

portant subject; and should they be the means of promoting the best interests of the thousands on whose behalf this is sent forth, the writer will have no reason to regret that he has furnished them with the story of the "Broken Pen-knife." Nihil.

PLANETS VISIBLE.

"There's nothing bright above, below,
From flowers that bloom to stars that glow,
But in its light the soul may see
Some feature of the Deity."

The evenings of summer are not usually the most inviting to him who loves to read in the bright leaves of what some one has called the poetry of heaven. The more resplendent constellations belong to a winter's night; and those which do look out from their azure depths appear shorn of their radiance. But this dull aspect of the heavens is just now enlivened by the presence of an unusual number of planets. There is no mistaking Venus, with her peerless lustre. Close in her train follows Jupiter, with his fiery neighbor Mars. Saturn souths, this evening a few minutes after sunset, and Mercury, though immersed in the solar beams, is also now in the same western chambers. Such is a rare proximity of the five most brilliant planets.

The Christian delights in nature's volume, for it is the best commentary upon that of Revelation,—and I save this only is the best suited to kindle his devotions. Hence patriarchs went out into the field to meditate at even-tide, and the monarch of Israel could utter his sweetest, divinest lays when he "considered the heavens." Meek-eyed faith loveth to look

"How the bright stars do dance their mystic round
O'er heaven's imperial pavement."

for they are embalmed in sacred not less than in secular poetry. Do holy men of old wish to image forth Jehovah's uncompromising purity? "Behold," they exclaim, "even to the moon and it shineth not; yea, the stars are not pure in his sight!" Would they humble the pride of man, and teach him his utter imbecility? Well may they ask, "Canst thou blind the sweet influences of the Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion? Canst thou bring forth Mazzaroth in his season, or guide Arcturus and his sons? Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven?" In their sublimest revelations the Messiah is foretold as the star of Jacob—the bright and morning star. The holy and the useful are to shine as the brightness of the firmament and as the stars for ever and ever. While—awful reverse—the wicked are wandering stars, for whom is reserved the blackness of ever-during night. What could be more forcible and striking! The righteous shall for ever circle round the "exceeding glory" to which they were indissolubly linked by the centripetal power of Love; while the sinner, like some errant planet, hath strangely struck out of his orbit, and is ever more wandering deeper and farther into the regions of night, and ice, and death. Even the different degrees of glory consequent upon the different degrees of faithfulness and grace in the Church militant seem to find their appropriate commentary in the same sublime science. "There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead." Such are a few of the many astronomical allusions which must have occurred to such as study the sacred writings. To those who would dwell on this inspiring theme we may be permitted to mention Chalmers' *Astronomical Discourses*, and Burritt's *Geography of the Heavens*, or almost any of Dick's popular works, especially his *Scenery of the Heavens*, which makes a late volume of Harper's Family Library.

Theological.

THE PARABOLIC TEACHING OF OUR LORD.

CHAPTER II.

(Continued from page 230.)

The second parable which deserves our notice is that of Jehoshaphat, King of Israel. And it demands it on two accounts. First, as it confirms the sentiment already advanced, that it was the practice among eastern nations to express themselves metaphorically on the most important occasions, both religious and political; and, secondly, as it furnishes an instance of the power of figurative language to express the passions in general—and here, defiance and contempt. Amaziah, the King of Judah, had smitten the Edomites; and, inflated with his victory, presuming, perhaps, also, that he should win back to the crown of David the revolted ten tribes, he challenged to battle Jehoshaphat, the King of Israel. His declaration of war is couched in the figurative language of the day. "Come let us look one another in the face." The answer of the monarch of Israel is scorn and defiance. "And Jehoshaphat the King of Israel sent to Amaziah the King of Judah, saying, 'The thistle that was in Lebanon sent to the cedar that was in Lebanon, saying, Give thy daughter to my son to wife: and there passed by a wild beast that was in Lebanon, and trod down the thistle.'" 2 Kings xiv. 9. Every thing here is strongly marked; the proud disproportion of their power, which he presumes—the thistle and the cedar; their natural affinity—both of Lebanon; the presumption which he imputes to Amaziah; the ease with which he deems he can crush him with his forces. It had been well for the King of Judah if he had taken the counsel so roughly administered; he persisted in contending with the monarch of Israel, and was defeated and taken captive by him.

The third instance of Scripture parables which occurs to illustrate the subject, is that of the woman of Tekoah; and its object and effect was persuasion. David had banished his beloved son Absalom, for the assassination of his brother Amnon. After his grief was assuaged, and his anger appeased, he longed for the return of his banished child; but he had been so guilty, that it appeared an act of injustice to recall him; and the firmness of the monarch was in opposition to the feelings of the father. While his mind thus wavered a widow woman, instructed by Joab, the commander of the forces, presented herself before the king in habiliments of mourning; and when David inquired into the cause of her calamity, she answered, "I am indeed a widow woman, and mine husband is dead. And thy handmaid had two sons, and they strove together in the field, and there was none to part them; but the one smote the other, and slew him. And, behold, the whole family is risen against thine handmaid, and they said, Deliver him that smote his brother that we may kill him, for the life of his brother whom he slew; and we will destroy the heir also: and so they shall quench my coal which is left, and shall leave to my husband neither name nor remainder upon the earth." How artfully this fable is drawn; its circumstances so remote as not to awaken the suspicion of the king; yet sufficiently allied to assist her plea if she should move him to pity her imaginary distress; and the tale is told with so much pathos, that she could scarcely fail to excite his compassion. Accordingly, he granted the life of her son; and she immediately turned the argument upon him, that if he pitied another who had offended partly in the same way, he ought, in justice to himself, his son, and his people, to recall his own child. Striking upon the already vibrating chords of