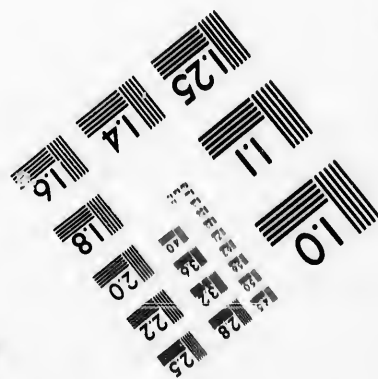
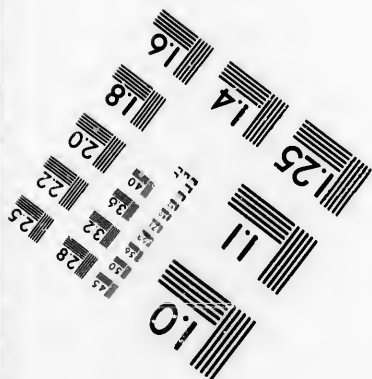
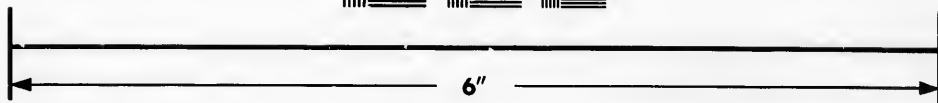
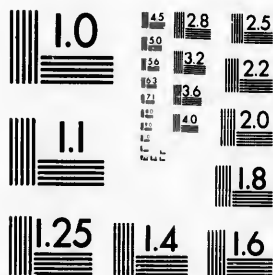


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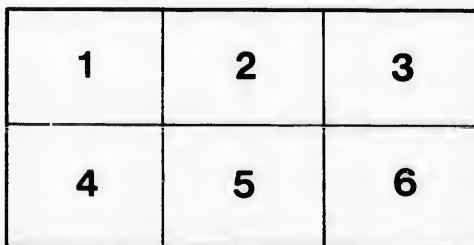
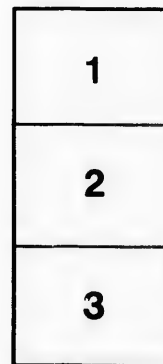
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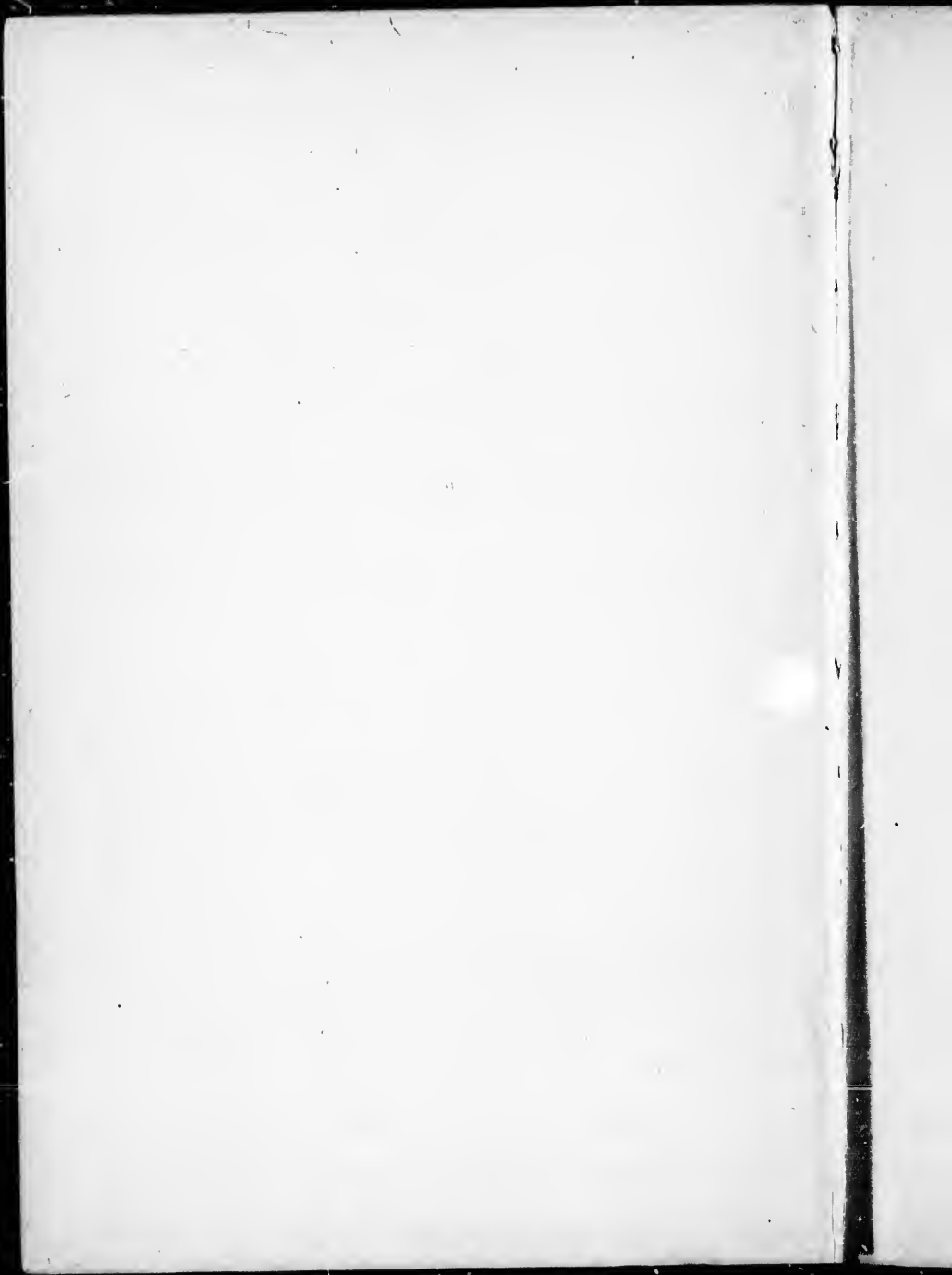
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SOME
PRACTICAL STUDIES
IN THE
HISTORY AND BIOGRAPHY
OF THE
OLD TESTAMENT
GENESIS TO DEUTERONOMY.

BY
GEORGE HAGUE
OF MONTREAL.

WITH PREFACE
BY
THE VERY REV. DEAN CARMICHAEL.

"Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning."

TORONTO:
THE COPP, CLARK CO., LIMITED,
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PREFACE.

Mr. George Hague, the well-known Canadian banker, seeks in this volume to make the living thoughts of Holy Scripture speak profitably to the life of to-day. After a lifelong study of God's Word, and of modern ideas connected with its inspiration, he takes the position that the Scriptures are the Word of God, containing in the strictest sense the will of God, and hence of Divine authority, demanding from man unquestioning obedience to its precepts and belief in its doctrines.

Mr. Hague's style is clear, concise and telling, and whilst he plainly avoids elaborate arguments on disputed points in the onward flow of his exegesis, he by no means leaves them unnoticed, appending to each chapter a definite "note" on each point as it arises, such "notes" plainly showing that the writer, whilst essentially orthodox in his teaching, is fully abreast of the times, and capable of speaking with authority as a well-read man.

This work is the work of years, the printed harvest of the springtime and summer of a singularly busy and successful life. It is given by a busy man to busy readers, at the very time that such a work on the Pentateuch is needed, a time when men are surfeited by attack, and are glad to listen to a re-statement of the old views, written by one who knows well the dangers that are connected with modern critical thought, and the unreliability of the ever shifting and contradictory views that have been poured forth from the press on the subject of the Pentateuch.

JAS. CARMICHAEL,

Dean of Montreal.

January, 1900.

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PREFATORY REMARKS.

The historical studies of this volume are expansions of lessons delivered to a class of men and women in the Cathedral Church of Montreal on successive Sunday afternoons. They have all been based upon the principle of taking the Divine word as it is, and endeavoring to penetrate its real spirit and purport, following upon the fundamental idea of Scripture being written for the spiritual education (or *learning*) of men. The author has specially endeavored to bring to bear upon the elucidation and illustration of the incidents of the narrative, a long and varied experience in secular life, and a close intercourse with men of various degrees, capacities, and occupations in several countries. He has thus sought to bring the light of the present to bear upon the past, and to lift the Scripture narrative from the position of a mere interesting ancient record, into that of a story of events and sayings that are in essence instinct with life, and exactly similar to the events and developments of character in these modern times.

Literary criticism and discussions, such as have occupied so largely the attention of scholars and literary men of late years, have been almost entirely avoided, and deliberately so, for the reason that, however interesting they may be to scholars, they are not specially "profitable" to the people at large "for correction and instruction in righteousness."

Not that the author himself has paid no attention to such matters, for he has. But the matured judgment he has formed as the result of years of consideration, is that the books of Scripture are of Divine inspiration, and an inspiration of an entirely different character from such efflorescence of human genius as is seen, for example, in Shaks-

peare, Plato and Homer; and following upon this, that there being a Divine inbreathing in these Scriptures, the human instrument by which the inbreathing or inspiration has worked out the results we see, is a very secondary matter compared with the supreme importance of a right appreciation of the revelation itself.

The Old Testament, by its very name, suggests the communication of a *will*; and this has been accepted, broadly and generally, by all Christian churches and people, as the will, not of Moses, or Samuel, or Isaiah, but of Almighty God. Now, the beneficiaries of an ordinary will, especially if its bequests are of a highly valuable character, rarely spend time in discussing what particular lawyer was employed in drawing it up, and criticising minutely its terms and phrases, in order to determine which, of various possible legal experts, might have been employed upon it. They spend their time and apply their minds, with such assistance as they can get, to the consideration of the meaning of the will itself, and in seeing how they are interested in it, or whether they are interested at all.

And beneficiaries would be somewhat impatient, if those whose business to explain its meaning and the extent of their interest in it, were to devote years of time to the trifling question of whose handwriting the will bore, and what paper it was written upon.

It is true that if such inquiries as these were likely to lead to the conclusion that the document was not the will of the supposed testator at all, but was composed by some pretender or forger, the enquiry would rise at once to the first rank of important questions. But on the supposition that the great consensus of opinion was that the will was genuine, a beneficiary would resent the delay caused by an expert who insisted on a determination of the question in whose handwriting it was, before he would allow its benefits to be availed of.

The above comparison, like other comparisons, is not absolutely accurate, for the Old Testament (and the New also) contain a great amount of matter that is not at all analogous in form to a will.

But, without entering upon curious metaphysical questions as to the exact nature and method of inspiration, it is

sufficient for the present purpose to note that the great consensus of opinion—or, as we might better express it, of *doctrine*—is that the Scriptures are THE WORD OF GOD, the writers being used as instruments by Him who *caused*, as is expressed in a collect of the English Church, *all Scripture to be written for our learning.**

Which doctrine, when truly accepted and believed, at once raises these Scriptures into such a position of authority that a man will have little disposition to dwell upon trifling questions of what and who were the human instruments for their production (for, on the above supposition it would not matter), but would give supreme and undivided attention to the great question, what has the Divine Author of my being, by these Scriptures, to say to me, and to those with whom I have to do?

For what is the chaff to the wheat? Much thought has been bestowed, and naturally, and much has been written, upon the question as to the adaptation of wheat in its varieties to certain climates and soils; but if companies of learned men put forth treatises on the various possible or actual developments of chaff, an agriculturist would conclude that they might have been better employed.

*The position of the Church of England as expressed in her own formularies, is clear and explicit on this matter, thus:—

1. She speaks throughout, in these formularies, of Holy Scripture, as God's Word, or the Word of God.
2. Authority is claimed for her Articles on the ground that they are agreeable to God's Word.
3. The three Creeds are received and put forth by her, not on the authority of the councils or persons who compiled them, but because they may be proved 'by most certain warrant of Scripture.'
4. The first mark or a note of a visible church is that the pure Word of God is preached in it.
5. The authority of the Church in controversies is limited by God's written word. And so is the authority of councils; the things ordained by them having no authority unless taken out of Scripture.
6. And finally, she requires of all about to enter her ministry a declaration of unfeigned belief in God's word. She prays that every order of her ministry may have a true understanding of that word. And she sets before them, as the ground of their preaching and exhortation, that it be taken out of the Holy Scriptures; and requires a pledge from her Bishops that all false doctrine contrary thereto be driven away.

It is scarcely needful to say that other Protestant Communions are in agreement with the Church of England in this respect.

It is in the full acceptance of this great substantive truth that the Canonical Scriptures, as we have them, are the will and word of the Creator and Ruler of the world, that these studies have been pursued; and the author states as a fact, that the farther research has been pursued, and the more thoroughly investigation followed, the more assured the conviction has become, that this "foundation of the Lord standeth sure."

As the various incidents of the narrative came under review, it became increasingly clear that from the time that men and women are stated to have been formed upon the earth, the actions and sayings attributed to them are eminently real and human, and not mythical and fanciful. Men and women, in these old historical records, act and speak as men and women do, or would do, in similar circumstances, in these modern days. Human nature developed itself in Adam and Eve, in Abraham and Jacob, in Moses and Samuel, exactly as it does amongst ourselves. And this is the special value of these narratives and biographies, that they relate to men and women whose course in life lay substantially along the same lines as our own; whose joys and sorrows, temptations and sins, failures or victory, are such as we all meet with in our own progress through the world, a world which is itself, in no essential respect, changed since the race of mankind began to spread themselves upon it.

It may be, and has been, objected that the many miraculous occurrences recorded as having taken place in these ancient days are such as altogether to differentiate Scripture narratives from those of later times.

But a careful consideration of these narratives will shew that there is an element of *naturalness* and *reasonableness* in these very miraculous events. They are natural, as being ascribed to the putting forth, for sufficient reason, and at exceptional times, of the same power that framed the Universe. And some of the most remarkable of them scarcely differ at all from the extraordinary manifestations of what we call "NATURE" in the world we are familiar with. And the reasonableness of them will appear, when examined and more carefully considered in the light of the end to be attained by them, in the time and circumstances when they transpired.

This is the case with the miraculous occurrences of Scripture in general, though it is true of some, that they do pass beyond our understanding, and lead us to say, with all reverence, as is indeed most becoming, *Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right. How unsearchable are God's judgments, and His ways past finding out!*

This line of thought will be fully opened up as these studies proceed.

One word, in conclusion, as to transcriptions and translations. Both of these are obviously human. It has never been professed that translators were divinely inspired, and, although we may reasonably believe that in a matter of such vast importance to the welfare of mankind, there has been the working of a watchful providence, yet it is obvious that, comparing translation with translation, there have been mistakes at times in the rendering both of words and numbers. Yet these defects have rarely affected the substantial teaching of the word in anything affecting its main purpose, viz., to be profitable for instruction in righteousness. And what has been achieved by new and better translation has rarely gone beyond the clearing up of some obscure point in a narrative of events, or some doubtful statement in an account of things said,—in addition, of course, to the modernizing of old terms and phrases.

Much the same may be said of transcriptions. In ancient times, when all copies were made by hand, it would have been marvellous, indeed, if every copy that was made was absolutely accurate, especially in the matter of numbers, as is fully opened up in the body of this work in the opening chapters of the Book of Exodus. But again, it can be said with truth, that the differences between versions, either of the Old Testament or the New, are scarcely ever such as to affect the great purposes of revelation.

Yet a knowledge of the original tongues is very helpful in throwing clearer light on many passages of the word. With regard to Hebrew words and phrases, the author has received much help from an admirable work on the Book of Genesis, by the late Professor Hirschfelder, of Toronto University. Any references to the original of New Testament texts he has been able to search out for himself.

The work is thus commended to the candid judgment

and prayerful consideration of all who desire help in the study of Divine revelation, it being the purpose of the author not to draw away the mind of his readers from the word itself, but to lead them to it, that they may the better, not only read, but *mark, learn, and inwardly digest it*, for their souls' health and salvation.

PRELIMINARY THOUGHTS, APPLICABLE TO
THE WHOLE OF SCRIPTURE.

There is no more pregnant sentence in the whole Bible than this: "WHATSOEVER THINGS WERE WRITTEN AFORETIME (referring to the writings of the Old Testament) WERE WRITTEN FOR OUR LEARNING."

Thus spoke the Apostle Paul, writing as moved by the Holy Ghost, when addressing the Christians of Rome. The Holy Ghost thus marked out and indicated the scope of those writings of holy men of old time which had been composed under His inspiration.

They were written for our "learning," the original word indicating an educating process, such as is passed through in school or college, or in the broad field of the world. But the "learning" is that of moral and spiritual lessons, such as relate, not to secular knowledge or science, but to the character and conduct of man. For the object of this "learning," we are told, is to develop patience and consolation and hope.—Romans 15; 4.

There is thus supplied a key to the whole of Divine Revelation. It is that we may learn how to live; and how to die. The history and biography of Scripture are not simply for information and the enlargement of knowledge, but to enable him who reads to draw lessons of patience and courage and hope. This is the one purpose of the revelation. If the reading does not result in this, the reader might as well have never read at all. Similarly, the poetry and philosophy of Scripture are not for recreation or intellectual stimulus, to kindle the fire of imagination, and light up the fancy with a succession of beautiful images, but to quicken the faith, the hope, and the spiritual faculty of a man, giving him mental strength to fulfil all secular and sacred duty, that he may be "ready to every good work," enabling him, also, when pressed by the sorrows of life, to rest in communion with God, and an assured hope for the higher life beyond.

The history and biography do undoubtedly give information and stimulate intellectual research; the poetry and prophecy do certainly quicken the imagination and charm the literary sense. But these are not the purpose of the writings. Their true purpose is never fulfilled unless a man considers, when reading, "What can be learned from

this narrative? What lesson for life and conduct is embodied in this psalm, this poetry, this prophecy?"

The Scriptures, in short, were not written to teach men science, history, geography, or abstract philosophy, but Morals and Divine things. And this is reasonable. For, let us suppose that in the first chapter of Genesis there had been a revelation of the truths of Astronomy, Geology, Chemistry, Zoology; is it not evident that in order that it might be comprehended, there would need to have been a revelation of all that has led up to these sciences? There would have needed a revelation of Algebra, Geometry, Conic Sections, Trigonometry, and what not. In default of this, a statement of astronomical truth would have been no more intelligible than if it had been made in some language that was not to exist till thousands of years afterwards.

But a Divine revelation is not needed in such matters. Men have found them out for themselves. But they have never, by searching, found out God. He therefore (and His ways, government, dispensations, laws and disposition towards mankind) has been revealed in this Divine word.

Now a revelation, if it is to reveal anything, must be intelligible—and this, not to men of acute intellect only, but to men and women in general.

There is, in the works of a profound philosopher of modern times, a sketch based on the theory of evolution, of what he supposed might have been the first processes of Creation. The sketch, in effect, does not differ materially from the first few verses of the book of Genesis, with the exception—a vital exception truly—that it does not recognise an originating Creator. But the language is so highly metaphysical that no person could understand it who was not familiar with transcendental philosophy. To the mass of mankind the sketch would be simply incomprehensible.

Another principle, obviously applicable to the case, is this—that any revelation of the operations connected with the forming of the material world, while so revealed as to convey intelligible ideas, shall nevertheless be such as to remain essentially true during the long ages of subsequent discovery.

What that means may be conceived of by considering that of the numberless theories on the same subject that have been broached in modern times, the greater part, one by one, have been shown to be untenable, as investigation widened the area of what could certainly be proved. The theories of so great a man as Darwin are already being discredited, modified, or disproved, in their application in this direction and in that; and apparently, only a small

residuum of what is finally and universally received will remain. Now, if this be so, in the course of a single generation, what, may it be supposed, will be thought of Darwin's philosophy four thousand years hence! Yet this is the test to which the Book of Genesis is being subjected in these times. And let any one who considers the matter judge whether the book has not stood this test in such a manner as to prove that a Divine mind was at work in its composition; that, though the vehicle of revelation, and its language, were human, the thoughts and ideas were inspired by Him to whom all things, past and future, are naked and open as the day.

OF THE ORIGIN OF THINGS IN THE WORLD WHOSE ORIGIN IS KNOWN.

Of many things in the world around us we know the origin, both how they came to be, and when they came to be. We can recall a time when they were not; and we know the circumstances which led to their coming to be. Let us consider what, exactly, it is we know. On the streets which we pass day by day, a building has recently been erected. It is an absolutely new thing in the world. A year ago it was not. But those who passed by, day by day, saw a process going on which resulted finally in the building as it stands. A foundation was dug. Materials were accumulated. Laborers began their work of piling stone upon stone. Hoisting machinery was brought. As the work went on, and skilled workmen appeared, stone, bricks, timber, and other materials, were taken by strong hands and skillful fingers, and fitted into certain places day by day; until finally this entirely new thing in the world appeared, viz., a BUILDING, fitted for a certain use. There is now a dwelling, a warehouse, a factory, a church, where nothing whatever existed before.

But besides the men of handicraft who did the work, there was one who appeared from time to time giving directions. And he had a paper in his hand, a remarkable thing indeed, for it contained, before a stone was laid, a complete picture and plan of what the building was to be. Every stone that was laid, and every beam that was used, had its prototype in that plan. The stone was conceived of before it was cut. Its size, weight, and place were calculated, and it was wrought and placed as a result of that conception and calculation.

Before the building appeared on the street, its picture appeared in the architect's office. But before it appeared in the shape of drawings in the architect's office, it had appeared in conceptions and ideas of the architect's *mind*.

But, let us consider. Is this the ultimate origin? Must we not go back another step before we reach the primal and ultimate cause? How was it that the architect himself began to design and calculate? According to all experience, the architect moved because he was moved upon. He had been consulted. A purpose was unfolded to him, which purpose he was desired to further by *designing* a building suited to fulfil it.

We have, then, reached, as a result of a search into the origin of the building, a desire, a conception, a determination, of some man who has an object in view.

Before the dwelling was planned at all, some man was thinking of its desirableness, was calculating whether it was within his means, and finally had brought his will into play, and formed a determination that it should be done.

The ultimate cause, then, of this material thing before us is something that is *immaterial*, viz., the mind, purpose, and will of the projector.

It is obvious, and the more carefully we consider, the more we shall be impressed by it, that some such mental forces as have just been traced from origin to fulfilment, have been at work to produce everything which has been wrought out by the hand of man.

Here is a great railroad, spanning the continent. The time was, and that not long ago, when it was not. But the time was, and that not long ago, when the conception of it was a mental entity in the minds of certain men in the land. The germ of it was there as a mental force and form of activity. This enormous material entity, now one of the greatest forces in the world, was, for a considerable time, a dream, a hope, a desire, an ambition; agitated, discussed, controverted, in the realm of mental and political activity, until finally the cogitation became determination, and mental conception became embodied in what we see.

The origin of this vast railway was in the Mind. To trace it to its origin, we must pass from the realm of the material, and enter the realm of spiritual forces. Beyond this we cannot go, for we have reached a reasonable and sufficient first cause.

What was the origin of the swift steamers that are annihilating distance on the Atlantic? The thought and purpose of the owners. The steamers were there, first in desire, then in conception, and finally in will, before a line of the keel was laid.

How came those marvellous machines to be which, as they work, seem almost endowed with intelligence? They were invented, we say. The mind of a man of mechanical genius was at work in a conception of what might be. The idea was at length complete. Conception then became will, and the machine was fashioned according to the conception.

Thus, at whatever we look, in the shape of inanimate things of which the origin is absolutely known, we invariably find that it can be traced back to an originating and directing mind. **THE MIND OF MAN IS THE ORIGINAL CAUSE OF ALL THINGS THAT THE HAND OF MAN HAS FORMED.**

There is, however, another development of material things, the origin of each individual specimen of which is known, viz., that of plants, trees, and herbs that have been originated by man.

Let us illustrate—The dwelling before spoken of is surrounded by a lawn or farm. Round about the lawn are trees, shrubs, and plants. These all came to be where and what they are by reason of being planted, according to a conception or design, this shrub here, that tree there, of the owner or designer of the place. These were produced by setting in motion certain forces previously known, inherent in the plant, according to its kind, which forces, once set in motion, by seed or sapling, worked independently of the will of the originator towards the desired result, viz., diversified and beautiful grounds, with fruit trees, and trees for shade and ornament. The designing mind of the owner, working by means of natural living forces, produced this garden, even as the same designing mind had worked upon mere dead form of matter to produce the house.

If the house is that of a farmer, and the ground is covered with crops, the same influences have been at work, with the same result. What do these "crops" consist of? Take that field of wheat, as an example. It is composed of innumerable specimens of the wheat plant. Less than a year ago, this very piece of ground was bare. Not a single wheat plant was there. The field came to be what it is, and these millions of plants to be there, owing to a conception in the mind of the owner, viz., the desire for a crop of wheat, leading to an act of the will, resulting in his setting in motion well known forces of cereal plant life. The seeds on which he acted were susceptible of other uses, and would have been consumed and destroyed, but for the volition of the farmer.

This development, and all others of the same kind, resulting in the growth of inconceivable multitudes of specimens of plants which make up the crops of wheat, rice, sugar, tea, cotton, and what not, which go to sustain the life of the world, have taken their rise in the conceptions and volitions of multitudes of human beings, acting by means of forces not human, but evidently the outworking of marvellous intelligence and calculation.

ALL THINGS OF WHICH WE KNOW THE ORIGIN WITH ABSOLUTE CERTAINTY HAD THEIR ORIGIN IN MIND, AND THEY WERE CONNECTED IN MANY CASES WITH WHAT WE MUST INEVITABLY CONCLUDE TO HAVE BEEN FORCES, DESIGNED, CALCULATED, AND ACCOMPLISHED, BY A HIGHER MIND STILL.

OF THE OBSCURITIES AND APPARENT CONTRADICTIONS OF SCRIPTURE.

The obscurities that are found in Scripture are largely matters of the relative intelligence of the reader. To a man of little knowledge of things ancient or modern, who has had little experience of human nature and the ways of mankind, many things will seem obscure, that to a man of wider knowledge and larger experience will seem plain and intelligible. Indeed, the same things will appear to the same man obscure and hard to understand in his younger days, and easy enough to comprehend when his knowledge is enlarged.

Sometimes a difficulty is cleared up by comparing with a parallel passage; sometimes by considering if the translation may not be inaccurate, and obtaining information from a scholar; sometimes by considering differences of times, circumstances, and men's manners; and sometimes by considering that human nature, even in good men, is seldom wholly consistent.

With regard to numbers, say of an army, or of population, which give rise to many difficulties of comprehension, it is important to remember that in the transcription, and repetition of copies of numbers, it is almost certain that errors would arise when the letters of ancient languages signifying numbers were so much alike. While the original record was undoubtedly accurate and from an inspired source, we are nowhere taught that copyists were infallible. But it is to be noted that no saving truth, no truth involving the guidance of men in the way of life, is bound up with the accuracy of numbers.

With regard to statements that appear contradictory, many apparent contradictions will disappear on further examination, or on considering more strictly the meaning of the language, or the character and circumstances of the man, or the time.

Any difficulties that are found to be insoluble by any of these methods may wisely be left to be solved by larger knowledge. And any that relate to the ways, or judgments, or works of the Divine Being; any thing that is related of Him that appears inconsistent with the revelation of His justice, or His mercy, may very wisely be left to the larger judgment of a future time, being assured that what we know not now, we shall know hereafter, and that "THE JUDGE OF ALL THE EARTH MUST DO RIGHT."

AS TO THE WORD GENESIS.

The word translated Genesis signified in the Hebrew tongue "Beginning" or "Origin."

This book, therefore, might be called in our own language the Book of Origins. And very appropriately; for it gives an account of the origin of the Material Universe as a whole—the Heavens and the Earth; of the organized world in which we live, and the relation of the heavenly bodies to it; of the plants, grasses, and trees of the vegetable kingdom, and the birds, fishes, reptiles, and animals of animated nature. It gives also an account of the origin of Man and Woman, their place and work in the world, and their relation to all other animated beings; of marriage; of the division of time into days of work and rest, and the character of that rest; of the entrance of Evil into the world, and of a system and purpose of redemption from it. All this is found in the first two chapters.

But proceeding, we find reference to the first beginnings in the world of Mechanical Arts and Inventions, of Music and Poetry, of the two great divisions of Agricultural Employment, of Religious Rites and Sacrifices, of the Dispersion of men over the various regions of the globe, and the germs of the division into the Races that have ever since occupied it.

CHAPTER I.

THE ORIGIN OF THE HABITABLE WORLD.

GENESIS 1.

It is a fact most noticeable that in respect of what the world we live in *is*, and what is its capacity and power of service for mankind, there have been, for many ages, a continuous series of expanding practical discoveries; and in no age has the progress of discovery been more remarkable than in this nineteenth century of the Christian era. Investigation as to what the world can *do* for mankind has been rewarded beyond the imagination of the most speculative dreamer.

But investigation, which has looked backwards, and has concerned itself with the enquiry, how all things originally came to be, the search into the Origin of things, as distinguished from their nature and uses, has been in all ages simply profitless. As in the days of Greek philosophy, so in these present times, the investigator, after proceeding a certain distance, has invariably (apart from revelation) found himself involved in a mist which there was no penetrating. Every theory that was framed was found to involve difficulties that were insuperable, or contradictions that could not be reconciled.

The utmost point to which philosophic enquiry has reached points only to an hypothesis or theory, either that the Essential Substance of Matter was Eternal; or that the World was Eternal; or that, behind and beyond all, was some unknown and inconceivable Force respecting which it was vain to pursue enquiry. The first two are theories of various philosophic thinkers of ancient and modern times. The last is the conclusion of the agnostics of our own day.

None of these theories, however, will be found tenable on examination. That either Matter or the World have existed from eternity is impossible; for both bear evidence of calculation, of purpose, of will—qualities which are not inherent in either. The theory of the agnostic, that the Ultimate Force is unknowable, is contrary to human experience.

It is precisely when, and because, reason and philosophy are baffled that it might be reasonable to look for light

from another source. And in this we have the ground and reason of a Divine Unfolding—a revealing of that which cannot otherwise be found out.

Throughout the Divine Word this rule or principle evidently runs; the things that cannot be searched out by the reason of man are revealed; the things that man by the powers of his own reason is capable of discovering are left to him to search out.

The first revelation of the origin of all things is, therefore, not scientific. None of the natural laws that govern the world are revealed, for law is the method of operation; and method can be discovered.

It is that which is beyond the sphere of law, which relates to the ultimate force, to the source and origin of law itself,—this it is—the undiscoverable—that is revealed.

This revelation, made nearly four thousand years ago, has been made in such a way as to conform to two principles essential to any revelation: (1) That it shall be so made as to be capable of being understood; and that, in all ages, in all countries, and by all men. (2) That it shall be, in essential substance, true for all ages of coming time, and that, notwithstanding the progress of discovery.

The reticence of the Revelation is as remarkable as its breadth and comprehensiveness. Nothing is revealed of what might have been stated to satisfy the curiosity of mankind or the search after knowledge for its own sake.

What is revealed of Creation in this first chapter of the Book of Origins is simply made known as the foundation for what follows, viz., the relation between the Uncreated, Eternal, and All-powerful Originator, and that being who was created last of all, and who is capable of knowing and obeying him, viz., MAN.

It is doubtful if any revelation or any discovery of the origin of the world and the heavenly bodies governing it would have been of any practical value to mankind, so far as mere secular life is concerned. The whole realm of *practical* science is not indebted for a single item of discovery to speculations about origin.

What, then is the object? What is the end to be attained by it? The end to be attained is certainly of high importance, being no less than *the establishing a foundation for Divine Law in the sphere of Human Conduct!*

He who created man, and created and developed the world for his habitation, and its productions for his food, clothing and sustenance—He obviously has the right to direct and control him. That must be accepted as an axiom.

The Creator of man's bodily frame, of the ultimate matter of which it is composed, of the powers and developments of matter in earth and heaven; He who formed the land and sea, with all that in them is, and gave them to the children of men for use and habitation; He it is who claims homage and affection. And His claim is reasonable. The understanding of man instinctively acquiesces in it. Hence it is, that a revelation containing commands and requirements from the Supreme Ruler, begins by an unfolding of the truth that the Supreme Ruler was the ALL-POWERFUL ORIGINATOR.

It is in the light of these great principles that such a Revelation as that of the first chapter of the Book, Genesis, must be considered. And that which is most noticeable therein is that it is a *Revelation of the Divinity in relation to Man*.

There is no preliminary affirmation of the existence, the attributes, the character, of the Supreme. For the Divine Being, in essence, is beyond the thought of man to conceive. *Who, by searching, can find out the Almighty to perfection?* But the Supreme, in relation to Man, is conceivable in an absolute and perfect sense. He is conceivable through the powers and faculties in which men are like him. Men are themselves originators. They design, and conceive, and order, and make. They govern, control and direct. They can, therefore, comprehend One who is revealed as originating, making, and ordering a material world. They can conceive perfectly of One who commands and directs a race of beings who, in essential character, have much in common with Himself.

The Revelation, therefore, after a general affirmation of the creation of the heavens and the earth, passes by the whole material universe and concentrates itself upon the one world which is for the abode of man.

Any reference to the heavenly bodies, and the great universe beyond, is not as to what they are in themselves, but what they are *in relation to the earth and to man* as the being for whom the earth was created and endowed.

OF THE CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT OF THE EARTH FOR THE SERVICE OF MAN.

The Creation and Preparation of the earth, beginning with that which is unorganized and formless, is represented as proceeding by successive stages, in regular order,

through certain periods of duration; from rudimentary organization, to that perfectly organized condition in which alone it was suitable for the habitation and development of a creature like man. And the heavenly bodies, whose action is essential to human life, are placed with their powers in such relation to the earth that they not only give light and heat, but by their movements are signs and marks by which human time is measured and all human affairs are regulated.

Unorganized matter, formless, dark, and void, having been called into existence, the first step in the bringing order out of chaos is the creation of LIGHT. God said—Let light be, and it was. The second, the separation of the atmosphere, and the region of clouds, winds, mist, and rain, from the gradually solidifying mass of the earth. God said—Let it be, and it was so. The third, the separation of the dry land from the waters on the earth's surface. God said—Let it be, and it was. And now that the great divisions of the earth begin to assume shape,—the seas retreating to their bounds, the river systems assuming orderly formation—God for the first time pronounces the work Good!

The next step is the development of productive power in the earth's soil. For the revelation is not that God created the grass, the reproductive herb, and seed-bearing fruit tree, but that He stamped *productive power* upon the earth itself. So the earth became a producer, and has so continued to this day. This was the beginning of LIFE; and it also was pronounced Good. But the life was unconscious. These various plants, trees and herbs had no power of motion. Neither have they to this day. The fifth step is, not to *create* the Sun, the Moon and the Stars, as many have supposed (for their *creation* is related in the first verse), but to perfect the relation of these bodies of the earth so that they shall give light; that the order of the seasons shall begin, with the regular procession of days, months and years—all which arise from the orderly motion of these heavenly bodies, and the earth's relation to them.

And here let it be noted that, though the roots and foundation of all physical science thus far have been touched, not a glimpse of scientific knowledge has been conveyed. Of Chemistry, Astronomy, Meteorology, Hydrostatics, Pneumatics, Botany, as sciences—not one word.

For it is evident that any Divine revelation as to these would have been entirely unintelligible unless accompanied by a revelation of all those elements of science which lie at the foundation, not only of discovery, but of a comprehension of what is discovered. It would have been vain

to reveal these, unless mathematical and geometric science had been revealed at the same time. That would have been practically impossible.

But to proceed. The Earth being endowed with power to produce the grasses, herbs, and fruits that are necessary to the sustenance of the next higher development of life, and the relation of the heavenly bodies to the earth being settled on a lasting foundation, the Divine word goes forth to the organization of the swarming multitudes that find their habitation in the water and in the air. These are all endowed not only with life, but with Consciousness and the power of Motion. Here, the word *abundantly* is used, indicating vast multitudes or swarms, both in water and air.

Thus, as we noticed in the last manifestation the beginning of life, but a life unconscious and fixed, so, following with reverence and awe the orderly steps of the Originating Power, we now see the first beginnings of Consciousness and power of Motion. From great sea-monsters and huge winged fowl, to the tiniest invisible insect, and the smallest bird of the air, all these are conscious of their own life, and all can move at will, some of the smaller ones with an inconceivable force and rapidity, in the sphere of their capacity.

And now that creatures endued with consciousness are originated, the Supreme Creator reveals, for the first time, another manifestation of Himself.

All this time we have, as a great astronomer once said, been "thinking the thoughts of God after Him," and have seen the marvels of Originating Power and Wisdom, the workings of an infinite Mind, in whom must have existed all the developments of mathematical, geometric and astronomic calculation. The great Mathematician, the great Geometer, the great Astronomer, be it said with all reverence, has been working before us, and producing these marvels. But they all might have been the outworkings of one whose attributes ended in mere force and calculation. They might—but they did not.

When the creatures endowed with consciousness appeared, then appeared with them, and never before, the attribute of Goodwill, or, in its Latin form, Benevolence. God gave BLESSING to all these creatures, to enjoy, in consciousness, a happiness such as they are capable of, and after their kind. The directing word also went forth,—Let them reproduce their kind, and fill the whole realm of the air and the waters. And it was so. And these also were pronounced Good.

The next step was to endow the earth with power to originate living creatures of various orders who are to find

their habitation upon it, such as cannot live in the waters, and cannot fly in the air. There is here distinction, such as corresponds with what has always existed on the earth, between the creatures that are attached directly to the service of man (in the preparation of food, the cultivation of the ground, and in travelling over the earth), and those other creatures of various orders, some of them four-footed, some many-footed, whose existence is bounded by themselves, or has relation only indirectly to the service of mankind. The former are evidently designated by the generic word "cattle" (and the Hebrew word suggests it) and are all of a higher order of consciousness. They are susceptible of discipline; in them are the rudiments of understanding, that is, just so much understanding as makes them capable of service to man. They can know their own names, understand directions and commands, and distinguish between their owners and other persons. And these also were pronounced Good.

Thus, then, there has been originated:—

A world forming part of a general system of material things, fitted for the dwelling of a creature like Man, by being endowed with productive capacity for all his needs, and filled with creatures whose lot is generally subservient to his own.

The next step in the development of creative power is the origination of the Being who is to be the crown and sum of the whole. This is treated of in a subsequent chapter; meanwhile, what can we say, if we rightly comprehend what has taken place thus far—but that Creation is marvellous beyond imagination, and reflects a glory inconceivable upon Him who conceived and called it into being.

NOTES CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY.

AS TO THE NAME OF THE DIVINE BEING.

One of the first requisites to a true appreciation of Scriptural narrative is an understanding of the meaning of the Hebrew words signifying the Divine Being. The English translation is defective in not indicating differences between these words, for, when examined, there is seen to be a singular accuracy in the manner in which they are used. A consideration of this would have prevented some vain theorizing. Part of the so-called higher criticism is little better than a "darkening of counsel by words without knowledge" by reason of its ignoring the *reason why* one term is employed in one place and another in another, as the sacred writer was referring to the Supreme Being as the Creator, or as the Moral Governor, or as the Everlastingly Existing, or as the Being who enters into covenant with mankind.

In this chapter the word employed is ELOHIM (translated simply GOD), but which really signifies the MIGHTY ONE, a term most natural when the operations of supreme creative power are revealed.

It is noticeable that the word is plural, and yet that the action is that of one Supreme being. The declaration is also noteworthy that the SPIRIT OF GOD moved on, or rather (as a better translation would give) *brooded over* the waters. All this, as is common throughout the Old Testament, is but a dim shadowing forth of things that were only perfectly revealed long ages afterwards, viz., the Plurality in Unity of the Divine Being.

AS TO THE PROCESSES OF CREATION.

The processes described in the first chapter are a creation or a forming *from nothing* by the simple action of a Divine will. This is the meaning of the Hebrew word "*Bara*," the word used in the first verse and translated "created." The world is not represented as being made, as some men ignorantly affirm, as a carpenter frames a bridge, or a builder a house, that is, out of materials previously existing. This book of Origins brings us face to face with that ultimate force, the Will of the Eternal. The method of its operation is, "Let it be," and it is. And this is so, notwithstanding that long periods of what we call

time may be occupied. There is always the operation of the Divine "Let it be" until the ultimate end of the operation is reached, it may be after lapse of ages. There are many confirmatory passages in the Divine Word as to this. Thus:

By the Word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all the host of them *by the Breath of His Mouth.*—Psalm 33: 6.

This is not the way in which a Carpenter works.

"He *spoke* and it was done."—Psalm 33: 9.

"He *hath* *hanged* the earth upon nothing."—Job 26: 7. (A dim foreshadowing of the truth of the earth's position, not to be scientifically discovered for thousands of years afterwards.)

"Through faith, we understand that the Material Universe was framed *by the word of God*,—the phenomena of nature were *not formed from things that can be seen.*"—Hebrews 11: 2. (This is a literal translation of this pregnant passage.)

It is to be noted here that the Apostle Paul, writing by the Holy Ghost, nevertheless writes as one acquainted with the profound speculations of Greek philosophy as to the origin of the world. The word "Aionos," which he employs to designate the "world" or "universe," means also ages or epochs of time. So the Divine Spirit seems to anticipate the idea of vast periods of time being occupied in the process of preparing the earth for human habitation.

The same Apostle Paul, writing by the Spirit, respecting the Divine Son of God, as taking part in creation, does so in these profound terms:

"For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions, or principalities or powers." Col. I. 16.

Here the mind is carried far beyond the outward forms and phenomena of the visible world, to the *forces* and *powers* that are behind all phenomena and that are the moving cause of them; they themselves being the creation of Him who is "before all things" and "by whom all things 'consist'" or are held in constituted and continuous being.

AS TO THE PERIODS OF TIME DESIGNATED DAYS.

The word Day may as naturally signify a definite period, era, or epoch—in the ages previous to man—as the period of time which we call day, and which is measured by a single revolution of the earth on its axis. For time, in

the absence of a definite mode of measure, is nothing but a mode of thought—a series of phenomena of consciousness. As there was no man whose consciousness was the subject of the phenomena, the “day” might be what man would have called a thousand years, or ten thousand, or ten millions; for to the Divine Mind, all time is now. There is no succession, no period, no measurement. One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

Nevertheless, in writing what is to convey intelligence, terms must be used which are intelligible. And of all words indicating time, the word day is at once the most simple and the most profound. It may signify either the period during which the earth makes one revolution on its axis, or a period of indefinite length during which a given course of operations is proceeding.

Speaking accurately, indeed, there is no time when there is no being (except the Infinite and Eternal) who is conscious of it, and, even then, when there is nothing by which to measure it. For, in the latter case, time must be measured by sensation. It is a well-known fact that when measured by sensation, the same period of time may seem to vary almost indefinitely from very long to very short, according to the character of the sensation. We all know how, when travelling from home, and multitudes of new objects give rise to multitudes of new sensations, it seems, after a few days have elapsed, as if we had been abroad from home for weeks, or even months. One can conceive, indeed, that sensation and consciousness might be so heightened, that a day might seem as long as a year, and if a year, then, by a still further quickening and heightening, a hundred years, or a thousand.

AS TO GEOLOGIC FORMATIONS.

The process described in verses 9 and 10, viz., the separation of the land from the water, is one which admits of indefinite changes, modifications, upheavals, eruptions, and all other phenomena that might be necessary to bring the continents and islands of the earth, with their mountains, valleys, and plains, to the condition in which there could be either vegetable or animal life on them.

The formation of most of the great continents of the globe, with their river and lake systems, and of some of the islands of the sea, and notably the British Islands, exhibit clearly, even in these modern ages, the action of enormous watery forces, of strength and velocity inconceivable. And the whole surface of the earth, in the chaotic period indicated in the second verse, being covered with

water, the process described in a few words in the ninth verse must have been one of Upheaval on the one side and Depression on the other. These upheavals may, some of them, have been slow, and some violent. The upheaval of the land above the waters here would cause corresponding deep depressions there, with the rushing of waters on a scale of magnitude and force utterly unknown in the ages of man's existence on the earth, but of which some shadow of an idea may be formed by those who have witnessed the action of water on the bursting of a great reservoir. The action of vast masses of rushing water of inconceivable force is to be seen in the rounding of the Gulf of Mexico, in the shape of the Eastern coast of the United States, of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, of the Eastern coast of the United Kingdom, and of many other parts of the globe. It is doubtful, indeed, if the great currents of the ocean, such as the Gulf Stream and the Arctic Current, are not the remains, by gradual subsidence extending over thousands of years, of the currents which once swept over the globe, and which, along with volcanic and up-heaving forces, determined the form of the continents and islands of the globe as it now subsists.

The same forces which would operate to cause these inconceivable rushings of waters, would operate also on the surface of the earth, upheaving, depressing, compressing, outspreading:—forming, in process of what we call time (for want of a better expression) the mountain chains, hill formations, valleys, and plains of the earth. And the action of the waters after the great bed of the sea had been formed would naturally give rise to the river systems of the globe. The whole of the river valleys of the globe present the same appearance of natural formation that a limited area of the earth's surface does on the subsidence of a flood. There is the same cutting down of a deep central channel, the same formation of lateral channels, the same cutting away of the earth by the swirling and rushing of revolving currents, the same spreading out and formation of alluvial levels as the ultimate waters are reached. It does not require a very vivid imagination for one who has seen the operation of a great river flood and its subsidence, to trace out the operation of the mighty forces described in the ninth verse, in the formation of the valleys of the St. Lawrence and the Mississippi in the New World, and the Ganges, the Danube, the Rhine, and the Volga in the Old. The gathering of the waters into one place, and the rising up and appearance of the dry land, would be accomplished by the rising up of mountain chains, corresponding with the depression of the bed of the sea, and of the river valleys of the whole globe. A proper

translation of that sublime Psalm of Creation and Providence—the 104th—gives, in a few words, the great work in process and accomplishment. "Thou coveredst the earth with the deep as a garment. The waters stood above the mountains. At Thy rebuke they fled; at the voice of Thy thunder they hastened away. *The mountains ascend, the valleys descend, to the place which Thou hast founded for them.*"

It is evident, moreover, in all the mountainous and hilly regions of the earth, that forces of inconceivable violence and magnitude were once at work on the globe, of a kind altogether different from anything ordinarily prevalent during the ages of man's abode of the earth. The remains of these forces in the present period of restraint and subsidence are to be seen in the action of occasional earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. The violent upheavals which resulted in an entire change in the conformation of a whole district in New Zealand about the year 1885, are, on a very small scale, of the same nature as those by which, in the ages anterior to man, the surface of the earth was formed as mankind have known it.

This period of violent upheavals and depressions, of the action of violent heat and extreme cold, of outspreadings and subsidences, of the formation of valleys and plains and hillsides, was necessarily anterior to the development of the earth as a productive power. Consequently, it is not until the earth has assumed a sufficiently settled form, as indicated in verse 10, that the production of grasses, herbs and plant life, and subsequently of all forms of moving life, was called forth by the Divine fiat. Yet this by no means implies that the era of extraordinary change and preparation was entirely to cease, for the process of preparation might be going on simultaneously with a certain degree both of plant and animal development; that is, such preparation as did not consist in such violent disturbances of land and water as would be inconsistent either with the development of plants or animals.

The traces of vegetable and animal life found in earlier rock formations are evidently such forms as could subsist while the process of preparation was not yet complete, but were after the great first movement described in verse 9.

But the process of preparation must have been sufficiently complete before the creation and placing of so highly organized, sensitive, and naturally defenceless creature as man upon the earth. And all things observable, on the earth and the waters, indicate that this was so.

OF THE DISTRIBUTION OF LAND AND WATER.

The areas of the globe occupied by land and by water respectively have plainly been matters of Mathematical Adjustment and Calculation; calculated indeed as strictly as the water supply of a city or of a factory is estimated. There has been the nicest adjustment here of means to ends, so that the area of water shall give off that exact amount of moisture which will ensure a sufficient rainfall and water supply, and replenishment of springs and rivers for the service of mankind and animated creatures, as well as the sustenance of vegetable life.

One might ask, in simplicity, why there is so much of sea on the surface of the globe? Let us suppose the relative areas of land and water so changed that there would be far more land, and less of water. Is it not evident, in that case, that the rivers of the earth would shrink, that springs would dry up, that water supply by wells would diminish, that the rainfall would be curtailed; the effect being a very large cessation of vegetable and plant life, and the turning of large tracts of productive territory into waterless desert?

No. The whole matter was designed in the depths of infinite wisdom, and designed *mathematically*.

But if mathematically, who was the Mathematician?

If by calculation, who was the Calculator?

A full and careful consideration of this great subject will lead to the settled conclusion that the successive developments of the formation of the earth must, of necessity, have been, in substance, such as are described in this first chapter of the Mosaic Record, and specially that a MIND of infinite capacity in designing, calculating, and executing, was at work "from the beginning," giving embodiment and form to conceptions and designs that have been partially revealed, but of which the fullness is beyond our thoughts.

CHAPTER II.

THE CREATION OF MAN.

When the narrative of creation has reached the period when the habitable world is settled in its place and formation, and is replenished with animals and plants, a marked change occurs in the style of the narrative.

There is a pause, and what seems (with all reverence be it spoken) like a consultation. What is now about to be done is of a different order from what has been done. The narrative represents the Divine Being as saying "LET US make Man!"

Evidently a being of higher order is to be now originated; how high, and how much higher than all that has gone before is indicated in a few pregnant phrases.

This being is to be made:

1st.—In the Image and after the Likeness of the Creator.

2nd.—He is to have Dominion over the creatures that have been made to inhabit the earth, the air, and the sea.

3rd.—His destiny and avocation are declared to be

(1.) To multiply and spread over the earth.

(2.) To *subdue* the earth itself to his own use.

(3.) To subdue and make subservient the creatures that inhabit it.

(4.) To cultivate for purposes of food all seed-bearing plants and herbs, and all fruit-bearing trees.

In the second chapter there are further revelations:—

Verse 7.—Man is formed, an aggregation of particles of matter, here called "Dust."* His bodily frame is as purely material as that of any animal, fish, bird, or herb, and is subject to all material laws. Wonderful as it is, the conformation of his bodily frame—and that of the lowest savage is as wonderful as that of the most intellectual man—is yet but the conformation of material atoms. It is of the earth, earthy. Marvellous—and appreciated best as marvellous by those who know it best—it is yet material. But this only heightens our conception of the marvellous things that matter is capable of. The bodily frame of man, beyond all reasonable doubt, is the highest manifes-

NOTE.—The true translation of verse 7, Chapter ii., is this:—
The Lord formed man—(not of dust, but)—dust of the ground.

tation of the capabilities of matter. When we think of the powers and capacity of the human *hand*, the human *eye*, the human organs of *speech*, with the rest of the structure, of bones, muscles, nerves, arteries, and the organs sustaining life, we are constrained to say—not only, I am wonderfully, but *fearfully* made. For certainly, a consideration of the wonders of the bodily frame of man does produce, as it proceeds deeper and deeper, a sentiment of awe, as if in the very presence of Almighty Wisdom and Power.

Into this bodily frame was breathed the Spirit of LIFE, specially and in a manner distinct from that of the life of other animated creatures. Man became a living soul. (There is, however, no special significance in the word soul, for it is used of all other animate beings). What the Spirit of Life was, that was breathed into man, must be learned from the capacities before referred to. These are, in general, the capacity to rule animated creatures, the capacity to subdue the productive forces of the earth, the capacity to spread over the surface of the globe. All this corresponds to all that is known of mankind in the present age, in all countries, and in all stages of development, and also to all that has ever been known of mankind, in any former age, no matter how remote, in any country, and in any condition, whether civilized or rude, from the very beginning of any kind of chronicle down to the present.

Putting aside, for the moment, any moral or spiritual development in the nature of man, let us briefly pass the foregoing under review:—

Man is stated to have been originally created with a capacity to rule over all orders of beings on the face of the earth. Men, as we know mankind, are greatly inferior in bodily strength and swiftness to many orders of animated creatures, and all evidence points to its having been always so. Yet it is a matter of equal certainty that men in these days, and in all countries, do, as a matter of fact—rule over and make subservient the creatures who are enormously superior in strength. The horse, the ox, the camel, and even a creature of such prodigious force as the elephant—these are all under the direct government of man. The wild and fierce animals of the forest and the jungle are equally under his mastery. The instinct which prompts the hunting of the lion in Africa and the tiger in India is in the very constitution of man as he is described in this book of Origins. The great reptiles and sea monsters, also are made subject; and so they are.

It is not civilized man only, but savage and ignorant races that bring the lower creatures into subjection. They are hunters and fishers wherever found. In fact, in the

arts and strategies necessary for the purpose, the savage man is often superior to the civilized. The most degraded Hottentot, the most savage cannibal, is at all times a man bringing into subjection the tribes of animals, birds, and fishes around him.

This primeval instinct of rule has developed within man an accompanying and necessary power of fashioning implements, weapons, harness, and of searching until search ended in invention, of all instruments necessary for his purpose.

The human brain to devise weapons, and the human hand to use them, gives to man his power to rule.

The command however, to *subdue the earth itself* is of a more far-reaching character. This command, in one single word, opens up a sphere of the widest extent. It contains within it the germ of all arts, sciences, discoveries, inventions, from the earliest ages. And its scope is far from being exhausted even now. Even in these days of astonishing development of those powers of the earth which have been subdued to the purposes of mankind, we may be only on the threshold of what may be discovered hereafter. All agriculture, all reclamation of wastes, all clearing of forests, all manufactures, all mining, all utilizing of electrical force, and of innumerable mechanical inventions, are but the carrying out of this command—a command which carried with it the power to execute it. When men are making harbors for ships, and opening river channels, lighting up coasts by lighthouses; when they are cutting down trees and building ships; when they are smelting iron, and refining silver; when they are cultivating tropical plants and fruits; when they are extracting that wonderful product, coal; when they are making roads, building bridges, and spanning continents with a band of iron and steel, they are simply fulfilling the command given to the very first inhabitant of the world—to *subdue the earth*.

The command to *multiply and replenish the earth* points to the institution of Marriage, and to the spreading abroad of the human race over all the habitable regions of the world. For, contrary to the nature of nearly all other creatures, man has the power to sustain himself alike in all regions and climates of the globe.

The command to replenish the earth is only partially accomplished even now, six thousand years after it was first given.

The power to subdue the lower animals and the earth itself was necessary to the fulfillment of the work of spreading abroad over the surface of the globe. The animals that assist mankind in journeying, and in bearing the necessary burdens of transmigration, the boats for navigat-

ing rivers, and ships for the seas, the roads that enable journeys to be performed from one region to another—all are part of a scheme of agencies and appliances for the accomplishment of this object. All have been made tributary to the service of man, and the power of *making* them tributary was given with the command to replenish and subdue.

Finally, of natural powers and capacities, we find that of caring for and making use of the Plants, trees and herbs that grow upon the face of the earth. The arts of Agriculture and Horticulture, of planting, developing, and tending the fields, gardens, orchards, farms, plantations of the world are wrapped up in this one sentence. The fruits of both tropical and temperate climes are here placed at the service and under the control of man. And wonderfully have his faculties been drawn out in the process of making them subservient, according to the original intention.

Thus far we have seen the development of one set of particulars of that Divine Image in which Man is declared to be created.

That man, like his Creator, is, and always has been, a designer, a contriver, a ruler; that he can look forward to an end to be accomplished, and fashion the means necessary to bring it about; that he has faculty and insight qualifying him to rule in the world; this is indisputable. And in this we see a part of the Image of Him who is the Supreme Designer, Builder, and Ruler of the whole Universe. But the image and likeness of the Supreme implies more than this.

That man has an intellectual nature and capacity beyond what has been indicated hitherto cannot be reasonably gainsaid. He is more than a builder, engineer, road-maker; more than a cultivator, mariner, and fisherman; more than a hunter and tamer of wild beasts, of the wilderness of nature, and of the waters. This is simply matter of fact. Man can lift himself above his surroundings. He can recall the past, and dwell upon it; put on record its doings and sayings. He is capable of reasoning upon them, and so considering them as to frame rules, mottoes, courses for guidance of conduct. He can also anticipate the future by imagination, and carve out ideals beyond the bare actualities and prosaics of daily existence. He can sing, and play on instruments, and has developed capacity for music and musical execution; he can compose poetry, or, when he cannot compose, he has the capacity to be moved by it and carried away beyond and above himself and all present pressure of life. He can develop art, in sculpture and painting, and rise to the loftiest conceptions of ideal existence through it.

That man has done all this is plain; that he must have had the capacity for all this in his very origin is equally plain. And that the ultimate reason of all this must be sought in the Supreme Originator is plain also. "He that formed the eye, shall He not see? He that giveth man knowledge, shall not He know?" Psalm XCIV.

He that gave man capacity for poetry, art, imagination; He who enabled man to reason out consequences from causes—has He not reason, and fancy, and imagination?

Man can not only exercise capacity for mastery over the world he lives in, but has come to understand the whole system of the universe. And to this he was naturally led by the mandate commanding him to replenish and subdue the earth; for this led to observation and reflection on times and seasons as affected by the movements of the heavenly bodies, and on the laws and reasons of those movements, and the nature and powers of the heavenly bodies themselves. In all this he was developing the power of following the counsels and thoughts of the Supreme Originator and Governor of all things; of Him who stamped on them those wonderful laws of orderly motion which move to awe and worship.

All the foregoing might be true and yet leave man but of a very high order of developed animalism. He might, with all this, be a being devoid of any sense of justice and righteousness, or love and kindness, of truth and honor, of mercy and care. Still less, of any knowledge of or appreciation of the great Supreme. But he has not been so constituted. The Divine Image, in that which must be considered to be its perfect manifestation, is a moral and spiritual endowment, rendering him capable of understanding, reverencing and loving his Creator, and of acting righteously, truthfully, honorably, and mercifully towards men.

And as his ordinary and animal life which he shares with all animated beings is accompanied by consciousness and is exercised at all times in consciousness, so this moral and spiritual faculty, moral in reference to man, and spiritual in reference to God, is accompanied by the faculty of Conscience, which is nothing more than consciousness in reference to moral and spiritual things. Conscience in man is the moral sense, and is the faculty of discernment of right and wrong, not by an intellectual process, but directly and by intuition; just as consciousness is moved as to physical pain or pleasure not by thinking, but by feeling.

Thus, then, was man represented in this Book of Genesis to be constituted: Last and chief of a series of animated beings; with a higher and finer physical organization than any, yet essentially composed of matter like them all. Endowed with the instinct and capacity of dominion and rule over all animated creatures. Capable by mental and bodily endowment of bringing all the capacities of the earth itself into subjection. Also of spreading himself over the whole earth, and living under any of its climatic conditions. Further, man being created in the image of Him that created him, he had the power of designing and originating; of understanding the operation of means, and how to frame them to certain ends; of bringing to pass that which has been conceived and designed; the power of self-knowledge also; of knowledge and consciousness of the past and the distant; of that which is above and beyond the earth, as well as of anticipating and providing for the future; the power of idealizing, and of imagination, of creating in conception things above and beyond that which is actual.

But above all this: The Divine Image involves moral and spiritual consciousness, the discernment of the Creator Himself, and the power of communion with Him, as like communes with like; and the power of loving, honoring, and consciously obeying Him, and of consciously understanding right, truth, and goodness as towards creatures of his own kind.

This is Man, as represented in the first chapter of this Book of Origins, and all that we know, or have ever known, of mankind, in any age or country, or in any condition of development, rude or civilized, corresponds to it.

NOTES CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY.

1.—The absurd criticism, that man is represented as being formed of the dust of the ground, in like manner as a sculptor makes a model out of clay, is dispelled at once by attention to the actual words of the narrative. There we read that man was formed "Dust of the ground," the word "of" not being part of the original text. However the will of the Supreme might operate in his creation and formation, the bodily and physical frame of man was material, the word "dust" simply signifying those inconceivably minute particles of matter which, when gathered together, become visible, and which are the foundation of all the infinite variety of material forms.

AS TO MAN BEING THE RESULT OF A PROCESS OF EVOLUTION.

There is no contradiction between the fundamental idea of Evolution and Creation. For if any given product of evolution, be it man, animal, or tree, came to be what it is by a process of gradual development from a simple organism to one more complex, and by a process of differentiation to higher and higher forms of complexity until the highest form possible is reached, there must have been created in the simple organism a capacity, or faculty, or power of such development. Now, the creation, or organization of this faculty is potentially the creation of the thing itself.

No mysticism in the use of such words as differentiation, natural selection, survival of the fittest, and such like can prevent this being seen when rationally considered. The acorn develops into the oak, under regulated conditions of soil, light, and atmosphere. But it was created so to be. This particular *power* of development is the work of the Being who caused the acorn to be. The very process of development or evolution is itself a creation moment by moment. And, in truth, it is more wonderful, when truly apprehended, than a simply springing into full maturity of life, of a man or tree by a simple fiat.

When a manufacturer of a piece of work in silk or cotton says to a bystander, "This is of my making," he would not the less be considered as its maker if it were shown

that he never touched it, but only designed one or more machines by whose operation it came to be. Nay, the conception and construction of the machine would be considered a more marvellous thing than the fashioning of the product by handiwork. Similarly, the creation of such a wonderful machine as evolution or development, would be as marvellous as would be the simple calling into full being the perfected product, be it man, animal, or tree.

It is, however, more probable that the first man was created a perfectly organized creature by a single act of creative power and will, than that his formation was the result of a series of gradual processes.

Yet either of these would be conformable to the narrative.

CHAPTER III.

OF MAN AS MALE AND FEMALE.

Genesis I., 27.—So God created man in His own Image, Male and female created He them.

Genesis II., 18 to 25.—The Lord God said, "It is not good for man to be alone. I will make him an helpmeet for him."

There has been supposed to be an inconsistency between these two narratives, and the difference has helped to suggest the notion of a divided authorship of the book called by the name of Moses.

But in truth, there is no inconsistency, and no foundation herein for fanciful theories of a dual or multiple authorship.

The narrative follows a course which is very commonly found with all who have a story to unfold; that is, there is first a broad general statement, and then an opening out of particulars. Thus, in a narrative of the campaigns of the Duke of Wellington, it would be natural to introduce them by a concise summary, and say, "This famous captain at the outset of his career gained several victories over the armies of Indian princes; he then made the remarkable Peninsular campaign, in which he overthrew one after another of the great Marshals of Napoleon, finally ending by overthrowing Napoleon himself on the field of Waterloo." After this, in successive chapters, the detailed history of these events might be given. That this is an ordinary procedure in writing history, or biography, every one who is familiar with literature is well aware. Much of this is accordingly to be found in the narrative of the Old Testament; not in this narrative only, but in those of subsequent times and events.

Putting aside then, as of no practical interest, mere literary speculations, let us proceed to the substance of the narrative itself.

As to the fact of the first formation: the first two were created, as are all other animated beings, male and female.

But one male and one female.

The manner of creation of the female is singular. Yet, singular as it is, it is full of profound meaning, which opens out the more it is reflected upon.

1.—The relation between the man and the woman is not to be merely a physical one, for the purpose of continuation of the species, as is the case with other animated creatures, but a relation of *companionship*. Both are created in the Divine image! The woman as well as the man, has the faculty of rule over the creation, has intelligence, design, imagination, moral consciousness, spiritual apprehension. She is created a companion. Introductory to her creation, a great fundamental truth is enunciated, of far-reaching effect, applicable to man in all countries, ages and conditions, viz., v. 18, "*It is not good for man to be alone. I will make him an helpmeet for him.*" And this has reference, not to male companionship (for man of necessity will not be separate from men) but to female. The being, therefore, through whom the race is to be continued, is so created as to be a companion and a help, suitable to his condition and circumstances. She is to live with him, and to be of service; a condition or position admitting of an infinite variety of adaptations, but all bearing on the same end.

But the details of the narrative of the creation of the first woman are full of practical significance. That they have furnished matter for ridicule is well known. That even devout and faithful souls have stumbled at the narrative is well known also. But this narrative, like much else in the narrative of the Divine ways as revealed in Scripture, when carefully looked at, is found to have nothing unreasonable in it; nay, it is seen to be conformable to the highest wisdom.

The LORD GOD caused a deep sleep to fall upon the first man, and took one of his ribs, and from this rib he made the female man. This sleep was evidently supernatural.

1.—Now, upon this narrative, it is pertinent to say that we know nothing, and can know nothing, apart from knowledge divine communicated, of the *method* by which anything whatever was created.

2.—That the creation of the first female man was in this manner is certainly not impossible.

3.—Of the abstract reasonableness, or otherwise, of this particular mode of creation, we certainly are not competent to judge. But we are competent to judge as to whether the reasoning of the first man upon the matter was wise and suitable to the occasion.

This mode of creating woman out of a part of his own body led to the first exercise of the reasoning faculty in the history of man, viz., in this manner—If this being, now brought to me, was formed from myself, then she and I are one; she is "*Bone of my bone.*" and "*Flesh of my flesh.*"

And the reasoning must strike every man and woman as sound. This man and this woman were one, as marriage now makes the man and woman one. And so the narrative goes on to say, by way of comment, what has been at the root of the marriage relation in all time, viz., that a man shall, in marriage, leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be not one soul merely) but one flesh.

This language, still prescribed in the marriage ordinance, goes back to the very origin of woman. She was created out of a part of the bodily structure of man, the part nearest to his *heart*. This book of Origins, therefore, places the woman as the last and ultimate creation. And as all creation was by a continuous process of advancement, the physical frame of woman and her moral and spiritual endowment must be considered the highest development of creative power and wisdom.

This suggestive narrative goes to the root of the matter of the true relation of man to woman, everywhere and always.

1.—Woman is not a creature of an inferior order, as she is almost universally conceived of in false religious systems and in corruptions of the true. Even in Mohammedanism, woman is always conceived of as a being of an inferior order. But in this narrative she is "bone of man's bone, and flesh of man's flesh."

2.—One woman for one man. Plurality of wives, and the keeping of concubines, were developments of a fallen and corrupted condition, allowed for a time, in some, because of that very corruption. But the great Teacher testified that *from the beginning* it was not so!

3.—The woman was to be a companion to man, and not independent. She was to keep him company, as it was not good for man to be alone. Yet she was to be a helpmeet, and her physical frame—which was doubtless from the beginning as it is now—and her special mental aptitudes, sufficiently indicate that her sphere was with the house which was their mutual abode, with the nursing and training of children, with the care of the sick, and with those offices of society and varied usefulness, which she can perform better than the man. Thus, as the first Man and the first Woman, this pair, in whom dwelt perfect innocence, both having the image of their Creator, and having capacity to rule the world, and to spread themselves over it, began that course of human history which has had so many strange developments as time rolled on.

CRITICAL NOTES.

Objection has been made to the narrative of the taking one rib from man to form the woman, from the fact that the ribs of man are symmetrical, and not defective. But in that era of supernatural occurrences, at the beginning, the rib might have been replaced by another, and so the body made perfect. The narrative does not mention this, but this by no means involves the conclusion that it was not so. Or, the body of the first man might have continued in this imperfect condition without any necessity that his descendants should inherit that imperfection. It is, however, vain to speculate. We have already seen that the mode of the creation of the woman, while neither impossible or unreasonable, was fraught with deep physical and moral significance. There the narrative must be left, for it would make us no wiser to tell of the manner in which the bodily frame of the man was subsequently restored, or whether it was restored, in the case of the first man, at all.

That the foregoing conception of the proper sphere of the man and the woman respectively is true, is shown by the universal instincts which have been implanted in them, from the moment they each begin to act consciously as of themselves. Everywhere and in all conditions of the human race, we find the child girl, without tuition or example, naturally showing a fondness or inclination for dolls. The interest of the young girl is drawn out to her doll, as if it was a living child. Her heart goes out to it, she has all the interest in it that a mature woman has in the child that is born to her. Nature, another name for the Almighty Creator, has stamped this instinct upon every girl that is born into the world; evidently that, whether with or without a will that may have subsequently been influenced by training, there may be deep down in woman's nature, the instinct of care for offspring. But with the child boy it is absolutely different. No boy ever cares for dolls. His interest is for tools, for a trumpet, for a whip. Deep down in the instinctive nature of the future man is the love of rule over animals, the love of labour by the hands, and the love of war.

CHAPTER IV.

OF THE ORIGINAL CONDITION OF MAN IN THE WORLD, AND OF THE LOCALITY IN WHICH HE WAS PLACED BY THE CREATOR.

Genesis II.—In the first chapter of Genesis we have a rapid and comprehensive summary of the gradual development, under a creative will, of the earth and all that is in it, and of the Heavenly Bodies, so far as they have relation to the world and its inhabitants. In the second chapter begins the history of the Human Race, and, as marking a new relation of the Supreme Being to mankind (for all the revelation of the Supreme is of his *relation*, and not of his *essence*) a change of name occurs.

In the first chapter, which is occupied with the formation of the world, the Creator is simply the "All Powerful,"—the Elohim.—And this is fitting. The second introduces another idea, that of Divine Providence or Government, continuously operating, directing, controlling. This new idea is signalized by the employment of a new word. It is not the Elohim simply, not the Supreme Power, but Jehovah-Elohim, rendered in English, somewhat imperfectly, as the LORD GOD, the word Jehovah signifying, the Eternally Subsisting One, the Unchangeable I AM. Nothing could be more appropriate to the beginning of the relation of conscious beings to the Divinity they were to serve. He was to remain unchangeable, while all things around them and above them were constantly changing.

For this would be the very sure foundation of that confidence or faith, which is the essence of all true relations between man and the Supreme, and which has been the same in all dispensations, under the Old Testament as well as the New. The faith of the godly man is in an everlastingly subsisting and unchangeable Almighty One.

The first act of the Supreme in His relation to mankind was to constitute the seventh period of time as a day of rest. (The Hebrew word signifying rest, viz., Sabbath, has been incorporated with our English tongue, but we use it often without thinking of its signification.)

But the seventh of the days was not only to be a day of rest, but of Religion—a day of Divine Blessing, set

apart (sanctified, meaning separated) and made holy by the Supreme Creator, for all time. The language of the Fourth Commandment is conformable to this. For that is not primarily a command to set apart the seventh day as a day of rest. The command is to *remember* what had been instituted formerly; which institution had fallen into disuse in the day of bondage, but which the people were now to observe, being free. The special force of the command is that the rest day is to be kept *Sacred*.

This is the first and oldest institution established amongst mankind, and here we have the account of its origin. And He who so commanded, has made the human frame, in its capacity for work and need of rest, to conform to this primitive institution.

The next act of Supreme wisdom and providence was to assign to the man and the woman a suitable Habitation and Employment. As to the habitation, being placed in a climate where clothing was not needed, a park or paradise was prepared, replete with all trees and plants needed, either for beauty or for food. In this Paradise the man and woman were to have their home, an order of things exactly corresponding to that which still survives in the instinct of mankind in all places. For, wherever man attains to such a position that he can do what he pleases, live where and in what style he pleases, he naturally surrounds himself with just such a park or paradise as is here described. The instinct is as old as the history of man; all our knowledge of civilized man in all ages and countries shows that in gardens, lawns and parks, men have taken delight from time immemorial. The hanging gardens of Babylon, the academic groves of Greece, the luxuriant gardens of wealthy Romans, the parks and gardens of modern Europe, of England especially, all bear witness to the instinct of delight on the part of mankind in such scenes as those which were specially prepared by the Divine Creator for the first man.

But the man was not to live in dreamy idleness. Nor, as originally constituted, was he to wear out his days in severe labor. His occupation was to *dress* and *keep* the garden; an occupation in which both the man and the woman could join, even as they do to this day. The delight of woman is with flowers. To dress and keep them she loves to devote time. From the beds and conservatories of the wealthy down to the cottage garden of the laborer, and the window of the dingy courts of a crowded city, we see the workings of the same instinct, planted in the heart of woman in the paradise of first creation. And equally, the civilized man, in leisure, loves nothing so much as to look after the planting of trees, the pruning of vines, the

laying out of grounds, the arrangement of lawn and park. This is the beau-ideal of human employment. Yet it is but a reproduction of the original work assigned to the first man.

As to the exact locality of Eden, it is not a matter of primary importance, except as bearing on the question of the accuracy of the Biblical narrative.

That which is a sure clue to the locality is this—through this garden there flowed a river, which, after a time was "parted and became four heads." The name of one of these subsists to this day, viz., the Euphrates. It is, then, to the head waters of this great river we must look for the locality of EDEN--this being the name, not of the Garden or park, but of a tract or region of country. For the garden was in the "Eastern part" of Eden. Now, following the Euphrates to its source, we find it springing up in the beautiful hilly region in the neighborhood of Mount Ararat. This mountain is evidently in the region inhabited by the very earliest of the children of the first man. After the flood, the ark first found a resting place on its sides. Now, we find that, at this very day, the head waters of the three great rivers of Persia and Armenia almost touch each other in this very hill country. The Euphrates and the Tigris, which fall into the Persian Gulf, and the Aras, the Araxes of the Greeks, which falls into the Caspian Sea, all rise there. The last-named makes a great circuit, or compass, in its course, and would correspond to either the Pison or the Gihon referred to in the eleventh verse and the fourteenth. (The translation, Ethiopia, is very misleading, as suggesting the country now called by that name in the Upper regions of the Nile, in Africa. The Hebrew word is Cush, and is evidently the ancient name of one of the regions in the neighborhood of the Caspian or Black Sea.)

The fourth river may be found in one of the other branches of the Araxes, or possibly of the Tigris or Euphrates, for all these rivers in their head waters are found in many branches.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF LANGUAGE.

The first definite action on the part of man in the history of the race is stated to be the giving of Names to all the animals and birds then existing.

For this purpose they were brought by the Creator—some impulse unknown to them guiding them—to the presence of the man. *And whatsoever he called each living creature, that became its name.*

It is to no purpose to discuss in what tongue he spoke, nor what the names were; nor whether the Hebrew names for animated creatures are those then given. Nor is it to any purpose to discuss the question how the fierce and wild animals of the forest, or the birds of the air, were moved to appear in quietness before Adam. These questions are of no importance, for the answers to them would make no man wiser.

The one point to notice is that we have an account of a man with a perfectly formed language, which corresponds with what else is stated of him as a fully developed being, and that he is placed, consciously to himself and visibly to the creatures he is to rule over, in a position of superiority and rule. Whatever the language may have been, it is most probable that the names given would express the character or quality of these creatures respectively, as was the custom of the Hebrew tongue, and is of the Indian tribes of North America to this day.

NOTES CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY.

The prejudice against the word Sabbath would surely die away if its beautiful meaning were kept before the mind. For, certainly, in the whole realm of ideas there is scarcely to be found a more attractive one than that of "Rest" after toil. The Sabbath day, which is sometimes thought of as something narrow, bigoted, puritanical, or Jewish, is really the Rest-day, a day to be looked forward to by the multitude of mankind with delight. It is a beneficent institution of the Creator, and as He set it apart for sacred service, man finds his highest enjoyment in observing it as his Creator intended.

AS TO THE CREATOR RESTING ON THE SEVENTH DAY.

The numerous theories of biblical writers on this subject, as well as the carping criticism of unbelievers, may both be passed by as not worthy of being dwelt upon. What can be actually meant by the Creator *resting*, can be no more actually conceived than we can understand the method of the Creator *working*. What we can understand is that a succession of periods of extraordinary putting forth of power on the part of the Supreme came to an end with the creation of man. After that, there undoubtedly supervened a condition of comparative quietness in the forces of the habitable world, and a change from the work of creation and preparation, to a condition of orderly motion and development.

The work of conservation, preservation, and providence then commenced, and this work has continued without intermission ever since.

Other developments of an extraordinary character in the frame work of the earth and the heavens, at some future period, are clearly foreshadowed in the New Testament. But the *time* is not revealed.

Whatever other idea may be connected with the Creator resting on the seventh day, it is certain that He has made it the foundation for the ordinance that is stamped on man's constitution, viz.: six days of work and one day of rest, and also for the idea of special blessing for the rest day.

THE CHARACTER OF THE GARDEN OF EDEN.

The Garden of Eden has often been conceived of as a small piece of ground corresponding somewhat to the garden of a suburban villa of these modern times. But this idea is not in accordance with the narrative.

The English word "Park," as meaning an extensive area of diversified and beautiful grounds, with groves of trees, wide spreading lawns and forest glades, and a meandering river flowing through it, expanding into one or more lakes—such a park as that of Blenheim, or Chatsworth, or Windsor—this would correspond with the idea of the original narrative. Let it be noted that the Eternal Supreme *planted* this park—as a wealthy father, in these days, may plant and lay out grounds for a favorite son. And the region in which it was situated is certainly one of the loveliest hills and valleys on the face of the earth.

MARRIAGE.

The last verse of the second chapter gives us the origin of Marriage.—The condition of primitive innocence of the first man and woman is spoken of, and it is in these terms:—

"The man and *his wife* were naked and not ashamed"—It is not the man and the woman simply. The Divine Spirit, inspiring and controlling this record, caused this to be the revelation—that the relation between the two was that of husband and wife—the only permanently honorable and satisfactory basis of any union between man and woman to the end of time.

CHAPTER V.

THE ORIGIN OF EVIL IN THE WORLD.

Genesis, Chapter II.—There is nothing more noteworthy in these early chapters, giving an account as they do, of the origin of the world and the things in it, than their perfect correspondence with the state of things found in the world as now known, as well as with what has been recorded in times past. The world itself is as therein described, so is the condition of vegetable and animated life, and so is the natural life of man and woman.

That men and women are now in a condition in which there is much moral wrong-doing, more or less flagrant; from the simple wrong, which, though consciously evil to him who commits it, yet does not injure another, to the crimes of violence, lust, and fraud, which bring misery untold to families and communities—all are well aware of who have any knowledge of the world.

It is so in civilized communities, and it is even more so in the uncivilized and barbarous, who, though children of nature, are tainted by every vice and crime that characterize mankind in the most corrupt communities. And that this has been so in all former times and ages, the history of the doing of men and women of every country bears only too sad witness.

The history of the world is not indeed wholly a history of wrong-doing, for, if so, the race would have been probably exterminated by violence and vice. But wrong-doing, private and public, has permeated all the actions of men and women in all ages of history. In Christian times, nothing is more striking than the fact that confession of wrong-doing, by speech, thought, and action is constantly kept before those who embrace the Christian faith. The whole scope of the Christian religion is to deliver, to *save*, as it is theologically expressed, men and women from the guilt of wrong-doing, from its natural and revealed consequences, and also from the power of evil over the will and disposition. Among non-Christians, heathen and unbelievers, wrong-doing, though not universally acknowledged as a matter of *guilt*, is universally acknowledged as matter of *fact*.

How this came to be is, of all mysteries and anomalies, the greatest and most terrible. If we theorize on the subject we may imagine—

Either that man was so created in the beginning; or that it has been a matter of evolution and development; or that the things we call evil are really not evil, but have no moral quality at all, being simply developments and manifestations of human nature. In fact, that there is no more moral blame in a man being cruel and murderous than there is in a tiger killing his prey. Nature, it may be maintained, is always right. What needs to be changed is not the human heart, but human conceptions and judgments—then there will cease all uncharitable fretting about what we foolishly think to be the wrong-doing of the world. This theory, strange as it is, has been put forth by certain philosophic thinkers.

The first of these theories is not in accordance with the revelation as to the origin of man. For man was included amongst the things that were pronounced good. Indeed, after the creation of man, the judgment was emphasized, and we read for the first time, that God pronounced all created things *very good*. And it is only agreeable to reason that it should be so. We cannot conceive that a being created with moral character and instincts, by a Being of absolute perfection, should be created corrupt and depraved from the beginning. (Reason, however, is not always a sure guide in those matters. But revelation is.)

The second theory is as little defensible as the first. For all evolution and development is but a perpetual opening up of what was in the germ at the beginning. If moral corruption and propensity to wrong was developed by simple evolution, then the moral corruption was there in the beginning, in germ and power. Thus we arrive by a different way to the result which has already been shown to be contrary both to revelation and the natural reason of things.

The third is contrary to every instinct and feeling known to human beings. And one cannot but think that if its advocates were subjected to some practical test, such as personal ill-treatment; if, for example, they were violently assaulted, if their houses were broken into and their goods stolen; if the honor of the family were invaded by the seduction of a wife or a daughter; they could not avoid sharing in those universal feelings of indignation against the wrong-doer, of grief and anguish at the wrong, and of that deep desire for punishment and redress which are universal amongst mankind. It is, indeed, only grave trif-

ling with a terrible subject to say that there is no evil in murder, fraud, drunkenness, adultery, or any other of the manifold developments of what in theology is called sin.

But now, it being well understood that evil exists as a matter of fact in human nature and the world, that it always has been so, so far as all history speaks, even apart from revelation, and the record being that the first man and woman were created very good and perfectly innocent, it becomes a question of profound interest, how and when such a change took place, from the one condition to the other, a change amounting to a catastrophe and moral revolution.

The narrative of the third chapter is the answer.

As a preliminary it is recorded that a very remarkable Tree was to be found in the garden—the tree of knowledge of good and evil—and that to this tree alone of all the trees of the garden was attached a prohibition and a penalty.

The man and the woman were commanded not to eat of its fruit—not even to touch it—with the warning that in the day they ate, they would “begin to die” (begin to die is the true translation). It is vain to enquire for what reason the Supremely Wise and Good should institute this test; why He should not have placed them in such a position that they could not do wrong. To imagine reasons for what the Infinitely Wise and Good chose to do, but the reason for which He did not choose to give, is only to “darken counsel without knowledge.” Such speculations are as vain as would be those of a little child as to some far-reaching and important action of a father who was Prime Minister of England.—There are some things we must be content not to know, and this is one of them.

But what we can, without difficulty, understand, is the manner in which this prohibition was used as an instrument of temptation, by a being whose purpose it was to tempt. Though, in their theoretical aspect, the things recorded in this chapter are impenetrably mysterious, yet, when they are regarded in a practical light, they are full of the deepest instruction. *For this temptation is in essence and substance a perfect type of all temptations, and of the way in which all lapses from virtue and rectitude are brought about.*

The narrative is of a creature called in this narrative a Serpent, who was the most subtle creature in existence, and who, by his action, is seen to be essentially evil and antagonistic to the Supreme Governor of the world. This creature cannot be conceived of as one

of those who had recently been created, for all these had been pronounced good; and none of these mere creatures could have had the subtle intelligence displayed in this narrative. Many of them, indeed, are now, and perhaps always have been, endowed with an instinct of cunning such as is needed to lie in wait for prey; but the intelligence of the narrative is specifically of that higher order that is the property of man alone, or of creatures of a superior order to man.

That such a being had existed previously we are not expressly informed in the narrative. But the inference from the facts of the narrative is irresistible, that this serpent was no ordinary creature, but a manifestation of a being of another order. As Scripture always throws light on Scripture, we have, in other places, sufficient indications—not such as to gratify curiosity or intellectual enquiry—but to show that this serpent was in reality a manifestation of “that Old Serpent the *Diabolos*,” Devil, the enemy of God and man, the great tempter and moral destroyer of mankind. Here again, intellectually, we are in a region of profound mystery. How such a being as the *Diabolos* or Devil, of high intelligence and profound dissimulation, came into existence, or came to be what he was, we have only very faint hints of in Scripture. The clearest of these hints is that contained in the Epistle of Jude (Jude v. 6), viz., that there were angels who “kept not their first estate” (or principedom, as the Greek rather signifies) but were cast down into darkness until the great day. But how or why this came to be, the Holy Ghost has not revealed. Scripture, both in the Old Testament and the New, reveals to us the Chief of these fallen princes as being able to manifest himself on the earth, tempting men to evil.

But why these fallen beings were allowed to manifest themselves on earth at all is again an impenetrable mystery.

But when, passing from intellectual speculation as to the cause, we come to look at and consider what we know as matters of common experience and facts of history, our knowledge, and all authentic records of the lives of men, harmonize with the Divine record as shewing:

First.—That there is a mysterious power, out of ourselves, which makes for unrighteousness; suggesting evil, putting it attractively to the senses and passions of men and women, drawing them on, generally most insidiously

and by stealthy approaches, to the harboring of evil intention or the commission of evil deeds:

Second.—That men and women who have fallen under the power of evil once, are in danger, unless the evil is checked from a higher source, of falling again, the one act tending to become a habit.

Third.—That when the habit of evil has been established, the person under its influence tends to become a tempter of others, an instrument of the great Tempter to work his purposes.

These things are facts of universal experience.

Now let us see what may be the practical thought suggested by this unique narrative.

And, to begin, is there any reason in the selection of a serpent as the creature to be the medium of temptation.

(1) Many creatures of the serpent tribe are extremely beautiful. If we rid ourselves of associations connected with serpents, we cannot but see in the variously colored and shining form a creature whose beauty is remarkable.

