

touch their faces and their bodies, many of which are naked, there arises a yell like that of all the fiends, and the multitudes spring up and rush tumultuously away, many through the streets, more to their own houses; and as the snowfire unfasts the bonds without touching the bodies of the three upon the unkindled pyre, Melchisedec stands erect, lifts up his hands to the fire foaming sun, and in a solemn voice exclaims, "It is fire and brimstone from the Lord out of heaven. Baal is the Lord's servant to-day, and has destroyed his worshippers. Just and righteous art thou, O Lord God of Hosts!"

Soon the rushing crowd feel who is in pursuit. It is the Living Fire—meeting them in every street—pursuing them into every house—outrunning the swiftest—consuming the strongest. As it runs, it weds the whirlwind, which tosses its waves to and fro, and forms them into momentary wreaths, like those of snow in the winter tempest. As it runs, it calls aloud to the earthquake, who, heaving up to meet it, makes towers and temples topple and fall, and lets out in waves and floods the bituminous sea which had long been slumbering below. Ere half the inhabitants have perished in the flames from above, the city begins to sink into the bitter waters from beneath; so that, while some are crying, in feeble hope, "The storm of fire is abating," others are shouting, in despair, "Our houses are sinking below our feet—the bitter slime is rising around us!" But no words can echo the groans, the blasphemies, and the remorseful outcries of the perishing myriads, as they are enveloped by the flames, or go down alive into the pit.

Caphtorim, as soon as the first tiny flake of flame had touched his cheek, had fled to his grandfather's palace. He had let himself down into the dungeon in which Irad had been shut up. There he remained in coolness and safety till the earthquake gave its conclusive stamp, when, escaping with difficulty the up-rushing slime, he ran to the highest turret of the building, where Ham had often watched the stars, and sought their aid in his confederacy against God. There—although he felt the palace sinking slowly beneath him, and had now no hope of escape—he determined to take his final stand. It was free from the flames which still raged among many of the lower buildings around, although it had, during the heat of the tempest, been scorched in divers parts. That tempest had now subsided; and, as the sky was again clear, the tower commanded a wide prospect over the scene of ruin. With the calm eye of despair, Caphtorim watched the gathering sea into which his own vessel was going down. Below, lay Sodom; many of its streets sunk, and the waters rolling wildly over them—some still contending with the flames; some sinking, with roaring reverberation, amid the deep—one or two lofty buildings, like that on which he stood, free from fire, but undermined, and gradually merging into the waters. Only a few human beings were visible; some of them struggling in the surviving flames; others, floating dead upon the rising waves; and one or two perched, like himself, upon high platforms and pinnacles, awaiting the completion of the doom. The square recently so busy and crowded is now a lake. The altars and their burdens have disappeared. Westward, the

fires are still carcering over the other three cities; and above them there is a smoke like that of a furnace, colored into the hue of brimstone by the afternoon sun. There is discord, as well as desolation—a discord composed of subterranean noises, of the heaving of waves, the bickering of flames, the crash of buildings sinking, and a lonely human shriek here and there, which attests at once how few remain to be destroyed, and how many have perished. The smoke of Gomorrah conceals Zoar and its neighboring heights from view; but straining his eye in another direction, Caphtorim perceives, or thinks he sees, a little group of four persons pressing up the hills which lie toward Mamre, and asks, with a sensation of envy which withers his heart, "can these be Melchisedec and the rest saved by an angel from fire and the bitter waters, and hastening toward safety? May the curse of a man near to death follow their steps; yea, let Tirzah herself be cursed, with her bridegroom!"

Having thus vented his rage at the fugitives, he turns resolutely round to wait for the ghastly issue which was before himself. The afternoon slopes slowly down the west, and as each hour passes, it sees a difference in the tragic page which was now wide opened to the heavens. Fiery street after fiery street goes down hissing into the pitchy sea; tower and temple are submerged, till at last the topmost battlement of Caphtorim's house alone rises a few feet above the waters. The sun is now setting, and at the very moment that he goes down behind the smoke-darkened mountains, Caphtorim, his adorer, stretching out his arms, and crying, "O Baal, I come to thee and to my father," throws himself into the waves. The darkness of night comes rushing over the scenes and hides his drowning struggles. The waters rise angrily above his corpse and above the tower on which he so lately stood, and the last survivor of Sodom has been engulfed, and the guilty city has become a weltering sea of brine, which in its everlasting moanings has ever since been proclaiming to all who have ears to hear the evil of that abominable thing God hates, and the fierceness of the hatred he bears to it—the extent to which human wickedness can go, and the existence of a point beyond which it can go no farther—the madness of man, and the justice and severity, so full of mercy, of the great God.

Saved from the flames, Melchisedec, Irad, and Tirzah returned to Salem. The lovers were soon after wedded by the priestly hand of the aged patriarch. He, after a season, fell asleep, and was succeeded in his just and benevolent sovereignty by Irad, who faithfully followed his steps. Happy in life, and not divided long in death, were the gentle pair. But, sitting under their vine and fig-tree in peace and safety, their thoughts not unfrequently reverted to the strange and fearful circumstances which attended their first meeting, and more than once, along with their children, they visited the Dead Sea, and, as they walked along its dreary brink, and heard its waters speaking to themselves with the sullen rapture of gratified vengeance—in low and thrilling tones, they told them this tale of the "Cities of the Plain."—*Hogg's Instructor*.

NOTE.—The notion that Melchisedec was Shem, is one held by several commentators, and it seems as probable