

Family Reading.

DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM.

A short time ago, Sir E. Bulwer Lytton delivered a lecture in Lincoln, on the early history of Eastern nations. He gave an outline of the history of the Babylonian, Assyrian, Persian, Egyptian, Greek and Jewish nations, and closed with the following powerful and dramatic description of the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus:—

Six years after the birth of our Lord, Judea and Samaria became a Roman province under subordinate governors, the most famous of whom was Pontius Pilate. These governors became so oppressive that the Jews broke out into open rebellion, and seventy years after Christ, Jerusalem was finally besieged by Titus, afterwards Emperor of Rome. No tragedy on the stage has the same scenes of appalling terror as are to be found in the history of this siege. The city itself was rent by factions at the deadliest war with each other—all the elements of civil hatred had broken loose—the streets were slippery with the blood of citizens—brother slew brother—the granaries were set on fire—famine wasted those whom the sword did not slay. In the midst of these civil massacres, the Roman armies appeared before the walls of Jerusalem. Then for a short time the rival factions united against the common foe; they were again the gallant countrymen of David and Joshua—they sallied forth and scattered the eagles of Rome. But the triumph was brief; the ferocity of the ill-fated Jews soon wasted itself on each other. And Titus marched on, encamped his armies close by the walls, and from the heights the Romans gazed with awe on the strength and splendor of the city of Jehovah.

Let us here pause, and take, ourselves, a mournful glance at Jerusalem, as it then was. The city was fortified by a triple wall, save on one side, where it was protected by deep and impassable ravines. These walls, of the most solid masonry, were guarded by strong towers; opposite to the loftiest of these towers Titus had encamped. From the height of that tower, the sentinel might have seen stretched below the whole of that fair territory of Judea, about to pass from the countrymen of David. Within these walls was the palace of the kings—its roof of cedar, its doors of rarest marbles, its chambers filled with the costliest draperies, and vessels of gold and silver. Groves and gardens gleaming with fountains, adorned with statues of bronze, divided the courts of the palace itself. But high above all upon a precipitous rock, rose the temple, fortified and adorned by Herod.

The temple was as strong without as a citadel; within, more adorned than a palace. On entering, you beheld porticoes of numberless columns of porphyry, marble and alabaster; gates adorned with gold and silver, among which was the wonderful gate called the beautiful. Further on, through the vast arch, was the sacred portal which admitted into the interior of the temple itself, all was sheeted over with gold, and overhung by a vine-tree of gold, the branches of which were as large as a man. The roof of the temple, even on the outside, was set over with golden spikes, to prevent the birds settling there and defiling the holy dome. At a distance, the whole temple looked like a mount of snow, fretted with gold pinnacles. But, alas! the veil of that temple had been already rent assunder by an inexpiable crime, the Lord of Hosts did not fight with Israel. But the enemy is thundering at the wall. All around the city arose immense machines, from which Titus poured down mighty fragments of rock and showers of fire. The walls gave way, the city was entered, the temple itself was stormed. Famine in the meantime had made such havoc that the besieged were more like spectres than living men, they devoured the belts to their swords, the sandals to their feet. Even nature itself so perished away, that a mother devoured her own infant; fulfilling the awful words of the warlike prophet who first led the Jews toward the land of promise: "The tender and delicate woman amongst you, who would not venture to set the sole of her foot upon the ground for delicateness and tenderness, her eyes shall be evil towards her young, and the children that she bear, for she shall eat them for want of all things, secretly in the siege, and straitness wherewith thine enemy shall distress thee in thy gates." Still, as if the foe and the famine were not scourge enough, citizens smote and murdered each other as they met in the way, false prophets ran howling through the streets—every image of despair completes the ghastly picture of the fall of Jerusalem. And now the temple was set on fire, the Jews rushed through the flames to perish amid its ruins. It was a calm summer night, the 10th of August, the whole hill on which stood the temple was one gigantic blaze of fire, the roofs of