(2) Its motions are beautiful, and its approach silent and insidious. The curves of its motion follow the very "line of beauty" of painters. Its approach through grass or leaves is indeed so insidious that the proverb "a snake in the grass" is used to express an enemy in ambush.

In all these respects the serpent is admirably fitted to express and symbolise the manner in which evil is presented in temptation. It comes in an attractive form; attractive, that is, to the propensities, passions, or tendencies of the person tempted. It generally steals into the mind insidiously; quietly and unsuspected. And, just as a venomous serpent has a deadly bite or stroke, so, evil in its ultimate effect, in the order of Divine government, is deadly to the soul.

Proceeding with the narrative, it is useless to speculate or reason upon the question, how could the serpent speak to the woman. It is sufficient to say, we do not know, for it has not been revealed. And we have a right to say, if we did know, we would be no wiser for all the practical issues of life and conduct. But, if we consider, instead of how the serpent could speak, what this mysterious creature *said*, we shall at once perceive that very practical issues of life and conduct are before us.

The narrative is of the first woman of the race, who was under a Divine prohibition against doing a certain thing, on penalty of death. The mode of procedure of the subtle and cunning being who was to tempt her to disobedience will reward consideration.

The first word was the insinuation of Doubt! "Are you sure? can it be so; that you are prohibited from eating of the fruit of this tree?" Does it seem reasonable; that its fruit should be there, that its fruit should be within reach, that it should be so fair to the eye, and yet that you cannot eat of it. Surely it must not be so?" The answer of the woman, at first, was a simple, open, and honest affirmation that the prohibition was there, and in force. Even in the first words spoken there was cunning on the one side and simplicity on the other—an exact picture of the course of temptation as it has been in the world from the beginning, and as it prevails in our time and day.

The Evil Creature, having opened up a conversation, and induced the woman to listen, proceeds to bold denial. The threatened consequences will not follow! "Ye shall not surely die!" On the contrary, the eating of the fruit will open your eyes! You will understand things of which you now know nothing. Your capacity and powers will be greatly enlarged. You will rise into a higher scale of being. You will become like gods! The deep subtlety of all this will be more apparent as we know the more of the course of temptation as it affects men and women now. It is the very same thing that is said, sometimes insinuated by those mysterious avenues to the human soul, which are as real as they are beyond comprehension; sometimes actually spoken, in low and dark mutterings, by one human being to another, when man or woman becomes an agent of the Tempter and speaks his thoughts to a more simple and virtuous soul. It is always so, "Come with us; we will show you something of Life!" It is life in some higher form than you have known before. It is a higher development. It is a broader experience, enlarging understanding; and with enlarged understanding will come increased capacity, power and liberty. You will be emancipated from the miserable restraints of conventional rule, and become free, even as the gods and higher beings are free.

Thus has many a son of Adam, and many a daughter of Eve, been seduced, and has found out, too late, that the knowledge of evil by experience does not tend to elevation but to degradation; that there are things it is better not to know by experience, the memory and knowledge of which would be better blotted out as if they had never been.

The words of the Evil Creature were so spoken as to enter the woman's soul and produce reflection. And then, even as it is now, it was seen that 'she who parleys is lost.'

This insinuation of direct opposition to the Supreme Will

* Doubt as to the Divine will—as to whether the Supreme did really speak in the Word is a common feature of the scepticism of modern days with those who acknowledge a Supreme Ruler of events.

should have been met by an instinctive recoil, by a rising up of loyalty in the heart, by the command to the creature, Begone!

But the woman parleyed; she considered the fatal question, shall I disobey or not?

And now, in her consideration, the working of the fatal virus of temptation is seen.

The woman saw that the tree was—

1. Good for food.
2. Pleasant to the eyes.
3. Desirable to make wise.

These thoughts correspond closely with the three-fold development of evil as written by the Apostle John (1st John, 2-16).

Good for food.—The lust of the flesh.

Pleasant to the eye.—The lust of the eyes.

Desirable to make wise.—The pride of life.

Thus the bait is displayed, in alluring fascination, before the simple soul; as the same, in substance, has been displayed to millions of souls since.

And alas! the allurements were too strong. She fell beneath the wiles of the Tempter and disobeyed, taking the fruit and eating it. Evil thus entered into her soul and lodged there.

But alas! how this experience corresponds with another well-known and universal development. *Facilis descensus averni*, says the wise proverb of the Ancients, reflecting universal experience. The descent to evil is rapid and easy. The woman, having done evil, becomes herself a temptress to evil. She gave to her husband; and he did eat also.

That such a disastrous fall should be so brought about is perhaps the most mysterious part of this terrible narrative.

In his case, no resistance, no consideration, is recorded. Whatever of persuasion on her part, or of consideration or hesitation on his, perhaps of a first refusal, then of pressure, then of more consideration, then of the working, perhaps, of a chivalrous resolution, to die with her—if they were to begin to die—of all this—if any such course of thought transpired, not a line is written. The woman gave, and the man took and ate.

So they both disobeyed. Both allied themselves with the Evil Creature against the Supreme Being, the Author of their existence.

Again it has to be said, that speculation is vain as to how such a thing could come about in the case of two perfectly innocent creatures. God has not seen fit to tell us more than it is for our highest wisdom to know. But this He has told us for our instruction and our warning. The rest would only satisfy intellectual curiosity or metaphysical speculation.

NOTES CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY.

I. OF THE CONDITION OF UNCIVILIZED RACES OF MANKIND.

The notion that the uncivilized races of men are in a condition of primitive innocence and simplicity is dispelled by actual knowledge of the races and people that have existed on the earth during the time that travel and adventure have made us acquainted with them.

The nations and tribes of Indians on the North American Continent are distinguished as much by revolting cruelties and murderous passions and lusts as they are by extraordinary capacity for life in the woods, plains, and rivers in which their lot has been cast. They know little, until taught by Christians, of true moral obligations. Each is a law to himself—or his tribe is a law to him. But that law is in many respects a law of murder, lust, deceit, treachery, and absolute want of humanity.

The history of the New England and Canadian settlements, as well as the settlements of more southerly regions, and other parts of this great continent, all confirms the truth that the savage races in their primitive condition were not in a condition of innocence, but of depravity.

The condition of the native people of the Continent of Africa is similar to this. Whatever wrongs—and their wrongs have cried to heaven for vengeance—they may have suffered or are suffering, the original condition of these numerous tribes, by universal testimony, was that of depravity and wickedness. As with the negro races of the central regions, so with the Caffres, Hottentots and numerous other aboriginal tribes and nations of the continent. None of them have ever been found living in a condition of innocence, where crime, cruelty and bloodshed were unknown, where love and peace prevailed, where the common law was honestly and fairly administered, where, in a word, the law of the second table of the commandments was the rule of life.

Such a state has been dreamed of by poets, and imagined by metaphysical philosophers who denied the Christian faith. But actual knowledge has dispelled the dream.

For, as with North America and Africa, so it was with the Australasian continent and the Islands of the Pacific. The Creator in these regions has wrought out scenes of

unrivalled beauty. And if it were true that the beautiful in nature softens, refines and elevates *per se*, then the tribes upon whom for ages the beauties of these enchanting regions have operated, should have become refined, virtuous, and elevated in a very high degree.

But the truth is that nowhere on the earth have there been more horrible developments of wickedness than in these paradises of beauty. Murder, and cannibalism, and lust—the most devilish cruelties, the most revolting iniquities—this was found to be the condition when the veil was lifted and the inhabitants of these lovely regions first became known. Beauty certainly did not soften, for in these paradises of beauty, the hearts of men were hard beyond conception.

The vices and crimes of men in civilized countries, whether living in ignorance of God, or in such perverted and corrupted forms of belief as had no moral influence over conduct, have been quite as devilishly wicked, cannibalism alone excepted.

The contention has sometimes been that the massing of men and women in unnatural conditions in cities has been accountable for the wickedness of civilization; and that in a state of nature, men and women would be innocent. The light of truth dispels these theories, and shows men and women, in a state of nature, to be as vile and condemnable as the most utterly depraved denizens of ancient Rome, or of modern Paris, London, or New York.

2. AS TO THE PRIMARY CONDITION OF THE ANGELS WHO KEPT NOT THEIR FIRST ESTATE, THEIR FALL, AND AS TO SATAN, THEIR PRINCE.

Revelation as to all this is almost wholly silent. Who was this "prince of the powers of the air," this awful spirit working in the children of disobedience? What his original condition, and how could he possibly fall from it?

What would not men, from an intellectual point of view, give to know all this?

But *cui bono?* What good would it do any man to know? To know how it came about that *Satan and his angels* fell is of no importance to mankind. But to know *how the first man and woman* fell is of infinite importance!

It is of the first importance for men to know that such a being as Satan has existed, and that he still exists. And it

is of the first importance that men and women should know sufficient of his wiles, devices, and methods to enable them to guard against them. And this much the Supreme Ruler of men has fully revealed.

And not only has He fully revealed it in the writings of prophets and wise men of old time, but He has given a striking example, in the revelation of the New Testament, how such cunning temptations are to be met and overcome. For, as Satan tempted and overcame the innocence and simplicity of the first man and woman, so he tempted, *but was overcome*, by the wisdom and virtue of the Second Man, the Lord from Heaven! And as the laws of spiritual existence appear, so far as we know them, to be as certain and fixed as the laws of material existence, we find that the method of Satan's temptation in the second case bore a close resemblance to that in the first.

When the man, Christ Jesus, was led up to be tempted of the Devil; (Matthew IV.)

(1) There is first:—

The insinuation of doubt! *If thou be the Son of God?* This addressed to the human nature of a weak and suffering man, suggests the unreason of weakness and suffering as a concomitant of a Divine Being; and is therefore a suggestion of doubt as to his being Divine in reality. An insidious undermining of the great fact of the Incarnation, which, had it succeeded, would have destroyed the power of Jesus to accomplish mighty works, and be the Redeemer of mankind. Such a thing can scarcely be conceived of as possible. But this was doubtless the object of the subtle adversary. It corresponds closely with the doubt suggested in Eve. Hath God said? Is it reasonable to suppose that He who loves you should debar you from partaking of such beautiful and luxurious fruit as this?

(2) There is an appeal to the natural desire of the flesh. Thou art weak and hungry. Thou needest food. Command then, that these stones become food!

This was, in effect, an insidious temptation to self-indulgence (in a highly rarefied form). Although it was only bread, yet in a weak state of the body, the result of long fasting, the longing for simple bread may become as great a passion, and as purely a "lust of the flesh" as the lust after wine in a man living in sensuality. A case is known to the writer of a man who, at one crisis of his life, was possessed with the idea of continued fasting, in the shape of absolute abstinence, as a duty; but who, in moments of extreme bodily weakness and pain, had such a longing for bread that it became irresistible. Again and again, he was overcome by this longing, and partook of most simple food at a time when he thought he ought not to partake

of food at all, the action being followed by as much torture of self-condemnation as if he had fallen into drunkenness or adultery. He recorded acts of what he called "debauchery" in his journal, such debauchery being simply the partaking of the most simple form of food to appease the cravings of hunger. All this was the result of a diseased condition of the spiritual conscience. But it illustrates the subtlety of the temptation in the case of our Lord, viz., to satisfy the pangs of hunger against the will of the Divine Father and the monitions of the Holy Spirit.

The *method of resistance* is as much to be remarked, and as full of practical instruction.

It is by appealing to the written revelation of the Divine Will:—"Man shall not live by bread alone," a mighty truth revealed through the same Moses who was chosen to reveal the origin of the world. Practically, this means that there are higher considerations, at times, than the satisfying of bodily wants. The fulfilling of the Divine Word and Will—this constitutes the real satisfaction of man.

The Second temptation to our Lord is of extreme subtlety, and is not analogous to that of Eve. It is a temptation to a presumptuous venturing into uncalled-for danger, in reliance on Divine protection—the Divine Word itself being quoted as justifying it. But a cunning misapplication of the Divine Word was met and overcome by a higher wisdom in applying it.

But the Third temptation is in exact correspondence.

As Eve was seduced by the vision of ambition: "Ye shall become as gods,"—so our Lord was finally tempted by a vision of universal dominion. "*All the kingdoms of the world, and all the glory of them*" were shown and offered. A dazzling prospect to a poor Galilean carpenter. But the condition—Renounce God and worship me! On this temptation being presented, there is, not as before, a calm refusal, but an outbreak of angry denunciation—natural and reasonable—"Begone, thou Adversary! It is written, The Lord God alone is to be worshipped. He only to be served."

Thus, as in the first man and woman we have a great Beacon Light, to warn; so in the Second Man, a very man, bone of our bone, tempted as we are, we have a shining light to guide.

He left us, in this respect, as in others, *an example, that we should follow in His blessed steps.*

OF THE POSSIBILITY OF WRONG-DOING IN THE FIRST
MAN AND WOMAN.

Profound metaphysical speculation has been employed on this subject, involving the deep question of Freewill, as it is called, in the constitution of man. It is argued to be a necessity to a perfectly formed being of the character of man, that he should have the power of choosing wrong as well as right—that, in truth, he should be, so far, independent. Such speculations do not go one step towards a practical solution of the problem. The truth is, in regard to this, as well as to many other matters concerning the life, constitution, and destiny of man, there are things which cannot be understood, or cannot be reconciled with what men do understand. *But experience shows that there is no subject with respect to which greater mistakes have been made, than that of indicating what is supposed to be consistent or inconsistent with some known fact or established principle.*

Certain acts of the Supreme Being are recorded in Scripture which appear to be inconsistent with statements as to His justice, or His mercy, or His unchangeableness. The two are difficult to reconcile. But, the simple truth is, we do not possess the key to these high and mysterious questions, and can only, in this matter (as it is necessary to do with regard to many others), fall back on the fundamental consideration, "SHALL NOT THE JUDGE OF ALL THE EARTH DO RIGHT!"

CHAPTER VI.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE GREAT DISOBEDIENCE.

Here, as throughout the whole narrative, we find an absolute conformity to human nature as we know it, and as it always has been known to the men and women of all time. The first effect of disobedience was a *development of shamefacedness*. They knew that they were naked! An absolute unconscionness of evil, either in thought or will, in deed or possibility, was their moral condition as created. These two pregnant words, the "knowledge" that they were "naked" open up at once a new order of feeling and being in their consciousness. To one another, they are not as formerly. To creatures in their moral and intellectual condition, it is probable there was a rapid and complete development of the knowledge of evil, a knowledge that came by consciousness. The tree was the tree of knowledge of good *and evil*. They had hitherto had no knowledge of good as a special quality, for there was nothing by which to estimate it or contrast it. All was good. But now, not by an intellectual conception, as men now study moral development, but by actual experience, they had come to know evil. They knew evil by doing it.*

So now, on the part of the man, there was manifested a want of love, honor, and respect for the woman. He threw upon her the blame. Intellectually he was right. She did give him of the fruit of the tree. Morally he was wrong. He was not compelled to take it. His duty was to refuse, remonstrate, and call to remembrance the Divine command. But the spiritual poison of the serpent was already working in the veins of both. Love, honor, affection, was changed into selfishness and hardness of heart, the root of all evil.

The next development was the shrinking and hiding from the Divine Presence. There must have been, previously, a condition of perfect accord and communion. How the Divine Will was made known to these two—through what

* It is needful in considering this narrative of the Fall to put aside and forget impressions from Milton's "Paradise Lost." That great work has stamped its impression on all subsequent conceptions: especially of fallen angels and Satan, and many objections are to the Fall as described by Milton rather than the narrative of this book.

avenue of sense or consciousness—we know not. It is not needful to know. But we do know that their condition towards God was that of perfect love, confidence, and oneness of affection.

Now, wrong having been done, as it always is and has been; as a child who has disobeyed instinctively hides himself, so these two shrink from the face of the Supreme Father when they become conscious of His presence.

And, as we know by experience, the father calls a disobedient child who is hiding himself, in sorrowful affection, yet with authority—"Where art thou?" so the Divine Father here, "Adam! where art thou?" It is at once the call of love and the summons of authority. We have its counterpart, again and again, in those pleadings of tenderness, almost inexpressible, that are enshrined for all time in the prophecies of Jeremiah and Hosea, and also in the heartbreaking lament of the Divine Saviour over the folly and weakness of Jerusalem.

In the answers of the man and the woman we have a perfect picture of the evasive, sulky, rebellious child of our own day. The man throws the blame upon both his wife and the Creator. "The woman whom thou gavest me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat!" Here is a picture of selfish and cowardly immaturity—the beginning of all similar manifestations in all subsequent time. Men blame other men, or their parents, or circumstances, or their schoolmasters, even religion itself, of the Divine Being—anything but themselves. Yet, in self-blame all amendment and permanent reform is rooted. No hope is there for any man or woman until wrong is realized as of themselves. In all this the first man is a type of many who have a true intellectual conception, with a perverted moral instinct—they know, but they refuse.

The woman is as little disposed as the man to blame herself. The Serpent, she says, *he beguiled me!* As with the man, so with the woman—the fact was stated truly. The Serpent did beguile, but the Serpent did not compel. The Serpent denied the Supreme Voice—were they bound to listen and believe him when in opposition to their own Protector and Father?*

Once more, the word of Eve is a true picture of the word of many of Eve's daughters, in a fallen condition, in these times and other ages. "I was beguiled, seduced, by

* Ezekiel 33: 17. The way of the Lord is not equal. Modern infidels ask why God made them thus.

specious promises, visions of freedom and pleasure, dress, jewels, and gaiety, or promise of marriage and home!"

The beguiling is always the same in effect, though differing, it may be, in form. It is always a promise of more pleasure, more knowledge of life, more enjoyment of beauty. The forbidden fruit is always set forth as pleasant to the taste, beautiful to the eye, and to be desired to make one wise! And the eating always brings with it the same results; a callous selfishness and meanness, conscious self-degradation, evasive answering, hiding from man, and complete alienation from God.

As Burns sang—from his own conscious experience—of the effects of wrong-doing:—

*It hardens a' the heart,
An' petrifies the feelin'!*

THE NEW RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SUPREME AND
HIS CREATURES.

Thus far the Supreme as FATHER and PROTECTOR, a relation he has ever since sustained, and of which the most marvellous manifestation was in the gift of His Son for the salvation and redemption of mankind—that "Unspeakable Gift" as the Holy Ghost terms it by the mouth of the Apostle Paul.

But now, wrong-doing and rebellion have become manifest, and the Divine Creator is also manifested in another form: that of JUDGE and SUPREME GOVERNOR. What is now His course and position? It might have been indifference. It might have taken the form of a Nemesis, which would blot them out of existence.

Both these conceptions have taken root in the thoughts of men in after times. God the Supreme and Infinite! He care for the little follies and (what you call) sins of poor mortals? Absurd! The invention of crafty priests for the purpose of bringing men and women into slavery! The other extreme is of a Jupiter striking dead with his will; or a pitiless superhuman monster and tyrant of Hindoo mythology, with many arms to strike and many heads to devour. But both are human misconceptions. The Divine Revelation is of a Being at once just and merciful; of a real retribution which was not physically destructive; the action, not of a blind Nemesis, but of a Supremely Wise and

All-good Governor, dealing with the noblest of His works, even a Man and a Woman, created in His own Image.

And as we have had in review before us, the origin or first beginning, of creation, of the division of time for men into days of work and rest, of the relation of woman to man and man to woman; the beginnings also of the manifestation of an Evil Being, of temptation, and wrong-doing; so now we have the origin and first beginning of Retributive Government and Just Administration; a moral government which has had wonderful manifestations in the history of mankind in general, but particularly in the history of one race and one people. We may look on, as the drama unfolds, and wonder what now will the Divine Being do? What is said to these three is marvellous, as containing the root and seed of countless developments in future ages, as the course of human history unfolded.

First to the SUPREME was the Divine sentence. In this we have a striking intermingling of the Divine dealing with the mere creature, the instrument, and that subtle, powerful Being who was the real introducer of evil into this hitherto perfect world. To the creature there is the sentence of a curse,—a reprobation—such as to make all of his species an object of shrinking and fear to human kind. There can be no doubt of a deeply seated instinct of that sort in men and women now. But the sentence is far deeper and more far-reaching, when it passes beyond the mere creature to the Evil Being himself.

The sentence corresponds with the offence. The Diabolos, who had himself become the eternal enemy of the Supreme, has desired these noble creatures, created in the *Image* of the Supreme, to cast off allegiance, and become confederates and friends with him.

This design is utterly frustrated by the sentence—Between the woman and her race, and the Adversary, there is to be, not friendship and honor, but *enmity*. The Supreme has placed it there, and there it is. Human beings have an instinct, deep down in their very souls, of hatred to the Adversary, even when under his influence. When absolutely enslaved by him, they hate him and his works, the vices he tempts them to, the crimes he has drawn them on to commit. There is no hatred so deadly as between a woman and her seducer. A slave to drink or lust abhors the wrong he is doing, even when yielding to it as to an irresistible influence. In the deep mysterious workings of the human mind we see love and hatred working simultaneously; a drunkard drawn to his indulgence by overpowering desire, yet at the very same moment hating it as destructive to his body and soul. And, as a further develop-

ment, the serpent is to have power over the seed of the woman:—*thou shalt bruise his heel*—a sentence suggesting that the Adversary shall have such influence that the race of mankind shall never (of themselves) be able to walk with uprightness and steadfastness, as a true "anthropos," as the Greeks called him; an uplooker; but with a bruised heel, stumble on the road of life, and wander, whether in the realm of duty to God, or duty and service to man. But now we come to a word which is a seed, indeed, a word of profound mystery, with a true evolution before it, until it issues finally in after ages in the great manifestation of "God in the Flesh," which has been the wonder of angels and heavenly hosts, "desiring to look into it." For the counterpart of the sentence is, "THE WOMAN'S SEED SHALL BRUISE THY HEAD!" The head, the seat of power, will, conception, design, that shall be bruised by the seed of the woman.

We are constrained to read this by the light of subsequent revelation. Many of the things revealed in the old times were not understood when spoken. The great promise to Abraham, that in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed, could not possibly be understood in its fullness by the patriarch, although doubtless meditated upon and profoundly cherished.

In like manner this promise, or, as the word came to be used later on, this *Divine Covenant*, could not be, and was not, understood in fullness by the first man and woman, though its vague idea of power and victory over evil was doubtless pondered in their hearts, and cherished by them and their descendants, until the fullness of time came.

The sentence next was upon the Woman, as the first of the two to sin. And the sentence on her has special reference to her condition, calling, and duty, as a woman, just as the sentence on the man has reference and application to his duty and calling. It is in relation to *children* that the sentence bears upon the woman with a sad severity, which has only been too faithfully fulfilled in experience. The bearing of children is to be in sorrow. The word *travail*, as expressive of a deep and acute order of suffering, has become inseparably associated with child-birth. And that this is not according to the original constitution of the female frame appears evident from the fact that the offspring of animals is generally brought forth without travail. The bearing of children is not only painful, it is dangerous. To many it is the occasion of death! No woman about to pass this serious ordeal knows whether she will survive it or not. It is impossible for it not to be looked forward to without a shadow of apprehension, for

the shadow may prove to be that of the valley of death! True, indeed, has it been, that pregnancy itself, and child-birth, are matters to cloud over a woman's life until the time of birth is passed, a child born into the world, and recovery complete. And well has the English Church ordered it as part of her services that the mother shall give thanks in public for preservation in time of signal danger:

But not only in the bringing forth of children has woman sorrow. Their care in infancy, subject as they are to many diseases, is a constant anxiety, and often there is the heart-breaking sorrow of their early death. The husband shares this sorrow. But the heaviness of the burden of training falls on the woman, and all know that the death of her offspring is, as a rule, a far bitterer sorrow to the wife than to the husband.

The second branch of the sentence is in the woman's relation to her husband. She is, now to be subject. He is to rule. The original condition was doubtless equality, an equality developed from absolute love and affection on both sides; an entire absence of selfishness, separate interest, or separate affection. With oneness there is no need of rule. But with disobedience came selfishness and alienation, a condition which rendered rule necessary on the one hand, and subserviency on the other. And the rule was placed with the man, as now upon him, in the altered circumstances of the world, devolves the hard toil of provision. The rule, therefore, was not arbitrarily bestowed. It follows inevitably from changed circumstances. And it has continued ever since, as a condition of all the life of man and woman on the earth.

That the condition of rule for the man and subserviency for the woman is a consequence of a lapse from love and piety towards God, is seen plainly from the fact that wherever the departure is more marked, the rule becomes more and more mere tyranny and brutality; while, wherever under Divine grace, virtue and love more and more resume their sway, the rule becomes more and more gentle, until it almost entirely disappears. With a restored Divine Image comes a restoration of the condition in which, as there is no self-seeking, and no alienation, there is no place for rule.

The sentence on the Man corresponds to his faculty and condition. The wife is to have sorrow in the family and

the home, the husband in going forth to his work of making provision for them. Instead of a gentle dressing and keeping of ground, naturally and readily yielding subsistence, there is now to be a condition of severe toil and contending with contrary forces. The labor of man is to be in sorrow; sorrow because it is so often fruitless; because search fails to be rewarded; because the seasons will often be apparently leagued against effort; because blight in the air, weeds in the ground, innumerable noxious insects, all conspire to harass, injure and impede; because on the waters men will have to toil all night and catch nothing. There can be no doubt that thorns and thistles, or weeds corresponding to them, now, all over the world, spring naturally out of the earth; and that to maintain any given piece of ground in a condition to produce what is required for the sustenance of men, incessant labor, labor developing the sweat of the brow, is continuously necessary. And what is true of the cultivation of the ground is true of every department of human labor—it has become toilsome, vexatious, disappointing, not seldom disagreeable, in a high degree; often dangerous, and leading to loss of life. A glance over the scenes of labor on the earth, under the earth, and on the waters of the sea, confirms the truth of the continuity of the ancient sentence.*

But in addition, there seems to be hinted a change in the physical condition of man. This, however, is not clear. The words of reprobation, "if thou eatest, dying, thou shalt die," indicates that if there had been continuous obedience, there might have been no death. Be this as it may, it is certain that after disobedience there was mortality. "Dust thou art." Of the ultimate material particles common to all things on the earth, the bodily frame of man is built up in life, and with a departure of the principle of life, comes a return to the original elements of which the body is composed. *The dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.* (Eccles. XII.)

It was only after the sentence of death had been heard by the man that he gave the NAME to his wife by which she has always been known; and the name, considering the time it was given, was significant. Its meaning is lost in our English abbreviated form of the word—Eve, in the Hebrew it is "Chevah," or "Living," or probably another

* Ecclesiastes I. 3. What profit of all labor. There are marvellous results: lands cleared, cities built, roads made, kingdoms founded,—but what of satisfaction?

meaning may be "Life." It is as if, in this hour of depression, with sorrow before him, and death at the end of sorrow, his thoughts turned with consolation towards his wife, a living being, and still a helpmeet and companion, and to be hereafter, the mother of other living beings, like himself and like her.

Then comes a significant passage, in which we have revealed another origin, viz., that of such clothing as comes by handicraft. The Eternal Father made "Coats of Skins" for them—not necessarily, by simple creation or miracle, but by giving them the necessary understanding how to fashion suitable materials into a required form.* The Indian tribes of our North American continent are all clothed precisely in this way, and in the wool, hair, and hide of animals we find most of the materials of human dress in all ages and conditions of civilization. The fact that the material was the skin of dead animals suggests the probability that at this time was also the origin of sacrifice for sin, in the shedding of an innocent victim as an atonement for the guilt of the person who offered it.

This, however, is only conjectural. But we do undoubtedly meet with it almost immediately afterwards in the story of the first two children who were born into the world.

The final course of the sentence on this man and woman is in their expulsion from the garden. "Paradise of Delight," is the meaning of the original words that we translate "Garden of Eden"; and until the terrible events we have been considering, a veritable Paradise it had been to them.

But now, the Divine Will was that they should live in it no more.

The reason given is one of the things that cannot be understood. Why the eating of the tree of life should reverse the sentence of death and confer immortality it is impossible to say. And speculation respecting it is a waste of time and energy. If we refer it simply to the Divine will, we shall reach as near to an understanding as it is possible for us, until we reach a scene where much that is now inscrutably dark will be made clear.

And equally, what is the exact meaning of the "Cherubim," and the "flaming sword turning every way, to guard the way of the tree of life," is beyond understanding.

What we can understand is that it is not deemed expedient by the Divine Creator, now that human nature is what it is, and the conditions of life what they are, that the immortality of which man is undoubtedly susceptible shall be an immortality in this world.

* Clothing like this was necessary when they were to leave Paradise.

Immortality is to be in no earthly Garden of Delight, always mocking the eager quest after happiness; but in a spiritual and heavenly one; that Paradise in which there is no need of earthly sun or moon, but of which the glory of God and the Lamb are the Eternal Light.

*There, nor waxing sun, nor waning moon,
Nor stars with courses bright,
But the Lamb in that Blest City
Sheds an Everlasting Light;
There the daylight beams for ever;
All unknown are Time and Night!*

CHAPTER VII.

THE COURSE OF THE HISTORY OF MAN WHEN OUT IN THE WORLD.

Of the condition of the earth in general, or of that portion of it in which the first man and woman found themselves after being expelled from Paradise, we have not exact knowledge. Covered with herbs, grass, and the smaller class of trees, many of them yielding food, it probably was. The earth, in its natural condition, as we now know it, is either covered with forests of great trees, with underbrush, as was once a large part of North America, the British Islands, and most of Europe; or it is in the condition of open grassy plains, with trees and plants along the margin of streams; or of upland plain and hill country, covered entirely with a smaller growth of herbs and plants. The first can only be brought into a condition fit for cultivation by the employment of sharp tools, like the axe; the third may be subdued easily to the purpose of man when the race is multiplied, and men render help to one another. But the second is that in which, at the very outset and origin of things, before tools were invented, or mutual help could be rendered, a single family, or one man and one woman, could most readily find subsistence.

The people of a country like Canada or of the adjoining commonwealth of States, have an advantage in studying a problem like this, in the fact that they have seen large tracts of territory in an absolutely natural condition as formed and developed by the Creator. Along with this, they have seen men and women penetrating the depths of forests, settling down on some one spot, felling the trees and clearing the brush around them; so creating, from a tree-covered wilderness, a tract of tillable ground, which, in time, by continuous labor, is developed into the Farm, with its homestead, garden, cattle, implements, and all the appliances of country civilization.

The most remarkable thing about all this is the extreme simplicity of the means employed. At the outset, no tool beyond the axe is required, and what wonders can be wrought by this simple instrument, any one can see who observes a farm in its rudimentary stages, and looks at the forest alongside it.

It is most probable that the first man and woman found themselves in a region corresponding to the second of these

conditions. The locality was undoubtedly the hilly upland of Armenia, with the valleys of the four rivers previously named diversifying the scene. The former would be covered with grass and small herbs, the latter with trees of various uses. The country would doubtless correspond with much of that in which the Indian tribes of the American continent found subsistence for ages, and in which many European settlers found a country almost made to their hands. The soil would be prolific and easy to till. It must have been so at the beginning. Tools were not needed in the Garden. Its trees yielded sustenance, and its soil was not tilled. But immediately on the first man being forced out into the outside world, the decree was that he should "till the ground"—and this is a matter of necessity. Thus began that process of "subduing the earth," which was impressed on the race as its destiny from the beginning, and which, as men have multiplied, has resulted in the wonderful extent of cultivation in various continents as we now know them.

To this cultivation tools are essential. Of their origin we are told nothing. But at an early stage of the story of Adam's posterity, we meet with a man of whom we have the remarkable statement that he was "*an Instructor of every artificer in Brass and Iron*"—indicating that before his time working in brass and iron had been invented and practiced. Be this as it may, one thing is clear, that the life of Adam and Eve, as now to be lived, was one essentially different to that of the Paradise. Instead of a subsistence ready to their hands, in the trees and herbs specially provided, subsistence has now to be obtained by cultivating the ground; always a matter of toil, often of vexing difficulty, and not seldom of wearing disappointment. The life that has been lived by all their descendants has now begun, and although, in the order of Divine wisdom, good has been brought out of evil, and adversity made to yield its "sweet uses," men cannot but long at times for another order of development for the world, and for an absence of that pain, danger, accident, and not infrequent death, which have marked the actual development of labor on the earth. This is specially so when we include within our consideration the toil of slaves. When we think of all that slavery has involved, of the crime and bloodshed, the kidnapping and transporting, and then of the cruelty often developed by the bondage itself, men may well wish that the labor of the world had never been such as it has become as a direct consequence of the fall of man. Still, under remedial influences, of Divine origin, which began to operate from the very beginning, labor itself has become a medium of higher discipline. Not only has it brought

about marvellous results in the development of the powers of the earth and the sea, but it has, in the mind of man himself, developed courage, patience, perseverance, hope, as well as that activity of intellect expressed by the proverb, "Necessity is the mother of invention."

THE STORY OF ADAM'S FIRST TWO SONS.

The beginning of the Family history of the world is only too true a picture of its continuation. Modified as is the progress of human development, by higher influences tending to virtue (and this must never be lost sight of in considering the development of human nature in the world), we still see, only too often between brothers, a rising up of jealousy, anger, evil purposes; and, in embryo, if not in act, all that was done by the elder son to the younger in the very first family that lived in the world.

The story of the two first brothers is significant religiously as well as morally. These two sons, the elder called Cain, or "Acquired," the younger Abel, or "Breath," followed what are now and have always been, the two leading branches of the agricultural industry of the world. The elder cultivated the ground. The younger became a feeder of sheep. The upland plains for the one—like the downs of southern England, the hill-sides of North Britain, or the vast inland plains of Australia; the lower grounds and valleys for the other, where a richer soil readily yielded crops to the simplest form of husbandry. There could be no rivalry or jealousy between them as to their occupation; no dispute about boundaries or landmarks. One might suppose that these two would live out their lives in perfect peace and harmony. But, as so often since, it was in religion that the occasion for quarrel arose. And it is noticeable (and most significant in view of future developments) that it was not in respect to the higher matters of religion, not as to the God whom they should worship, but as to the *form* their worship should assume. We are told that both the brothers brought an offering to the Lord. It is evident that by this time religion had taken the form, not simply of prayer and praise, but of offering, and so, indeed, it has ever since continued, in all forms of true religion, and in many forms of false. Both Cain and Abel conformed to this requirement. To that extent both were obedient, and both presented of that which naturally arose from their avocation; Cain of the fruit of the ground, Abel of the best of his flock. The narrative is that Abel's offering was accepted, and Cain's rejected. But the reason is not there assigned. It has been generally concluded that the reason of

the difference was that in Abel's offering there was an acknowledgment of the Divine sentence of death as due to sin; and an acceptance of Divine mercy as revealed by the substitution of an innocent victim slain as an atonement. Cain's offering, on the other hand, bears the aspect of an offering of thanksgiving, made by an innocent dependent creature, such as the first man might have presented in Paradise. And probably, to judge by the Divine action, there was a deliberate ignoring of the necessity of the offering of life in sacrifice.

It is impossible not to see that this is a reasonable conclusion. Abel, coming as a sinful man, presents his slain substitute as a propitiation, and is accepted. Cain comes with an offering of thanks to the great Creator and Provider, ignoring his own condition as a wrong-doer needing mercy, and ignoring his relation to the Supreme as Lord of morals and conduct. Abel's offering was of the lambs of his flock. In this, it is impossible not to see a foreshadowing of the lambs subsequently offered by patriarchs and priests, also of the redeeming lamb of the Passover, and, above all, of "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." All these became realities in the course of human history. Does not Cain's offering represent natural religion, the offspring of man's reason, ignoring revelation; whilst Abel's is the offering Divinely ordained, and fitted to the circumstances of men who have done wrong and need forgiveness? The one could not but be rejected and the other accepted, according to the operation of those laws of moral and righteous government, which are as unchangeable as the laws which govern the realm of the natural world.*

The colloquy between Cain and the Supreme Governor brings out the principle on which the Divine government has ever been founded—

"IF THOU DOEST WELL, SHALT THOU NOT BE ACCEPTED? IF NOT WELL, SIN WAITETH AT THE DOOR," *i.e.*, for its retribution.

Do well, and live; the rule of the Old Dispensation, is the rule of the New Dispensation also.

But let us understand. Do well included, under the Old Testament, the acknowledgment of wrong-doing, and the offering of sacrifice. To do well, under the New Testament, also includes the acknowledgment of wrong and the offering of sacrifice, *viz.*, the presenting with the mind and heart, before God, of the One Sacrifice offered by the Son of God for the sins of the world. The law of moral right-

* But the Holy Spirit in the New Testament speaks of Abel's offering as of Faith, *i.e.*, of belief in, and obedience to the Supreme Lord.

cousness was the same under both Covenants. Under both, men were made bitterly to feel that by the deeds of the law no man could be justified. Under both there was, as a fundamental condition of acceptance with God, the presentation of sacrifice for sin. These have been made universally obligatory, being founded on the deep instinctive sentiments of mankind.

But now we have unveiled one of the saddest scenes of all human history; the first jealousy, the first breaking out of anger, the first violence, the first murder! Is not this deed of blood the explanation of the words of the great Teacher, that "the Devil was a Murderer from the beginning"?

To what can that saying be applied but to this murder of Abel, incited by him in the rousing of angry passion and devilish hatred in the elder brother? The old serpent was now in the world, not only by his devices raising up man against God, but man against man, and using religious rites as the pretext, as only too often since. It is not (as some would-be-wise men foolishly say) the religion of God which has been at the root of the cruelties and murders of Christian times by the so-called Christian Church. These things have always been of the Devil, who stirred up the passions of priests and inquisitors against the disciples of their time, even as the Scribes and priests were stirred to anger against the great Master in His day, and finally murdered Him.

In the story of Cain and Abel we see reflected the persecutor and the persecuted of all times—the saints and prophets of the Old Dispensation, the confessors and preachers of the New. And as persecuting, the stronger, the more powerful in Church or State, inspired by jealousy of goodness, jealousy of influence, fear of their example, hatred of their testimony, determination to be rid of them at all costs. It was after the Divine colloquy with Cain, and the pointing out the way by which he also might be accepted, that the outbreak leading to murder took place. He evidently disregarded the monition, and opened the way for the great Adversary to take full possession of him. It is even so now. The Divine word comes to many a man

* The expression Sin "lieth at the door," has given rise to some curious comments. But its meaning is on the surface. Sin lies there, and has to be dealt with. Of the various forms in which forgiveness of sin is referred to, not the least expressive is that which speaks of it as a "sending away." We have preserved this idea in the word remission, which simply means sending away. We have the same idea in the word remit, as used in business language. To remit is to send off; from whence comes the application of the word to the doing away with punishment by remitting it. Now when sin is said still to lie at a man's door, it plainly implies that it is not remitted, sent away, or forgiven.

(by preaching, reading, monition of friends, and what not), who disregards it, ignores it, and becomes more wicked than before by that very disregard. It is certainly true, as matter of fact, and not simply as a doctrine of theology, that the Divine word is to some a "savor of death, unto death." And it comes naturally to be. The disregard of warning and admonition hardens the heart, and prepares the soul for overt acts of wickedness. It was the disregard of the Divine admonition by the mouth of Jesus that prepared the way for His murder by the chief priests.

The Progressive Development of evil in the world is as noticeable in the case of Cain as of his father and mother.

After the slighting of the monition came the murder. After the murder came on a defiant hardness and callousness of conscience, with also a defiant deceitfulness and lying. Where is thy brother? asked the Eternal Father. The ready lie leaps to the mouth, "I know not!"

The Devil, by the mouth of the Divine Teacher, is characterized as the Father of all Liars, and it is terrible to see the development of his power in this the earliest family of the world. The lie is repeated, in another form, in the query which has passed into the universal language of man, "*Am I my brother's keeper?*" Everywhere, and ever since, all the world over, that query has been the mark and sign of a brutal and hardened nature, the nature of a villain.

And the answer has been the signification of a Divine law with regard to murder, *the blood of the murdered one cries aloud for retribution!* It has always been so, in all ages and countries, and it is expressed in the proverb in our language, Murder will out!

The sentence would doubtless have been death but for the consideration, who is to inflict it? There might have been other children of Adam and Eve, but there could scarcely have been any competent to take part in the apprehending and executing a sentence of death upon this desperate man.

Instead of actual death, the sentence was a living death; a banishment from the society of father, mother, and all human kind. To become "*a fugitive and a vagabond on the face of the earth*" was to become the first Outlaw, the first transported Convict, the first whose hand was to be against every man, and every man's hand against him. So he went out—and, significantly, the land he went to was called Nod, meaning "wandering," indicating an aimless, restless, unhappy life—ever seeking and never finding—"seeking rest and finding none."

A place for repentance may have been found, even

for such a double-dyed transgressor as Cain. At any rate, it is amongst his descendants that we find the origin of many things that have subsisted in the world ever since, viz.:

The origin of the Nomad life, of tents with flocks and herds.

The origin of instruments of Music, the harp and the pipe; the one the first stringed instrument, the other the first wind instrument. Genesis iv., 16 to 23.

The origin of Tools and cutting instruments.

And finally, the origin of Poetical and rhythmical composition. Genesis iv., 16 to 24.

The more closely this book of Genesis is studied, in relation to man in the past, and also to his condition in these times now present, the more we shall marvel at its accurate correspondences; and at the number and variety of the things which took their rise in the earliest period of the dwelling of men on the earth.

We may notice, too, how utterly absent is the element of fancifulness, or foolishness, such as fills so large a space in early secular writings in all the languages of the world.

Every one of the incidents related, even where is the manifest immediate execution of Divine power, and the working of forces that are not in the world now, has a distinctly practical aspect. These incidents bear upon the life of men as now lived in the world. Adam, Eve, Cain, Abel, are all types of men and women as we see them, and have known and read of them. The circumstances that befell them, their temptation, their weakness, their seduction, their fall; the retributive justice that overtook them, are all instinct with practical instruction. And this is precisely what differentiates these biographies of Scripture from the fanciful, foolish, and even absurd and licentious stories of the earliest mythologies, in which is found no lesson, no example, no warning, nor anything that has the least bearing on the conduct of any man as now living and acting in the world.

CHAPTER VIII.

NOAH AND THE MEN OF HIS TIME.

Genesis 6.

For many generations the course of human history is recorded in Scripture by little more than a genealogical table. Only one man is noted as being or doing what was worthy of record.

This brief note is like a beam of light shining out in a long era of dullness and gloom. "Enoch," we are told, "*walked with God,*" and it is added—somewhat mysteriously—"*and he was not, for God took him.*"

This man Enoch has been a pattern of goodness to all subsequent times, as one who lived his earthly life in perfect harmony with his Creator. He walked with God! But it is the manner of his ending that has stamped an individuality upon the man, and lifted him far above the lot of ordinary mortals. The record is "*He was not, for God took him.*"

The first part of the sentence reminds us of the way in which the death of persons is often spoken of by writers of old Rome. "He lived," was the expressive formula. Two words only, indeed only one in the original, but with a world of meaning. So, the expression, "he was not," suggests death; as we have it nearly in the same form, in our English expression, "he is no more." But when it is added, "For God took him," we have a phrase of which the meaning is only made clear in the New Testament. The Epistle to the Hebrews tells us, "By faith Enoch *was translated that he should not see death,* and he was not found, because God translated him!"

How this was done it is utterly vain to speculate. And what possible advantage would it be for us to know? The revelation would certainly not be such as to enable other men to escape death. Apart from this, to reveal the manner in which this "translation" was accomplished would only be to gratify vain curiosity. All we know is that apparently there was nothing visible of the translation, as in the case of Elijah's ascent in a chariot of fire, or of the risen Saviour, when He was borne up to heaven in the presence of His Disciples.

The only other noteworthy point in this long story of the world before the flood is the length of men's lives—and

here, again, we must take the record as we find it. It is absurd to allege that the narrative is unreasonable; or that this length of days was impossible. The whole duration of the life of man is simply by the ordering of the Divine will. There is no reason, in the necessity of things, why the ordinary limit of a healthy man's life should be "three score years and ten" any more than there is that the life of domestic animals should be so much shorter. Why should not the days of a noble creature like the horse be three score and ten too? Why does he attain maturity at a period when a human being is only a little child needing the care of a nurse?

The Divine Creator has so ordained it. That answer is sufficient. Beyond that it is impossible to go. So, when considering this narrative of the days before the flood, while some may amuse themselves by imagining reasons why the life of man was prolonged to ten times its present duration, it is sufficient to consider the Divine will.

It is, however, noticeable, that after the last great cataclysm and upheaval by which the habitable world was flooded, a gradual shortening began, which, in the course of generations, brought the limit of life to be what it is now. The Ninetieth Psalm makes this evident.

One thing is, however, clear, that the generations before the flood, had come by that time, to be characterized by an extraordinary development of Wickedness. The picture is of a world given up to corruption and violence, when men of great stature and strength dominated at will, following the bent of natural inclination without check. A state of society is hinted at like that of California in its early days of mining development, when crime, lust and lawlessness abounded; when the only rule was the rule of the strongest, and the strongest men were the most wicked. The earth was *corrupt*. This is repeated with emphasis. God looked upon it and it was *corrupt*; for all flesh had *corrupted* His way upon earth. This doubtless refers to the relation between man and woman. It was also "*filled with violence*." That also is repeated emphatically, reminding us of the dark scenes of cruelty and bloodshed of the native tribes of Central Africa, of Ashantee, with its human holocausts; of Uganda, Gazanguela, and the horror of the slave hunts and the slave trade. "Filled with violence," as Rome was in the early days of the Empire, when murder, and lust, and poison, and blood, were almost every-day incidents of life; and not of savage life, but of a life of highly developed civilization. And coming down to modern times, what could more accurately describe the dreadful days of the French Reign of Terror than this old description of a

world utterly corrupt and wholly given up to violence! Thus human nature survives in its developments through long ages, despite all change in manners, arts, governments and civilization.

The revelation now is of utter weariness of the world as it had come to be, on the part of its Creator, as expressed by the words, "It repented the Lord that he had made man, and grieved Him to the heart." This ascription of human feelings to the Creator has been objected to on very insufficient grounds. For, granting that the Divine Being is conscious, that He is capable of thought, design, calculation, purpose—that He can approve, and find pleasure in the works of His hands, and pronounce them good; how can the converse of this not be true, viz., that he finds pain when his work is marred. What more according to sound reason than that the Divine Being should be weary of the perverseness, the folly, the degeneracy of the race; and almost wish he had never created a being like man at all. This is how men feel; and, let us remember, that this approving the right and being vexed with the wrong is part of what is peculiar to man amongst conscious beings. It belongs exclusively to humanity. It is part of the Divine Image, the highest and finest part, the truest and most perfect mirror of the Being who is righteousness in essence, who cannot but abhor evil and approve good.

The expression, therefore, that God was grieved that He had ever created man is agreeable to analogy and sound reason. If it is said that the declaration that the Lord repented that He had made man is inconsistent with another declaration that "God is not a man that He should lie, nor the son of man that He should repent," let it be considered that the two declarations are made under wholly different circumstances, and that the meaning of the words is different. The one declaration is that of a perfectly righteous Being who "repents" that he has made man in the sense of bitter sorrow for the wreck and ruin of the noble nature He has created. The other is that He cannot repent, in the sense of being a fickle, changeable creature who forms purposes and changes them without reason.

Both these correspond with what is known of the working of the mind of man. A father of high and noble nature, who has spent pains on the education of a son, and labored much to place him well in the world, if that son turns out ill, year after year, bringing dishonour upon his father's house, cannot but be "grieved at heart," and some shade of what is here called "repentance" will undoubtedly cross his thoughts at times, and a wish that such a son had never been born.

On the other hand, the same man, being a man of perfect

and tried probity, whose word is his bond,—should some doubt be expressed as to whether he will fulfil a promise, would undoubtedly exclaim, "I am not the sort of man to repent and change my mind—when my word is given, it will be kept. Have I said—and shall I not do it?"

Thus speak men, and it is through this mirror of human nature—the Divine Image—that we can understand what can be understood of the workings of the infinite mind.

But if the whole conception of the Creator (should a Creator be believed in at all) be that of a simple embodied creative "Force," subsisting in an impassive calm throughout eternal ages, and never moved to either pleasure or displeasure, either joy or grief, it is undoubtedly impossible to conceive of such a one being grieved at heart. But man himself has a far higher nature than such a Being as this. Moreover, the works of creation are full of suggestions of good will. The design manifest in nature is not only of orderly arrangement for existence, but of benevolence, and considerations pointing to the happiness of sentient creatures, such being planned for precisely as a good father makes provision, in his household arrangements, for the happiness of his family.

It is inconceivable that the Originator and Sustainer of the world in which human beings are placed, should be inferior to His own creatures. That fundamental enquiry, "He that formed the eye, shall He not see?" applies to the higher faculties that are the glory of man. The Being that created and sustains man must be one who can love, can have compassion, can judge righteously, can pursue great and noble ends; and as it is a sign of a low and ignoble nature in a man to be indifferent to wrong-doing, and of a truly great and noble nature to hate evil, the Divine Being must be conceived of as hating the wrong as well as loving the right. And as man has been created with a capacity of governing, judging, and ruling, on a very large scale, even extending to the governing of great empires, all with a view to the encouraging of right and the putting down of wrong, so the Supreme Sustainer of all, by whom all things consist, and are held in their first order, must have the capacity to rule in righteousness, by repressing and putting down wrong-doing. And as men do all this according to the measure of their capacity and intelligence, so, with the Divine Being, according to His power and wisdom.

Further, as the measures of men in the high sphere of government are often misunderstood, or not understood at all, simply from want of capacity in men of lower spheres to understand them, so, but in a far higher sense, it is with the dealings and measures ascribed to the Supreme Ruler

of the Universe. That "His ways" should be "past finding out" only indicates that the men who attempt the task have not sufficient capacity for it.

All this has direct bearing on the design of the Supreme with regard to the wicked and abandoned race that now inhabited the earth. That purpose was of destruction. The race of men had been about fifteen hundred years upon the earth, and had become utterly corrupt. They were unfit to live—as indeed has been the case with other races and tribes in both ancient and modern times. The purpose was connected with an impending cataclysm or overthrow on the earth itself. "I will destroy them, *with the earth.*" These intimations of what was to happen throw light on what did happen. It was much more than a flood. It was an overthrow of existing conditions. But there was a purpose of mercy along with a threat of retribution. This has been the order of Divine government from the beginning.

A delay of one hundred and twenty years was granted. This, we are told in the New Testament, was in God's long suffering, *not willing that men should perish, but that they should come to repentance.* The time, however, must be measured in relation to the length of men's lives at that time. Men lived ten times as long then. This time of delay would be equivalent to about twelve years of a modern life—an ample time for consideration, repentance and amendment.

One man, and one family, were conspicuous in this evil generation. Noah, whose name signifies "Rest" or "Comfort," was distinguished for goodness. He was a "just" man—as opposed to the men of lawless violence; a perfect man—perfect in the Scripture sense of the word, viz., sincere, upright-minded, free from double-dealing, licentiousness, and corrupt transactions; and he, like Enoch, *walked with God.* A godly man, having the fear of the Supreme Lord before his eyes, amidst godlessness and universal defection.

One of the most beautiful of classic stories is that of Telemachus, the son of Ulysses, who, in his travels, was accompanied by the goddess of wisdom in the form of Mentor. This presence surrounded him as a guard, and he, so long as he faithfully kept by Mentor's side, and walked with him, was guided and kept.

Noah, naturally, was a man who witnessed for righteousness. The New Testament writers speak of him as a man of faith who believed God, and acted on his conviction, by doing a very extraordinary thing, viz., building a vessel in the midst of dry land, whose only use could be to float on wide-spreading waters. This of itself was a striking

form of preaching; and, in doing this, he "*condemned the world,*" who evidently did not believe the threat of impending catastrophe.

But doubtless he was a preacher of righteousness by word of mouth, remonstrating, warning, beseeching, as the true messengers of God have done in all ages down to these times. These men, men of justice, and righteousness, and purity, are the salt of the earth now, and have been in all the dark eras of the world's history. And let us note again, as bearing on the revelation of the Divine Being, that this man "walked with God!" The righteousness, purity and goodness of Noah found congenial companionship in a Being whose righteousness, purity and goodness were like his own—only absolutely perfect.

CHAPTER IX.

THE GREAT FLOOD.

Genesis 7.

Several things are apparent in the Scripture narrative of the Flood.

First.—That the men living at the time had ample notice of what was coming.

Second.—That they refused to believe in the possibility of a catastrophe, and refused to make preparation for it.

Third.—That the generation then living were irredeemably wicked, a curse to the world, and unfit to live in it.

Fourth.—That the sweeping away of all living creatures except a small remnant, was the act of the Supreme Creator, whose ways are always right. Though men of modern generations may sit in judgment on them, they are not possessed of sufficient knowledge to judge wisely, either as to the proper mode of retribution, or its extent, or the effect to be produced by it.

Fifth.—One thing is clear, viz., that the destruction was of a race of wicked men; and that therein the Divine Mind and Law are manifested; that is to say: a hatred of evil, and a retributive dispensation with regard to it.

And sixth.—That the man who refused to be carried away by the wickedness of the time was saved with all his house. This also by the ordering of Divine government.

There is thus apparent, broadly and generally, a settled order of Divine government with regard to the race of man in the world; and this, although in its particular manifestations, we may not always be able to follow it, so far as the course of particular events is concerned. Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed for their supreme wickedness; but other places, of great wickedness, have been suffered to continue to curse the earth—Herculaneum and Pompeii had their developments of gross wickedness too; but they were not as variously wicked as Rome. The New Testament, however, teaches us that many of the things that happened in these olden times were types or examples for the admonition of men of subsequent ages. But it is clear that the Divine retribution has not always reference to the life now present. Retribution for wickedness, as certain to come to pass in the eternal world, is plainly revealed, and also the possibility of repentance and consequent deliverance in this.

For this Flood, in many respects, was a Type.

As to the Flood itself, it was evidently brought about by a cataclysm of the same nature as that by which the bounds of land and water were fixed in the ages before man was created. The narrative tells us, very briefly, not only that "*the windows of Heaven were opened,*" so as to produce extraordinary rains, but that *the Fountains of the great Deep were broken up.*—This clearly intimates a violent disturbance of the relation between land and sea, and an overflow of the waters of the ocean. It seems to have been the last of the great eras of elevation and depressions in the world, but operating only over the region between the Black Sea, the Persian Gulf and the Caspian Sea. But this was then the whole habitable earth. What such a convulsion may effect, when on a very small scale, may be understood from what happened in New Zealand about the year 1890. One of the most interesting of natural objects of New Zealand was the series of lovely cataracts called the Pink Falls, from the color of the rocks around them. The region round about was so actively volcanic that the very ground in places was hot. A recent traveller (Mr. Froude) has given a vivid description of the perturbation with which his party travelled over a district where the internal fires were so near. Shortly after his book was published, a terrible convulsion shook the whole region. A violent upheaval of the land took place; and now, where there was a valley, there are hills; where there were hills, there is a depression; while every vestige of the Pink Falls has disappeared.

Such, we may conceive to have been the convulsion which let in the waters of the ocean on the region first inhabited by our race, and which depressed the mountains below their level, with a corresponding elevation of the bed of the sea. In addition to which an incessant downpouring of rain swelled the rivers and streams of the land.

One man and his family had believed the forewarning, and made preparation as directed.

A vast structure had been prepared, capable of floating on the deep. This was not a Ship. It was not designed for movement. It had neither sails nor rudder. Its sole purpose was to float; holding within its vast interior, not only the family of the faithful man, but two and two of all the tribes of animated creatures then inhabiting the earth.

It was apparently about 450 feet long, 75 feet broad, and 45 feet high, and corresponded nearly to the size of one of the largest of the steamboats of modern times. Its interior was in three divisions; doubtless for the proper housing of the various orders of creatures who were temporarily to inhabit it; with stores of food for their use. It had a light (not a

window, as in the authorized version; the Hebrew word signifies a light, evidently, from the description of it, running round the whole vessel, about a foot and a half wide, and doubtless so contrived as to light most of the interior.

This huge vessel was built under Divine direction; its size and character being arranged by Him who was the Architect of the Universe, whose orderly mathematical arrangements in this and other worlds, calculated in the depths of Infinite Wisdom, are the wonder of all who look into them.

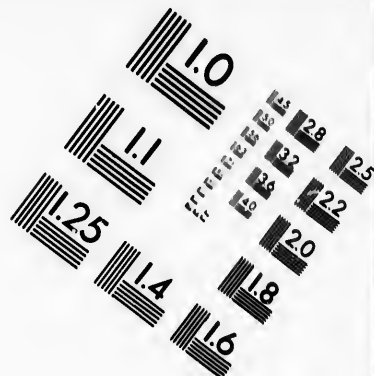
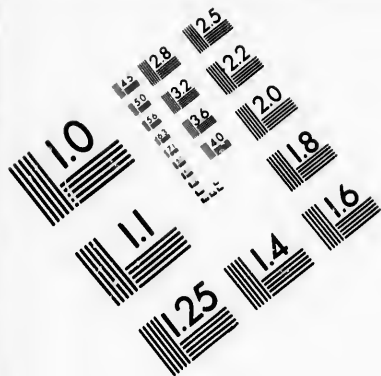
The cavils of unbelievers respecting the size of this ark must be set down to simple ignorance, or want of consideration. It is impossible, at this distance of time, when thousands of years have elapsed, that anything can be known with certainty as to how many creatures were to enter the ark, and what space would be required for themselves and their food, along with provision for Noah and his family. All computations and estimates are mere vanity. They rest on no solid basis and amount to mere guesses. The unreasonableness of such cavils may be seen from this one consideration; that if a vessel of the size described would not have been large enough, it would have been perfectly easy, in the time given, to have built one twice or four times the size. But, as the narrative describes the building of the vessel to have been under Divine direction, it is absolutely certain that its dimensions were sufficient, and no more than sufficient. He who framed the solar system, and weighed and measured all its parts; He who arranged the balance of the proportions between land and sea with mathematical nicety, He directed the vessel to be built of such a size as is described. And we may rest with assurance that it would exactly answer its purpose. Men make mistakes in designing and building; but God, never.

As to the objection that such numbers of living creatures could not be got into the ark at all, and could not live there as long as is stated, of what possible value are such guesses, when made in ignorance of the numbers and character of the creatures. It is a homely simile, and imperfect, but if one considers what a number of different specimens of the animated creation are now gathered and kept within a menagerie, or in zoological gardens, we may form some conception of what might be done in the case described, when it is evident that a Divine Providence was guiding the whole operation.

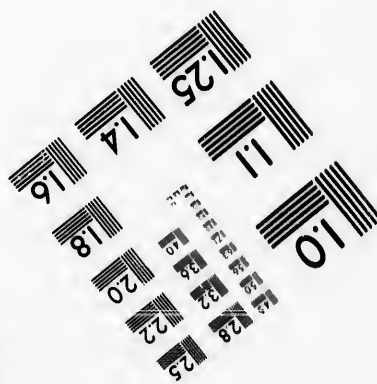
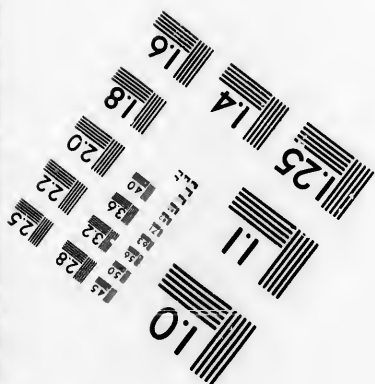
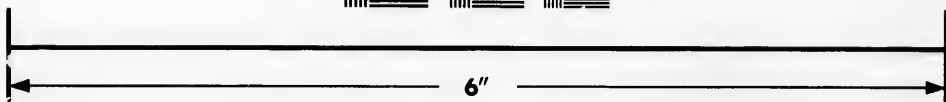
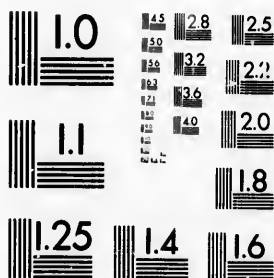
The foundation of the whole narrative is that of a special Divine interference, both of retribution and deliverance. Admit this (and why should it not be admitted, if there is Divine government at all), and all falls into proper place and proportion.

W. M. C. 11/18/17





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To build such a structure in the midst of a country where no water existed on which it could possibly float, was a demonstration of extraordinary Faith. The New Testament tells us, in the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, that whilst the ark was preparing, the course of the world went on as usual.—Luke 17 : 26, 27.

Men ate and drank, they married and were given in marriage, up to the very day when the convulsion let loose the waters upon the earth. For a period equal to twelve years of our lifetime this apparently idiotic and absurd structure was being proceeded with; being, doubtless, the standing jest of the men of the time.

The whole affair is a Type. Men in these Christian days who regulate life by considerations of a future judgment are equally the object of more or less ridicule or suspicion. They are either enthusiasts and fools, or hypocritical knaves. The general condition of society naturally modifies this condition of things. When a whole community is largely under Christian influences, then this habit of living in view of an eternal world and with regard to the revelations, promises, threatenings of a Divine Being, is so much the manner of the people that no one is singular who is governed by it. But let such a state of things arise as at the French Revolution, when godlessness and vice were the predominant tone, what then would the life of a man of faith be? It would be the experience of Noah repeated.

But the Ark, being completed, and fashioned, as another ark was, many ages afterwards, in exact accord with Divine direction, preparations were made for the entry of Noah and his family to the place assigned them. "*Come thou, and all thy house, into the ark.*" Thus spake the Creator and Supreme Judge. Seven days were allowed for the many arrangements necessary for the entry of such a multitude of beasts and fowls. There was a distinction made, even at that early stage, between clean and unclean creatures. What that distinction was, we know not with certainty. Possibly it might correspond with the distinction between wild animals and domestic. That would be a difference founded on the natural use and order of things. The details furnished in the law of Moses were not introduced for many ages afterwards, but as they were Divinely ordained, it is possible that the same distinctions were made known in these earlier times. It matters not. The only point worth noticing is that the clean animals were to enter the ark in sevens, while those not clean were to be by twos, the male and the female. But the fowls of the air were all to enter by sevens.

As to the means employed to get these creatures into the ark; many, if not most, would enter without difficulty, being accustomed to be led or driven by man. All domestic animals and fowls would thus enter naturally, as if driven into a fold or led into a stable. The wild animals and birds not domesticated must have been made subject to some impulse, such as even now possesses wild creatures when there is a premonition of impending danger. It is well known that in such circumstances the fiercest and most untameable beasts will become as quiet as domestic animals.

All being safely housed in the ark, we are significantly told, "*The Lord shut him in!*" So, in quiet and calm, was Noah and his family enabled, faithfully committing themselves to the Divine protection, to wait the coming catastrophe.

The Flood came. The waters prevailed over the earth. The Ark was lifted up. (How graphic and natural the narrative is). The ark "*went upon the face of the waters,*" and the event proved that it was capable of answering its purpose and housing in safety all those, both of man and beast, who were hereafter to continue the races of animated beings in the world.

All others perished; perished: first by their exceeding wickedness, second by their folly in disregarding the long period of warning. And, as is the order of a government of this world (and the denial of revelation does not alter it), the children perished with their guilty parents; and animals and living creatures who had no moral consciousness perished with those who had.

To what purpose is it for men to cavil, criticise and find fault? All such either believe the narrative to be true, or believe it to be, in substance, false. Believing the narrative to be true, and that there was a Divine hand in all this, can men, with any sense or judgment, arraign the Supreme Judge as being unjust? Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? But if the narrative is believed to be false, criticism as to details, as bearing on the character of the Divine Being, is an absurdity. If it is judged to be false, on the ground that a perfectly equitable and benevolent Being could not have doomed a whole race to destruction, the judgment is unreasonable. The simile of the child of a great statesman must be used again. We are no more competent to judge of the equitableness of great acts of retribution than such a child would be of the reasonableness, let us say, of a declaration of war in the policy of such a father.

Sufficient to say, that the revelation of God from beginning to end is that of a Being of equal benevolence and justice, and that there has never been any great act of retribution without some prospect of escape by repentance and amendment. And as it was in former ages, so in the Christian Dispensation. The wrath and righteous judgment of God are revealed against the wickedness of man, and that judgment will be executed. But for every individual man a door of hope and escape is open.

The ways of God are not arbitrary and unequal. Men said so, in the days of the prophet Ezekiel; and they say so now. But the saying was not true then, and it is not true now.

CRITICAL NOTES AS TO THE FLOOD.

As we, in these days, are not to be saved by an Ark, it is not of any special importance that we should understand the details of its construction.

Noah understood them, and had abundance of time to make needful arrangements. It saved him and his house. That is sufficient. What men in these days have to understand and act upon is the way of being saved through Christ.

In verse 14 of the 6th chapter, the original Hebrew gives a very beautiful suggestion. Noah is directed to make "rooms" in the ark. The Hebrew word is "Nests," indicating such receptacles for beasts and birds, after their kind, as would be both home-like and for their comfort. The God of Creation is the God of revelation and moral government.

AS TO THE EXTENT AND DEPTH OF THE FLOOD.

There is no need, from the narrative, to suppose that the flood was ever over the whole surface of the globe. The Divine purpose, in speculations on this subject, has been somewhat lost sight of. This was, for righteous reasons, the destruction of the race of men then inhabiting the world; and everything that is known or recorded points to the conclusion that the region of settlement and habitation did not, at that time, extend beyond the bounds of the four rivers that watered the regions now called Armenia and Persia.

The idea that such a flood must necessarily, from its depth, engulf all the lands on the surface of the earth, is founded on an erroneous idea of its cause; which was, as has been stated, and as clearly indicated in the Bible narrative, a "breaking up" of the relative conditions of sea and land in that region, a subsidence in one direction and an elevation in another; a cataclysm and convulsion like that of geologic ages, accompanied by extraordinary and long continued torrents of rain. But there is no indication of these convulsive movements extending beyond the bounds of the seas encircling Armenia and Persia. All animated life then in the earth was concentrated there, and there the great work of destruction commenced and ended.

This view, which is undoubtedly the true one of the

origin of the flood, will enable us to understand that the mountains and high hills could be covered by the waters. The depression and subsidence of the surface of the land would bring down the elevation of the hills to such a point that the waters would naturally cover them. And, on the other hand, when the period of subsidence was ended, and the land was again elevated and took the form, in plains, and mountains, and valleys, which it has maintained ever since, the waters would flow off to the sea once more, leaving the course of the rivers, viz., the Euphrates, the Tigris, the Araxes, substantially, as they have ever since been.

THE CASPIAN SEA.

This vast inland sea, now wholly of fresh water, opening out not far from Mount Ararat, into which flows one of the great rivers of Armenia, may possibly have owed its origin in great part to this flood of four thousand years ago. This, though thrown out as a mere suggestion, has a very reasonable basis of actual observation to rest upon. Thus:—

1. It presents incontestable proof of having been, in former ages, covered with sea water.
2. Its surface and surrounding shores abound in sea salt, sea weed, salt marshes, and salt pits. And innumerable shells, mostly resembling those of the sea, and such as are not found in rivers, are to be found along its shores.
3. Towards its eastern border the whole country has the appearance of a deserted bed of the sea.
4. The Caspian Sea has the same fish, the same seals as are to be found in the Black Sea and the Sea of Aral, indicating that in some remote age the water of all these were commingled in one.
5. It was evidently at one time much more extensive on three sides, North, West and East, than it now is, and it is still slowly diminishing.

All these appearances are precisely what would naturally be found in a region once covered by such a flood as Scripture describes, but where, in great part, the waters have subsided, leaving the Black Sea, the Caspian, and the Aral separate bodies of water, and the country between them a region of hills and valleys, with rivers fallen to the channels through which they are flowing to this day.

AS TO THE UNIFORMITY OF NATURE.

The Uniformity of nature is sometimes supposed to be such as to preclude the idea of a great catastrophe like the Flood.

But such a conception of the natural world as that there have never been in it any such great cataclysms or convulsions as will alter the conformation of countries, the course of rivers, the height of mountains, and the depth of valleys is contrary to facts as we have known them during this very century.

Such conceptions of uniformity are narrow and unscientific, comparable only to the notions of a West Indian, who treated as idle fables the stories he heard of water freezing solid, and the covering of land by snow. In this very century, there have been convulsions in New Zealand (see an earlier page of this chapter), in China, in Japan, which have altered the course of rivers and the conformation of whole districts of country. There is the clearest evidence that the great plains of the St. Lawrence were once a vast inland lake, and that the present expansions of the great river in the lakes St. Francis, St. Louis and St. Peter, are the remains of what was once an inland sea. The Mountain—so-called—or wood-crowned hill, at the foot of which Montreal is built, was once an active volcano, with streams of lava at times pouring down its sides. So were other mountains in its neighborhood.

The earth, in all its parts, bears evidence of convulsions and disturbances. There is water where land was formerly, all along the coasts of Britain, along the shores of the Mediterranean, and of Northern Europe. The Zuyder Zee of Holland is a modern creation. There is land where water was all along the lower course of the Ganges, the Danube, the Po, the Yang-tse-Chiang.

A thousand years hence, when the region of the Pink Falls of New Zealand is covered with farms and flocks, a sceptic may laugh at the story that the most beautiful cataract on the earth occupied that spot, just as narrow-minded sceptics do in these days at the narrative of the flood.

TIDAL WAVES.

A recent irruption of the waters of the ocean over many populous districts of Japan, with the destruction of numerous villages, and loss of many thousand lives, may enable

some idea to be formed of the real nature of the flood of these early times, the causes and accompaniments of which have been so much misapprehended.

The effects of the wave—as we read in the Journals of September, 1896, were felt from Sendier to Aomori, a distance of over 200 miles in length. In a few minutes, 30,000 people were killed, and 12,000 houses destroyed. On the evening of the day of this terrible irruption of waters, three or four shocks of earthquake were felt, and about half an hour later a dull booming sound was heard coming from the sea. By the most of the people, little or no notice was taken of the noise; but a few, a very few, suspected its significance, and fled inland for their lives. The booming increased rapidly in volume, until it resembled the roar of cannon. Then, huge waves, of thirty feet in height, came thundering in to the shore, sweeping all before them, and leaving ruin in their wake. The province of Iwate suffered the most severely, the number of people killed in it alone being estimated at 26,000.

Japan is accustomed to violent convulsions, but this tidal wave, in violence, was almost unprecedented.

The Bible narrative of the Deluge suggests just some such irruption as this.

CHAPTER X.

THE SUBSIDENCE OF THE FLOOD AND THE COMMENCEMENT OF A NEW WORLD.

The flood subsided, the land appeared, and the ark found a resting place, not "on Mount Ararat," but "*upon the Mountains of Ararat,*" not on its summit, as has been absurdly suggested by Bible pictures, but more likely in some quiet valley in the mountain chain. The first act of Noah on setting foot on the present earth was to build an Altar, and offer a sacrifice of blood, thus basing the whole future life of the world on an acknowledgment:

1. Of wrong-doing on the part of man.
2. Of Divine Justice and Divine Mercy through sacrifice.

He thus recognized the fundamental distinction between the thank-offering suitable to a pure and innocent creature, and the offering of atonement suitable to a being like man. All false religions, even when observing the rite of sacrifice, fail to recognize this. The wonderfully beautiful Greek and Roman rites had their offerings of fruit and flowers, their songs and harvest festivals; good, so far as they went. They had also the offering of animals, and the shedding of blood on the altar. But this was only in deprecation of the wrath of a capricious deity; unaccompanied by confession of sin and of law broken, and only offered with the idea of securing capricious favor. The gods of the Greeks and Romans were not law-givers. No code of moral conduct proceeded from Jupiter or Apollo, hence there was no consciousness of sin in the sacrifice of their votaries, and no moral development arising out of their rites of worship.

But from Abel to Noah had proceeded the tradition of Sacrifice for Sin, and rites of worship which had their fruit in obedience to moral law and righteousness of life. And so onward, through the generations of men, who were under the guidance of God, until He came who fulfilled all these ancient ideas in the sacrifice of Himself for the sin of the world.

These ideas are not mythical or mystical; and they are not obsolete; they have their root in the nature of man; they belong to all time. They need, it is true, Divine direction; for otherwise, they have been, and are, perverted to the uses of priestcraft and superstition. But, rightly directed, they place humanity, in its relation to the Supreme, on a proper foundation; and open a way to recovery of

righteous living in this world, and assured hope for the world which is eternal.

A right foundation being thus laid in the relationship of mankind to the Supreme in spiritual things, we have a revelation of the true foundation on which the whole course of events will rest hereafter in the realm of natural things.

The offering of sacrifice was accepted. And now, in order that men may enter upon the work of life, cultivate the ground, and subdue the earth without fear, the Supreme revealed His purpose with regard to the future in the pregnant words:

"WHILE THE EARTH REMAINETH, SEEDTIME, AND HARVEST AND COLD AND HEAT, AND SUMMER AND WINTER, AND DAY AND NIGHT SHALL NOT CEASE!"

This Covenant is prefaced by the declaration that "*though the imagination of man's heart may still be evil from his youth, the ground shall no more be cursed for man's sake, neither will God smite any more every living thing.*"

This is the covenant under which the whole secular life of man has since continued. Thus we are reminded that the changes in the rolling round of the spheres, and their relation to the sun, which bring about the possibility of obtaining food out of the earth, subsist not by forces within themselves, but are constantly kept in orderly being, by the God of grace and redemption. It is by the Divine Son of God, the Saviour of the world, that all things "*consist.*" This reference of all natural forces to a Divine source is the only rational mode of considering the phenomena of nature. Seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and day and night, and winter and summer, all in their respective length and order of succession, bear evidence of the same design and calculation, that the various parts of a well ordered constitution of an earthly government do. It is not reasonable, but the height of unreason, to refer all to the operations of blind, unknowing, unconscious force. For mere force cannot think, and calculate, and plan. It is the simple exercise of reason on what has been revealed, to acquiesce with profound awe and delight, in the revelation of an all-wise designing Being, who is at once Creator, Father, Redeemer. It is the same voice that speaks to us in the orderly constitution of Nature, in the Ten Sacred Commandments, and in the revelation of love in the Redemption of the race of man by Jesus Christ.

The voice that rolls the stars along
Speaks all the promises!

This is sure ground, and on this the faith of a rational mind can rest.

THE NEW BEGINNING OF LIFE IN THE WORLD.

A few simple declarations of the Divine will are made to this man, Noah, who, like a new Adam, is to be the father of all the races of mankind in the world.

There is reiterated the condition of dominion over all animated creatures, and the command to multiply over the earth. There is further the permission to use for meat every living thing on the earth. The original permission had been to use the whole vegetable creation; the only prohibition now is that "flesh, with the life thereof, which is blood, shall not be eaten." This prohibition of the eating of blood survived through all the changing generations down to New Testament times. We find it repeated in the injunctions of the first Christian Council at Jerusalem to the converts from Heathenism (Acts 15:29), clearly indicating that the eating of blood was practised by some of the people of the Roman empire at that day; as, indeed, it is in these modern times amongst some barbarous races.

But there is added to this a very stringent prohibition against the taking of human life. Every man is made the guardian of his neighbor's life. No man hereafter can say, "*Am I my brother's keeper?*" for the supreme Governor declares in the very outset of this new era in the history of the race, that "at the hand of every man will He require the life of man!"—Verse 5. A sacred guard is thus thrown around human life, in striking contrast to the low estimate formed of it amongst savage peoples, and by great military conquerors. "What care I," said Napoleon, to the Austrian Ambassador, who was remonstrating against the fearful slaughter of his wars,—"*what care I, if a million men are sacrificed? What are a million lives compared with the accomplishment of the designs of my empire!*"

In the early days of the French Revolution, under the Reign of Terror, Marat and others like him were constantly clamoring for more bloodshed. "More blood," they cried, "before there can be freedom!"

These had both thrown off the restraints of the Christian religion, and were simply indulging in the natural bent of a certain order of human nature. True it is, indeed, that men called Christians, and even ministers and priests of the Christian church, have pursued the same course, and plunged nations and communities into wanton war and bloodshedding. Very true,—But these are developments of human nature; not the fruit of Christianity, but existing in spite of it.

The Divine will is that the life of man is sacred; and this idea is embodied in the jurisprudence of all modern Christian nations, whose rule is that of this command as given four thousand years ago: "WHOSO SHEDDETH MAN'S BLOOD, BY MAN SHALL HIS BLOOD BE SHED."—Verse 6.

When Legislatures, under the influence of ill-considered theories, seek to improve upon this precept of Divine wisdom, they only render human life insecure, and break down the safeguards that the Divine Governor has placed around it.

These fundamental features of the Divine covenant with man are evidently for all time, and for all peoples. Unlike the secular Laws of Moses, which were for one people; that contained much that was not suitable for universal obedience, and were abrogated, when a religion for all mankind was taught by the Son of God, these few simple commands are given to the second head of the whole human race, and bear the stamp of being universally obligatory, in the fact that they have in them nothing local, climatic, or peculiar.

The only other matter then made known as to the Divine Covenant with mankind is the beautiful token or sign of it, viz., the "*Bow in the Cloud*,"—the Rainbow. Erroneously, and from want of due consideration, it has been supposed that this rainbow was a new creation at that time. What was really now done was to constitute this object, universally prevalent, whenever there was sunshine and rain, to be a perpetual sign. "*I do set my bow in the cloud, for a token of the Covenant for perpetual generations.*"

So it was, and so, for all these long intervening centuries, it has continued to be. The rainbow has spoken to more than a hundred generations, and the word has been sure.

Turning now to the human side of the history, we find the names of the three progenitors of the great divisions of the populations of the earth; not indeed always maintained in separation, but substantially corresponding to the original people of the three great continents of the old world. As to this continent of America, all observation of its aboriginal tribes points to an Asiatic origin. And the same is true of Australasia and the isles of the southern seas.

One may speculate curiously, and wonder what might have been the development of the human race, had peace and virtue been always and universally prevalent; if, instead of men spending strength and inventive genius in subduing one another, they had always followed out the Divine precept of subduing the earth. The continuous degrada-

tion of savage races would then have been unknown. There would then have been diversities of color, from varieties of climate, and also diversities of physical development; but the dreary chronicles of debasement and wickedness that have constituted a large part of the histories of mankind would then have been unheard of. And the marvelous discoveries of modern times might have been anticipated by thousands of years; with results that pass imagination to conceive. Speculation, however, as to what might have been is vain. What can be done, and what every man can take his part in, is to fulfil the purpose of the Creator and Redeemer of the world, in the sphere, and according to the capacity he has received. When this is universally done, it will be "*as the days of Heaven upon earth*"; a dream that filled the imagination of the great Jewish lawgiver in his own time.

One only thing is told of the subsequent life of Noah, and the telling of it illustrates one feature of the whole of these Old Testament narratives, viz., that the sins and faults of even the best men are never concealed. But while these narratives of good men's sins have perplexed some people, whose wisdom was not in proportion to their goodness, they clearly illustrate the truth of the fundamental saying, that "*whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning!*" But that this end may be fulfilled, the history must be faithful.

Noah became a husbandman, a tiller of the ground. He grew crops, he planted a vineyard, he made wine, he drank of it, and lay in a drunken condition in his tent. One may very reasonably imagine that the wine of that particular vintage was of somewhat unusual strength, for both grapes and wines differ in this respect; or that, in that climate, on some occasion of great heat, and unusual thirst, he drank an unusual draught. The narrative does not necessarily imply moral obliquity, such as attaches to a man who knowingly drinks to excess, and continues until it becomes a habit of vice. But it does suggest a want of prudence and caution, and this doubtless is the lesson intended to be conveyed. Wine, and all liquids of like character, need to be used with care. A danger signal is hung out in this narrative. Granting, for the sake of argument, that wines may have their wholesome uses and value, how clear is the Divine voice sounding through this narrative. Beware! you cannot drink freely. Wine cannot be played with. Want of care may bring about in you as deep a degradation as it did in this patriarch.

This narrative illustrates another feature of life and character, viz., that one single act of wrong-doing or imprudence or the part of a good man will be remembered, when years of virtuous and honorable living are forgotten. So it is in these times, as every man of acquaintance with the world can testify. And many features of Old Testament biography illustrate the same principle. This, and the whole tenor of these ancient histories, demonstrate their truth and value as records for all time. They are not mere fables and foolish legends, like many of the stories of old times that have come down to us. The narratives of this Book of Origins, that run far beyond the foundations of the most ancient kingdoms of the world, are always instinct with the real life of men and women, as men and women have always been in the world. And they are instinct with practical lessons of life, even for us in these times of the Christian era.

The narrative of the modest and reverent behaviour of the two elder sons of the patriarch, and the want of it in the younger, is instructive in itself. An example in the one case; a warning in the other. And the short narrative that follows illustrates a principle of the Divine government. To honor parents brings blessing. To disregard and despise them, a blight and curse. The blessing may not always be in the form of the prosperity of this world, nor the blight result in poverty. But blessing and curse there are, as history and experience show. And very generally it does come in the form of temporal prosperity; especially when the honor is rendered to a widowed mother. Most men of long experience can recall instances of young men who, in early life, endured privation and toil, in order to sustain one or both parents who had been stricken by adversity; and who, in after years, in remarkable ways, and to men's astonishment, had openings of advancement, and opportunities of wealth which resulted in placing them in a position far beyond what any friend of their early years could have dreamed of.

The solemn words of cursing and blessing pronounced by the patriarch have, almost certainly, been much misconceived; and it may be said, with an absolute certainty, that when the curse pronounced on Canaan was perverted, in these modern times, to the justifying of negro slavery, the Scripture was unjustifiably wrested from its proper use and reasonable meaning.

But beyond doubt, there has been in these modern times a singular correspondence and fulfilment of the words

spoken in these far-off ages, by the second father of the race. Taking Japhet to be the progenitor (and probabilities point towards it) of the races of modern Europe, it is certainly true that he has been wonderfully *enlarged*. The whole of the two continents of America is now in his occupation; and by the conquest of India and predominance in the East generally, he, through the Anglo-saxon race, has certainly fulfilled the prediction that he should "dwell in the tents of Shem."

W. C. ...

CHAPTER XI.

THE TOWER OF BABEL AND THE CONFOUNDING OF LANGUAGE.

Genesis xi.: 2 to 9.

The project for the erection of a Tower of enormous height has moral and spiritual aspects which will repay consideration. And first, it is evident that the descendants of Noah were all keeping together, instead of obeying the Divine command to fill up the earth. How long they succeeded in doing this is not clear from the narrative; and the speculations and calculations as to the early chronology of Scripture are, as a rule, mere fanciful guesses. But, probably, not much time had elapsed from the days of the flood, considering the different manner in which the lapse of time would be conceived of in the days of prolonged human life. Keeping together, they migrated, most naturally, down the valley of the greatest river of that region, the Euphrates, and finding a wide-spreading country of alluvial plains, with what no doubt was then a most fertile soil, rich in products, and easy to cultivate, they concluded there to dwell.

Now, it can be seen how naturally the idea of a high tower would arise. They were in the midst of extensive low-lying plains, far from hills and mountains, with a great river flowing by. A great rise in this river would flood the plains and destroy the fruit of generations of labor. A high tower, so large that all could take refuge in it, and high enough to be beyond all danger, was thought of by some, and the thought spread. They said one to another:—*“Go to;—Let us build!”* But they forgot the Divine Covenant. Already we can see the dawning of a new era of unbelief, and departure from the Living God. He had solemnly promised—and the bow in the sky was the sign of it—that the earth should never again be wholly destroyed by a flood. It was surely in unbelief and faithlessness that this project originated, and the high tower was a sign of alienation from God, exactly as every temple of idols has been in every age of the world.

The project, moreover, was to build a City as well as a high tower. Now, the building of a city, when brought about by natural and ordinary circumstances, carries no special moral significance, either bad or good. But in this case, the project seems to have grown out of a determination to disregard the command to spread abroad. “Let us

build a city," said they, "lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth,"—the very thing that the race of man was commanded to do.—Another sign of faithlessness and alienation.

It was accompanied, moreover, by a development of pride and vainglory. "Let us make us a NAME,"—a very early development of the desire to perpetuate the name and glory of the founder of a state, or a great warrior and legislator, or an author or philosopher, who has shed lustre over his age and country.

It may be said, what possible harm could there be in this? Are all those to be considered as doing something displeasing to God who have named cities and towns after distinguished men, or who have erected monuments and statues to warriors and statesmen?

To answer this reasonably, we must distinguish. The essence of the wrong—when there is wrong—is the development of an evil moral quality, viz., pride and vaingloriousness. Now, this can only be, when a man of prominence and power takes means, himself, to perpetuate his own works and deeds. The spirit to be reprobated is exactly manifested by the conqueror, Nebuchadnezzar, who, looking out from the roof of his palace over the city of Babylon, broke out in the exclamation, "*Is not this Great Babylon, that I have built, for the house of the kingdom, by the MIGHT OF MY POWER, AND FOR THE HONOR OF MY MAJESTY!*" Here is pride and vainglory, justly condemned and punished. And this was exactly what these people, on the same spot, more than fifteen hundred years before, proposed to do. "Let us build a city; let us erect a tower reaching to heaven; and let us make us a name!"

