

Written for the Experiment.

**THE FATAL VOW.**

BY A. G.

It was evening: the proud king of day had retired in glorious majesty behind the western hills. Twilight's dusky shades had fallen o'er the hills and valleys of Judea. The blue arch of Heaven was glowing with sparkling light. The zephyrs bore on their wings the perfume of flowers, and in the distance the "Song of the Tuttle," and the gentle murmuring of streams were heard. Presently the "moon took up the wondrous tale," and reigned in bright and peerless majesty, the queen of night.

It was a dark period in the history of the Jews. Torn by discord, and exhausted by civil wars, they were in no condition to repel an invader; and to complete their misfortune, the children of Ammon had already invaded their coasts and threatened their destruction. At this eventful period the Israelites began to look about them for a leader, but they knew of no one in whom they could repose implicit confidence. They remembered, however, that a man named Jephthah had been banished from his home by his brethren, in consequence of their jealousy. A council of the elders resolved to place Jephthah at the head of their army, and as a proof of confidence on their part, they promised, in the event of his accepting their invitation, to make him ruler of the people. Messenger clothed with full powers was immediately despatched to the land of Tob, the residence of Jephthah; and after the usual salutations, and the forms of ancient hospitality were over, the message of the elders was immediately made known. The offer was accepted, and Jephthah prepared with his daughter Rebecca to bid adieu to their long loved home.

Rebecca was the fairest of her race. She was scarce sixteen; yet her form was tall and graceful, and moulded in the most exquisite symmetry. Her flowing hair was dark as the wing of the raven, and her sparkling eyes were brighter than diamonds, and when shielded by their long dark lashes, would wound the hardest heart; and such was the glow of health on her lovely cheeks, that the rose in all its beauty bloomed not fairer than Jephthah's daughter. At length, with many tears, she bid adieu to the scenes she loved so well, and accompanied her father to the land of Israel. Jephthah was received by his countrymen with the deepest protestations of esteem and affection; and he hastened to place himself at their head, and marched to give battle to the Ammonites, who had advanced as far as Aroer. He arrived in sight of the enemies' camp on the evening we have mentioned above, and having placed proper sentinels, he walked in the open plain to admire the beauty of the scene, and to muse on his former condition, and his present perilous situation. Around him the majestic palm, the luxuriant olive, and the clustering vine flourished in all their beauty. He thought how he had been spurned and insulted by his brethren,—how he had been driven by them a solitary exile, from the land of his birth, the home of his fathers; and as the bitter thought rose in his mind, the cheering reflection that he had forgiven them, immediately overpowered it. They had solicited his return; they had conjured him to bury the actions of the past in oblivion; they had restored to him his former estates and dignity, and his name was no longer covered with ignomy and disgrace. Instead of being despised by his countrymen, he was their only hope. He considered how uncertain would be the conflict with his enemies, for the army he commanded, when compared to their multitudes, was but a handful. He knew that his only hope was in the God of Israel. Alone and unseen by any but the All-seeing Eye of Heaven, Jephthah vowed a vow unto the Lord and said: "If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands, then it shall 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." He retraced his steps to the camp, and before the rays of the sun had guided the mountains of Gilead, Jephthah's chosen band was drawn up in battle array on the plain that was that day to witness the death struggle of thousands.

The Ammonites rushed to the attack, and long and doubtful was the conflict. At length the Israelites prevailed, and the broken legions of Ammon fled dismayed from the field. The Israelites pursued, and dreadful was the carnage. The countless myriads of idolaters were slain almost to a man, and the plain of Aroer, which a few hours before was wet with the dews of Heaven, was covered with the bodies, and deluged with the blood of the slain. After the battle was ended the Israelites returned to their homes, and Jephthah received in every city through which he passed the congratulations of his countrymen who flocked around him to hear the glad tidings of victory. He arrived at Mizpah, and approaching his house he beheld his daughter advancing to meet him, and singing a hymn of thanksgiving for his safe return.

