) This was done by divine direction—

"Gather the people together
I will give them water."

Water is in these countries of such importance as to render the discovery of any additional supply, a sufficient call for public rejoicing; and the success of the people on this occasion under the guidance of their great leader and the prince of their tribes, led to an ode commemorating the simple yet precious gift—

"Spring up, O well, sing ye unto it
The well which the princes digged,
The nobles of the people digged it
With the sceptre of the lawgiver,
With the staves of their tribes."

—Numbers xxi. 17, 18.

As the poetical remains of that age are so scanty and from their extreme antiquity so interesting, we may notice the only other fragment of lyric poetry preserved. It is to be found at ver. 27-30 of the same chapter. The Amorites had but recently subdued the Moabites, who dwelt North of the Arnon, and occupied Heshbon which they made their chief city. But they were defeated by the Israelites at Jabaz and their land entirely conquered. The event was commemorated in a song, of which only a portion has been preserved. "Therefore," that is because Heshbon had fallen in this manner, the composers of proverbs say,

"Come home to Heshbon
Built and restored to the city of Heshbon."

A challenge or ironical appeal to the Amorites to return and rebuild their city. Let them come who had been so successful against Moab—

"For fire went out of Heshbon,
Flames from the city of Sihon;
It devoured Ar of Moab—
The lords of the heights of Arnon."

In the next strophe he turns to Moab and announces her overthrow. If her Gods could not protect her from Sihon and the Amorites, in the triumph of Israel over the latter the former is entirely lost—