In all ages, countries, dispensations, it has been that *God abhorreth the proud*. Apart altogether from revelation, it is in the very constitution of nature, society, and of man, that the proud are cursed!

To take a most conspicuous modern example. What but pride and vainglory was the ruin of that marvellous and many-sided genius, the first Napoleon? It was pride alone that impelled him to the disastrous Russian campaign. Recovering, almost by miracle, from the terrible overthrow, he had the opportunity of preserving his throne and dynasty by being simply content with France according to its old boundaries. This, the sovereigns of Europe offered him. But, under the impulse of pride, still unsubdued even by the calamities of the Russian campaign, and the defeat of Leipsic, he refused. After that came the Hundred days, Waterloo, and—

"Last scene of all that strange, eventful history,"
—St. Helena.

So much for the men that magnify and honor themselves. But when a grateful people call cities after the name of the man who has founded the state, as the Americans have done their Capital, or erect monuments to a great captain who delivered it in time of peril, as England did in Trafalgar Square, the case is wholly different. There is in this, neither pride nor vainglory, but simple gratitude, and honor of great deeds.

A tower whose top should reach to heaven! To what a height did the pride and vainglorious boasting of these people reach!

But there was One observing, whom they had forgotten and ignored; the great Supreme, whose dwelling was in those very heavens they spoke of. Seeing that the people were set upon disregarding his will, and refusing to spread over the earth, He determined to interpose, and compel them to do what they were disinclined to do, but the doing of which was necessary to their welfare.

This clinging and crowding together of a people in a small space, in cities, or in a small territory, has been repeated in these modern days, and always with evil effects. So were crowded together the cultivators of the soil in Ireland, until the land, divided and divided, and still further sub-divided, was insufficient, under any system of cultivation, for a reasonable subsistence. Then the mighty forces of scarcity and famine compelled a scattering abroad, to the enormous benefit of those who migrated, and the lasting welfare of those who remained. So, also, but in a lesser degree, did the people on the Lower St. Lawrence hold together, refusing from one generation to another to spread abroad, until here, as in another sphere, the forces of privation, and poverty, and the impossibility of obtaining subsistence from the land, for such increasing numbers, compelled a continuous migration.

Both these movements were strenuously resisted, sometimes by short-sighted priests, sometimes by politicians. But they might as well have attempted to resist the tide. For the movement was in accordance with the will and purpose of the Lord of the whole earth, that the earth He had created for the service of man should be replenished and filled up.

Thus, then, in these ancient times, the forces of compulsion were brought into play, and a scattering and spreading abroad effected, against the will of these people, or their leaders. The force was not the force of famine, or pesti-

lence; it had no element of retributive punishment in it whatever. Yet it was most effectual for the purpose.

The bringing about of new developments of LANGUAGE suddenly was certainly one of the most remarkable manifestations of Divine power that the world has ever seen. In the Christian era, and these historic times, we have seen the development of divers languages going on from stage to stage, until in these days we have the English, the French, the German and Dutch, the Italian and Spanish, and other languages in a fully formed and perfected condition. But consider the time required for all this. A thousand years and more of very slow development has resulted in what we see. What, then, must have been the exertion of Divine power which could have brought about such a state of things as is here described—the confounding of languages, by the creation of new tongues or dialects. Whether this was brought to pass in one day, or gradually, in a period of weeks or months, the narrative does not make clear. But it is clear beyond doubt, that the change was brought about by a direct exercise of Divine power.

Exactly *how much* change was wrought the narrative does not inform us. The ordinary rule of the exercise of extraordinary Divine power is that sufficient shall be put forth and no more, to accomplish the needed result. What was the one language that was spoken up to this event, we know not. The narrative of Scripture is silent. Hebrew scholars say that the proper names in the family of Adam are pure Hebrew words, and that most of the names mentioned up to the building of the Tower of Babel can be traced to a Hebrew root. They also point out that the Hebrew tongue is one of extreme simplicity of structure, far more so than Sanscrit, which is its only rival in point of antiquity.

Be this, however, as it may (and the matter is of no practical importance), we have arrived in this narrative at an efficient cause of division. The language of the inhabitants of the world was so divided that numbers of men could not understand one another. Probably three or four separations of tongue would be amply sufficient for the designed purpose of scattering this multitude abroad. For what was needed, was that they should separate, not into a multitude of small isolated communities, but into a sufficient number of parts to ensure efficient co-operation amongst the tribes, for the purpose of protection, and of industrial occupation of the countries and lands of the Eastern Hemisphere.

And this was accomplished. They were compelled to

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desist from the building of the city and tower, for no one of the tribes into which they were divided was able to finish them alone.

So "*they left off to build the City,*" "*and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of the earth.*"

If the place be looked at, on a map of the Old World, it will be seen how it occupies the very centre of all the lands of the old world.

Eastward were the great regions that were afterwards the seat of the Persian and Indian Empires. Round about them the great plains that became the seats of the universal monarchies of Assyria and Babylon. Westward, to the north, was all Asia Minor and Europe. Westward and to the south, Palestine, Arabia, and all Africa.

So began the migration of the families which developed into tribes, and the tribes into races and nations, which, in process of ages, filled the three continents of the Old World, and furnished the peoples who, by continued migration, first from Asia, and then from Europe, are even now gradually filling up the New.

The Tenth chapter of the book contains a very condensed account of this dispersion. But there is nothing of special interest therein, except the proof it affords of the one common bond of kinship between all the various tribes of the earth (for *God hath made them all of one blood*, as is asserted by St. Paul when speaking at Athens), and also the very brief notice of the first of those great Eastern conquerors whose history fills so large a space in subsequent ages. One of the race of Ham was Cush; who was the father of NIMROD. He, Nimrod, began to be a "*mighty one in the earth; a Mighty Hunter before the Lord,*" an expression which suggests the capturing and enslaving of men; as is probably the real meaning of the passage. And this very place, Babel, was the beginning or principal seat of his kingdom; a place afterwards to be so famous in its expanded name of Babylon. The kingdom began in tyranny, was continued in tyranny and pride, and in an hour of impious tyranny and profanity it was overthrown. Vast mounds on the now desolate banks of the Euphrates still testify to the fact of great structures once occupying the spot, and very possibly some of these mounds may contain some remains of the Tower and City of Babel.

CHAPTER XII.

ABRAHAM.

GENESIS XII.

During many generations that intervened after the great flood, no man had appeared whose deeds were worthy of even a word of mention, save only the mighty hunter and king, Nimrod. And for him one sentence was deemed sufficient.

But after the lapse of some hundreds of years, there appeared a Man whose life, crowded as it was with incident, had more to do with the course of history in subsequent ages, both secular and sacred, than any man that had hitherto appeared on the scene of the world's affairs. The influence of this man Abraham's life, indeed, is a living force, in many directions, even in this age of the world. It is a simple fact that his name is more widely known amongst all the populations of the earth, in this century and time, than that of any man that ever lived, and wherever it is known it is honored. For not only do all of the Hebrew race look back to Abraham as their progenitor and father, but all of Arabic or Saracenic blood, wherever found over the whole East. In fact, speaking generally, nearly the whole Mohammedan world look up to and reverence him as their progenitor, through that son of his, Ishmael, who was a true child of the wilderness, his hand against every man, and every man's hand against him, and whose character has so marvellously been perpetuated through all subsequent generations. For, like Abraham himself, Ishmael was to be a *father of many nations*. And so he became.

But much more than this. By the whole Christian world, this man Abraham is looked up to as a spiritual father, the father of all faithful souls; who, because he believed God, and courageously acted on his convictions, obtained promises and blessings, which have not died out of the world yet, but which are living forces in tens of thousands of souls in all lands and countries, even in this age we are now living in. For all Christians, of every creed, consider themselves, as indeed they are fully entitled to do, if they are faithful, as heirs of those same promises, in a high and spiritual sense, which were first made to Abraham and his descendants in an outward and secular sense. For that secular sense did not exhaust their meaning. That it did

not, all Scripture is witness, and especially that teaching of the great Master and His Apostles, to which all Christian people give reverent regard. From them it is learned that the promise of blessing to all the world made through Abraham, found its fulfillment in his descendant, JESUS CHRIST, whose disciples are all declared to be, in a spiritual and therefore, very real sense, Children of Abraham.

But what was this man that he should be so highly distinguished? What did he do? What did he say?

He certainly did not *say* much, though some of his sayings have struck deep into the heart of humanity. He was not a philosopher, nor a poet, nor a maker of laws, nor a chronicler of the times. But if we look into what he *did*, and into what he *was*, as revealed by what he did, we shall find it remarkable enough. The man was as eminent for his manliness as he was for his godliness.

The first thing we read about him is that a Divine call or monition had been given, commanding him to leave his own country, and his own kindred, and to go out to a strange land.

This, it is to be considered, was in a country and state of society where the only law of protection was that of the strong hand. Every man trusted to his own family, his own friends, his own connections, to keep him from being robbed and enslaved. A state of things not unlike what prevails amongst the Bedouin Arabs at this day prevailed then. Let an adventurous stranger travel, even to-day, much beyond the bounds of a city, or his own camp, and he will soon find himself in danger of being treated as the traveller was who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho.

The monition to Abram was a call to a dangerous enterprise, as well as to one of uncertain means of subsistence. Men, in Christian times, and in these very days we live in, have had monitions of a similar kind, and have obeyed them. But this man Abram was the first of all such.

But this was not the case of a man emigrating by his own choice to another country merely to amend his temporal condition. He left his country at the command of the Supreme God. Abram was the first of the great army of Emigrants who have left home and country, some to seek religious liberty, some under a high sense of duty to God or country. And this brings him in touch with men's lives and conditions as known to us in this age and country. And the fact that he went when called, going out "*not knowing whither he went*," stamps him as a man of courage and character.

The inspiring motive, however, with this man, was Faith

in God, and obedience to His will. That theological word, *Faith*, has been so sadly misused, that one might well be afraid to use it at all. But in this instance, it means simply the well-grounded confidence of the weaker in the stronger; the assured conviction that he will be preserved and cared for, so long as he was living in obedience, by the Almighty Being whom he worshipped. Between this kind of faith, the true faith of Scripture, and sound reason, there is not, and cannot be, any conflict.

The lesson of dispersion, compulsorily taught to men at Babel, had been well learned by that time. Men, in all probability, in preceding ages, had been seized with that instinct of dispersion which has filled the minds of multitudes of men in modern times. They had proceeded from the valleys of the Euphrates and the Tigris, westward and southward, and occupied the land of Canaan, on both sides the Jordan. They had roved on, across the desert, either by way of Sinai, or more probably by the shores of the great sea, until they arrived at the glorious plains of Egypt. There, a civilization of wealth and all the arts congenial to it had developed as rapidly as it has done, in some communities (Japan, for instance, and some of the islands of the South Sea) in modern times. The valley of the Jordan and its southern plain, rich and luxurious beyond measure, had been occupied, cities built, and a style of wickedness developed that has given an evil name to the region for all time. Men had come to be known by tribal designations. The Canaanites had already come to occupy the land to which the man Abram was directed to go; fierce, idolatrous, semi-civilized peoples, not differing much from the Indian nations that occupied Canada before the advent of the white man. Men had, however, come to the condition of civilization in which money was coined, bargains as to land made and ratified by formal deeds and covenants; chiefs of tribes recognized in warlike expeditions.

This was the condition of the Eastern world, secularly, in the time of this man. Religiously, there would appear to have been a falling off from the service of the Supreme, and a development of various forms of idolatry, such as is natural to mankind.

Such was the world, as Abram had lived in it till his seventy-fifth year, an age equivalent to about forty in these days. By this time the duration of men's lives had been materially shortened, but they still were nearly twice as long as they became subsequently. Before Abram was called by a Divine voice, his father and kindred, probably with numerous others, had migrated from Armenia to the

hill country still called by the name Haran, lying north-east of the land of Canaan. There his father died. Then came the Divine call to proceed southward; a call which was accompanied by extraordinary conditions and revelations. It is these that have given this man his extraordinary pre-eminence in the world of sacred things. Yet Abram was a man of the world in a very real sense; no recluse, hermit, priest, or religious enthusiast, but fulfilling a destiny in the world that then was, and taking his full share in moulding its affairs and doing the will of its Creator in it.

But the Supreme chose him out specially to be the recipient of such great promises as these:—

" I WILL MAKE OF THEE A GREAT NATION !"

" I WILL BLESS THEE ; AND MAKE THY NAME GREAT ; AND THOU SHALT BE A BLESSING !"

" I WILL BLESS HIM THAT BLESSETH THEE, AND CURSE HIM THAT CURSETH THEE ?"

" AND IN THEE SHALL ALL THE FAMILIES OF THE EARTH BE BLESSED !"

Remarkable words, indeed, and the like has not been spoken to any human being, save only the son and grandson of this man; and to these only because of their relationship to him.

Of the fulfilment of two of these great promises, the most inveterate sceptic could not doubt. That he became a great nation, the history of the world witnesses, even down to our own day. That his name became great is equally certain, as has been observed already. And that the promise of all the families of the earth being blessed in him has been fulfilled in the past, and is being more and more widely fulfilled in these days, no Christian ever entertained a doubt. This kind of blessing's not indeed of that outward and apprehensible character which compels attention, and which nobody can have a doubt about. But it is certainly as real. For the fulfilment of the promise was through the great descendant of Abraham, Jesus Christ, the Saviour of Mankind. And that His advent, life, and death, have been a source of blessing to the human race, immeasurable and inconceivable, can be evidenced by an innumerable cloud of witnesses.

This series of promises was made more definite, and was also amplified, in subsequent periods of the man's life. Thus, after his nephew, Lot, had separated from him, the promise was made in this form:—

"Look from the place where thou art (he was then encamped on the heights north of where Jerusalem afterwards was built), northward and southward, and eastward and

westward; *for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and thy seed forever!*" The boundary of this inheritance was to be Egypt on the one side, and the river Euphrates on the other.

Afterwards, when the rite of Circumcision was ordained, and a solemn covenant was entered upon, the promise was enlarged again, viz., that he should be the Father of many Nations and kings. At this time, also, his name was enlarged. He had hitherto been Abram—meaning high father. He is hereafter to be called Abraham, signifying the father of a great multitude. (The meaning and even the derivation of this and many other Hebrew names is obscured by the odd way in which we pronounce them. Thus, the word Abram, is really Ab-Ram—Ab, father; Ram, great or high. The enlarged name would then be, Ab-Ra-Ham—father of a great number.)

Finally, as to these promises, or shadowing forth of great things in the future, we have, after that wonderful trial of obedience in connection with his son Isaac, the great promise that *his seed shall be multiplied as the stars of heaven, and as the sand by the sea shore; that they shall possess the gate of their enemies; and that all the nations shall be blessed in his posterity.* And these last were prefaced by that inexpressibly solemn declaration, "BY MYSELF HAVE I SWORN!"

It is these most remarkable covenants and promises that lift this man so high above his fellows. But it is evident that they were not bestowed arbitrarily; not without reference to the character of the man. The Divine choice of a man to be the head of a race who should preserve the true light of religion in the world, and through whom should be promulgated eternal laws of morality and conduct—this choice was in perfect wisdom. The man was himself a pattern and exemplar of virtue and godliness. A man, with one exception, to be hereafter noted, of unswerving trust and devotion, fulfilling all religious obligations; a man, too, of justice, kindness, consideration, benevolence; a man of courage and fearlessness; ready to take up arms when called on for the rescue of captive in war. Yet no angel, but a man, liable to be tempted, and liable to stumble, as he did, and as we do. All these traits of character are manifest in his history—and they vindicate the Divine choice.

CRITICAL NOTES.

What is this peculiar "Blessing" which so remarkably characterizes the Divine promises to the man Abram? This is worthy of careful attention, for the word and the ideas conveyed by it are almost peculiar to the Divine revelation.

The original idea of Blessing is that of bestowment of good-will; and hence, all that can follow from the good-will of a Supreme and all-powerful Being to one placed as mankind are, in circumstances where they are constantly in need. The operation of this good-will takes a multitude of forms, as the needs and wants of men are infinitely varied. Thus to Abram, it undoubtedly referred largely to his temporal condition in the world;—that he should be prosperous; increase in wealth; be successful in his enterprises, in the bringing up of his family, that his flocks and herds should increase, and that he should be at peace with his dependents and neighbors.

All this is involved in the idea of the Blessing. And such it has undoubtedly meant in a multitude of cases; in the Old Testament especially. Lord Bacon, amongst his many wise aphorisms, observed that "prosperity is the blessing of the Old Testament; but adversity of the New"—a saying, however, that conveys only a very partial truth. For, certainly, in the Old Testament, the Divine blessing often refers to matters of far higher and deeper import than increase of wealth and power. The blessing of the man "*who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly,*" (Psalm 1), is certainly a spiritual blessing—a peaceful mind, a quiet conscience, a soul in harmony with the Divine purpose and commandment. So the blessing of the "undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord; who keep his testimonies; who serve him heartily; who do no iniquity" (Psalm CXIX.) is not the increase of this world's goods, or its greatness. For in the same psalm we have the contrast between such a man and the man who is lifted up in this world's prosperity, and who looks down upon the man whom God has blessed, and despises him.

But the "good" of the Old Dispensation was undoubtedly much more of an outward and temporal character than the blessing of the New. The blessings and curses of Mount Gerizim referred wholly to bodily health, increase of substance, victory over enemies, respect and fame amongst other peoples, good crops in the land.

These matters, however, are wholly passed by in the New Dispensation under Jesus Christ. We have there a style of blessing relating wholly to the moral and spiritual condition of man. So much so, indeed, that bodily affliction and temporal suffering are represented rather as blessings than otherwise, because of their tendency to strengthen and develop character. And certainly this New Testament conception of blessing is a far higher and a far truer one than the other. For it is beyond question that a man may have increase of wealth, power, and friends; and may have also freedom from sickness and calamity, while yet he may be a miserable, discontented, unhappy man. Theologians and ministers of religion tell us that the good things of this world do not satisfy the soul of man. And men of the world, after full experience, have to complain, with real vexation, that this is only too true.

"*Vanitas vanitatem*" is an undeniable verdict. The good things of this life are not blessings in themselves, and can only be made such when they are used by the possessor of them (and they may be), for the good of his neighbors and mankind. When a Nobleman throws open his park, garden, and palace to the people, they become a higher means of enjoyment to him than if he selfishly shuts them up for himself. The exercise of good-will is a blessing in itself, and it becomes a means of blessing to others, when they are led to appreciate the good-will, and to copy the example, each in its own sphere.

And it is a meaning of this kind which undoubtedly is conveyed by the declaration to Abraham that "in his seed all the families and nations of the earth should be blessed." All nations were not to inherit the land of Canaan; all families were not assured of prosperity, health and wealth. But to the people and families of all nations, spiritual prosperity, health and peace would come by Jesus Christ; and to all of them would finally appertain an inheritance in a heavenly Canaan, which would be to them all a possession for everlasting ages.

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CHAPTER XIII.

INCIDENTS IN THE LIFE OF ABRAHAM.

GENESIS XII, XIII, XIV.

The life of this man is crowded with incidents, and all the incidents are worthy of consideration, by men, who, like Abraham, are living out their life in transacting the business of the world. They are very certainly for our "learning."

The first incident is one of the most significant of all, and it has been most sadly misunderstood. It relates to his

GOING DOWN INTO EGYPT

The incident is set forth, not as an example, as some have unwisely conceived it, but as a warning.

Abram, moving southward because of famine, enters on the borders of Egypt; foresees danger to himself from the beauty of his wife, and is guilty of a subterfuge in order to preserve himself. A very strange procedure, in a man of such extraordinary faith and courage, and at first sight, the accuracy of the story might be questioned. But it is a fact of general experience that men at times fail in that very point of character in which, as a rule, they are strongest. Men are sadly perplexed at times in the contradictions that appear in the actions of the same man. In the memoirs of Cardinal Manning we have bitter complaints of the vacillation and weakness of the Duke of Wellington on the Catholic question. Of all men in the world the Iron Duke was the last from whom vacillation and weakness were to be expected. If Shakespeare is to be trusted (and he is generally accurate in his historical sketches) the great Caesar himself, on one occasion, behaved "like a sick girl." Solomon, the wisest of men, was guilty of extraordinary folly in choosing heathen wives and concubines. Moses, distinguished for meekness, broke out into a storm of passion on a critical occasion.

So when we find this man of extraordinary faith and courage, Abram, on an emergency, losing all his confidence in Divine protection, and resorting to subterfuge in a time of danger, we can be well assured of the accuracy of the narrative, and take the lesson intended to be conveyed by it, viz., to take heed of our steps. The lesson is conveyed

in those pregnant words of the New Testament: "*Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.*" (1. Cor. x. 12.)

That the Lord plagued the house of Pharaoh for the sake of Abram's wife is no argument that the Lord approved deceit. It was simply for the sake of preserving Sarah in purity, and for her sake, in preventing her becoming one of the concubines of the ruler of Egypt.

It is noticeable that this generic appellation Pharaoh was in use in this early time.

It is noticeable too, that this Pharaoh behaved most justly and generously in the matter.

Again and again, throughout the Divine word, both in the Old Testament and the New, we have brought before us the just and upright conduct of men who knew not the God of Israel, a remarkable witness to the perfect truth and fairness of the record. For in this it corresponds with what we know from secular history of the just and upright character of men in many ages and countries, and specially of men in the earlier days of Greece and Rome. What the Divine record tells us of Hiram of Tyre, Cyrus the Persian, the Roman Proconsul Sergius Paulus, the Centurion Julius, who behaved so courteously to the apostle Paul; secular history also tells us of Socrates, Aristides, and Marcus Aurelius.

What then—may it be said—was the need of a Divine religion if without it men could be so good? What need? Every need. For although in Heathendom a man here and there displayed a character of justice and goodness, the great mass of the people—priests included—were tainted with vice almost irredeemably. We must look at the tendency of systems, not at the rare exceptions; and, viewing matters in this light, who can doubt that Divine intervention has been necessary to save mankind from sinking deeper and deeper into an unfathomable abyss of vice, and of moral and spiritual degradation. The history of the world, men being left to themselves, is invariably that of continuous moral and spiritual degeneracy. The experience of the ages before the flood is only too true a type of the development of human nature in all places and times subsequently.

At a later period in Abraham's life, a parallel incident occurred, when, in his nomadic wanderings, he passed into the region bordering on the Sinaitic desert. The chief of the warlike tribes of the desert did then what the Bedouin would do now; he sent and took Sarah for himself, and would doubtless have followed it up, if needful, by taking the life of Abraham, whose faith failed him again. That

this subterfuge was not needful is proved by the fact that the Divine protection was again extended towards him, unworthily though he was of it, in this instance.

Again the lesson is before us, let not any man think that a long course of honorable and faithful conduct will preserve him from falling into dishonor.—“He that trusteth his own heart is a fool.” To the very end, so long as men are in circumstances where they may be tempted, they need to be on their guard, and to make their trust, not in a past record, but in the Living God.

THE SEPARATION OF LOT FROM ABRAHAM.

The whole story of the relations between Abraham and his nephew Lot, brings out sharply the character of the two men. In the elder, a disinterested kindness and consideration, bravery in intervening to save from disaster, and compassion for one surrounded by terrible moral degradation and in imminent danger of being overwhelmed in it.

When, between the herdmen of the two chieftains (for Lot was now a nomad chief as well as Abram), dissensions, jealousies, and quarrels arose about the best pasture, on the hill sides of the country north of Jerusalem, Abram, as the elder and head of the two families, might well have called Lot to his counsels and insisted on the latter removing to a part of the country he might designate. This would have been his right. But, with a true spirit of forbearance and conciliation, like that afterwards enjoined by his great descendant, Abram offered to give way to the choice of Lot. Aware that the strife of servants often extends to the heads of families, and plants roots of bitterness that may grow for years, and even generations, he said to Lot, “*Let there be no strife between me and thee—nor between my herdmen and thine; for we be brethren.*” (Here let us note the use of this word “brethren,” as meaning near relationship, a use which is common throughout the Divine record, but which use has been the occasion of foolish and unreasonable cavil.)

In this spirit he offers him the choice of the whole land. “Make thy choice, and I will abide by it. If thou chooseth the right hand, I will take the left; if the left is more agreeable to thee, I will take the right.”

A noble example for men in all subsequent ages whose arrangements as to land boundaries or occupation of territory may bring them into conflict with neighbors. Best, without doubt, in the end, for all parties, that a spirit of accommodation and conciliation should rule; and best, always, that the stronger party should lead the way. In our

times, when nations are extending borders and boundaries, and disputes are in danger of growing into war; or when business rivalries as to territory to be covered grow into fierce disputes or costly law suits; when a Venezuela boundary, or the partition of Africa, has almost lighted the flames of conflict between great nations, how fine the lesson of forbearance conveyed in this incident. Even ecclesiastical bodies, Mission Boards, Churches, etc., amongst whom jealousies as to occupation of territory are not unknown, might well ponder the action of this large-hearted chieftain, and say to one another, "Let there be no strife between us; for we be brethren; if thou wilt take the right hand, I will go to the left; or if thou concludest to occupy the left, then I will go to the right." And surely the good of Christ's kingdom would be enhanced by this course, more than by the successful occupancy of ground that is already well filled with gospel appliances. And, in the affairs of nations, and the rivalry of business, who can doubt that a spirit of reasonable conciliation, especially on the part of the stronger, would bring about more prosperity.

In the conduct of Lot we see the weak-minded and thoughtless choice of a man who looks simply at present and temporal advantage, and forgets or neglects higher considerations. To begin with, he ought, in all reason and courtesy, to have refused the position of choice offered him by his relative. A wise and considerate man would have said to Abram, "No, the choice of ground belongs of right to thee. Take thou what to thee may seem good; I will be well content to take what may remain." Far better had it been to act thus, than simply to consult his own inclination. For the sequel proves that he was not wise enough to make a choice, as is the case often enough, with those who insist on having their own way.

Lot, looking down towards the plain of Jordan, and seeing a most fertile and well watered country, chose for himself a portion in the plain, and pitched his tent before Sodom. Apparently, he never considered what kind of neighbors he would have; nor whether the region was a safe one to pitch his tent in, nor the kind of influences, for good or evil, that would surround his family in their bringing up. The immediate prospect was all that he considered; but dearly had he to rue the folly of his choice. Lot has had many who have followed his foolish example. In the settlement of this continent, under similar circumstances, many a one, with the whole land before him, has chosen to cast in the lot of himself and his family in the neighborhood of some mining camp, whose occupants, like the men of Sodom, were "sinners before the Lord exceedingly." Evil,

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it is true, there is to be found in every community, small or great. In the quietest rural village, or on the solitary farm, human nature will assert itself. An ancient Father of the Church, long ago, found that even in the desert he could not fly from sin. But there are degrees of development, and it is certain that some cities of modern times, like many of old times, have acquired a bad pre-eminence for prevalent vice.

What Lot did, is set up before us as a warning. For he not only suffered the loss of all his wealth in the war that broke out, but having recovered it through the bravery of his uncle, he was finally involved in a catastrophe that overwhelmed the city where he dwelt. And though he seems to have preserved his own virtue and character, the utter moral degradation of his children stands out only too conspicuously.

ABRAM AS A SOLDIER

GENESIS XIV.

The predatory chiefs (called kings) of the region round about the Jordan Valley and the country beyond, had their quarrels then, as chiefs and kings have had ever since, and at last an organized league, offensive and defensive, was formed, four chiefs against five. Ravaging, plundering and destroying, these roving bands at length came to Sodom and Gomorrah, killing some, and taking others prisoners. Amongst the last was Lot, who, with all his goods, his wife and children, his flocks and herds, was carried away captive as far north as the neighborhood of Damascus.

One of those who escaped came and told Abram, who, hearing that his brother (again note the use of this word brother, as indicative of a relative by blood) was taken captive, acted with the energy and promptitude of a strong and able man, leading forth his trained servants, over three hundred in number, and pursued the marauders to the northern boundaries of the land. (Note, incidentally, this word trained, indicating a body of men regularly disciplined in the use of arms, as was natural and reasonable to a man like Abram, surrounded by barbarous tribes, and having valuable herds and flocks to defend).

When he overtook the marauders, with true military tactics, he divided his small band, and made a night attack. Sudden, resolute and overwhelming was the onset. He smote them, they fled; he pursued them to the borders of Damascus, rescued Lot and his family and retainers, and recovered the whole of the spoil. This is the first and the

last of the military exploits of Abram. But it is evident, that he had the energy and capacity to become a leader in military enterprises, and make a name for himself among the conquerors and chieftains of the world.

But *cui bono?* What the good of this? What benefit to the generation then living, what to generations following? Would it have been thus that the nations would be blessed in him?

MELCHIZEDEK.

It was in returning from this expedition (the route apparently being the one followed to this day, passing along to the west of the Jordan, along the hill-country, until the road turned eastwards down the valley lying between Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives) that the whole party were met by the king of Sodom. And here they were also met by a very remarkable personage, whose name has passed into the history of the Christian Church as a perfect type of the Divine Saviour of the world. This man had a remarkable name, Melchi-Zedek (for this is the manner in which it ought to appear), which signifies King of Righteousness. He is described as King of Salem, the place evidently being the same as that occupied by the city of Jerusalem in after years, and meaning Peace. Thus far there is nothing to excite very particular notice; for the place, Salem, was one of those which, from the very earliest times, have been chosen as the seat of some king or chief, from its commanding position. It was a true natural stronghold. And the name, King of Righteousness, might well be given to some chieftain who had ruled with such equity as to have earned to himself such a name.

But the one most marvellous thing about him is that, besides being king, he was Priest of the Most High God. How such a man came to be there, how he came to be a priest, who consecrated him, what functions he exercised, in what building, temple or tabernacle did he exercise his ministry, with regard to a'l these natural questions, the narrative is silent

But it intimates that he was a true Priest, and that as such he pronounced a formal blessing upon Abram from the Most High. The term he uses in doing this is remarkable: "Blessed of the Most High God, Possessor of heaven and earth." Possessor—a term indicating supreme and continued ownership; the right, which, as applied to secular government, is called the right of "Eminent Domain," intimating that in the last resort, all things on the earth, movable or immovable, all property of every description is

his. A great truth indeed, with far-reaching applications, and well expressed in Psalm 24: "The Earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof." And well have the merchants of England done in putting this text on the forefront of that "Royal Exchange" in which the productions of the whole world are dealt in.

The pertinence of this term to the occasion is worthy of note. There was property to be distributed, the recovered spoil of successful war. It is at this moment, when all persons interested are gathered on the scene, that this Kingly Priest speaks of the Most High God as "Possessor," enunciating, in these very early times, the eternally subsisting truth, that the property of the world, of every description, is the Lord's. From this proceeds that other great truth, that, to the extent that any property appertains to them, all persons are accountable to the Most High as stewards and distributors.

This truth, and the position of Melchizedek himself, was acknowledged by Abram giving him Tithes of all, the first instance in Scripture of this mode of distribution.

But this man Melchi-Zedek had in after times the singular honor of being named as the fore-runner and type of the Divine Saviour of the world, in His office of High Priest and Mediator between God and man.

In the 110th Psalm occurs the very striking and well known passage "Thou art a Priest for ever, after the order of Melchi-Zedek." Evidently, from the whole tenor of the Psalm, it is the coming Messiah who is referred to. And so the inspired writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews claims him to be. This man Melchi-Zedek appears on the scene as a personage distinct and alone. He is not one of a line of priests; he has no predecessors and no successors. Nothing is recorded of the beginning of his life or of its ending. He was a King; King of Righteousness in character; King of Peace (Salem) by locality; and a Priest in addition. So utterly unlike other men and other priests, and combining in himself so many remarkable attributes, that he was a most fitting type of Him, who was unlike all other men, yet very man; who had an eternal existence before, yet was born in time, and who, though made subject to death, for the redemption of mankind, abideth for evermore, "a Priest for ever," and therefore "able to save to the uttermost bound of time all who come to God by him."

And it surely was as a part of his typical office, that this remarkable Priest brought forth Bread and Wine, the very elements used, many centuries afterwards, by his great Antetype, the Messiah, to set forth His redemption; and which he has commanded to be used (which command his

people in all ages have obeyed) in commemoration of Himself, until His return a second time to the world.

The conduct of Abram in refusing to accept the offer made by the king of Sodom of a large portion of the spoils is noticeable. Not even the smallest portion would he take. In all this affair, his character shines conspicuously as a brave, generous, large-souled man, worthy to be chosen of the Supreme Benefactor, as the channel of benefits and deliverance to all the nations and families of the earth.

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CHAPTER XIV.

ABRAM AND ISHMAEL.

Genesis 16, 17, 18.

The visit of Abram to Egypt had a remarkable result, not less on his own household than on the course of future ages and the destiny of nations.

So it often comes about, in the deep and mysterious workings of Divine government, as most men can bear witness to from their own experience. To how small a thing can men often trace the most momentous changes of their lives! The cackling of geese once saved Rome. A very slight event prevented Cromwell and some other Puritans from following their friends to America. What followed from their staying in England all the world knows.

So in this life of Abram. His wife Sarai brings from Egypt a native Egyptian maid, a woman of another stock and race, who became the mother of the man Ishmael, the head and progenitor of all that Arabian race who have played almost as large a part in the history of the world as the Jews, and from whom, ultimately, sprang that extraordinary enthusiast, soldier and false prophet, Mohammed. What has followed, religiously, from him, the Christian world knows only too well.

Ishmael, a true child of the desert, "his hand against every man, and every man's hand against him," is perpetuated in his descendants, who, at this very day, and in the very same wilderness, display the same characteristics. Many an Eastern traveller knows to his cost that these wilderness regions are still full of Ishmaels.

The manner in which all this came about is noticeable:— Sarai was barren. At her own request, and this is a point to be remarked. Abram took this Egyptian as a second wife. Yet, though it was at Sarai's own request, the usual consequences followed; family jars and jealousies. In this case the fault was entirely with the servant, who, being lifted up above her natural sphere, displayed a proud and vaunting spirit, a development only too common in the world. The mistress resented this, naturally enough, and rightly enough. The flight of the maid followed, and her steps turned, naturally, towards her native country, the route to which through the wilderness she well knew; a route followed to this day.

But though she was at fault, she was not forsaken. She had travelled far on the way, when the Almighty Protector succored her by an angel, as she rested near a well in that solitary wilderness, and commanded her to return, opening up a wonderful revelation of what should happen through the child that was to be born.

Then it was she spoke the words that have come down to these times, and have been a very fountain of consolation to distressed souls in like circumstances. Far from friends and home, travellers, explorers, missionaries, prodigal wanderers, when all earthly hope has failed, have lifted up heart on thinking of the words of this Egyptian maid; "THOU GOD SEEST ME!" For she said, "Have I, in such a place as this, seen Him, that seeth me," an exclamation of devout gratitude for preservation. So, in memory of this, the well was called by a very striking name, "Beer-lahai-roi," "The well of the Living One that seeth me."

The incident reminds us of the modern traveller, Mungo Park, who, in the midst of the African desert, alone, exhausted, despairing, lying down, as he thought, to die, was roused to one supreme effort by seeing a little flower blooming beside him, and by the thought: "He who made and cared for that flower, has surely made and will care for me."

The son was born, grew up, and fulfilled the character foretold of him, that he should be not a "wild man," as it is rendered, which might suggest a sort of savage, but a "wild ass of a man," as the phrase means; a man of strong, masterful, untameable spirit, submitting to none, and caring for none. But before he attained manhood, another incident occurred closely corresponding to the one just related. It came about in this wise:—

As the boy Ishmael grew, it is evident he had the high regard and affection of his father, just as such strong and masterful boys always have. But it was not the Divine purpose that a sacred race should proceed from such a one. A man of proud, untameable and combative spirit, like Ishmael, was highly unsuitable. For the Divine choice of instruments always has respect to suitability, and so it must be. Not through Ishmael, but through another son, born of the wife Sarah, whose name, signifying "Princess," indicated high birth and breeding, was the sacred line to flow. But the announcement troubled Abraham, who prayed that Ishmael might be chosen, Ishmael the bold and daring boy, and a favorite. This prayer, however, crossed the Divine purpose, and like all such prayers, was denied. Many a similar prayer has been offered by a fond father or mother, prompted not by consideration of the Divine will, but by natural affection, or earthly desire, and has been refused;

and how could it be otherwise? If men foolishly ask for a stone or a serpent, what can the All-wise do but refuse? It is when men ask in Christ's name, in sympathy with Him, and for the things of His kingdom, that the promise applies "it shall be done."

Not Ishmael, but one born of Sarah, was to continue the line of blessing.

But she was old, long past the time of bearing children, and when it was announced that a son should be born to her, she laughed in incredulity.

But Abram steadfastly believed—and Paul the Apostle, writing of him many ages afterwards, to Christians at Rome, as the father of all faithful souls, testified thus:—

"Who, against hope, believed in hope . . . and being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body, now dead (when he was about an hundred years old) neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb. He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; being fully persuaded that what he had promised, he was able to perform.

And rationally was he so persuaded.

For the All-wise, speaking to Abram of the incredulity of Sarah, gave utterance to this great truth:—

"IS ANYTHING TOO HARD FOR THE LORD!"

This single saying solves all the difficulties of Scriptural miracles.

At the time appointed, the child was born, and was called Isaac, signifying Laughter or Joy. But what had taken place between Hagar and Sarai is now repeated between Ishmael and Isaac. Ishmael mocked and jeered at the little child. In what way is not recorded, but it can be understood that he, now a boy grown up, was angry at the prospect of another rising up to displace him as heir. And in what way big boys can torment little ones all understand who know anything of public schools. It was evidently no light matter. It grew to be intolerable, and Sarah demanded that Hagar should be separated from the household.

Again we find Abraham sorely troubled. A strong man, able for all enterprises, fearless, faithful and bold; yet, like many another of the same character, tender-hearted and affectionate, he would gladly have kept his whole household about him in peace. It was "very grievous" to him to send Hagar and her son away. Her experience is a remarkable repetition of what had befallen her before, and it might be fancied that the two stories of the wanderings of Hagar are really the same. But the sameness of the experience is really a proof of the truth of the narrative. All experience is of sameness in this nomad life. The children of the des-

ert live now, have the same dress, the same occupation, the same customs, as their ancestors have done for untold generations.

Were the patriarch Abraham to re-appear in the flesh, and visit the scenes of his earthly life, he would find himself, in the cities and towns of the land he once dwelt in, in an utterly unknown world. But in the camp of the Bedaween, he would be at home. Their life, apart from their plundering propensities, is the very life he and his children lived thousands of years ago.

So, it is most natural to find this Egyptian and her son, turning in the same southerly direction, wandering in the same wilderness, meeting the same hardships, and being succoured in the same way as she was many years before. Doubtless, in turning her steps thither, she had in view, a return to her family in Egypt; and with the travel that was common, even at that early day, it was more than likely she would fall in with some company travelling there too, just as the brothers of Joseph did many years afterwards.

But she fell in with no company, and she seems to have wandered out of the way, and have lost herself in the wilderness. Faint, weary, her supply of food and water exhausted, the death of herself and boy was inevitable. It is a pathetic story bearing an evident stamp of truth. She places the child in the best shade attainable, under one of the shrubs—a true description of what is found in that wilderness to this day—and withdrew lest she should see the poor boy die before her eyes. And thus, she lifted up her voice and wept; a true picture of the extremity of desolation; a striking scene that has captivated many painters in these modern times. But it is a true saying that "man's extremity is God's opportunity." The lad himself seems to have lifted up his voice in prayer, for the story is that God "heard the voice of the lad," sent an angel who called to the mother to arise, and take the boy; at the same moment opening her eyes, so that she saw it well she had not before discerned, and revealed to the mother the destiny of her son. A wonderful thing indeed; in part natural enough, but partly, as cannot but be allowed, supernatural. Yet natural and rational was all this, even in its supernatural character, considering the great destiny that was before this lad; and such as to justify the putting forth of the Divine hand in an extraordinary way.

The life of both was saved. Henceforth God was a protector of Ishmael and his mother. He grew, dwelt in the wilderness, became an archer, killed the game of the desert, fulfilled the character given of him before he was born, and, as again was natural enough, his mother sought and

found for him an Egyptian wife, thus mingling for the second time the blood of the two great races of these ancient days.

From this union sprang twelve sons, who became the heads of tribes that spread themselves over the great tracts of country east of Jordan, stretching over to Arabia and westward to the borders of Egypt, which regions they have occupied ever since. That they increased rapidly is evident from the fact that in the time of Joseph they were numerous enough to form a caravan engaged in merchandise between the Eastern country and Egypt. It was by a company of "Ishmaelites" he was taken there.

The conduct both of Sarah and Abram to this unfortunate woman Hagar has been, and with apparent reason, subject to adverse criticism, as having the appearance of harshness and cruelty to an unnatural degree. It is never well to justify what is plainly, on the face of it, wrong, even in men and women of eminent goodness. On the other hand, it is reasonable to consider circumstances and times, and to avoid coming to conclusions from only partial examination. It is fair, also, when a case admits of doubt, to give a man the benefit of doubt whose general character is one of eminent goodness.

Now, the first going away of Hagar was voluntary. She was the occasion of trouble in the house, by vaunting over her mistress in a matter that touches a woman most closely. Sarah was concerned and deeply indignant, appealing to her husband for justice, in the name of Almighty God. "The Lord judge between thee and me." Abram, naturally, gave back the matter to Sarah herself, who then, as it is expressed, "dealt hardly" with her maid; whether she passed Hagar's vaunting, we know not. Hagar probably, as was natural to a woman of her temperament (she was probably somewhat like her son in disposition), rebelled against Sarah's treatment; only provoking her mistress more and more, and bringing down upon herself more and more severity of treatment. This is the way such matters go in the world at present, and, as has been observed before, it is evident that men and women, in the beginning of time, had the same human nature that they have now.

The crisis came at last in Hagar's flight. She evidently intended—as a maid would do now—to make her way to her own kindred and country. The God of Providence had a destiny in store for the woman, and commanded her to return to her mistress and submit to her, a reasonable inference being that Hagar was largely or wholly at fault. On her return, we hear no more of any vaunting on her side or of hard treatment on the other.

In the second instance, the trouble again rose from a course of vaunting and mocking—this time on the part of Hagar's son.

And again our knowledge of the world will teach us how disturbing this condition of things would be, especially considering the difference in rank and position of the parties. It became at length intolerable. The baneful influence of such a disturbing element in the camp would be apt to spread and bring disorder and confusion. Separation was inevitable. Sarah, as the female head of the household, insisted upon it, as she certainly had the right to do. But Abraham, grievous as all this was to him, acted under Divine direction in consenting. And that Divine direction was accompanied by Divine protection is clear from the course of the narrative. The word of promise was renewed to Abraham that, "of the son of the bondwoman God would make a great nation," clearly implying that the lad would be the object of Divine care wherever he went. So any imputation of hard-heartedness or cruelty is removed from Abraham at least.

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CRITICAL NOTE ON THE SUBJECT OF THE LORD
SPEAKING TO MAN.

From the time of Noah onwards, the scripture record constantly refers to Divine communications as made to men, directing them at one time, forbidding them at another. The whole life of Abraham, especially, is reported as being governed by such Divine monitions. Yet his life, in all its outward aspects, is that of an ordinary man of the world. He emigrates, he moves about with his flocks and herds, he buys and sells, he engages in a war-like expedition, he has intercourse with other chiefs like himself, and with chiefs of tribes in other countries. There is nothing funnical or enthusiastic about him. He is no monk, or hermit or dreamer. Yet from the first of his life to the last we read that the Lord of Heaven and Earth spoke to him as a wise and masterful tutor would with a pupil confided to his care. The Lord said, "Get thee out of thy country." The Lord said, "Take thy son, and offer him on one of the mountains of Moriah." The Lord said, "I will establish my covenant with thee in circumcision." Every important action is under Divine command and direction.

How, and in what manner, the Lord spake to this man, and to many others in these remarkable times, is not revealed. One may enquire curiously, if not perhaps very wisely, was it by an audible voice? Was it in the light of day, or was it in the night? Was it, as seems to be the case even now, by a concurrence of circumstances, pointing plainly in a certain direction, or by the voice of a preacher, teacher, friend, specially pressed with singular force on the mind? Men in these days are sometimes so powerfully touched by the words of Scripture that they come with all the force of a personal direction. But in the time of Abraham there was no written record, and there seems to have been no teacher, prophet or priest, save only Melchi-Zedek. But he is not represented as giving any Divine direction, or making any revelation.

There must have been a communication of a direct and immediate sort, such as was plain and intelligible. And, certainly, all these circumstances have the gravest import, for their consequences remain to this very day.

There are two very striking passages in the book of Job referring to Divine communications to men. The first is in Chap. 4: 12 to 18, and is in a highly poetical form:—

"In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon man: Then a spirit passed before my face. It stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof.

There was silence. . . . Then I heard a voice saying, 'Shall mortal man be more just than God?'

A pregnant question indeed.

In chapter 33: 14 to 17, another striking description occurs:

"For God speaketh once, yea twice, and man perceiveth it not. In a dream, in the vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon man, in slumberings upon the bed: *Then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction. That he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man!*"

There is no mention of dreams and visions in the life of Abraham, though they figure strikingly in the story of Jacob and Joseph.

But there are other avenues to the soul besides dreams and visions. Was not that a Divine message that Augustine heard, when, being long tossed with doubt and fear, he had the words *Tolle, Lige* (Take, Read) impressed on him with irresistible power, which words were the very turning point of his whole life?

A case is known to the writer of a young man, suddenly called to undertake a long voyage to a distant country, on business of very great moment, who, sitting in his cabin on board ship before sailing, and thinking of all that might befall him, was startled with the force with which these words were impressed upon him:

"For I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again to this land."

These are the well-known words spoken to the young wayfarer, Jacob, in nearly similar circumstances. But this young man was not reading. He was not thinking of the Divine protection; he had never read that passage with any particular attention. Yet, the impression was as vivid as if an actual voice had spoken, so vivid that he started from his seat, almost expecting to see some one. The impression was so profound as to expel all anxiety and fear as to what might happen. He was convinced it was a Divine voice, and, in all the strange incidents of his travel through unknown scenes, by land and sea, he never had the shadow of doubt that the Divine Protector was near, and that he would return to his own land in safety, which indeed did happen.

There may indeed, and there have been, instances where men have mistaken their own fancies and impulses for the

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Divine will. And a man may fairly ask, in these days, how Kingdom of God in the world, or the protection and guidance Divine or otherwise. To all which it may be said:—

That no impression can be taken as Divine which is contrary to the plain teaching of the Divine word, and no impression can be taken as Divine which has not evidently, as a consequence, directly or indirectly, the furtherance of the Kingdom of God in the world, or the protection and guidance of His servants.

CHAPTER XV.

ABRAHAM—THE DIVINE COVENANTS.

Genesis 15 and 17.

If we attentively consider, we shall always find a reasonable sequence in the events recorded in these biographies. Abram had vanquished a confederacy of warlike tribes and had recovered spoils. By this he had incurred their deadly enmity, and placed himself in a position of greatly increased danger. A chief of a camp, with flocks and herds spread over a wide extent of pasturage, he was now more than ever exposed to such marauding attacks as those so vividly described in the first chapter of the book of Job. In the narrative portion of that remarkable book it is recorded how bands of marauding Sabeans and Chaldeans fell upon his camp; slaying his servants with the edge of the sword, and carrying off the whole of his oxen and camels. Always more or less exposed, the camp of Abram was more so than ever, from motives of revenge on the part of the chiefs whom he had defeated. They would plan reprisals; they would burst upon him unawares, to kill, burn and destroy. Our own early history gives only too many examples of this with the Indians of former days. Abram knew this and could not but fear. So, walking about with watchful eye, some night before retiring to rest, scanning the horizon for the approach of foes, another Divine word comes to him, eminently suited to his circumstances:—

“FEAR NOT, ABRAM. I AM THY SHIELD AND THY EXCEEDING GREAT REWARD!”

The Almighty Ruler who holds the hearts of all men, friends and enemies alike, in his hands—He will defend. The idea of Divine protection under the figure of a shield, is made permanent for all time, and to all men, in the 84th Psalm:—“*The Lord God is a Sun and a Shield.*” Now then, Abram could sleep securely, though surrounded by enemies.

But more. The promise was not only of Divine protection, but of Divine recompense:—“I am thy exceeding great reward!” He had just relinquished the rewards of conquest; giving an example of conquest over natural desire; of disinterestedness; of generosity, and God answers him, “*I am thy Reward.*”

Whatever satisfaction, pleasure, honor, he might have had from the enjoyment of these spoils—far more—exceed-

ing more, he should have in the love and service of God. Another grand and fundamental truth, confirmed by experience of all good men, in all places, and at all times, and this even if only the time now present be considered. But what if we consider the life to come! Abram was a man of like passions with ourselves. Naturally he would strongly desire these spoils. The rich always desire more. But he had relinquished them. And now he has what our Lord calls "THE TRUE RICHES."

There are three ways of gaining the wealth of this world, differing widely both in means and consequences. The first is:—Industry and honest trade, which benefits all.

The second is:—Speculation, which enriches one at the expense of others. In this should be included all forms of commercial gambling, stock gambling, and lotteries.

The third is Robbery and Fraud, viz., by violence and plunder, by cheating, by dishonest handling of public moneys, by quiet and systematic embezzling. Open violence and plunder are regularly practised by the Bedaween descendants of Abram at this day, and apparently without conscience of wrong. Cheating and embezzlement are crimes of our boasted civilization.

"Thou shalt not steal" has been a command of wide application in all times. But "*Thou shalt not covet!*" this goes to the very root of the matter, and, were it only obeyed, would cure half of the troubles of our civilized world, applying, as the tenth commandment does, to all the domestic relations of mankind, as well as to those of property.

Yet, with all his strong faith, Abram is at times depressed and unhappy. He is almost alone. Wife he has, but no child. This was before Ishmael was born. None to inherit his wealth, but his steward, a good man, certainly, as appears by the sequel; but not to be likened to an heir by blood.

Then it was that the remarkable scene ensued which was remembered nearly two thousand years after by one of the greatest of his descendants, Paul the Apostle of us Gentile people, and set forth as an example to Christian souls in all subsequent generations. Brought forth out of the camp, on the upland plains of Judea, his eye is directed to the brilliant array of stars in the heavens: "Look," said the Divine voice, "see if thou canst count the number of them. *So shall thy seed be!*" An unlikely and almost incredible thing. But Abram believed God; and why should he not? And now was made the remarkable declaration, "*He believed in the Lord, and He counted it to him for righteousness.*"

Strange that this phrase, which represents and stands for one of the keen controversies that have distracted theo-

logians for generations in these modern times should be found so early in the history of our race as this. "Imputed Righteousness,"—what learned tomes have been written of this, now affirming, now denying, but never agreeing to differ, or realizing that the shield was being looked at from opposite sides. It is opened out by the same Apostle in his famous Epistle to Roman Christians. But nothing more appears there beyond this, that it pleases the Supreme ruler and Governor, to whom all are accountable, that whereas none are or can be righteous by complete and un-failing obedience to law, the faith of those who trust in Him shall be accounted to them for righteousness; the trust being a steadfast reliance on His love to them through His Son, who is set forth as "dying for our sins, and rising again for our justification." The man who thus trusts in God, through Christ, is declared to have righteousness imputed to him, "not of works, but of grace" or good-will.

One might wish to be able to dispense with theological terms in such a matter, and think and write in the ordinary language of men. For, certainly, the record as to Abram is reasonable and natural. And so is the application of it by the Apostle. And if we could only look at things in a natural light, and not as obscured by controversy, we might understand that He who is the sole ultimate Judge of human conduct in relation to Himself, can surely, if it so pleases Him, institute some other mode of obtaining justification, when, in the case of every man, perfect obedience has failed.

And that such a faith as is described, both as appertaining to the Patriarch, and to men in Christian times, is a powerful force in the elevation of character godwards, and the development of the highest virtue that human nature is capable of, none can doubt who have a true acquaintance with its working in the minds of men.

This faith, however, must be distinguished from a credulous acceptance of lying and debasing legends, or of silly superstitions; of which, "miserabile dictu," the history of the church affords only too many developments. Such a faith as surely degrades and destroys, as the other elevates and saves.

Thus this man of generations long passed touches us in our life now present. He becomes the "Father" of the long line of men, who, through faith, not only saved themselves, and were lifted up in times of depression and danger, but wrought great deeds for God and man, both in patient suffering unto death by sword or stake, and by courageous daring in mighty enterprises for the spread of the Kingdom of God: to all which may be added the elevating and quick-

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ening influence of this principle in the ordinary routine of the tasks of the world.

THE COVENANT OF CIRCUMCISION.

It was after this great transaction that two "signs" of the Divine covenant of blessing were instituted. But they were preceded by a very solemn command and sentence of obligation. The Lord appeared, and said to Abram:—"Walk before me, and be thou perfect."

The first carries us back to the days of Enoch and Noah, both men of eminent godliness of life, having the fear of God before them in all their ways. These men must have been well known to Abram by tradition, and of both it is said that they "walked with God"; and of the last it is emphatically said that he was a "just man, and perfect in his generations." That Noah was also a man of eminent faith has been seen. And here we have, in the very first manifestations of faith as a principle of character, the same truth brought out that is prominent in the New Dispensation, viz., that Faith towards God produces justice and uprightness towards men, and is tested by it. Anything called by the name of this much abused term, Faith, that fails to produce such results, is dead; a mere sham and falsehood.

Abram, the man of eminent faith, is to be a perfect man; the word translated perfect, both here and elsewhere, having its real significance in our English words, "upright," "honest," "sincere," a man "in whom is no guile," a "single-minded" man. After this solemn charge as to Abram's conduct, we find an enlargement of the promise as to his posterity. "My covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of a multitude of nations!" And as a sign of this enlargement, his name is expanded from Ab-Ram to Ab-Raham, the first signifying "an eminent father," the second, "the father of a great multitude."

That all this has been fulfilled the whole course of history shews.

Then there is instituted that remarkable rite of Circumcision, which brings these times of nearly four thousand years ago into close touch with the times now present. For the Hebrew people, all over the world, at the present day, most religiously observe this rite. So also, do others of the peoples descended from Abraham, but not universally, and they have not at all times. The rite of circumcision has always been practised by some of the people of the Mohammedan world, but it has never been of universal observance

or obligation with them. Some traces of it are also to be found in the history of the ancient Egyptians and also of the Abyssinians. But with none of these was it ever a part of a Divine covenant. With Abraham, however, it was the subject of Divine command. Do this; keep my covenant; thou and thy descendants in their generations. And this is to be a sign of the relation to subsist between the Almighty Father and Protector, and Abram's posterity—blessing and protection on the one hand; obedience and honorable service on the other.

This that is commanded is a manual act, and the obligation is put upon parents to observe it with their children.—It was a command, therefore, in its nature, perfectly comprehensible and simple, about the meaning of which there could be no dispute; and it was easy to obey. And certainly, so far as all history records, however sadly the Hebrew people may at times have fallen off from spiritual obedience, they have never failed in the observance of this outward rite.

The references to Circumcision in the New Testament are very striking.

Circumcision, as a rite, was a symbolical token of the cutting off of sin, just as Baptism is a sign of the washing it away.

But, it had to be pointed out to the Jews of our Lord's time, steeped as they were in ceremonialism, that it was simply a sign; and that, if unaccompanied by the reality, viz., the blessing of the heart, it brought no benefit; also, that circumcision, at the beginning, was not the means whereby the covenant of blessing came, but the sign that a blessing had come, as a reward of faith and obedience. Its imposition on children was a sign that they inherited a nature from which sin needed to be cut out, or cut away; just as the surgeon's knife is a purifying instrument, cutting off an unsound and diseased member of the body. But as it had been pointed out by Moses, that the reality of which this was the sign was the circumcision of the heart, the same truth was strongly emphasized by the Apostles in preaching the Gospel according to Christ's commandments: "He is not a Jew," writes, with great boldness, the Apostle Paul, himself a circumcised man, "*he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh.* But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God."

In accordance with all this, the Apostles and elders, and brethren assembled in the first Christian council, refused to impose circumcision upon the converts from the Gentiles,

and apparently left it open to the Jews who were converted to the faith of Christ to continue to practise it or not.

Our Lord, in giving the great commission to preach the gospel of all nations, imposed Baptism as an obligation, but said no word as to circumcision. John the Baptist, before Him, had denounced the idea that salvation came by mere lineal descent from Abraham, which, of course, included circumcision; and our Lord himself, more than once, exposed, in scathing and alarming terms, the fallacy of such trust as this in mere lineal descent and circumcision, and refused to allow men to be children of Abraham at all (circumcised as they were), unless they "did the works of Abraham."

Much of what was said of our Lord and His Apostles, in their day, to Jews who were not living a life of faith and goodness, is plainly applicable to Christians of the same character in these days; who, though baptized, are not entitled to be called Christians in reality, not having received that spiritual baptism which is of the spirit and not in the letter merely, which is not of men, but of God.

THE COMING CATASTROPHE TO THE CITIES OF THE PLAIN.

And now, after these events, the shadow of coming judgment darkens over the wicked cities of the plain. God, the Supreme, in the depths of His infinite purpose, does, at times, permit wickedness to develop unchecked by outward repression, to a height that seems to call aloud for retribution. Such, to speak of a modern example, was the condition of France during the awful Reign of Terror, the developments of which, as we read them, at one moment make the flesh creep with fear and horror, and at another rouse up a passionate instinct of retribution and vengeance.

So, in the case of these wicked cities, the story is that their cry—the sound of their damnable doings, had reached to the very heaven. God permits much, but there does at length come a time when the cup of iniquity is full, and wrath descends to the uttermost. The history of cities and nations proves it. The narrative is vivid of the steps of coming judgment. First are sent messengers, who, in figurative language, are to see and know the truth of the matter. One of these would seem to have been the Lord himself in human form. Here, and elsewhere, through the Old Testament, we seem to have a dim shadowing forth, a pre-figuration, of the time when the Son of God would be "manifest of the flesh"; where the terms "Angel of the Lord," and "The Lord" are used interchangeably of the same person.

Then, after a beautiful picture of the hospitality of camp life, we have one of the messengers—now called “the Lord”—saying, “Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?” and the true testimony following: “*I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, to do justice and judgment.*” In every way—with two rare exceptions in the course of a long life—this great man’s actions justify the position he was lifted up to: Well did he deserve the name—“Father of all that believe,” and “Friend of God.”

For, as a friend he was treated, when the terrible doom that hung over these cities was made known to him. “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him,” said the Psalmist. And the Son of God Himself, in the days of His flesh, spoke of His disciples as raised to the position of Friends:—“For all things,” said He (John 15), “that I have heard of my Father, I have made known to you.” It is singular to note the continuity of this idea of making a “confidant” of a good man, by the second person of the Godhead.

Now, when this terrible retribution is opened to the view of Abraham, he instantly thinks of his nephew Lot, his wife, his family, are they to be involved in the threatened destruction? For it was destruction, evidently, though the manner of it was not made known. His heart stirred with compassion, he breathes forth the most remarkable prayer, and is the subject of the most remarkable colloquy, that has been recorded in sacred history.

“Wilt thou destroy the righteous with the wicked?” he begins. And he ends the first portion of the colloquy with that profound query (referred to herein already), “*Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?*” Profound indeed; a saying that goes to the very foundation of the Divine government of the world, and will solve, if reasonably applied, all the mysteries of the Divine way. What God does must be right, no matter how far beyond our comprehension it may be. Milton wrote “Paradise Lost,” that he might “justify the ways of God to man.” Often it is impossible, on the ground of human reason; yet, knowing how short the measuring line of human reason is, a wise man will be content to rest in faith, and wait till larger knowledge, wider experience, and more perfect wisdom will enable him to see what at present is dark and impenetrably mysterious.

It applies specially and pertinently to such a tremendous judgment as was about to fall on these wicked cities.

The prayer of Abraham is a striking example, both of reverence and freedom, and also of continued importunity; the latter a quality specially commended by our Lord and

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Saviour in the parable of the Unjust Judge. And, though it did not save the cities, or the inhabitants generally, it did, almost certainly, save that unfortunate man, Lot, and such of his family as were willing to flee from the danger with him.

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CHAPTER XVI.

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE CITIES OF THE PLAIN.

Genesis 19.

The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in this early period, was almost an exact parallel to the destruction of Herculaneum and Pompeii, in that both were accompanied by a storm of fire from the heavens. And, in some respects, there was a parallel in the social and moral condition of their inhabitants. The two Roman cities had developments of great vice as well as Sodom and Gomorrah, as is manifest from what has been found remaining since Pompeii was exhumed. But there the resemblance ceases. To the sudden and overwhelming overthrow of the cities under Mount Vesuvius we can certainly apply our Lord's words as to the men who were crushed by the falling of a tower at the pool of Siloam. "Suppose ye," said the Divine Teacher, "that these were sinners above all that dwell in Jerusalem? I tell you, nay!" The people of Herculaneum and Pompeii were sinners indeed, but there is no evidence that they were sinners above the people of the city of Rome, and we have no reason to look upon the overthrow as a special Divine judgment. For, if Divine judgment had fallen in the shape of fire from heaven, it would rather have fallen upon Rome itself, which had already shed the blood of Christian martyrs, and where deeds of abominable violence and vice were being often enacted that cried aloud to heaven. The cry of Rome doubtless went up, as that of Sodom had done many centuries before, and we may see what looks like the movement of long delayed wrath and retribution in the storm and sack of the city by the Barbarians in the time of Augustine. The movement of Divine retribution in the storming of Jerusalem, and its utter destruction by the Roman army is in accordance with the prefiguration of the New Testament.

The circumstances that preceded the coming down of the fiery storm on the Cities of the Plain reveal plainly enough, the abandoned licentiousness of the people of Sodom, with the violence that nearly always accompanies it. Lust and bloodshed are generally very close companions. Again, we must refer for an example to the early days of the French Revolution.

Two only of the Divine messengers remained; doubtless

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the one called "the Lord" had departed. These two accepted Lot's hospitality; for Lot, by this time, had become a resident of the city, and some of his daughters were married women of Sodom, though two of them were not. Apparently, also, he had sons, as well as sons-in-law. The narrative makes it clear that he had entirely given up the pastoral life, and had become settled as a citizen. The description of the mob raging round the door of Lot's house is graphic in its fidelity; true to nature and life, reminding us of mobs in England surrounding the house where some good Methodist had taken refuge; or, on this continent, of the crowd surrounding the dwelling of some persecuted negro whom they were determined to "lynch." The cry of the mob of Sodom, "*bring them out,*" has resounded again and again in English towns and Southern cities, and though the purpose in the case of these abandoned Sodomites was more abominable, the end would certainly have been the same. And what a picture is given of the pitiful weakness of Lot! Wretched man, willing to sacrifice the honor, and perhaps the life of his daughters; a sad picture of the degeneracy that had come over a man by sojourning in such a villainous society. And then the brutality of the mob; the shout of "*stand back,*" the sneering reference to Lot as coming to sojourn, and now "*he must needs be a judge,*" the pressing hard upon him, the danger of the door being forced, and the roaring crowd bursting in; the rescue of Lot by the heavenly messengers, who pulled him into the house, and closed the door; all is told as by a very eye-witness, and gives a vivid picture of lawlessness and wickedness, such as has been witnessed, alas, often enough, in the behaviour of mobs in modern days.

But the heavenly messengers had forces at their command of a very potent character, more potent than any that men of modern days have been able to employ in their defence—more certain than rifles or revolvers, and more merciful. They struck every one of the raving crowd with blindness, "both small and great," small as well as great, for, as usual, there were mischievous boys in the mob, shouting and yelling with delight, and taking a fore-most part in the fray. (The Hebrew word employed to signify blindness rather suggests a temporary, than a permanent loss of sight.) And now the danger was over. The crowd was paralyzed, and after wearying themselves to find the door, they dispersed. This wild scene took place late in the evening. Now follows the warning of the heavenly messengers, the command to Lot to search out all those belonging to him who were not in the house, that they might not perish with the wicked city. But his sons-in-law, like the

people in Noah's time, refused to believe it. "He was as one that mocked, to his sons-in-law." Again, we have a scene that was witnessed repeatedly in succeeding ages; the messengers of mercy derided, the warning unheeded, the threatened judgment disbelieved; as the men of Jerusalem did many a time and oft to the prophets of God; and as the men of England and America have done again and again when warned by faithful messengers to "flee from the wrath to come." Thus does history repeat itself, in the spiritual sphere as well as in the secular. Nor need we be surprised at this. Human nature was as evidently the same in the days of Lot and Abraham, as the hills of Judea were the same as those which the traveller meets with now. The story of the lives of these men is so true to nature as we know it, that we instinctively feel it to be real.

But the night wore on. Time pressed. All who were in the house with Lot were willing to fly. They believed, and showed their faith by their readiness to abandon all they had. Escape from the City of Destruction they must; a true type of those who forsake all to follow Christ, and obtain eternal life. Yet they lingered; a very true touch of nature again. They lingered, as men do who are about to leave a sinking ship, thinking probably that they may be able to save and carry away something. And so the night passed on. But when morning arose; or evidently just as the dawn was breaking, and before sunrise, the angels hastened Lot away. Arise, said they, arise, "lest thou be consumed." And while they lingered, the angels laid hold upon them, almost dragging them away; out into the street, and out of the city into the open plain. Now comes the stirring command, "Escape for thy life: look not behind thee; neither stay thou in all the plain. Escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed!" This command needs to be noticed in view of what happened to the wife of Lot.

The mountainous region bordering the Dead Sea, then, probably, as now, was a resort of the most lawless amongst the many lawless of the time; and Lot was afraid to go there. One thing cannot but strike us in all the history of this unfortunate man, viz., that though in the main a good man, and well-meaning, he had none of the faith and confidence in Divine protection, none of the sturdy assurance that what God commanded was right, which distinguished his relative Abraham. Afraid he was, and was allowed to remain in a small city in or near the plain, which, for his sake, was exempt from destruction. The narrative is of a hurried flight; and all arrived at this city of refuge save one, whose fate was remembered, and has been perpetuated for all time by the warning words of our Lord, "Remember Lot's wife!"

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She "looked back and became a pillar of salt;" a terrible consequence of what appears a very slight offence. But it is evident that she not only looked back, which was itself a violation of the command given, "look not behind thee;" (indicating the urgency of the danger); not only looked, but lingered, her heart probably still in Sodom, thinking of her old home and her children still there; and that she was caught in the outskirts of the descending storm of sulphur and fire, which encrusted her round and round as she stood, until she became a lifeless statue of salt and sulphur.

There was, apparently, nothing miraculous about this. That which happened to this unfortunate woman was due to natural causes. She was caught just as some of those who fled from Pompeii were caught, and overwhelmed in the storm of ashes. Nor need it be imagined that it was a Divine judgment that overtook her. Blamable she undoubtedly was, and rash to a degree, considering the urgency of the heavenly messengers. But many a man in a shipwreck and in a burning building has done the same thing. Looking back has led to going back, to recover something of value; and loss of life has been the consequence. The warning of our Lord, "Remember Lot's wife," was a warning against delay in the matter of salvation when the signs of coming judgment were plainly discernible. His words might apply to the impending destruction of Jerusalem, or to the final ending of all earthly things at the coming of Christ to judgment. They are a warning, too, against looking back into the world, and hesitancy as to decision and repentance, when the call of the angel is sounding in the ears of men.

But now, as to the storm of brimstone and fire from heaven by which these cities were overthrown, was it a natural occurrence, like the eruption that overwhelmed Herculaneum, or was it a special miracle?

It is not to much purpose that such a question is asked, for no man, however learned and able, can possibly answer it. It does not answer the question to quote the text that "*The Lord rained fire upon Sodom,*" for the word of God, speaking in the most rational and philosophical manner, constantly speaks of the operations of nature as the work of Almighty God, as they undoubtedly are. So, it was the Lord that caused the eruption that destroyed Pompeii, and in like manner, the great earthquake of Lisbon in the last century, and the terrible tidal floods, tidal waves and volcanic catastrophes of China, Japan and New Zealand within the last few years.

It seems to have been a principle of the Divine procedure from the beginning not to put forth extraordinary powers

when the end designed could be brought about by natural causes. Looking, then, at the storm of fire that fell on these cities, it is to be noted that the region is one in which just such a catastrophe would be likely to occur. It is a region remarkable in many ways. The plain of the Dead Sea is more than a thousand feet below the level of the ocean, a spot unlike any other on the surface of the globe. It is volcanic and sulphureous, its rocks are bituminous; slime pits are mentioned in the narrative as abounding in the plain. There are asphalt and inflammable substances all round about at this day, and the Dead Sea water is not like the salt water of the ocean, but far denser. It is not mere salt, but salt, and sulphur, and naphtha.

The Dead Sea is now probably much larger than it was before the catastrophe. Doubtless the whole area now covered by it was affected by the eruption, a change taking place like that already alluded to as having taken place in New Zealand, when the Pink Falls were destroyed, and the whole aspect of the surrounding country was changed; valleys becoming hills, and hills sinking into plains.

That such an eruption and storm of fire, descending like rain, might be a very natural occurrence in such a region cannot be doubted, and it is proper to say that He who knows the end from the beginning, foreknew the time when the mighty forces that were at work would burst forth, and used these natural forces as means of judgment to men who were "sinners exceedingly;" and not fit to live on the earth. Yet, from the answer to the pleading petition of Abram, that if there were ten righteous men in Sodom, it should not be destroyed, it might certainly be inferred that the Almighty Ruler would hold in the eruptive forces in such a manner that they would either not burst upon the cities, but upon some other part of the surrounding region; or that they should not burst forth until there had been time for all their inhabitants to escape.

That such was possible, is no more to be doubted, than we can doubt any other of the manifestations of Divine power recorded in Scripture, including that chief and sum of them all, the creating of the world "*by the breath of his mouth.*"

But it is vain to pursue such inquiries and thoughts. They can lead to no rational conclusion. But the facts as related are pregnant with lessons both as to the Divine procedure and human conduct. It is clear, for example:

1. That wicked men may, in the order of Divine government, be allowed to pursue high-handed courses of wickedness for a time, and without punishment.

2. Nevertheless, the time of judgment and retribution will come, although it may be after long delay.

3. That it is a dangerous thing for a good man to become one of a community of wicked men; dangerous for his soul's health, for that of his family, and often for his temporal interest, unless indeed he goes amongst them as a Divine messenger, with an express mission of warning and call to repentance.

4. That when any people are called, by the Divine voice, to flee from coming wrath, their duty is to obey without lingering, hesitating, or looking back.

The difference between these events, and those of the overwhelming of Herculaneum and Pompeii, the earthquake of Lisbon, and the tidal wave of Japan is this:—that none of the latter yield any moral or spiritual lesson, or, in fact, any lesson whatever, unless it be that cities should not be built at the foot of volcanoes. Men are perfectly competent to draw such conclusions for themselves, without a Divine revelation. But as to moral and spiritual matters, it is a matter of common experience, that the very men who are sharp-witted and wise in the ordinary things of secular life, are often dull to the verge of stupidity in matters of high import. "Their eyes they have closed, and their hearts they have hardened." This is the true testimony of the Divine word of such as these. And this is the testimony of experience also.

THE CONDUCT OF LOT SUBSEQUENTLY.

One might wish that a veil were drawn over such a scene of depravity as is revealed in the closing verses of the chapter. But the Holy Ghost has not drawn a veil over this, and many other scenes of deplorable wickedness. And why? Clearly because such records are for the warning and instruction of mankind. For if some men in some places, in certain states of society, conceive that records of outrageous wickedness have no practical bearing on the life that surrounds them, let them remember that these Scripture records are for the instruction of mankind in all ages and countries, and all states of society; and that although some men and communities may not need such warnings, there are others that do.

But taking the condition of society, such as we know it, in these so-called Christian communities of modern times, is there not, in this narrative, another terrible warning against the free use of wine?

Corrupted as the moral sense of this wretched man Lot had become, it would have been impossible to commit the wickedness recorded unless his senses had been stupefied by intoxication. This is the second warning of the kind in

these very early records, and all experience shows that the warning is a pertinent one even in these modern days of Christendom.

As to the conduct of the daughters, what can be said, but that it is a frightful instance of the working of corrupt influences year after year, and going on until moral sense is lost. "*Evil communications corrupt good manners.*" This proverb, quoted by St. Paul to the Corinthians, is of heathen origin, but is profoundly wise and true, like many others that the Greeks have left us. And it has never had a more terrible exemplification than in the conduct of those two young women, who, in their early days were probably living an innocent and virtuous life, when their father was the chief of a tribe, with flocks and herds feeding on the plains, but who, in the corrupt life of a wicked city, had gradually imbibed the poison of bad sentiments, and now did that which rendered them infamous for all time.

There is another reason why their wretched deeds are mentioned in the Divine record, viz., that the children born were named Moab and Ben-Ammi, the first being the head of the great Moabite nation, and the other of the nation of the Ammonites. Both these were distinguished by their idolatry, and licentiousness, and both were enemies, giving sore trouble to the Israelitish people during many generations.

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CRITICAL NOTE AS TO THE DEAD SEA.

The Dead Sea is now divided, very noticeably, into two distinct parts, the northern being of a very great depth, upwards of a thousand feet; the southern being very shallow, being not more than twenty feet deep. The southern part is marked off from the northern by a projecting peninsula. It has long been matter of doubt and controversy whether the wicked cities were at the northern or southern end of the valley; but of late, and as the region became better known, the weight of opinion has been in favor of the southern extremity, and the remarkable difference between the great depth at one end and the extreme shallowness at the other, favors this idea. For it is easy to conceive that the whole of the shallow part of the lake was once dry land, a fair and lovely region, well watered by streams from the mountains.

The objection to the truthfulness of the narration arising from the entire absence of any remains of cities either there or elsewhere though the valley is entirely without foundation. For the narrative is that the cities were entirely destroyed by fire. Now, no matter how solidly they might be built, it is impossible that after the lapse of nearly four thousand years of the action of the elements since the fiery storm overthrew and destroyed them, any vestiges that survived the fire could have remained to be seen in these modern days. And if it is said by way of rejoinder that the adjacent country abounds with ruins of very ancient cities, let it be remembered that these were all of much later date, certainly a thousand years later, than Sodom and Gomorrah, and then that none of them were ever overthrown by such a catastrophe as overtook the Cities of the Plain.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ABRAHAM OFFERING UP ISAAC.

Genesis 22.

"And it came to pass, after these things, that God did tempt Abraham; and said unto him, 'Abraham;' and he said, 'Behold, Here I am.'"

It is most unfortunate that the translators of the Scriptures, in the ordinary version, sometimes used terms which not only failed to convey the true meaning of the original, but were suggestive of what was impossible, viz., that the God of truth and justice could do wrong. It is, too, most singular that they should have translated this verse in such a manner as to make it appear that the Supremely Good, on this occasion, actually tempted Abraham to do that which was evil, when a previous translation gave the passage its true sense; a sense which has been restored in the Revised Version. Both these translations gave the passage thus:—

"And it came to pass, after these things, that God did prove Abraham;" this being the real idea intended to be conveyed by this most remarkable narrative.

God put Abraham to the proof, by imposing upon him the severest trial of faith and obedience that it was possible for any human being to be subjected to.

This "putting to the proof" is practised constantly in the case of such inanimate things as may, at times, be subject to a great strain. And the proof is by putting upon them during the process a much greater strain than they are likely, under ordinary circumstances, to have to bear. For this there is the obvious reason, that extraordinary circumstances may sometimes arise, and that such exigencies, though they may never come to pass, should be provided for. Thus are proved the cables of a ship, the timbers of a bridge, the iron-work of girders and beams for a pier or a railway station. Thus were proved the galleries of the building in Hyde Park where the first great Exhibition was held. In the case of men who have to perform some arduous duty, or to hold some difficult command, it is rare that they are allowed to exercise their functions until they have been tested and their quality proved. Indeed, it is quite common for a superior, in the course of training his subordinates, to give a man a task of unusual severity, far more than he is

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ever likely to meet with in the course of his ordinary duty. It is thus that the temper, the patience, the courage of a man is tried, in a manner quite apart from the proof that may be required of intellectual fitness.

It is related, whether truly or not, but it is likely enough to be true, of a certain Principal of a Theological Training College, that he would sometimes request a candidate to wait upon him at four o'clock on a winter's morning; that he would keep him waiting in his study two hours without seeing him; and that, when the interview took place, he would begin by asking a number of questions such as a very young school boy could answer. Having thus tested the candidate's *morale*; his obedience, his patience, his docility; if the behaviour of the man were satisfactory, he would then proceed to an examination of an intellectual character. For, as a wise man, he well knew that other qualifications, besides those of scholarship, are absolutely necessary to prosecute the work of the ministry successfully.

The same principle is enunciated in the Epistle of the Apostle Paul to his "son in the faith," Timothy, where, speaking of the setting apart of the Deacons to their office, he lays down the rule, "*and let them first be proved*"; the original word signifying a proof by trial, as metals are assayed before being stamped.

Such considerations may enable us to understand the Divine procedure in this matter of Abraham's offering up Isaac. The Lord, who designed that Abraham should be for an "Example" to all who should subsequently believe and trust Him; and specially to such of them as should be called to posts of high service, and severe sacrifice, was pleased to put him to the severest test that could be applied to any man. For, when considered, it must appear to be such. This son, Isaac, had been born specially by Divine promise, and the solemn covenant of God was that the sacred line of blessing should be continued through him. For this purpose, Ishmael, the strong and daring boy, whom Abram favored, had been set aside. Yet now he was commanded to take this son of a Divine covenant, and put him to death! How, then, could this covenant of blessing be fulfilled? How could the sacred race be continued? Was all this line of wonderful promises, that had sustained him in leaving his own country, and cheered him in numberless dark hours, to be broken off, and brought to nought? This edifice, so laboriously built up through many long years of faith and hope, hoping indeed, oftentimes against hope—was it all to fall into ruin?

A dark mystery indeed! Then, besides, the horror of the command for a father to put his son to death! How can

there be Divine justice in that? Still more strange and dreadful is the command to offer him up for a Burnt Offering! What! is the Almighty Ruler and Father, my Shield and Reward, become like one of the bloodthirsty gods of the nations round about, that He must have a human sacrifice offered to him?

Such thoughts must have troubled the breast of a man such as Abraham was. They are not recorded. Nothing, indeed, is recorded, except his simple unquestioning obedience. There is no intimation even of such a yearning as characterized Abraham in so marked a manner when he pleaded for Lot and for Sodom. Not a word. Not a thought apparently, but of going about to obey the Divine command. We may well say, what can such silence mean?

The New Testament shall give the answer. Amongst the heroes of faith, the "*cloud of witnesses*" who are marshalled before us in the Epistle to the Hebrews (chapter 11) Abraham naturally is most conspicuous. His career is rapidly passed over in brief, and the great spiritual ideas that were its inspiration opened up and revealed. Then, passing on, the inspired writer records:—

"*By faith, Abraham, when he was tried*" (note the word tried, as expressive of the true nature of the transaction; a trial, or proof), "*offered up Isaac*"; and he that had received the promises, offered up his only begotten son; of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called, "*Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead*"; from whence also he received him, speaking figuratively."

Here then we have the key to Abraham's conduct:—

He obeyed this very strange command, having a perfect and unshakable confidence that what the Supreme Lord of his life had directed him to do was right. He obeyed, with the same perfect confidence (to compare earthly things with heavenly) with which the soldiers of Napoleon or Wellington would execute plans and movements of which they could not comprehend the reason; nay, more, plans which to them would seem utterly unreasonable and fraught with disaster. Was not our own Balaklava Charge an instance of the same absolute obedience of what must have seemed to be an order of absolute madness?

"Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs but to do and die."

And must it not be so always in spheres where men have to co-operate in the carrying out of large plans and the working of great enterprises. Some men must lead, must calculate and give directions, with the responsibility of success or failure before them. And others must follow; obey.

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ing implicitly and without knowledge. It is impossible that a President, a General, a Captain, a Superintendent, the Premier of a Government, the head of an enterprise, should discuss all his plans with subordinates, and that they should obey only when they approve or understand. The business neither of the world nor the church could be carried on if such a rule prevailed. No. Men must obey when they do not understand. Nay, they must obey, even when they are in a position to form some judgment as to what is ordered to be done, and when their judgment differs from that of the chief.

It is precisely here where the faith and obedience of a subordinate are tested, "I do not understand the reason of this movement," a loyal officer will say, "but I shall execute it." Nay, more, "I seriously fear this operation will lead to disaster," says another, and an officer of higher grade, "but the Commander-in-Chief knows better than I." Such things as these occur in every sphere in life; in civil affairs as well as military, in the conduct of the church, in all its spheres of service, Missions, Parish affairs, Diocesan matters; but above all, in the sphere of Government. In that sphere, numbers of things require to be done for which it would be highly improper to assign reasons to subordinates. And, not seldom, there are things that even to well-informed men, men of experience and intelligence, appear to be unreasonable in a high degree. Nevertheless, they are done, and done loyally and heartily. And why? Because there is perfect confidence or faith in the superior.

But in Abraham's case there is stated to have been a consideration of how the command to offer up his son in sacrifice could be consistent with the promise of a line of posterity through that son. And we are informed of the conclusion he arrived at. The language of the Epistle to the Hebrews in this respect is noteworthy. We are told in chapter 11. v. 19, that the patriarch obeyed, "*Accounting that God was able to raise him from the dead.*" The word translated "accounting," a Greek word from which our English word "logic" is taken, suggests reasoning, calculating; a consideration of circumstances, and the arrival at a reasonable conclusion. And, indeed, the conclusion was reasonable in a high degree. Could not God who commanded the death of the son, raise him again from the dead? The question brings us again to that fundamental thought, "*is anything too hard for the Lord?*"

And so, we are brought round to that other great and pertinent saying; pertinent in view of the strange and terrible nature of this command, viz., "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" This is solid ground. Only let a man

be convinced that a command is really from the Supreme Ruler of the Universe, he cannot, in the nature of things, but obey with confidence, as Abraham did.

The pathetic and beautiful incidents of the journey have often been commented on. The prompt obedience, the inquiry of the lad, "*Where is the Lamb?*" the answer, unconsciously anticipating the result, "*God will provide himself a lamb;*" an answer that contained the very words that were to be embodied after this event, in one of the names of the Supreme; above all the extraordinary and unhesitating calm with which this terrible transaction was prepared for, and the equally extraordinary submission of the son in allowing himself to be bound, when he could so easily have escaped, form a picture of undying interest, which has had a singular fascination for faithful souls in all subsequent ages.

Well did the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews characterize the transaction as an actual offering up of Isaac by his father; for such in effect, it really was. "By faith, Abraham, when he was put to the test, *offered up Isaac*"; yielding him at the Divine command, parting with him in effect and intention just as surely as if the actual sacrifice had taken place.

The intervention of the Divine Being, at the last moment, when the lad was actually lying bound upon the altar, and the hand of the father was raised to slay the son, is not the least remarkable of the incidents of this wonderful narrative. Yet the reason given for this intervention carries an irresistible conviction. The purpose of the trial was fully accomplished. The actual taking of the lad's life would not have demonstrated one whit more clearly the absolute nature of the patriarch's trust, nor his readiness to obey, no matter how dark and mysterious, how utterly incomprehensible the Divine requirement might be. That being accomplished, the hand of extreme pressure is taken off. "*The trial of faith,*" to quote the words of the Apostle Peter, "*was much more precious than the trial of gold in the fire.*"

"Lay not thy hand upon the lad, for now I know that thou fearest God; seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me!"

Thus spake the Divine Ruler of Abraham's life.

Another sacrifice was provided, a ram offered up in place of the patriarch's son, and Abraham, full of a deep and profound satisfaction, called the name of the place "Jehovah-Jireh," "THE LORD WILL SEE," that is, see to it, or will provide (provide being only the Latin form of foresee). A grand truth that has stumped itself on the heart of succeeding ages. Many centuries afterwards, at the time the

book of Genesis was written, the saying was still remembered. Men then said to one another, in times of darkness and sore trial, remembering this scene on the Mount Moriah, "The Lord will see." And they have been saying so, and most truly and wisely, down to the days in which we live. When the servants of God have been in dark and difficult places, out of which they could see no way, they have lifted up their souls in calm confidence, making sure that "The Lord will provide." Many a sailor has said this, when tossing about on stormy seas, and on treacherous coasts, or unknown shores. Many a missionary traveller, like Livingstone, in the depths of a dark continent, or Carey when hopelessly contending against the hostility of his countrymen, or Judson, wearing out months of a precious life in the prisons of Burmah, has been lifted into light and hope by the mighty truth, "Jehovah jireh—The Lord will see!"