His rash vow was remembered; his eyes overflowed, which had never dropped a tear when driven an exile from his home; his heart, which had never quailed amid the deadly strife, now well nigh broke; his knees trembled; his brain became giddy; and a sense of the deepest and most insupportable anguish pervaded his mind. He leaned against a friendly olive for support, while Rebecca asked him in the sweetest and most tender accents, the cause of his grief. Pale, as if the King of Terrors had already claimed her as his own, and motionless as a statue, the unfortunate maiden heard her doom from the lips of her heart-broken parent. "Weep not for me," at length she said, "for thou hast opened thy mouth unto the Lord, and canst not go back. But, oh my father, grant me a last request. Permit me to wander upon the mountains for two months with my maidens—

"To mourn my hapless fate,  
And train my mind to meet a change so great."  
Her request was granted; and Rebecca with her little band of maidens departed to the mountains, where they visited each well remembered spot, and mourned in hopeless sorrow the fair being who would soon be torn from their embraces forever.

The clouds of night had been dispelled by the light of day. The sun had risen above the mountains of Benjamin. The feathered songsters were carolling in the groves. The flowers again unfolded their petals to the rays of the sun, and all things wore an air of joy and gladness, except this little band of mourners, as slowly they visited for the last time the scenes they loved so well. The sun had approached his meridian when a stranger stood before them, who announced to the chieftain's daughter that he was a messenger from her father.

She called her maidens around her and said, "mourn not for me, for I go to a land of bliss beyond the skies; and oh comfort my father; remember that I am a willing victim; and as we part forever, grant me a last request. As often as returning springs beautify our plains, return to these mountains and mourn my untimely fate." A wail of agonizing sorrow burst from her companions, as she was borne to her father. But let us draw a veil over the scene. Suffice it to say that her father did with her according to his vow.

The fair daughters of Israel mindful of her last request, returned yearly to the mountains and mourned four days in each year their lost Rebecca.

**WONDERS OF GEOLOGY.**—More than 9000 different kinds of animals have been changed into stone. The race of genera of more than half of these are now extinct, not being at present known in a living state upon earth. From the remains of some of these ancient animals, they must have been larger than any living animal now known upon the face of the earth. The Megatherium (Great Beast,) says Buckland, forms a skeleton, nearly perfectly colossal. With a head and neck like the sloth, its legs and feet exhibit the character of an Armadilla and the Aunteeater. Its fore feet were a yard in length, and more than 12 inches wide, terminated by gigantic claws. Its thigh bone was nearly 3 times as thick as that of the elephant, its tail, nearest the body, was a feet in circumference. Its tusks were admirably adapted for cutting vegetable substances, and its general structure and strength were intended to fit it for digging in the ground for the roots, on which it principally fed.

**NATURAL HISTORY.**  
CHAPTER I.

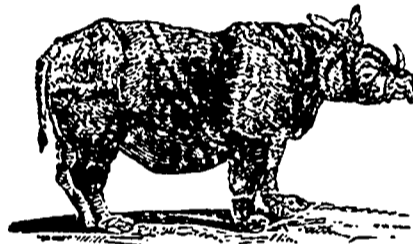


THE PANTHER.

The length of the Panther is usually more than six feet, not measuring the tail, which is about three feet long. The color of the upper parts of the body is light tawny-yellow, with many black, roundish marks, several of which have in the middle of them a black spot. The under parts of the body are white.

In most of its habits of life, the Panther is like the Tiger; it lurks in secret amongst bushes or shrubs, on the borders of the forests, and springs with a sudden leap on such animals as pass by. The Panther has none of the noble qualities of the Lion.—His thirst for blood is very great; and his ferocity is such, that even when in the power of man, and in his gentlest moments, he seems rather to be subdued than tamed. He has a fierce countenance and a restless eye; his cry is similar to that of an angry dog.

The mode adopted to destroy the Panther is usually as follows: A bait, consisting of a piece of flesh, is suspended on a tree, near which the hunter has previously erected a hut for his own concealment and security; the smell of flesh attracts the animal to the spot, and, whilst he is seizing it, the hunter shoots him, and almost always wounds him mortally.



THE RHINOCEROS.