The same thought has cheered many a poor widow when honestly struggling to bring up her children decently, hoping almost against hope. And many a hard-pressed man of affairs, merchant, statesman, farmer, soldier, has taken heart in dark and trying days, when nothing seemed before him but bankruptcy, disaster, or defeat, by remembering how, at the very last moment, the wonderful hand of God was seen "in the Mount," intervening, saving, providing, and turning night into day.

These are not sentimental fancies. They are facts of human experience, repeated too often, with too many men, in too great a variety of circumstances, through too many ages of time, to leave doubts of their being solid realities.

And now we have that remarkable declaration of Almighty God; really transcendent in its solemnity, "BY MYSELF HAVE I SWORN, because thou hast done this, and hast not withheld thine only son from me; that in blessing I will bless thee, and will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore." A wonderful oath indeed, and never forgotten by the descendants of this man. For, nearly two thousand years afterwards, we find the father of John the Baptist, speaking by inspiration, respecting his son's destiny, calling this great oath to mind (Luke 1: 73). And after this, when writing to his fellow-countrymen, who had embraced the faith of the Messiah, the Apostle Paul also stirred up their faith and zeal by reminding them of this oath, in the pregnant words:—"For men verily swear by the greater; and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath. That

by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us."

And now, what is the practical significance of this wonderful narrative. The story has been scoffed at by unbelievers, and made the butt of sarcasm and contempt, if not an occasion of deep enmity to the Divine record, and to Him who is revealed in it, for many ages. And it is so, even down to our day. Christians at this very time are taunted as believers in a God who commanded a father to murder his own son. But as in every other objection to the sacred narrative, it is evident that the objector, even if honestly desirous to judge in fairness of what is recorded, has not bestowed proper attention upon the words of the narrative. For the record is, that the God of Covenant Blessing, put this man to the proof. The transaction was a trial! And in all trials, there is a pre-determined course as to how far the trial should go. The command, moreover, was not to *murder* his son, not simply to slay him, but *to offer him up*, to sacrifice him; to part with him, to give him up to God. Now, the reasonableness or otherwise of this can only be determined by considering what lessons for subsequent times and ages are embodied in it; what stimulus, what consolation, what encouragement, what direction—that is, if there are any lessons to be found in it at all. And here we are on no uncertain ground, but on the solid rock of human experience, as has been already said. It is a fact, that to great numbers of people, for many ages past, even before the time of Christ's coming, the question had been put, "has this narrative of the offering up of Isaac been a stimulus, or an encouragement, or a consolation to you?" These large numbers of people would undoubtedly have said, "It has;" and in many cases they would have said, "It has been such in a supreme degree. For, I also have been severely tried. I have been called to give up to the service of God, of His church, of my country, my only son, the hope of my life, or my dearly beloved daughter, the crown and joy of our house. It was a dark day. But the thought of this sacrifice of Abraham, of the mighty, calm, unquestioning faith that led up to it, and of the wonderful blessing that flowed from it, lifted me up out of doubt and darkness into the very mount of blessing, so that I also could say, In the mount shall the Lord be seen."

For fathers and mothers in all ages have had to do, in effect, what Abraham was called to do. And there was a Divine prescience of all this; a foreknowing of what would come, and of what would be the means of strength and comfort to all who had to do it.

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And to the number of those, also, who are called to the discharge of duty of a strange character, of which the reason is beyond comprehension (and there have been many such in every sphere) this narrative is an inspiration, as indicating to them that there is certainly a reason in the counsels of Divine wisdom for the course they are about to follow; and that the path of implicit obedience, in perfect confidence, is the path of blessing—not ordinary blessing, but blessing multiplied and enlarged.

Few men enter on a decided course of religious action without sacrifice. Sometimes, it is the giving up of friends and companions, sometimes even separating from a man's own kindred, as in the case of Hindoos, or the French of Lower Canada; sometimes the parting with some cherished course of life, the sacrifice being like the cutting off a right hand, or the plucking out of a right eye. Our Lord spoke of such sacrifice as this in the strong and peremptory terms, "*unless a man forsake all he hath, he cannot be my disciple*." Such times are exceptions in a man's life. They do not take place every day. But when they come, they must be met as Abraham met the command to offer up his son. And the same blessing will follow.

The striking prefiguration of this narrative is somewhat beyond the line of these practical studies. But the least reflection will shew the remarkable resemblance of its incidents to the spiritual realities of redemption.

God gave up His dearly beloved and only son.

The Son yielded himself up in perfect submission.

He was sacrificed on the same mountain.

Great glory to God, and blessing beyond thought to all mankind was the result.

CHAPTER XIX.

ABRAHAM'S CARE FOR THE MARRIAGE OF HIS SON ISAAC.

Genesis 24.

The exquisite narrative of this chapter is not only charming in itself, as a beautiful idyll of Eastern life, but is full of practical lessons for men and women in these very days. Isaac was to continue the sacred line. Hence the choice of a wife was a matter of the most sacred importance. Being old, and fearing he might not live to see the event, Abraham took a most solemn oath from the chief steward of his house, that he would not take a wife for his son of the daughters of the Canaanites. For they were all idolaters. This was doubtless under that Divine direction which is so singularly manifest in every step of this business.

For He who "knows what is in man," knows that it is dangerous for the godly to marry the ungodly. The tendency was, and is, and always has been, for the ungodly, whether wife or husband, to draw down the other to the lower level. So, in early Christian times, the utmost care was taken to surround marriage with safeguards. "*The woman may marry whom she will,*" wrote the Apostle Paul to his brethren in the city of Corinth, "*but only in the Lord,*" a most significant caveat; "only in the Lord!" (1 Cor 7, 39). And this is followed by the command, in a subsequent pastoral letter, "*Be ye not unequally yoked with unbelievers;*" for what fellowship hath righteousness with *v* righteousness?"—II. Cor. vi., 14.

Beauty, wealth, position, none of these are forbidden. But to marry with the ungodly, the unbelieving, the unrighteous—this is expressly forbidden. And all experience, in all ages, countries, and states of society, shews the perfect wisdom and reasonableness of this prohibition. Not to speak of a marriage between a Christian and a heathen, or a Christian and a Hebrew, it is generally found inexpedient that there should be marriage even between a Protestant and a Roman Catholic. "How can two walk together unless they are agreed?" says the Apostle. If both are in earnest as to religion, there must be constant division and separation, leading to heart-burnings and jealousy; dissensions as to bringing up of children, and the setting before

them of an evil example in vital matters. If one or other of the parents be not particularly in earnest, such a marriage is more likely to result in confirmed indifference to religion, both in the parents and the children.

The entering on the marriage relation thoughtlessly, and with little consideration, is one of the evil signs of the times we live in. Marriage may not be, as the Roman church makes it, a "sacrament." But that it is a high and solemn Ordinance, carrying with it most serious consequences for long continuing years, and future generations, is as certain as that it exists at all. That the only rational basis of marriage is that of an engagement for life; taking one another "for better or for worse, until death us do part," will be evident when it is considered how long it takes to bring up, educate, and place out children in the world; and how supremely necessary it is for the woman to have the assurance of sustenance and protection during this long course of years.

The State, most properly, takes cognizance of this relation, and makes laws with regard to the parties entering upon it. But it is a relation which can never be rightly entered upon except with the sanctions of religion as the basis of its obligations.

It was in this spirit of solemnity that the good patriarch entered on the business of seeking a wife for his son. And it was in a spirit also, of confident faith in Divine guidance. Sending his Steward, with a retinue and presents on the long journey northward to the land of his kindred, he says to him: "The Lord God of Heaven, which took me from my father's house . . . *He shall send an angel before thee*" Language this, that opens up a wonderful field of thought. For though no angelic messengers are ever seen with the bodily eye, in these ages of the world, they do not need to be seen with the eye of the body for their presence to be realized by a good man. That the angels are God's messengers, and "ministering spirits to them who shall be heirs of salvation," is a truth of the New Testament dispensation in which we live; a truth to be grasped by faith, yet a most reasonable truth considering how difficult the path of life is, and through what a wilderness every man has to make his way. No laughing of faith to scorn, will do away with the difficulty of life; and none but a fool will make light of any revelation of help if help there be, as undoubtedly there is.

The many promises made to the seed of Abraham according to the flesh, are all inherited by his spiritual children, the men and women of like faith, in these later times. And one of these promises is that of the Ninety-first Psalm:

"He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. And in their hands shall they bear thee up, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone."

And what, under the supposition that the world and all the people in it, are under the cognizance and guidance of Him who created it; what more reasonable, than that subordinate beings should be employed in the spiritual realm, helping, strengthening, and guiding those whose lives have been consciously placed in subjection to Him.

So, when engaging in any important enterprise, on setting out on a long and varied journey, any man who is living his life in harmony with the will of Him that made him, may confidently look for Divine helpers to be about him, "the angels of God going before him to show him the way."

But to exercise such a faith as this, it is not necessary that a man believe all the foolish stories or fanciful tales about angels that have gathered round the literature of the church. These "*old wives fables*," as the Apostle Paul calls them, are hindrances to rational faith. The revelation of God is the only sure ground of confidence, in this and all other matters of a spiritual sort. And when men travel beyond this record, they enter a region of spiritual fog and darkness.

The promise that a man shall be so borne up that he shall not "dash his foot against a stone," reminds us how easy it is to stumble in the journey of life; and not only to stumble, but to fall and hurt oneself; to break a limb, to fall even over a precipice and be lost. Many a man has had this lamentable experience in business, in politics, in the church; many a woman in the sphere of social life, in companionship with her own sex, and, still more, with the other. In this very matter of marriage, how many have stumbled through forgetfulness or neglect of God's commandments, and have fallen, finally, over a precipice into that dismal pit of divorce, from which, as a rule, there can be no extrication.

But we follow the servant of Abraham on his long journey northwards from Hebron, over a track that, even then, had long been followed by traders and travellers going from Mesopotamia to Egypt,—the same that was followed by Abraham himself when he left his country and kindred; the same, doubtless, or nearly, that is followed by travellers to this day. He travelled with a retinue—many camels, and servants; and this for safety, as men have to do still, through the same region; and he arrives at last at the place where Abraham's kindred had their abode. This was in the country of Mesopotamia, north of Damascus.

And now we can imagine the perplexity of a man charged with such a mission as this. The real difficulty of the expedition has now begun. Apparently he is in ignorance (and he probably was in entire ignorance) of the various members of the families composing Abraham's kindred; what number of daughters were among them; what were their ages, character, suitableness, or otherwise. And, even if he is supposed to be able to remain long enough amongst them to discriminate and choose, how is the choice to be made effective by the consent of parents and relatives, whose views might not by any means be in harmony with those of the stranger. And, then there is the all-important matter of the consent of the chosen one herself. This particular difficulty had, very naturally, been foreseen from the outset. "*Peradventure,*" said the thoughtful steward, "*the woman will not be willing to follow me into this land! Am I then to bring thy son to the land whence thou camest?*" This, certainly, would seem to be the most natural course. Let the young man, in that case, go and plead his own suit. But the father would not consent to this; for some reason not given. But he had full confidence in the guidance of Divine Providence in this very delicate and difficult matter.

The steward, however, having come to the very place where his mission is to be fulfilled, is strongly impressed with the difficulty of choosing, and the danger of making a wrong choice. And, indeed, considering all the consequences that flow from a life-long union between man and woman in marriage, he might well almost despair and wish that such a serious business had never been entrusted to him.

Then a very characteristic scene is opened to us. The steward finds relief in prayer. And he prays in a very remarkable style, for success in the object of his journey. There is a touch that seems almost like irreverence in the detail of this prayer. The steward, most earnestly desirous for Divine direction, addresses Almighty God as if he were speaking to a man:—"Behold, I stand by the well. The daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water. *Let it come to pass that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, that I may drink, and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also. . . . Let this be she that thou hast appointed.*"

A singular particularity in the prayer, yet, if analysed, we shall see that the intent and purpose of it is most wise and sound. It is the kind of prayer which is in harmony with God's will, the only prayer that any man can expect a favorable answer to. For, to begin with, it recognizes the

directing hand of Providence in the matter, and that this marriage should be one of Divine appointing, "Let this be she whom thou hast appointed!" Further, the kind of woman his thoughts were dwelling upon, and such as God could certainly approve. He was looking for fine moral qualities. She was to be courteous and obliging, and that to an unusual degree. It would have been courteous and graceful to hand her pitcher to the stranger; but to add, "Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also," indicated an exuberance of kindness and good will; a kindness that was willing to labor and sacrifice for kindness' sake. Certainly all this is in harmony with His will, who is goodness in His very essence. And when a man, even in these times when Divine direction is not so plainly manifest, though not less real, when a man prays that he may get such a wife, his prayer is very likely to be answered. For, in addition to extreme courtesy and kindness, the woman the steward prayed for was to exhibit great industry, capacity for work, and knowledge exactly suited to the station she was to fill. She was to be, in fact, the kind of woman so well portrayed in the last chapter of the book of inspired Proverbs.

If a man prayed for a beautiful wife, or a rich wife, or a wife of high social position, forgetting the higher and spiritual qualities that make the glory of a woman—even if he were a good man, it is most unlikely that his desire would be granted. For such an answer might be the ruin of him.

But, one may say, are we not taught that "if we ask, we shall receive; that if we seek, we shall find?" Very true. But by the same word, and by the same Divine Teacher, we are taught that prayer such as is sure of an answer must be offered "in faith," in harmony with the Divine will, "in the name of Jesus Christ." But now can a man ask "in faith" for what the Divine word has taught him might be a hindrance and a burden; how for things that are not in harmony with the Divine will, how, in the name of Christ, for things that Christ has never promised, and never blest. The simile employed to express willingness to answer prayer should teach us what sort of prayer we may expect an answer to. "If a son ask bread of a father, will he give him a stone? or, if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?" Very true. But suppose the son, in his ignorance or foolishness, ask for the stone, what then? Suppose he ask for the serpent, will he get it? Nay, verily. The Father in Heaven gives "good things" to them that ask, things that are intrinsically good and valuable, as measured and judged by Him. Not that beauty or wealth are bad in themselves, but that, if sought for their own sake, they may become snares and hindrances.

In the case before us, the steward showed his wisdom and

his fitness for the mission with which his master had entrusted him. His thoughts were dwelling, not on beauty, wealth, or station, but on real goodness and suitableness for the life the wife of his master's son would have to lead.

And his prayer was literally answered, being inspired, as all true prayer is, by Him who is the object of it. And it was answered, like another great petition we read of (Daniel ix, 29), before he had finished speaking. So runs this exquisitely beautiful and simple story, a story that bears upon it an evident stamp of truth:—"Before he had done speaking (v. 15) behold Rebekah came out, with her pitcher on her shoulder; and the servant ran to meet her, and said, 'Let me, I pray thee, drink a little water of thy pitcher.' And she said, 'Drink, my lord.' Mark the courtesy of her answer. "And when she had done giving him drink, she said, 'I will draw water for thy camels also, until they have done drinking!'"

Well might the good man hold his peace in wonder, at the immediate fulfilment of his prayer. So, nothing doubting, in the full confidence of faith, he produces his costly presents, a golden massive "ornament for the forehead" (not an earring) and two golden bracelets for her hands; then accepting for himself, his retinue, and his camels, the offered hospitality, he bows down, "worshipping the Lord," full of thankfulness and praise, testifying, "*I, being in the way, the Lord hath led me to the house of my master's brethren.*"

The rest of the narrative is most dramatic and beautiful. "The welcome of Rebekah's brother Laban (of whom we hear much hereafter) 'Come in, thou blessed of the Lord,' glad sounds in the steward's ears, as indicating faith in the same Divine Lord; the excitement in the house; the refusal of the steward to eat until he has told his errand; the acknowledgment of the Divine hand by Laban and his father Bethuel; the reference of the great matter to the damsel herself in the words, "*Wilt thou go with this man?*" and her simple and direct answer, "*I will go,*" the solemn blessing they bestowed upon her at parting. "*Thou art our sister; be thou the mother of thousands of myriads; and let thy seed possess the gate of those who hate them*"—all these combine to form one of the most touching pictures that has ever been drawn by the pen either of an inspired or an ordinary biographer; a picture of simplicity, courtesy, goodness, piety, consideration, that is almost unique in literature.

The damsel, we are told, "was very fair to look upon." That she was stout and healthy is evidenced by her watering all the steward's camels. So, as it was with another, who, seeking for the best thing first, obtained other things he did not ask, the steward had the great satisfaction of

taking home to his master a young woman who, by every quality of body and mind, was worthy to be an ancestress of a sacred race.

The picture of her arrival is a fit close to this narrative.

Isaac, a pious and meditative man, was out in the fields, meditating or praying (for the Hebrew word will bear either interpretation) when he saw, probably a long way off, the cavalcade of camels and attendants. And Rebekah, she, too, is eagerly looking out, as they are coming toward this south country, where the settlement of Isaac was; near that famous well of Lahai-roi, "the well of him that seeth me." She sees a man coming. Enquiring who he is, she learns that this is her future husband. She alights from her camel, takes her veil and covers herself, and thus, with all ceremony and respect, these two came together, whose union had been so strangely brought about. And well does the narrative conclude by the statement that, "*she became his wife, and Isaac loved her,*" as well he might; "*and was comforted after his mother's death.*"

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ADDITIONAL NOTES AS TO ABRAHAM.

Genesis 23.

Abraham lived long with his wife Sarah. She died at an advanced age, at Hebron—the same Hebron which is still one of the most famous of the towns visited by travellers in Palestine, lying about twenty-five miles south of Jerusalem, in the high country of Judah. This chapter of the book of Genesis is an interesting one, giving as it does, a perfect picture, of Abraham's position as "*a stranger and a sojourner in the land;*" as he speaks of himself to the children of Heth, while yet, to them, he is "a mighty prince," or "a prince of God," as the Hebrew literally means. He was well known to them, for though he had carried his flocks and herds over a great extent of country, he had sojourned there before, and had made an alliance with their chiefs at the time when he had gone out to defeat the bands that had carried off Lot. This place of his sojourn and encampment, Mamre, near Hebron, is still associated with Abraham, for there is a venerable tree on the heights above the city that still bears his name.

The chapter gives an idea, also, of the development of civilization up to that time, in the matters of coined money, and the buying and selling of land, which are not materially removed from what prevails in our own day. The lapse of nearly four thousand years has made little difference.

Abraham himself never owned a foot of that land which was so solemnly assured to his descendants. So, when his wife died, it was a necessity to apply to the people of the land for a place of burial. "He stood up from before his dead," says the pathetic narrative, and said, "I am a stranger and sojourner with you; *give me a possession of a burying place.*" They answer, with a deference and courtesy, still characteristic of the East, "Thou art a mighty prince among us; *in the choice of our sepulchres bury thy dead.*" Abraham chose for the purpose, the cave of Machpelah and offered for it "*as much money as it was worth.*" The owner, Ephron, entreated Abraham to take it as a gift, calling witness to the fact of his offering the property for nothing. This most generous offer Abraham refused, as he had refused gifts once before, and insisted on paying for the field a fair price,

which the owner named as "four hundred shekels of silver." This amount of money, then, Abraham weighed out to Ephron. "four hundred shekels of silver, current money with the merchant." Then the cave, and the field, and all the trees therein, and in the borders about it "were made sure unto Abraham for a possession in the presence of the children of Heth."

And there he buried his dead.

The whole of this is strikingly similar to the condition of things with regard to land, which prevails at the present day in our own country. It has already been noticed that human nature subsists to-day substantially as we find it in these narratives of a thousand years ago. But we could scarcely expect to find so close a correspondence in what may be called matters of business. Yet what have we in this narrative?

First, we have ownership of distinct parcels of land by individuals. It is not a tribal ownership, but a personal; and an ownership that was secure; a freehold. And the parcel of land was defined, and bounded, so as to suggest that some survey must have been made, lines marked out, and a plan made. Then we have the offer of money for a transfer of right of ownership, and a sale made with the condition of *sure possession*.

Further, the money offered was such as was "*current with the merchant*," a remarkable phrase indeed, in use at the present day in deeds and documents of title, and in contracts, commercial and financial. Current money, which must have been indicated by the coins called shekels having been stamped or marked in the same way that silver is stamped now to indicate its genuineness, and possibly by the coins themselves being marked as of such and such a weight.

But the phrase "*current with the merchant*" indicates that there were, at that early period, regular mercantile dealings, and that the stage of barter had been passed. Finally, we have a *transfer of ownership, made sure, in the presence of witnesses*, exactly as land is conveyed, for due consideration, in money current with merchants, by deeds and acts duly witnessed, in this nineteenth century of the Christian era.

And that this transaction was respected, and ownership in Abraham and his family recognized, is manifest from the subsequent history. Abraham himself was buried there by his sons Isaac and Ishmael. And, many long years afterwards, when the chances and changes of life had carried the grandson of Abraham, Jacob, down to a foreign land, he gave a strict charge, in extreme old age, as to his own bur-

al in the very last words he spoke (Gen. xlix., 29, 30, 31) "Jacob charged his sons, and said: "I am to be gathered unto my people. *Bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite, for a possession of a burying place.*" "There," he adds, "they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife; there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife; and there I buried Leah." This charge was religiously observed. The remains of the head of the house of Israel were carried by his sons, with great pomp and ceremony, to the land of Canaan, and deposited in this cave of Machpelah, a cave which has ever since been considered a spot of the highest sanctity, and is still held in veneration by the whole Christian and Mohammedan world.

CHAPTER XX.

ISAAC.

Genesis 25, 26, 27.

The life of this quiet, home-loving and gentle-souled man derives almost its sole importance from its connection with his great father on the one hand, and his two sons on the other.

To his father he was a son born out of due time, in fulfillment of Divine promise; and the subject of the most fearful trial of faith and confidence that ever man was subjected to in the history of the human race.

Left in possession, as heir, of all his father's property, an arrangement that excited no opposition from his famous brother, Ishmael, who could not pretend to dispute the title, and most happily married, he entered on his unobtrusive life as a dweller in tents, possessed of numerous flocks and herds, mainly in the region round about the famous well, "The well of him that seeth me," Lahai Roi (*Genesis XVI.*). Twenty years of life passed away before children were born. Then his wife Rebekah bore him twin boys, both of whom became remarkable men, the elder son, Esau, the progenitor of many tribes who spread themselves over the great region east of the Jordan; the younger, Jacob, by far the most remarkable of the two, the true head of that most remarkable race of all the world, which still subsists as a powerful factor in our modern civilization. The descendants of Esau have long ceased to be capable of identification; those of Jacob, though they have wholly lost any national character, can be more easily identified than any other race or nationality in the world. In any given assembly of civilized men (as we know by experience in this country of mixed population) it would be hard to make an accurate separation between the Englishman, the Frenchman, the German, the Italian, the Russian; and any man who attempted it would certainly make mistakes. But out of such an assembly it would be easy to pick out the descendants of this Eastern patriarch of four thousand years ago; in comparison with whose history, the chronicles of all the rest seem but a story of yesterday. But the father of these two sons had no such strong traits of character as distinguished each of them.

The only noteworthy incident in his individual life is a singular repetition of what had more than once befallen his father when forced by stress of famine to make his way to a foreign country. With a wife "very fair to look upon," his own life would be in danger. A singular illustration of the truth of this has been furnished in our own time in more than one instance. When a famous Englishman, Captain Baker, went down amongst Mohammedan populations in Africa as an explorer, he took his wife with him. But she was always dressed as a man, and passed as his page. Her husband knew the people amongst whom he was travelling, and that it was necessary to adopt such a measure for his own and her protection. A similar instance took place with a noted French traveller in the same continent, whose widow is living in Paris still. It is said that having adopted male attire for her husband's protection amongst barbarous races, she has chosen to continue it since returning to civilization.

But Isaac manifested the same want of confidence and courage that had been shown by his father. Abraham's failure must have become known to his son, who may have excused himself by his father's example. So easy is it to follow in the steps of men when they fail; so liable are a good man's failings and defects to be repeated, almost unconsciously, in the experience of other men who follow him.

But the greater part of Isaac's life was one of continued prosperity and increase in wealth. "The man waxed great and went forward, and grew until he became very great; for he had possession of flocks, and possession of herds, and a great store of servants."

To which record is added, that his neighbors "envied him," a true touch of human nature as we find it amongst men and women even in this age of the Christian era.

The story of the wells that Abraham's servants had digged, which the Philistines in their jealousy had filled up, and that Isaac's servants re-opened, and of other wells that they digged, including another of the famous Beer-sheba, "the well of the oath," in the extreme south of the pastoral country, close to the borders of the desert, all shows the high importance of the Well in that hilly country, where all streams but the Jordan were, as usual, dried up in summer, and where a drier season than usual would burn up the grass and might produce famine. These famines, happily almost unknown in more northerly regions, are still amongst the terrible casualties of the seasons in the East. And now, as then, they influence the course of history, and the migrations of families and tribes.

The transactions that took place later on in the life of

this patriarch, when his two sons were grown to manhood, belong rather to their history than his own. Suffice to say that during his lifetime the great promise of "Blessing" was renewed in still more enlarged terms. "Sojourn in this land," thus spake the Divine word, "and I will be with thee, and I will bless thee; and unto thy seed will I give all these countries; and I will perform the oath which I swore unto Abraham thy father! Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments and my laws." And all his life was passed under the beneficent shadow of this blessing.

After his sons had grown to manhood, and had both of them done and said that which has become part of the world's history, the life of Isaac moved on in quietness and peace, presenting a striking contrast to the stirring lives both of his father and his descendants. He died in extreme old age, at Mamre. Jacob, his son, being with him, and he was buried there by his two sons, Esau and Jacob.

CHAPTER XXI.

JACOB.

Genesis 25 and 27 to 29.

The great space given in the Divine record to this remarkable man indicates the extent to which his career has influenced the subsequent history, not only of his natural, but of his spiritual descendants. For, like Abraham, he has had his spiritual descendants, the true Israel, the heirs of spiritual blessings and promises; first spoken to him, and then extended to all those who, like him, have risen, as Tennyson has sung, "from their dead selves to higher things."

JACOB (or in its Eastern form, YAKOUB), meaning a "supplanter," became, in later days IS-RA-EL, a PRINCE OF GOD; not that, in his earlier days he was wholly the crafty unscrupulous man of the world he has often been supposed to be, for he was not; but that, at one time in his life, he did one thing, which, as is often the case, gave him a name and a character which was always remembered against him.

Yet this action and others resembling it by no means represented the whole man. The course of his life gives the impression of a many-sided man, a man of contradictory elements of character, so contradictory that those whose acquaintance with men is limited, have supposed either that the narrative is wholly true, or that Jacob was a consummate hypocrite.

But such contradictions are so far from being uncommon that they are to be found in almost every man of mark, in every sphere of life. The letters and correspondence of the great soldier Moltke, the man so iron-souled, and impassive, that his associates would have concluded that there was not a drop of human sympathy in him, reveal a man in private life of exquisite tenderness and sensibility. Who, again, could have imagined that Lord Nelson, the terrible genius of destruction in sea-fights, would have been the man to give public and devout thanks to Almighty God when he had gained great victories, and still more that he would have left behind him, in the cabin of the "Victory," (found after his death) a touching prayer for success to the arms of England in the conflict impending; and, especially, for

grace to show mercy to the vanquished. The last a true note of sincerity; and it would be the shallowest of judgments to say that these were either mere formalities, or that he was a hypocrite.

An English lawyer of the past generation, known to the writer, a man who rose high in his profession, and commanded the services of eminent clients by his ability, in matters of religion was as credulous as an uneducated peasant. One could hardly imagine it was the same man who during the week would be conducting cases with far-reaching sagacity, weighing evidence with professional keenness, and drawing up deeds and contracts in a manner that evidenced a highly disciplined mind; while, on the Sunday, he would sit in a gathering of religious enthusiasts, and be deluded, with others, by the vagaries of people who pretended to speak with tongues, and to work miracles. Yet so it was.

Was not Cromwell a man of opposites? a master of statecraft, a great general and ruler, a man who could hold his own with the crowned heads of Europe; yet a man of profound religious enthusiasm, a man of much prayer and communion with God? The old estimate of Cromwell as a designing hypocrite has been exploded by fuller knowledge in this very generation. He was simply a man of opposites.

To go back to Scripture itself, who could imagine that David, the bold and daring genius in war, *'a man of blood,'* as the Scripture itself designates him, could possibly be the man of such wonderful tenderness, delicacy, sensibility, and devotion, as he exhibits himself in the Psalms? It is a shallow and uninformed criticism which judges that the same man could not have been both warrior and psalmist; a criticism founded on ignorance of the manifold developments of human nature.

And, to come down to our own age and continent, we have seen in the American General Stonewall Jackson, a man of the same opposite traits; a man of the most constant devotion, and habits of prayer and communion with God; devout and saintly enough for a monk; yet, withal, a man who in war was a terror to the enemy by the rapidity of his movements and the fierceness of his onslaught; a fierceness well expressed by the order he gave at a crisis in a great battle, *"now sweep the field with the bayonet!"*

The same opposite traits were also to be found in that great Englishman (using the word English in its broad sense) General Gordon.

Thus, as the life of this man Jacob opens before us, exhibiting him as a man of opposites, let us not imagine either that the record cannot be true, or that Jacob was a

pretender to that which he had not. For such a conclusion would be unphilosophical, and contrary to what is known of the thoughts and ways of men. That Jacob should be at once a man of most tender affection and of profound craft, a man of far-reaching plans of worldly advancement, steadily pursued through a long course of years, yet one who saw wonderful visions, and dreamed marvellous dreams, need not excite either surprise or suspicion. It is the part of wisdom to study the characteristics of this man, as opened up in that Divine record which never either "extenuates or sets down aught in malice."

The two twin sons of Isaac and Rebecca grew up together, and, as often happens, they were of diametrically opposite characters. "*The boys grew; and Esau (a name signifying hairy) was a cunning hunter, a man of the field.*" There are few families of boys where one is not found like him. These are the sportsmen, the men who love to go afield with rod or gun, who know how to trap or shoot game, large or small; the men who shoot tigers in India, and lions and elephants in Africa. Bold, hearty, enterprising, restless, they are often true Esaus in being careless of the future; frank in bearing, and jolly in manner and speech, they are generally universal favorites.

Such was Esau, a man, in some respects of better *moral*, naturally, than his younger brother. Yet, obviously, not the sort of man to be the head of a nation who above all things were to be entrusted with the task of preserving in the world the knowledge of an unseen God, and of a most patient faith in the future destiny of their own race, and of mankind. For the recklessness and levity of Esau were as conspicuous as his good nature, and there appears in him no signs of either the fear or the love of God.

"*Jacob,*" so reads the record, "*was a plain man, dwelling in tents.*" But our translation hardly does him justice. The word translated "*plain*" is the same word that occurs in the Book of Job, where that patriarch is described as *upright*. The same word is used in the Book of Psalms to describe the man of integrity. (Psalm XV.)

Though contrary to much that has been conceived, there is good reason to believe that the basis of Jacob's character was uprightness and integrity; and that the instances where he plainly departed from it, are those of a good man being tempted and failing in that very feature of character where he was least likely to do wrong. It was exactly so with Abraham, as has been seen. It was so with Moses, with

David, with Solomon. And it was so with Peter, the rock-like and immovable apostle; bold, daring and resolute, who in a crisis of danger became as timid as a girl.

The history of these two men, and especially of the younger of the two, brings out strikingly various developments of human nature; showing human life as it is, and was, and probably always will be, holding up a mirror for us to see men and their ways, and the consequences of these ways too.

It strikingly illustrates also the operation of Divine grace, and the working of the spirit of God in the heart of man; it shows also the conflict between good and evil in the same soul, and the prevalence, now of this, now of that, in the actions of the man, until finally the good triumphs. The story illustrates, too, the deep and far-reaching purposes of the Divine government, some of which are hard to understand, and some altogether past finding out.

The history opens with an incident which displays an almost incredible levity and folly on the part of the elder brother, and a covetous craftiness on the part of the younger. The New Testament, as its manner is, throws light on this incident.

Esau (Hebrews xii. 16, 17) is there styled "*a profane person*," the word translated profane, meaning a despiser of sacred things, "*who, for one morsel of meat, sold his birthright.*" This birthright carried with it the headship of the family and a double portion of the father's property by inheritance. That a man who had come to years of discretion should throw away all this for the mere sake of a single meal, even though he were in the extremity of hunger, as hunters like Esau are apt to be (the experiences of the Indians of our own country proves this) shows an extremity of folly which proved him unfit to be entrusted with any measure of responsibility. Such men have come to be heads of families in England under the operation of the law of primogeniture, and have wasted many a valuable inheritance by folly and extravagance, as subsequent inheritors have known to their cost. There are few English counties in which some titled family is not to be found whose members are endeavoring by rigid economy of living to win back an inheritance that had been wasted by the folly of some Esau of the family in a former generation.

Spiritually, Esau is a picture of the men who despise the blessings of the future and the unseen for the sake of a little fleeting worldly enjoyment. The Jews, who heard Paul and Barnabas, at Antioch in Pisidia, and *contradicted and blasphemed* (Acts xiii. 45, 46), were warned that as they

had shown themselves "*unworthy of everlasting life,*" the word of salvation would be preached to them no longer. Thousands of men like these have done the same thing, and, indeed, are doing it every day.

Esau in mature age showed his indifference to all considerations except his own pleasure by marrying, successively, two idolatrous wives, well knowing that this was contrary to the Divine will, and to all the traditions of his race. These women, naturally, brought trouble into the family, and made Rebekah say with bitterness: "*I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth. If Jacob take a wife such as these daughters of the land what good shall my life be to me?*"

But now, returning to this matter of the birthright, the narrative is a very remarkable one in its terms. Esau comes in from hunting, utterly exhausted, and faint with hunger. Asking his brother for food, the natural answer would have been the offer of it. To any man whatever, being so hungry, surely food would be offered; how much more to a man's own brother. But food was not offered. On the contrary, the extraordinary proposal was made that the hungry man should sell the brother his birthright. One would conclude this proposal to be a jest; and possibly it was meant as such, for no man could have thought it possible that such an inheritance could be offered in exchange for a single meal.

But, as we well know, things spoken in jest are sometimes taken in earnest. At any rate, Esau so took it; and, very probably to his brother's astonishment, he went on to say, most recklessly and foolishly: "*I am nearly dead; and what is the good of this birthright. Give me some food and thou shalt have the birthright!*" Jacob evidently doubted if he was in earnest, and would have the bargain confirmed by an oath, which was given. "*Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles; and he ate and drank and went his way.*" Significantly it is then added: "*Thus Esau despised his birthright!*"

And it might have been added, thus did Jacob, a home-loving, industrious man, and for the most part upright and straightforward in his dealings, fall into the snare which always besets men of his temperament, the temptation to be covetous, to take advantage of the folly of another man so as to get valuable things for far less than they are worth. Often, indeed, it is to their own undoing, for the men who are taken advantage of generally become enemies, and are apt, being such men as Esau was, to take back by force what has been got by sharp practice. There was, indeed, no *fraud* in this case. It might be called, as the way of the world is, a fair bargain. There was no deception on Jacob's part, no offering of a thing in exchange which was

represented falsely, no taking advantage of another man's ignorance. For Esau was not ignorant. Reckless and foolish he was, to the last degree, but he knew perfectly well what he was doing.

Yet it is plain that Jacob was wrong. And the wrong was this, and a bitter wrong it was, in not having compassion and kindness towards his hungry brother. Yet it is a form of wrong that is not uncommon with men of uprightness and integrity, viz.: a strange insensibility to want and suffering. There are many men whose word is their bond, who yet never stretched a hand to help the needy in their lives; nay, who make a sort of principle *not* to feed the hungry and clothe the naked, on the ground that such benevolence only tend to make men lazy and improvident.

This, however, is not the mind of the great Master.

As to Jacob, this birthright, so obtained, seems to have done him little good. There is no sign of its bringing him honor, respect, or consideration. His father, with whom Esau was a favorite, could not view such a transaction with favor. Yet his favor and respect were an all-important matter. And his brother could never be to him again what a brother should be. A man who has been over-reached can never be a friend. He will complain, and talk hardily, warning others to beware. So, often it comes to pass, in this modern world, where transactions like this of Esau and Jacob are by no means unknown, that the man who has over-reached another has over-reached himself. He becomes generally distrusted, loses friends, connections, and credit, and finally is, in many cases, utterly stranded.

Many years seem to have elapsed between this transaction and the next, during which the course of the lives of the two men went on as before.

But in Isaac's old age another thing was done, which has never been forgotten, and in which there were far darker features than the other, viz.:

THE DECEIT AS TO THE BLESSING.

The prime mover in this disreputable business was not Jacob, but his mother; a foolish woman, with all her good qualities. And the narrative is a terrible warning to mothers against letting their partialities and favoritisms with their sons become so dominant as to blind them to considerations of what is honorable and just.

Not much, it is evident, had come, so far, of the acquisition of the Birthright. Nor was it likely to have come, under the circumstances. But now, an opportunity arose, in the view of this short-sighted mother, of settling finally

the matter of her favorite son's pre-eminence. And she contrived a little plot, a deceitful artifice of a kind very characteristic of persons who have an end to accomplish, and are neither scrupulous about the means, nor considerate of the consequences. Such things have been done again and again in various spheres of life.

Men have sought to circumvent their fellows in the strife of politics and business; women in the sphere of social life; but it is always with the same result. The plot may temporarily succeed. If well contrived and carried out, it will almost certainly succeed. But the men who over-reaches another, as has been said, always over-reaches himself. The temporary success always brings about what followed in this case of Esau, viz.: a bitter sense on the part of the person injured of having been wronged, and a determination to be avenged, to "get even" with the wrong-doer, as the modern phrase is.

When the end to be attained seems to be a praiseworthy one, as, for example, in the sphere of politics, the attainment of some important object for one's country, or the prevention of some great evil, a statesman may be tempted, and often has been, to attain it by low and unworthy means, by deceit, concealment, misrepresentation, or other improper influences. But the result is always the same. The required majority does not remain faithful. The measure is found unworkable. The opposition gathers strength, and it is repealed, after years of heart-burning and disquiet.

So this plot of Rebekah only brought disaster and confusion to herself, and trouble to her family.

The deceit she proposed should have been rejected by Jacob at once. But again we have the picture of a man, generally good, falling into a "horrible pit," and getting his feet entangled "in miry clay."

His consent was somewhat reluctant. He saw the danger and warned his mother of it. But evil, once admitted, infatuates and blinds. Her love and partiality for him rises to a passionate defiance of results. "If there is a curse, instead of a blessing, *on me be the curse, my son!*"

For love, how many have broken the laws of God and man, and have brought darkness and curses upon their lives and those of their loved ones. A strange chapter in human history is this of the follies and sins of affection; the turning of the choicest treasure of the human heart—love—into the means of the most dismal downfall of which human nature is capable.

Let us notice the rapid development of the evil.

There is first the consent of Jacob to a fraud.

Then the repeated lie. In verse 19, "*I am Esau, thy first-born!*" Then,

In verse 24.—“*The Lord enabled me.*” Horrible profanity! Then,

In verse 24.—The solemn assertion when challenged, “*I am indeed thy son Esau!*”

It is a sad and sickening picture, indeed! a terrible example of evil coming into a man's soul like a flood, and bearing rapidly away all restraint of honor, conscience, and the fear of God.

And now follows the bestowment of the solemn blessing of the aged father, which, let it be noted, is purely a temporal one. “*God give thee of the dew of heaven, the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine. Let people serve thee. Be lord over thy brethren. Cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be every one that blesseth thee.*”

Wealth, honor, power, the three things the human heart always craves for, everywhere, at all times, amongst all peoples, in all circumstances; these are what have now been nominally bestowed upon Jacob. His mother and he should surely be satisfied.

But now, as it is always, they experience the deceitfulness of the lures and promises held out by the great Deceiver. They have got what they schemed for, apparently,

But have they?

They have no more got it than our common mother, Eve, obtained what the great Deceiver promised her at the beginning.

There is no evidence that Jacob ever obtained the pre-eminence over his brother, or the double share of the family property, or the headship of the house. On the contrary, the mother and the son immediately realized the consequences of what they had done in the outbreak of wrath on the part of Esau, and his expressed determination to slay the brother who had so previously wronged him. In that case, what would become of the blessing!

For the cheat was discovered immediately; it could not but be discovered. Then comes the bitter outcry of Esau, who heard that the blessing could not be recalled; the cry of an impulsive and passionate man, who has bartered away in folly one great part of his inheritance, and realizes all the more the terrible position he would be in if he lost the remainder. Such a cry could not but be heard. The father pronounces also a blessing on him; a prophetic blessing, far-reaching, and looking on to his posterity.

He also should have temporal prosperity; but his lot should be as different from his brother's as their characters were diverse. “*By thy sword shalt thou live, and thou shalt serve thy brother. And it shall come to pass when thou shalt have the dominion that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy*”

The first and the last of this prophecy were certainly fulfilled in the lifetime of the brothers. There is no record, however, of Esau's life being subject, personally, to his brother, and in that respect, as well as in the other, the object to be attained by this wicked and foolish plot was never accomplished. The subjection, however, came in course of time and the developments of history.

As a prophecy, reaching into far distant ages, it was in substance fulfilled in their descendants.

The consequences that followed the shameful fraud of which the mother and son had been guilty must be considered in another chapter. Meanwhile the lessons it conveys lie on the very surface, viz.: to mothers, to beware how they allow partiality to a son or daughter to rise to a passion and lead to deeds of injustice and folly; and to men living in the world to beware of listening, even for a moment, to dishonorable proposals, lest the listening should open the door for evil to enter in like a flood, sweeping away truth and honor, and causing them to do that which will be remembered against them after a whole lifetime of good actions is forgotten.

CHAPTER XXII.

JACOB'S VISION AT BETHEL.

Genesis 28.

It has seemed strange that after such a disreputable course of conduct as Jacob was guilty of in connection with his father's blessing, there should have been manifested to him such a wonderful vision as that of the angels' ladder, and such wonderful promises of blessing from the Supreme God. We would rather have expected some outburst of wrath on the part of the Almighty Judge, some cutting off of Jacob altogether from the Divine favor. But the ways of God are not always our ways. He speaks, at times, truly, by prophets and messengers, but at other times, yet no less forcibly, by the course of events.

Let us mark the sequel of events in this case.

First, with regard to the mother, the prime mover in the wrong.

Rebekah had only two sons. By what she had done she had utterly estranged Esau, who was no longer to her as a son. How could he be? And, now that Esau had threatened to take Jacob's life, it was no longer safe for her favorite son to remain. She called him, and advised him to fly. But the fond mother hoped it was only for a short time. *"Tarry for a few days with my brother Laban, in Haran, until thy brother's fury turn away, and he forget what thou hast done to him. Then will I send and fetch thee thence."* Then the heart of the mother breaks out in the exclamation, *"Why should I be deprived also of you both in one day?"* A foreboding of what was coming, of the perpetual separation which she dreaded, lurks in this pathetic exclamation. She was a woman of tender affection; loving her husband, loving her home, loving both her children; one of them, indeed, not wisely, but too well. And she fondly hoped the brothers would become reconciled and the family be reunited again. But there is no record of Rebekah ever seeing her son Jacob again, and the course of the narrative would indicate that there had come about a permanent alienation between herself and Esau.

So speedily did retribution overtake her for the deceit she had instigated, a retribution which had exactly corres-

pounded to her offence. Her love to Jacob led her to commit the wrong. Retribution overtook her in the shape of perpetual separation from him who had always lived at home, but was now compelled to fly for his life to a distant country, from whence he was never to return in her lifetime.

Jacob himself, the home-loving man, was practically banished from home, compelled to go out as a fugitive and a wanderer, to undertake a long and dangerous journey; all which came home to him with bitterness as a consequence of the pious sin he had committed against God, and the wrong he had done to his brother. The time of his setting out was referred to by himself afterwards as a "*day of distress*." And, evidently, it was a time of humiliation and prayer. In chapter xxxv. verse 3, he speaks of God *having answered* him in this bitter day. The passage, like so many brief and incidental passages of Scripture, furnishes a key to what follows. For it is incredible, and contrary to the whole Divine procedure that such blessings and promises could have been given to a man of mere craft and covetousness, going away in hardness of soul, callous and indifferent to what he had done. There was everything in the circumstances to bring about an entirely opposite state of feeling. He had fallen into disgrace, he had endangered his life, he must leave the home where his whole life had been spent. And he went out, a solitary man. No escort accompanies him, no train of camels as when Abraham sent to seek a wife for Isaac, no attendants, no presents for his friends, nothing has he but a staff and a wallet, and he carries his life in his hand at every step of the way, for he must have had money enough with him to carry him to the end of his journey, and so have been worth plundering.

All this was calculated to bring about a revulsion of feeling like that which swept over King David's soul when his horrible sin was pointed out to him by the prophet. So as he sets out, and loses sight behind the hills of the encampment of his father and the tent of his mother, pursuing his way northward in poverty and solitude, what could come over him but distress and anguish of spirit, remorse and bitterness of soul, leading to earnest cries for Divine mercy and protection.

This was the "*day of distress*" that he remembered so well twenty years afterwards, and the answer to his cry came, as it is sure to come to them who "*call upon God in the day of trouble*."

About the end of the second day of his journey he arrives at the place where Abram, his grandfather, many years before, had built an altar. There, on the solitary hillside, for he dare not go into the neighboring town, he arranges to

pass the night in the open air; not a very safe proceeding, for there were wild beasts about that region, roaming up through the hills from their haunts in the valley of Jordan. It was, and is, a rocky region. Choosing some quiet nook where he would be least likely to be disturbed, he arranges the stones of the place for his pillows and lays down to sleep, weary with his journey, but much more heart-sick at the miserable folly he had been guilty of and the dangers of the way he was travelling.

But he slept.

Then, in a wonderful dream, came God's answer to his cry of distress, an answer that wonderfully fitted his circumstances. He dreamed and saw a stairway, reaching from earth to heaven, and the messengers of God ascending and descending on it! Ah! a way from earth to heaven even for such a one as he! And God's messengers, ministering spirits, executing His will on the earth, guarding, guiding, preserving them that trusted Him. And had not an angel accompanied him, all unseen, thus far! The angels were ascending,—were they conveying home the souls of the faithful departed, as was revealed long afterwards, the angels carrying Lazarus to Abraham's bosom! And were not some descending,—bearing Divine messages and commands,—a wonderful vision indeed! And surely the heart of the lonely wanderer must have been stirred to cry out, "Oh, that one of these might attend on me on my journey!" But much more than this. Raising his eyes upward, he was made conscious of the presence of Almighty God Himself, not sitting on a throne, but *standing*,—standing in the attitude of one who was ready to help.

And the words then spoken, brief as they are, have been instinct with power, to all generations since, and are as truly applicable to the circumstances of men in this our own busy day and age, as they were to the lonely and dispirited wanderer on the hills of the land of Canaan.

The first words were a confirmation to Jacob of the original promise spoken to his grandfather Abraham, and repeated to his father Isaac, of an inheritance in the land whereon he slept, and that his descendants *should spread abroad to the west, the east, the north and the south*, becoming a blessing to all the families of the earth. This promise of spreading abroad is an enlargement of anything previously spoken, and its full meaning was only realized spiritually when the true Israel, the faithful souls who accepted and followed the Divine son of Jacob in after ages, were given the great commission, and fulfilled it, of going into all nations, and spreading abroad over the whole earth the good tidings by which all the families of the earth were to be blessed.

But now, being thus assured of his inheritance in the ancestral blessing, further words were spoken to him specially applicable to his own circumstances and the pressing need of the hour.

He was alone, and without attendants and protectors.

How perfectly suitable to his circumstances was the assurance from the All-Powerful Supreme, "BEHOLD, I AM WITH THEE!" "I am with thee;" surely that counts more than any number of an escort! "*If God be for us, who can be against us?*" Frederick the Great, in a difficult position, calling a council of war, found his generals very despondent on counting up their small numbers as compared with the host of the enemy. The king, drawing himself to his full height, looked round the council table, and exclaimed, "And how many do you count Me!" Just so. The Duke of Wellington once said that he considered the presence of Napoleon with his army as good as forty thousand additional men. So it was once well said that one man with God on his side was in the majority, no matter how many might be against him.

But the Divine word went further. The young man was going to strange places, to unknown regions; he might easily lose his way, be captured by a hostile tribe, sold for a slave, as his own son was in after years, or perish with hunger or thirst before arriving at the end of so long a journey. Again we must notice the perfect fitness of the Divine promise, *and I will keep thee in all places whither thou goest.*" The Divine presence would be the presence of a guard. This is the true idea intended to be conveyed. No armed host could make his journey more safe.

But further still. The young man purposed to return. His visit was intended to be short. Yet it could not but be doubtful as to whether he would ever return or not. The Almighty Protector then adds the promise, "*I will bring thee again to this land, and I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.*"

All these are wonderful words. Considering the time, the circumstances, the person, and all that was involved in them, they are a wonderful manifestation of Divine goodness and wisdom.

And the power of these words has never been lost. They speak as truly, and with as much appositeness and force, to the young men of these times as they did to Jacob. This is an age of dispersion. Men are obeying, as they never did before, the Divine command to replenish the earth, and to subdue it. Young men, in multitudes, have left the paternal roof, to travel far abroad, to the very ends of the

earth, to strange and unknown countries, often encountering danger of precisely the same kind as that which surrounded Jacob. And it has already been told, in these pages, how to one such, with a long travel before him by land and sea to utterly unknown regions, when considering in despondency the prospect before him, these words came as an inspiration: "*And behold I am with thee, and I will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again to this land, for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.*"

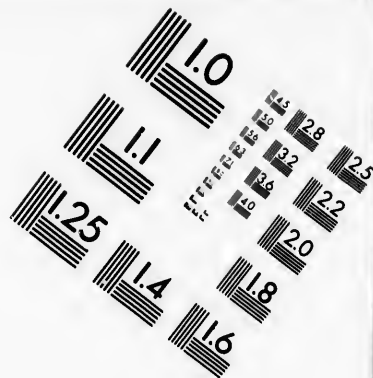
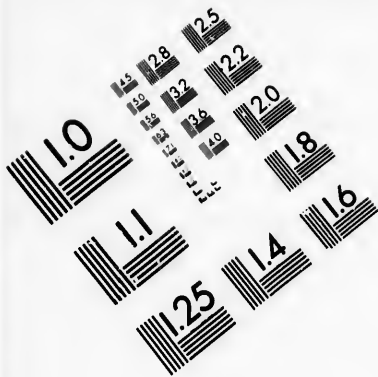
Well might Jacob, when awakened out of sleep, be struck with awe and solemnity, and a strange sense of the presence and power of Almighty God. "Surely," he said, "*THE LORD is in this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of Heaven!*"

And rising in the morning early, he consecrated the place, setting up the stones on which he lay for a pillar, pouring oil upon it, and giving it a new name, BETH-EL, *the House of God*, a name it has borne ever since, and by which it is known to this day.

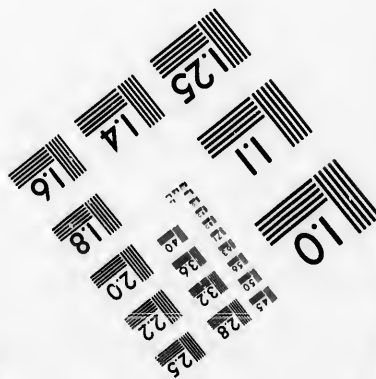
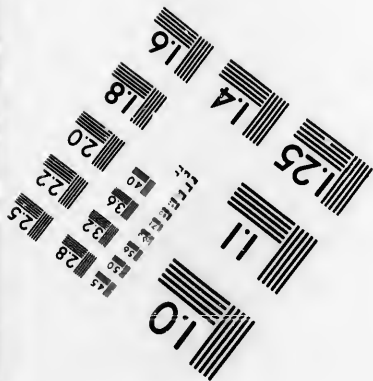
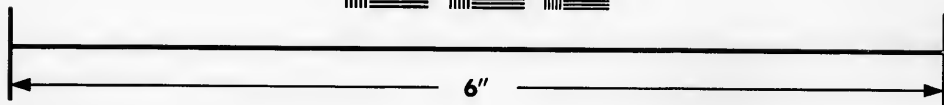
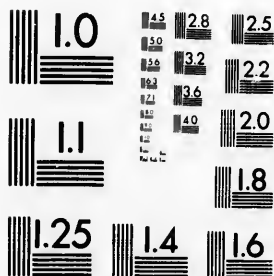
And now occurs a passage which skeptics and deriders of sacred things make mock of even to this day. It represents, say they, a miserable mercenary bargain between this man and his Creator; so much service on the one hand, so much protection on the other.

But this is not the true idea of the passage, and it does not represent the thought of the man. The revised version of the Scriptures gives, in the margin, what is doubtless the true intent of the man's heart. He was filled with the thought of the Divine protection and blessing which had been vouchsafed to him, conveying, as these did, the assurance of Divine forgiveness for the wrong he had done. His soul was lifted up into a far higher plane of spiritual thought than he had ever known before, and it was while filled with such thoughts that he uttered a vow of consecration; not coldly making a bargain, but in solemnity, awe and thankfulness, reciting, to stir up his spirit, the wonderful things God had promised to do. "If, then, it be so, what a solemn obligation rests on me to consecrate my whole life to my Preserver, my Benefactor, my all-powerful Heavenly Friend, whose messengers I have seen going up to heaven and returning from it. And so it shall be. *The Lord shall be my God*, in deed and in truth; in token whereof I set up *this stone as His House, and of all He shall give me I will surely render the tenth to Him.*" This was the portion already, at this early period, designated as that which should be set apart as appertaining to God. And this Jacob solemnly vows to fulfil.





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The whole tone of the passage forbids the idea of a spirit of cold, mercenary bargaining. It breathes the same spirit of solemnity, thankfulness and humility afterwards expressed by one of the greatest of his descendants when he sang: "*What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord.*"

And in this spirit the lonely traveller resumes his journey, a journey of some hundreds of miles, crosses the Jordan with his staff in his hand at the place where he recrossed a wealthy and prosperous man, some twenty years afterwards, and pursuing his way, day by day, for nearly a month, arrived at length in Haran, the home of his ancestors.

So far, then, the Divine word had been fulfilled.

JACOB'S LIFE AT HARAN.

What reception he would meet with on arriving at the settlement of his uncle Laban must have been a matter of anxiety as he approached it. He came as a wanderer and a fugitive, in absolute poverty, and might be, for aught his relatives knew, no desirable addition to their household. A wonderful contrast was this to the arrival, in great state of camels, servants and presents, of the steward of his grandfather some fifty years or more before. But the story of his reception is almost as beautiful as that of the steward when he halted at the well and met Rebekah.

Jacob came near to what he supposed to be the neighborhood of Laban, and encountered a company of men gathered about a great well, watering sheep. "*My brethren,*" said he, "*whence be ye?*" They replied in a friendly tone, "*Of Haran are we.*" He was, then, in the neighborhood he was seeking. "*Do you know,*" he continued, "*Laban, the son of Nahor?*" They replied, somewhat cautiously, "*Yes, we know him.*" "*Is he well,*" continued Jacob, or as it is in the beautiful idiom of the Hebrew, "*Is it peace with him?*" "*He is well,*" they replied, and becoming more friendly, they went on to say, "*Behold, his daughter Rachel cometh with the sheep.*"

While he was speaking, Rachel came up, leading the flock of which she had charge. And now there is a scene of the same character as that of fifty years before, with this difference, that then it was the woman of the house that watered the camels of the stranger—now the stranger waters the flock of the woman of the house. The manner of the narrative reveals the depth of emotion that stirred

the soul of Jacob at this moment. His long and dangerous journey by night and day amongst strangers and possible enemies was over. Once more this home-loving man, this man so devoted to his mother that he committed the great sin of his life to please her, found himself among his mother's kindred, and speaking to the daughter of Laban, his mother's brother. The story of this journey must originally have been told by Jacob himself, and we may mark how he emphasizes the word 'mother' in it: "It came to pass, when Jacob saw Rachel, the daughter of Laban his mother's brother, and the sheep of Laban his mother's brother, that he went near, and watered the flock of Laban his mother's brother." The threefold repetition in the same sentence marks the intensity of his emotion in finding himself once more amongst members of his own family, a joy which many a man in these days of diffusion has felt on finding, often unexpectedly, persons of his own house in remote parts of the world.

Jacob saluted Rachel with the affection of a relative, and then, utterly overcome by his emotion, he burst out in a passion of weeping. This little trait reveals a side of Jacob's character that is constantly overlooked. In the man of keen, practical business insight, always alive to his own interest, and more than once falling into the temptation which always besets such men, to over-reach and defraud, the world has forgotten the man of keen sensibility, of strong affection for home and kindred, and of a high order of emotion which none but men of noble natures are capable of.

The young stranger was well received by his uncle, Rachel had run in with the tidings of her cousin's arrival: *And it came to pass, when Laban heard the tidings of Jacob his sister's son, that he ran to meet him, and embraced him, and kissed him, and brought him to his house.* Then Jacob told Laban all the news of the far-off family of Isaac, and his mother Rebekah, on which exclaimed to him, "*Surely thou art my bone and my flesh!*"

The story of Jacob's fortunes in the twenty years he remained with Laban, and of his wives and their children sounds strangely in our ears in these times. And apparently there is not much in it out of which instruction can be gathered. But let us remember that these words were written thousands of years ago for the instruction of multitudes of people, in divers ages of time, in different degrees of civilization, of different countries, manners and usages, and that what appears to us commonplace may have appeared to others interesting in a high degree; what to us is coarse and almost indecent,—to men and women of

former ages, and even to those of different countries even in our own—is natural and proper. Especially let us remember that the twelve sons of Jacob became the heads of the twelve tribes of Israel, and that to all the members of these tribes, the circumstances under which the head of their own tribe received his name would be a matter not only of great, but of abiding interest. For names were always significant, either of personal qualities or of the circumstances of birth. The birth of a child being in circumstances of rejoicing he was called Judah, or *Praise*; when in gloom and darkness, he was called, in the language of despair, I-cha-bod, "The glory has departed." The Divine Being Himself is referred to again and again in the form of a Name. "*The name of the God of Jacob defend thee.*"

But it is evident that Jacob early displayed what would be called a capacity for business, and that, in the course of a very few years, the whole management of the affairs of Laban was committed to him, and to Laban's great advantage. Jacob did what many a capable manager has done in these times, he enriched his employer. Jacob, after a time, could say most truly: "Thou knowest how I have served thee, and how thy cattle was with me. For it was little which thou hadst before I came, and it is now increased to a multitude. And the Lord hath blessed thee since my coming. And now," he adds very naturally, for he had married and had many children, "when shall I provide for mine own house also?"

Most reasonably said. And the answer practically was to give him what would be called in these times a share in the business. Jacob thereupon made an arrangement whereby his knowledge of the breeding of cattle, sheep, and goats could be used hereafter to his own advantage, as hitherto all his knowledge, industry and experience had been employed to the advantage of Laban. The result was that as the years went by *he increased exceedingly, and had much cattle, and maid-servants, and men-servants, and camels and asses.*

A wonderful change, indeed, from the day when he had crossed the Jordan with nothing but a wallet and a staff, and made his way to his kindred in Haran, a friendless and homeless fugitive.

CHAPTER XXIII.

JACOB'S RETURN AND NIGHT OF WRESTLING.

GENESIS XXXI AND XXXII.

The wealth and prosperity of Jacob has aroused the jealousy of the sons of Laban, and they mutter amongst themselves, and talk to their father, as the manner of jealous men is, exaggerating and misrepresenting. "Jacob," said they, "*hath taken away all that was our father's.*" This was certainly not true. But they added what had some semblance of truth in it, "*Of that which was our father's hath he gotten all this glory.*" Thus, often enough, have incompetent and lazy sons of a modern family received with jealousy and dislike the progress of an able and competent nephew or poor relation, and have made his position so uncomfortable that he has been compelled to leave. And this Jacob now determined to do. After conferring with his wives, who thoroughly agreed with him, saying, "*Is there left to us any portion in our father's house? Are we not counted of him strangers? Hath he not sold us, and de-roved also our money?*" (a noteworthy phrase), Jacob made preparations to leave the land of Haran and to take his journey to Isaac in the land of Canaan.

But, foreseeing opposition on Laban's part, he stole away, unawares, with all his cattle, his camels, his sheep, and his wives and their sons, seizing a favorable opportunity while Laban was away sheep-shearing. Crossing the river, no doubt the Euphrates, he *set his face towards the hill country of Gilead*, returning doubtless by a well-worn and well-known road, the same by which he had come, when a poor fugitive, alone.

Laban, for some reason, sees fit to pursue after Jacob, apparently with force of arms, for in the colloquy which ensues he says *he has it in his power to do him hurt*. The colloquy refers at first to some images which Rachel has carried off; a curious circumstance, and illustrating the hold that the love of images had obtained even over the worshippers of the Living God in those days, and very like what obtains amongst some worshippers of God and Christ in our own day. But the colloquy proceeds through the stages of remonstrance on both sides until, as such af-

fairs very often do, it becomes somewhat of an open quarrel. In the hot words then spoken we obtain a better glimpse of Jacob's life with Laban than the plain course of the narrative itself afforded us. "*This twenty years,*" said Jacob, "*have I been with thee. Thy ewes and thy she-goats have not cast their young, and the rams of thy flock have I not eaten. That which was torn of beasts I brought not unto thee; I bare the loss of it; of my hand didst thou require it, whether stolen by day, or stolen by night.*"

A hard and exacting master was this Laban, as many uncles have been since; and one might forgive a man like Jacob, competent and able as he was, that, after serving such an uncle so well for many years, he should look carefully and even sharply after his own interest when the opportunity came.

But the nephew goes on to say, and one can almost hear a tone of rising indignation as he speaks: "*Thus I was. In the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night, and my sleep departed from mine eyes. Thus have I been twenty years in thy house. I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and six years for thy cattle. And thou hast changed my wages ten times. Except the God of my father had been with me, surely thou hadst sent me away empty.*"

Hearing all this, which carries with it a conviction of honest truth, the uncle broke out into a passion, as men who are in the wrong generally do: "*These daughters,*" he says, "*are my daughters, and these cattle are my cattle, and all that thou seest is mine!*"

A violent and unreasonable outburst, which Laban, doubtless, felt to be such; for, on his passion cooling, knowing he was in the wrong, and his better nature prevailing, he made proposals of peace.

Terms of amity were easily arranged, and there was concluded between them a covenant, marked by a cairn, or heap of stones, which was solemnly named by a word that has come down to our own times, and is still used by friends towards friends who are absent. The word is "MISPAN," signifying the *Heap of Witness*. For Laban said: "*The Lord watch between thee and me, when we are absent one from another.*"

Beautiful and tender words were these of this keen and grasping man. And the manner of parting is very creditable to both. For Laban went on to say: "*If thou shalt afflict my daughters, no man is with us. SEE; GOD IS WITNESS BETWEEN ME AND THEE! . . . The God of Abraham and the God of Nahor, the God of their father judge betwixt us!*" And Jacob swore by the fear of his father Isaac. Then he offered sacrifice on the mount, called his brethren to eat

bread, the whole party tarrying all night on the mount. "And early in the morning Laban rose up, and kissed his sons and his daughters, and blessed them. And Laban departed and returned to his place."

Thus peaceably ended an interview which at one time threatened to lead to open conflict, and which might have ended in what would have embittered the lives of both, and the lives of all belonging to them, to the end of their days.

So Jacob came away, with all that he had, having escaped one great danger. But another, and far more serious, was now to confront him. Before this happened, however, another wonderful vision was vouchsafed, doubtless to prepare him for what was about to happen. "He went on his way," says the narrative, "and the angels of God met him. And when Jacob saw them he said, this is the army of God!" This is God's host. The Angels; not one, but many. Was it those he saw in the dream at Bethel? Were they come to encamp beside him as a guard? for they were encamped as a martial host.

Let us consider the position of this man. He was returning with his bands, stretched over the mountainous plains of Gilead, slowly travelling by day and by night towards the land of Canaan, defenceless and peculiarly liable to the attack of the roving bands of that region. Probably when all was quiet, in the stillness of the night, walking out, and thinking of all that had befallen him since he crossed those mountains twenty years ago, this wonderful vision of another encampment around his own, another company of tents, met his gaze. And who can these be? In a moment he saw that they were no mortal visitants. These are no tents of wandering Ishmaelites. *This is the host of God!*

This idea of armies and camps as attendants and ministers of the Almighty Sovereign became a common one in after ages. "The Lord of Hosts is with us," said his descendant the Psalmist, and, possibly thinking of this very incident, he adds, "the God of Jacob is our refuge!" Strikingly like this incident is that related of God's prophet Elisha, in an evil time (2 Kings vi), when his eyes were opened, "and lo! the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all round about him."

No wonder that Jacob called the name of this place of vision MAHA-NAIM, or *Two Camps*. His own encampment, one: the camp of the Lord's Host another. And this was the name it bore when Jacob's descendants possessed the land, four hundred years afterwards.

By this time Jacob has entered the territory ruled by his brother, and, with characteristic prudence, he sends messengers to Esau. It was a somewhat indefinite message they carried, but it meant, doubtless: "I am now rich, and have the means of repairing wrong. What ransom shall I pay? On what terms shall we meet, and what wilt thou exact for my passage through thy territory?"

Jacob must have waited some days before the messengers returned, but when they did return, they brought terrible tidings. Esau sent no answer whatever. Not a word had he to say. But he was coming to meet Jacob with an armed band—a company of four hundred men—sufficient to sweep Jacob and all he had from the face of the earth. The prophecy had been uttered long before, "*by thy sword shalt thou live,*" and to all appearance the word was to have a terrible fulfilment now.

And now comes another incident of the life of this man that has stamped itself ineffaceably on the spiritual life of all the believers in the Supreme God throughout the world, viz., the strange *night of wrestling*.

Jacob, greatly afraid and distressed, fearful of this band, who were not likely to spare, but to "*smite the mother with the children,*" first makes the most prudent division of his company for safety he can think of, by dividing them into two bands. Then he betakes himself to prayer. This was another "*day of distress,*" and far more serious than the one of twenty years before, for then he was alone, and calamity would involve only himself. Now he had many beside himself—wives, children, attendants, servants—all of whose lives might be sacrificed. Not to speak of the loss of all his earthly possessions, he could not but be distressed beyond measure at the prospect before him. And there was this bitterest of ingredients in this bitter cup, that all had come about by his own wrong doing.

His prayer is noteworthy, indeed.

He pleads the covenants of God with his fathers.

He pleads the command of God that he should return.

Then, in most touching language, he bows in humility and acknowledges unworthiness.

"*I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant, for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands.*"

There is in this no direct confession and acknowledgment of wrong doing. Doubtless that confession and acknowledgment had been fully made long before, and the assurance of forgiveness received. But in this, "*I am not*

worthy of the least of thy mercies"—language of which the echoes are found long afterwards in the epistles of St. Paul, and in the liturgies and offices of the Christian Church; in this we have the outpouring of a most humble and penitent soul. And then comes the pathetic cry, "*Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children.*" In all this there breathes the profound feeling that he has only too well deserved such a terrible retribution. And in this, too, we have another evidence of the co-existence in this man's character, along with a keen and far-seeing outlook for money and worldly goods, of most tender home affections, of deep sensibility, and a profound underlying sense of the power and goodness and overshadowing presence of the Supreme God.

It is necessary to note this depth and agony of fear and apprehensive feeling in order to understand, in any measure, the wonderful event of that night.

His dispositions for protection, and for obtaining the favor of his brother, were prudently made, and are an eminent example of that wise use of means which prayer and reliance on Divine help, by no means, render needless.

And now we have an answer to his prayer in a manner that is one of the most interesting and mysterious occurrences related in the Divine Word. He seems, during the day, to have crossed over the brook Jabbok, which flows down to the Jordan through one of the deep depressions of that region; but, becoming restless in the night, he rose up, woke the sleeping encampment, and caused them to re-cross the ford, apparently thinking they would be safer there. This being done, he passed over to the side from whence the dreaded troop of his brother was approaching. And now the narrative proceeds:—

"And Jacob was left alone:

"*And there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.*"

This mysterious event was, doubtless, a Divinely-sent dream, so vivid as to have all the impression of reality, the mind fully awake, the body utterly worn out with toil and excitement. Mentally and spiritually, it was a reality. Looking carefully at the circumstances, there is nothing so reasonable as the supposition that he thought it was his brother Esau who was encountering him, stopping the way, striving, opposing, struggling to overthrow him. There wrestled a man with him (not Jacob with the man.) All through the long night, in violent conflict, Jacob's soul is wrought to the highest pitch of excitement, and strength

almost supernatural, like that of a drowning man, his antagonist struggling to overthrow, he holding on in defence with the tenacity of desperation as he thought of his wives and his children. This went on hour after hour, until all in a moment the vision changes, and he becomes conscious, by a single touch, that it is no mortal man, no Esau, that is before him, but the very ANGEL OF THE COVENANT who had appeared to Abraham, to his father Isaac, and to himself.

And now is produced an intensity of longing that is indescribable. "*Let me go,*" says the Heavenly visitant; trying his faith. To which Jacob replies, crying out in an agony, knowing whom he is addressing, determining with the boldness of despair rather to die than be disappointed, "*I will not let thee go except thou bless me!*" For he was now helpless. He had been rendered, by a touch, utterly unable to wrestle. But he could still *cling* and hold on. And then, crying and clinging, and holding on in the very intensity and agony of supplication for an assurance of blessing, he obtains it!

For now, for the first time, the Divine visitant speaks, and the word spoken is one that recalls the past. *What is thy name?* asks this all-powerful opponent. *And he said, JACOB.* Jacob! the supplanter, the deceiver, the man who has wronged his brother. Jacob, the supplanter! Yes, I must confess it; I am, indeed, that wretched and sinful man. I deserve to perish, but if I perish, I perish at thy feet! Thus, long generations afterwards, pleaded another of his descendants, the beautiful and patriotic Queen Esther, before the Persian King, Ahasuerus. And as she obtained the desired boon, so did this man.

{ The question was, doubtless, intended to bring out, at such a moment, all this train of penitential thought, and was antecedent to the bestowment of the blessing.

{ Jacob had risen to the very height of heroic faith and perseverance. As said the prophet Hosea, referring to this very circumstance in after times, "He wept, he made supplication; yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed."

The answer came in a way that has been remembered in all subsequent generations, viz., in a change of name.

"*Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but ISRAEL (the word signifying PRINCE OF GOD); for as a Prince hast thou power with God, and with men, and hast prevailed!*" The names here clearly symbolize character. For, as a mere appellative, the name Jacob did appertain afterwards to him; and he was only occasionally called Israel. But the character of *supplanter* disappears. Ever after this, the

man appears as a holy, devout, just, and good man, chastened by affliction and purified by fire, with none of the earthly alloy that characterized him in so marked a degree before.

A wonderful blessing, indeed. Far beyond the blessing of wealth and health and lands and earthly dominion. And now, this agony over, and assurance of Divine favor given, the man is emboldened to ask the *name* of the Heavenly Visitant. But he received only the answer, *Why ask my name?*—a question which implies that Jacob should surely know. What could his name be, but the All-Powerful, the Supreme, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, the God of Bethel, the God of promise and of blessing!

The vision was now ended. The day was breaking. The night was gone; not simply the night of this earthly scene, but the night of the soul. The morning was dawning, and it was the morning of a new and better life. Filled with such solemn thoughts, the awe-struck man calls the name of the place *PENIEL*, *The Face of God!* for *I have seen*, he says, *God, face to face, and my life is preserved!* The place of the first vision he called Beth-El, the House of God. This is Peni-El, the Face of God.

And, as he crossed over again towards his company, the sun rose upon him. Significant is the phrase, the sun rose upon *him*. The darkness was past, and the true light now shone, the shining of the sun of righteousness with healing in his wings.

Yet he halted on his thigh. By some mysterious physical touch his very bodily frame had felt the effect of this night of conflict, and it is probable that he carried it with him to his grave.

And now, the morning being fully come, Jacob lifts up his eyes; and behold! Esau with his company of four hundred spearmen is before him.

Esau, on setting out, must have had hostile intentions towards his brother; otherwise he never would have brought such a large band as this. For his own protection, twenty would have been surely sufficient; as such a number would be for a traveller in the same region to-day. But to bring four hundred! Certainly this betokened an attack; a falling upon the band, as the Chaldeans and Sabeans did upon the sons of Job, the killing of the men, the carrying away of women and children captive, and the driving off to his own country of the herds of camels, cattle and sheep.

But the Divine Being who had visited Jacob and assured him of blessing, had the hearts of all men in his hand, and turned the heart of Esau toward his brother again. By

the time that they met, all hostile thoughts had passed away. They met in peace. The account of the meeting is inexpressibly touching. Jacob went on before his wives and children, making obeisance in Eastern fashion, bowing seven times until he came near his brother. But Esau "*ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.*" Fell on his neck and kissed him! A wonderful encounter, indeed. Where, then, are all the armed men, and where the visions of these men, with Esau at their head, *smiting the mother with the children?* Surely the revulsion of feeling to Jacob was as great as when he first found himself, a poor and friendless fugitive, welcomed to the home of his ancestors in Haran. Nay, far greater. For the armed men were around him, evidence of hostility and power. But the enmity was taken away, and the man whom he expected to "smite the mother with the children," falls on his neck and kisses him, the very words being the same as those used by our Lord when describing the affection of the father when receiving home his long-lost prodigal son.

Is it any wonder that they both wept. In these tears was washed away the enmity of twenty years on the part of Esau and of years of remorse on the part of Jacob.

And now the generous-souled elder brother,—one cannot help being drawn to him,—refuses the large presents sent by the younger, saying: "*I have enough, my brother; keep that thou hast unto thyself.*" But Jacob entreated him with touching grace, saying: "*I have seen thy face, as though I had seen the face of God! . . . Take, I pray thee, my blessing. For God hath dealt graciously with me, and I have all I need.*" And he urged him, and he took it.

If any person imagines these times as days of barbarism, let him read the story of this meeting between Esau and Jacob, of that also between Abraham and the men who owned the land he bought for a tomb; as well as the journey of Abraham's servant to the land of his fathers; and say whether it would be possible to find more beautiful examples of courtesy, hospitality, and true refinement of feeling, in any age, or any country, even in those most highly distinguished by civilization, down even to our own day.

Like a true and courteous knight of the middle ages, Esau now offered to march with his band at the head of Jacob's company. *I will go before thee*, he says, obviously for protection. But Jacob felt instinctively the unsuitableness of so large an escort as this, or even of any company of spearmen at all. For he was now close to the border of the land of Canaan, and considered that his own

company was sufficient for all the purposes of safety and defence. So the offer was declined with all possible courtesy, and the brothers parted in peace. The enmity of twenty years was healed with a Divine healing, and Jacob from that time forward was a stronger man, spiritually, than he had ever before been. And with nothing he said or did in his subsequent life could any serious fault be found.

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CHAPTER XXIV.

JOSEPH.

Genesis 37, 39.

After parting with his brother Esau, Jacob passed over and settled, with his family, once more in the land of Canaan. There he remained, moving hither and thither as his fathers had done before him, seeking pasturage for his flocks and herds according to the changing seasons. But there is no record of any visit to the region where his aged father was dwelling, until the day when his brother Esau and he met round the patriarch's grave. As for his mother, she has passed from the scene in silence. Not a word has been said of her since the shameful transaction by which her eldest son was wronged and his brother compelled to fly. She was left, apparently, deprived of both her sons, to reflect in silence on the wrong she had done, and to die unnoticed. Jacob's sons, as they grew to manhood, exhibit strange traits of lawless violence, their lives being characterized by cruelty, idolatry, and licentiousness that comport strangely and contrarily with the destiny that had been foretold of this family. The record of their treachery and violence with the young prince of Shechem, only redeemed by the indignant outburst of Simeon and Levi at the dishonouring of their sister; the licentiousness of Judah and the wickedness of his children; the cold-blooded, murderous dealing of the majority of them with their young brother Joseph, combine to form a picture of family depravity that carries us back to the days before the flood. The only redeeming feature in the story of Jacob's children is the romantic career of the youngest but one, whose goodness, indeed, shines out only the more conspicuously against the dark background of the wickedness of most of his brothers.

The narrative, however, illustrates two things with great force and vividness. The one is, the absolute impartiality of the narrative, carrying, as all Scripture narratives of the kind do, to a fair-minded and thoughtful reader, an absolute conviction of its truth. If these stories were the mere mythical compositions of some Hebrew chronicler of after times, it is impossible to imagine that such wicked deeds would be recorded of the fathers of the race who

gave their names to the tribes that constituted the nation. That their names were perpetuated is a fact of history which is patent by the circumstances around us. While the names of Assyrians and Babylonians and Egyptians are never used by moderns in naming their children, and names of Greeks and Romans only very rarely (except in a grotesque form), we have the names of Simeon, and Levi, and Judah, and Benjamin, surviving as the appellatives of men of the same blood as these original twelve, who are daily taking a high and distinguished part in various spheres of talent, genius and enterprise, in all the civilized countries of this modern world. For let us bear in mind that the modern Jew has made a great name for himself, not only in the sphere of commerce and finance, but also in that of music, literature, and statesmanship; and, let us also bear in mind, of large-hearted benevolence. Strange, one may well exclaim, that such wonderful streams of power and blessing should proceed from sources that, with one or two exceptions, were so villainously corrupt.

But this brings out another thought, viz., that in the order of Divine procedure it does at times transpire that great and good consequences are brought about by very unlikely and apparently unsuitable instruments. He, the All-Wise and Almighty, not seldom brings good out of evil, and light out of darkness. The New Testament teaches us that Divine grace is not a matter of heredity, however other qualities and faculties may be. The sons of God are not "*born of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*" All experience shows that good men may at times have very bad sons, and wise mothers foolish daughters, and it has often pleased the Supreme Lord of Providence and Grace so to order affairs in His spiritual realm that the glory of great events shall be His alone. The new dispensation under the Messiah, which is eminently a dispensation of wisdom and philosophic teaching, which was inaugurated by the manifestation of the Son of God as an intellectual light, which he commanded to be spread abroad by teaching; and of which the commencement was a bestowment of the gift of speech in various languages; this dispersion also was by means of twelve men, of no natural intellectual capacity whatever, one only excepted, and some of whom exhibited, even in the sphere of morals, poor developments enough. "*Let no man glory in men.*" said the only one of them who had any pretence to culture. The Supreme Ruler hath ordered things in the depths of His wisdom, so, "*that no flesh should glory in his presence.*"

So, then, no Hebrew can make any boast of the men who were the founders of his nation—with one exception. And, strange to say, this one is the only one amongst them whose name was not perpetuated in a tribe. There is a tribe of Reuben, and a tribe of Judah, and a tribe of Levi; but there never was a tribe of Joseph. True, his two sons, Ephraim and Manassah, each became the head of a tribe. But of these two men not a line is recorded, either good or bad; while Joseph's identity, so far as tribal relations are concerned, is swallowed up in theirs.

The Divine Spirit, who guided and influenced the preparation of these ancient records, took care that such a life and character as that of Joseph should not pass away unrecorded and forgotten. For it is told, and it deserves it, with more fulness of detail than even that of Jacob himself, and the story is universally acknowledged to be one of the most touching, beautiful, and instructive, not in the Scriptures only, but in all the literature of the world.

The narrative opens out, and proceeds from one scene to another in a manner most natural, and very closely corresponding to the developments of family life in our own days. And not only so, but the more romantic and marvellous portions of it may be paralleled in the scenes and circumstances of many a life in our own century.

But Joseph's life is illustrative, in a very high degree, of the wonderful workings of a Divine will, as it orders and controls and over-rules the ways and passions and sins of men for the accomplishment of purposes which, in their ultimate issues, are connected with the destiny of nations and the welfare of mankind.

He is seen first as a younger brother, not much unlike the youngest son of Jesse many ages afterwards, mingling with elder brothers as they pasture their flocks. And he sees their evil ways. What these are the narrative only too plainly tells us. Licentiousness, lawlessness, and bloodshed; this is the evil report that Joseph has to tell; and that, not as a mere tattler and tale-bearer, but as one deeply concerned with the dishonor they bring on such a father and ancestry. The story is instructive in another way as showing how the forces of evil in human nature rise above natural surroundings. These men are leading a pastoral life; their flocks and herds are about them; they live in tents, far from the temptations and sins of cities. Should they not be virtuous? The inexperienced would say yes. But it is a delusion to suppose that a country life, a life spent amidst the scenes of nature, is more favorable to virtue, or offers less opportunity of temptation than

life in the crowded haunts of men. Temptation, the enticements of that Evil One, who ever goeth about seeking to devour, comes to men alike in city and country. The Latin father, Jerome, fled to the wilderness to avoid temptation, but it pursued him there, as he has himself recorded. In our own quiet country life, either *of* farm or village, or in solitudes or far-off prairies, we have developments of family dissension, quarrels between brothers, aggressions of neighbors, stealing and defrauding, removing of landmarks, pride, licentiousness, drunkenness, cruelty; all these, and as much of them there as elsewhere. Some of the most atrocious crimes that have disgraced the annals of Canada have been committed in purely rural districts, and by men who had breathed all their lives the pure air of heaven in farm and field. This story of the virtuous lad bringing an evil report home to the father is only too sadly like what is daily occurring in modern life. The lad was a handsome boy and a favorite, and all the more beloved that his mother, Rachel, was dead. A pathetic story it is of her passing away. While Jacob was journeying, she was seized with the pangs of child-birth near Bethlehem. "*And it came to pass,*" says the narrative, "*as her soul was in departing* (note this expression, the soul *departing*, as indicating the belief in the life of the soul after the death of the body) *for she died; that she called the child's name Ben-oni,*" that is, son of my sorrow. Alas! alas! many a mother has had this most sorrowful experience, yielding up her own life while bringing another life into this sorrowful world. Such children as these might well be called Ben-onis.

But the father, probably seeing the boy to be strong and lusty, would have him called *Ben-Jamin*,—son of the right hand. And the boy grew, and became the head of a Tribe which gave its first king to Israel, and, what is of far more consequence to us, from which that great apostle of the Gentiles came, to whose preaching and teaching we owe our own knowledge of the Christian faith.

Rachel died near Bethlehem. Her sorrowing husband erected a pillar over her grave, and at this day a quiet monumental structure exists on the spot, on the roadside, half way between Jerusalem and Bethlehem, and is known as Rachel's tomb.

The very injudicious favoritism of Jacob for his son Joseph, natural as it was, and shown by the many-colored coat made for him, bred jealousy and dislike amongst his brethren. "*They hated him, and could not speak peaceably to him.*" The Divinely sent dreams, in which his future

greatness was so clearly foreshadowed, only increased their dislike and jealousy. These dreams were the first monitions of the extraordinary events that followed, events in which the Divine hand can almost be seen in its marvellous working; bringing light out of darkness, trying the faith of his servant to the very uttermost before taking off the pressure which is to develop strong character, and overruling the working of the powers of darkness so as to make them accomplish his will. Again and again in the history we perceive how man's extremity becomes God's opportunity. It was when Joseph was abandoned to perish in the dried-up well that the events began which led to his glory in Egypt. It was when Jacob's descendants were on the point of utter extinction by the policy of a designing despot that the day of deliverance from Egyptian bondage dawned, and they became a nation.

The jealousy and dislike of the brothers increased to such a degree that, on his being sent to see after their welfare by Jacob, they formed the murderous purpose of getting rid of him. Which of them was the leader in this nefarious plot does not appear from the narrative, but it was probably not Judah, whose conduct, scandalous and reprehensible enough in other matters, becomes commendable to a degree in these dealings with Joseph. But the first purpose is to slay the lad outright, cast his dead body into a pit, and take his many-colored coat, smeared with blood, to deceive the father. A deadly purpose, stirred up by that old first liar and murderer, who prompted the first-born son of the human race to murder an innocent brother. But the elder son, Reuben, intervened,—intervened with some force and authority: "*delivered the lad out of their hands.*" and said "*Let us not kill him. Shed no blood. Cast him into this pit in the wilderness,*" doing this with the honorable purpose of delivering him when the rest had passed on their way.

The party were in the region north of Shechem, near the great route from Mesopotamia to Egypt. Here, naturally, at intervals, wells or cisterns had been dug for refreshment of caravans, some of which, in a hot season, would become dry. Into one of those the lad was cast, crying out in anguish of soul, and beseeching them to spare him so dreadful a death as slow starvation. (This we learn from the troubled colloquy of the brothers when they once more faced him as Lord of Egypt.) The utter hardness of heart and abandoned wickedness of the men is shown by the story that after doing this "*they sat down to eat bread,*" as if nothing had happened.

And now another step in the way of God's providence

is to be noted. While these brothers, were resting and feasting at this spot, a company of merchants, sons of Ishmael, came along with their camels and their merchandise, the product of the country, on the way to Egypt. Had they passed an hour or two before, or an hour or two after, humanly speaking, the whole course of history might have been different. Why did they begin their journey at the exact hour they did, and why proceed at the exact pace they did? Had something detained them on setting out, or had something accelerated their journey on proceeding, the brothers of Joseph would have left the place without seeing them. Then Joseph would never have been sold into Egypt, never have risen to greatness, they and their father would never have gone down also; there would have been no settlement in the land of Goschen, no bondage and no deliverance by a Mighty Hand. But there was One, whose eye is ever running abroad to and fro upon the earth, working all things according to the counsel of his own will; He so ordered events that the caravan from Gilead should pass at that precise hour.

This gave the opportunity to Judah, who, solely amongst the men there, for Reuben was not then with them, had retained some spark of natural affection. "Come," said he, "What profit is it if we slay our brother and conceal his blood? Let us sell him to the Ishmaelites," and he added, "He is our brother and our flesh." Surely, one might have supposed this would have moved them not to sell him at all, but to take him out of the pit and let him return to his father. Human nature, however, is strangely constituted. So far they could go, in the way of virtue and brotherly feeling. But the forces of jealousy and envy were bitterly strong within them. They could not forgive him his dreams. They were determined that these dreams should not be fulfilled by their coming under subjection to him. If he was not to die, which would be the most effectual way of preventing it, he should be sold for a slave and carried off to Egypt. They would then see him no more, and then what would become of his dreams! So they thought, and so they purposed. But "He that sitteth in the heavens" laughed at them. (Psalm II.)

The Ishmaelites were willing enough to buy, for it was in the way of their business. The persistence of the type is extraordinary. Their descendants are trading in slaves at this very day. The bargain was made. Twenty pieces of silver was the price. The poor lad was drawn out of the pit, and his life saved. But a dismal lot was before him; for he, the favorite son of a powerful and wealthy chief, and already distinguished in the family, was sud-

denly torn from his father and his home, and cast down to the position of a slave. So, with this caravan, he slowly makes his way, doubtless in confinement to prevent his escape, and on foot, weary and footsore, down through the land he knew so well, probably passing near his father's encampment, but unable to make his condition known; then across the desert until he reaches the country where in so wonderful a way his dreams are all to come true.

As to the brothers, they added to their evil deeds the sins of lying and scandalous hypocrisy. The many colored coat was dipped in the blood of *a kid of the goats*, and brought to the father with the lying message, "*this have we found, know now whether it be thy son's coat or no.*" The tone of the message is hard and cruel. The deed they had done had given them up to the power of the devil for the time, and they spoke without a particle of brotherly affection, even of such a thing as their brother's violent death.

But the poor father was heart-broken. He "*rent his clothes in anguish, put sackcloth on his loins, and mourned for his son many days.*" The lying villains who had wrought this mischief pretended to sympathise with his grief. *They rose up to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted, saying, I will go down to the grave unto my son mourning!*" In this gross and wicked deception practised on him by his sons can we not see the retribution for deception which he as a son had practised on his father long years ago. Surely the heathen saying is the product of a true instinct and experience of the course of human affairs, "the mills of the gods grind slow, but they grind fine." And revelation confirms experience, that even when wrong-doing has been repented of and forgiven, when its spiritual penalties have been removed and the wrong-doer is restored to divine favor, there are temporal consequences which follow inevitably, by the laws which Providence has stamped upon the constitution of man. The divine government indeed is many-sided. The aspect of the Supreme Ruler, like that of a human governor, is different in its operations as the circumstances of men are different. The Divine Being is revealed "*as a father pitying his children,*" he is also revealed as one who will "*bend his bow and whet his sword, and shoot out his arrows against the wicked.*" The same Supreme Governor, whose administration is founded on immutable justice, *righteousness and judgment being the foundation of his throne, and who will by no means clear the guilty,* is also He who pardoneth iniquity, transgression and sin; nay, who sent His own Son into the world to establish an all-enduring and orderly system of righteous absolution by the offering of his own body upon the cross. All these

are the different modes of operation of one and the same Divine Ruler and Father, according as the aspects and circumstances of men in relation to himself differ. To the hard-hearted and froward He is simply the executor of the wrath pronounced against the evil doer. To the penitent and trusting soul He is *gracious and full of compassion*. Yet, even to them who have forsaken evil ways, He interferes not with those natural laws by which evil ways leave evil consequences behind them. The drunkard and licentious, though repentant and forgiven, carry the consequences of sin with them in the trembling hand, in feebleness of eye, and in premature old age. So it is in the complex workings of Divine government and grace, and so it evidently must be, for that they should be so is right.

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CRITICAL NOTE.

It is worthy of note that the Hebrew word translated "grave," used by Jacob in his heart-broken lamentation for Joseph, is properly a word generally signifying the "unseen world," or "the abode of the departed." The word is *Sheol*, and corresponds to the Greek word *Hades* of the New Testament, which has exactly the same signification. The Hebrew word of the Old Testament, alike with that of the New, clearly implies life after death, and thus contradicts a theory that some have promulgated, that in the Old Testament there is no revelation of such a life. Some obscure passages, both of the former and the latter revelation, would be made more clear by a proper rendering. Thus, for example, when the Divine Son of God appeared in glory to the Apostle John at Patmos, he spoke of himself (as translated in the authorized version) as having the keys of "Hell" and of Death. The true idea of the declaration is that He is Lord of the world of departed souls, both of those who have done good and those who have done evil.

In the earliest creed of the Christian Church the belief is expressed that Christ descended into *Hell*, an expression which has been a great occasion of stumbling to many devout souls; and very naturally so. But the original word has the same signification as that in the Apocalypse, and the belief is expressed that Christ, after death, passed into *Hades*, the great unseen world of departed souls. The Greek conception of this region is well known, a conception which is referred to with vividness in one of the most wonderful passages of Shakespeare, that, namely, describing the dream of Clarence shortly before his violent death.

CHAPTER XXV.

JOSEPH IN EGYPT.

Genesis 39 and 40.

The company of merchants who bought Joseph sold him for a slave to one of the chief officers of the King of Egypt. Up to a recent period, and in some parts of the Eastern world now, the slave market is as common a feature of a large city as the bazaars where carpets and rugs are sold. We need not say how recently the same might have been said of many cities of this American continent. Now Joseph, let us remember, was a *goodly young man and well-favored*. Handsome in person, and, doubtless, of good manners and address, he was precisely the kind of servant that a great officer of State would like to have about him. Such a one visiting the slave market, in search of a man-servant for his house, would naturally be attracted to one of Joseph's appearance, and desire to possess him. So the bargain is made, doubtless highly to the advantage of the merchant-men, and the young Hebrew is taken to his new home. The officer is called in our version the Captain of the Guard; but the Hebrew rather suggests one like our High Sheriff, a civil, not a military officer.

And now, as the young man increases in age, he develops a capacity for management, which was doubtless inherited from his father. So as time goes on, serving in his master's house, he gradually advances in responsibility until he is put in charge of all his affairs, both within and without, and as his father had made Laban to prosper, so does the son make his master Poti-Phar (note the difference in the language) to prosper. The secret of all was that the "*Lord was with him!*"

But while thus proceeding and becoming more and more trusted until his master, as it is said, "*knew nothing of all that he had,*" leaving all to this young man's management, fully confiding both in his honesty and his capacity, a terrible misfortune befalls him. Another dark cloud passed over his existence, at the very time when the sunshine of prosperity was all about his way. Once before, when all was well with him, in the land of his birth, he, the favorite son of his father, honored with special tokens of approbation, and with foreshadowings of greatness revealed by

Divinely-sent dreams, was suddenly cast down into the depths of misery, Satan stirring up murderous designs against him in the breast of his own brothers. Now, again, having risen to a height of favor and prosperity (for the narrative emphasizes the fact that "*he was a prosperous man; the Lord making all that he did to prosper*"), Satan again weaves a web of wicked design to catch him therein, and overthrew him.

The great adversary tempts the wife of Poti-Phar to wicked advances, which Joseph resists by considering, "HOW CAN I DO THIS GREAT WICKEDNESS AND SIN AGAINST GOD?" shewing to all tempted souls in after time the true source of strength when assailed "*by the fiery darts of the wicked.*" None were there to see, as the narrative tells. But the ALL-SEEING, His eye was there, and the young man realized it. His faith in the unseen God was a shield to quench the darts repeatedly cast at him, and he came unscathed and unhurt in soul out of the furnace of trial.

Devilish malice takes now another form. Lies and slander by the tongue of this wicked woman are uttered, believed by his master, who, as was most natural, was fiercely angry with his steward, and cast him into prison. There was no trial, no hearing of the accused, no opportunity of defence. In those days, and for long ages afterwards, aye, down even to modern times, an enemy or suspected man might be seized by order of a king or by the violence of a noble who was lord of a castle strong enough, and, without the shadow of law, or any orderly procedure of justice, cast into a dungeon, from whence he might never emerge but to be led to execution and buried in the castle yard. The Bastille of Paris, only one short century ago, contained victims of this sort, as did our own Tower of London in earlier times, as well as the picturesque castle of Chillon on Lake Geneva, and many more throughout Europe. That famous enactment of English law, the Habeas Corpus Act, is expressly designed to prevent such lawless tyranny, by compelling those who have any prisoner in custody, be they whom they may, to bring the prisoner into open court, that he may face his accusers and give such an answer as he can.

Joseph, however, was put into a prison, a State prison. Here he was "*bound with fetters*" (as we learn from Psalm 105; thus does one Scripture supplement another), he was "*laid in iron,*" and thrust into an inner prison, a dungeon, like the great Apostle of the Gentiles was in after times.

But even here, in this dreary plight, the Lord was with him. So good was his conduct, his whole demeanor so utterly unlike a criminal, that the jailer took notice of him,

raised him up, and in time gave him charge over the rest of the prisoners; the jailer recognizing the power and talent of the man, as the High Sheriff had done before him.

Here, in the prison, begins a train of circumstances which gradually advance him higher, until he becomes, with exception of one, the foremost man of all the world, as the world then was. Egypt, as is well known by other records and as is evidenced by imperishable monuments, had advanced by this time to a high position in civilization. Art, architecture, government, gradations of rank, an orderly society, science, learning, had all a development in this wonderful land of the Nile far beyond anything known elsewhere. Only in religion was there a degradation and debasement worthy of the most untutored barbarians, proving what has often been illustrated in the history of nations, that very high developments in all forms of secular civilization may co-exist with the most contemptible conceptions of Deity, the most degrading superstitions, and the most childish credulity and folly. The noblest temples of ancient times still rear their ruined and gigantic columns on the banks of the Nile. The principal god that was worshipped in them was a creature whose proper *habitat* is the stable or the pasture field, a sacred bull. The noblest temples of Christendom were erected at a time when the Christian faith reached its very lowest development in debasing superstitions, lying legends, and corrupt lives of priest, monk, and people.

Such was Egypt, as regards civilization, when this young Hebrew was carried down to the country as a slave. And such it was during the train of singular events that transpired, in the Providence of God, during his life.

The steps of his elevation are noteworthy. They began in the casting into prison of two high officers of Pharaoh's household, suspected, possibly while perfectly innocent, and at the instance of designing enemies who wanted their offices, of designs on the king's life. For these two men carried the life of the king in their hands every day. A little poison introduced into the cup of wine by the chief butler, or a little poison carefully and secretly mingled with the sweetmeats prepared exclusively for the king's table by his confectioner, and as a result, sickness, death, the triumph of plotting enemies, and perhaps a change of dynasty. The history of ancient nations, and of some modern ones too, throws a lurid light on such methods and their consequences. Thus it came about that the office of cup-bearer to the king was of such high importance; the custom being that the cup-bearer must drink himself of that

which he handed to the king. A curious light is thrown on the safeguards by which kings sought to surround themselves, in this very narrative. The butler's office was to take grapes from the vine, and in Pharaoh's own presence to press out the juice and present the cup to the king. This truly did not ensure absolute immunity from danger, for a designing official, heavily bribed, might even introduce poison to the juice of the grape by the pressure of the hand. But there can be no doubt it diminished the danger to the smallest possible degree.

These two officers, however, were in prison under suspicion doubtless of designs on the king's life, and each of them in the same night dreamed a characteristic dream.

DREAMS.

The philosophy of dreams has never been unravelled. Most of them are disconnected, aimless, unreasonable; and men wonder how such strange combinations of fanciful events can possibly pass through the brain. But some dreams again are clearly the outcome of events actually experienced, and which have left an unusually strong impression on the mind. Others reflect the desires, aspirations and hopes which men entertain, perhaps of travelling to foreign countries, or of returning home, or escaping out of prison, or of success in some cherished enterprise. And it is a fact, that in some rare instances, even in our own day, a dream of an unusual kind has been followed by an exactly corresponding event. A person living in one of the cities of Canada once dreamed that a small brook flowing by the house had risen as a roaring torrent to such a height as to force its way into the dwelling, in spite of all efforts to prevent it, and flooded the basement to a considerable depth. This dream was talked over at breakfast next morning. The month was July; the weather was hot and dry, and such a flooding next to impossible. Yet that very day, about noon, by the bursting of a dam in the neighborhood, every particular of that dream was fulfilled. Such things are utterly unaccountable by any known laws of mind.

The dreams of the chief cupbearer and chief confectioner were each of them natural enough. And they must be taken to be, in some sense, Divine premonitions.

Joseph had had dreams himself, which we know now were Divine premonitions. But they were far from accu-
 mulated in his mind at that time, and may have been utterly forgotten. Yet a very general belief existed in all these an-

cient times, and it presents itself again and again, in these Biblical narratives as well as in ordinary history, that some dreams had a significance, that they were sent by the gods, and that priests, prophets, magicians, sorcerers—persons all of them having (or professing to have) knowledge of the designs of the gods—were the persons to interpret them.

But Joseph made no pretension to be a prophet, and there is no evidence of any desire to glorify *himself* in what he said to these men. Rather he led them to think of the All-Wise as the Revealer of the Secrets which affected the destiny of men. His humility and modesty are conspicuous throughout the whole narrative.

The dream of the cup-bearer was about the discharge of his office; that of the confectioner about the work he had constantly to do. Both suggested, in some degree, events that came to pass. But they were undoubtedly susceptible of other interpretations, and we can only ascribe the giving of the true solution by Joseph to an impartation of special Divine wisdom.

The words of the Hebrew slave to the cup-bearer are most touching. *"Thou shalt be restored to thine office within three days. But think on me, when it shall be well with thee, and show kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house. For indeed I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews, and here also have I done nothing that they should put me into the dungeon."*

An appeal, this, one would think that would touch the most callous. But alas! for human nature, when the chief butler was restored to his office, *"he did not remember Joseph, but forgot him!"* Too true to life is this, as men know it, and have experience of it, in days of modern civilization, an experience which has led to the cynical saying that *"gratitude is a lively sense of favors to come."*

Joseph, therefore, dragged on his weary life in prison, and there he might have remained till the day of his death, for let us remember there was no period assigned for his captivity. But at the end of two years an event happened, which turned the whole current of his life into another channel and affected the destiny of his family and nation. And, again, dreams are the instrument that the Supreme Ruler of the affairs of men employs to accomplish His purposes.

The dreams that Pharaoh dreamed were of matters of immensely greater import than those of his officers. They related to the supply of food for the people of the kingdom, a matter of life and death to multitudes of people, and not

of Egypt only, but of all the regions round about. For Egypt then, as it became even more in after ages, was the granary of the world. Certainly, it was a matter of life and death to the family of Joseph. The dreams of the fat and lean kine, and of the full and shrivelled ears have become classic in our language. They might mean many things, but the drift of them, apparently, was of some impending calamity. Therefore the King was troubled. There were, even in that early age, professors of the magical art; conjurors, necromancers and wise men, in the country, but none of them ventured on an interpretation, for the penalty of a mistake would probably be death.

Then it was that the chief cup-bearer bethought him of the wise young Hebrew of the prison, and candidly exclaimed, "*I do remember my faults this day,*" going on to tell of the dreams of himself and the chief confectioner, and of the interpretation of them by Joseph, which corresponded exactly with the event. This, then, was the man who was wanted; and so we read on, "*Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon, and he shaved and changed his raiment and came in unto Pharaoh.*"

The shaving and change of raiment may indicate the neglected condition of prisoners like himself, even in a prison of State. Be this as it may, the Hebrew captive is brought into the presence of one of those mighty monarchs who ruled so absolutely over the destinies of nations in those early times, and who could, and did, raise up or cast down at his sole pleasure. As it was expressed most truly of the King of Babylon in after ages, "*all people feared before him: whom he would he slew, and whom he would he kept alive, and whom he would he set up, and whom he would he put down.*" (Daniel v., 19.) Men; even to our times, monarchs of this type, have ruled nations and peoples, and do so, even in Europe, at this day. The rapid rise of some, the rapid downfall of others, are matters with which, even in the case of monarchs themselves, we have been most familiar since the days of the French Revolution.

So this young man stood before Pharaoh. The opening sentence of the colloquy gives the key to his character. The King spake and said, "*I have dreamed a dream and there is none to interpret it. And I have heard of thee that when thou hearest a dream thou canst interpret it.*" Here, at such a time, was an opportunity for a man of self-seeking to exalt his own powers. And certainly the temptation to pride and undue exaltation at such a moment was as severe as the temptation to licentiousness was at another. But the grace of God was upon him. The sense of God's

overshadowing presence was there with this young man, the sole representative of the unseen Supreme Lord of Lords amidst a multitude of worshippers of animals and reptiles. "Thou, God, seest me," he must have said, on passing into the royal presence, and, accordingly, in response to the challenge to interpret, he answers, with all humility and faith, "*It is not in me. God shall give to Pharaoh an answer of peace.*"

Then the dreams were told: the seven lean kine devouring the seven fat kine, the seven lean ears of corn devouring the seven full ears. Such dreams might mean nothing, or they might mean something that concerned the King alone, like the cup-bearer's, or they might mean much more. What they did mean, we learn from Joseph, who, after hearing the dream recounted, replied, "*The dream is one. God hath showed Pharaoh what He is about to do.*"

The dream, then, was a Divine monition. He who has access to the spirits of all men chose, in His goodness, to give the King of Egypt a warning of what was impending in his kingdom. The vast importance of such a monition in the case may be seen by considering that if there had been no knowledge of the years of famine, there would certainly have been no preparation for them. Times of plenty are more generally times of thoughtless spending than of careful provision for possible failure. The mass of the people live from day to day. Some look from season to season, but these are the exception. But who, when years of plenty were steadily recurring, would think of keeping back and storing up against a change which might never transpire.

Yet, let us think. Suppose that for a few years past there had been certain knowledge of the scarcity in India towards the close of 1896, and of the terrible famine that might ensue, of what inestimable value to the lives and welfare of millions would such knowledge have been. What preparations we would have seen, what storing up, what sowing of greater areas, what economy of resources, what arrangements for distribution. Then, indeed, there would have been no famine and no plague.

These dreams were Divine monitions, and the magicians probably had some instinctive consciousness that they were such. They usually were not backward to give some sort of interpretation, and often they made very shrewd guesses. But now, apparently, God caused a fear to possess them, as if He would not have His warnings interpreted by cheats and frauds. Joseph, therefore, was left alone, and expounded the dream, as we well know, to mean seven years of plenty, succeeded by seven years of dearth,

"such that all the plenty shall be forgotten. And the famine shall consume the land."

Such was the interpretation. But Joseph, still under Divine direction, went on, speaking with fearlessness and unconsciousness of everything except the terrible danger that overshadowed the land and the necessity of guarding against it: *"Let Pharaoh look out for a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt. Let Pharaoh do this,"* emphasizing the words, *"and let him appoint Overseers over the land, and take up the fifth part of the land in the seven plenteous years, and lay up corn under the hand of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities, and that food shall be for store in the land against the seven years of famine."*

There is singular wisdom in this advice; first, in the recommendation to appoint a man with special powers to superintend the supplies of food over the whole land; next, in the recommendation to appoint subordinate officers under his direction to see that the fifth part of each plentiful year's crop should be saved: and most of all in the recommendation as to this fifth part. For to take a fifth part would not be felt as an excessive amount to withhold, and would produce no dissatisfaction; while, as calculation will easily show, this amount, added to the much diminished crop of the famine years (for the land would produce *some* crop even then) would carry the land, with reasonable economy, through the years of scarcity. Thus, let it be supposed that an ordinary crop averages fifteen bushels per acre. In the years of plenty there might be thirty (and we have known such things ourselves). One fifth of this would be six bushels. Let it be supposed that the crop in the famine years was only one-half an ordinary crop, or seven bushels. This, with the six bushels added, would come so near what was required, both for food and seed, that no inconvenience would arise.

The practical wisdom of all this so impressed Pharaoh that he at once conceived that no man could be so fit to carry out the design as he that had given the advice. So, turning to his servants, he said: *"Can we find such a one as this: a man in whom the spirit of God is?"*

Whatever he might mean by this, or they understand, it seems clear that they came to recognize the working of a higher than human wisdom in the matter, the wisdom of superior divinities, or of One Supreme Lord of Wisdom, Foresight, and Providence. That such thoughts have impressed the minds of men in heathen countries, when brought face to face with evidences of Divine power and wisdom, is clear from the Book of Daniel—a man strikingly resembling Joseph in every particular of character and circumstance.

Be this as it may, it pleased Pharaoh, and his servants concurred (all ordinary jealousies being silenced in the greatness of the events opened out to them) that Joseph should be lifted up at once to this exalted position, and made, what we would call, the Prime Minister of the Kingdom.

Now the Divine hand is seen moving events rapidly towards the accomplishment of purposes shadowed forth long before. The slave is lifted from the dungeon. He is made ruler of all the land. Invested with all the outward insignia of greatness, he rides in Pharaoh's chariot, wears Pharaoh's signet ring, has a chain of gold about his neck, while heralds cry before him, "*Bow the knee.*" Finally a title is conferred upon him, "*The Revealer of Secrets,*" the words in Egyptian being Zaphnath-paaneah, and the daughter of Poti-pherah, the Priest or Prince of On, is given him to wife. So this stone, rejected by the builders, becomes the head of the corner, in contemplation of which it may be said, "It is the Lord's doing, and marvellous in our eyes."

CHAPTER XXVI.

JOSEPH AS CHIEF RULER.

Genesis 41, Etc.

Joseph, prepared for high destiny by a long and severe course of discipline, as well as by previous experience in subordinate positions, enters on the duties of his office when he is thirty years of age. His first proceeding was to pass through every district of the country, and put into operation those measures of economy with regard to the extraordinary crops, which he had suggested to the King. He would appoint subordinate officers also to assist in working out his plans. In this he would have need of Divine wisdom, for the best measures, the most wisely designed, will fail in operation if not well carried out in detail. The selection of subordinates, and especially those charged with responsibility, is one of the most difficult duties of a man placed in high position. To find men who are at once capable and honest, men who understand their duty, who have energy, industry, and perseverance, as well as technical skill, men who, at the same time, are conscientious and faithful in discharge of duty, who cannot be bribed or influenced to neglect it, these are men who have to be sought for, and being proved, can be advanced from responsibility to responsibility. Such men Joseph had in view in recommending "overscers" to be appointed (when telling the meaning of the dream), and such he doubtless looked for and appointed, as he was able to find them.

Egypt had many cities, so called, at that early time, probably more like our country towns or villages, many of them. For the Egyptians were utterly unlike the nomads of the desert or the plains, who never built, but lived in tents. The Egyptians were great builders. They congregated together. Even the cultivators of the soil lived in villages, as they do in India, and largely in England to this day.

In each of these, then, Joseph established Government storehouses, *laying up corn therein, under the hand of Pharaoh*, by royal mandate, year after year, the means thereof being a special reservation of one-fifth of the yearly crop. This could be borne without the slightest difficulty at such a time, and doubtless the greater part of the people would willingly co-operate. But this was far too serious a matter

to be left to voluntary co-operation. The very life of the people of Egypt, and indeed, of all adjoining countries depended on it. Therefore, it was enforced by royal mandate.

During these prosperous years the two sons of Joseph were born who were to give their names to tribes. MANASSEH was the first born, the name signifying Forgetting, for "God, said he, hath made me forget all my toil and all my father's house," thus giving God all the praise of his advancement; the other, EPHRAIM, signifying Fruitful, in token of the blessings that had befallen him. Of the tribe of Manasseh we do not hear much in subsequent history, but that of Ephraim had their portion in the very centre of the land of promise, and became the head of the tribes that revolted.

But the years of plenty passed, and the years of scarcity began. Large as were the stores laid up by the Government, it is probable that they were largely supplemented by those laid up by provident individuals or communities. And the event proved that all these supplies were needed. For the scarcity was not in Egypt only, but in all the corn-growing lands of the time. And all, hearing of the stores of Egypt, came thither to buy bread.

And now, much as it is in India, while these words are being written, the great and chief employment of Joseph, as head of the Government, was to superintend the sale and distribution of food. And then it was that the events began, after so long a period of time, by which the strange fore-shadowings of his early life were realized. And events also developed, by a sagacity and wisdom on his part, inspired from above, that brought these hard and cruel brothers of his to a condition of deep humiliation and repentance for their misdeeds, and to a change which issued in an elevation of thought and conduct, which, at one time, none would have conceived them capable of. One may well say, when looking at what these men became, and what they were before, and the means by which it was brought about. "*How unsearchable are God's judgments, and His ways past finding out!*" In the earlier portion of this narrative their conduct was that of licentious and savage barbarians; in the latter, that of men worthy to be the heads of a nation through which the light of salvation was to be preserved for all the world.

The scarcity affected the land of Canaan. It was doubtless by a continuous series of hot and dry years affecting all countries. To Egypt it meant a low rising of the Nile, year after year. What that meant we may understand on thinking of the extraordinary anxiety with which the ris-

ing of the river is watched, year by year unfaillingly, in these very times. For a low rise still means scarcity. To the land of Canaan, while the hot and dry years would mean deficient crops of grain, it also meant deficient pasturage for flocks and herds, and the necessity of slaughtering them for food. The vast sheep-ranches of Australia are sometimes so visited, and the consequence was vividly expressed by its being said of one whose flocks were numbered by tens of thousands, that at the end of a certain dry season he found himself the happy owner of *fifty thousand skeletons!*

Something of this sort probably befell the family of Jacob. Their flocks and herds being so reduced that they dare not allow them to be further depleted, the old man, hearing of corn in Egypt, said to his sons: "*Why do ye look one upon another?*" Thus were they looking, in moody silence, which was an index of the despair which was taking possession of them. "*Go down to Egypt,*" said the father, "*and buy food.*" So all went, Benjamin alone excepted; for the old man could not bear to part with him, the only son left of his dearly loved and lost wife Rachel. They come to Egypt. They meet Joseph, who recognizes them at once. But it was impossible that they should recognize him, utterly changed as he had become.

And now, guided by infinite wisdom, with the great end in view of bringing about the conversion of these men through suffering and discipline, he adopted strange and rough methods, accusing them of being spies, and throwing them into prison, doubtless the very same in which he had been confined himself. For such, generally, is the course of retribution. Their thoughts and colloquies in the dungeon may be imagined. It was evident they were thinking of their conduct years ago to their brother, at first left to die in a pit, and then sold for a slave into this very country where they now were. Did they not begin to think what had become of *him?*

Such were their thoughts, evidently; for on being released, and hearing that the great potentate before them insisted on retaining one of them in prison as a pledge that they would bring down the youngest brother they spoke of, they said one to another, little dreaming who was listening: "*We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us!*"

Blessed words of contrition and penitence: the dawning of a new and better era in the lives and characters of these men. Joseph, on hearing this, was moved beyond endurance. "*He turned away and wept.*"

Simeon was the one chosen as hostage. One may well imagine, from the savage onslaught he once made on the men of Shechem, that he had been the prime mover in the nefarious plot to murder Joseph. Now he was bound in fetters *before their eyes* and taken off to prison.

Their corn was measured out, their sacks filled; and, strange to say, their money returned in the sack too (doubtless from Joseph's private resources), another circumstance which filled them with alarm. *"Their hearts failed them; they were afraid;"* like guilty men, they feared that some retribution or other was coming, and they said one to another, *"What is this that God hath done to us?"* Again we see the working of a new principle of good in their souls, viz., the recognition of the hand and power of Almighty God—God, whom they had so wickedly ignored and forgotten in their earlier days. Affliction is driving them to *"consider their ways and turn their feet to His testimonies."*

Arrived home, they tell their strange story. They all feared as they counted out the money, but when they spoke of the hard conditions exacted by the lord of the country, viz., that Benjamin must go down too, the old man could not bear it, and broke out, in bitter reproaches against his sons, *"Me ye have bereaved of my children! Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away!"* And then he added words which many a troubled soul has used since his day, *"All these things are against me,"* the heart-broken exclamation of a man about whom the clouds of adversity have settled so thickly that no light is to be seen. Yet the words have in them a lesson of comfort inexpressible, for the sequel showed that these very clouds were full of "showers of blessing."

So matters rested. But the time came when the food was consumed. Hard necessity pressed. They must go to Egypt again. Every phase of this narrative is as true to life and human nature as it is possible to imagine, and we can almost hear the colloquy that ensued. After a positive refusal on the part of the old man; we *must* take Benjamin, said Judah (who from this time forward takes the lead) for the man in Egypt said we should never see his face unless we did so. Then, said the father, *"Wherefore dealt ye so evil with me as to tell the man whether ye had yet a brother? And they said, The man asked us narrowly of our state, and of our kindred, saying, Is your father yet alive? and Have ye another brother?"* and we told him. *"How could we know certainly that he would say, Bring down your brother?"* Ah! how could they know the reason of this interest in their family on the part of the great ruler?

All of this was marvellous to these dwellers in the land

of Canaan. What possible interest could this great potentate in Egypt have in a family of strangers and foreigners, who only came on the same errand as hundreds of others, to buy supplies of corn to keep them from starving? Why should he trouble himself about them in particular?

But dire necessity knows no law. Judah again speaks: "*Send the lad with me; I will be surety for him; of my hand shalt thou require him. If I bring him not to thee, let me bear the blame forever.*" Brotherly and filial affection is marvelously developing under the heavy pressure. The furnace of affliction is refining their character.

Then spake the father, "If it must be so, take presents, and take back the money he returned, and take your brother, and God Almighty give you mercy before the man!"

The image of some cruel and remorseless tyrant was before him. With sore misgivings of the result he cried, "*If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved.*"

For the second time they took their journey, and appeared before the man they so much dreaded. This man, this terrible Lord of Egypt. But now there is a series of still more remarkable events; a kindling of the refiner's fire to even a hotter point than before, a more terrible application of the discipline of suffering. Yet not at once. For they were lifted up, before they were cast down to the depths.

Much to their astonishment they were invited to the house of the great ruler; and also much to their alarm (v. 18). For they concluded he would take occasion, from the money they took away, to arrest them and reduce them to slavery. Still they were haunted by the idea of *bondage*, as guilty men always anticipate from others what they have meted out themselves.

But apparently their fears were groundless. Simeon was brought out to them, most likely a much changed man from the fierce desperado of former days. They were ushered with much ceremony into the presence of the man they feared, who, to their great relief, spoke kindly to them, again asked of their welfare, and said: "*Is your father well, the old man of whom ye spake? Is he yet alive?*"

Marvellous words, indeed, to be spoken by this Egyptian potentate to them, through an interpreter. Then Benjamin was noticed, and he said: "*Is this your younger brother, of whom ye spake to me?*" Then, the bonds of brotherly affection bursting through all restraint, he added, in a tremulous voice, "*God be gracious to thee, my son.*" But Joseph could bear it no longer. He hastened away, sought out a private chamber, and burst into a passion of weeping. (v. 30).

But the meal bye-and-bye was served, and in all ceremony

and state; he by himself, they by themselves, the Egyptians by themselves. And marvellous it was to them, yea, utterly unaccountable, that their places at table were all assigned in exact order of seniority. Surely, they must have thought, this man is a magician and a diviner, as well as the Lord of Egypt. But the meal passed off happily. Wine removed restraint. *"They drank and were merry with him."* (v. 34.)

So far all went well. But now a strange artifice was practised on them, the object being to cast them to the very dust in penitential humiliation; to draw out to the very strongest tension the cords of family affection; to bind them together as they never were bound before as brothers and sons. An artifice it was, like to a stratagem in war, only defensible on the ground of the end to be derived from it; coming, indeed, perilously near to the doing of evil that good might come. But, after all, we cannot properly judge of the means, and the end was undoubted.

They got their corn. But a strange direction was given to the officer who served them, viz: that the silver drinking-cup of the great Prime Minister should be put into the sack of the youngest brother. So, then, early in the morning they all left in peace. But before they had proceeded far, Joseph said to the steward: *"Up, follow those men; demand to search their sacks, and say, 'Wherefore have ye rewarded evil for good? Ye have stolen my master's divining cup. Ye have done evil in so doing.'"*

Beyond measure astonished, the men protested solemnly their innocence. Were they the men to steal the master's silver, they—who had brought back all the money first given them? And they added the solemn asseveration, "in whosoever's sack the cup is found, let him die, and we will give ourselves up to be bondmen." But the steward said, "Nay, he shall be a bondman, and ye shall be blameless." The dread enquiry now opened, beginning at the eldest. Sack after sack was opened, and as no cup was found in one after another, their hopes beat high of speedy deliverance and safe return.

But alas! at the very last moment their hopes were dashed to the ground. The cup was found in Benjamin's sack! Of all possible calamities this was the worst. They were struck dumb by the unexpected blow. *"They rent their clothes, laded every man his ass, and returned to the city."* What their thoughts were during the sorrowful going back is plain from the sequel.

Arrived, they are brought into the presence of the awful chief, and prostrate themselves before him. (v. 14). He demands of them roughly, *"What is this ye have done? Know ye not that such a one as I can certainly find out?"* Then

Judah, once more speaking for the rest, said, "*What shall we say unto my lord? What shall we speak? How shall we clear ourselves?*" Then he adds the inexpressibly solemn words, "*God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants.*" Innocent of the present charge, as they were, the guilt of their villainous wrong-doing of twenty years before was now weighing down their spirits with anguish unspeakable. "*My sin is ever before me,*" exclaimed the great King and Psalmist of after ages, himself a descendant of Judah; and to these men had now come a powerful conviction of sin, doubtless by the Spirit of God, working *repentance unto salvation not to be repented of.*

Then he added, "*We are my lord's servants, both we and he with whom the cup is found.*" But the great master replied, God forbid; only the man in whose hand the cup is found, he shall be my servant. "*As for you, get you up in peace unto your father.*"

Had they been the men of twenty years before, they would have accepted this proposal, which gave them their freedom at once, and, without a shadow of compunction, left Benjamin to his fate. But they were changed men. The iron of disciplinary suffering had sunk into their soul. Penitence had dawned, and with penitence came tenderness of affection and a brotherly kindness before unknown. So then, with a bursting heart, Judah once more spoke, and spoke in words of the most touching pathos that have ever been embodied in human language. Nothing in all literature can be found so tender, so moving, so simply eloquent, as these of the rude Canaanite shepherd, pleading before one who was at once a great Egyptian potentate, and his own much-wronged younger brother.

"*Oh my lord,*" he begins, (v. 18), "*let thy servant speak a word in my lord's ears, and let not thine anger burn against thy servants, for thou art even as Pharaoh.*" Then proceeding, he tells of the family, little dreaming that the ears of him who was listening were burning with interest as he went on: "*My lord asked, have ye a father or a brother? And we said unto my lord, we have a father, an old man; and a child of his old age, a little one. And his brother is dead.*" (Ah! his brother is dead! but who, Judah, brought that about?) "*and he alone is left of his mother, and his father loveth him. And thou saidst, Bring him down to me; but we said, the lad cannot leave his father, for if he should leave his father, his father would die! And thou saidst to thy servants, Except your youngest brother come down with you, ye shall see my face no more.*" Then in touching words he tells of their return home, of their recounting the hard conditions to their father, of his anguish at the idea of parting with Benjamin.

"Thy servant, my father said unto us, Ye know that my wife bare me two sons, and the one went out from me, and I said, surely he is torn in pieces, and I saw him not since; and if ye take this also from me, and mischief befall him, ye shall bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave."

And Joseph listening to all this!

"*Now therefore,*" Judah continues, evidently with a broken and troubled utterance, past recollections, remorseful and bitter, crowding his thoughts as he speaks, "*now therefore, when I come to thy servant my father, and the lad be not with us, seeing that his life is bound up in the lad's life,*" and now a troubled pause; his voice falters, he can scarcely speak; "*it shall come to pass, when he seeth that the lad is not with us, that he will die!*"

Another moment of troubled silence. He will die, "*and thy servants shall bring down the gray hairs of thy servant our father with sorrow to the grave!*"

Then he pleads, in most touching words, that he, Judah, shall abide instead of the lad. "*For thy servant became surety for the lad unto my father, saying, If I bring him not to thee, then I shall bear the blame to my father for ever. Now therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide instead of the lad, a bondman to my lord, and let the lad go with his brethren. For how shall I go up to my father, and the lad be not with me, lest peradventure I see the evil that shall come to my father!*"

The hardest heart wou'd have been moved by such an appeal. What then must Joseph have felt as his brother went on. His bosom rose and swelled until his emotions became overpowering. "*Cause every man to go out from me,*" he suddenly cried out. Then, when left alone with his brethren, his pent-up feelings found vent in a loud outburst of weeping, so loud that the house of Pharaoh heard.

What must have been the astonishment of his brothers at such a scene as this! But how much more astonished when this great Egyptian lord, whom they so much feared, cried out to them, "*I AM JOSEPH! Doth my father yet live?*" This last touch of affection was not so much a question—for he had been hearing of his father all through the address of Judah—as an exclamation. Is it indeed so that my aged father survives?

But his brothers were awe-struck. "*They could not answer him. They were troubled,*" or, as the margin gives it, terrified, at his presence! And well they might, as a rush of recollections crowded upon them—their treachery, the murderous casting into the pit, the selling into slavery, the lying to their father! Can it be possible that this all-powerful lord of Egypt is their once-shamefully used brother? What can they expect but to be hurried off to execu-

ties. Such thoughts doubtless filled their minds, rushing in a swift current in less time than it takes to recount them.

But their fears were at once quieted by his gracious words, "*Come near to me, I pray you.*" On their coming near he went on, "*I am, indeed, Joseph, your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt!*" Then, with tenderness beyond expression, he went on to say, "*Be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, for God sent me before you to preserve life. There are yet five more years of famine. God sent me before you to save your lives by a great deliverance. So, it was not you, but God, sent me here, and he has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of his house, and ruler over the land of Egypt.*"

Were they not dumb with astonishment, as men in a dream, when they heard this; and almost more so as he said, "*Haste, go up to my father. Tell him, thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt. Come down, tarry not, and thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and there will I nourish thee, for there are yet five years of famine; lest thou and thy household, and all that thou hast,—come to poverty.*"

Wonder of wonders, they must have thought, as the gracious words fell from his lips. But not a word could they reply. Then, seeing that they could not realize it, could not believe their very ears, he said, probably casting off some portion of his head-dress, that they might see him more as he used to be, "*And behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that it is my very mouth which speaketh to you.*" Then with an exquisite touch of nature he goes on, "*And ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that ye have seen, and haste and bring my father down hither.*"

Then he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, and Benjamin fell on his neck,—Benjamin first, the son of his own mother Rachel. Then he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them.—wept upon them.

Up to this time they had not dared to utter a word. But now, *they talked with him.* What a conversation that must have been! but the Divine Spirit has not seen fit to have it recorded.

But the fame of all this was heard in Pharaoh's house, and it pleased Pharaoh and his servants.

A marvellous history indeed. Surely this is the hand of God, guiding, controlling, influencing the minds of many men, to bring to pass the counsels of his own inscrutable will.

CHAPTER XXVII.

JACOB AND HIS FAMILY GO DOWN TO EGYPT.

Genesis 46, 47.

Instead of Joseph's brethren being received with suspicion and jealousy, as is usually the case when a man in high position endeavors to promote his family, they were welcomed, and invited by the king to settle in the land of Egypt. The whole narrative reveals a marvellous and constant working of the Divine will, overruling events, and the course of men's minds, and ordering all for the accomplishment of ends of high importance, but such as were most unlikely to happen in the ordinary course of affairs. Long before this it had been revealed to Abraham that his posterity would sojourn for many generations in a strange land; would suffer heavy oppression; would go out "*with great substance.*" while the nation that afflicted them should be "*judged.*" Marvellous, indeed, have been the events that led to this migration. "*Wonderful in counsel and excellent in working*" is the Supreme Ruler and Lord of all the Earth, and we now see Him bringing about the separation of this chosen family from the land where they have sojourned for three generations.

The brethren of Joseph are sent back with presents as well as food, and a mandate from Pharaoh, spoken to Joseph, that they shall bring their father, their wives, their children, and all that they had, and settle themselves in one of the richest districts of the country. "*I will give you,*" said he, "*the good of the land of Egypt, and ye shall eat the fat of the land.*" This, of course, refers to the country in its natural condition, when the years of famine were ended. For it was lean enough at that time.

When the brothers returned with the wonderful story that Joseph was alive, and Governor of Egypt, the old man was overcome with fear. His heart fainted within him. For if that story were true, then they have grossly deceived him before. "*He believed them not,*" and fell into deep dejection of spirit. What other misery were these wretched sons of his preparing for him? But they told him of the words of Joseph as to the land they were to dwell in, and he saw with his own eyes that Benjamin had come back. But the convincing proof was the numerous train of waggons they

had brought with them. How could they possibly have brought these if their story were not true? So, considering these things, the spirit of the old man revived, and he said, "*It is enough, Joseph, my son, is yet alive. I will go down and see him before I die.*"

The events of the present century, when such multitudes of people have migrated from their own country in search of wealth or better means of subsistence, may the better enable us to understand the many migrations recorded in this Book of Genesis. For there are so many that it might almost be called the Book of Emigration as well as the Book of Origins. For example:—

1. We have the great movement of the whole population after the flood down the valley of the Euphrates. But they moved in disobedience, keeping together instead of spreading abroad, and ended by the folly of the Tower of Babel.

2. Abram was an emigrant, leaving his own country by Divine command and going to a land he knew not. But his emigration was a work of confidence and obedience, and was accompanied by an untold blessing.

3. Lot emigrated, too, going down to a lovely country. But he asked no Divine direction. The inhabitants of the country were as bad as the country was good, and the end was disaster unspeakable.

4. Jacob, early in life, emigrated. The occasion was his own wrong-doing. But it was over-ruled for his own good, and for a means of blessing to after generations.

5. Many generations, afterwards the whole nation, emigrated, going out from a land of oppression, under Divine guidance, to the land of promise.

But as preliminary to this, the old patriarch and his family break up all the ties and associations of a lifetime and are going down to a country as absolutely different from the one in which they have been brought up as it is possible to conceive. But this migration was of God.

The first day's journey ended at Beer-Sheba, that famous "Well of the Oath," so often mentioned in these narratives. And there he offered sacrifices. At every special crisis of Jacob's life he had been favored with a Divine revelation and promise of blessing. So it was at Bethel, on leaving his old home. So it was at Mahanaim, when about to meet his brother. So it is now, as he is on his way to this unknown country of Egypt, in extreme old age, not knowing what may befall him there. He is at the very extremity of the land of Canaan, a land which he intuitively feels, considering his time of life, he can never see again. Looking back with the regret of an old man, he must undoubtedly have felt apprehension on looking forward to the desert

which he and all his had to cross. Then it was that the God of his fathers appeared to him "in the visions of the night," and said, "Fear not to go down into Egypt, for I will there make of thee a great nation," adding words which strikingly recall the vision of Bethel, "I will go down with thee into Egypt, and I will surely bring thee up again, and Joseph shall put his hand on thine eyes." (v. 4).

So, with the assurance of the Divine presence accompanying him, the old man goes on his way, a long train of waggons with him, carrying the goods they have gotten in Canaan, his sons, his sons' wives, their children, and their cattle, and all they had, exactly as the pioneers of the West and the North-West of our own continent made their way slowly across the plains to the region they desired to settle in.

There were sixty-six in the train. These, with Joseph, his wife and his two sons, made up the seventy souls, who, by the laws of natural increase, unchecked by war, famine, or emigration, and in a highly fertile district of country, watched over specially by Divine Providence, became the great multitude of the time of the Exodus.

As to the objection that so small a number could not possibly attain to so large an increase, let it be considered:—

First, that modern calculations and estimates of the time during which these people were in Egypt are mere guesses, without scientific basis or value. This applies, indeed, in a considerable degree, to all chronological calculations of these early times, which, it must be remembered, are purely human estimates, and form no part of Divine revelation. The only time distinctly mentioned as the period of sojourn is in the revelation to Abraham (Gen. xv. 13), where it is stated to be four hundred years. This four hundred years would be amply sufficient, especially under the conditions next mentioned.

For second it must be remembered that the period of their sojourn was one of unbroken peace, so far as they were concerned. There was no diminution of numbers, either by war, or by sickness, or by emigration. During the greater part of the period they were free and prosperous. And even when tyranny supervened and most of them were reduced to slavery, the increase in numbers went on. "The more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew," a fact which modern experience confirms as likely to be true.

So, then, we see this small company of people arriving in Egypt, and settling in a district called in the narrative Goshen, which was probably the region lying nearest to the land of Canaan. Through that district has been cut, in modern times, the fresh-water Canal, along the course of

which the British troops marched when they encountered and defeated the usurper Arabi at Tel-el-Kebir. In this land of Goschen the sons of Jacob pursued their occupation of shepherds and herdsmen for many generations.

One may marvel that so much of the care of the Supreme Lord of the Universe should be with this little company of people, who were, all of them, so far as the civilization and developments of this world are concerned, so very far behind the people amongst whom they came to sojourn. Humanly speaking, it might be thought that the Egyptians would be the favoured people; for their capacity for art, architecture, science, literature, learning, government, and social development, was, even at that early day, far beyond anything known by these uncultured shepherds and herdsmen of the land of Canaan. But, even then, as it was in after ages, the law of Divine procedure seems to have been, that not the wise, not the noble, not the great of this world should be chosen to exhibit and transmit a high order of spiritual development. (1 Cor., I., 26).

For let us consider. What, of all this science, religion, learning, literature, philosophy of the Egyptians has survived to our own times, as a light to enlighten, or quicken, or direct the ways of men? Is there a single particle? Do men generally now read the lives of Egyptian leaders, or ponder the precepts of Egyptian sages, or follow the words of Egyptian devout men to express religious hope or aspiration? Is there such a thing known anywhere in the world? There is not. On the contrary, is it not a fact that tens of thousands, nay, an innumerable multitude of people in these times, and for many generations back, have found in the records of Abraham's life and words, and also in those of Jacob and Joseph, a powerful stimulus in the way of righteousness? There can be no shadow of doubt about it. The Egyptians of that age have left no sign in the active spiritual sphere, marvellous as are their works in architecture and sculpture. These shepherds of the land of Canaan *have*, and the sign is not of superstition, or bigotry, or credulity, but of the most rational faith and hope that have ever been known amongst mankind. This, then, is the reason for the otherwise strange Divine procedure.

But while the settlement of the family in Egypt was going on, the famine increased in severity. "*The famine was very sore. There was no bread in all the land. The land fainted because of the famine.*" Chap. XLVII., 13.

The measures that were taken by Joseph as administra-

tor of the relief stores, have been criticized with much unreason and denounced as harsh and tyrannical. But let the matter be fairly considered, in the light of all the circumstances then existing, and it will be seen that his measures were as equitable as they were far-seeing.

Naturally, in the first year or two, the people came to buy corn with money. To sell corn to those who could pay for it was obviously a far more prudent course than to pauperize a whole people by instituting a system of gigantic and universal alms-giving. So far, certainly, no fault could be found. It is evident from the whole course of the narrative that the condition of the country was wholly different from that of India in these modern times, when swarming millions crowd the land, earning at the best of times but a precarious subsistence. Egypt, evidently, was only thinly populated and partially occupied, as is clear from the fact of a large and fertile district like the land of Goshen being free for the family of Jacob to spread themselves over, and occupy with their flocks and herds. The condition of Egypt then was much more like that of our own province of Manitoba, where a small number of cultivators are thinly dotted over large tracts of land, and raising quantities of grain that would be deemed incredible to men accustomed to the farming of thickly peopled countries. Evidently these Egyptian cultivators, as was natural at such an early stage in the settlement of the country, were men of accumulated savings in money, and also in cattle and sheep and asses and horses. Such a population of land-owners could only be dealt with as free men; that is, that they should receive a fair equivalent for what they were able to buy.

First, then, they bought with their savings of money. This carried the people through the first year. This being passed in safety, they bring their cattle, flocks and horses in exchange for subsistence for another year. It must be evident, in the nature of things, that they were allowed to keep these animals in possession, holding them in pledge or trust for the king. The cattle being all disposed of, and another year of scarcity arising, there was left the land. This also was sold to the king, and another year's subsistence secured, and as with the cattle, so with the land, it must have remained in possession of its former owners, they becoming tenants to the State instead of holders in freehold. And so it proved, for as we read further on, seed as well as food was provided for the cultivators of the soil, on condition that one-fifth part of the produce was paid over to Pharaoh. This fifth part corresponds very closely to the rent paid for the use of agricultural land in these modern times, and is another instance how, under the same

circumstances, the conditions of life in these earliest ages of the world correspond with those prevailing now.

The people of the land appreciated all these arrangements as just and reasonable. For they said to the Chief Administrator, Thou hast saved our lives; let us find grace in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh's servants.

All this has been foolishly distorted into first robbing the people of their property, and then of reducing them to slavery, a view of the matter which a reasonable consideration entirely dispels.

For the crisis was urgent, and yet though a crisis, it lasted through seven long years. The very life of the people depended on the measures taken. There were only two alternatives, the one to institute a regular and constant system of relief by doles and gifts, which would degrade and pauperize the people; the other to allow the people to make an honorable contract with the Government by which they would render, of what belonged to them, a fair equivalent for the subsistence and seed they required. The result of the whole was that, for a time at least, the whole agricultural population became tenants of the State, the rent being fixed at a sum which the land was well able to bear. And as to money, it is certain that a large part of this must have been again returned to its former owners in the shape of loans, for money, as well as land and cattle, would be needed in order that agricultural operations might be carried on and the kingdom kept together.

It is almost certain that if a similar state of things were to arise in the present day, measures substantially similar would have to be resorted to, all which justifies the foresight and wisdom of Joseph's administration. But in truth the state of things brought about by the measures he instituted to provide for a life-and-death emergency, are very much those which many theorists about land tenure would like to see brought about now, viz., that all the land should be owned by the State, that its cultivators and occupiers should be tenants at a fixed rental, and that this rental should be the sole form of taxation. In the present condition of the greater part of the land in various countries of the world this is a mere idle dream. For all land in a state of cultivation has been brought to that condition by the expenditure of wisely devised and long continued private labor, as well as considerable amounts of money. The State could not in equity take possession of such land without payment. But payment would involve the raising of such prodigious sums of money that no country in the world could possibly sustain the burden of it. The idea, may, therefore, be dis-

missed. With regard to land in a state of nature, either in forest or prairie, it is largely in possession of the State as it is.

From this general transfer of the land of Egypt to the State one class was exempt, viz., the priests.

This was no arrangement of Joseph's, but arose out of the powerful influence of this class with the King. For the reason assigned for the lands of the priests being exempt is stated to be that their land had been assigned them by the King. "*They did cut their portion which Pharaoh gave them.*" (v. 22). The germs of the relations between Church and State which have given rise to such momentous questions in modern times are distinctly traceable here. The assignment of lands to the Church, the claim of the Church to be exempt from State burdens and taxes, are arrangements with which we are familiar enough in our own age and country. And we are familiar, too, with the fact that priests, acting together in an organized capacity, are sometimes able to prevail and carry their point against the strongest ministers that rule a country.

Either through the king personally, as in this instance, or through a majority of credulous and superstitious voters, bringing influences to bear which none know how to use so well as those who have so much to gain by it,—the Church has generally been able to have her own way. It is only when priests and ecclesiastics have become so grasping and ambitious as to acquire an amount of property that threatens the stability of the State and the general welfare of the people, that measures have been carried through which deprived them of an exceptional position, and made them and their property subject to common burdens. In some cases, in these modern times, in Europe, the evil of the absorption of land by the Church in various forms—houses of worship, monasteries, convents, cathedrals, colleges, and so on—had become so scandalous as to bring about revolutionary restorations and displacements that had some elements of injustice. This is what has been witnessed in Italy, in France, as well as (with regard to monasteries) in England.

It is not probable that in Egypt at this early period the amount of land in the hands of the priests was so large as to diminish materially the royal revenue. As to the production of these lands themselves, it is likely that they produced as much in the hands of the priests as they would otherwise. For the priests, doubtless, would make the most of the land for their own sakes. The question, then, of the exemption of the priests from giving up their lands to the State was one that concerned the King, as the head

of the State, rather than the people. Hence it was not interfered with by Joseph, for it did not interfere with the great and pressing need of the time.

Thus, year by year passed on. The people of Egypt were carried through a period of protracted and terrible scarcity, and the measures taken by the young Hebrew were justified by the event.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

JACOB'S LAST WORDS AND PROPHECY.

Genesis 48, 49.

The Scripture narrative, having unfolded the series of events that fulfilled the prophecy to Abraham of a migration to a strange land, returns once more to the aged patriarch, who is both the natural and spiritual head of the people of Israel, whose life, indeed, is a remarkable type of the life of many godly men and eminent servants of Christ. Beginning in much cloud and darkness, with developments of strong natural propensity to evil, lightened up now and then by rays of Divine light and power, the life of the man goes on, bearing, for the most part, steadily upward, until after a tremendous crisis of spiritual conflict, he reaches a serene plane of steadfast piety, in which, tenderness, consideration, and love to man, are as conspicuous as devotion towards his God. So was spent the long evening of that remarkable life, of which the close is narrated in the last chapter of this great book of Origins.

Now the most remarkable particular of Jacob's closing days is that he gave utterance to the first series of prophetic and inspired *sayings* that have been recorded in these Scriptures.

No man before him had said anything (beyond a word or two) of the character of prophecy or teaching. Abraham was mighty in deeds, but not in words; Isaac left no sayings that have been recorded. But Jacob not only saw wonderful visions and passed through striking changes and vicissitudes, but said things in these his closing days which have become part of the Church's heritage of teaching for all time. He was, in truth, in his old age, the first of the long line of prophets and seers whose words have a double application—first to the local time and event, and then to all time to come.

The exquisite tenderness and beauty of the old man's words in speaking to Joseph of his two sons, Ephraim and Manassah, cannot but strike one who is filled with the idea of Jacob as a hard-hearted, crafty man of the world, the prototype of the crafty and covetous Jew, as he is generally supposed to be, in our own time. The old man is in his last sickness. Joseph visits him, bringing his two sons. His father then recalls, as an old man so often does, the

former days. "God Almighty," he says, "appeared to me at Luz, in the land of Canaan, and blessed me." It is a vivid recollection not of the ladder or the angels, but of the Almighty Ruler, who had been the guide and stay of his life. So, then, thinking of the promise of increase and blessing, he proceeds to adopt the two sons of Joseph as his own. "As *Reuben and Simeon*," he solemnly declares, "they shall be mine." And so they became; for these sons of Joseph, Manasseh and Ephraim, gave their names to tribes. Then, with a touching remembrance of Joseph's mother, the dearly-loved Rachel, who died between Jerusalem and Bethlehem, the aged patriarch proceeds to give a blessing to the two boys, couched in language of imitable tenderness and solemnity. With a hand laid upon the head of each of them, he utters the words: "GOD, BEFORE WHOM MY FATHERS ABRAHAM AND ISAAC DID WALK, THE GOD WHICH LED ME ALL MY LIFE LONG UNTO THIS DAY, THE ANGEL WHICH REDEEMED ME FROM ALL EVIL, BLESS THE LADS! AND LET MY NAME BE NAMED ON THEM, AND THE NAME OF MY FATHERS ABRAHAM AND ISAAC. AND LET THEM GROW UNTO A MULTITUDE IN THE MIDST OF THE EARTH." What a wonderful gathering together of the past we have here; the long "walking before God" of his father and grandfather, the long course of providential care in temporal things that had marked his own chequered career; above all, the great redemptive power which had wrought deliverance for him in spiritual things, making of the old "*Supplanter*" a "*Prince of God*,"—all this comes rushing back to the patriarch as he puts the hand of blessing on these grandchildren of his adoption.

But, in doing so, a curious change is made by the Patriarch. He puts the right hand on the head of the youngest, the left hand on the head of the eldest; and, when Joseph desired to correct what he supposed was a mistake, the old man declares that it is done with a purpose: "The younger shall have the pre-eminence; he shall be greater than his brother, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations." (v. 19).

This was undoubtedly fulfilled in the subsequent history of the tribes. Joshua, the great warrior and leader, was of the tribe of Ephraim. For many years the centre of the religious life of the people was at Shiloh, in the territory of Ephraim. And certainly, after the great disruption, Ephraim was the leading tribe of the kingdom of Israel, and is often referred to by the prophets as representing them all. Not that this stood for any superiority in goodness or wisdom, for it certainly did not. But, as the tribe had obtained for its portion the very central position of the land,

it always had a leading part in the development of the life of the people. This Manasseh never had.

After this, the old man gave utterance to an expression of faith in the continued abiding of the presence of Almighty God, and in the whole family being brought again to the land of their fathers. "*Behold,*" he says, "*I die, but God shall be with you, and bring you again to the land of your fathers.*"

The last scene in the life of this patriarch is striking in the extreme. He gathers his sons about him, and in a series of short but vivid and picturesque sayings, he sketches the character and destiny of themselves and their descendants.

His sayings are not all prophecies. Some of them are mere characterizations or descriptions, most vivid and poetical, but not having any special significance for the Church of God in these times. But those to Judah and Joseph are very significant; and the word spoken to the former has never ceased to interest the disciples of the Divine Saviour, as being one of that long series which foreshadowed, in terms more and more clear, the attributes, powers, and properties of that Messiah whose coming into the world was for the "healing of the nations."

The reference of the saying to the Messiah is disputed by a certain school of critics in these days; but then, they dispute almost every other of such foreshadowings, even those which are expressly referred to the Messiah by Jesus Christ himself and by his apostles. And not only so, they dispute the truthfulness of much of the Old Testament record, and especially of the miraculous occurrences therein, forgetting that, if a Divine Creator exists at all, which they generally allow, Creation itself, whether instantaneous or gradual, is the most stupendous miracle conceivable, and that it is impossible to set limits to the working of His power who formed a universe. To discredit the narrative of a miracle because it is a miracle, or to say that a prophecy which clearly points to an event that actually came to pass could not have been written before the event, is to display such a want of sound judgment as to lead to an entire discrediting of the critics themselves.

Passing by, then, these doubters and disputers, it is interesting to look at the words of the aged patriarch themselves, and see what meaning can naturally and reasonably be attributed to them. Having spoken briefly of Reuben, Simeon, and Levi, with emphatic reprobation of their former evil doings, the old man passes on to JUDAH, the youngest

son of his first wife, Leah. But here the whole style of the language changes. There is no mention of his misdoings, flagrant enough though they have been; the mind of the patriarch is swallowed up in thoughts of exaltation, victory, and dominion. "Thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise; thou shalt have victory over thine enemies; thy brethren shall bow down before thee." Then, using bold figures of speech, he speaks of Judah as a "young lion," as a lion in his full strength, and as a lion in old age, whom it is dangerous to "rouse up." After this comes the remarkable saying:—

"THE SCEPTRE SHALL NOT DEPART FROM JUDAH, NOR A LAWGIVER FROM BETWEEN HIS FEET, UNTIL SHILOH COME, AND UNTO HIM SHALL THE GATHERING OF THE PEOPLE BE."

Now, then, we have a remarkable opening up of a great future for the descendants of Judah, and an equally remarkable close to such future. Various refinements of the meaning of the original words of this declaration have been put forth for the purpose of supporting a theory. But taking the widest varieties of interpretation, they all point to the idea of leadership, rule, and government in one or other of the spheres of life which the descendants of Judah would occupy. Whether it is the "sceptre" of a king, or, as some would have it, the "rod" or "staff" of a shepherd, the essential idea is the same. And similarly the idea of lawgiver, or as some would have it "teacher or interpreter," is but a variation of the same function of rule and government in the intellectual or spiritual sphere. Respecting the word "SHILOH," which is not translated, and which means giver of rest or peace, peace bringer, peace bestower, there can be no manner of doubt that some important personage is shadowed forth by it. For to him the "gathering of the people," or as some would translate it, "the obedience of the people," is to be, both conveying the same idea in substance, viz., that the rule of this giver of peace is to be wide and extensive, and, what is important to be noted, that it is to be voluntarily acquiesced in. But nearly all who have written comments on the original language of this passage, and especially scholars of the Jewish race, have concluded that the idea of the original is well expressed by the language of our own translation, and that the Shiloh is the Messiah that was to come.

Thus, then, we have a prophetic vision with regard to this tribe, of long continued sovereignty, leadership, or rule, to be ended by the coming of another peace-giving ruler, to whom the gathering or obedience of the people would be.

These words were uttered when the family of Jacob was settled in a foreign country, and when they were all shep-

herds and herdmen, and hundreds of years before they were numerous enough to return as a nation to the land of Canaan under the guidance of a man, who might have been looked upon naturally as having the right to be made king, if any man had. But not a word is there during all the long history of Moses, of his desiring or assuming the kingly office. Nor did his great successor Joshua, who, next to Moses, was certainly entitled to such a distinction for his great deeds of generalship and valor in leading the people to occupy the land of Canaan. Never once did Joshua even name such a thing as that he should be made king.

There seemed to be a Divine restraining hand, keeping the leaders of the people within certain bounds, and never allowing them to pass beyond them. For neither Moses nor Joshua was of the tribe of Judah. Moses was of the tribe of Levi. Joshua of the tribe of Ephraim. None of the great Judges, such as Gideon, Barak, Jephthah, were of Judah, and none of them ever aspired to be king. Samuel, the greatest of all, was of the tribe of Levi. Needless to say, he had no such aspiration.

Yet it is a singular development that the first king was of the tribe of Benjamin, the tribe which had so close an affinity with Judah as almost to be a part of it. For Jerusalem, which, first under the reign of David, became the national capital, was partly in Benjamin and partly in Judah, and the tribe of Benjamin alone, of all the tribes, clave to Judah in the time of the great revolt. But so predominant was the tribe of Judah that the original kingdom, whose capital was Jerusalem, was always called the kingdom of Judah, and has been so called ever since. The fact, however, that the first king, viz., Saul, was of Benjamin, does not contradict the prophecy, which was not that in Judah alone there should be sovereignty, but that the sceptre should long abide with Judah. Now it is certain that when, in the person of David, the sceptre was vested in the tribe of Judah, it continued generation after generation in unbroken descent in a line of kings, nearly all of whom were illustrious both for their goodness and their great qualities. This is in striking contrast with the kings who were set up over the revolted tribes, who were deposed one after another by violence and lawlessness, the sceptre never continuing long in any one family.

But in the evil days of misrule that succeeded the captivity of Babylon, and for many generations afterwards, there was no kingly rule, properly speaking, either of Judah or any other tribe, and, as is well known, Herod, who was allowed to retain a subordinate sovereignty by the Romans, was not a Jew at all, but an Idumean.

Still, whatever leadership there was, and there undoubtedly was some, in the darkest days, the tribe of Judah was foremost in it. It was the men of Judah and Benjamin, as we learn from the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, who, on the return from Babylon, built up, first the ruined Temple, and afterwards the walls of Jerusalem. Nehemiah, the Governor, who exercised all the functions of rule and leadership, was almost certainly of the tribe of Judah. And during the long period respecting which the Canonical Scriptures are silent, it is round the tribes of Judah and Benjamin that all national life gathered from time to time, and it was centered in them in the days when the Saviour of the world was born.

This brings us to the chief point of the prophecy, viz., the advent at some distant day of the Shiloh, the Giver of peace or rest, the name being nearly equivalent to the Prince of Peace spoken of by the prophet Isaiah. Here we are on certain ground. After the lapse of many ages, there was born in Bethlehem, in the tribe of Judah, and of the family of David—who was of the house of Judah—a child who well deserved the appellation of the Shiloh, the giver of Rest, or Peace. His birth was ushered in by a grand angelic chorus, whose strain was, "*Peace on Earth and good-will to men.*" His mission on earth was one to bring peace and rest to the spiritual nature of men by the sacrifice of Himself on the cross. "*He made peace by the blood of His cross,*" said His greatest apostle. His command to his disciples, when sent out to preach in His name, was to say, "*Peace to this house,*" on entering any habitation. His last legacy to His followers was a message of peace: "*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you.*" And the benediction pronounced in His name in all assemblies of His disciples throughout the world, even at this day, is, "*The Peace of God that passeth all understanding keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ.*"

Unlike another great form of faith, which was propagated by the sword, the weapons of the Prince of Peace are spiritual only, such as affect the conscience and intelligence of men. And whenever his followers have resorted to carnal weapons to advance their cause, as they have repeatedly done, as in the Crusades, Dragonades and Albigensian wars, they have been wholly recreant to the spirit of His commands. For, in the visions of prophecy which stretch far out into the future, and which anticipate the spreading of His kingdom over the earth, one distinguishing feature is that men shall "*beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks, and that they shall learn war no more.*" (Isaiah ii. 4.)

And as to the prophecy that to him the "gathering of the people" should be, what could be more closely fulfilled in the life of our Divine Saviour? The crowds gathered about him wherever he went. "*All the world is gone after him,*" said the Pharisees when conspiring against him. (John XII., 19).

But the great fulfilment was after his decease. "I, if I be lifted up," said he, "*will draw all men unto me,*" and this drawing has been going on for ages, and is going on now all over the world, beyond doubt.

And the word of prophecy assures us that in the time to come all peoples, nations, and languages shall serve him!

Recurring, then, to the words of the aged patriarch, it must be confessed that they embody one of those striking sayings, not understood by him who spoke them, nor by anyone else at the time, in which, little by little, the coming Messiah was so prefigured that when all the sayings are gathered together they correspond exactly to what actually transpired of His birth, life, death, and everlasting reign.

The only other son who is referred to at length is, very naturally, Joseph. But the passage is descriptive rather than prophetic, and pictures in beautiful language the wealth and prosperity of this remarkable son, succeeding a course of severe persecution. Joseph is a fruitful bough, whose branches run over the wall. And though "shot at by the archers," who grieved him, and hated him, his bow abode in the strength imparted by the Mighty God of Jacob. Then follows an ascription of blessing of the same kind as that which had been spoken of himself, viz. blessings of all temporal wealth, power, enlargement and increase, through successive generations.

Having thus spoken, the old man gave his solemn charge: "*I am to be gathered to my people,*" a phrase which points to the belief that his people, his ancestors, Abraham and Isaac, were still living with God; and further, "Bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, in the cave that is in the field of Macpelah, in the land of Canaan." "There," he adds, "they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife; there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife; and there I buried Leah." These touching memories of the past crowd upon the old man in his last moments. "And when he had made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost." "And," the narrative finally adds, "HE WAS GATHERED UNTO HIS PEOPLE."

The extraordinary respect and honor in which Joseph was

held is strikingly shown in the honors that were paid to the remains of his father. He was embalmed in the Egyptian manner, a manner that we are perfectly familiar with from the numerous mummies that have been unearthed in our own times. And there was a national mourning for him, as for a royal personage of our day. Seventy days of mourning for this aged foreign chief; how strikingly does this testify to the honor and respect which had gathered round this remarkable family; and how little could Jacob, when spending his early years in tents in the land of Canaan, have dreamed of the manner in which his life would close. But so God had ordained, who knows the end from the beginning. For not only was there a national mourning, but a public funeral. The remains of the old man were carried back to Canaan with great pomp and state; not only Joseph and his house, his brethren, and his father's house, but all the ministers of state and the elders of the royal family, and a very great array of chariots and horsemen accompanying them.

The whole cavalcade halted just on the border of the land of Canaan, doubtless to prevent the idea arising of its being an invasion of the country, and a great scene of mourning and lamentation, lasting many days, was witnessed by the people of the region, who called the place "Abel-Mizraim," the "Mourning of the Egyptians."

Then, the sons alone proceeded with the body of their father and laid it in its last resting-place, the cave near Hebron which Abraham had bought long before.

So this great patriarch and most remarkable character passes away from the scenes of earthly history; a history of deep shadows and of bright lights; the light, however, "*shining more and more unto the perfect day.*" And he left a name which stamped itself deep upon the religious life of this people, as the many references to the "GOD OF JACOB" testify, and the many more in which his name stands for a personification of the whole people, while, as to their national life, his new name of ISRAEL has been the appellation of his descendants in all ages, even down to our own day.

Returning to Egypt, a singular manifestation of distrust is witnessed on the part of the brothers, who feared, now that their father was dead, that Joseph might take retributive measures against them. So sensitive is an evil conscience, even when apparently all need for fear has passed away.

They took counsel together, and, remembering the great difference in station between themselves and him, they sent a messenger with the dying charge of their father, to Jo-

seph (of which we only hear through them), entreating him to forgive them. This they follow up by a personal interview, in which they expressed the deepest contrition and humiliation.

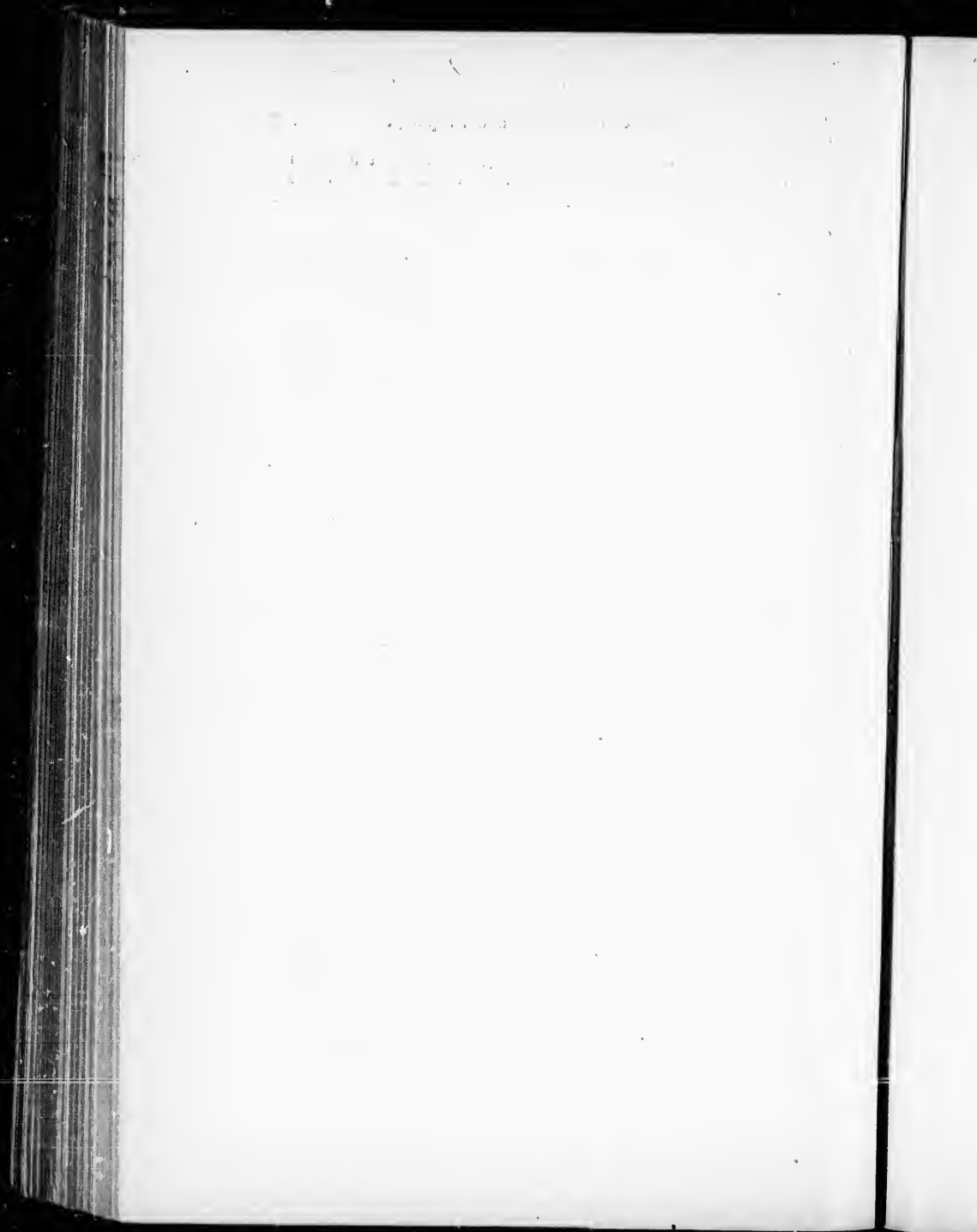
The Divine grace which made him the man he was, is strikingly manifest in his behavior to them. He is utterly overcome by their behavior, by their fear, their humility, their repentance, their willingness to be anything, and to do anything. *"He wept when they spake to him."* And he made a reply which indicated his high-minded generosity, as well as his piety towards God. *"Fear not,"* he said, *"Am I in place of God,"* in this, anticipating the famous saying of after times, *"Vengeance is mine,"* saith the Lord; mine, that is, and not man's. And he added, *"Ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good; to bring it to pass, as it is this day, to save the lives of many people."* "Now, therefore," he finally said, *"Fear ye not. I will nourish you, and your little ones."* "And he comforted them, and spake kindly to them."

These are the last recorded words respecting the active work of Joseph.

The famine was still in the land, and many years of administration were before him. These, however, are not recorded. They belong rather to the secular history of Egypt than to the spiritual history of these ancestors of the people of Israel. Joseph lived to extreme old age. He was 110 years old when he died, and his grandchildren and great-grandchildren were about him.

The last record of him is that when he saw he was about to die, he expressed his solemn faith in the presence and care of Almighty God, who would, he said, *"surely visit them and bring them out of Egypt to the land he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob."* And he took a solemn oath of the children of Israel, probably all the descendants of his father being assembled for the purpose, saying, *"God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence."* This charge was religiously observed, for when Moses led the people of Israel out of Egypt we read that *"they carried the bones of Joseph"* with them.

And thus ends this remarkable Book of Origins, which opens out to a reflecting mind not only what is conformable to an Almighty and Allwise Creator and Governor of the Earth, but also what is conformable to human nature as it now is, and to the ways of men as we know them now.



THE BOOK
OF
EXODUS
OR THE
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PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS.

Before entering upon a consideration in detail of the supernatural events that occurred in connection with the mission and work of Moses, even to the end of his life, it will be well to fix in our minds the great principle that underlies all these manifestations. For the whole of them are stated in the record to be by the operation of the same Divine power which had previously been described as creating the Heavens and the Earth, and originating by a simple exercise of will, the whole natural constitution of things as they have ever since subsisted in the world. The orderly processes of the vegetable and the mineral worlds, the influences of the sun, the light, the rain; the regular procession of the seasons with their consequences in seed-time and harvest; in fact, all that we are accustomed to think of in the supremely wonderful and almost unfathomable aggregate of forces which we call Nature, have been described, in these records, as proceeding, in the first instance, from the exercise of will on the part of a mighty and conscious Being; to whom, so far, two names have been given, one signifying the Supremely Powerful, the other the Eternally Subsisting. What we call the laws of Nature (and very properly, within certain reasonable limitations) are represented in the records preceding these of the Departure, as perpetual exercises of an Eternally Subsisting Will, which is identical with the Ultimate Force of modern philosophy, save that modern philosophy, in the hands of some, refuses to see that such a force, to be reasonably exercised, must be the force of a conscious and ever-subsisting Being.

This being so, it becomes evident that if there is adequate reason, in the circumstances of the time, and in consideration of the end to be accomplished, for events to be brought about of an unusual character, such as are contrary to the ordinary operations of Nature—that is to say, contrary to the ordinary working of the Divine will—the sole question for consideration is this—was there adequate reason in the character and importance of the end to be accomplished, and in the circumstances of the time, for the Divine will to depart from its usual methods of operation.

This must be conceded to be agreeable to sound reason. For it must be assumed as certain, that the Being whose operations in the natural world bear such wonderful evidence of the working of the higher wisdom, or reason, and especially of the ordering of forces and powers with a view

to a destined end, will equally manifest the working of a high and profound reason when events have to be brought about connected with the moral and spiritual development of that human race which is manifestly the crown and sum of His works. For all that we know of nature leads to the conclusion that all that is in the world has been created, and is being ordered and sustained for the service of Mankind. Our enquiries, therefore, will always, if they are conducted rationally, be as to whether the unusual methods of operation that we call supernatural, or miraculous, are of such a character as to serve great ends in the development either of mankind as a whole, or of some nation, tribe, family, or individuals in it. It must, however, be borne in mind that we cannot always rightly judge, in the absence of express reasons given, what reason there was for unusual operations in circumstances and times so remote. And we must also acknowledge—and a wise man will do so—with becoming modesty, that the arrangements of a Supremely Wise Being as to the events of four thousand years ago, even when the reason for them is stated, may be beyond the scope of our judgment. It has already been stated in these Studies that the child of a Prime Minister of England is as well able to understand the measures inaugurated by his father, and the reasons therefor, as we are to understand the ways of the Eternal and Infinite God.

Every reasonable mind will acquiesce in the words of the Apostle of the Gentiles, when, in writing to the Romans, he reverently exclaims, "*Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out.*" the last words (in the original) having reference to the works of explorers, and conveying the idea that the paths of the Supreme are in regions beyond human exploration.

It is only when bearing these fundamental principles in mind that we can be in a position to look rationally at the supernatural events recorded in the extraordinary narratives of this Book of Departure. It is thus we can consider the supernatural gifts conferred upon Moses as evidences of his Divine mission (expressly so stated), and judge whether the Supremely Wise did not understand what sort of powers would accomplish the object. With regard to the great plagues with which the land of Egypt was desolated, terrible events as some of them were, we may have some understanding as to the reason why the judgments took the form they did, in considering the previous cruelties and barbarous oppression, the insolent defiance of the power of the Supreme by the King, the shifty, treacherous and crafty

changing of his purpose; the nature of the gods the Egyptians worshipped, the extraordinary reverence for insects, reptiles, cattle, and the river Nile, which was the common habit of the whole people; and the necessity for such manifestations of power as would break the pride of the king and make him willing to let the people go.

If any are still disposed to find fault (and there have been such fault-finders with the Divine procedure from time immemorial, as both the Old Testament and the New testify), let them consider the tremendous calamities that befel the American people as a prelude to the setting free of another oppressed race. That deliverance cost the lives of hundreds of thousands of men, the desolation of some of the fairest provinces of the continent, and such enormous sums of money as to transeend the imagination of ordinary people. The calamities inflicted upon Egypt were trifling, indeed, compared with the awful bloodshed and desolation of the American Civil War. Yet both had the same cause, and the same result.

Passing on to the events after the Departure, it is doubtful if the passage of the Red Sea was effected by anything but the operation of natural causes. But if the passage were supernatural, the whole course of events leading up to it, and much of that following it, was most natural. And if supernatural power was put forth in an extraordinary exigency, it was only a part of a system of Divine operation with a destined end in view, viz., that this people should reach and become inhabitants of the land of Canaan.

So with the events of the Wilderness. Their sustenance was supernatural, for so it had to be, if they were to remain there long—and, in Divine wisdom, they did remain long enough to be welded into a nation.

The events of the giving of the Law were mostly supernatural, and why should not such stupendous events be so? All that transpired in the wilderness was of such transcendent importance to that people, and through that people to the whole human race that were to be helped through them, that we cannot rationally refuse credence to the record, as of events in which there were special and extraordinary manifestations of the Divine will.

For the circumstances, and the end to be accomplished fully justified it.

In these narratives there is nothing fantastic, capricious, or unreasonable, nor is there anything that is contradictory to the evidence of the senses, or to the mature reason of thinking men, who will fairly consider the whole surrounding circumstances with their antecedents and consequences.

It is well known that misconceptions have arisen with regard to miraculous events, and events alleged to be such, and that in two directions, the one the Sceptical, the other the Superstitious. These mark two opposite types of human character, both of which have good elements in them. But in both the good is marred or absolutely spoiled by being pushed to an extreme.

The sceptical, for example, refuses to believe in any miraculous event at all, alleging it to be simply impossible, as being a contravention of fixed and immutable laws; or, in any event, if not absolutely impossible, yet as being so contrary to the ordinary course of events, that no reasonable man can believe it. Now let us consider. A miracle, in itself, according to the meaning of the word, is an event to excite *wonder*—a wonderful thing. Now the very idea of a miracle is that it is a contravention or contradiction of the ordinary course of nature or of events. For, if it were in accordance with them, it would not be a wonder; it would not be a *miracle*.

This being the case, it becomes simply a question as to whether there exists any power strong enough to bring the wonder to pass—strong enough, in fact, to suspend or contravene the operation of natural laws. And here the narrative must be admitted to be perfectly consistent. For the narrative refers all miracles to the exercise of that Supreme Power by which the whole universe was originated, and by whom were framed for the government of this earth, those very laws which miracles contravene. There can be no question that here we touch a power that is strong enough; for the exercise of power required to suspend the operation of natural force at one period of time, and in one place, is infinitesimally small, compared with the putting forth of operative force on the earth alone for a single day. For no sane man could deny that the mechanical force required to roll the earth round on its axis for a single day is inconceivably greater than was required to work all the miracles recorded in Scripture.

The sceptical and critical spirit may fairly exercise itself in considering alleged events and their causes, with a view to sifting the wheat from the chaff; and such miracles as are connected with the Divine government of the world and the ways of the Supreme, from the idle tales by which the designing and crafty wonder-worker imposes on the superstitious and the credulous, for his own advantage or that of his craft or order.

For as there are men of the temperament that refuses to believe *anything*, so there are of the temperament that is ready to believe *everything*. And it is such as these that

have largely brought the word "faith" into a position of conflict with reason, and led to the identification, in so many minds, of faith and credulity, or, to speak more plainly, with gullibility. It was amongst people of this temperament that the magicians, soothsayers, and necromancers of olden times found ready followers; and equally so did the miracle-mongers of the Medieval Church, and the spirit-rappers, and believers in the Book of Mormon of our own time. Between the state of mind of such as these (and pity it is to say it, but it is true, that such a state of mind is rather encouraged in the Roman Church) and a rational reliance on Almighty Power and Wisdom, there is a wide gulf indeed.

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CHAPTER I.

EVENTS PRELIMINARY TO THE GREAT DEPARTURE.

Exodus 1.

AS the first book of the Bible is named after its most characteristic event, viz., the account of the beginning or origination of the world as a habitation for man (the word Genesis signifying origination), so the second book is called the Book of Exodus, which signifies the GOING OUT, or DEPARTURE; from the great event of the departure of this race of people round which the whole narrative of the book turns.

Yet this book cannot be rightly comprehended if taken as an isolated narrative. For it is not an isolated narrative. Its incidents are inseparably connected with what has been already related in the Book of Origins, and it is but groping in the dark after their value and significance, if they are not looked at, as they were evidently meant to be looked at, in their due sequence and order.

Following, then, the orderly sequence of events, let us notice what had been said beforetime with regard to the lot and destiny of this people. For words about his descendants, viz., this very people who *went out*, were spoken many ages before to their great ancestor Abraham. To one of those great promises that he and his should "inherit the land," was once added (Gen. xv. 13, 14) these remarkable words: "KNOW OF A SURETY THAT THY SEED SHALL BE A STRANGER IN A LAND THAT IS NOT THEIRS; AND SHALL SERVE THEM, AND THEY SHALL AFFLICT THEM FOUR HUNDRED YEARS, AND ALSO THAT NATION, WHOM THEY SHALL SERVE, WILL I JUDGE: AND AFTERWARDS THEY SHALL COME OUT WITH GREAT SUBSTANCE."

Now, without wasting time, for it is time wasted, in calculations and computations about this period of four hundred years—let us consider the scope and force of the words themselves. They evidently afford a key to the whole of the remarkable history of this Book of Departure. For here we have foreshadowed, first a long period of exile and afflictive servitude in a strange land; second, a period of judgment upon those who oppressed them; and third, a departure, or going out, in wealth and substance. All these were fulfilled.