The single-horned Rhinoceros is not exceeded in size by any land animal except the Elephant, and in strength and power it gives place to none. Its nose is armed with a formidable weapon, a hard and solid horn, sometimes above three feet in length and eighteen inches in circumference at the base, with which it is able to defend itself against the attack of every ferocious animal. The Tiger will rather attack the Elephant than the Rhinoceros, which it cannot face without danger of being torn to pieces. The body and limbs of the latter are defended by a skin so hard as to be impenetrable, except in the belly, by either a knife or a spear.

The upper lip of this animal answers, in some measure, the same purpose as the trunk of the Elephant; it protrudes over the lower one in the form of a lengthened tip; and, being extremely pliable, is used in catching hold of the branches of trees and shrubs, and putting them into the mouth.

The Rhinoceros is generally of a quiet and inoffensive disposition, but when attacked or provoked he becomes extremely dangerous. This animal has a most acute and attentive ear, and runs with great swiftness.



THE CAMEL.

These animals are mild and inoffensive. They are of great value in hot and sandy countries.—Their great power of living without water, enable them to proceed for seven or eight days' journey without any supply. They can discover water by their scent at half a league's distance, and will hasten towards it long before their drivers perceive where it lies. Their patience under hunger is perhaps equally remarkable.

A large Camel will bear a load of a thousand, twelve hundred pounds, and with this will traverse the deserts. When about to be loaded, the animals bend their knees at the command of the conductor. If any disobey, they are struck with a stick, or their necks are pulled down; and then, uttering their groan of complaint, they bend themselves, put their bodies to the earth, and remain in that posture till they are loaded and desired to rise.

If over-burdened, they give repeated blows with their heads to the person who oppresses them, and sometimes utter the most pitiful cries.

**THE LAMA.**

The Lama is the only animal associated with man, and undebaused by the contract. The Lama will bear neither beating nor ill treatment. They go in troops, an Indian going a long distance ahead as guide. If tired, they stop, and the Indian stops also. If the delay is great, the Indian, becoming uneasy towards sunset, resolves on supplicating the beasts to resume their journey. If the Lamas are disposed to continue their course, they follow the Indian in good order at a regular pace, and very fast, for their legs are extremely long; but when they are in ill humour, they do not even turn their heads towards the speaker, but remain motionless, standing or lying down, and gazing on heaven with looks so tender, so melancholy, that we might imagine these singular animals had the consciousness of another life, of a happier existence. The straight neck, and its gentle majesty of bearing, the long down of their always clean and glossy skin, their supple and timid motions, all give them an air, at once noble and sensitive. It must be so in fact, for the lama is the only creature employed by man, that he dares not strike. If it happens (which is very seldom) that an Indian wishes to obtain, either by force or threats what the Lama will not willingly perform, the instant the animal finds itself affronted by word or gesture, he raises his head with dignity and without attempting to escape ill-treatment by flight, he lies down, turning his looks toward heaven, large tears flow freely from his beautiful eyes, and in half or three quarters of an hour he expires. Happy creatures who so easily avoid sufferings by death! Happy creatures who appear to have accepted life on condition of its being happy! The Indians of the Cordilleras alone possess enough patience and gentleness to manage the lama. It is doubtless from this extraordinary companion that he has learned to die when overtaken.

**A TENANT WANTED.**—We learn (says the New York Mirror,) that an Irishman was seen in the upper part of the city on Thursday with the words, "A tenant wanted," painted in large letters on pasteboard, and suspended around his neck. Patrick was asked, "Who wanted the tenant, and where?" "And it's me, meself," he replied, "that wants a tenant." "Well for what house?" "House," he said. "And do I care what house, so long as it be a dacent and respectable place and sure wages?" "You're a fool, Paddy, or somebody has been making a fool of you—for if you have a house to rent then you want a tenant; but if you want a situation, why don't you say on your showbill 'A situation wanted.'" "Aha, my darlint," replied the Irishman, "and is it there ye are? And perhaps I ain't a fool? Sure I was t to be occupied, and can I be occupied unless I have a tenant?"

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