The fulfilment of the first we have already seen the beginning of, in the history of Joseph. The continuation and progress of it are now to be considered.

As Kepler, watching the movements of the heavenly bodies, reverently considered that he was watching the thoughts of the Almighty Creator, so we, watching the unfolding, age by age, chapter by chapter, of this marvellous history, are following the thoughts and purposes of the Almighty Ruler and Governor of the Human Race.

The Book of the Departure opens with a list of the sons of Jacob, and a statement that they, their wives, and their children, numbered seventy souls in all. Now, let us remember the promises to Abraham and his seed that they should become a great nation, and see how events are shaping towards it.

The great and primal factor now meeting us is the condition of servitude into which, in process of time, they had been reduced. Now, servitude by no means always carries the idea of oppression. But it always does, more or less, of a condition of comparative poverty and privation.

But all experience in the world demonstrates that such a condition is most favourable to a rapid increase of population. The experience of our own French-Canadian people illustrates this in a striking degree, and so does that of the negro population in the South. So long as there is not a check to increase by war, or by actual famine, a condition of open air country life, with hard toil, spare food, and absence of luxuries, is the one in which the people of a country increase the most rapidly. We can understand therefore how reasonable is the statement in the first chapter of this Book of Departure, that "*the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and waxed exceedingly mighty, and the land was filled with them.*"

This was before the period of the great oppression, and it went on for many generations. But the rapid multiplication was not good for their *morale*. They degenerated beyond doubt physically, and certainly they had gradually become, to a large extent, most of them, forgetful of the God of their fathers. Living in the midst of a people of a far higher civilization than themselves, they could scarcely help imbibing the spirit of the degraded idolatry that characterized them. For it was a characteristic of Egypt, that the grandest temples ever erected in the world were devoted to the worship of the meanest gods.

But the God of Abraham was watching over their destiny. It was His will that they should become a great nation. The powers of this world, however, set themselves to pre-

vent it, just as in after ages, often and in many forms, *"the kings of the earth set themselves (Psalm ii.) and the rulers took counsel together against the Lord and against His chosen."*

A king of Egypt arose *"who knew not Joseph"*—as is the way of the world with many of its benefactors. Joseph and his children, long since dead, all he had done was forgotten; and there was only present this great and increasing people, who continued foreign, and who, from a military point of view, might be a source of danger. So, taking counsel, the king set about to reduce them to a condition of absolute servitude, which, apparently by military force, he was in time able to do, the people submitting and not rebelling.

Then great public works were undertaken; store cities, of which the remains are to be seen to this day, were built, and possibly also many of the great buildings—pyramids, temples, etc., which have made Egypt famous in all ages. These all were on a gigantic scale. Masses of stone were moved whose magnitude astonishes even modern engineers, it being evident that all this was done by the severe bodily toil of vast organized masses of slaves. This was all done with a purpose, viz., to prevent their multiplication, and it was continued for a long period. So the powers of the world set themselves against the Lord. *"But He that sitteth in the heavens laughed; the Lord had them in derision."*

The more these unfortunate people were oppressed, the more they multiplied and grew. Seeing this, the rigour of their burdens was increased. *"The Egyptians made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar and brick, and in all manner of service in the field. All their service was with rigour."* (v. 14.)

One can scarcely imagine the descendants of the powerful chieftain Abraham reduced to such a condition as to submit quietly to all this. For they were not an inferior race; but originally fully equal in physique to their oppressors. And their kinsmen, the descendants of Ishmael and Esau, were among the freest of the free. Let us remember, however, that all this was the working out of the great Divine purpose, the slavery being the foundation upon which was built the most marvellous displays of Divine redeeming power the world has ever seen.

How long all this went on, we know not; but most probably through a long course of years. But at length a far more stringent measure of destruction was adopted, viz., an order generally, that all the male children should be killed as soon as they were born. The king's command was promulgated, and if it had been steadfastly carried out, it would, in the course of a generation or two, have blotted out the name of Israel from the face of the earth.

But the command was one of the kind that defeats itself by its own stringency. It was impossible to induce all those who assisted Hebrew women in childbirth to commit a constant series of murders. Human nature revolted at it, not to speak of patriotic feeling and the fear of Almighty God.

They refused to obey the barbarous edict. Summoned before the king, as some of them were, they made it plain by their evasive answers that they were not disposed to obey. We do not read of any punishment being inflicted upon these women. There are some things that even despots and tyrants are afraid to do, and possibly some idea of these people being under the protection of a very mighty Divinity might cross the mind of Pharaoh. Yet he continued firm in his purpose of gradually absorbing this race of people into his own, and destroying their separate character and existence. We read, therefore, that he issued an edict addressed to all his people, in which doubtless all the Hebrew parents were included, that every male child was to be killed by being *cast into the river*, and every daughter saved alive. The river, it must be remembered, in all the lower parts of Egypt, spreads out into many branches, and by irrigation is brought to every cultivator's door. The means of destruction were therefore at hand, and probably many, for fear of their own lives, would obey the tyrannical and murderous edict of the king.

THE BIRTH OF MOSES.

It was in these circumstances that a child was born, who, taken all in all, has perhaps exercised over the human race a more remarkable and permanent influence in the moral and spiritual sphere than any man that ever lived, always excepting that Supreme Man, the Son of God and Saviour of the world. Over his own race and nation the influence of Moses has been paramount. No man has approached him. For not only in the spiritual, but in the national sphere, he towers, so far as the Hebrew people are concerned, far above any other of the many eminent men of the race. He was chosen to lead the great multitude out of bondage and to weld them into a nation. Humanly speaking—yet always in fulfilment of Divine purpose—he created the national life of the Jews. He was not only the man who led them out of bondage, but he gave them the most striking code of laws in existence, covering first the great fundamental precepts which concern the moral relations of all men to the Supreme Governor and to one another; then the whole of the law relating to their ecclesiastical organization, worship, and ritual, and finally the

whole law relating to the administration of justice, and of every department of civic administration.

The first of these has been held of perpetual obligation by the disciples of the Great Teacher of Mankind, in all ages and countries to this day. The second has been seen to have typical and spiritual meanings, which were fulfilled in the manifestation and sacrificial death of the Son of God, and which are reverently regarded by Christian people all over the world. And the third, though it has absolutely passed away as a system of civil law binding on any nation or people, is yet carefully studied and reverently regarded for the equitable principles it lays down for the dealings of man with man in the relations of secular life.

God the Supreme, the Great Founder of the Universe, who has stamped His own profound wisdom upon it; here, and through this man Moses, reveals Himself as the Great Lawgiver, first of this peculiar people, and then, through them, of the whole human race.

And now, at the outset of the series of marvellous events, both of this man's life and of the people amongst whom he was brought up and educated, let us think for a moment of the condition and destiny of the two peoples inhabiting this wonderful land watered by the Nile.

Of the Israelites enough has been said. They had been reduced to slavery. They were submissive. They had no national life, or spirit to rise up against oppression. They had been in Egypt many generations, and not a man had arisen during the whole dreary period who was worthy to be named on the same day with such men as Abraham, or Jacob, or Joseph. Humanly speaking, as a separate race and people, they were doomed for all time to a condition and destiny nearly corresponding to the negroes of the Southern States, or the swarms of slaves that formed the bulk of the population of the States of Greece and Rome.

On the other hand, without going beyond the Bible record, which all experience is confirming as time rolls on, we see in this land of Egypt a people as far beyond the Hebrews in the arts of civilization as the Greeks and Romans were beyond their slaves, as the Americans of the South were beyond the negroes, as the English at this day are beyond the Hindoos. The Egyptians had had for generations an established government, a king being at its head, with regular line of succession, and officers, courtiers, a military establishment, and all that appertains to governments in our own day. They had an established priesthood; and also, what has appertained to all heathen organized societies, an order of soothsayers, magicians or augurs,

exactly such as was found in Rome in the palmiest days of her civilization and grandeur. They had evidently the rudiments of mathematical science, if not, by that time, a great deal more than rudiments; and they certainly had begun to develop that capacity for planning great buildings which in time resulted in erections which still astonish the world.

They had the rudiments of philosophy, natural science, and of astronomy, and were altogether the foremost people of the world in all that constitutes the greatness of this world. But the Egyptians knew not God. Of the deep mysteries of the Divine dispensations, next to the origin of evil itself, the greatest of all is that the foremost races in art and science and civilization were, in religion, blind, and debased, and foolish, worshippers of gods that were no better than men, and, as the Apostle Paul expresses it, *of four-footed beasts and creeping things*. This was the worship of Egypt.

Four-footed beasts, a sacred bull the chief divinity, and creeping things, lizards, serpents, grasshoppers, and flies, with the devouring crocodile, as subordinate divinities.

It pleased God that the world by wisdom should not know God. And vain it is to enquire why. The times past are gone. *These times of ignorance God passed by.*

But if any man, thousands of years ago, had been asked from which of these people would the light to enlighten the world proceed—from these polished, learned, and civilized Egyptians, or from these degraded and oppressed slaves? would he not have answered without hesitation, Certainly from the Egyptians.

Yet it has not been so. Do we read the works of Egyptian law-givers? do we sing the sacred songs of Egyptian poets? are we stirred in our religious assemblies by the powerful words of Egyptian prophets? was it from the Egyptian race that the Great Redeemer of the world sprang? No!

We do sing sacred psalms of the poets of ancient times; we do read the wise words of a great law-giver and historian; we are stirred in our assemblies by the fiery words of mighty prophets; but they were all of that race who in the time now being considered were degraded and oppressed, and whose extinction was being planned by the greatest monarch of the world. Such had God decreed, and so it has come to pass.

CRITICAL NOTES AS TO THE NUMBERS IN THE
OLD TESTAMENT.

It will not be surprising to any person who has had much practical acquaintance with figures and arithmetical calculations, that, in the course of long ages of time, some errors should have crept into the Hebrew text of the Old Testament in respect of numbers; and still more, that errors in respect of numbers should be found in various translations. For it is well known to those who are conversant with the matter, that even with the most watchful care and oversight, and with our modern system of notation by figures, it is almost impossible, in the course of a long series of transcriptions, to prevent errors taking place. The liability to such error is much increased by the fact that, whereas a misprint with regard to a person, a place, a fact, or a word, reveals itself at once to the reader by destroying the sense of a passage, a mistranscription of figures does not. Thus, for example, let the word *man* be transcribed instead of *many* in the sentence—"many a man has found out to his cost;" it would read, "man a man has found out," which would be obvious nonsense. But suppose the error to be one of a figure, and that a sentence is transcribed "he proceeded on this expedition with a thousand chariots," there is nothing to call the attention of a subsequent transcriber to the fact that the number is erroneous, although the word "thousand" ought to be "hundred," for the word thousand does not destroy the sense. Even in our system of numerals, the addition or omission of a single 0 makes the difference of ten times more or ten times less. A very slight turn of the pen makes the difference between three and five, and so, in giving the number of a great army or the population of a great city, 300,000 may very easily be made 500,000. And 5,000 may easily be made 50,000.

It may safely be said that it is *impossible* for any narrative containing such numbers to pass through the hands of many transcribers without such errors being made. And it may be affirmed, further, that it is also absolutely certain that such errors in numbers in many cases will not be detected by examiners whose business is to correct the errors of transcribers. Transcribers trained to their work, who detect and correct at once the slightest inaccuracy in a word, in a statement of a fact, in the name of a man, in the announcement of a doctrine, are found to pass by without

detection errors in figures, which errors, in the course of a generation or two become part of the *textus receptus*, and are perpetuated from generation to generation to all time. Such things must be accepted as inevitable in the case of any written revelation, unless, what is nowhere promised, there is a perpetual miracle going on to preserve from numerical errors every transcriber, copyist and scribe that has ever had to do with the handing down of the sacred record.

Errors in the transcription of the numbers in the Hebrew are far more easy to make than in our Arabic numerals, for some of the letters signifying so many hundreds or so many thousands are exceedingly like one another, a mere dot or slight stroke upwards or downwards, to the right hand or the left, constituting the whole difference.

It should be said, however, that we are apt to misjudge the force of numbers in these ancient narratives, especially when they refer to the population of a tribe or district, or to the numbers of men who could assemble for war. We may judge of the density of population by modern and western standards, though they are obviously misleading. And with regard to fighting men, nothing can be more misleading than to compare the number of fighting men in the army of a certain tribe, with the number of soldiers in a highly-organized standing army like that of Britain or France. In such wars as those of David or Jehoshaphat, every man capable of bearing arms would turn out with arms of some sort; so that it would not surprise us to find an army numbering one-fifth of the whole population. It would be absurd to talk of a civilized state like Canada putting a million of trained soldiers into the field in these times. But let us imagine the whole population of Canada comprised in the space of a few of our counties, we can easily understand from what Lord Roberts has told us of the swarms of tribesmen that turned out to oppose him at Kabul, how, in a similar condition of civilization, an army of a million men, such as they were, might gather together and keep the field for a time.

But be this as it may, it is certain that some errors have crept into the Hebrew text or translation with regard to numbers; as, for example, when, in a narrative of the same event in two different books, the one gives the number of chariots as seven hundred and the other as seven thousand. But, granting all this, what do such errors, or the whole sum of them, amount to? Do they teach any doctrine as to man, any revelation as to the Supreme God, any inculcation of duty, any promise, or warning, or threatening, or word of comfort, or encouragement, or stimulus?

Granting that some errors exist in regard to numbers, suppose we could have them corrected by a new revelation, would the Scripture be one wh't more profitable for doctrine, for discipline, for correction, or for instruction in righteousness? To ask these questions is to answer them. They would not. We may pass them by, therefore, as not worthy of attention, and consider the things that are of serious concern.

It should be said, however, before closing this note, that the liability of transcribers or translators to error in the case of numbers in the New Testament is much less than in the Old. In the Greek of the New Testament all numbers are expressed in words which differ one from another so much that the probability of error is much less than in the other case.

CHAPTER II.

THE BIRTH, TRAINING, AND DESTINY OF MOSES.

Exodus 2.

The birth of Moses was in circumstances of extreme danger. Sentence of death by the king's edict had been passed on all new-born male children. So was our Saviour's life threatened by a tyrannical king almost as soon as *He* was born; and, like Pharaoh, Herod did not hesitate to sacrifice the lives of numbers of innocents to accomplish his purpose.

This child, afterwards called MOSES, a word meaning "drawn out," from the circumstances which saved his life (he was "drawn" or "lifted out" of the water), is stated to have been a "goodly" infant, a fine, strong and healthy boy; a boy to be the pride of a mother's heart. The New Testament, throwing light as it always does on the Old, speaks of him (Hebrews xi. 23) as a "*proper*" child, the word translated "proper" conveying the idea of handsome, beautiful; a child fit for the polished life of a city—"a child for a city" would be the literal rendering. Stephen in his address to the Sanhedrim (Acts vii. 20), speaks of the child as "*exceeding fair*," the original word being a very strong one, and might be rendered "strikingly beautiful." Now, having such a child, could they possibly obey the king's barbarous edict and drown it like a kitten? Common humanity forbade it. But there was a higher motive. The parents of the child were among the few devout souls who retained their faith in the God of Israel and in the Divine promises of protection and enlargement. St. Paul, writing by inspiration to his own countrymen (Hebrews xi.), speaks of the parents as people of "Faith," which faith emboldened them, and gave them courage, enabling them to rise above *the fear of the king's commandment*.

So they hid the child for three months, a statement which suggests that some sort of supervision or espionage was maintained by the authorities, which indeed was very likely to be the case.

But as the child grew, concealment became more and more difficult. Then the parents took a singular resolution. They were commanded by the king to "cast all their males into the river." They determined in faith, and relying on Divine protection, to set the child, alive, afloat, on the

river, in a little vessel here called an "ark," a sort of floating cradle of bulrushes, made watertight and capable of being borne on the current. They know not what might come of this, and where the current might carry the child to. They knew, moreover, that in the river, away from the cities, crocodiles abounded, carnivorous creatures, who would soon make an end of a helpless child.

A perilous experiment indeed, and one that must have been conceived and carried out in great fear and anxiety, apart from that calm faith in Almighty God which sustained them.

They placed the child on the margin of the stream, and his little sister (the famous Miriam of after days) "*stood afar off to watch what would be done to him.*"

Here, then, let us watch too. And, watching, we shall see the wonderful working of Divine Providence, ordering things in ways that none could have thought of, to the accomplishment of great and fore-ordained ends.

The place where the child was set afloat was above, and not far from, the gardens of one of Pharaoh's palaces which came down to the river, and where, naturally enough, just as it would be at this day, a suitable place for bathing had been prepared. Pharaoh's daughter, with her maidens, comes down to the river to bathe. She comes at the very time when the poor little outcast is floating along the placid current.

At that very time, was it? And was this by chance? Was it a fortunate accident that the daughter of Pharaoh should have chosen this particular hour? and also that the parents of the child had chosen it too, so that it came to pass that the child floating along in this strange cradle was passing that spot at the very moment when this princess was there.

An accident? Chance? Some may believe it to be chance. But, for my part, I hold it a far more rational belief that there was a Divine directing in this business, an unseen but all-powerful hand controlling the thoughts and purposes of princess and peasant alike, and so ordering events, not merely for the child's preservation, but for his education in all that the civilization of the world had produced up to that period.

The strange floating cradle was, at all events, seen, and, a maid being sent to fetch it, the ark was opened, and, strange to say, was found to contain a baby boy of remarkable beauty. "*And behold,*" says the narrative "*the babe wept.*" What woman's heart could refrain from sympathy with the poor little crying child, and such a child as this? "*One of the Hebrew's children,*" said the princess, noting its

dress and physiognomy. But now, why did she not have the child killed according to the king's commandment? Killed? It is easy to say the word; but where is the woman in the world who, seeing a child in such circumstances, would not have compassion upon it, as this high-born woman had? To kill it, even though the edict was her own father's, was impossible.

And now the little sister, who had been watching all the time, comes near. She was safe enough, for the murderous edict extended only to boys; and, emboldened by the circumstances, she, a Hebrew child too, says, "*Shall I call thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee?*" And Pharaoh's daughter said, "Go."

And, of course, she went to her own mother, telling the extraordinary story of the child's deliverance, and calling her to come and be a nurse to it.

But the child was not taken to Pharaoh's palace. That would have been too bold a step even for Pharaoh's daughter at such a time, so the nurse was ordered to take the child away. "Take this child away," said the princess, "and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages."

So, then, the mother got her child again, but under the strange charge that it was to be hers no longer. "*Nurse it for me.*" said Pharaoh's daughter, and nursed it was for her, until it became old enough to be received with safety into Pharaoh's household as an adopted son. And being a Hebrew, the child received a Hebrew name Moses, "*drawn out.*" for she said, "*Because I drew him out of the water.*"

And now he is educated as an Egyptian prince, and becomes "*learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians.*" which wisdom was the fountain, as is well known, of all the science and philosophy of the ancient world. For the Greeks derived their philosophy and science at first from Egypt, their advanced students travelling to that country and attending its schools just as men from our own country go over to Germany for the same purpose.

Thus Moses grew up: becoming, it is evident, a man of strong character, "*mighty in word and deed.*"

But now a time came when, as to other men, and generally in opening manhood, circumstances occur which lead to the making of the great choice in a man's life, the choice between a life wholly for the honor and pleasure of this world, or for higher objects, the good of one's country and mankind, the advancement of true religion, the reforming of abuses in church and state, the salvation of one's own soul, or what not. Such a choice is always preceded by mental and spiritual perturbation, a disturbance reaching

down to the depths of a man's spiritual being, leading to such enquiries, as whether I am as I ought to be, *where* I ought to be, and *doing what* I ought to do; conscience and spiritual forces being aroused in the soul, and leading to an altogether different judgment of himself to any that has ever before been taken. Such spiritual conflicts have been almost invariable in men of strong temperament who have, as so many have in Christian times, forsaken the way of ease, honor, or wealth, for that of privation, obscurity, actual or comparative poverty, all for the sake of higher and unseen objects, not to be apprehended by outward sense or earthly judgment, but by what Scripture terms "Faith," viz., a realizing of things hoped for, as if their very substance was present, and of things unseen, as if they were actually visible. Thus the great apostle of the Gentiles wrote of that which he had actually experienced; a faith which made real to the soul the things that were future and unseen. (Hebrews xi.)

Now, speaking of the operation of this mighty spiritual force in the minds of men, he traces its operation in the mind and actions of the young Hebrew Moses, who had been adopted into the family of the king of Egypt, and was likely enough to become in time the king of Egypt himself.

For, while the narrative in the Book of Exodus gives us the bare facts, as the manner of these old narratives generally is, the inspired Apostle, writing for the instruction of a far wider circle, gives us the inner reason for what transpired, viz., in the working of powerful principles in the minds of men.

The first thing revealed to us in the comment of the Apostle is that Moses, under the influence of "faith," *refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter.* Naturally, and according to the working of all ordinary reason, he would be only too eager to be recognized as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. It was a great thing, a thing for any man to be proud of, to be one of the Royal Family of Egypt. And it argues the working of a principle of extraordinary force in this man's mind, that he should actually *refuse* to be called what he had been brought up to be; what he was in reality, by the law of adoption; what he was universally looked up to as being by the whole people, from the nobles and priests, down to the humblest cultivator of the soil. There have been many instances of men who by force, by intrigue, by fraud, sought to *enter* the royal families of the world. But there has never been a single instance but this of a man who had been adopted into a royal family in childhood, deliberately in manhood throwing away the high

distinction and identifying himself with a race of slaves. He was allied to these slaves by blood, truly. He was of the same race, but according to all the analogies of modern life, these very, very poor relations were the last people on earth that he would desire to be associated with. There could hardly be the influence of what is often called patriotism, that is, the love of one's country, for these oppressed and swarming multitudes had no country, unless they could claim, as a country, the land of their fathers, which Almighty Power had sworn to give to their children. But the faith of this would appear to have died out amongst the majority of them, as appears only too evident when they were marching through the desert towards this very land.

No. It was not the mere tie of blood and kindred, and not the mere sentiment of patriotism, that moved Moses to turn his back on the splendid prospect before him.

What, then, was it?

It was, first, the conviction that this despised and persecuted people were under the protection and care of Almighty God, who had given great promises of blessing to their fathers, which promises He, the supreme Lord of all the earth, would surely perform. He thus chose rather to suffer affliction with this "people of God" than "to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season," by becoming an Egyptian in very deed, abjuring the God of Israel, and becoming a worshipper of "gods many and lords many."

Then there was what the Apostle calls "the reproach of Christ," a phrase which may seem enigmatical, for what could Moses know, when a young man in Egypt, and before any special revelation had been made to him, about Christ?

But let us consider. Christ is only the Greek word for Messiah, and Messiah signifies God's anointed or chosen one, which clearly indicates that the promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as to their seed becoming a blessing to all the families of the earth, had taken deep hold of devout Hebrew souls, and of Moses himself, leading him to look into futurity as a time when blessing should come through one of his own race to all the people of the world. This was that hope of a Coming Blessed One, which gradually became a never-to-be-forgotten feature in the religious life of the Hebrew, and which was strong enough with Moses as to seem far more to be desired than all the glory of Egypt. "For he had respect unto the recompense of the reward;" clearly not a reward in this world, or in the present time, but in the future, and in a world unseen.

It was under the influence of such faith as this that Moses "went out," as the narrative states, "to his brethren, and looked on their burdens." Naturally his feelings were stirred

when he saw their hard lot and the tyranny of their oppressors. While thus investigating, some case of more than ordinary cruelty seems to have come under his notice, just as, during the prevalence of negro slavery in the Southern States, cases of brutal treatment by foremen and slave-drivers would occasionally occur. On seeing this, his indignation burst all bounds. Under its impulse, he killed the task-master, and then hid his body in the sand.

This act decided his destiny. For it was witnessed by other Hebrews. The next day, still pursuing his investigations into the oppression of his brethren (mark the word "his brethren," as indicating how completely he had identified himself with them), he encountered two men of the Hebrews striving together. He interferes as a peacemaker. With the aggressor he remonstrates, "Why smitest thou thy fellow?"

But he is met with the angry retort, "Who made thee a prince and a judge over us?" a foolish speech indeed, if the aggressor knew who he was. But passion and pride are always foolish.

Yet it is only too clear a premonition of much that was to happen in the subsequent history, and it gives an insight into the curious mixture of character there was in this people. They were perverse and unreasonably to a degree; self-willed and rebellious against those who were their best friends. As this man was with Moses now, so were all the people with Moses afterwards. One would think a people so self-asserting, so ready to resist even the semblance of authority, would never have submitted quietly to the oppression they were suffering. But here the singular contradictions of their character assert themselves. This man must have seen that Moses was putting forth his strength as their friend and champion. Yet to him and to his remonstrance he would not submit for a moment, while not uttering a word of complaint against the Egyptian task-masters who were oppressing them.

The man who thus rudely refused the peace-making intervention of Moses added words that indicated knowledge of the deed of the previous day. "Intendest thou to kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian?" he said, which seemed to suggest that Moses had probably used some force in separating the men who were striving. It suggests, also, taken in connection with the actual killing of the task-master of the previous day that Moses at this period of his life was a man of strong passions and impulses, a man with whom the blow would very quickly follow the word, when wrong was being done in his presence, and also a man of powerful physique.

Otherwise, the Hebrew could scarcely have said, "Dost

thou mean also to kill me?" A mere verbal remonstrance would hardly bring out such language as that. But we can well imagine that when two men are quarreling and striving and a stronger than either forcibly separates them, that the one who began the quarrel should turn round and abuse the intervenant, whose strength of arm he has just felt, and say, "Are thou about to kill me as thou didst the Egyptian?"

The only notice that Moses took of this was to reflect on the consequences of his action. "It is surely becoming generally known," he said; "it will reach the ears of the king."

Now, upon this, a course was open to him, which, with one who had such strength of faith and character, one would naturally have expected, viz., that he should seek an interview with Pharaoh, and boldly justify his conduct in killing the task-master; for, doubtless, the circumstances were such as to justify the slaying. He might, at the same time, announce to Pharaoh that he intended to identify himself with his Hebrew brethren, and to be their champion against oppression.

Yet, let us consider. What if he did this! Could he expect a favorable hearing? Would it be likely to result in any good? On the contrary, would it not certainly have resulted in his being instantly thrown into prison?

For what would such an avowal mean? What, but that Moses had set himself deliberately to thwart the king's policy, a policy which was being steadily pursued, even although it involved the sacrifice of thousands of infant lives! It is not likely that any sentimental avowal of patriotism, or love for his own countrymen, would evoke any such respect on the part of Pharaoh as would prevent him putting a formidable friend of this oppressed people out of the way. So it appears certain that Moses would not only have been committed to prison, but put to death.

Therefore, he did not appear before Pharaoh to justify himself. And what we have suggested as likely to happen was what actually did happen. The king, hearing of this slaying of one of his subjects, determined to put Moses to death.

The only course, therefore, was flight. So, the narrative goes on to say, "Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh," and left the land of Egypt, not to return for forty years.

Thus was the Supreme Disposer of events preparing the way for the great deliverance, by preparing the man for the task of accomplishing it. Moses was brought up in Egypt, a country of debased idolatry, that he might realize what idolatry was; how idolatry, that immorality were intertwined and inseparable. Especially was he to witness the

debasement tendency of idolatry, even amongst a highly civilized people, in certain forms of sensuality and wickedness which are specially referred to in the prohibitions of the Mosaic Law.

Some people, with the best intentions, have doubted the wisdom of recording such things in a book which is for the general instruction of the whole people. There are forms of wickedness which, under Christian influences, have almost disappeared from civilized society altogether.

But they were rampant enough in Pagan Rome and polished Greece; and whenever the force of Christianity weakens, and the paganism that is in human nature asserts itself, these vices assert themselves, like noxious weeds, again.

There was more reason for the prohibition of the Second Commandment than is sometimes thought; for the graven images of idolatrous systems were, and are, many of them, grossly debasing and immoral.

But, along with all this, there was in Egypt much that was worthy of being developed and perpetuated; and this good element in the framework of society in its civil and governmental aspect was doubtless remembered, pondered over, and purified; and under Divine direction incorporated in the structure of that civic law of Moses which excites admiration the more it is pondered and considered.

CHAPTER III.

MOSES IN THE DESERT.

Exodus 2 and 3.

Moses, flying from the face of Pharaoh, most naturally takes the nearest way out of Egypt. This nearest way was the same that Joseph and his brethren, with Jacob their father, had travelled many generations before, the same by which Abraham and Sarah had entered Egypt many years before that; the same by which our Lord himself was carried as a helpless child, when his parents were compelled to fly to save his life many long generations after. But instead of passing on to the land of Canaan, this fugitive turned his steps southward as soon as Egypt was left behind, and soon found himself in the midst of that wild region of rocks, ravines, and mountains through which forty years afterwards, he was to lead the people on their way to the Promised Land.

This was then called the Land of Midian. His steps were providentially directed to a chief of that region, whose encampment surrounded a well. This chief had seven daughters, and on the men of the camp treating them rudely, Moses, ever the man to succor those in need, stood up for them, helped them, drove off the shepherds, and watered the flock.

On arriving at their father's tent, in answer to the enquiry how it was they returned so soon, they answered that an Egyptian had helped them to water the flock. An Egyptian certainly Moses would be in dress and appearance. The father, with true wilderness hospitality, called for him, entertained him, and finding him well-disposed, strong, and willing to be useful, made a proposal for his remaining in the camp, which Moses was content to accept.

Thus he, who, when born, had the air of a city child, and who had been educated and had lived as one of the royal family of Egypt, now becomes a denizen of the wilderness, a dweller in tents and a feeder of sheep—a life which prepared him for much that was to follow in after days.

Thus many of God's servants were trained. So was John the Baptist brought up, a denizen of the wilderness. To the wilderness was our Blessed Lord led by the Holy Spirit that He might pass through the great conflict which finally

fitted Him to enter on His ministry. Thus, too, was trained that remarkable forerunner of John the Baptist, the prophet Elijah. In this wilderness Moses married one of the daughters of the chief, and had a son born to him, whom he called Gershom, meaning "a stranger here," "for," he said, "*I have been a stranger in a strange land.*"

Here he spent one-third of his entire life. Forty years passed away in apparent inaction and uselessness, while during all this long period the woes of his poor countrymen in Egypt were unredressed. The narrative pathetically tells us, "*The children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried. And their cry came up by reason of their bondage. And God heard their groaning.*" A sad picture of helpless misery—sighing, crying, groaning, but never resisting—probably because they felt it hopeless to resist successfully, while the attempt would only aggravate their misery.

But one may well wonder why the God of this people suffered them to be oppressed so long. Yes, we may wonder. Many have wondered in various ages, and have cried out in anguish, "*Oh, Lord, how long! How long!*" The Church of God has often cried in times of bitter persecution—how long! Indeed, one of the deep mysteries of the Divine government of the world is that for so many years and centuries the world was given up to idolatry, to barbarism, to the prevalence of heathen systems. Why so long before our Lord came? Why so many ages of medieval darkness over the Christian Church? Why have China, India, Japan been suffered through all these centuries to go on in spiritual darkness, while the light of the world has been shining for eighteen hundred years?

What can we say to these things? Who can solve these mysteries but One? And, after all, what better should we be if they were solved, if we perfectly understood, if we were taken into the counsels of the Infinite? Would it affect our own duty, lighten our pathway, render it easier to do and to bear, easier than the assurances and the promises now existing?

We have the assurance that though "*clouds and darkness are round about Him, yet righteousness and judgment are the foundation of His Throne.*" What more do we really want? We have promises without end of support in trial, of light in darkness, of strength in temptation; and we have that great and comprehensive declaration that "*all things work together for good to them that love God.*" This is surely sufficient. Here we can rest and be satisfied; and be content to wait the time when "we shall know even as we are known."

Thus, nearly forty years passed on without a single incident in the life of Moses deemed worthy of record. Probably, but we do not know it, he might be pondering much and long upon the destiny of the oppressed ones in Egypt, and be receiving some revelation of the laws and ordinances he was afterwards to deliver to them. The long periods of solitude would be favorable to such contemplation and revelation. It is, however, vain to speculate and imagine. We know absolutely nothing. But, towards the end of the forty years, a very remarkable thing happened, an event that was the turning point in his whole life and career. Hitherto, let it be noted, nothing had happened in his lifetime of a miraculous character. We read of no visions, revelations, or Divine communications; no event had happened that might not have happened to any man. But, from this period onward the life of this man is one continued series of events of a character so remarkable as to stamp his history as almost unique in the annals of the race. And many of these, though by no means all, are of a character distinctly supernatural. They are more than remarkable; they are of that wonderful character that are rightly deemed miraculous; that is, they could not have happened without the special intervention of the Supreme Lord of the forces of the world.

Yet these occurrences are like the rest of the miracles of the Divine Record; they conform to the laws of the highest reason. There is reason for Divine intervention in the character of surrounding events and in the end to be accomplished, and there is reason in the *method* and *extent* of Divine intervention as being exactly fitted to that end. So much power is put forth, and no more, and in such a manner and at such a time as is fitted to the end. There is no manifestation of the sort of sign and wonder that makes the ignorant gape and stare. The power is always such as to draw forth the faith, the regard, the love, the worship of the people towards Him who is redeeming them; or, on the other hand, the fear, the awe, even the alarm of the oppressor; or to demonstrate in a convincing manner the command of supernatural power in the man who is the instrument of redemption.

Moses, leading his flock to a very remote and lonely part of the desert, finds himself under the shadow of "*the Mountain of God, even Horeb*," one of the peaks of which was the famous mountain Sinai.

There the "Angel of the Lord" appeared to him by a significant manifestation. The region abounds to this day in low bushes. One of these appeared to be blazing with fire;

but as he kept looking, the bush was not consumed; a striking emblem, certainly, of a people suffering under the fires of persecution, and yet subsisting generation after generation unconsumed. Turning to look more narrowly, Moses hears a voice out of the bush (but evidently no human voice), calling him by name, commanding him to put his shoes off his feet (as is the fashion still in the East on entering a mosque, temple or inner room of importance), "*For the ground whereon thou standest,*" said the voice, "*is Holy.*"

A marvellous message truly, and a fitting prelude to that which followed. For the awe-struck man now heard the voice proclaiming the immediate presence of the Almighty in words to which he had long been a stranger: "I AM THE GOD OF THY FATHER, THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, THE GOD OF ISAAC, AND THE GOD OF JACOB." And Moses hid his face, for he dare not look further upon that awful bush.

But now the Lord announces a great purpose, viz., that the time of deliverance of the oppressed had come, and of the fulfilment of the ancient promise that they should have for a possession the land of Canaan, a land at that time swarming with many tribes of warlike and partially civilized people, who had come to occupy and fill the land of Canaan in the ages succeeding the departure of Jacob from it.

The message was one of sympathy and compassion as well as of power: "*I have seen,*" *I have seen the affliction of my people in Egypt; I know their sorrows!* And now the Divine voice gives to this man a direct call to a high office and duty: "COME, I WILL SEND THEE, AND THOU SHALT BRING FORTH MY PEOPLE OUT OF EGYPT."

Many a man, hearing this, would have recalled the past, his early history, training, antecedents, with the circumstances of his flight, and would have been lifted up with the thought of going back to Egypt, the land of his birth and education, on such a great errand. It was like the call of a superior giving a soldier the command of a great expedition.

But Moses shrank within himself at being so distinguished. He had that true humility which goes before honor. "*Who am I,*" he answered, "*that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?*" Thus speaks the man who has a high appreciation of his work; and because he has a high appreciation of the work, has a low opinion of his own fitness to undertake it. But these are the men who succeed. There is hardly a man in the world who has attained great eminence either in Church or State, who, when high office has been offered him, has not felt a certain shrinking from it under a sense of personal unfitness. To this there have,

no doubt, been notable exceptions. But that is the rule. *Nolo Episcopari* expresses a general truth.

It is the over-confident, the vainglorious, the men who think highly of themselves, and little of their work, that become egregious failures; and this by the very force of natural circumstances.

On hearing this plea of unfitness the Lord gave him the great assurance, "*Certainly, I will be with thee.*" A truth which, when grasped, will nerve a man to dare and to do anything. And Moses did apparently grasp it.

For, with a willing and obedient mind, as to the main issue, he begins to think how such a work is to be proceeded with. And certain difficulties occur to him, the first of which is as to the *name* of the great God whom he is to represent, a difficulty which would not readily occur to us, who for many generations have been accustomed to the idea of one only God and Almighty Father in the universe. We are accustomed to have false gods, and the gods of the heathen, called by names, as Jupiter, Minerva, Baal, Vishnu, Brahma, and what not. But in ordinary religious language we never give a *name* to the Supreme Lord the Maker of Heaven and Earth, unless it be in the form of the Son of God, the God-Man, Jesus Christ.

But to these Hebrews, brought up for generations amongst a worship of gods with names, it would be most natural to ask for the name of the Divinity they were asked to trust in. To this we would think a sufficient answer would be, "Our God is the great Creator of Heaven and Earth. He dwelleth not in temples made with hands. He cannot be seen. He has no name. He was worshipped by our fathers, whom He had protected and blest."

We might so think; but we are not in a position to judge rightly. The answer of the Lord to this question was to announce a name indeed; but a name that no mortal man could ever have conceived; a name of inconceivable sublimity and majesty, the depth of which no human intellect has ever sounded. For God said unto Moses, "I AM THAT I AM!" And he said, "Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you."

I AM!

The ever-subsisting, He who is from Everlasting to Everlasting; He whose existence is the first necessity, and the last; who is before all things, and in whom all things consist; in whom we ourselves live, and move, and have our being.

This, it is true, tells nothing of *what* He is. He might be the I AM, and yet impassive or unmoved; He might be capricious, vindictive, unjust; He might be the terrible tyrant

of the universe, delighting in blood and cruelty. All these have been human conceptions of Divinity, embodied in poetry of the sublimest sort, or sculptured in purest marble. But none of these conceptions of a capricious, or cruel, or unreasonable Divinity were ever associated with the idea of One everlasting and unchangeable Being; they all are parts of systems of "*gods many and lords many.*" The same revelation which opens to our conception the I AM, opens up also the Being who is perfectly just, true, good; who pities, comforts, blesses; who forgives wrong and loves the repentant wrong-doer; finally opening up a wonderful revelation of a love manifesting itself in the sending of an only begotten Son, that all who believe in Him may have everlasting life. Such are the further revelations of Him whose name is I AM.

But to return to the revelation made to Moses.

The name as given in Hebrew is almost perfectly expressed by that mysterious word *Jehovah*, which has always expressed the idea of pure, simple, unchangeable, undivided, and never-ending being.

Of such a name two very important things are to be said: first, that it could never be supposed to be the name of a god who was like one of the gods of the heathen,—the whole idea of it was absolutely of another order of thought; secondly, it was a name that precluded any possibility of representing its object by any image, symbol, or outward figure of any description.

For how could the Eternally Subsisting One, who had neither beginning nor ending, be represented by anything that human eye could see.

Both of these were of the very foundation of the many revelations that were to be made through Moses of that awful Being who now spake such gracious words of sympathy and compassion, and who announced His intention of effecting deliverance from bondage through the medium of this shepherd of the wilderness.

"Go," said the Divine voice, "*gather the elders of Israel, and say, 'Jehovah, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, and Isaac and of Jacob, hath appeared unto me, and said, I will bring you up out of this affliction in Egypt, to a land flowing with milk and honey.'*"

And the voice added, "*They will listen to thee. But the king of Egypt will not listen to thee; therefore, I will smite Egypt with wonders; after which he will let you go free.*"

Thus, in few words, was foreshadowed all that came to pass in that strange visit of Moses to the scenes of his former life, and especially that the deliverance was to be by a distinct Divine intervention, and not by the ordinary

means of a successful rising up in rebellion and a smiting of tyrants with the sword. Of such risings the world has seen many instances, some successful, some not. But this deliverance was not to be by the hand of man, but by the finger of God!

Still, Moses is full of doubts and misgivings. "They will not believe me," he says; doubtless with remembrance of the perverse and contradictory spirit displayed by some of them forty years before. And that he had good reason for doubting them the whole history proves. But the Divine Being who has chosen him, determines that he shall carry his credentials with him. "*What is that in thine hand?*" says the Heavenly voice. Moses had his shepherd's staff in his hand. "*Cast it on the ground.*" the Lord says; which, being done, the rod became a serpent; doubtless one of the dangerous and poisonous serpents of that wilderness, for Moses fled from before it, as we would from a rattlesnake suddenly appearing at our feet. Then came the trial of faith and confidence. "*Take up the serpent.*" says the Divine voice; certainly a severe trial, for it was at the risk of his life that he touched it. Let any of us imagine such a command being given, with a deadly rattlesnake, showing its terrible fangs, ready for the attack, immediately before us. How dare we come near it and touch it.

But the command was obeyed. He put forth his hand and caught it, and it became once more a shepherd's staff.

Again the command came. "*Put thine hand into thy bosom.*" Withdrawing his hand it was leprous—as white as snow.

"*Return thy hand into thy bosom.*" said the Divine voice. On doing so, and withdrawing it, the hand was like the other flesh.

The power to work these wonders was, then, expressly conferred upon Moses to the intent that his own people might be convinced of his Divine mission. If they were not convinced by the first sign, then the second was to be displayed before them, an instance of that economy in the manifestation of miraculous power that has already been referred to.

But a third power was placed at his command. Some might doubt, even when the two signs were displayed. For such as these, most obstinate, suspicious, and hard to convince, Moses was armed with power to take the water of the river, and convert it into blood.

These signs, as we shall see, closely resembled such as were commonly wrought by the magicians and wonder-workers of the time, and doubtless were such as, in the wis-

dom of God, were adapted to accomplish the purpose for which they were bestowed. For even if the people of Israel at the first only conceived of Moses as a great magician, like the magicians of Egypt, it would open the way to their reverence and attention. But they would speedily discover that Moses was no mere magician, and that these signs were by the mighty power of God.

One more doubt, lastly, occupies the mind of Moses; this whole series of doubts and questionings indicating the overshadowing importance which the great mission had come to occupy in his mind, as he dwelt more and more upon it.

The man to fulfil this work should be able to speak, and speak with power. But Moses pleads his want of eloquent speech. "*I am slow of speech and of slow tongue.*" he says, words strikingly resembling those spoken many years afterwards by a prophet of burning words. "*Oh, Lord,*" said Jeremiah, the priest, when his commission as a prophet was announced to him, "*I cannot speak. I am a little child.*"

But the last doubt of Moses was somewhat sharply rebuked. "*Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? Have not I, the Lord?*"

"*Now, therefore, go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say!*"

Moses, however, though rebuked, still pleads that some one more fit for the work than himself should be sent. On which the anger of the Lord was kindled, and He said, "*Is not Aaron the Levite, thy brother. I know that he can speak well. Thou, then, shalt speak my words to him, and he shall be thy spokesman to the people.*"

On hearing this, Moses becomes silent, and prepares to obey.

NOTES TO CHAPTER III.

OF MOSES AS A SHEPHERD.

The fact that a man of such an early training and such a destiny should spend one-third of his life as a shepherd seems like a waste of time and opportunity. But let us consider.

The occupation of a shepherd in the desert—was it not well calculated for training of another sort?

A shepherd in the peninsula of Sinai would have his faculties of watchfulness, provident foresight, and courage developed by constant exercise. He would require to be on the lookout at frequent intervals for new pastures, would have to study the capacity of region after region of country for supplies of water; and not infrequently he might, like young David in after years, have to defend his flock from wild beasts. Such a life is highly favorable to the development of a hardy, patient, calculating, courageous character, just the qualities, in fact, that fit a man, along with certain gifts of mind, to be a leader amongst his fellows. Such then was the discipline through which Divine Providence led this man during forty years.

AS TO THE NAME JEHOVAH.

It has become a sort of fashion in these times (and there is fashion in literature as well as in dress) to spell this time-honoured word,—*Yahveh*, and to insist that this is the true and only proper mode of spelling and pronouncing it. Now, as in the ancient Hebrew, the words were without vowels, it is evidently the purest guesswork in these times to insist that these vowels should be *e* and *e*, and not *e*, *a*, and *a*. For there can be no possible proof that the two letters were the letters adopted in ancient times to enable the word to be spelt at all; or that the name ought to have two syllables and not three. As to both spelling and pronunciation, is it not the fact, as experience shows, that the very same name will be both spelt and pronounced differently by men of different European nationalities, and that another set of varieties will be introduced if we bring in men from the Asiatic continent? Is it not a fact that nearly all Bible names are differently spelt and pronounced by Englishmen, Frenchmen, Germans and Italians? Are there not differences be-

twcen the Greek form and the Hebrew form of the same name? Is not Jesus the same name as Joshua, and Esaias as Isaiah? Does not the familiar Jacob become Yacoub, or Yahcoob, in the East, and Moses Mosheth? Now, if Jehovah is to be changed to Yahveh, why not change the names of all biblical personages into the Eastern form too? It would look odd—and sound odd too—to speak of the God of Ah-Bra-Haam, Esak, and Yahcoob. But it would not be one whit more uncouth than to change the name Jehovah into Yahveh. Indeed, do we not constantly find the same man's name spelt in two different ways even in the Hebrew itself? This is not a singular thing, truly, if we consider in how many ways the name *Shakspeare* has been spelt, even in England, not to speak of foreign countries.

There is then no sound philological reason for the change from Jehovah to Yahveh. But there is one reason of considerable importance why the change is undesirable. It has come into use, and is most insisted on, by a school of critics who have adopted the theory that the God of the Hebrews was only revealed to them as a tribal divinity; a being on no higher level than Baal, Moloeh, and Chemosh. Now, as the word Jehovah has come to have inalienable associations for generations back, as expressing the Almighty Ruler of the Universe, it is seen that if our conceptions of the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, are to be lowered to the level of these heathen divinities, it is absolutely essential to break the association bound up with the name. Men may say, and have said, "What's in a name?" But all thinking men know that there is in names the power of associated ideas. To break the idea then is very much easier if we change the name. The word Yahveh has not, and never had any associations of a Supreme Divinity connected with it; indeed, let any man read a history, commentary, or essay, in which the name of the God of Abraham is so spelt continuously, and he will insensibly—in spite of himself—imbibe the idea desired, viz., that the God who spake the Commandments and revealed himself to the patriarchs was on a very little higher level essentially, than the idolatrous divinities of the surrounding nations.

Those who believe the contrary, and are convinced that the Old Testament revealed in those early times an Almighty Creator and Law-Giver of the Universe, the Eternal and unchangeable I AM, before whom all the gods of the heathen are vanities, should resist a change which undoubtedly tends to undermine this belief.

And they have good philological and grammatical grounds for doing so too.

FURTHER NOTE ON THIS NAME.

When the Lord spake to Moses (Chap. vi. 3) that He was not known to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, by His name Jehovah, there appears to be a contradiction in the passage where Abraham (Gen. xxii. 14) calls the name of the place where Isaac was to be offered, Jehovah-Jireh. But the communication to Moses was evidently intended to convey the idea that the Lord was not generally known by that name to the Patriarchs. And the narrative of their lives plainly shows it.

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CHAPTER IV.

MOSES AND AARON BEFORE PHARAOH.

Exodus 4 and 5.

Aaron, who first comes before us at this time, and is associated with his more eminent brother in the work of redemption, had by no means the forcible character, wisdom and gifts of Moses. The only thing that distinguished him was that he could "*speaking well*," an important matter, indeed, when they had to plead before a haughty tyrant such as the Pharaoh of that time was. But the power of "*speaking well*" is a very subordinate faculty compared with the power of thinking well, and in truth is not seldom entirely dissociated from it.

Moses was the man who was called out to lead in the great work, and ample endowments were conferred upon him, from the very beginning of the work in the presence of Pharaoh in Egypt, to the time when he laid down his life so mysteriously on the very border of the land of promise. Aaron, however, was distinctly subordinate, and there was reason for it. Though a good man, he was weak, and on the only occasion when he acted alone, his action was lamentably deficient in faithfulness and courage. But in subordination to his brother, he fulfilled his part in the great mission. Before the arrival of Moses, he seems to have been so far free that he could leave Egypt and undertake a journey to the wilderness. There at the "Mount of God," or Horeb, he meets Moses, hears all that had transpired, and all the signs that God had commanded, and accompanies Moses to Egypt, doubtless giving him information as to its present condition, the condition of their own people, the character of the king, the best means of gathering the Hebrews together, and of approaching Pharaoh. And on arriving in Egypt, they were able to confer with the "elders" of the children of Israel.

This is the second time that the word "elders" occurs in Scripture narrative as designating leaders, rulers, or prominent persons, and suggests that in the midst of all the oppression they were suffering, the people had never lost some semblance of orderly government amongst themselves, such as must have existed for many generations after the sons of Jacob came down to Egypt. The heads of the respective families of the sons, those families which de-

veloped in course of time into tribes, would naturally become leaders in council during the early period of their sojourn in the land. And we know (from the experience of oppressed and persecuted people in modern times), that they generally find means of acknowledging the authority and working under the regime of leaders, elders, prominent persons (called by various names as time went on), to whom they look up for guidance both in civil and political affairs.

Aaron was doubtless such an one himself. He then, would know who the rest were, where they were to be found, and how they could be gathered together, most likely by night, in secret, acknowledging one another by signs and passwords, as did the Covenanters on the hills and moors of Scotland, and the persecuted Christians under the Roman Emperors.

Being then, gathered together, Aaron began to exercise the office of spokesman, rehearsing all that had transpired in the wilderness, and the great commission that had been given Moses to deliver them from slavery, and lead them to the land of their fathers.

Moses also showed the signs, and the people of this assembly believed. *"And when they heard that the Lord had visited them in their affliction, they bowed their heads and worshipped."* This being done, the first step in the work of deliverance was taken. They believed in the possibility of deliverance, that it was from the intervention of the God of their fathers, and was to be by the instrumentality of Moses.

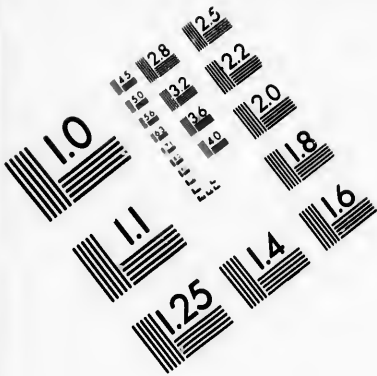
The first interview of Moses and Aaron with Pharaoh is significant both in its character and its consequences. They use remarkably bold language, humanly speaking. But the language is not bold at all from messengers of the Most High God, who has the hearts of men in His hand, and in whose presence the distinctions of the world vanish.

They must have been announced as Hebrews having some special message to deliver to him as sovereign. And doubtless the message was startling enough when they delivered it, not in their own name, but in the name of the Living God.

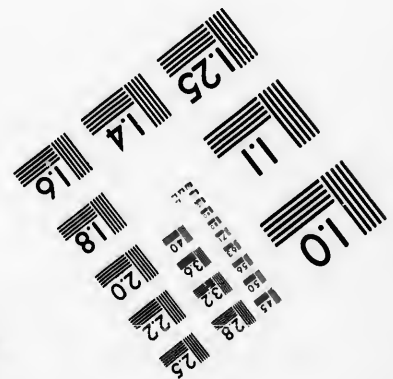
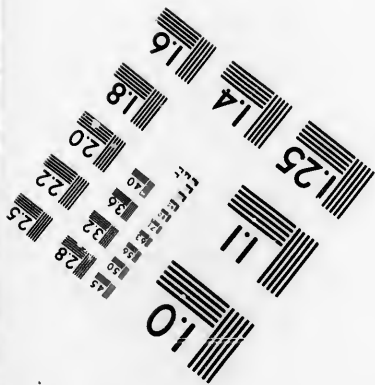
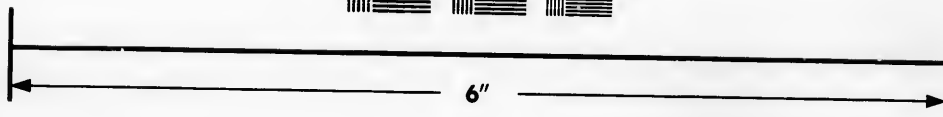
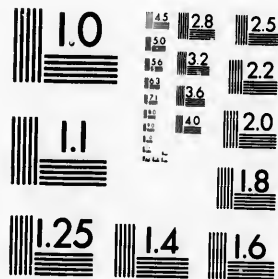
"Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel;" these were the opening words of the message. *"LET MY PEOPLE GO, that they may hold a feast to me in the wilderness."*

The word is that of command, not the word of entreaty; and words of command a Pharaoh was not accustomed to hear, even from the gods of his country, much less from any mortal man. Hence his tone of defiant refusal: *"WHO IS THIS JEHOVAH, that I should obey His voice?"*





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Obey! I am not accustomed to obey. Who dares to summon me, and to make such an unheard-of demand upon Pharaoh? Let the people go? I know nothing of this God, and I will not let Israel go.

This is what might have been expected. It was what they had been forewarned of. The natural working of the mind of a despot is here seen, as it has been seen in scores of instances since the time of Pharaoh.

And yet, while the mind of this king is working now, and will continue to work, according to its natural impulses, he is all the while working out the designs of the Supreme Ruler. Thus it was in the great and stupendous event by which the redemption of mankind was accomplished. In that event we find the chief priests of the Jews following out the impulses and purposes of their own mind, only intent on bringing about events such as they themselves wished for. Yet their plans, purposes, and actions were made subservient, all unknown to themselves, to the highest purposes of Divine beneficence and goodwill to mankind. Their plans and purposes were bad, selfish, wicked and cruel, and they were justly held accountable for them, as such. Although what they did subserved a Divine purpose, it was their own purpose they were called to account for. They had no beneficent intention to mankind in plotting to bring Jesus to death, and hence the terrible arraignment of Peter the Apostle when he addressed them after our Saviour's death and resurrection. "*Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.*" The guilt of murder was upon them, for no thought but of murder was in their hearts.

Thus it will be found throughout this remarkable narrative of the steps by which these Israelitish people were wrenched from the grasp of Pharaoh. His actions resulted in marvellous manifestations of the power and beneficence of the Supreme God. But he never intended this. His purposes and actions were all in pursuance of his own thoughts. He followed his own inclinations. And by these he was judged.

So, when Moses and Aaron still urged that they were acting under a Divine command, the king became jealous and suspicious; a true touch of nature this. These men have another end in view. Under pretence of this message from their Divinity—whoever he may be, I don't know him—they really want to recover their liberty, and work once more for themselves. The great works they are building for me and for Egypt are to be stopped, and they suffered to spread themselves again over the land as cultivators and shepherds, displacing our own husbandmen.

This looks like the course of thought on the part of the king; and, in pursuance of it, he dismisses Moses and Aaron angrily from his presence. The tone of the narrative suggests that they were accompanied by some of the elders of the people, for the king adds "*Go, get you to your tasks again.*" This to the elders. To Moses and Aaron, "What right have you to interfere and hinder the people from going on with their work?" (Chap. v. 4.)

The result of this first conference was disheartening indeed. Matters became worse rather than better. Per with the true instinct of a strong-willed and unscrupulous despot, short-sighted, indeed, but following the line of his own inclination, Pharaoh gives orders for the burdens of the people to be increased. More work must be put upon them. They are idle. The overseers must be more exacting. The day's tally must be more rigidly watched. They must go out after their tale of bricks is finished, and find their own straw. If they drop down exhausted, if some of them, now and then, die in the fields with excessive toil, what matter? There are abundance of them. What are the lives of a few thousand foreign slaves in comparison with the finishing of these great works for the honor of the king and the glory of Egypt. Such was the talk of another great despot in these modern times, Napoleon. When remonstrated with by Metternich on the terrible slaughter of his battles, and how Europe was being drenched with blood by his campaigns, he coolly replied, "What matters the slaughter of even a million of men, compared with the execution of the great plans of my empire?"

So, more work was laid on these wretched people, and the overseers of their own race, whose business it was to see to the proper "tale" of work being accomplished, were beaten when the full amount was not rendered as formerly.

The whole story is true to life and history. In the time of slavery in the Southern States, if a man or company of men on a plantation appeared refractory, or inclined to remonstrate, or showed the least sign of intention to escape, their burdens were increased, they were subjected to the most cruel treatment, they were beaten and starved without mercy. So it has been wherever slavery, or serfdom, or a servitude that was equivalent to it prevailed. The instinct of tyranny is up in arms at once against any attempt to throw off an oppressive yoke. Our own English history affords abundant exemplification of this.

The treatment of the Hebrews, oppressive enough before, was now positively brutal. "*Ye are idle, ye are idle,*" said the task-masters. "*Go and work. Find your own straw.*"

But the full quantity of bricks we must have." Those who have seen the work of brick-fields in our own country can realize the cruelty of such a state of things as this in a hot climate like Egypt. All this should be remembered when the narrative subsequently relates the judgments that befel the land.

It cannot be wondered at, that at this time the people began to look bitterly towards Moses and Aaron as the authors of their troubles. "It is you who have made us so obnoxious to the king and his servants. You have put a sword into his hand to slay us." A bitter thing, indeed, for Moses to hear, and harder to bear than the insolence of Pharaoh.

Thus passed the first stage in this strange work of redemption. For, in spite of all the terrible clouds that darkened the path of this people, it was towards redemption that all was surely tending. He that sitteth in the heavens was looking on, and laughing to scorn the resistance of Pharaoh and his purpose.

How long this condition of increased exaction lasted we know not. It might be spread over a considerable space of time, months, or even a year or more. But there gradually came on a new order of events.

Moses received new communications from the Lord, indicating that some extraordinary manifestations were at hand, and that a time was coming when Pharaoh would be impelled by an irresistible force to set the people free. "With a strong hand he shall let them go, and with a strong hand shall he drive them out." (Chap. vi. 1.)

Then, emphasizing the revelation of His great name of *JEHOVAH*, the Lord reiterates the great purpose of establishing the covenant of Abraham with his people, and that He will deliver them with mighty judgments from bondage, taking them to Himself as His people. He to be to them a God; and that He will surely bring them to the land He had sworn to their fathers as a heritage.

But the spirit of the people was utterly broken by the cruelties they were suffering. They could not believe all this; it was beyond them, naturally enough.

Then a very strong word was spoken to Moses. Being charged to appear before Pharaoh again, he is told that he should be made as "a God to Pharaoh, and Aaron should be a prophet." This was to lift him above the despondency which had evidently taken possession of him, and the bitterness of heart at seeing his first appearance followed by such a terrible increase of cruelty to his people. For he was evidently most unwilling to appear before the king

again. If his first message had produced increased exertions, and bitterer toil, who could tell what a second might bring forth. A despot of strong will and determined character might order to execution the whole of the leaders and elders of the people, including Moses and Aaron themselves.

This Divine message, however, was to lift Moses above the influence of such fears; and it did so effectually.

Accompanying this message was another of a remarkable character. "I WILL HARDEN PHARAOH'S HEART," said the Divine word, and "*multiply my signs and wonders.*" "I will lay my hand on Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord when I bring out the children of Israel from among them." (Chap. vii. 3.)

What is the hardening of Pharaoh's heart? One would think it needed no special hardening after reading the narrative of the cruelty and insolent tyranny we have been considering. Was it not hard enough? Hard enough, certainly, as respects inflicting oppression. But this particular hardening is in the way of rendering him obstinate in resisting the Divine monition by the hand of Moses, and evidently by suffering the naturally haughty spirit of a despotic sovereign to have full scope; allowing him, in fact, to have his own way. This cannot but be the idea of God's hardening the heart. For God cannot tempt a man to evil, cannot induce to evil, cannot lead on to evil. But God may, for deep and wise purposes in the counsels of infinite wisdom, allow a man's evil propensity to have full scope, in certain circumstances, at a certain time, unchecked, until great fore-ordained ends have been accomplished. If unbelievers cavil, let it be considered that this narrative is the only source from whence we have any knowledge of these events at all. If the statement is true, viz., that the Divine Being did so announce an intention of hardening the heart of the king (and it is only on the supposition that it is true that fault can be found with it), then that action, although we may not fully understand how, must have been consistent with all that is revealed of his perfect justice and righteousness. There we can rest and be satisfied.

Moses, then, and Aaron, again enter the presence of Pharaoh, and again deliver the Divine message, "Let this people go." And now, after this, begins the series of signs of a supernatural order that grow more and more terrible as they advance.

The first, however, was not terrible at all, being only a exhibition of supernatural power in turning a shepherd's staff into a serpent. The magicians of Egypt (for magic

was well developed in Egypt by that time) imitated this, as Eastern magicians can at this day, and their rods also turned into serpents. Whereupon Aaron's rod swallowed up all the rest—a symbol of the power of Jehovah being far beyond the power of all other so-called gods.

This produced no impression whatever upon the king. He doubtless considered it to be only a better exhibition of magic than his own sorcerers could furnish. This, however, was a mere prelude. The great judgments that went to display the power of the God of the whole earth now began.

Let us remember that the conception of an all-powerful Being who could control the forces of the natural world was utterly foreign to the heathen mind. The greatest of the gods of Egypt was nothing but an animal; far below man in the scale of being, and at best only a symbol of certain powers of nature. And other gods were as far below this animal as he was below man. These gods were never dreamed of as capable of doing anything great and marvelous, and that any of them, or all of them together, could control the forces of the natural world, the river, the air, the winds, was beyond imagination. But Pharaoh was now to learn. The first judgment was upon the river Nile. This river, then, and now, as has been already said, was the very life of Egypt. Indeed, the river was the very origin and source of all the cultivation of the country. Without it, the whole area of Egypt would have been desert. There would, in fact, have been no Egypt. There would be no Egypt to-day. The land and cultivatable area of Egypt, that which alone makes the country of value, or ever has made it so, exactly coincides with the extent of the annual overflow of the Nile. The moment this area of overflow is passed, the sandy region beyond begins.

The first judgment, therefore, was a serious one, and eminently calculated to induce reflection in the ruler of the country. If this mysterious Divinity whom these men speak of, the God of these Hebrews, is a Being with power over our river, what may not the extent of His power be? If he can alter the nature of the water of the Nile, has He not our life and destiny in His hand, for without the water of the river we must die.

Such would have been the course of reflection with men in circumstances to reflect calmly. But they were not. The pressing necessity of the mass of people was to get water, and the narrative is true to fact and circumstance in representing them as bestirring themselves with energy, and digging wells to find water fit to drink, which apparently they did, and found sufficient for the few days during which

the visitation lasted. For in this instance judgment was tempered with mercy. The time was calculated. It only lasted seven days. Had it lasted longer the whole people would have been in danger of perishing.

As for Pharaoh himself, he seems to have considered the change of the water as a mere piece of enchantment, and called upon his magicians to effect a like wonder. They seem to have been able to do what satisfied the king, for we next read that his heart was *hardened*. He refused to believe in a Divine interposition, but "*turned and went into his house.*" The whole suggests an attitude on the part of the king of supreme indifference and contempt, considering the miracle as a mere piece of jugglery, not worth further notice.

This is precisely what might be looked for in a despotic king who was determined that his purpose of retaining this people and using them to prepare vast monuments of glory should not be thwarted. Kings who were accustomed to the terrible realities of war, and to the sacrifice of the lives of tens of thousands of men, and to the desolation of whole provinces by fire and sword, all for the furtherance of plans of extension or conquest, were not likely to be moved except by something which would come very closely home to them, causing great personal discomfort, or endangering the rise of a rebellious spirit amongst their subjects. We shall see then, as the narrative progresses, how, in the deep counsels of Infinite Wisdom, and in furtherance of the purposes both of retributive judgment and of deliverance, a series of calamities was brought about which it was impossible for any king, no matter how mighty he was, to disregard or despise.

CHAPTER V.

PHARAOH AND THE PLAGUES OF EGYPT.

Exodus 8, 9, 10.

In considering these plagues, while assuming the narrative as true, some have stumbled at the idea of a merciful and benevolent Divinity putting forth power to torment and plague His creatures. "This surely," they say, "is more like the ways of men, and not the way of a good and gracious God."

But let us ask, how do we know, or who informed us, that God is merciful, kind, and good? Is it not the same revelation that opens up also the great thought of the Divine Being as Supreme Ruler and Judge, as hating evil, either in men or nations, and dealing righteously and in the way of retribution, with both individual persons and families, tribes, and nations? The whole course of human events makes it certain that whatever else we may know of the Power that rules over the destinies of men, we know that He either permits or brings about terrible events as a consequence of tyranny, cruelty, oppression, licentiousness and wickedness. Let us think for a moment of the horrible scenes of the French revolution and Reign of Terror, or the sack of Rome by the Goths. These are historical events, and they were both preceded by an era of wickedness such as the world has hardly ever seen.

No. Though our God is revealed as merciful to individuals who repent, and full of benevolent care for the creatures He has made, He is revealed, nevertheless, as the God of retribution for national and individual wickedness, a God of judgment, and at times even of vengeance. And any other view is contrary both to history and to revelation; it is also contrary to reason. "*Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance?*" said the Apostle of the Gentiles to the Romans, a people eminently capable of judging. "*It cannot be,*" is the reply; "*for then how shall God judge the world?*" a reply that commends itself to the reason and conscience of every thinking man.

But the weight of judgment in all these plagues put together was light indeed compared with what it might have been, had it pleased God to deliver His people by force of arms. If Moses had been sent to head a revolt, then battle and bloodshed would have continued, it may be, for

months, or even years; thousands of lives would have been sacrificed, and desolation extended to every corner of the land. What it cost to give freedom to the slaves of the Southern States is only too fresh in the memory of many now living? The awful slaughter of many battles by land and sea, the thousands of deaths in hospitals, on the march, in camp, by exposure and disease, the desolating of thousands of homes, the destruction of property, the wasting of fertile lands to an inconceivable extent; such consequences as these enormously exceed such plagues as were inflicted upon Egypt. What are plagues of frogs, and insects, and flies, and locusts, of murrain of cattle, and boils, and hail, and supernatural darkness; if even to these be added the death of the first-born. What are all these compared with the calamities of war!

Considering the long era of oppression, cruelty, and wrong on the part of Pharaoh and the Egyptians generally towards these Hebrew people, it must be admitted that even in these plagues they were mercifully dealt with.

It is curious and instructive to notice the effect which each of these visitations produced, as manifested in the changing moods of the king. Once or twice before the final catastrophe his courage and pride gave way; he begged for respite, he promised deliverance, he confessed wrong-doing. But again and again, when the plague had abated, his resolution returned, his heart was hardened, and he refused as before. All this is as natural as it is possible to conceive.

It is interesting, also, to notice what may be called the natural element in all the supernatural events related in this book. They are all such as arise out of the natural conditions of the country, and also out of the circumstances of the time. They all are calculated to accomplish the end in view, viz., a demonstration of the power of Almighty God, as well as the deliverance of the people, and with the least possible loss of life. Let us look at them one by one.

After the discoloration of the water of the river, which Pharaoh looked upon with contempt, a great plague of frogs swarmed over the land, entering into every house, and covering the rooms even of the royal palace. The Frog was one of the sacred reptiles of Egypt, and there is extant to this day a carving on one of the monuments representing a king paying homage to a frog-headed monstrosity. This swarm of frogs soon became what would be called in these days an intolerable nuisance. They penetrated into every apartment, even into the chambers of the women of the royal household. Insignificant as this visitation might seem, for there was neither sickness, nor loss of life, nor

lack of food connected with it, we have only to consider the plague in detail to see how it would render the daily life of men, and especially of women, utterly unbearable.

This brought Pharaoh to reason. He sent for Moses and Aaron, and entreated them to pray to the Almighty Ruler to take the plague away. And he promised to let the people go.

They took him at his word. Their prayer was heard; the frogs died out of the houses, the villages and the fields; they gathered them in heaps, and their noisome odor pervaded the land. But the king did not keep his word. It is an old maxim with despots—we have had it in our own English history—that a king is not bound to keep his word with his enemies; nay, we have had the same principle in a certain development of the Roman Church, viz., that there is no obligation to keep faith with heretics.

The Plagues of LICE and of FLIES were of the same character. They did not endanger life; they did not even tend to bring on sickness. But they would certainly tend to render life intolerably burdensome. The plague of Lice, like the two preceding, demonstrated the power of the God of the Hebrews over objects held in religious reverence by the nation. They were produced by Moses and Aaron smiting the soil, that soil which was a product of the river, and revered as the river itself was. This soil was made to bring forth small insects resembling our black flies, or mosquitoes, which became a torment to man and beast throughout the land, as we who know of these insects may well understand. The Magicians endeavored to imitate this, but they found it impossible, and so confessed to Pharaoh, saying, at length, "*This is the finger of God,*" an expression indicating that they had come to understand something of the great and all-powerful Divinity worshipped by the Hebrews. (Chap. viii. 19.)

But this plague produced no impression on the king; doubtless because it affected him and his household less than it did the mass of the people.

The plague of FLIES was one which converted another divinity into a source of torment, the air itself being an object of worship with them. But the Hebrew word translated "Flies" suggests rather a kind of beetle than our common house-fly, and has been supposed to be of a species which bite, as well as incommode by flying in swarms.

This plague proved an unbearable torment, and the king was moved by it. Calling Moses and Aaron, he proposes that they shall be at liberty to hold their festival and offer their sacrifices in the land of Egypt, to which Moses naturally answers that the cattle that would be offered were held

in such reverence by the Egyptians that the sacrifice would be held by them to be an "abomination," and lead to their being stoned while offering them. No. They must go into the wilderness; on which, Pharaoh parleying, as it were, to gain time, and evidently with no serious intention of letting them go at all, says, "I will let you go, but not far away." That is, they might go, but not beyond his jurisdiction or power.

But that he was acting deceitfully, as Moses plainly hinted, was proved by the event. When the swarms of flies were removed, Pharaoh was as obdurate as before.

Some time now seems to have elapsed. Hitherto the plagues had done no real damage to life or property, no more than our swarms of mosquitoes or black flies do in new settlements in the spring of the year. But a series of inflictions was now to begin which would touch the husbandmen of the land in their most valued possessions. First their CATTLE were to be the victims of a grievous murrain, and to die in great numbers. We, in these times, know the terrible effects of cattle disease. And so do the present inhabitants of Egypt, which has been thus visited more than once in this century. How difficult to cure, what devastation to herds, what stringent measures of precaution to prevent its spreading, every one knows who has any acquaintance with the matter. This plague, however, was far worse, for it affected not only horned cattle, but horses, asses, camels, and sheep, completely paralyzing the operations of the cultivators while it lasted, and threatening to bring ruin on them all. The character of this judgment was plainly manifest from the fact that the cattle of the Israelitish cultivators were left unharmed. The God of all the earth made a division between cattle and cattle. (Chap. ix. 6.)

Pharaoh, however, was unmoved; a fact, which reveals his character as one of the heartless despots who have no shadow of care for the welfare of the people they rule.

The next visitation was one which came more clearly home to the people, viz., a breaking out of BOILS and BLAINS on man and beast.

The Scripture narrative does not mention whether Pharaoh and his household were affected along with the rest of the people. To judge by the fact that he was still obdurate, one might suppose they were not, if it were not that men, when finally set upon their own way, and whose pride and passion are aroused, will undoubtedly pursue their course, even though it cost them for a time grievous bodily suffering.

It is, however, expressly stated that "the magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils," for the boils were upon them, as well as on the rest of the Egyptians. And after this we hear of the magicians no more.

The plague that next followed is preceded by a strenuous command and terrible warning, viz., that the land should be visited with Pestilence, and that Pharaoh himself should be cut off from the earth. This threat, for some reason not given, was not carried out; for, though the land had still to suffer heavily, it was not visited with pestilence. And Pharaoh, though he was cut off from the earth, was not the victim of pestilence, but of his own rashness and folly in attempting to follow the fugitives across an arm of the Red Sea.

But the threat is accompanied by a statement that has been the subject of much theological and philosophical criticism, some of it of a bitterly adverse kind. The statement is this: "*In very deed,*" saith Almighty God, "*for this cause I have raised thee up for to show in thee My power, and that My name may be declared through the earth.*"

From this some have concluded that the Supreme God declared that this man had been expressly created what he was in order that God's power might be shown forth in his destruction. But the margin gives a different reading; and this marginal reading is said by Hebrew scholars to be the correct one. It is not that God had *created* him to be what he was, not that He raised him up *as from birth*, but that He "*made Pharaoh to stand,*" that is, to *stand out prominently*; raised up on high before the world; conspicuously working out his own character of cruelty and obstinate indifference, the blame being wholly his own, although it did result in wonderful displays of Divine power, such as should be remembered, as they have been, in after ages. This truth has been enlarged upon already.

The visitation of Hail, accompanied by violent storms of thunder and lightning, is not of a supernatural character in itself (nor indeed were most of the others)—what was supernatural about it was its unprecedented violence, destructiveness and extent. We, in this country, and especially in the region of the North-West, know only too well the devastation that a single hailstorm may produce, and how the whole crop of a farmer may be destroyed in a single day. But such storms are invariably partial. Such a thing as a hail storm devastating a whole country and destroying its crop is unknown. This storm, however, was universal throughout Egypt, with the sole exception of the land of Goshen. That region was exempt.

And a singular feature of the narrative is that some of

the servants of Pharaoh, and some of the Egyptian people believed the warning voice, and got their cattle out of the fields into a place of shelter, with everything that could be housed, including their servants. For the storm, when it came, swept everything before it—crops, cattle, men, and women; breaking down trees, and tearing up herbs, exactly as the severe cyclones do with which at times the western parts of this Continent are devastated.

This visitation produced a striking effect. The king sent for Moses and Aaron in the midst of the storm, and while it was raging, evidently in great fear (as well he might be, for the storm was even then raging with unparalleled destructiveness), confessed his wrong and the wrong of his people. This is the first and only time when the Egyptian *people* are identified in wrong-doing with the king. Pharaoh may have had little ground for thus speaking. It may have been only the natural working of a mind conscious of great wrong, for men, almost invariably, attempt to shift some portion of their wrong doing to others. Or it may have been true that his people generally, or their leaders, at any rate, fell in readily with his plans of outrage and oppression, and took part in them willingly. In this case, Divine chastisement, as affecting the people generally, would be most just.

Pharaoh not only confessed his sin, but begged that Moses and Aaron would intercede for the stoppage of the plague, giving now an unconditional promise to let them go. (Chap. ix. 28.)

Moses, in promising to offer prayer, spoke of the storm as a display of power of "the Lord of the whole earth" (and thus above all the divinities of Egypt), and sent that the king of Egypt and all his people might know it. And did not all history and experience tell us of the treachery and deceitfulness of the heart of man, we should judge it to be impossible that Pharaoh should not then have submitted, in humble acknowledgment of Divine power, just as another great monarch of future ages, Nebuchadnezzar, did, when warned by the prophet Daniel.

But Pharaoh, when the visitation had passed, resumed his old attitude of defiant indifference. There is an old couplet of medieval times about Satan being sick, and what he did when well, which expresses a too well-known truth as to wicked men under the pressure of calamity. The pressure taken off, they return to their old ways.

The narrative now proceeds to record another plague. And its whole course is consistent with the working of human nature and the course of historical events, as well as with the conditions prevailing in a country like Egypt.

Moses was again sent, and again there is a strenuous remonstrance and solemn warning of another impending calamity. The plague threatened was Locusts. This plague was doubtless well known to the leaders of Egypt and the people about Pharaoh's court, and even in its ordinary manifestations they well knew how it was to be dreaded. But they had learned by this time that the peculiar character of these plagues was a condition of severe intensity, either in the ordinary annoyances of life, or the misfortune that affect an agricultural community. The Egyptians were accustomed to be annoyed by frogs and mosquitoes and beetles. They had, no doubt, the experience of murrain in their cattle, and hail storms in their fields, and they, many of them, had known the pain of boils and eruptions on the skin. But never in the experience of Egypt had these things been experienced in so terrible a form as now. The annoyance was never so intolerable, the storm never so dreadful and destructive. So when a plague of locusts was threatened, they knew what to expect, viz., such unheard-of swarms over the surface of the land as would destroy everything in it; a wave of destruction, in fact.

It was no wonder, then, that Pharaoh's servants took a very strong step, a strong step considering the character of such despots generally, and how reckless they were in ordering to instant execution even their most trusted servants who dared to dispute their pleasure. Ancient history gives us many examples of this; so does the history of the Ottoman Empire, even down to these very times. They remonstrated in strenuous language against the king's obstinacy. "*How long,*" said they, "*shall this man be a snare to us?* Let the men go that they may serve the Lord their God." Strange and unaccustomed language for a Pharaoh to hear from his servants. But they were wrought up to a pitch of anger and desperation that made them careless of consequences. For they added, "Dost thou not know *yet* that Egypt is destroyed?" as if they had said, "What madness and folly, O king! to contend with this terrible Divinity longer! Have we not had sufficient proof of His power in the storm, and the murrain, and the diseases that have overtaken us? What rashness to bring the land to utter destruction by a plague of locusts!" (Chap. x. 7.)

Moses and Aaron were now sent for, and the tone of Pharaoh's communication shows bitter anger and vexation. "Go," he said, sullenly, "go, and serve the Lord your God." Then suddenly bethinking himself of their numbers, he adds, "But who are they that shall go?" To which Moses replies that they must all go, young and old together, and

take their flocks and herds with them. Then Pharaoh adds, though in somewhat ambiguous language, invoking their God, that he will not let the little ones go, nor the women—for mischief will come of it. Look to it, he says angrily, you men, you can go. This is what you want. Go, and serve the Lord. Then he ordered them to be driven from his presence.

This was not the sort of answer to avert calamity, and the threatened visitation came. The Lord brought up, by a strong east wind blowing from the desert all that day and night, such swarms of locusts as had never been experienced in the land before. "For," as the narrative says—evidently the narrative of an eye-witness—"they covered the face of the whole land, so that the land was darkened; and they did eat every herb of the land and all the fruit of the trees that the herb had left. And there remained not a green thing in the land. (We who have known of visitations of locusts in our North-Western prairies in former days, will recognize here a very true description.)

And again we have a repentant king, or rather a king who pretended to repent. But when the mighty west wind blew the locusts away to the Red Sea (a very natural operation, natural and supernatural both), and the plague had passed away, Pharaoh was as before.

The next visitation was of intense DARKNESS; but this did no damage at all. It was rather a symbol and a warning of what *might* come, and of what actually did come, than a means of actual damage. The only terrible thing about it was the uncertainty of its duration. For if by day and by night there was to be continued such a blackness of darkness over the land, they might as well be banished to the infernal regions at once. And again we have the same exhibition of angry submission, followed by the same obduracy on the return of light, and finally a fierce defiance and refusal to let the people go. Moses and Aaron too were now banished from his presence on pain of death.

This threat was met by Moses with a firmness and spirit that became a messenger of God. "*Thou hast well spoken;*" he replied, "*I will see thy face again no more*"—evidently unless Pharaoh earnestly desired it. (Chap. x. 29.)

CHAPTER VI.

THE LAST PLAGUE, THE PASSOVER, AND THE DEPARTURE.

Exodus 11 and 12.

Hitherto, in this history of events leading up to the Departure, we have not met with any that are connected with the times now present. But we are now about to have brought before us an event of a character so remarkable that a permanent memorial of it was instituted. And it is one of the most striking of the many remarkable events of Scripture that the memorial of it has subsisted to this very day, and has been carried to all lands throughout the earth wherever the descendants of these oppressed people are found. For, found they are, on every one of the continents of the globe, our own included. And within less than a week of the time when these words were written, in the very city where they were indited, congregations, of Hebrews, descendants of the oppressed of Egypt, having survived for thousands of years, have celebrated the deliverance of their ancestors by observing the striking Feast of the Passover.

Nay, more. This feast of the Hebrew people has been perpetuated in another form by the greatest of the Hebrew race, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham, the God-Man, who commanded His disciples, on the night when He celebrated His last Passover, to observe forever a similar ordinance in remembrance of His dying for their deliverance from a spiritual bondage. Thus, by Hebrew and Christian alike, the memory of the great redemption from bondage is kept up, for the Christian is expressly taught, by an Apostle of the Lord, to look upon the Supper of Communion as a spiritual feast of the Passover.

The great judgment which accomplished the redemption of the Hebrews was a judgment of Death. It was the death of the first-born of Egypt that accomplished the life of the Hebrew nation, this being one of the many parallels between the outward and secular events of the Old Testament and the spiritual realities of the New. It was preceded by a more solemn warning than had been given of any previous plague, and also by serious preparations for Departure. It is evident, that by this time, the people of Egypt, from the highest to the lowest, Pharaoh alone excepted, had been so profoundly affected by the calamities

that had overtaken the land, that they were willing to sacrifice anything that could be sacrificed in the way of property, in order that they might hasten the departure of a people whose continued presence was destruction.

Hence their willingness to give to the people jewels of silver and jewels of gold, for any idea of borrowing and lending in the usual acceptation of those terms is precluded by the circumstances of the case. Those who were able to part with jewels must have been persons of position and property, and they above all others were interested in a cessation of the calamities which were destroying the property of the land.

They might very well consider, as doubtless they did consider, that jewels of silver and gold, including money, costly raiment, and other forms of such property as appertains to the wealthy, could very well be parted with in order to save the land itself, and that which produced wealth in the land, from destruction. It was a case resembling the throwing over of cargo to save the ship.

Let it be borne in mind too that this transfer of property from wealthy Egyptians to the Hebrews was really of the nature of restitution of what had been wrongfully taken. For two or three generations the Hebrews had been oppressed. From being a free people, occupying a portion of Egyptian territory, and contributing by their industry to the building up of the State in the way that the inhabitants of a country do under ordinary circumstances, they had, in great measure, been reduced to a condition of bondage. Forced labor had been exacted. Work had been done, day by day, during a long course of years, for which no proper recompense had been rendered. The Hebrews were "*a people robbed and spoiled.*" and the giving them large and valuable presents was only a mere acknowledgment of an enormously larger debt.

Thus, the preparation for the great journey was made. And it becomes evident, as the narrative proceeds, that this down-trodden and enslaved people had been gradually prepared, through a long period of striking manifestations, for the great step of leaving a country which they and their fathers had inhabited for centuries, and plunging into an unknown wilderness on their way to an unknown land. There was, in fact, gradually developed in them, in some degree, that great principle of Faith—faith in the unseen God, and faith in an unseen land, which is opened up to us in the Epistle to the Hebrews as the very life and spring of all that was best and noblest in the development of this people. For, without such a faith, however heavy may have been the Egyptian yoke, they could never have been per-

suaded to take such a dangerous step as to leave behind a certain subsistence for themselves and families, and encounter the dangers of such an exodus as was before them.

We, on this continent, have much knowledge of what such a step involves, for the western prairies have been whitened with the bones of emigrants making their way in large or small companies to the regions in which they expected finally to settle. A veritable land of promise was before them, and such it thus proved to their descendants. But the way there, over trackless wastes and treeless plains, was a way of untold hardship and privation, of attacks of hostile tribes of Indians, of sickness and misery, of which the half has not been told. The Hebrews of Egypt could not anticipate all of what eventually befel them. But they knew that a terrible desert region had to be crossed, and within the borders of Egypt itself, and close adjacent to the region in which many of them dwelt, there was sufficient of desert country to give them a vivid idea of what would be the perils and privations of crossing it. It was needful, then, that they should have some mighty moving force impelling them to action, and inspiring them with courage sufficient to act with Moses when he called them to forsake a country of certain subsistence for one that was utterly unknown to them, except by tradition from long distant ancestors. We are well aware in these Christian times, that the faith spoken of is a force mighty enough to accomplish this, for we have witnessed its operation in our own days. And, so far as Moses himself was concerned, the testimony of the Epistle to the Hebrews is decisive. It was "BY FAITH HE FORSOOK EGYPT, NOT FEARING THE WRATH OF THE KING," for he endured as seeing Him "who was invisible." And having this powerful principle constantly operating within him, he succeeded in inspiring the leaders and elders of the Hebrews with it also, so that they became willing to take the risk of plunging into the great and terrible wilderness, and leaving the glorious land of Egypt behind. For a glorious land it was, chief and foremost of all the countries of the earth.

So, then, when the supreme crisis came, we find them prepared to act. They had been gradually preparing for the departure during many months, and their courage did not fail them when the hour of action came.

On a certain most memorable day, which has left an impress that has survived the changes of thirty centuries of the world's history, the people were convened, and there was delivered to them a message direct from their God: "THIS MONTH SHALL BE UNTO YOU THE BEGINNING OF MONTHS.

IT SHALL BE THE FIRST MONTH OF THE YEAR UNTO YOU." (Chap. xii. 2.)

Here is clearly indicated the beginning of a New Era, a new dispensation, like that which Christians have observed in the reckoning of time from the Birth of the Saviour of Mankind, who delivered from a deeper and worse bondage, a bondage of the spiritual man.

The message went on to command that a young Lamb, a male of the first year, should be taken out of the flock, kept separate till the fourteenth day, and then killed in the evening; then that its blood should be sprinkled on the outside of every house of the Hebrews; and finally, that the Lamb should be roasted and eaten with bitter herbs, and be entirely consumed before morning. And to this command was added another, that it should be eaten, not as is usual at a meal, but in haste, with loins girded, staff in hand, and all preparation made for a journey. To this command, so calculated to assure the waiting people that the day of deliverance was at hand, was added a premonition of the last terrible event, the final stroke that was to break their fetters and set them free, viz., that in the same night, at the hour of midnight, the Lord would pass through the land in judgment, smiting all the first-born in the land, save only the children in the houses where the sign of the blood appeared.

The command was finally given that the day was to be kept as "*a Memorial day for ever, a feast to the Lord throughout all generations.*"

What an astonishing force in this Divine message! How far-reaching the influence that has kept alive the command through inconceivable changes, so that it is a living force in lands that were absolutely unknown for thousands of years after the command was given. For even where there are no Hebrews to observe the command in the letter, there are millions of Christians who keep that Feast which grew out of the Hebrew Passover, which is, in spirit, an observance of the Passover, and which, like the Passover of the Hebrews, is observed in obedience to Divine command as "an ordinance for ever."

It brings these times of thousands of years ago very near, when we find Hebrews whom we know, with whom we have daily intercourse in the affairs of the world, carefully observing the time of year, cleansing their houses from every sign of leaven, preparing unleavened bread, and sitting down to a sacred meal in which they recount to their children the wonderful deliverance of their fathers. And we Christians can only say, would that they understood the spiritual significance of the Feast, and observed

it in remembrance of that great world-redemption by One who, according to the flesh, was of their own race, the true Paschal Lamb, who offered Himself without spot unto God, and whose blood, sprinkled, not on the house, but on the heart, cleanseth from all sin!

This command was given by Moses to the Elders, and by them communicated to the people, who received it with awe and reverence, and obeyed it universally, their faith and hope being now wrought up to that point where they were prepared to act as might be commanded.

That night was such a night as men spend who are in preparation for an immediate journey to a distant land. It was not a night of sleep, but of obedience and preparation on the part of men and women, and of wonder on the part of children.

But it was a night of terror and alarm throughout Egypt. At midnight the angel of death entered every Egyptian house and smote the first-born: "*from the first-born of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the first-born of the captive that was in the dungeon.*" This terrible visitation broke down finally the obstinate spirit of the king. It was no wonder that he rose up in the night and called for Moses and Aaron. And now, he does not promise and permit that they shall go, but *commands*: "Rise up," is his language, "and get you forth from among my people. Go, and serve the Lord, as ye have said; and," he adds, "take your flocks and your herds with you and be gone." (v. 32.)

The language indicates both anger and alarm—the changing mood of a man of imperious will, who finds circumstances too strong for him.

But the last word he speaks to Moses and Aaron, the parting word, the word of farewell (for he never spoke to them again), is an entreaty for a blessing! Strange, and it might at first sight seem unaccountable. But it is after all most natural. It indicates the extreme pressure of calamity on the soul of this proud man, and the working of a superstitious fear and feeling. That there was an extraordinary power of inflicting *evil* connected with these men was only too certain; might it not be well to seek *good* from them?

May we not also imagine that these words of entreaty indicate a shade of remorseful regret for the hardship and oppression inflicted without cause on this Hebrew people, a people who had never given the slightest cause for it, who had obeyed the law, who were peaceful cultivators of the soil, and had never been guilty of riot or tumult of any description. Might not the king think of a possible Neme-

sis or retribution that had overtaken him and his land, remembering the ruthless edict that *all the male children of the Hebrews* should be slaughtered as soon as they were born! And now a terrible power, more mighty than any Pharaoh, had appeared, causing the death of thousands of the first-born of the Egyptians.

Two generations had passed since the promulgation of the edict of destruction against the Hebrews, and Divine retribution had slumbered, as it so often does; so often that the philosophic Greeks had embodied the idea of delay in the proverb: "*The mills of the gods grind slow, but they grind fine,*" a proverb which expressly refers to the progress of retribution.

Be these things so or not, it is evident that some unusual mood of softness and humility came over the king as he was about to part with Moses and Aaron finally. "*Bless me also,*" were the words he had spoken to them. And it were to be wished, for his own sake, and that of many of his people, that he had continued in the same mind, instead of within a day or two changing his purpose, and organizing an armed pursuit which ended in his overthrow and death.

The servants of Pharaoh and all the people were now alarmed beyond measure. How could they be otherwise? They said one to another, "*We be all dead men;*" for evidently it would only need another word from the same terrible power to bring about this result. They were urgent, therefore, the instinct of self-preservation moving them, to get this people out of the land; for so long as they were there, neither life nor property was safe.

And they willingly gave them all that was needed for the long journey—raiment, and gold and silver, the latter probably with a view to the obtaining supplies from the tribes that might be met with on the way. It must be remembered that the narrative expressly states that "*the Lord gave them favor in the sight of the Egyptians;*" and this is in explanation of the readiness with which the Egyptians furnished them with costly articles. A Divine hand was at work in these preparations for the journey, as it had been in the great events which had made the journey possible.

The concluding words of the verse in which the Lord is spoken of as giving the people favor in the eyes of the Egyptians have given rise to much short-sighted and unreasonable comment. This, however, is referred to in a critical note at the end of the chapter. Passing from this, it cannot but be noticed how little is said of the extraordinary preparations that must have been necessary before such a multitude of people could move away finally from

the country. For the journey was wholly on foot. And there were about six hundred thousand adults, besides children.

The only preparation which is referred to is that they took their half-prepared cakes of food with them, and their kneading-troughs upon their shoulders, bound up with their clothes, just as the Arabs carry their simple implements for baking cakes to this day. As to the number 600,000, it is given as only approximate in the present text; which may itself not exactly correspond with the original words of Moses, as has been shown in a previous chapter.

Thus ended that strange dispensation of sojourn in Egypt which had been foretold many ages before to Abraham their ancestor, and of which many traces remain on the monuments and buildings of Egypt to this day. The beginning and the ending of the dispensation are both marked by wonderful movements and interpositions of Divine power, the first in mercy and blessing, the last in wrath and judgment. Joseph, raised from a dungeon, becomes a prime minister, the second person in the kingdom, and the saviour of the land by wise forecasting arrangements. And his family, being brought down to Egypt, all share the honor and respect accorded to himself. This is the beginning of the sojourn.

Many generations pass, and not a word is said of them, except that they multiplied rapidly. No Divine communication, no distinguished man, no revelation, no influence of their purer religious faith over Egypt, nothing but a mere living in peace, plenty and prosperity; a period of Hebrew history which has left no sign or memorial to after generations.

But to this succeeds a period of remarkable change, a time of striking manifestations of tyranny and oppression, of grinding and crushing edicts threatening their very existence; then of the raising of a man more remarkable than Joseph, and the loosening of the bonds which bound the captives to Egyptian soil by a series of shocks unparalleled in history. This is the beginning of the career of that remarkable people, who, amid innumerable faults and failings, were instruments of Divine power in conveying to the world a revelation of the Divine person, character, and will, and who still subsist throughout the world, preserving in their greatest annual festival a memorial of these last events that has been kept up for nearly three thousand years.

To follow the development of this people on their way to the land of promise will be the object of our succeeding chapters.

CRITICAL NOTES ON THE FOREGOING CHAPTER.

AS TO THE WORDS TRANSLATING BORROWING AND LENDING.

It has already been pointed out that the ideas involved in borrowing and lending as now understood are entirely inapplicable to the condition of the Hebrews and Egyptians respectively at the time when such transactions are said to have taken place. For borrowings and lendings are dealings of persons who are in a position to contract with one another. There must be a promise of repayment on the one hand, and a willingness on the other to part with property in consideration of it. But between an oppressed people and their oppressors such a condition could hardly arise. And a close examination of the Hebrew text gives a meaning to the words which makes them much more conformable to the circumstances and the reason of things. Instead of *borrowing*, the word really signifies *requesting* or *asking*; and instead of *lending*, we have *granting* or *giving*.

It is quite conceivable that the Hebrews might ask, and that Egyptians might give, in the circumstances that had arisen. For the Egyptians were, by that time, most urgently desirous that the Hebrews should leave them, and only too ready, as is most evident, to do anything that would help them to go.

There was thus no deceiving on the one hand, nor being deceived on the other, for both parties knew perfectly what they were about. Much unreasonable criticism on this passage and that which follows has really no foundation.

An earlier translation of our Scriptures, that of 1538, gives the true sense of the original, and so does the Revised Version. In both the words are: "*They asked of the Egyptians jewels of silver, etc., and the Egyptians gave them what they asked.*"

AS TO SPOILING THE EGYPTIANS.

The word "spoiling" is just as much a mistranslation as the words borrowing and lending. For a moment's consideration will show it to have been impossible. To spoil is to take the property of another by force, and is generally used of the goods captured in war. Now, it is absurd to suppose that the Hebrews could take anything from the Egyptians by violence or force, for they were the weaker

party by far; any attempt at spoiling by violence would have been crushed at once.

The Egyptians, were not like a conquered army or a captured city. They were enormously superior to the departing Hebrews in numbers, and in every attribute of physical strength. The Hebrews could not, if they would, have made spoil of the Egyptians' goods.

The true meaning of the phrase is that they *recovered* from the Egyptians that of which they had been formerly spoiled themselves. And what they thus recovered was not a tithe of what they would have been entitled to had a just account been rendered and payment made for services performed without remuneration during two generations of bondage.

CHAPTER VII.

THE PASSAGE OF THE RED SEA.

Exodus 13 and 14.

Although, when the final crisis came, the departure of the Hebrews from Egypt was in great haste, it is evident that there had been much preparation for it. Orderly arrangements, as is evident from the narrative, had been made beforehand, as to the place which every family and company was to occupy in the long procession of march, arrangements such as take place when an army has to move. Without such carefully planned arrangements an orderly departure would have been impossible. Before a single day had elapsed the whole multitude would have been involved in inextricable confusion. Any person who is familiar with the arrangement necessary even for a small party of persons in these days to take the same journey, the supply of tents, food, utensils, change of clothing, money, may understand what would be required for such a journey as the migration of such a large company of people involved.

If it be said that miraculous powers were about them, such as would render any such careful planning unnecessary, let it be remembered that miraculous power was, as a rule, never exerted when the ordinary powers of man were sufficient for the purpose. This principle will be found to accompany nearly all displays of Divine power, as recorded both in the Old Testament and the New.

So, in this case, there is evidence that there had been both careful planning beforehand as to the order of march, and the actual ordering of the hosts in accordance with the plans when the time for movement came. Tents, utensils, as great a supply of food as could be carried, clothing, money, and even arms, were all provided, and the great multitude moved, not in confusion, but with the order of a disciplined host.

It is a great error to suppose that these Scriptural events were in their character and movement altogether unlike those of the ordinary history of mankind. Such a supposition is not only false in itself, but it deprives the events as narrated of their value for instruction. Miracles undoubtedly there were, in certain circumstances and at certain times, when they were needful. But, for the most part, the events are in no wise different from those which have

been the subject of human experience in non-miraculous ages. And certainly the men and the characters, and their sayings and doings, reveal human nature in its developments precisely as it exists to day and has existed from the earliest ages.

This great exodus, therefore, is not an event by itself in the world's history. There have been many migrations of the same character, though probably none of them on such an extensive scale, or where the people continued on the march so long. The departure of great companies of pilgrims for holy shrines in these modern days is not much unlike the departure of the Hebrews from Egypt. But the greatest similarity is to be found in the departure of companies of people from Europe to the American Continent, which, commencing nearly three hundred years ago, has continued almost without interruption down to the present day. In these migrations there is often a predisposing oppression, as in the case of the Pilgrim Fathers, or terrible hardships and sufferings driving men out of the land of their ancestors, as in the Irish famine. There was the same necessity for careful preparation, the same breaking up of old ties, the same long and weary journey, the same plunging into wildernesses altogether unknown, and, in many cases, there were the same hardships, suffering and death by the way, and the same failure to reach the promised land on the part of multitude who set out on the journey.

And we may pursue the parallel a step further, and say there was the same Divine Providence guiding and overruling, and showing the way; not, in these modern times, by marvellous supernatural manifestations, by a pillar of fire and cloud, but still by manifestations such as devout and single-minded souls could apprehend, and following which they were led by sure steps to their wished-for destination.

It is on this principle that the great departure of the children of Israel will be studied.

And, following up what has been said before, it is to be noticed that the phraseology of the Scripture narrative of the Exodus suggests arrangements like that of an army. It was a departure of the "*hosts of the Lord*:" the children of Israel went out "*by their armies*;"—"*the children of Israel went up harnessed out of Egypt*," the marginal reading being "*in ranks of five*," or in marshalled order, probably in five divisions. Thus they went out, in an orderly fashion. Moses at their head, all on foot, but with all things needful for camp life in the wilderness. And they took the bones of Joseph with them, as they had been strictly charged to do.

Their first day's march brought them to the border of the cultivated country; "*the edge of the wilderness*" as it is called, a phrase which shows exact local knowledge, for nothing is more remarkable in Egypt than the sharp line of demarcation between the green of cultivation and the sand of the desert, a line that may well be compared to an *edge*. So far, they had travelled on what must have been a well-defined road through a cultivated region. No special guidance, therefore, was needed. But the moment they step out upon the sandy desert, they pass into a region where no roads exist. Here, then, begins that remarkable series of supernatural events in aid, which characterized all the rest of their wilderness journey. It began here at this precise point, in the shape of guidance, for it was guidance they now began to need. They encamped at Etham; the word encamped at once revealing the extensive preparations that had been made beforehand, all in a natural manner, using such powers and opportunities as were within their reach.

But now, in the morning, when they break up camp, and proceed on their way across a sandy region, Divine power is put forth supernaturally to lead them.

For it was needed. A remarkable cloud appeared in advance, shaped like a pillar, and to Moses and the leaders it is made known that the pillar is to be their guide, and that the presence of their God and Redeemer was with it. "*The Lord went before them, by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them the way, and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light, to go by day and night.*" And it is added, the narrative plainly reading like the story of an eye-witness, "*He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.*"

Anything more completely adapted to the purpose of guidance it is impossible to conceive. For a cloud, in that climate, is a rare object. It could not fail, therefore, to attract the attention of the people. There could be no possible dispute or cavil as to the direction indicated by it, and, as a matter of fact, there never was. Caviling and fault-finding, and unreasonable outbursts of distrust and ill-temper, there were in abundance during the progress of the people through the wilderness; but never in a single instance was there any caviling about the route they ought to take.

For, plainly and beyond all dispute, their Divine Lord was going before them to "show them the way."

This pillar of cloud and of fire was almost the first of those remarkable outward events that are types and images of spiritual things true for all time, that are to become so

abundant as the narrative moves on. That there is Divine guidance in the affairs of men who seek it, is a truth that has been deeply engraven on the hearts of faithful men, or men of faith, in all subsequent times. And it has often found expression in seizing and adapting this incident of the pillar of cloud and fire as an image of the manner in which the steps of men are ordered, often in ways they know not, to a high and destined end. So, in the sacred poetry of the modern Church, we have such aspirations as these:

“ Guide me, Oh, thou great Jehovah!
Let the fiery, cloudy pillar
Lead me all my journey through.”

And again:

“ Captain of Israel's host, and guide
Of all who seek the land above,
Beneath thy shadow we abide,
The cloud of thy protecting love.”

And still further:

“ Round each habitation hovering,
See the cloud and fire appear,
For a glory and a covering,
Showing that the Lord is near.

Thus they march, the pillar leading,
Light by night, and shade by day.”

And many a man, weary and heart-sick in the manifold troubles of the journey of life, has lifted up his heart in hope on thinking of that wonderful guidance of God by day and by night through the wilderness, as he came to read the solemn and inspiring words (Numbers ix. 17-23):

“When the cloud was taken up, then after that the children of Israel journeyed; and in the place where the cloud abode, there they pitched their tents.

“And so it was, when the cloud abode from even unto the morning, and the cloud was taken up in the morning, then they journeyed:

“Or whether it were two days, or a month, or a year, that the cloud tarried upon the tabernacle, remaining thereon, the children of Israel abode in their tents, and journeyed not; but when it was taken up they journeyed.

"At the commandment of the Lord they rested in their tents, and at the commandment of the Lord they journeyed."

But the first indications of guidance by the cloudy pillar were perplexing in the extreme, and sorely trying to the faith and courage of the people. It is often so now, indicating how true the narrative is to the ways of a Divine government, which is, in principle, "the same yesterday, to day, and forever."

The great host was not led by the shortest and most commonly-trodden way round and past the northern limits of the Red Sea, but was directed to turn southward in a direction which would bring them directly in front of the sea itself, and necessitate either a crossing it by some means, or a retracing of their steps. Had they pursued the beaten track and followed the way by which their ancestors went to and from Canaan to Egypt, they would soon have been beyond the jurisdiction of Pharaoh. They would have been out of Egypt altogether. But the direction of the cloud would keep them still within the borders of the land of Pharaoh; and, as they travelled on, it became evident that they were getting into a most dangerous position. *"They were entangled in the land,"* as Pharaoh said, for the configuration of the country was such that there was only one way by which they could proceed, viz., along a plain with hills on each side which were impassable for a host, while the plain itself ended in the sea.

The way by which good men, individually, and companies of them collectively, are led, is often as dark and perplexing as this, and at times it seems as if they are shut up to dire calamity or destruction. Even so was it with these people: *"The wilderness had shut them in."*

Pharaoh now heard that the people had fled; and, as before, when calamity had passed, his mood changed. He was angry that he had let them go, and resolved to follow them. And follow he did with an armed host, pursuing with chariots, and captains, and horsemen, and an army; coming in sight of them as they were encamped on the plain bordering the Red Sea, and doubtless exclaiming, as Napoleon did on the morning of his final overthrow, "Now I have them."

It is at this point there begins that series of querulous cavilings on the part of the Hebrew people that reveal their utter want of manliness and courage as a whole, and how generations of degradation had undermined their faith. And here we begin to understand the far-reaching wisdom of the Divine ordaining of a forty years' preparation, before they were suffered to begin their national existence in the

land of Canaan. Long preparation for that which is to last long, is undoubtedly the Divine order of things in this world; and all the events of this long wilderness journey prove how much they needed it.

The army of Egypt being in sight, the children of Israel *cried unto the Lord*. But it was not the cry of faith, but of despair. And consequently it did no good. It produced no quietness and confidence; for they immediately turn to Moses and upbraid him for leading them out. In bitter sarcasm, they ask if he has brought them out to die and be buried in those sands "*because there were no graves in Egypt!*" alluding to the fact that all interments in Egypt were in tombs hewn out of the rocks, as these rocks witness to this day. (This piece of sarcasm is an incidental witness, by the way, to the truth of the narrative.)

And they go on to say, which gives us some insight into the difficulty that Moses had in prevailing upon them to leave Egypt at all. "*Did we not tell thee,*" they say, "*in Egypt, to let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? Better for us to serve the Egyptians, than to die in the wilderness.*"

Moses, replying, shows himself in this emergency the man of faith and courage, *stilling* the people, as was said afterwards of his great successor Joshua: "*Fear not,*" he said; "*stand still, and see the Lord's deliverance.*" (Note that the word translated *salvation*, as in this passage, and generally meaning deliverance from sin, has sometimes a secular aspect, and denotes deliverance from danger. We are so accustomed to think of salvation in its spiritual aspect that it is better to use the word *deliverance* when the meaning clearly is a saving from some threatened calamity.) Stand still, said Moses, and the Lord shall deliver you. Wise counsel, indeed, for resistance would have been hopeless. Some of them were armed, undoubtedly; but to fight against such a disciplined host as Pharaoh's would have been madness. But *the Lord shall fight for you*, said the man of faith, *and ye shall hold your peace.*

So the first of many tumults and uprisings was quelled, as all of them were quelled afterwards, one by one as they arose. Then a Divine word came to Moses of a strange kind. It is, perhaps, the only instance in the Bible where a man, or company of men, are forbidden to pray. "*Why criest thou to Me?*" says the Divine voice; "*command the people that they march forward!*" There is then a time to pray, and there is a time to act. And now the time of action has come.

But what action? Command them to go forward? Where are they to go to? They can only march into the sea, if

they move forward at all. Are they to march in, and be drowned?

No. Divine power, exerted naturally or supernaturally, shall make a way for them through the sea. The waters shall be divided, and the people shall march through as on dry land.

THE PASSAGE THROUGH THE SEA.

Very great misapprehension has arisen, and this has been fostered (as so many other errors as to Scripture events have been fostered by picture-painted in times of ignorance) by imagining that the people passed through the sea as it is now, and had to traverse a passage of some fifteen to twenty miles in width, and of very great depth.

Now, we well know that "nothing is too hard for the Lord." And if such a passage as this had been needful, it could have been accomplished. But such a passage was not needful. The Scripture narrative makes it plain that the passage was at a point considerably north of where the Red Sea becomes broad and deep, as it does south of Suez. But the place of encampment by the sea, viz., at Pi-hahiroth, near the watch-tower Migdol, and over against Bal-Zephon, which was on the other side of the sea, shows plainly that the place of crossing was far to the north of where the sea broadens out. And there is clear evidence that an arm of the sea stretched up northward over the sands, covering the route of the Suez Canal of these modern days, varying in width with the rise and fall of the tide from a mile to three or four miles, shallow enough at very low water for almost anybody to cross it, and yet deep enough in high tides to overwhelm even an army of chariots and horsemen.

The place somewhat resembled those sandy bays on the coast of England, such as Morecombe Bay, in Lancashire, and the Solway Frith, farther north, where miles of sand, capable of being traversed by people on horseback in the morning, become miles of sea before evening, over which are sailing crowds of fishing smacks.

This is the proper conception of the place where the Israelites were encamped, and where they crossed the sea.

Now, as to the actual crossing, there was a Divine leading by the fiery and cloudy pillar, but otherwise there is no need to imagine any special miraculous agency.

The great danger to the Israelites was that they should be attacked by the Egyptian army. That would inevitably have ended in the slaughter and destruction of most of the men, and the carrying back of the women and children to hopeless captivity.

It was evening when Pharaoh overtook the Hebrews. He doubtless saw the position, and encamped at a short distance, prepared for an attack in the morning. It was essential that the Israelites should cross that night, yet to do this it was necessary that they should be able to break up camp silently and unmolested.

Here, then, the watchful Providence of their Divine Leader interposed.

The picturesque and stirring narrative tells us that "*the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face and stood behind them. And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel, and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these.*" Precisely what was needed in the circumstances.

So then, with this light about them, the people of Israel, as night wore on, moved forward. The tide was out, and the waters would be shallow in any case. But as Moses stretched his hand over the sea, a very strong east wind sprang up and caused the waters to recede so that the bed of the sea for a certain distance was dry. A perfectly natural agency, a perfectly natural effect, and a perfectly natural movement of the great host, who passed on in the night until the other shore, the boundary of the highest tide on the eastern side, was reached in safety. The army of Pharaoh meanwhile was enveloped in a thick misty darkness that obstructed both sight and hearing. The distance across was probably not more than two miles, and as the dry bed of the sea extended far enough for the host to spread itself out, the passage would not occupy more at most than three or four hours.

The words of the narrative that "*the waters were a wall unto them on the right hand and on the left,*" do not mean, as is often thought, that the sea was raised up like a wall to the north and south of them, and the waters miraculously kept from flowing over them, but that the waters north and south were a protection, even as a wall would be; the strong east wind clearing a dry space of a few miles in extent so that the host could all pass over together.

Early in the morning, about break of day, the cloud and darkness having been removed, the outlying pickets of Pharaoh's army discovered that the last of the Israelites had just passed over. The alarm was given, the horses and chariots hastily made ready, and the army put in motion. There was still sufficient of the space uncovered by the sea to allow them to follow in the very track of the Hebrews. But the ground was heavy and damp. Driving such vehicles as chariots over such sands was extremely difficult. The

heavily-armed chariots whirled came off. Disorder filled the ranks, and panic began to supervene. For now, the east wind having ceased, the tide came rushing on in its strength. They were caught by its oncoming, and overwhelmed, as many a hapless traveller has been by the returning tide of the Solway.

As the waters increased, they cried, "Let us flee from the face of Israel. Let us return. *Their God is fighting for them and against us.*" They attempted to turn, but on such ground, now becoming rapidly covered by water, becoming deeper and deeper, they found it almost impossible. Those who were able, fled here, and fled there, but as is the way of the tide when flowing on, it intercepted them, and compelled them to turn again, until getting into deeper and deeper water, they sank down and were lost.

"For the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them."

And later on, as the tide receded, the people of Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore, cast up by the waves. "And," as the narrative proceeds to tell, "Israel saw that great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians," and the terrible retribution that overtook the obstinate oppressor who had displayed such treachery and falsehood towards them, who had repeatedly broken his promises, had ridiculed their sufferings and doubled their burdens, who had defied the power of the Supreme Ruler of the Universe, hardening his heart, refusing to let them go, until it became necessary to wrench them from his grasp by mighty signs and wonderful works, such as had never been seen before, and have never been repeated since.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FIRST JOURNEY THROUGH THE WILDERNESS.

Exodus 15 and 16.

It cannot be wondered at that after such a great deliverance, and the destruction of their oppressors and tyrants, their feelings should be wrought to the highest pitch of poetic fervor and find expression in one of the noblest bursts of psalmody in existence. It is the first of such glorious outbursts of which we have record in Scripture, and in poetic force, vividness of word-painting and loftiness of ascription of power to the Most High, it is the equal of any of the great compositions of later times. This noble song is a fine illustration of the method and rationale of Divine inspiration, viz., that such inspiration, evidently throughout all Scripture, works (as God in His Providence largely works also) by means of the natural powers and faculties of men; only quickening and purifying and guarding that which is the outcome of such powers, so that nothing shall proceed therefrom that is not true, and edifying, and in harmony with the Divine will, as manifested to other men, in the same or other ages. Thus it is that men of natural poetic faculty have been inspired to burst forth, at times and occasions, into psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, according to the dominant idea prevailing with them, whether of joy or grief, triumph or depression. Similarly, men of another order, as the authors of the books of Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, men of philosophic insight naturally, have, under the same guiding influence, produced works that are true for all time, instructive and comforting to all men, and such as are in perfect harmony, in all their convolutions of thought, with one another, and with all that has ever been embodied under the same influence in sacred song and psalm, as well as in narrative and doctrinal statement.

Moses, as plainly appears from his writings, was a many-sided man; he was naturally a man of affairs, a man of large governing capacity; yet withal a man of imagination; of poetic fire, of tender, yearning affections; not a man of speech, as he himself confessed, yet of power as a writer; and such a man, filled with the power of the Divine spirit, under this influence, produces writings that have proved

quickening and uplifting to the servants of God in all subsequent ages and times.

The whole assembly of Israel joined in the refrain of this wonderful song of triumph and anticipation; and MIRIAM, here called a prophetess, the sister of Aaron, led the songs of the women with timbrels and sacred dances. "*Sing ye to the Lord,*" she cried, "*for He hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea.*" This was probably the beginning of that responsive singing which became so marked a feature of worship in after days, and still subsists.

Then the great MARCH ACROSS THE WILDERNESS began, of which only few then alive saw the end; a march signalized by some of the most remarkable events that have ever happened in the history of mankind, and particularly by the giving forth of that LAW, which is still revered, and proclaimed in Christian assemblies as the rule for the conduct of men.

Three days they marched, the cloud leading them entirely away from the direction of Canaan, which lay to the northeast, while they pursued a route nearly due south. The place in which they had encamped after crossing, was a green spot in the long stretch of sand, and it is still called Ayoun Mousa, the fountain of Moses.

Three days they journeyed, and then came to a place where again there was water. But the water, like so much now found in that region, was brackish or bitter; a great contrast to the water of Egypt, which has a peculiar sweet softness, even though the river may be muddy. The people now began to murmur like a crowd of children (and children in character and moral development most of them were), and cried to Moses, "What shall we drink?"

Moses, laying his trouble before the Lord, was directed to cast one of the bushy trees of the region into the water, and the water was sweetened; probably a natural process.

The bitterness gave its name to the place, MARAH, meaning Bitterness, it was named. And the name is retained, with a slight variation, to this day, viz., HUWARA.

And there, after this display of Divine power to bless and heal the water, we have the first of the COVENANTS which became afterwards so numerous and remarkable. The voice of Jehovah in covenant had been silent for hundreds of years. The last word of solemn promise had been spoken to Jacob many generations before. Now the Divine voice is heard again. "*If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases upon thee which I have brought upon the Egyptians.*"

Here is opened up, in a Divine covenant, that connection between a pure morality and bodily health which is stamped upon the constitution of mankind. Of this there never has been, and never can be any doubt. But in what a pure morality actually consists has often been involved in doubt, and the light of nature and the teachings of civilization have been contradictory and imperfect. The will of the Divine Creator—He who formed both the body and mind of man, and ordained those social relations with which morality is concerned—He will shortly speak to these people with fulness and authority, teaching men what is that "good and right way," which is health both to the body and to the soul. And the first word of covenant to the people as a nation is that the keeping of His statutes and laws shall preserve from such diseases as they had been familiar with during their sojourn in Egypt, viz., the diseases of the body which spring from luxury, from indulgence of the sensual passions, from want of self-denial and self-control, the diseases, in fact, which have always accompanied a high development of civilization. The history of Greece, of Rome, and of some modern countries, amply confirms the truth, that vicious indulgence brings about peculiar and even loathsome forms of disease, some of which are hereditary and contagious. These were well known in Egypt, as we learn from the words afterwards addressed by Moses to the people.

And the striking prominence given in the ordinances of Moses, instituted under Divine direction, to matters of SANITATION, to CLEANLINESS of body and habitation, to diet, and also to habits of mind and restraint, bearing on bodily health, all are in fulfillment of this first covenant that the Great Creator of the body would be "THE LORD THE HEALER." This thought took firm hold of the Jewish mind, and is strikingly brought out in that Psalm of Thanksgiving, the 103rd, in one verse of which are coupled together the healing of the body and the mind: "*Who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases.*" Such is the inspired language of the Psalmist.

And no Christian needs to be reminded how wonderfully, many ages afterwards, these were united in the person of the Divine Man, who came "to save His people from their sins," yet whose time was largely spent in going about "*healing all manner of sickness and disease among the people.*"

After a while they left this place, Marah, where they had been tried and proved, for the first time, and came to the delightful grassy vale of Elim, where, amidst palm trees and numerous fountains, they remained and rested a whole month. This lovely spot is, in many of its features,

the same in these days, and is well known as a resting-place to travellers proceeding to the region of Sinai from Egypt.

But the cloud moved on from thence, and they moved after it, away from Elim to the barren, rocky wilderness stretching thence to Sinai, a wild and desolate region indeed. There the supply of provisions became exhausted; and, as before, the people began to murmur when thinking of the plenty of Egypt. The leaders of the people were weak as children in faith and manliness; but they were now, and again and again in this journey, wonderfully bold in protesting and remonstrating—types of many men whom we have seen and read of in these modern days. "Would to God we had died in Egypt," these miserable cowards said, "there we sat by the flesh-pots, and ate bread to the full." Then, addressing Moses fiercely, they added, "Ye have brought us forth into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger."

A fickle, rash, and restless multitude indeed, the revelation of whose character shows the profound wisdom of not taking them directly to the promised land.

They were proved again and again, and they failed each time in the trial. They had not the strength and stamina of men who were to enter on a life of national responsibility and freedom. Hence the long period of wandering in the wilderness, a period long enough to permit of a new generation of men arising, who had been bred and trained in the perils and privations of the desert, and who by these very trials had developed within them that faith and courage which alone can sustain a continued national life.

But the want of food was a serious matter indeed, and would have justified these leaders and heads of families in having serious consultations with Moses and in earnest crying to their All-Powerful Redeemer. For it was impossible that he should forsake them and leave them to perish in these desolate regions.

Nor did He.

THE PROVISION OF MANNA.

Another marvellous development of Divine power and providence now begins, a development which is, perhaps, the most remarkable of the whole series, and the least to be accounted for by anything resembling natural cause.

A provision of a plain and simple food, such as was suitable to a hot region, was the one pressing daily need of this multitude, and the need had no sooner arisen than it was supplied by the appearance on the ground, day by day, in sufficient quantity, of a substance resembling rice, "white,

somewhat sweet to the taste," and lying round about the camp so contiguous that it could easily be gathered up.

This was that famous "BREAD FROM HEAVEN" which the people called MANNA, a word signifying What is it? and which continued to be supplied to them during the whole time of their long journey. And truly, with all reverence, and with a measure of awe be it said, if the Commissariat Department of a great army had had committed to it the charge of provisioning this multitude, consisting, let us remember, largely of women and children, they could not possibly have devised anything more perfectly suitable to the circumstances if they had had the whole world to draw from.

Yet, had not He, who had the charge of feeding them, the resources of the whole world, yea, of all the forces of the universe at His command? Indeed, has He not in His Providence the charge of feeding all the world now, and has He not had at all times? How is it that there is always, with rare exceptions, sufficient food for all the inhabitants of the world every year? It is certainly not by any general arrangement amongst the food producers of the continents and islands of the earth. Yet it is inconceivable that without some supervising agency the supply of food for all the populations of the world should work with such perfect regularity that there is always sufficient, practically speaking, and never too much. If the provisioning of a great army were carried on by a large number of subordinate agents, each acting independently, none of them knowing how much was required in all, and each sending whatever quantity of whatever kind suited his convenience, can any sane man believe that such a system would work for a single month. Let us suppose that there were a hundred of these agents, and no commissariat officers to direct them, is it not certain that chaos would ensue before the lapse of many weeks. Yet the supply, not of an army of a hundred thousand men, but of a world of a thousand millions of people, is maintained by tens of thousands of food growers and merchants all acting independently, and none of them being under any earthly direction. Yet there is not chaos. There never has been chaos. Famine and scarcity, it is true, there have been in isolated cases in certain years and in isolated districts; but there was always a supply ready, not far off, available for relief. Does this not suggest with irresistible force that there must be a world-wide and ever-acting silent superintendence at work, controlling directing, and moving upon the minds of men, a superintendence ever calculating, weighing and regulating, with infallible accuracy, the forces of production, so that all the

world under its charge shall be led like sheep in charge of a shepherd. And whose superintendence, whose design, whose calculation can this possibly be, but His, the Almighty, whose deep design and wonderful calculation weighed and measured the spheres in creation, fixed them in their orbits, and ended this earth with power to produce all things needful for mankind!

Now, it is He who is represented in these marvellous narratives as having designed to bring this people out of Egypt, and as having deliberately, for high and long-enduring purposes, led them into this foodless wilderness.

Is it not then most natural—nay, would it not be most unnatural to suppose it otherwise?—that in default of other supplies, He should send them what was so truly called "Bread from Heaven?" As to how this was brought about it is vain indeed to speculate, and equally vain to deny its possibility.

The bringing of this Manna was the most distinct exercise of miraculous power that had so far transpired in the history of the human race. All other marvellous events had their origin in natural causes. This can be said even of the great Flood, of the fiery overthrow of the cities of the Plain, and of the Plagues of Egypt, as has been shown. But by no cause known to man in the order of nature could this extraordinary supply of daily food be provided. It was a pure exercise of Divine power in the way of Providence, and that is a sufficient cause.

Two things are noticeable about this food. It would not keep. If any man had gathered more than an ordinary day's supply it spoiled. Thus faith and hope were kept in constant exercise. And on every sixth day a double supply was found, so that no work might be done on the holy rest day. This was before the giving of the law on Mount Sinai, and proves that the setting apart the seventh as a day of sacred rest had been previously known. And to preserve the memory of this wonderful provision, a pot of manna was directed to be prepared, and preserved by Aaron, to be kept in the Ark of Testimony when that should be provided.

WATER OUT OF THE ROCK.

The great want of this region is water. The great care of the Dragoman who guides parties of travellers across the same wastes in these days is to see that there is water for the journey. And such is the care of every Caravan.

The host of Israel had now come to a region without wells or fountains, and began to experience the pains of

thirst. And again, instead of quiet confidence and waiting upon God, (for surely the gift of Divine food was sufficient to develop faith), there is renewed murmuring and fault-finding with Moses for bringing them away from Egypt.

Well might the behaviour of the people be described in after ages as a "*provocation*," as a "*hardening of the heart*" in the day of trial, as a grief and burden to the Almighty Ruler who had delivered them.

The bitterness of the people's taunts is reflected in the cry of Moses to the Lord: "*What shall I do to this people? They be almost ready to stone me.*" Certainly unbelief was their one prominent characteristic, as was well remembered in after ages by the great Apostle of the Gentiles, when addressing the believing Hebrews of his time.

The cry of Moses was answered by a command to take these complaining leaders of the people to a rocky ridge forming part of the chain of Horeb, a region well known to Moses. There the Lord promised to meet them ("*I will stand before thee, there, upon the rock,*" He says) and display His power in providing water at a signal from Moses by smiting the rock with his rod. This was done. The water came forth, the people drank, their thirst was assuaged, and assurance given them that their Heavenly Guide could give them not only bread from heaven, but water throughout their travel in the desert. (Again it must be said that it is vain to conjecture *how* this was accomplished. The people needed water. God supplied it in default of all human aid. Beyond this we cannot penetrate.)

The people had displayed their unbelief by perversely disputing and striving, and calling out to one another. "*Is the Lord amongst us or not?*" And the place, in remembrance of all this, was called MASSAH (Temptation), and also MERIBAH (Strife).

THE FIGHT WITH THE AMALEKITES.

The host of Israel had not advanced far into the wilderness before they encountered, and were attacked by, one of the tribes of people descended from Esau. It had been prophesied of him, "*By thy sword shalt thou live,*" and that warlike characteristic was perpetuated in most of his descendants down to remote generations. The tribes of the same desert are of the same warlike disposition to-day.

Esau's grandson, Amalek, was the father of the tribe of roving warriors whose habits of life have been perpetuated in the Bedaween Arabs of modern times. The name Amalek was blotted out from under heaven more than two thousand years ago, but the habits of the desert tribes remain un-

changed. Their hand, as was said of Ishmael, was against every man, and especially any man or company of men that attempted to pass through the territory they claimed as their own, viz., the tract of wilderness north of Sinai and east of the Red Sea.

Their power and prominence is witnessed to by the prophet Balaam, who speaks of Amalek as "*the first of the nations*," that is, of the nations with whom the Hebrew people had to do when they themselves became a nation.

They were on this occasion the aggressors. The simple Mosaic narrative is, "*then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim.*" Plunder was doubtless their object, and certainly a host like this, with many flocks and herds, presented a tempting object to a warlike marauding tribe.

The Hebrews must perforce defend themselves; and now another man comes into view who has never been mentioned before. The hour brings forth the man, as is generally the case. Moses commits the defence of the host to a young man, JOSHUA, doubtless from observation of qualities that had already begun to manifest themselves, and which afterwards made him so distinguished.

"*Choose us out men,*" said Moses to this young man, "*and go out, fight with Amalek.*" From this direction, and from the reference to the "edge of the sword," it is evident that amongst the preparations for the journey, arms had not been neglected. But arms are useless without the right men to handle them. *Choose us out men*, then, is the command, and in this direction is found the key of all successful enterprises, whether military or otherwise.

This was the first of the military events of which so many marked the course of the Israelites before they entered the land of promise. The wars that followed are familiar to all readers of sacred story.

The battle with the Amalekites was solely defensive, and it is interesting to mark the manner of it. For while some fought, others prayed. And the course of the conflict, as the day wore on, was indicated by the energy, or otherwise, that marked the prayer. "*When Moses held up his hand, then Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed.*"

The lifting up of holy hands was always an action of supplication, and the extraordinarily close connection between prayer and Divine help was now strikingly exhibited, for the instruction of faithful people in after ages, even until now. And the artificial help rendered by Aaron and Hur in the holding up of the hands of Moses, curious as it may seem, was acknowledged by the Most High. The mere outward act was nothing. The significance of it, as indicat-

ing dependence on Divine help, and a steadfast expectation of it, was everything. And it was honored.

The close of the day saw the attacking force completely routed. The defeat was so complete, that the Amalekites molested Israel no more during the long sojourn in the wilderness.

The victory was so important that Moses was commanded to make a record of it *in a Book*, and to rehearse it in the ears of Joshua, doubtless to stir the heart of the soldier with the recollection of Divine help in the way of conflict. And with this promise was pronounced a judgment upon Amalek, that was not fulfilled for hundreds of years afterwards; another instance of the manner in which Divine retribution moves slowly.

On this battle field of Rephidim Moses reared an altar, as men have erected monuments on famous battle fields of these times:—Waterloo, for example, and Gettysburg. And the name of it was called *Jehovan-Nissi* (the Lord my Banner), a devout acknowledgment that victory had been due to God alone. Yet Joshua and the chosen men had fought, and fought well. But the spirit that animated them was Faith in God.

The spiritual significance of this conflict is worthy of note. That the life of a Christian man while in the world is one in which spiritual enemies abound, and in which at times conflict has to be maintained, is an old and well-established truth. There are Amalekites round about us all, in the shapes of false doctrines and principles, vicious modes of living, infidelity and scepticism, luxury and idleness, and sometimes open opposition. And temptation from without finds only too much encouragement from within. But the Christian life is not one of *incessant* conflict, and it is not Scriptural to represent it so. Yet there is always *danger* of conflict. Hence the necessity of having arms ready at hand, and of knowing how to use them, more especially the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, also the Shield of Faith, wherewith the fiery darts of the wicked are quenched, and a readiness to pray, always and everywhere.

But the principal parallel of the narrative is with Christians in assembled bodies. The Church of God is marching too. And it has its enemies round about, who occasionally make bitter attacks. Sometimes the secular power persecutes, as of late in Central Africa; sometimes false and un-Christlike and un-apostolic doctrines are broached from within; sometimes the deadly miasma of luxury, ease, wealth, and worldliness spreads over the camp.

Then it is for leaders to awake and betake themselves, every man to his post. A captain has to be chosen, and he to look out chosen men to fight under him. But while these are fighting, the very highest post of service is that of continual prayer by those who cannot fight.

If either is wanting, success will be absent. Some must fight by speech and writing, in pulpit, press, and conversation. But never let it be forgotten that the battle is the Lord's, that He will honor them that wait upon Him with uplifted hands. And in this work of prayer, as Aaron and Hur helped Moses, let man strengthen man, and brother encourage brother, so that they who are occupying the arduous places of the field, say in mission lands or in the slums of wicked cities, may know that there are those who are co-operating with them in a way approved in all times by the Lord of Hosts, and so thank God, and take courage.

For while Moses held up his hands, Israel prevailed, but when his hands hung down, Amalek prevailed.

CHAPTER IX.

THE PREPARATION FOR THE GIVING OF THE LAW.

THE SAGE COUNSEL OF JETHRO.

Exodus 18 and 19.

Whilst the host of Israel was near the scene of conflict with the Amalekites, there occurred a remarkable conference between Moses and his father-in-law, Jethro, here called a priest of Midian.

Jethro is now in extreme old age, for it is forty years since Moses, as a stranger and a fugitive, first came in contact with him and his family in the desert region near Horeb. Moses married his daughter. Sons were born; and, to all human appearance, the man who might have been a king of Egypt was now likely to spend and end his days as chief of a wandering tribe of shepherds. But God willed otherwise.

Moses has fulfilled the great mission on which he was sent to Egypt, and now, after an interval of time—how long an interval we cannot tell—he reappears at the head of this great company of people who are slowly making their way through the passes of the desert.

Here his wife and sons join him, brought by Jethro, his father-in-law. It is noticeable that we hear no more of the wife of Moses at all, or of his sons, except as private individuals. These two men, Gershom and Eliezer, might have been expected to become prominent in the great company, and to assist their father in the work of guiding and leading the people. Humanly speaking, in the natural order of things, they would have been the men to succeed him, and carry forward his work. But not a word of this do we read.

Doubtless they were not the sort of men to entrust with office and responsibility, and they were not of pure Hebrew blood. Considerations like these, however, have not prevented great leaders in modern times from pushing relatives into prominence. Every European country can show examples of it.

Yet if these sons of Moses had had a tithe of their grandfather's capacity, they would have been valuable men in the councils of the leader. For certainly there have been few instances of wisdom and political sagacity in the world superior to that shown by this chief of Midian.

The advice given to Moses was worthy of Lord Bacon.

There were even in that company cases of perplexity and dispute, as there always are and will be when numbers of people are associated together. All these were referred to Moses himself, as was, at first, most natural. No matter how petty the case, every man would like to have the great leader's decision upon it. So Moses is found, apparently on a day appointed, sitting "*to judge the people, and the people stood by Moses from the morning unto the evening*," waiting, many of them, all day long, for their turn to receive judgment on the case. The aged chief, noticing Moses thus occupied, probably through a very long day, with cases, many of them of a trivial character, enquires, "What is this thing that thou doest to the people? *Why sittest thou thyself alone?*" To which Moses replied, "*The people come to me to enquire of God; and I judge between one and another.*"

Then the father-in-law replies, with a sound practical wisdom that indicates much experience in the affairs of men, "*What thou doest is not good. Thou wilt surely wear thyself away and wilt weary out the people also. This thing is too heavy for thee to perform thyself alone.*" Thou shalt provide out of all the people, ABLE MEN, SUCH AS FEAR GOD, MEN OF TRUTH, HATING COVETOUSNESS, and place these over them as rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, and rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. And let them judge the people at all seasons. And it shall be, that every great matter they shall bring to thee, but every small matter thou shalt judge. So shall it be easier for thyself, and they shall bear the burden with thee. If thou shalt do this thing, and God command thee so, then thou shalt be able to endure, and all this people shall go to their place in peace."

When reading such words as these, we find it hard to realize that we are not listening to some wise Pericles, or able Justinian; to some of the great Greeks or Romans who built the fabric of the civilized states of the old world; or, it may be, to such a one as our own Alfred the Great, or the wise Burleigh of Queen Elizabeth's time; or to one of the founders of the American Republic who have had the glory and responsibility of shaping the destiny of one of the chief countries of the modern world.

That a man who was no more than the chief of a half-civilized encampment of wanderers over the desert should give forth such words of political wisdom, is calculated to elevate our whole conception of the intellectual and moral tone, not only of the individual man, but of those times antecedent to secular history which are sometimes conceived to be ages of ignorance.

For let us consider further. In this scheme of divided

authority and oversight, gradually rising from the dealing with the smallest to the greatest matters, have we not the germ of the system of government and jurisprudence in all well-ordered States of the present day, and of which our own country is so good an example. Have we not, by the wisdom of men of past generations, inherited exactly such a system; where the concerns of a township are dealt with by a council elected to deal with the small matters appertaining to it; then, as a next step, the business of a county by county councillors; then the larger concerns of a whole province by a local legislature; until finally we have the great matters affecting the whole country under charge of a Parliament of the Dominion. Is this not exactly a carrying out of the idea of the old man of thousands of years ago; the idea, that is, of rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens? And have we not the same principle in our jurisprudence, where a recorder's court or magistrate's bench deals with small matters, a county judge with higher ones, provincial judges with matters of larger importance, until we come to such a high jurisdiction as that of the Supreme Court of Canada or the United States, or the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council of England!

Then, how wise and comprehensive his description of the men to be chosen for these offices! What better indications of suitability could we have even in these days in looking out for town councillors, for members of Parliament, or for members of the Government, than those contained in this description? What better guidance in choice for those who have the charge of selecting men for responsible positions, for heads of departments in business, for managers of great railways, or financial enterprises, for governors of states or provinces, for ambassadors or secretaries of state?

Four particulars are given, every one of them weighty and pertinent.

The men chosen for office are to be—

First: "ABLE MEN: men of capacity, intelligence, experience; men who, as it is expressed in another place, "have understanding of the times, and know what men ought to do."

Second: "SUCH AS FEAR GOD;" for a man who has no sense of moral responsibility is only the more dangerous because of his ability; "a man, then, who has 'the fear of God before his eyes,' and will do no wrong to any man if he knows it; who can be depended on to be faithful in difficult circumstances, incorruptible, not looking to his own ease or pleasure, but to do his duty in the sight of the All-Seeing."

Third: "MEN OF TRUTH;" who will not deceive those who appoint them by representing matters otherwise than as they are; will not send flattering reports, will not conceal damaging conditions, will not falsify accounts, will not write misleading despatches; but will, on the contrary, state things exactly as they are, whether good or bad.

Fourth: "HATING COVETOUSNESS;" a most wise condition; for what more common danger, as all experience proves, than that men shall use power and office to enrich themselves; shall accept gifts and presents, because of their love of money, and so have their eyes blinded and their judgment perverted; shall betray the trust reposed in them by using public funds to their own advantage.

Notice the strength of the expression: not merely *avoiding* covetousness, but *hating* it!

And, certainly, all experience shows that it is a thing to be sternly repressed, not only by a man in dealing with temptations to himself, but in his dealings with others. A man who displays a covetous disposition is unfit for any position of responsibility, whether public or private; and to displace him is only just.

Such were the wise counsels of this sagacious old chief, and we have only to imagine them to have been universally operative during this very century of modern history, to understand what innumerable scandals would have been prevented, what bad legislation would have been stopped, what embezzlements and frauds would never have been even conceived, much less executed; how, in fact, the whole tone of public and private life would have been lifted to a plane of wisdom and righteousness which it is hard to conceive of.

May we not pray that the great Lord of all the forces of life, both secular and sacred, may so work upon the minds of men through His Church, that hereafter governments and human society may approximate to this ideal more and more; until our Parliament, our Councils, our diplomatic service, our great public and commercial institutions, may be filled with men of this kind, ABLE MEN, FEARING GOD, MEN OF TRUTH, AND HATING COVETOUSNESS.

And now, in the third month of their departure from Egypt, the great host again broke up camp, and moved to a spot that has ever since been famous, not in the history of this people only, but of the world. For they now rested, and pitched their tents in the great level plain which stretches out from the base of Mount Sinai.

This mountain of several peaks is easily identified as the scene of the great occurrences that took place upon it and about it. It would be a striking object even to men accustomed to mountain scenery, for its sides are bare, rising in rocky, abrupt masses sheer up from the plain, its summit jagged, rough and precipitous, piercing the sky at a height of seven thousand feet above the sea. But to men who had never seen a mountain in their lives, the towering masses of Sinai, many colored, at times cloud-capped, piercing the very heavens in solemn grandeur, could not but inspire feelings of intense awe and solemnity.

It was in the plain at the foot of the mountain that the camp was now pitched; in a place where all the circumstances of majesty and grandeur that accompanied the declaration of the Law could be plainly seen by every man and woman in the host. It has, however, not been sufficiently noticed that all that transpired was not of a nature to inspire terror, or even awe. Before the law was proclaimed, gracious words of covenant, and promise, and blessing were pronounced. Let it be noted that these words came first—the law followed after that; in fact the Law was founded on the covenant of Blessing. Moses was the medium of communication, but the words were addressed to the whole assembly.

"Ye have seen," said the Lord, what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself!" Words, these, surely, of wonderful tenderness and beauty. There is nothing of the terror of Sinai about them, although the people were right under the shadow of the Mount. They are like the pleading, not of a father, but of a mother, "*I bare you on eagles' wings,*"—does this not remind us of the pleading tenderness of the Divine Saviour, when, mourning over Jerusalem He exclaimed: "*How often would I have gathered you, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not.*"

Then the Lord went on to say: "*Now, therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people. For all the earth is mine. And ye shall be a kingdom of priests and an holy nation.*"

A wonderful prospect indeed for this emancipated people; not a prospect however of houses and lands and silver and gold, of health and wealth, and all that makes the prosperity of this world. Blessings of that sort had truly been promised to their fathers; but these were of a far higher order; blessings to be apprehended by faith in the unseen and Almighty God. To be valued and guarded by Him as a precious treasure was surely a great promise for this

people to dwell on, strangers as they were in a strange land, and that land a waste and sterile desert, in which were hostile tribes surrounding them, they themselves being so great a host that natural sustenance by food and water was impossible to be provided. Men who are fighting their way through the difficult paths of ordinary life know the value of a wealthy and powerful friend, and such would be the feeling of the faithful ones amongst this people now. They would proceed on their way through the wilderness with confidence. But apparently, alas, the number of such men amongst this host was few.

But these wonderful words to Israel went further. They were to be a KINGDOM OF PRIESTS and a HOLY NATION; remarkable words indeed, and worth careful pondering by Christian people, inasmuch as they have been perpetuated by one of the Apostles of our Lord as applicable to the spiritual Israel, the true children of God of all nations and times. Writing to the Christians of his time, the Apostle Peter quotes the words addressed to his ancestors, and applies them to those who have received Jesus Christ as Saviour, and who love Him though they have never seen Him. "Ye are," says the Apostle, "*a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people.*"

It is evident that what the disciples of Christ are to be to the world around them, that the Hebrew people were designed to be to the nations with whom they came in contact, viz., a light amidst darkness, a preservative "salt" in ages of corruption, a people consecrated to the service of the Supreme and Living God; knowing His will, and exemplifying it in lives of purity, truth, faithfulness, and goodness.

All this is involved in the idea of their being a "holy" nation and a people favored and loved by their Creator. But all is contingent on obedience.

The phrase, "*a kingdom of priests,*" is one, however, that requires a little elucidation.

In a strict and literal sense, it is impossible that any kingdom shall consist wholly of Priests, if a Priest is meant simply one who is set apart to minister in a sanctuary, to offer sacrifices upon an altar, or to perform such service in a temple or house of worship as may be called for by the form of religion professed.

The Hebrews who were present before Sinai had all spent their lives in a country abounding in temples consecrated to the gods, in which priests ministered according to the rites and ceremonies established amongst them. To this service in the temples the Priests were set apart, and they constituted a body or *caste* by themselves of high dignity

and esteem. That such was the position of the Priests of Egypt in the time of Joseph has already been seen. But the whole kingdom could not have consisted of such Priests, as is quite evident. Some other meaning must be sought for the term, therefore, and it is to be found in considering what is at the root of the whole idea of the Priesthood. The root of the idea of the Priesthood is that of consecration or the setting apart to the service of God. This idea may take many forms, and be developed in very different ways; but all these different forms and methods when traced to their foundation are found to rest upon a consecration or setting apart. Thus, then, it can be conceived how a whole kingdom may be priests as respects the rest of mankind, by being consecrated and set apart to obey and serve the One Eternal God. And this was evidently the meaning and intention of the Divine Covenant with these Hebrews. They were to be set apart from the rest of mankind, they were to be consecrated to His service, obeying His voice, and keeping His commands; and so exhibiting a constant light, in matters of religion, to the rest of mankind. And in this service the whole people were to be engaged.

This by no means precluded the idea that when the time came for an orderly system of worship to be instituted, certain persons from amongst them should be set apart for service in the sanctuary. Thus, while the whole body of the people, when duly serving God, would be a kingdom of priests, as respects the rest of mankind, these, set apart for the service of God in the sanctuary, whatever the form of that might be, would be priests amongst their own people.

And this idea was exactly carried out in Christian times. The whole body of Christian people are a royal priesthood, set apart to serve and obey their Lord and Master in His kingdom on earth. But from amongst them, men have at all times been set apart, to serve and minister in the Christian assembly or in a Christian sanctuary.

And as the functions, office, and authority of the Hebrew priest were defined by Him in whose sanctuary they were to serve, even so the Christian minister (for Christ's servants in the Church are never called priests by Him, or by His Apostles) has his office, duty, and authority, defined by Him who is Head over His Church in all things.

When these words were spoken to the elders of the people, evidently as representing the host, they "*answered together,*" in memorable words, remembered and quoted afterwards by the Apostle Paul: "ALL THAT THE LORD HATH SPOKEN WE WILL DO." Thus they accepted the covenant

with its conditions and blessings; and one cannot but think with sadness how very far short they came of doing what they promised; nay, how often they set the covenant at defiance altogether, both in the wilderness and in the land of Canaan.

After this came the solemn preparations for the giving of the Law from the great mountain. These solemn preparations, and the subsequent tremendous appearances, are noticeable for this reason, that they took place with reference to the giving of the Moral precepts of the Law alone, thus marking off these precepts from the laws as to ceremonies, sacrifices, festivals, garments, sacred buildings, and also from the laws concerning the civil and secular life of the nation. The moral law was spoken in the hearing of all the people; the rest of the voluminous precepts were given to Moses alone. Moreover, the Law of the Ten Commands was written with the finger of God upon two tables of stone; all which suggests that there is a wide difference between the one set of precepts and the other, that the one were temporary and for this Hebrew people only, while the others were to last for all time and to be for all the people of the world.

The preparations were significant. First there was commanded a solemn purification by washing, and a setting apart the people for two days, sanctifying them and making them ready to appear in the manifested presence of God. Doubtless this sanctifying had reference to preparation of mind, and to a remembrance especially of God's gracious words just spoken. Next, there was a setting bounds about the mountain, and a charge of most peculiar solemnity forbidding them to go near it, or to touch the border of it, on penalty of immediate death. For the mountain was, for the time, to be the throne of the Divine Majesty, from whence He was to speak His will to this people and all the world through them.

There was, lastly, an announcement that on the third day, at the sound of a trumpet waxing louder and louder, they were all to assemble under the lead of Moses, and stand before the Mount to "*meet with God.*"

Such directions as these were calculated to make the most thoughtless of them ponder and consider their ways, and to receive the words spoken in such a manner that they would veritably be *written on their hearts!*

And as it was made known to them, so it came about. The third day came, and again we find a strange mingling of the natural and the supernatural in the circumstances of the scene.

"It came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there

were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount"—all perfectly natural phenomena. But in that region, doubtless, the rolling and reverberation of the thunder from one rocky height to another, in one of the wildest mountain regions in the world, would be grand and awful beyond imagination.

But the voice of the Trumpet was supernatural, and as it waxed louder and louder, it was no wonder the people trembled. So the whole mountain appeared as if on fire, the lightnings blazing and flashing, being *altogether on a smoke, the smoke ascending like the smoke of a furnace*. Doubtless the rolling masses of vapour in the great thunder storm would have this effect. Then *the Lord came down from the Mount*, and called Moses to ascend, charging him to warn the people not to come near, not even the priests, but Aaron alone, even as, in an after time, the High Priest alone went into the Most Holy Place of the Sanctuary.

It was amidst such circumstances of unparalleled grandeur that the Law of Mount Sinai was given, and surely every feature of the solemnity of that day was calculated to deepen the impression on the minds of the people, that the LORD JEHOVAH was a great king over all the earth—a God of Gods, and not merely one amongst many.

CRITICAL NOTE TO CHAPTER IX.

ON THE WORD PECULIAR.

This word, which is found in the same connection both in the Old Testament and the New, has been strangely misapprehended. It is generally supposed to intimate that the persons who keep God's commandments and have faith in Jesus Christ are to be noted for odd and strange fashions in dress, or speech, or manners, that they are to be *peculiar* in this sense. But the words have no such meaning. They mean something far more important and far-reaching. Israel, keeping God's covenant, was to be a *peculiar Treasure*; a treasure of a special and highly valued kind, dearly purchased by special and wonderful displays of Divine power and judgment.

And when the Apostle Peter, quoting this passage and applying it to Christians, affirms that they are a "peculiar" people, he uses a word which means costly, specially purchased and acquired, and therefore "highly valued," the idea carrying us back to the statement that Christians have not been redeemed with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ. So when the Apostle Paul, addressing Titus, speaks of our Saviour Jesus Christ as purifying to Himself a "peculiar" people, he uses another word of the same import, viz., precious, highly valued, or costly.

None of these passages have anything whatever to do with dress, or manners, or speech, and they who adopt a fashion in dress or speech which is odd or peculiar, under the idea that this is becoming to a peculiar people, do so in entire ignorance of the Divine will.

NOTE AS TO PRIESTS IN THE FOREGOING CHAPTER.

The warning that not even the Priests are to approach the Mount, indicates that some preliminary and incipient organization as to the priesthood had taken place before its formal institution by ordinance and statute from Mount Sinai. For let it be remembered that up to that time, amongst this people and their ancestors, there was not that sharp line of demarcation between secular and sacred things that was afterwards so marked. Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob were all of them "men of the world," having large secular affairs on hand all their lives, yet they all built altars, and offered sacrifices thereon.

The famous Melchizedek, priest of the Most High God, was king of his own city of Salem. The wise counsellor, Jethro, is called by a name which signifies either "priest" or "pince." So that at this early and unorganized stage of the nation's life, the elders, or leaders, who are so often mentioned in this narrative of the departure from Egypt, might very well be termed priests, as they are in this narrative, although no formal organization of a separate order had as yet taken place.

High God,
counsellor,
or "priest"
unorganized
who are so
ture from
they are in
of a separ-

CHAPTER X.

THE LAW OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS.

THE FIRST TABLE.

Exodus 20.

When Law is spoken of, the first consideration is as to the right of the law-giver; that is, if the law-giver is a single person. When companies of people are thrown together, and begin a new state of society, they can, and generally do, agree together as to the rules they are to observe in their affairs and dealings, both with one another and with other persons.

But, even here, if the company has been led out of a lower condition into a higher, by the talent and energy of one man of mark, it is quite natural that the company, so raised up or called out, finding themselves still dependent for the continuance of their organized life upon his foresight and wisdom, shall allow him to frame rules for their guidance, and shall then willingly obey them.

The right of any single law-giver to make rules, thus rests upon what he has done; and what he is able to do. He has rescued, he has delivered; he has found out a new country, he has shown capacity for leadership, he has gained victories over enemies; he is now watching for them, looking for food and subsistence, and they depend upon him for guidance. Such a man, in such a position, has the natural right to make laws; and will unquestionably be obeyed.

In this unique narrative of the Book of Exodus, it is no mortal man who is imposing his will upon his fellows, but the Supreme Lord and Creator of all things. But He is imposing His will upon this particular people not so much as their Creator, for He sustains that relation to all men, nor even as the Great Provider, for that also He is to all men, and as such he has right to give laws and claim the obedience of all men. But here He announces Himself as the Divine Lord who has "*brought them out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.*" It is, then, primarily as their Great Deliverer from slavery, and that by wonderful displays of supernatural power—striking down their oppressors with a Mighty Arm (as the descendants of these people sang in

after ages), it is thus that he claims the right to give them commands and exact binding laws. It is because He has made a nation of them, has led them with infallible guidance through the desert, has provided, and is providing them with food and water, and has enabled him to defeat their enemies; this, along with the covenant that they shall always be the object of His love and care—"a peculiar treasure to Him"—is the ground on which He claims obedience.

And it is impossible to deny the rightfulness of this claim. When he begins the declaration of His will by the solemn words, "*I am the Lord thy God which brought thee out of slavery,*" we instinctively acquiesce in His words of command as reasonable in the highest degree, so far as that Hebrew people were concerned.

But, so far as mankind in general are concerned, what is the ground on which the God who has called out these Hebrews claims the allegiance and obedience of the whole human race? Why do we, Christian people of another race and time, acknowledge the obligation of these commands, rehearse them in our sacred assemblies, and teach our children to observe them? We have not been brought up out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, nor have we been delivered from any Pharaoh, or led by a pillar of cloud and fire, or fed, with manna in any wilderness, or supplied with water out of a rock. Whence, then, the authority of the Law-Giver over us, and on what ground is obedience based?

These questions are reasonable, and if they put us upon an enquiry into our relations to the Supreme Law-Giver, they will be found highly salutary and useful.

Have we not, then, and have not all the people in the world, been under the care and watchful Providence of an unseen and All-Powerful Divine Creator, all our life long?

Who brought us up and cared for us during the long years of helpless childhood? Our parents? True. But who sustained and fed and watched over *them*?

It is said, *we* have never been fed with manna from heaven, *we* have never drunk water out of a rock in the wilderness. But by whose supervising and calculating care has it been that supplies of food and water have never failed to us, and to the rest of mankind?

It has already been shown that there must have been an ever-operating, and infallibly wise supervision over all the natural forces of the world that have resulted in giving us food during all our days. If we have not been fed with manna direct from heaven, we certainly have with a variety

of food which has been produced by forces with the creation of which we have had and could have nothing to do, and which forces must have been Divine.

If no water from a rock in a desert has been for our sustenance, whence, but from a Divine and ever-operating power, has it been that the water of springs and wells and rivers has been constantly available to us? A pillar of fire and cloud, visible to the bodily eye, has not guided us in any journey we have taken. True. But what of the guiding hand of a Providential Ruler and Friend that has manifestly been about us, showing us the way in which we should walk. Has that not been visible to the eye of the soul?

If we believe in a Divine Creator at all, and how is it possible not so to believe, we cannot, if we follow on with any rational process of thought, refuse to acknowledge also a Divine Provider and a Divine Guide. This much even a wise heathen like Socrates has concluded as an intellectual truth, though, strange to say, he never worshipped the Divinity he had concluded to exist, but continued, even to the last hours of his life, to be a heathen in practice.

But now, with the light of a revelation about us, having apprehended the Creator as Supreme Ruler and Provider, we must see that it is for Him to direct, control, and give commands as to the course of our lives.

But Christian people can proceed further than this.

To them there has been a real deliverance from Egypt, from a house of spiritual bondage, even a bondage to sinful ways and lusts, and to Satan, the great adversary and tyrant of the soul.

This deliverance has been effected by the shedding of blood, the blood of the Son of God, the true Paschal lamb, who "*by the Eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot unto God, as a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.*" And to them, there is a feeding on bread from heaven, the spiritual manna, even Jesus Christ, the true "*bread which giveth life unto the world.*" And there is also a water of life flowing freely to all who will receive it. And this also is the same Jesus Christ.

So, then, not only as Creator, Provider, Guide, but as a Divine Deliverer, Redeemer, Saviour, does the Lord of Christian souls have the right to direct and command. And this is gladly acquiesced in by all faithful ones, the very essence of whose spiritual life is obedience in heart and soul to the requirements of Him who is honored with the highest regard of which the soul is capable.

Under the Christian order there is not merely an outward

and apprehensible declaration of what is required to be done, but an inward power, working upon the mind and conscience, disposing to a hearty and generous reception of the commandment, a power affecting the intellect, that the law may be discerned to be "*holy, and just, and good;*" and obedience to it to be a "*reasonable service,*" or a service of the understanding; and affecting the heart, that there may be a genuine love of the goodness inculcated, and a positive dislike to the opposite evil.

And all experience shows that such an internal power is absolutely necessary to the working out of the commandment in practice. The wisest of the heathen or pagans of former ages have framed systems of ethics, which, in regard to the relations and duties of men to one another, are almost perfect. But it is one thing to say what it is right to do, and another to induce obedience. For all the instincts, desires and passions of men draw them strongly in an opposite direction. Hence the utter powerlessness of the mere promulgation of systems of virtue and goodness. Men will not obey them, for they do not love them.

It was then, with profound and all-wise knowledge of human nature, that the promulgation of these commandments was prefaced by declarations of tenderness and love, calculated to draw out the affections and to work upon the heart of the hearers.

The COMMANDMENTS themselves are universally known. Their most marked characteristic is that they are not simply a code of Ethics, but a code of Religion. Their foundation is religious. The duty of man to man is made to rest on a religious foundation. The first commands do not concern the duty of man to man at all—a very striking feature, that makes them differ from all codes of moral conduct that have ever been promulgated. Yet this is most natural; for how can it be otherwise than that the Creator of man, his Provider, Sustainer, Guide, shall require, first of all, a hearty loyalty to Himself.

And this especially in view of a tendency, that experience had proved to be deeply rooted in human nature, to frame theories of other Divinities, to pay them homage, and to embody ideas of them in carved and graven images, the likeness of various things in heaven and earth.

The FIRST command, therefore, is that no other god is to be served. Supreme honor, allegiance, worship, is to be for the Creator alone.

The SECOND follows naturally upon this. No graven image, no likeness of any living thing of air, of earth, or

water, is to be worshipped or had in religious honor and reverence.

And the far-reaching wisdom of this command is realized on remembering what debasing, demoralizing, and scandalous things have been and even now are carved, and lifted up, in heathen temples to be worshipped and adored by the people. The people who first heard the law had seen much of this in Egypt. And they saw more of it in Canaan, where the images of Baal, and Ashteroth, the queen of heaven, were to be found with debasing and demoralizing influences flowing constantly from them.

In the Second Commandment, there is the mention of a sanction and a penalty. "*I, the Lord, thy God, am a jealous God.*" is a word that has been ignorantly criticised as bringing the Eternal Jehovah down to the level of a narrow-minded and suspicious man.

But how could it be otherwise with a Being who was what he is represented to be, viz., not a mere impassive and unconscious force, but a living, thinking, loving Creator and Redeemer, loving the right and necessarily hating the wrong; loving the creatures who are so much like Himself and for whose sake the very world itself is sustained in being, all the tremendous forces of life and energy in nature being kept constantly in operation for His sake.

How could such a Being not be jealous? Love is always jealous. A love that is indifferent to desertion is no love at all. A father who cares not for his children's affection is not worthy of the name of father.

If, then, God loves any man or any race or community of men. He must in the very nature and necessity of things be jealous of any tendency on their part to stray away from Him.

With regard to the declaration that the iniquity of fathers is visited upon the children to the third and fourth generation of them that hate God, this is evidently, in its primary sense, intended as a strong incentive to the doing of good on the part of parents, and a deterrent from doing evil, lest they should bring harm upon their offspring. The love of parents to children is appealed to, to preserve parents from falling away from the Living God, to the debasing worship of idols. But it is certain that the perpetuation of evil from parent to child, generation after generation, is stamped upon the very nature of mankind. Men who refuse to admit the Divine origin of these Commandments are compelled to acknowledge this as a law of human existence; and this must be so. It flows naturally from the very relation of parents to child. The idolater will bring up his children to be idolaters both by example and direct

precept. The men who in these times and in Christian countries, live in wickedness, and are "haters of God," exercise a demoralizing influence on their children. The degraded and criminal population of the "slums" of cities bring up their children in vice and crime. It is not so much, generally, a matter of pure physical heredity, for neither grace nor vice come by mere descent of blood, but of immoral examples and speech, continually operating to poison the moral atmosphere which children breathe, and so to intensify and aggravate that natural tendency to evil which is common to all men.

But there are undoubtedly certain sins that are connected with abuse of bodily functions that tend to perpetuate themselves by the force of direct heredity. And this is particularly the case with drunkenness and licentiousness. These sins affect the bodily constitution, and are carried on from generation to generation by the laws of natural descent. And this warning comes naturally as a sequence to the prohibition of idolatry, seeing that the idolatry of ancient times was demoralizing and debasing, *religion itself being an instrument of defilement and corruption.*

As we proceed with the study of these Commandments, we cannot but notice how each of them is directed against some practice or course of conduct *to which human nature is prone.* The first is against the forsaking of the true and only Supreme Being for other objects of worship. These may be material or immaterial. For example, money, fame, power, may become divinities to a man. *Mammon* is a word which embraces them all, and in the teaching of the Divine Saviour is put in direct opposition to God. "Covetousness is idolatry." is another saying of the New Testament. These are divinities which cannot be represented by material forms, the devotion to which is prohibited in the First Commandment.

But others can be represented by graven images of wood, stone or marble, and had been so represented for ages at the time the Law was given. The devotion of men and women to this form of idolatry has survived even unto Christian times.

The **THIRD** Commandment deals with that proneness to make light of the Divine Name which has characterized some men in all ages. From the grosser forms of profane swearing in which men of passionate natures indulge, to the light and frivolous trifling with sacred things that distinguishes others, all such are embraced in this prohibition. As the Supreme Being is, in Himself, worthy of the highest honor, adoration and reverence, as no being or thing is to be conceived of in comparison with Him, so His

very name is to be pronounced reverently, and not lightly; still less is it to be used to accentuate forms of words which express the wicked passions of malice, hatred, and all uncharitableness.

This prohibition has by some been considered to extend to those oaths which are required to be taken in courts of justice. But this position cannot be maintained with reason. For the essence of the prohibition is against *irreverence* and *lightness* in using the Holy Name. "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God *in vain*"—that is, foolishly, lightly, and irreverently. But an oath in a court of justice is a thing of solemnity in itself, and it is administered for a very serious and sacred purpose, viz., to ensure the speaking of truth in a controversy between man and man. It is a calling upon the Supreme Judge to intervene and see that the right prevails, and that justice is done.

Yet it must be said that this very solemn act is at times performed lightly and irreverently; and whenever so performed, there is a breach of the Commandment, and the incurring of guilt.

The last of the Commands which refer to the Divine Being is that relating to the Day of Rest.

The scope and character of this command is often misunderstood. The Fourth Command is not simply to abstain from work, and to make of the seventh a day of rest. It is evident that at the time of the giving of these commands the seventh day was well known to be a day of rest. The strong impulses of human nature with regard to the day were of two opposite kinds. They were so then, and they have been so ever since. There were the impulses of a grasping, money-loving disposition, desiring to go on working and earning or making money all the days of the week, and to have their servants and employees work also.

To this class the command speaks strongly and prohibitively. Six days are for work, and in these six days all work must be finished. The seventh day is for rest from work, both for man and beast.

The other, and generally by far the most numerous class, is that of persons who desire to make the seventh day a time of pleasure and amusement. They do not desire to work, and they do not work.

But they do not desire to have the day as "a rest of the Lord God," but as a day of ordinary pleasure.

The command begins, therefore, with the emphatic word, "REMEMBER," a word which shews how prone men were in former ages (even as they are now) to *forget* that this day was set apart by the Creator as a time sacred to Himself.

Remember to keep this day SACRED. It is a holy, and not

a secular rest, that is enjoined. Its purpose is not merely that the bodily frame of man may be conserved, or that his mind may be prevented from being overtaxed, but that men may be brought, once in every week, to remember their Creator, and all they owe to Him. The very object of the command is that regular and systematic opportunity may be afforded for worship in concert, for meeting together, to praise the Lord of Creation and Redemption. And this, in view of the fact that human nature is now estranged from Him, and would, if left to itself, employ rest and recreation days in debasing pleasure (as is well known to be the case even in countries where Christianity is professed), or would take no notice of the need for rest, and continue working and compelling others to work in the ordinary occupations of life.

The command above all others is for the welfare of the large mass of mankind and womankind who are employed and controlled by others, and who, in the absence of such a provision as this, would wear out their lives in an increasing round of toil.

CRITICAL NOTES TO CHAPTER X.

In speaking of the love of goodness, the hatred of evil, the jealousy of disobedience on the part of the Supreme and Eternal Ruler, language must be used that conveys intelligible ideas; and these words do convey such ideas; and the ideas when examined are found to comport with the highest attributes of justice and righteousness. It should, however, never be forgotten that all our knowledge and conceptions of the Eternal Divinity are of *His relations to mankind*.

What the Supreme Being is in the abstract, or in His essence, no man can know—not the profoundest philosopher any more than the untaught peasant. But we can know, and do understand, the Eternal God in His relations to mankind as Creator, Provider, Redeemer, Guide, Consoler, and Just Ruler. And it is thus He is revealed in the Sacred Word.

But, after all, this limitation to our understanding of the Supreme God applies to all human knowledge. One of the greatest original thinkers of this day, Herbert Spencer, has pointed out and plainly shown that all our knowledge is relative; that is, we know nothing in its essence, but only in its relations and bearings upon ourselves and other things.

If, then, it is objected that we cannot conceive of an Infinite Intelligence and Supreme Creator being affected by such feelings as anger, jealousy, hatred, it is sufficient to say, first, that if the Supreme Being were revealed to us as a simple, impassive embodiment of Force, He would be inferior to ourselves, for the highest development of human nature is to love righteousness, hate iniquity, and be jealous of the infraction of law; and second, that whatever may be the nature of the thoughts of the Eternal God in essence, it is only by describing them in human language that they can be made in the slightest degree intelligible to us.

AS TO THE SINS OF THE FATHERS BEING VISITED UPON THE CHILDREN.

This declaration of the Second Commandment is by no means inconsistent with a striking passage in the prophecies of Ezekiel, where the responsibility of every man for his own sins is maintained. There is no inconsistency, for this reason, that the commandment expresses a broad and general truth as to the effect of the sins of parents upon their children, a truth which all experience confirms.

But all truth, all doctrine and commandments may be abused; as, for example, are the doctrines of the grace of God, as unfolded in the New Testament. In the time of Ezekiel this truth of the Second Commandment was abused. Men who well knew that they were doing wrong, and breaking God's commandments, when called upon to repent, caviled and trifled, making light of God's messenger, blaming their parents or ancestors, quoting the Second Commandment, and alleging their helplessness. *Our fathers have cuten sour grapes, said they, and we the children have our teeth set on edge.* But their very attitude and words showed that they were not helpless victims of circumstances. For such victims are unconscious of their position. But these men were fully conscious of it. They knew they were doing wrong, and voluntarily persisted in it. Then it was that the voice of the Supreme Law-Giver and Judge sounded in their ears by the mouth of the prophet; it is vain and wicked trifling for you to evade responsibility. You will not be punished for your fathers' sins but for your own. *The soul that sinneth, it shall die.*

Thus, though through a parent's fault and bad example evil tendencies are intensified, and so the sin of the father is visited upon the son, there is, nevertheless, in the conscience of every man that which witnesseth to the fact of individual responsibility for actual wrong-doing. And in that very conscience there is that which will lift a man out of his father's evil ways and enable him to take hold of the great remedial measures which are found both in the old dispensation and the new, and which were being strongly insisted on by the prophet himself.

OF THE OBLIGATION OF THE SABBATH AS INTERPRETED
BY JESUS CHRIST.

It is sometimes supposed that the teaching of the Divine Saviour respecting the Sabbath was contrary to that of the Fourth Commandment. This supposition has rested, first, upon His working miracles of healing on the Sabbath; next, on his reasoning that the ox or ass must be taken to water, or relieved in case of accident, on the rest day; next, on His allowing His disciples to pluck the ears of corn in the fields on that day; and finally, on His declaration that the Rest day was made for man and not man for the Rest day.

But none of these were contrary to the Fourth Commandment. They certainly were contrary to certain pharisaical interpretations of it by the men whom Christ declared to have made God's commands of none effect through their traditions. But to the Commandment itself they were not

contrary. For it is evident that the "work" so strongly prohibited therein was the secular work of the business of life, the work by which men earn their livelihood or acquire wealth, in various callings and occupations. Now, the relieving the necessity of the sick is not such work, neither is the feeding of animals, who are under our care, neither is the helping of an animal out of danger, neither is the plucking of ears of corn by a passenger through a field. That the Sabbath was made for man is an undeniable truth, and it can be clearly demonstrated that a reverent observance of it as a sacred day is conducive to the best welfare of mankind in all conditions and circumstances.

The reference to the day of Rest by the prophet Isaiah (the prophet, let it be remembered, who seems to have anticipated the times of the Christian dispensation) is a Divine commentary on the Fourth Commandment.

"If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath—from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shall honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words—then I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth. (Isaiah lviii. 13.)

In this Divine unfolding of the Fourth Commandment, the remarkable thing is the emphasis laid on not taking one's own pleasure, thus emphatically reprobating a view of the Sabbath which has obtained much currency in modern days, and which, sad to say, has been approved by a certain section of the Christian Church.

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CHAPTER XI.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS.

THE SECOND TABLE OF THE LAW.

Exodus 20.

In considering the last of these Commandments, viz., those relating to the duties of men one to another, it is to be noticed that these are such as obtain the universal assent of all men, in all places, and in all ages. The Ethics of all systems and nations are in theory very similar to one another. For it is a fact that the conscience of mankind is much more alive to breaches of this class of commands than to those relating to the honor and worship of the Creator. And the reason is not far to seek. The fall of man (and the inherited tendencies that have flowed from it) had reference primarily to his duty and obligation to the Creator.

Consequently, the world has ever been prone either to false religions, or to corruptions of the true, or to an abandonment, either formally or essentially, of religion altogether. That men are naturally alienated from the Supreme God, that they are averse to Him, and to the doing of His will, is an undeniable truth. "*The carnal mind,*" as it is expressed by the Apostle Paul, "*is enmity against God.*" The term "*carnal mind,*" or "*the minding of the flesh,*" as it might be translated, is but another term for *human nature*, which is "*not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be,*" unless Divinely changed.

But to practice, in at least some degree, the ordinary moral virtues, and to restrain from many vices, not to say many crimes, is a necessity of human life. Without such restraint, any organized society would become in course of time, simply chaos. Such virtues, therefore, have been almost invariably inculcated.

But the world has seen, in these modern times, on a great scale, in the history of nations, the carrying out of theories of absolute freedom from restraint on the part of individuals.

The French Revolution, in its civil development, was a strenuous assertion of freedom from the restraints of a Divine law. The movement was in form against the tyranny of an arbitrary and despotic government; and, so far, it

had good elements in it. But it was equally a revolt against religion, as embodied in a form of Christianity that was certainly most corrupt. The northern nations of Europe had revolted once before, viz., in the time of the Reformation, against the corruptions of the Roman Church, both in doctrine and practice. They had done so, however, expressly in order to return to a Divine authority as embodied in the very Divine word that we are now studying. But the moving spirits of the French Revolution had cast off belief, not only in the unlawful pretensions and false doctrines of the Roman Church, but in all Divine authority. They repudiated all restraint professing to be from above, and asserted independence of Divine law, and of all rules of conduct having a religious basis.

This theory was not long in working itself out. As might be expected, the rule of the strongest became practically the only law. These, having cast off restraint, murdered all those who were in their way. A reign of terror ensued, which converted France for a time into a pandemonium of mutual destruction. One after another of the leaders was murdered by the rest, until at last scarcely one remained.

Then society arose, in self defence. It had been demonstrated that universal freedom from moral law meant universal liability to be murdered without redress. No man's life was safe, and no woman's honour. For also, as might be expected, a carnival of blood was accompanied by a carnival of licentiousness.

Thus it was demonstrated that a moral law of some kind was absolutely necessary to the holding of society together.

But another thing was also demonstrated, that the sanctions and restraints of religion are the surest guarantee for the observance of moral law. Even so corrupt a form of Christianity as that of the Roman Church has preserved the provisions of the second table of the law without contravention, however grievously it has departed from the observance of the first table by its exaltation of the Virgin Mary to Divine honor, and by its gross violation of the command respecting graven images.

The Christian religion is the surest support to morality. Its sanctions, restraints, and Divine influences upon the soul of man have all the effect foreshadowed by one of the ancient prophets, viz., that the Law of God should be "*written upon the Heart and the Mind.*"

Otherwise, why should not men indulge their passions, and do what is pleasing to human nature? There is, in truth, the restraint of the Civil Law, whatever form that may take, in this country or that. But there are numbers

of things that are not touched by the civil law, and cannot be; which things, nevertheless, deeply concern the harmonious and happy relations of men to one another. Thus a man may behave with gross disrespect to his parents, and wear out their lives in grief for his rebelliousness and folly; he may plot mischief against a neighbor's property, reputation, and in some cases even life; he may indulge a bitter, revengeful, and malicious spirit; may lie, slander, and calumniate; he may indulge the baser passions of lust and drunkenness; may indulge, in fact, every wicked passion and propensity known to man, and yet, in running the whole course of wickedness, never violate a single human law. And, apart from the overshadowing and restraining presence of a Divine Law-Giver and Ruler, men may say, why not?

It is thus we come to see the place of the first table of the law as related to the second. The fear of God, using that term in its proper sense of high regard and reverence, is the true foundation of man's duty to man. And, as a preservative against wrong-doing, how absolutely sufficient is that great thought so present to the mind of Joseph when tempted, "*how can I do this great wickedness, AND SIN AGAINST God!*"

If the precepts of duty inculcated by the second table are examined, they will be found to gather round the central thought of *doing no injury to any man*; not to his Life—as in the sixth, not to his Domestic Peace, as in the seventh, not to his Property, as in the eighth, not to his Reputation, as in the ninth, the tenth being a summary of preceding ones, but going deeper.

The FIFTH, the only one that is positive, has its root in the same thought of doing no injury, but takes mankind at an earlier stage, and inculcates that habit of respect, subservience and obedience which is the surest foundation for subsequent moral discipline and good conduct. The honor to be rendered to father and mother is not mere obedience and outward conformity to rule. The command goes deeper; it requires *honor* and respect; the cultivation, in fact, as a child grows into consciousness and capacity of self-control, of a habit of looking up to father and mother with so high a degree of regard as will ensure obedience on the part of children when young, and a readiness to help and support, if needed, when parents have become old.

The command is calculated to ensure domestic peace, and is the first link in the chain which binds all human society together. For society largely consists of families.

Amongst communities who have not known Christianity,

or with individuals who have rejected it, theories of society have been framed which would ignore the institution of the family altogether. In the ideal state imagined by that great philosopher Plato, and outlined in his "Republic," there are no families. Children are to be all brought up in public institutions, and know nothing of father or mother. Some non-Christian philosophers of modern times are also inclined to adopt this idea, and some have tried to put it into practice. The religion of the false prophet undermines the true idea of the family, by allowing a plurality of wives to one husband; and by the low ideal of womanhood which is inseparable from this practice, and which pervades the whole Mohammedan system.

All this is contrary to the instinct implanted both in women and children by the Creator, and which has survived the catastrophe of the Fall. All women have a yearning for a home, and their love of children is one of the strongest impulses of human nature. And equally, children have a longing for the care of father and mother. The instinct of family life is as strong within them as it is within men and women.

The theories of Plato's Republic and the fancies of modern philosophers are contrary to the first and primal instincts of humanity, which is the reason why they have never been carried out. But the command to "Honour father and mother" is in accordance with these primal instincts, and is felt and acknowledged universally to be just and good.

The command has a promise annexed to it, viz., the promise of long life. *"That thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."*

Whatever may have been the force of this promise, so far as the Hebrews in the land of Canaan were concerned, it is undoubtedly a fact that in these modern times unusual prosperity often attends the way of a man who has shewn unusual honour and respect to his parents, and especially to a widowed mother. The promise seems still to be operative in some sense, and "the blessing that maketh rich and addeth no sorrow therewith," undoubtedly follows the man who honours his parents when young, and cares for them in old age.

The Sixth Command is founded on the high respect for the Life of man which follows from his being made in the image of God. Disregard for the life of its citizens is always a mark of degeneracy in a State; while to protect them, both at home and abroad, is its highest function. The command is but a continuation of that precept of a very

early age: "*Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man; for in the image of God made he man.*"

The command not only prohibits murder arising from malice or desire of gain, or desire of high place, as in political murders, but the gratification of private revenge. The Divine Creator thus throws round every human being the shield of His protection, by making it the duty of every man, not only to refrain from taking the life of another, but to protect him and defend him when his life is in danger. This is also in accordance with the instinct of self-preservation, which is inherent not only in individuals but in organized communities. And certainly, in these Christian times, however far men may have forgotten their duty towards their Creator, they are generally not slow to exert themselves, and even to endanger their own lives, in the endeavour to save the lives of others; as, for example, in cases of shipwreck, fire, or accident. The record of our own country is full of honourable examples of this.

The Seventh Command is concerned with the preservation of the honour and purity of the *Family*. It is essentially connected with the family, inasmuch as its violation is the most deadly injury that can be inflicted on family life, both physically and morally. The taint of evil blood and lawless character introduced into a family by this moral crime is an evil, in some respects, worse than death. And death, as the punishment and penalty of adultery under the civil code of the great Legislator, is but an expression of the deadly character of a wrong-doing which affects innocent children and future generations.

There are other forms of a breach of this command which, though not connected with family life directly, are so indirectly, in the degradation of womanhood, and the rendering of marriage impossible or fruitless. And God, who has created the human frame so "*fearfully and wonderfully,*" has stamped upon the natural constitution both of man and woman a reprobation of this deadly wrong-doing in the shape of a terrible penalty of disease.

The Eighth Command, "*Thou shalt not steal,*" throws the safeguard of protection over every man's property. It recognizes the *right of property*, a right which has been denied by certain theorists of modern times, who are, as a rule, however, persons who deny the Divine law, and repudiate the obligations of the Christian religion. If the sanction of the Christian religion is invoked to deny the right of property, and the condition referred to in the early chapters

of the Acts of the Apostles is quoted in support of it, "when the disciples had all things common," and no man considered that aught he had was his own (Acts iv. 32), it must be remembered that this was an exceptional condition of things, arising from the fact of large numbers of people being detained in Jerusalem beyond the time they had intended and provided for, and the necessity of making unusual provision for their sustenance.

The same conditions would bring about the same results in any Christian community in these times. But that these are not normal and ordinary conditions is manifest from the fact that there are no precepts for its continuance, while there are many that recognize the right of every man to his own, while appealing to him to bestow liberally and generously thereof for the relief of the poor and the support of the Gospel. (I. Cor. xvi. 2, also I. Timothy vi. 18, 19.)

The right of property is plainly recognized by the Eighth Commandment, which forbids any man to deprive another man of it against his will. Stealing may be by violence, or by fraud, and it is a much more common propensity in some communities than others. There have been times when whole communities of people practiced stealing without compunction of conscience, even while nominally Christians, as when the Highlanders of Scotland raided the Lowlands, or the Borderers the adjoining counties of England. Scrupulously honest among themselves, they had no respect whatever for the command not to steal from their neighbours. The condition, in fact, was one of perpetual war, utterly anti-Christian in spirit, though practiced by those who were Christians in name. The organized bands of robbers in the mountains of Southern Italy and Greece are also Christians in name, and, in their way, devout, for it is well known that they invoke the protection of the Virgin on their wicked enterprises, and cross themselves when passing shrines. Thus it is seen how men can be Christian in name and form, while setting its precepts at defiance by stealing and murder. The Bedaveen Arabs are men of precisely the same character. Honourable and just in their dealing with each other, they plunder without mercy all strangers, and if they meet with resistance, they do not scruple to murder.

But, passing by these examples of the contradictory tendencies of human nature, and of the inefficiency of corrupt forms of religion to restrain it, let us consider the developments of stealing amongst the civilized societies of the modern world. And the first thing that strikes an observer is the constant out-cropping from society of numbers of men to whom stealing is an occupation. Many of these

have been born of criminal parents, brought up in criminal surroundings, and have never known any other mode of living than stealing. The petty pilferer of the streets is of this class. So is the daring burglar who goes about his nefarious business with deadly weapons, and is always prepared to use them. The practice of constant stealing develops a superior aptitude and skill in its exercise. Thus in the case of the professional burglar there is as much mechanical skill exercised as would enable the thief to earn high wages, and obtain constant employment in an honest occupation. The same may be said in even a higher degree of the professional forger, whose skill in engraving and handwriting would ensure him a high place in any business establishment.

All this points to the fact that many men are criminals because they *love* to be criminals. They like the life. It is a life of utter freedom from moral restraint, and, for the most part, a life of idleness. The professional criminal is, in the very nature of things, an outlaw. He knows no law. He feels himself at liberty to indulge his passions, appetites, propensities without restraint. And he exercises it.

Society, of course, organizes a system of defence against all this. And every criminal is liable to be laid hold of, and placed where he can do no harm. For a longer or shorter period, and sometimes for life, such men are shut up. And thus society protects itself from deprecation. Yet with the full knowledge of an almost absolute certainty of imprisonment and privation, so strong are a criminal's natural propensities to idleness, lawlessness, and vicious indulgence, that he will continue to steal even though, as a penalty for it, the greater part of his life is spent in prison.

Almost all the property of the world, including money, stocks, bonds and land, has to be committed to the charge of others. Persons placed in positions of trust have temptations of their own, and sometimes fall into the snare of the evil one. To all such, the ever-present voice of the Eternal Law-Giver sounds in warning: "*Thou shalt not steal.*" And happy are they if they heed it.

The Ninth Command relates to another class of wrong doing which does infinite mischief in the world, and to which some are exceedingly prone: "*Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour*" strikes at that practice of slander and calumny, of lying reports and wicked inventions, of false testimony in Courts, and whisperings and back-bitings in secret, by which a man's reputation is injured, sometimes beyond repair, or his property sworn away

beyond power of redemption. Lying reports and slander are often beyond the power of law to punish. It is only when false testimony under oath can be proved against a man, or when calumny can be shown to be malicious, and calculated to injure reputation or deprive of property, that the law will intervene and punish. But by far the larger number of cases where this command is violated cannot be reached by human law. It is therefore all the more necessary to regard the Divine prohibition against falsehood. And so far from falsehood and lying being venial sins, as they are counted to be in a corrupt form of Christianity, they are stamped with such reprobation by the Creator that liars are classed with the wicked whose portion is the lake of fire, the second death. And in the early Church, the terrible death of Ananias and Sapphira marks the abhorrence entertained by the Lord of Souls towards "*lying lips and a deceitful tongue.*"

The Last Command of all these of the Second Table, is of a different character from the rest, in that it goes beyond the outward act, and reaches to "*the thoughts and intents of the heart.*" Thou shalt not steal; thou shalt not commit adultery, are both embraced in the command: "*Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, his ox, or his ass; thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife.*" It puts a man upon the necessity of watching his thoughts and springs of action, and of "nipping evil in the bud" before it ripens into wicked words and deeds. In a community where this rule was the law of life, if such can be imagined, a high sentiment of honour and respect for others would pervade all the actions of men. There would be a scrupulous regard for the peace of families in not disturbing the relations of master and servant, of husband and wife, as well as of the owner of property and the property he owns. In case of disputes, there being an absence of that covetous disposition which leads men to *desire* the property of others, there would be a willingness to give way on both sides, thus ensuring an absence of those bitter quarrels which sometimes culminate in a breach of another command, viz., "Thou shalt do no murder." The same principle extended to the affairs of nations would ensure peace, and prevent wars for wresting territory from others.

It would not prevent, nor is it intended to prevent, nations extending their bounds by taking unoccupied territory, or by purchase from states willing to sell. Nor would it prevent private individuals from increasing their property in the same way. These commands, from first to last, have in view the one great object of the prevention of

aggression on the rights of others. DO NO WRONG TO THY NEIGHBOUR is the one dominating thought; not to his person, not to his family, not to his property, not to his reputation. The Almighty Sovereign who has constituted society knows what are the evils that mar and spoil the enjoyment of it, and He has set bounds to the actions of men in every direction where wrong would be done. His will is that men shall be just, true, self-restrained, honourable, in all their ways and relations with one another from childhood to the grave.

And these precepts only need to be fairly carried out by all parties in all conditions of life, both private and public, for the life of earth to become like the life of Heaven.

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CRITICAL NOTES TO CHAPTER XI.

SOME CONSIDERATIONS AS TO THE COMMAND TO HONOUR FATHER AND MOTHER.

The wisdom of the selection of the word "honour" instead of "obey" will be evident on considering how the relations between children and parents inevitably change with the process of time. Children are wholly under the care of parents up to a considerable age. During this time the rule of simple and unquestioning obedience is natural and reasonable. A time, however, gradually supervenes when the child ceases to be wholly dependent, and becomes more and more able to provide for itself.

The helpless child of former years becomes the apprentice boy, the boy the young man, until the time comes when parental care and support are no longer needed, and the child who was for so many years wholly supported becomes a supporter himself. Along with this change of capacity for support comes enlarging intelligence and power of judgment, so that in many matters the child of former days, receiving implicitly everything taught him, becomes a person capable of investigating and forming opinions, and able to determine with more or less intelligence courses of his own. This change, like the other, comes about gradually, but it comes to every man and woman as time passes on. But with these two changes, viz., the cessation on the part of the growing young man of parental support, and the acquiring of the faculty of independent judgment, there comes of necessity a change in the extent and character of the obedience that can reasonably be required. Nature itself, as in so many other cases dealt with in this second table, determines the matter. Nature agrees with the command. Though the period of *obedience* necessarily passes away, the obligation to *honour and respect* can never pass away. And the obligation to honour and respect may involve the obligation to support, or to assist in supporting, as is so often necessary in the case of the poor.

This brings us to the case cited by our Saviour, as proving that the Pharisees set aside the commands of God through their tradition. A young man who was under obligation to support his father and mother, might evade, according to the Pharisees, that obligation, by saying to

them, "The money by which I support you is now given to God," and be free from the command to honour them. (Matthew xv. 5, 6.)

This opens up a question: Can a man righteously refuse, under any circumstances, to obey father or mother? Or can he refuse to support them, because he conceives God, or His cause, to have a greater claim upon him?

To the former the answer must be yes, when a child has come to years when he can exercise his own judgment and act on his own responsibility, and is commanded by parents to do wrong; to worship idols, for example, in some countries, or to do what is manifestly unjust in any.

For we are taught by our Lord's own Apostle that "we must obey God rather than man." (Acts iv. 19.)

But in the second case, the command of God is plain and paramount, "*Honour thy Father and thy Mother,*" and cannot be set aside by some dedication of means to God at a man's own will and pleasure. However plausible may be the *apparent* duty, the command of God is clear as to what is *real* duty.

There has been a good deal of teaching like that of the Pharisees, and a good deal of practice too, in the Christian Church, where zeal for religious obligation and for consecration to God's service has blinded devout souls to the plain obligation of God's commands. Occasionally it may be hard to see what the way of duty is; as, for example, when a man conceives himself called to the ministry, or to go abroad as a missionary, and his parents object to it. In that case, a man may fairly see whether the teaching of our Saviour above referred to (Matthew xv. 3) applies to the case; whether, in fact, he will do his parents injury by diverting his means from their support. If so, he ought not to go. But if not, it may then be a question whether the other rule applies, "*we must obey God rather than man,*" But inasmuch as the rule of honour and respect to parents holds precedence, it ought to be a very clear case of duty to God indeed which would justify a man in disobeying them.

It must be acknowledged in all candour that a strong leaven of this Pharisaic spirit has been prevalent at times, in certain sections of Christ's Church, and that preachers, priests, and confessors have been disposed to regard too lightly the obligation of filial duty when advising young people as to entering on a course of separation from the world, and consecration to special service of the Church.

It is still a tendency of human nature *to make the commandment of God of none effect through a tradition*, and it is still a necessity for a Christian man to guard against it.

OF OUR SAVIOUR'S COMMENTS ON THE COMMANDMENTS.

The manner in which the Great Teacher dealt with these Commandments is exactly in the opposite direction to that of the Pharisees. They emphasized the outward, and the ceremonial aspect only. The Divine Saviour taught that the command reached to the will and the intention. Malicious anger is a breach of the command to do no murder, for it has the root of murder in it. The lustful look is adultery in essence. These words open up to view the *method* of Divine judgment, viz., that it is not so much the outward act, as the thought and intention that is regarded. In this the grounds of the Divine and human judgment are diametrically opposite. For it is obvious that human law can take no cognizance of a man's thoughts, nor even of his intentions, unless manifested by outward act. But He who rules the spiritual world looks at the thought and intent alone. He who is Spirit, deals with and judges the spirit of man.

OF THE RELEASE OF CHRISTIANS FROM THE OBLIGATIONS OF THE LAW.

The profound questions as to this matter are fully opened up in the Epistles of St. Paul. And certainly, few things have given rise to more misapprehension and controversy.

For a careful consideration of the scope and intent of the Apostle will shew, either that the law which he taught that the Christian was free from, was the Ceremonial Law, *i. e.*, the obligation to be circumcised and to observe the festivals and outward ordinances of the Mosaic ritual; or else that the Christian was free from the condemnatory sentence of the law by the righteousness of Christ appropriated by the Christian in faith.

But so prone is human nature to misunderstand, or to misuse the best things, that the doctrine of freedom from the condemnation of the law has been perverted to mean that a Christian is under no *obligation* to any rule or commandment of God at all. Certain teachers have taught this, and have referred to a condition of obligation, as a condition of bondage from which Christ had set them free. In doing this, they have entirely ignored the many rules and commands laid down by our Saviour and His Apostles, which are nothing more than expansions and full developments of the last six commandments, and which certainly all loyal followers of Jesus Christ are bound to obey.

Many of these teachers and their followers, while repudiating the obligation of the law in theory, have been careful

enough to observe it in practice, living virtuous and godly lives, serving God, and doing good to their neighbours. But, undoubtedly, certain others have followed out in practice what was taught in theory; and while making profession of eminent holiness, lived in violation of many of the plain requirements of honesty and fidelity as between man and man.

It is true that it was generally asserted by these antinomian teachers (antinomian meaning "against the law") that with the renewed man it was sufficient to follow the impulses and desires of the new nature, that where a man had the law written "*upon his heart, and in his mind,*" the outward law was not a necessity. The theory is plausible, but is entirely contrary to much of the New Testament, which abounds in outward precepts and rules for the conduct of Christian men. He who knows "*what is in man,*" has not left it to the instincts of the new nature to determine the course of conduct for his disciples to pursue, but has given specific directions in great number, suited to the varying conditions of Christian life. And, certainly, a disciple of Christ is under obligation to fulfil them, and does wrong if he neglects or disobeys.

CHAPTER XII.

SOME FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS AS TO THE MORAL LAW.

The words of the Law as given on Mount Sinai were not the only words of direction as to moral conduct promulgated through the great leader of this Hebrew people.

Many other such words were spoken by the Supreme Governor of the world through him, as we shall find in pursuing his remarkable history. Amongst these is the striking summary of duty referred to by the Great Teacher, in answer to the captious questions of His enemies.

The precepts of the first table are embodied and condensed in the words, "*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind;*" and those of the second in the words, "*Thou shalt love Thy Neighbour as thyself.*"

These words are much more than a condensation; they are an enlargement, a carrying of the precepts of the law to the very innermost region of the soul; an anticipation, in fact, of the times of the New Testament, when the Divine Son of God placed the service of the Eternal Father, not in outward observances, but in the devotion of the heart and the submission of the will.

And what more natural?

In the relations of an earthly sovereign with his people, the one thing looked for and valued is what we call "*loyalty*," not a mere quiescent and formal obedience, but a hearty affection and love. This is the essence of loyalty.

What this is, we of the British Empire, as it is at present, and has been for half a century, understand perfectly. The good Queen of England whose reign has extended so long, is the object of a sincere love, and honor, and reverence, that is unique in history. She has the *affection* of her people, that affection having gathered strength as years passed on, and gave new and more remarkable evidence of her genuine goodness. For it is goodness that draws out love. England has had many kings, and as kings they have been had in honour. But which of them have been *loved*? and how many of them would have cared for love?

Now, passing from things earthly to things heavenly, it is most remarkable to note that the Sovereign of the Universe calls not only for obedience, but for *affection*. "*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God,*" a command which implies love on the part of the Sovereign to those whom he com-

mands. It is to cause the Great Creator loves His creatures that He desires their affection in return.

Now, let us mark how far-reaching this precept is. It is certainly true that love is the strongest force in the world. For if men love their sovereign, they will obey, even to the extent of sacrificing life; giving up all things, and counting nothing dear to them, out of this honourable affection. Hence it is that love is the *fulfilling* of Law. For if a man love God, it is impossible that he can have any other gods before Him; impossible that he can bow down to graven images, impossible that he can use His Name with lightness or profanity. It is equally certain that he will love the day that is set apart for His honour and worship, and will teach His children to honour it also.

Then, passing on to the second table, the terse summary, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," goes to the very root of all right and honourable dealings between man and man. For, as has been pointed out, the commands of the second table are all directed against some form of injury to a man's neighbour, beginning with the child's obligation to do good to parents, and going on to the forbidding of injury to life, or property, or reputation.

But if a man loves his neighbour, it is certain that he will do no injury whatever; nay, it is certain that he will do his neighbour all the good in his power, and be ready to labour and sacrifice to that end. "*Love,*" says the Apostle Paul, "*worketh no ill whatever to his neighbour; therefore love fills up the whole law.*" (Romans xiii. 10.)

And the measure of this love is very strikingly set forth. A man is to love his neighbour *as much as he loves himself!*

Therefore, he will love his neighbour even though the neighbour does not love *him*; yes, even if the neighbour "hates him, despitefully uses him and persecutes him."

The love of a man to a neighbour, and the measure of what he will do for him is not what the neighbour will do or omit to do in return. A man has to consider, what would I do, if that neighbour were myself. Thus we find that this comprehensive rule of conduct, enunciated by the Divine Law-Giver through Moses, and that Golden Rule, laid down fifteen hundred years afterwards by the Great Teacher, "*Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.*"

The same idea is involved in the modern saying, "put yourself in his place"—and then act as you would to yourself.

These profound and philosophic principles and rules of thought and action towards God and man were enunciated

more than three thousand years ago. Yet they are fresh, and true, and as perfectly applicable to all men, in all conditions of life, in all development of civilization, in all countries of this modern world, as if they had been spoken by some prophet of these times.

They anticipate, moreover, all those wonderful revelations of Love on the part of God to man, and of returning love on the part of man to God, which are opened up in the teaching of Jesus Christ and His Apostles. They even anticipate those revelations of the special love of the Saviour to His followers and friends, and of those tender injunctions to love Him in return, which form so remarkable a feature in the new dispensation. Thus it is that the New Testament is a real development of the Old, not being contrary to it, but a completion of it, being to the Old Testament as the fruit is to the seed or blossom.

Thus it is that Christ came, as He Himself expressed it, not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it. And happy would the world be if these two simple precepts were so written on the hearts of men that they would be obeyed, not as mere rule and law, submitted to on compulsion, but followed out in the spirit of the Psalmist when he cried, "*I delight to do thy will, O God; Yea, thy law is within my heart.*"

There are also found in the books of Moses many precepts relating to moral conduct, interspersed with Divine directions as to religion, worship, and ceremonies, and also as to the civil constitution and law. These, however, can be better noticed as the study of later features of the Divine revelation through Moses is proceeded with in subsequent chapters and as the events are considered which illustrate so marvellously the Divine dealings with this people before they entered the land of Promise.

A FINAL WORD AS TO THE GROUND OF MORAL OBLIGATION.

The whole ground of moral obligation rests on the fact that He who commands is not only a Creator, a mere simple embodiment of Eternal Force, but a beneficent provider and friend in whom we live, and move, and have our being; and also a "*Redeemer*"—one who has helped out of difficult places, rescued in time of spiritual peril.

That men have the capacity to appreciate the Divine Being as such a Friend and Redeemer is beyond question. The whole spiritual history both of the Hebrews and Christians in all ages, testifies to the fact that men can know so much of the Eternal God as will draw out their reverence and regard; and not only reverence and regard, but in many cases, a love and affection which transcends all other passions and affections of the soul.

And this love of a man to God is the surest foundation for the love of his fellow-men and his fulfilling of all obligations to Him. For as God loves all men, and is ceaselessly working for their welfare, both in natural Providence, and in the realm of Grace, so a man who loves God will imitate Him, imbibe the same spirit, follow the same thoughts, and live so as to do all the good in his power to those who are like himself, God's children.

But previously to the declaration of precepts relating to Civil Life, a word was spoken which was fundamental as to the religious life of the nation, though not forming part of the precepts relating to the Tabernacle. As this was immediately followed by the precepts of the Civil Law, it may be appropriately introduced here.

The word was this:—

AN ALTAR OF EARTH THOU SHALT MAKE UNTO ME. (Chap. xx. 22 to 26.)

The mere material is not the vital point, as is evident. But the promise that followed is vital indeed.

CHAPTER XIII.

COMMANDS OF GOD RELATING TO THE CIVIL LIFE OF THE JEWS.

Exodus 21, 22, 23.

When the people were gathered at the foot of Mount Sinai, God, through His servant Moses, spoke of this great multitude of people as a *Nation*. "Ye shall be," said the Lord, "a *Holy Nation*!" They were henceforth to be a people united together under a definite form of government, observing a civil polity, with a country of their own, and under laws and institutions relating to secular life peculiar to themselves. They were to be a nation. This they never had been in Egypt. A Nation they were, welded together by long discipline in the wilderness, when they entered on their inheritance, and a nation they continued to be until the time when the Messiah came, the Shiloh to whom "*the gathering of the people was to be,*" the true "King of the Jews." "*He hath not dealt thus with any nation,*" said one of the Psalmists. "*Lest the Romans take away our place and nation,*" said Caiaphas the High Priest, speaking of the need that Jesus should be put to death. And so the Romans did when Titus the Roman General besieged and took Jerusalem. For his triumph was the end of the Jews as a nation; and the memorial of it is to be seen in Rome, graven on the arch of Titus to this day. Marvellously as they have been preserved as a *race*, they have never existed as a nation since Jerusalem was captured.

But now, at the period under consideration, encamped before that famous Mount, the first steps in the great formative process are being taken by the delivery to their Leader of Divine precepts relating to their civil life. Immediately after the moral precepts of the Law had been announced, in circumstances of such tremendous majesty, the people stood afar off, and the Lord spake now to Moses alone.

The fathers of the nation had built altars since the time of Noah downward, in almost every place where they sojourned. The altar in that dispensation was of the very essence of the worship of the Supreme. No altar, no acceptable worship. For on an altar had been offered the sacrifices which He had ordained as the means of blessing from the beginning.

And with this fundamental requirement was given a great Promise which is still a living force in the Christian

Church. The altars and the offerings are no more. Their purpose was fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the one perfect sacrifice and oblation for men, the true "*Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world.*" But the promise still lives and will live to the end of time, "IN ALL PLACES WHERE I RECORD MY NAME, I WILL COME UNTO THEE, AND I WILL BLESS THEE!" Through all changes of outward form this great word of covenant abides the same. God meets with His people at the place where His Name is recorded. And He meets them in *Blessing*. And the words are confirmed to us in these Christian times by the Son of God in His remarkable saying, "WHERE TWO OR THREE ARE GATHERED TOGETHER IN MY NAME, THERE AM I IN THE MIDST OF THEM."

Why is He to be *in the midst*? Because in the New Dispensation there are to be no altars, and no sacrifices of slain animals. For Christ Himself has fulfilled all, and gathered to Himself all these sacrifices, by one offering of Himself on the Cross, that altar to which He was bound, and on which He died. When His true disciples gather in His name, it is in His name as the Lamb of God, "*in whose blood is redemption.*" And He is present wherever and whenever they meet, as the Divine offering and sacrifice, that they may still come to the Eternal Father in His name, and receive the blessings that flow from the New Covenant of Peace.

Immediately after this command as to the Altar, and the covenant of blessing connected therewith, are the many precepts and laws relating to CIVIL LIFE, which laws are expressly stated to have been given by the Sovereign Lord as His "Judgments" to be set before the people. The word "*judgments*" is noticeable. It has been incorporated into our own language and mode of thinking, as expressing that final decision which has been arrived at after full consideration of the case by competent and recognized authority, which authority must be obeyed, as it can be enforced by officers appointed for the purpose. The whole power of the realm is expressed in the judgment. And, in our form of government, all judgments are the judgments of the Sovereign. It is in the name of the Sovereign that a court sits, it is by the Sovereign that men are summoned to attend it, the judge sits as the Sovereign's representative, and the decision is given in the Sovereign's name.

It was even so on this great occasion, when the people were assembled before Mount Sinai. The Lord God appeared, not only as the Lord in the sphere of morals, but as the Ruler in all civil matters, and the Head of the Nation.

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verse and the people of the world generally has ceased, being expressly abrogated by the Son of God Himself, who declared that His "kingdom was not of this world" (John xviii. 36), the laws as to civil life given by Him to this people may be studied with profit.

For they will be found, on examination, to be instinct with the principles of equity between man and man; bearing, however, in mind, the circumstances of the people, the times they lived in, and their capacity for civil development.

The Great Teacher, in after ages, enunciated the principle that these civil laws, in one important respect at least, were imperfect, and accommodated to the condition of the people. "Moses," said He, speaking of divorce, "because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives." (Matthew xix. 8.)

Civil laws, in the nature of things, unlike moral laws, must be adapted to circumstances and times. So, as the precept respecting divorce was imperfect and temporary, others of the same kind may be found relating to other matters. And it must always be borne in mind by us of the Christian dispensation, that these laws of civil polity all came to end when the Jewish polity itself came to an end by the destruction of Jerusalem. The position of these people with respect to surrounding nations has also to be considered, for although they were to be absolutely separate in religious matters, and for that reason forbidden to marry amongst them, yet in civil life there must have been necessity of intercourse.

All this bears upon such questions as Polygamy, Slavery, Divorce, Punishment for Crime, and other matters.

The first precepts relate to the relations between

MASTER AND SERVANT.

These have the appearance at first sight, of instituting or sanctioning a system of slavery.

But it will be found, on examination, to be little or nothing more than that kind of servitude which is common in all countries, even in republics where all are declared to be "free and equal."

Men in these countries make contracts or engagements to serve others, as artisans, clerks, managers, superintendents, and to these engagements they are *bound*. So long as they exist, the party who has made the engagement is not an absolutely free man. He is a servant, under orders, which he is bound to obey. Now this servitude of the Hebrew is of this sort evidently. No contract for service is to be for longer than six years (Chap. xxi. 2). In the seventh, the

servant is to go free. But the service is not to be that of a slave. In the book of LEVITICUS we find the following significant passage (Chap. xxv. 39):—

“If thy brother that dwelleth by thee be waxen poor, and be sold unto thee, thou shalt not compel him to serve as a bond-servant, but as an hired-servant, as a sojourner shall he be with thee and shall serve thee unto the year of Jubilee. Thou shalt not rule over him with rigour, but shall fear thy God?”

Thus, when a person is sold to another, the transaction is utterly unlike the selling which makes one man the absolute property of another. The purchase is simply a commutation of the value of the labour for a term of years, not longer in any case than six. If the year of Jubilee intervene, the service must end then, whatever the time of service has been.

But the character and quality of the service to be exacted are most noticeable:— *“Thou shalt not rule over him with rigour. Thou shalt not compel him to serve as a bond-servant, but as a hired servant.”* The people who had come out of Egyptian bondage and the hard treatment it involved knew perfectly well the meaning of the distinction. What it was to serve *“with rigour,”* they had had only too bitter an experience of. (See Note, page 381.)

But a servant might, if he pleased, make a contract for life. Before noticing this, the rule as to a servant's wife and children must be considered. The law provides that if he were a married man at the time of his entering into service, when the service ends he can take his wife with him. But if his master gives him a wife during servitude, and she bears him children, when the service expires he can go out by himself, but cannot take wife and children with him.

This at first sight seems harsh. But now let us see what follows:—

“If the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children, I will not go out free, then his master shall bring him to the judges:” (V. 5) and by the significant ceremony of boring his ear through and fastening him for a moment to the door-post, the contract shall become that of servitude for life; not, be it again said, the servitude of a bondman with rigour, but the honourable service rendered by one who is hired.

The whole arrangement is evidently designed to bring about that kind of long service on the same farm, in the same business house, to the same person of distinction, that is, reckoned amongst ourselves to be so honourable on both sides. Who does not know these old servants of a great firm, a great bank, a great house, who are trusted and respected by the head of the house as if they belonged to his

own family. What mistress does not say, with pride, if she can say it at all, "My servants stay with me as long as they live!"

And who does not know these servants, whether in a lower or higher capacity—and in some cases the service is of a very high order indeed; who are proud of their position, proud of the house they serve, and proud of the long course of service they have rendered?

This is evidently the sort of service that would be fostered by such regulations as these.

The rule as to maid-servants has several provisions that are most considerate, together with some that are not easy to understand. It seems to be implied that the engagement to be a maid-servant implies marriage or concubinage.

This must be conceived of as one of the cases where a temporary evil was allowed "because of the hardness of their hearts."

But this being so, the regulations respecting it are humane and considerate. The master shall have "no power to sell her to a strange nation," but, in case of disagreement, must let her be redeemed. *And if he have betrothed her unto his son, she shall be dealt with as a daughter.* (How different this from the condition of a female slave in the house of a master in the days of slavery in the South.)

POLYGAMY.

The regulations as to this matter are most noticeable, thus:—If the master take another wife, he is bound to maintain the first in all honour and comfort: "*her food, her raiment, and her duty of marriage, shall he not diminish.*" (V. 10.)

She must retain her place in the house and not be put aside or neglected. Thus the law, while permitting what in those early times was universal, the taking of more than one wife, was so framed as to throw difficulties in the way of the man who desired it, for he was bound to treat the first wife with as much honour and respect as if there was only one. The effect of the law in the way of protecting the woman is most evident.

Under such regulations, polygamy is made difficult, it is shorn of its worst evils, and a state of things like that prevailing under Mohammedan rule entirely prevented. For, let us consider the far-reaching effect of such a law. When a man, in a country where it is lawful to take a second wife, desires to take that step, the natural sequence is that the first wife shall be made to occupy an inferior place, and become little more than a household servant. For only by this course could the large majority of men

afford the expense of a second wife. But this law absolutely prohibits this being done. As respects the first wife, "her food, her raiment, and her duty of marriage shall he not diminish." If, then, he would still be bound to treat the first wife as she had always been treated, having her proper place at table, her proper dress according to her station (and no worse than she had been accustomed to), and in all other respects letting her be in the house as in time past, a barrier almost insurmountable was raised to the taking a second wife at all. Thus the law would accomplish indirectly what was desired. And all who know legislation, and its difficulties, are well aware that the action of indirect enactments is often much more effectual than those that are direct.

It is to be borne in mind that the law evidently contemplates that *no other than a second wife* shall be taken. There is no indiscriminate provision for a man to take as many wives as he may please. This is prohibited even to kings. (Deut. xvii. 17.)

LAWS RELATING TO THE PROTECTION OF PERSON AND PROPERTY.

These are difficult laws to frame, and the highest efforts of jurisprudence have been directed to make them on the one hand severe enough to be effectual, and not so severe as to be cruel. There was an ancient state, that of Sparta, in which all offences were punished by death. The universal judgment of mankind has condemned this as a barbarous code, and unworthy of a civilized state. On the other hand, the sentimentality that much prevails in modern times, under which the punishment of even grave offences would be light, and which would abolish the death penalty altogether, would altogether fail of the great object of the punishment of crime, viz., the deterring of others from its commission.

These laws, spoken to Moses by the Divine voice, evidently have in view the protection of the life of the citizen from violence, and the deterring men from committing crime by fear of consequences. And all experience shows that this is, in the end, the most humane mode of dealing with the matter. The safety of the community in its person and property is the end to be attained. As enactments attain this end, in the largest number of cases, they are to be judged beneficial.

Commencing with the twelfth verse of Chap. xxi. are a series of laws with penalties attached, more or less severe according to the nature of the case.

The first in order is the penalty of death for Murder. But the murder must be wilful. A clear distinction is drawn between this, and what is called, in modern jurisprudence, manslaughter. Yet life is held so sacred that the manslayer must flee to a city of refuge, duly provided, in which he may live safely. But the wilful murderer is to find no refuge, and may be taken even from God's altar. The abuse of the privilege of sanctuary that became so prevalent in medieval times in the days of ecclesiastical corruption finds no sanction in this Divine code.

The severe punishment of death is to follow the man who smites father or mother, or who even only *curses* father or mother. Severe, it would seem. Yet it would be found beneficent. For it throws around the family life a strong safeguard and protection, and deters at the very outset a wayward, violent-tempered, and rebellious son from the very beginnings of what might, if unchecked, become fratricide.

The brand of reprobation is put upon *man-stealing* for gain, and the terrible penalty of death is meted to the man-stealer. The need of this strong treatment has been seen for generations in the horrible iniquities of the African slave trade, where man-stealing on a frightful scale was practiced, alas! in former days, by men of British blood and race; and still prevails with all its horrible accompaniments of cruelty and murder on a gigantic scale, by Arabs of Mohammedan faith.

After the offences against life, and against father and mother that are punishable with death, come a series of another kind. But it is noticeable that in all these penalties there is no mention of imprisonment. Moses was familiar with the prison system of Egypt, and might have been expected to introduce something of the same kind in legislating for his own people. But let us remember that these laws and judgments are expressly stated to have come direct from the Almighty Ruler. They were not devised by Moses, but by Him *who knew what was in man; who knew what was suitable to the circumstances of the people, and what was not.* Moses was the promulgator of this body of law, not its author. And history has shown that the whole system of imprisonment has given rise to great abuses, and has been a scandalous instrument of tyranny and arbitrary power. The people of England have devised express safeguards against this in the famous "Habeas Corpus" Act. But for centuries after this, France, to mention no other instance, was subject to the awful tyranny of the "Lettres des Cachet," whereby, at the mere will of the monarch, a man or woman might be seized, lodged in the Bastille, never

brought to trial, be held in durance for life, and die without a chance of redress.

Beside this, it is evident that this body of the civil law was largely intended for a rural population.

The penalties are therefore such as could be inflicted in the midst of country life, where imprisonment would be almost impossible to carry out.

Thus, v. 18: if men quarrel and one is hurt so that he has to keep his bed, he that smote *shall pay for loss of time*, and for the expense of sickness "*till he is thoroughly healed.*"

V. 20: *If a man smite his servant with a rod so that he die, he shall be surely punished.*" In what way is not stated. Probably the punishment is to be left to the judge who tries him. For this is not a case of wilful murder; else the inevitable sentence would be death. But the fact that he, who in chastening a servant is cruel and causes death, is to be punished, is in striking contrast to the laws and customs of either, modern or ancient slavery, and proves how little countenance the Mosaic code gives to the barbarous usages of the regime of slavery once prevailing in the Southern States.

V. 22: If men in a quarrel hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit depart from her, the one who caused the mischief shall be punished as may be determined *by the husband.*

But if the woman die, then life must be given for life. And this is not a case for the city of refuge.

This provision is intended, like the previous one, to make men careful to restrain their passions, when chastising a servant, or when having a dispute with another.

V. 24: And here comes that provision which has been supposed to be so barbarous, as countenancing private revenge. "*Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, burning for burning.*"

But these precepts have nothing to do with private revenge. They are for the guidance of Judges and Magistrates in dealing with cases of assault and violence, and they are all intended to restrain and deter from violence, and prevent a man from doing injury of any kind to his neighbour, lest precisely that injury should be visited on himself by the law. And the universal instinct of humanity agrees that such a mode of punishment is the most equitable that can be devised, and the most likely to accomplish its purpose of preventing what we in our day and country call "breaches of the peace."

Vs. 26, 27: Another precept as to the dealing of a master with a servant is that if he shall so exceed the bounds of reason in chastising him as to cause the loss of an eye, or

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a tooth, he shall let him go free. A very effectual deterrent, and most equitable, and another striking contrast to the usages of masters with slaves in modern times.

Vs. 28 to 36, and in parts of Chap. xxii.: In these we have an interesting and curious series of commands very pertinent to such an agricultural community as the Hebrews were meant to be when settled in the land of Canaan. And in spirit and essence, they are just as applicable to a farming community now.

In those days, as now, some oxen developed, as they grew up, propensities which made them dangerous. Such an ox, if a man or woman was gored by it, was to be killed, and its flesh not eaten. If the ox had hitherto been harmless, "the owner was to be quit." But the law goes on to say, "if the ox were wont to push with his horn, and his owner knew it, and had not kept him in, then, if the ox killed a man or woman, the owner was to be held guilty of the death." A most equitable provision, one that would make owners of cattle most careful, and render it more safe to go about in an open country where fences were unknown. The death penalty, in this case, however, might be commuted by a ransom according to the circumstances of the case; another equitable provision.

Again: if a man opened a pit and left it uncovered, so that an ox or an ass fell therein, the owner of the pit was held to make it good.

If one man's ox hurt another, that he die, the live ox shall be sold and the price divided, along with the body of the dead ox.

But if it be known that the ox has been used to push others, and the owner has not kept him in, then he shall surely pay ox for ox, but the dead beast shall be his.

Two great principles plainly rule in these enactments, the first that in the chances and changing circumstances of the people, human life is to be surrounded by every possible protection; the second, that blame for wrong-doing is to be apportioned and punishment awarded according to strict equity and fair consideration of the circumstances of the case.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE MOSAIC CIVIL LAW.—(Continued.)

Exodus 22.

The preceding chapter of Exodus contains laws respecting Persons, in which far-seeing wisdom, justice, and equity are strikingly manifest to those who attentively consider them.

The same principles will be seen to pervade the laws for the protection of property.

In the absence of any system or practice of imprisonment, the law of *restitution* is invoked, and made to assume the form of penalty. Thus:—

“If a man shall steal an ox or a sheep, and kill it, or sell it, he shall restore five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep.” This is sufficiently deterrent, no doubt, and it would have a better result than imprisonment.

There is not a farmer in the world who would not prefer to have his stolen ox replaced by five other oxen than to have the thief put in prison.

But the distinction is immediately made between theft and burglary, precisely as there is in modern jurisprudence. And the case is anticipated which so often arises in our own day, where a householder resists and wounds or kills the burglar. *“If a thief be found breaking up, and be smitten that he die, no blood shall be shed for him.”* Equitable, beyond doubt.

But immediately after, a reasonable distinction is made.

The immunity for slaying a burglar is only to extend to what is done in the night. If a burglar attempt to break in during daylight, and a householder slay him, then the householder is to be punished. For, obviously, he has the opportunity during daylight of obtaining necessary assistance, and ought not to use such violence as will result in death. The thief, in that case, comes under the operation of the law of restitution.

V. 5: Further, *“If a man cause a field or a vineyard to be damaged by putting his own beast into it, he shall make full reparation of the best he has, of field or vineyard.”*

So, if a fire that he kindles causes damage to a neighbour's corn in field or stack, *he shall surely make restitution.*

These are all the penal laws relating to direct stealing and spoiling another man's goods.

In the following verses are found rules as to property placed in the hands of another. And here we have precepts which touch the conditions of modern life very closely indeed. For it may be safely said that in all civilized countries of modern days the great bulk of the property owned, whether it be by individuals or by corporate bodies, is in charge of others than the owners. By confidential servants in the case of private individuals, or by trusted officers, of various grades, acting for corporations constituted for the purpose, all the actual money or representatives of money, or property easily convertible into money, such as bonds, stocks or merchandise is taken care of.

The laws of modern life with regard to breaches of trust, or embezzlement, or making away with property by persons in charge of it are generally well known, and are of a most elaborate kind.

The laws as delivered to Moses are not elaborate, but very simple and easy to understand. Yet they are sufficient for the time, and their equity and reasonableness are apparent.

Thus, in v. 7, and following, we have the provision: "*If a man shall deliver unto his neighbour money or stuff to keep, and it be stolen; if the thief be found, let him pay double. But if the thief be not found, then the master of the house shall be brought to the judges.*" Obviously, the allegation of the custodian that the property has been stolen from him may be false. And if no thief can be found, the presumption is that it is false. And if he cannot perfectly clear himself, after a full hearing (as in v. 9) of both parties, he whom the judges condemn shall pay double.

If the property to be taken care of consists of an ox, an ass, or any beast, and it be lost, or if it die, or be driven away, no man seeing it, the custodian shall be put upon oath; and if he can clear himself, no restitution shall be exacted. But if he cannot, he must make restitution.

So of property borrowed; if it is damaged, the owner not being there to see, the borrower shall make restitution.

If, through a man's carelessness, a fire break out, and catch in stubble, so that corn in stack, or standing grain in the field be consumed, he that kindled the fire shall surely make restitution.

Some precepts follow in relation to the lending of money and the taking of usury; which precepts, like many others in the Divine word, have been misapprehended for want of consideration.

In this chapter the verses that relate to the taking of Usury come immediately after those relating to the vexing and oppression of strangers and the cruel treatment of a

widow or an orphan. They have plainly nothing to do with those loans of money for purposes of business, which constitute so large a part of the commercial life of modern nations. They refer, on the contrary, to the loans whose foundation is benevolence and kindness, and where the element of commerce and business have no place. Loans of this class, made to the poor of the people, or to any one in distress or other adversity, should not bear interest at all. And this is reasonable on purely economic grounds, for there is no fund in cases of this sort out of which interest can be paid.

But it is precisely in cases where money is borrowed by the poor or distressed, that the temptation to act the part of the usurer is prevalent, and interest at rates utterly unknown in business transactions is exacted; and hence the stringent laws against taking interest at all in such cases.

The placing of money out at interest, and the receiving and paying of interest, when connected with business transactions, are distinctly recognized by the Great Teacher in the parable of the Talents, and the servants who were entrusted with them. But this class of transactions, and those which are of the same character as the oppressing of the widow and the orphan, are wide as the poles asunder. The one is recognized as usual and reasonable; the other is denounced and reprobated. And practically the same distinction prevails at present.

Careful consideration for the poor and needy is strikingly shown in the precept that if a neighbour's raiment is taken in pledge, it is to be delivered to him by the time the sun goes down; the reason given being that he will require it as covering for the night. Eastern habits to this day would involve the same requirement, and passages illustrating it are to be found in Homer's *Odyssey*.

In the Book of Leviticus is a precept relating to perfect honesty in buying and selling.

Lev. xix. 35, 36: "*Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in meteyard, in weight, or in measure. Just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin shall ye have. And this precept is with the impressive sanction, I am the Lord your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt!*"

All this is strictly applicable to modern life. And its application reaches out to forms of injustice not known in early days; by which governments in modern times have forced *unjust coins and currencies* upon the people. As the Mosaic law prohibits unjust weights and measures, so it would in principle prohibit unjust pounds, shillings, and dollars in our own day.

There are other precepts relating to civil life which are well worthy of attention.

For the offence of *seduction*, which is found so difficult to deal with in modern jurisprudence, it is ordained that the seducer shall marry the woman, and endow her to be his wife.

That is the natural, reasonable, and obvious remedy for the wrong.

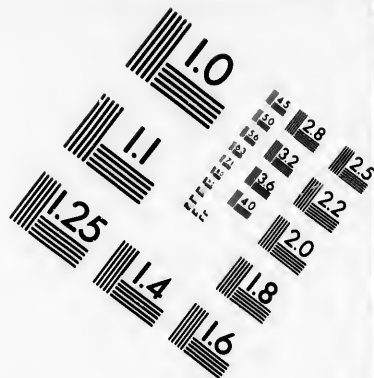
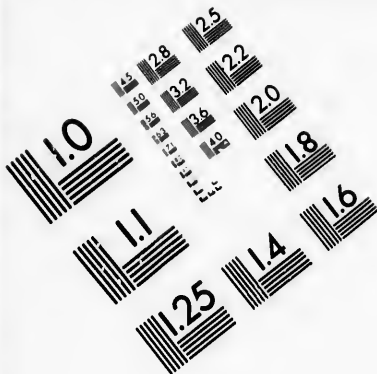
But if the father of the woman interfere, and refuse to allow the marriage to take place, then the seducer shall be fined as much as the dowry of the virgin would amount to according to her station in life. A very reasonable alternative, and of a very positive character in the way of a deterrent. For if a man has the prospect of such a heavy fine as this before him, he will surely beware, ordinarily, of yielding to temptation.

Another precept is one that has been shamefully abused in these modern days by men of much faith and little judgment, viz., that relating to witches. "*Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live*" is the precept; and it has been so interpreted and acted upon as to be a terrible engine of persecution. Conscientious men have supposed they were doing God service in harrying and oppressing poor women who were supposed by ignorant and superstitious neighbours to be possessed of powers of witchcraft, and able to do them harm at will.

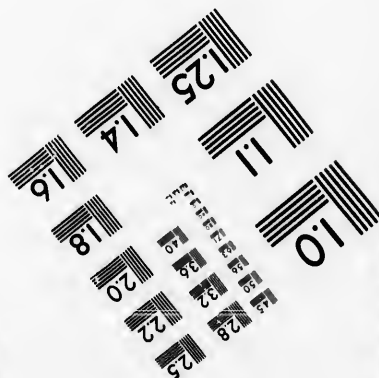
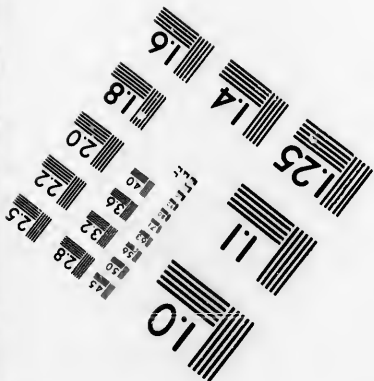
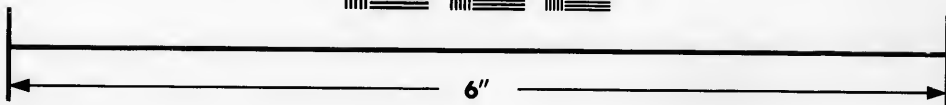
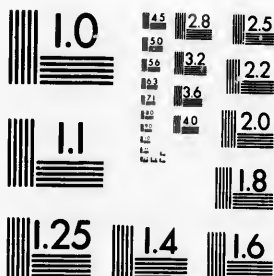
Without entering at large upon a subject on which volumes of curious literature exist, it is sufficient to point out that the obligation of these civil precepts of the Mosaic law has passed away with the Jewish polity. Christian people of modern times have no more to do with them than they have with the obligation to present themselves three times a year at Jerusalem. This surely should be obvious to every thoughtful person.

But with regard to the time then present, and the conditions then existing, and the precept that a witch should be put to death, it must be remembered that witchcraft in women, and sorcery, necromancy and the pretended dealing with familiar spirits by men were parts of the idolatrous systems of the time. They were all founded on the forsaking of the Living and Ever-Present God, the Deliverer and Ruler of the nation. The connection between all these things and idolatry is very clearly brought out in the Book of Deuteronomy. In chap. xviii., vs. 10, 11, and 14, we read: "*There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire.*" This was a form of worship of that hideous god Moloch. Then immediately follows "*or that useth divination, or is an observer of times,*





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or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits." For these nations which thou shalt possess, hearkened unto observers of times, and unto diviners.

It has been so in all ages, and not only amongst those practicing the grosser forms of idolatry, but amongst the polished and civilized communities of Greece and Rome. It is a deep-rooted instinct of human nature, that in departing from the Living God there shall be a seeking after supernatural guidance in other forms.

The witches, then, as well as the sorcerers and diviners, were all really traitors to the covenant under which this people had a national existence at all. And it is as such they must be considered, when we read the severe penalty imposed upon them by Divine command, under the Mosaic Law. For witchcraft and sorcery were treason against the Divine Ruler of the State.

The penalty for *false witnessing* in court or otherwise is worthy of notice. It is found in chap. xix. of the Book of Deuteronomy. In v. 16 we find the following:

"If a false witness rise up against any man to testify against him that which is wrong: *then he shall stand before the Lord*, before the Priests and the Judges which shall be in those days; . . . and the Judges shall make diligent inquisition. *And behold, if the witness be a false witness, then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to do unto his neighbour.*"

A very clear precept, founded on the righteous law of retribution. And the object of all punitive legislation has never been more clearly stated than in the next verse:

"*And those which remain shall hear and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more such evil among you.*"

In dealing with criminals, and considering criminal legislation, this fundamental point has often been lost sight of in these times. Punishment is that men may take warning, and *commit no more such evil*, whether it be an injury to a man's property, his person, his reputation, or his life.

False witnessing in court, or perjury, is a very difficult thing to prove, inasmuch as the essence of the crime is wilfulness. A man may make a mistake in testifying, and say what is false, believing it to be true. That is no crime. And the difficulty in case of perjury is to prove that the false statement was *known* to be false.

Such a difficulty must always have existed; hence the precept that "*diligent inquisition*" is to be made, with a view to ascertain the real truth of the matter.

When it is ordained that the accused shall *stand before the*

Lord, we have what is strictly analogous to our swearing of witnesses in Court, the essence of which is the calling to witness of Almighty God that what is said is truth.

Analogous to the bearing of false witness against an individual is the raising of false reports. This is forbidden, though no penalty is mentioned in connection with it.

It were well if this Mosaic precept were more in evidence in these days of voluminous reporting upon all sorts of things and persons, and that journalism were not so much given to the spreading of reports that have no foundation in fact.

Two precepts relate to the *poor*. The one is that no favor is to be shown to a man in his cause *because he is poor*; a precept that has a bearing on certain forms of pandering to the prejudices of a class in these days.

The other is that judgment is not to be wrested *against* a poor man, a precept applicable to an opposite state of society and political condition, where the poor have no chance of justice against an influential man, or one who is rich enough to bribe the judge.

These last commands are rather of the nature of moral precepts than of civil law, inasmuch as they carry no penalty, but are important to note as indicating the general spirit of the Mosaic jurisprudence. Yet we mistake somewhat, in calling it Mosaic, for though it came through Moses as a minister, it is represented as proceeding from the Almighty Ruler Himself.

Of a like character are such further precepts as these:

"If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again."

"If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, thou shalt surely help with him."

The precept that followers of Christ are to love their enemies is to be found in substance in these precepts delivered to Moses. And the intrinsic difference between the Divine Law and the Pharisaic glosses upon it is strikingly shown in comparing these passages with the Pharisaic saying, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour and *hate thine enemy.*"

To hate one's enemy has no countenance in the precepts delivered to Moses for the regulation of a man's individual conduct. And the difference has often been strangely overlooked between such moral precepts as these, and those others which have solely to do with judicial procedure, and mark out the character of the punishment to be meted out for crime by the judges. With these alone the precept of "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth" has to do.

Bribery in all its forms is forbidden in the precept in v. 8:

"Thou shalt take no gift; for the gift blindeth the wise, and perverteth the words of the righteous."

What a forcible commentary on this has been seen in modern times in the experience of one of the greatest and wisest of Englishmen, Lord Bacon!

And how closely this touches modern political life, all who are acquainted with its development and the laws against bribery know only too well.

"Thou shalt not oppress a stranger" is a humane precept that seems to be entirely contrary to the commands given as to the rooting out and destroying of the Canaanite nations. But here again we must recognize the difference between precepts for the guidance of men as individuals, and those which concern the administration of justice, or the public polity of nations. An army has its functions in destroying the forces of the enemy, and its killing is lawful, but if an individual soldier, acting without orders, kills a non-combatant, or even a combatant, when the battle is over, the action is murder.

This brings up the whole question of the commands given as to destruction of the Canaanite nations. Respecting this, there has been much misapprehension and misstatement for want of consideration of facts and circumstances. The subject will be considered later on. Meanwhile, it is well to remember that we are not very competent to judge adversely of the policy and ways of a Being who is revealed as both righteous and merciful; but whose judgments are expressly declared to be "*past finding out*;" past finding out that is, not in themselves, but by persons of such limited intelligence in such matters as even the very wisest amongst us.

Yet, even with such limited intelligence as we possess, some reasons for the commands delivered through Moses to the Children of Israel in this respect may be discerned.

CHAPTER XV.

THE MOSAIC CIVIL LAW.—(Continued.)

THE LAWS RELATING TO LAND AND TO HEALTH.

Exodus 23, and other chapters.

The first command relating to the occupation of Land is to be found in the same chapter of Exodus (chap xxiii.) from which the precepts of civil law have been taken that were commented on in previous pages.

It reads as follows (vs. 10 and 11):

Six years thou shalt sow thy land, and shalt gather in the fruits thereof. But the seventh year thou shalt let it rest and lie still, that the poor of thy people may eat; and what they leave, the beasts of the field may eat. In like manner thou shalt deal with thy vineyard and with thy oliveyard.

Two things are very apparent from this; first, that the land of a cultivator is intended to be his own property, subject to his own control, the fruit of which is to be gathered for his own use. A limitation to this is afterwards introduced, not however, of the nature of a common ownership of land, or its continued ownership by the state, but of the preservation of inheritances *in the same family*; the same end, in fact, which is sought to be attained in modern times by the law of entail and primogeniture.

The second principle is, that land in process of cultivation is to have a periodic rest. Six years it is to be worked, the seventh year it is to lie fallow; a division singularly corresponding to the days for labour and for rest on the part of man himself.

All experience in dealing with the cultivation of the soil in modern countries shows that this necessity of a periodical rest is stamped on the very constitution of the earth itself. In Great Britain, where so large portion of cultivatable land is farmed by those who pay rent for it, the almost universal custom is for stipulations as to the land having periodical rest to be inserted in the lease. Experience has proved the necessity of it. And it is interesting to note that on the very first occasion in which an organized community under Divine direction is placed in possession of cultivatable land, directions are given which correspond, in principle, exactly with the rules which men in these days

have found it necessary to adopt from the teachings of experience.

And experience on this continent in the same matter has carried with it some bitter lessons that abide in disastrous consequences to this day. In Eastern Canada large tracts of land that once produced regular crops of wheat, have had their productiveness destroyed in that direction by persistent cropping, year after year, without rest or rotation. The same state of things has been brought about in certain parts of the United States.

There is, however, one country, and a wheat-growing country too, that presents a striking exception to this necessity of rest for the soil. And that country is Egypt. But this is an exception that proves the rule. For the soil of Egypt is unlike that of any country in the world, in that it is annually renewed by the inundation of the Nile. Now, it is noticeable that these regulations as to the land having a rest, appear in books written by a man whose whole experience of cultivating land had been *in the one country where it is not necessary*. All the early years of Moses were spent in the country annually renewed by the Nile; and when absent from Egypt for forty years, he was a shepherd in the Peninsula of Sinai, and had no experience in cultivating the soil. Yet when he is leading this great army of people towards a land where they will be cultivators, he gives directions with regard to it that could not have been derived from any experience he had had. Whence, then, had he this wisdom? Is it not most natural, most rational, most in accordance with the order of things, to acknowledge that its source was Divine; that the Supreme Being who had created the soil of the earth and knew its capacities and needs, revealed to His servant the laws by which while it was being cultivated, its powers could be best conserved. It certainly is.

But the most remarkable regulation with regard to the land is that which requires that it shall be restored to the family that originally possessed it every fiftieth year.

This ordinance is unique in the history of the world. And, like the seventh day of rest for man, and seventh year of rest for the land, this is an ordinance of sevenths. It is found in the Book of Leviticus (chap. xxv., v. 8).

"Thou shalt number seven Sabbaths of years unto thee; seven times seven years. Then thou shalt cause the trumpet of the jubilee to sound; and ye shall hallow the fiftieth year; and ye shall return every man unto his own possession, and every man unto his family." This is repeated in v. 13; "In the year of the jubilee, ye shall return every man to his possession." And

what followed plainly indicates that he is to return, not merely to the *occupation* of the family inheritance, but to its possession as owner. For it is immediately enjoined that when land is sold, the number of years that elapse until the jubilee are to be counted, and the price regulated thereby.

"According to the number of years after the jubilee thou shalt buy of thy neighbour. According to the multitude of years thou shalt increase the price thereof; and according to the fewness of years thou shalt diminish the price of it."

And it is added, with emphatic asseveration, by the Almighty Ruler: *The land shall not be sold for ever; FOR THE LAND IS MINE.* The marginal reading of the authorised version brings out the meaning still more clearly: *"The land shall not be sold to be quite cut off";* i.e., permanently alienated from the family. The Revised Version reads "shall not be sold in perpetuity." But the literal meaning of the Hebrew "shall not be sold to be quite *cut off*," singularly corresponds to the phrase "cutting off the entail," when land is alienated from a family in England.

The reason given for this, viz., that the land belongs to God, has been used as an argument against private ownership of land at all. The land, it is said, should be public property, the property of the State. But it is surely evident that if the fact of the land belonging to the Supreme Ruler is to debar its ownership by individuals or families, ownership by the State is equally debarred. For the State is nothing but an aggregation of individuals. Yet those who argue for sole ownership by the State always mean that the land under the jurisdiction of any state shall be owned by that particular state and held against all other states. Further, if the argument that the land belongs solely to God is pressed, it might reasonably be concluded that it should all be made over to, and owned by the representatives, or those who claim to be the representatives of God upon earth, viz., His Church.

The Church of God, in its various forms and manifestations in different lands and countries, might thus lay claim to the possession of all the land in the world.

It is well known that a gradual approximation to some such condition of things was taking place in some countries of modern Europe, bringing numerous abuses in its train, and that stringent legislation has been enacted to prevent these abuses growing to such a height that not only land but nearly all other property would be in possession of a wealthy priesthood and religious orders, with people sunk in poverty all about them.

The theory of communal ownership of land in cultivation, or of the continued ownership of such land by the

Government is, in truth, entirely unworkable in practice. And He who knows the conditions of land and labor as they must exist in the world, when He set apart a certain portion of the land of the earth to be cultivated by this Israelitish people, ordained that it should be distributed amongst them by families who should have the right of possession, as their own property. And so strongly was this idea of family possession inculcated and enforced, that it was ordained that if temporarily alienated by sale or mortgage, it was to come back to the family by force of law at the year of Jubilee.

Two things must strike any reflecting person with regard to this most peculiar arrangement of the fiftieth year. Its operation would inevitably be to prevent the acquirement by wealthy individuals of large tracts of land, and so, of the development of a land aristocracy. The whole arrangements of the civil law as revealed to Moses, were such as to favor a reasonable equableness of conditions, and the avoidance of the extremes of either great wealth or great poverty. It is probable, indeed, that the prohibition of usury was intended to operate in the same direction; for, naturally, when wealth accumulates, there is a tendency to employ it in loans to poorer neighbours, and with this, the temptation to oppressive rates of interest begins.

But a second effect of the system of restoring land at the Jubilee, would be to necessitate something like a system of primogeniture, the land always being the inheritance of the eldest son. For if all the land was apportioned amongst families, and no land could be permanently alienated from the family, how could the sons of a family be provided with means of subsistence after the first generation or two. The family land might be divided up once, or even twice, but after a time further division would be impossible. No new land could be purchased, for it all belonged to some family or other, and could not be alienated. Experience has shown the great evils of an excessive division of land, on both sides of the Atlantic. Some arrangement would therefore be inevitable like that which has obtained in England for generations, viz., that the eldest son shall inherit the land, while the younger sons shall seek out other avenues of employment.

There is, however, one exception to the operation of the Jubilee, which exception shows the profound wisdom which dictated these enactments, viz., that it shall not apply to property in walled cities.

V. 29: *If a man sell a dwelling house in a walled city, then he may redeem it within a whole year after it is sold. And if it*

be not redeemed within the space of a full year, then the house that is in the walled city shall be established for ever to him that bought it. It shall not go out in the Jubilee.

Here is a distinction, founded on the very nature of things, which is fully operative in these days, but is constantly lost sight of by theorists in land. For the land that is cultivated or occupied by an agricultural class is, in itself, the very means of subsistence to the cultivator. Without the land he cannot live.

But house property in a city is not, in itself, the means of subsistence at all. The dwellers in cities are men of a different class. Their subsistence is not from the buildings of the city, but from merchandise stored therein, or from professional occupation, such as those of judges, lawyers, physicians. These classes have no need of any permanent ownership of the dwelling they live in to carry on their avocations; hence there is no provision for family inheritance being perpetuated therein.

It is, however, provided (and this is another instance of the far-reaching and discriminating wisdom of these enactments) that (v. 31) *the houses of the villages which have no wall about them shall be counted as the fields of the country; they shall go out in the Jubilee.* And why? Because the houses of villages would undoubtedly be the houses of the farmers or cultivators, as is the case in England to this day, and would therefore be a necessary part of a farming inheritance.

But the property of the Levites in the cities they inhabit is to be subject to the law of the Jubilee, and for a natural reason. They were a separate class, and their houses were all the fixed property they had. No land was allotted to them. Their houses could not be permanently alienated without injustice to the whole community of Levites.

Such was to be the law with regard to land when the Israelites obtained possession of it; and one cannot fail to be struck with the profound foresight and wisdom involved in the regulations both with regard to its ownership, its restoration to the family at a stated period, and its cultivation according to a regulated plan of work and rest. The more the subject is studied, the more evidence shall we see of these laws having preceded from Him who is "*wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working!*"

The land, as is seen from the Book of Numbers (xxvi. 52-56) was originally divided, not only amongst the tribes—Levi only excepted—but amongst the families of the tribes; and the division was by lot; the only equitable mode; and that which would alone prevent caviling or imputation or favouritism.

And this inheritance of the land by families was doubtless the reason why, even in the Divine record itself, such an amount of space is devoted to family genealogy. For the family genealogy was the registry of the ownership of the land.

It is finally to be noted that this seventh year of rest for the land was connected with a provision for the poor; apparently that they might have rights in that year similar to the rights over the "common" lands of England enjoyed by the poorer inhabitants of the villages. Exactly how this would work it is impossible to say with certainty at this distance of time. But the intention of care for the poor and provision for them in such a way that a pauperized class could be prevented from arising, was sufficiently manifest.

Provision for the poor has been made in various ways in these modern times, and it is confessedly the most difficult problem in the government, either of a city, a municipality, or a country at large. In medieval Europe the monasteries were largely the channel of care for the poor; a system that had something to recommend it in theory. But it developed great abuses in practice. In the land to which the Israelites were going, the poor were to have special privileges during every seventh year. But the whole tendency of the Mosaic civil law was to prevent the formation of a class of poor at all.

THE YEAR OF RELEASE.

But in the Book of Deuteronomy is found (Chap. xv.) another remarkable provision indicating extreme care for the poor, viz., that at the end of every seven years there is to be a general release from debts. Yet it is evident from the text (vs. 8 to 11), that the loans referred to are those which are made from motives of benevolence and not as matters of business. It is such loans as these upon which usury is not to be exacted. In fact, when such loans are made in our own times, it is rare for interest to be exacted upon them, and no one who had made such a loan would be much concerned if the debtor were released by law after a given time.

But if such a law were applicable to business loans, the effect would be to bring about a system of gradual repayment so that nothing might be due at the period of release. And if that period were near, it would certainly be the case that some special security would be taken.

But the whole tone of the passage, and especially the

ninth, tenth and eleventh verses, clearly point to loans of benevolence made to help the poor and needy.

There is in the Book of Leviticus a curious yet most wise provision with regard to the planting of orchards, viz., that fruit shall not be gathered from any tree for the owner's use until it is five years old, though the fruit of the fourth year may be gathered for the Lord. All this evidently has in view the permanent productiveness of the trees, and corresponds with modern methods of Horticulture.

SANITATION AND CARE OF HEALTH.

This was a marked feature in these laws as delivered by the Supreme to the people, whom He had called out, and whose existence was intended to be preserved, for purposes of grace and blessing to mankind, for thousands of years to come. For this purpose, sanitary laws were of essential importance; and it is interesting to note their development.

These laws had three main divisions:—

Those connected with Food.

Those connected with Cleanliness of person, dwelling, and camp.

Those connected with the treatment of Contagious Disease.

The laws connected with Food divide all animals, fishes, birds and reptiles into the classes of Clean and Unclean; of those that might be eaten, and those that were forbidden. And the very wording of the division shows that the permission and prohibition concerned not taste or enjoyment, but health. Some were *clean*; evidently in the sense of being wholesome, suitable, and promotive of health. Others were unclean, being evidently unsuitable, and provocative of disease.

Of the latter the flesh of Swine was the most noticeable. And, considering that this flesh is perhaps the most universally used in modern civilized countries, one may wonder at the prohibition.

But this very prohibition is a proof that the Mosaic civil polity and law was never intended to be for all people, but had a partial and temporary use only. For in the cold latitudes of northern regions, the flesh of swine is the most suitable that can be found. But it is otherwise in southern latitudes. And in such a latitude was the land of Canaan.

Another curious difference was put between fish that had fins and scales and those which had not. The last were forbidden, and doubtless for the reason that their flesh is generally a mass of fat or blubber; highly unsuitable to a southern region; though, as we all know, the fatty flesh of

the whale is a chief article of diet in the regions of the extreme north.

The differences between one kind of feathered fowl and another are founded in the reason of things, and generally prevail even now. The same may be said of reptiles. But it is singular to find that such insects as locusts, beetles, and grasshoppers are allowed to be eaten. Here, certainly, there is a wide divergence between Mosaic law and modern civilized usages.

But with respect to this, and many other details of the Mosaic law, both civil and religious, it may with truth be said that while it may be difficult, at this immense distance of time, and in wholly changed circumstances, to assign reasons for some particular enactments, the general spirit and principle of the laws can be traced clearly enough. In the case of Religion it is either to secure reverence and awe in worship, or to symbolize greater things to come; or to guard against the idolatrous rites and customs prevalent around them. In the case of Civil Law, it is to ensure substantial justice between man and man, showing no favor either to poor or rich; also to develop and preserve the idea of the family, and to prevent some from permanently accumulating wealth, and others from falling into permanent poverty. In the case of measures for the preservation of the health of individuals, and of the people generally, it is to ensure that wholesome food is eaten, that cleanliness shall be strictly observed, and that if the seeds of contagious disease ripen, the contagion shall be prevented from spreading.

In short, the whole spirit of the law, as delivered to Moses by the all-wise framer of the body and soul of man, was to develop, in that country, at that time, and in those circumstances, the highest degree possible of physical health, and social and moral welfare. But the enactments themselves are for that time, country, and people only. They are evidently not suited for application to all time, and to all countries, and people. The time came, therefore, when they were all abrogated, viz., when the Kingdom of God was set up on earth by the Messiah. But, and it is important to observe this, the spirit of these enactments still survives in that very kingdom, for it is a kingdom of righteousness between man and man, and of personal purity of body and soul, and in its solemn charge to the rich of the world, to be ready to distribute, willing to communicate, and to care for the poor, there is a provision which if steadily carried out would prevent many of the evils that afflict modern society from the great inequality of conditions.

It is in the light of this obvious rule that the enactments have to be considered that respect personal cleanliness. Some of them seem overstrained, such as the prohibitions to touch the body of a dead person or beast, or to touch any physically unclean thing, whether of man or beast, or to touch the flesh of birds and beasts that are not to be eaten, together with the ordinances about breaking the vessels they may fall upon, and of washing the clothes of any who have to do with them. But the laws as to purifications are evidently pervaded by the principle of care for absolute cleanliness of person and dwellings though we may not be able to see the reason for the particular enactment. (Leviticus xi.) And the provisions for cleanliness in the Camp when journeying are exactly such as in principle are carried out in the camps of armies to this day.

With respect to Contagious disease, amidst a multitude of detailed directions (Leviticus xiii. and following) that are involved in repetitions and are difficult to understand, several general ideas are plainly discernible in the way of direction as to what is to be done.

First. That when any sign that has the appearance of a contagious disease, such as leprosy, comes out upon a person, he is to be immediately *isolated* for a period of seven days—precisely as he would be in these times—or longer.

Second. Extreme care is to be taken to distinguish between an ordinary and harmless eruption, and the spots that indicate Leprosy.

Third. If the case prove to be leprosy, there is to be continued isolation. The person afflicted is to be placed with out the camp, with marks to indicate his condition.

Fourth. All the garments that have been worn by a leprous person are to be burned.

Fifth. The house in which there has been a plague of leprosy is to be thoroughly cleansed by scraping the plaster from the wall, and in some cases taking out the stones and beams of the house. In other and more virulent cases, the house itself is to be torn down. And in every case all that is scraped off or torn down is to be carried away from the abodes of men and destroyed.

All this, in essence and principle, remarkably corresponds with the manner in which sanitary measures are carried out in modern times; in fact, it is only in recent days that in the treatment of contagious diseases some modern countries have come up to the standard laid down, by Divine direction, for this Israelitish people, more than three thousand years ago.

CRITICAL NOTE TO CHAPTER XV.

AS TO THE LAND BEING A DIVINE POSSESSION.

The *Land is Mine*, said the Supreme Ruler to His people Israel, when forbidding its permanent alienation from the family originally owning it. Then, say the modern theorists, land cannot become the property of any man.

But let us consider whether this is a fair inference.

Was this declaration not made as an assertion of the right of the Supreme to confirm *certain families* in continued ownership. It undoubtedly was. Then the ownership of land by families was part of the Divine constitution of this Israelitish nation. The inference therefore that it cannot become private property is unwarranted.

But, further; is this Divine assertion, "*the land is mine,*" not a part of a far greater claim, viz., that *all things whatever* in Heaven or earth are His? It undoubtedly is. And here we cannot but revert to the striking language used in the time of Abram (when he had recovered spoils from the marauding chieftains) by that kingly Priest Melchizedek. Giving blessing to Abraham, he speaks of the Most High, as the "*POSSESSOR of Heaven and Earth*" (Genesis xiv. 19.) thus asserting a claim not to the land of the Canaanites only, but to all lands, and in all worlds. This claim is asserted more definitely and largely in the twenty-fourth Psalm, in the words, "The Earth is the Lord's, *and the fulness thereof;*" or, as otherwise translated, *and all that therein is.* Thus the Lord proclaims His right to the whole earth and to all its fruits; to all corn and wine, all forests and fields, all gold and silver and precious stones, all that is on the surface, either in the realm of nature, or of civilization, or beneath the surface, or in the air. "*Every beast of the forest is mine,*" it is asserted in another place, "*and the cattle upon a thousand hills.*" Thus there is no absolute, independent, and ultimate ownership of anything by any man; for, in the ultimate issue, God is the Supreme Owner of all. And so it must be; from the great conception which Revelation gives us of the Supreme, as Creator, Disposer, Preserver of all, *by whom all things consist*, and in whom man himself *lives and moves and has his being.*

Yet this does not prevent a subordinate right of property on the part of States and Governments, of the territory they occupy, nor the right of "*eminent domain*" of the State as against the individual citizen.

Nor does this right of "eminent domain" or sovereignty of the State over all within its bounds, prevent the exercise of the right of property by individuals over whatever they have acquired or inherited lawfully. Individuals may own lands, houses, forests, mines, and all that comes out of any of them. Yet all is subject to the right of the State, and that itself is subject to the sovereign claims of God, the Almighty Ruler of the whole earth.

NOTE AS TO BONDMEN.— (Page 358.)

There is, in these precepts, a brief indication of difference between the servitude of a Hebrew and that of a stranger. The principal difference is that, the Hebrew becomes free in the seventh year, and at the year of Jubilee, while the stranger does not. His service is for life (Lev. xxv. 46). He may also be called on for harder service than a Hebrew.

But it is expressly enjoined that he shall not be *oppressed*. (Exodus xxii. 21 and xxiii. 9, *et al.*) A comprehensive enactment, and designed expressly to prevent such exactions as the Hebrews suffered under Pharaoh. (Chap. xxiii. 9.)

CHAPTER XVI.

THE RELIGIOUS SYSTEM DELIVERED TO MOSES FOR THE HEBREW PEOPLE.

Exodus 25, and forward.

The Religious observances delivered to Moses by the Supreme Ruler are much better known than the laws as to civil and secular life, and for this reason, that much of the religious observance proved to be a shadowing forth of great spiritual realities in the Christian dispensation, and hence have been constantly brought before Christian assemblies. The Law, it is affirmed in the Epistle to the Hebrews, had a *Shadow of good things to come*. And how much this is the case is opened up in that very Epistle, where, speaking by the Holy Ghost, the writer opens up the great spiritual ideas that were symbolized in the Priesthood, the Sanctuary, the Mercy Seat, the Sacrifices and the Offerings. And we know that one of the great Festivals ordained as binding on the Jews was expanded and enlarged into the great central observance of the Christian faith, the Supper of the Lord, the Holy Communion; which is plainly founded on the Feast of the Passover.

Yet, well as this religious system is generally known by Christian people, there are many most interesting points therein that are at times overlooked. And it must be confessed, that in a certain method of commenting upon, and expounding of, the numerous details of this system, and the endeavour to draw out some symbolical meaning from every jot and tittle of its observance, the sound and rational instruction to be derived therefrom has been buried under a mass of conceits and fancies. The inspired Epistle to the Hebrews, however, is short, pointed, and eminently easy to understand; and following its indications, the idea and meaning of the whole system of the Mosaic ritual becomes apparent.

And here, more even than in what has previously been commented on, it is necessary to remember that while we may not be able to understand the reason why there was such extraordinary detail in the directions divinely given to Moses (for he was expressly charged to make everything according to the Pattern shown him on the Mount), their general scope, spirit, and object, become apparent enough if we carefully consider them. Bearing this in mind, then,

let us pass under review the directions given as to the following:

1. The Sanctuary or Tabernacle;
 2. The Ark of the Covenant;
 3. The High Priest, his dress, and functions;
 4. The Altars, Sacrifices, and Offerings;
 5. The Great Festivals and the annual Day of Atonement;
- with respect to all which, we shall see how that which they shadowed forth has been fulfilled in the Christian dispensation.

THE SANCTUARY OR TABERNACLE.

Seeing that this Sanctuary was for the use of a people who were travelling and moving about from place to place, themselves dwelling in tents (as the inhabitants of the same region do at this day), it was of necessity that the sanctuary should be a tent too.

In chap. xxv., at the eighth verse, we find the fundamental idea of this sanctuary (the word signifying a holy place) in the command, "AND LET THEM MAKE ME A SANCTUARY, THAT I MAY DWELL AMONG THEM!" The camp was spread widely over the plain, and consisted of a multitude of tents.

As the king or chief of a tribe would have a tent of more than usual beauty and costliness, so the Divine Sovereign, the Chief and Leader of this people, commands that a Tent be prepared for Him; and of such rare and costly material as would set forth (so far as material things could set forth) his grandeur and state. Thus would He "*dwelt among them.*"

This idea of the Divine Ruler abiding and dwelling among the people is repeated again and again with solemn emphasis. In chap. xxix., 42 to 46, we have this idea dwelt upon: *At the door of the tabernacle of the congregation (or Tent of Meeting) I will meet with you, to speak unto thee: And there I will meet with the children of Israel: And I will dwell among the children of Israel and will be their God! And they shall know that I am the Lord their God which brought them forth out of the land of Egypt that I may dwell among them! I am the Lord their God.*

This idea is dwelt upon with peculiar force in the directions for the fashioning of that singular chest called in chap. xxv. the "Ark of Testimony." "*There will I meet with thee;*" and there is added these remarkable words "*and I will commune with thee from above the Mercy Seat,*" words indicating a wonderful condescension of nearness on the part of the Sovereign Ruler, and a foreshadowing of that striking saying of the Divine Son of God to His disciples, "*henceforth I call you not servants, but friends.*"

But even at this early stage in their history, the idea was emphasized that the sacred tent was not to be a dwelling place of the Most High *in itself*; and apart from the assembly of the people. The tent was only a means by which God might dwell *among them, or meet with them, or commune with them*; in this being essentially different from the Temples of the Heathen, in which the god was always present, whether the people were there or not.

As to the erection itself, the following particulars are to be noted:

1. It was to be erected by the free and willing offerings of the people. (Chap. xxv. 2.) "*Speak to the children of Israel that they bring me an offering; of every man that giveth it willingly, with his heart, ye shall take an offering.*" Thus it was to be in the wilderness. And thus it was when, on a much grander scale, the far more costly materials for the Temple were gathered by King David. And thus all offering, all service, all gifts are desired to be by Him who yet is Lord of all.

2. Its materials were to be of the most costly kind. "*This is the offering ye shall take of them, gold, silver, brass;*" also materials for curtains, and finally precious stones, "*onyx stones, and stones to be set in the ephod and in the breastplate.*" These, as we learn in a subsequent chapter, comprised nearly all the jewels which have ever been known in the world, or which are valued at the present day, amongst them being the *diamond, the sapphire, the topaz, and the emerald.* (Chap. xxxix. 10 to 13.)

It is noticeable that though a system of TITHES was instituted as a perpetual matter of obligation, this was confined to the support and maintenance of the priesthood.

There never was anything of the nature of a levy on perproyt for the erection and furnishing of the tabernacle, costly as it was; or of the magnificent Temple, the most costly building, probably, of its time, in the world. In both cases appeal was wholly made to the loyalty and affection of the people.

It is well known that when the Christian Church was established, no system of tithes, or obligatory contribution was instituted. Appeal was made to the willing and hearty offering of the people whenever money was required. The only occasion when definite obligation was laid down was when the rich congregation of Corinth was making a special contribution for the relief of the poor Christians of Judea. Then they were enjoined to give, systematically, as God had prospered them. But no general rule as to giving, applicable to all Christians, and all time, was laid down even then.

A strict injunction was laid upon Moses to have every-

thing constructed according to the *Pattern shown to him on the Mount*. This injunction is repeated again and again, and the details are given with such particularity as to excite our wonder that the Great Sovereign of the Universe could condescend to care about such accessories of worship as lamps, candelabras, tables, and curtains; and that the directions should have been preserved for all time in the sacred records.

Does God care for such things, it may be asked? And some would be inclined to think it beneath him. But let us consider. What are the developments of Divine Power in the world of Nature? Is anything more remarkable than the extreme care which the great Creator of all the worlds of the Universe has bestowed upon innumerable multitudes of small creatures that inhabit the earth, the air and the water. Does God care for flies and beetles? Some would say, absurd! But let us examine the structure of any one of them, and we shall find in it not only the most wonderful mechanism, but evidence of calculation and design quite as striking as is manifest in the structure of the largest animal, or, for that matter, in the world itself.

So, then, this care for the minute details of a structure which was to be the earthly scene of the divine manifestation for many centuries, corresponds exactly with the care for minute details in the formation of his creatures.

This word "*Pattern*" seems to suggest a visible plan or drawing, such as architects make of a building to be erected. And the minute directions correspond almost exactly (even as to giving details of measurements) with what are called *specifications* written out by the architect, giving directions to the builder in modern times.

The whole building was to be erected, and all its Divinely-ordained furniture to be constructed by men specially endowed for the purpose with practical wisdom. (Chap. xxxi.)

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, See, I have called by name Bezaleel, the son of Uri. And I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship. To devise cunning works, to work in gold, in silver, and in brass, and in cutting of stones, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship."

The house and all its furniture was to be of a Divine pattern, and the workman was to be filled with Divine wisdom.

And, if it be asked, how, in that wilderness, did that multitude of people, only lately oppressed with a bitter bondage, obtain all the costly material for this magnificent tent and its splendid contents, let us recall what took place

at the time when the people were hurried away out of Egypt. It was by Divine direction that, as we read in the twelfth chapter, they *borrowed* of the Egyptians jewels of silver and jewels of gold, and raiment. The true character of this so-called borrowing has been opened up in a previous chapter, and we now see what the object of the whole proceeding was. The people of Israel recovered back from their Egyptian masters some part of what they had been deprived during years of bondage. And this recovered treasure was now consecrated to the service of their Sovereign Leader and King.

THE ARK OF THE COVENANT.

One of the most remarkable things about this magnificent Tent, was the great curtain or veil that divided it into two distinct parts. The whole tent was a consecrated place. But the inner portion was Most Holy. This veil of separation continued to be a feature of the Temple down to the time of our Lord; when, in the awful hour of the Crucifixion, when the true atoning sacrifice was being offered of which all that went before was a shadow, this veil was *rent in twain from top to bottom!* This terrible portent was a sign; and what it signified was the end of the dispensation of shadows, now that the great reality had come. And, as we know, the whole came to an end by the destruction of the Temple itself, in fire and storm, at the sack of Jerusalem by the Roman army under Titus.

But for many centuries this veil separated the Most Holy Place from the rest of the Tabernacle.

And within the innermost sanctuary was contained what was by far the most important part of the contents of the Tabernacle.

The Ark of the Covenant (chap xxv.) was simply a chest, made of fine wood, about four feet long and three feet high, gilded both within and without, and with a crown of gold upon it, thus denoting the presence of the King. It was never to be touched, but to be carried by means of staves through rings. Within this ark was to be placed the *Tables of the Law*, the testimony of God; and also the *Rod of Aaron that budded*, together with a *pot of the sacred Manna*, the food of the wilderness. Highly significant and marvellous representations of the *power*, the *government*, and the *care* of the Sovereign King.

But the most significant thing about this Ark was its covering. This was of pure solid gold, and it was named the *Mercy Seat*, a name corresponding almost exactly to the "*Throne of Grace*" spoken of in the Epistle to the He-

brews as that to which one may approach and find help from the Most High in time of need.

The chest contained within it the greatest manifestation of Divine Law that has ever been made known to the world in the two Tables of the Covenant. But a Law, to those who are continually coming short of it, and who, consequently are only condemned by it, must be an object of dread in the absence of any provision of mercy and forgiveness. With the Divine Wisdom then was it ordained, that the very same ark that enshrined the Law, should be covered by the emblem of Mercy. A golden seat of Mercy; this was the place of special Divine manifestation.

"There," said the Sovereign Lawgiver, "*will I meet with thee.*" And not as a Judge, not even as a Sovereign, but as a *Friend*, for it is added, "*and I will commune with thee;*" evidently as to forgiveness, favor, the Divine blessing, communion with God. The very highest form and manifestation of a sanctified life, as unfolded in the Christian dispensation, is here revealed as possible, even in this early age and dispensation of foreshadowing.

The Mercy Seat had bending over it two carved figures of solid gold, with outstretched wings, called by the same name as that given to those remarkable creatures appointed to guard the garden of Eden after man's expulsion from it. They are called *Cherubim*, a purely Hebrew word, and from its root apparently suggesting Divine Majesty and Power. What was their form has been the subject of laborious (and it may be added) very foolish conjecture and dispute; for the form of these creatures has no possible significance. But it is much more likely than not, that they were of human form, with wings outstretched, and bending over the Mercy Seat in an attitude of profound reverence, suggesting the worship and the service of the angelic world in the great work of the manifestation of mercy to mankind.

This Ark, with its golden cover, was placed within the vail. And there, from time to time, the Divine Presence was manifested amongst the people.

So perfectly was the idea of the Divine Presence associated with the ark, that the ark itself is spoken of in Numbers x. 33 as if it were a living thing. When the people finally left the neighbourhood of Sinai, and began their long journey through the wilderness, "*the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord went before them in the three days' journey, to search out a resting place for them!*"

And the words were added which were evidently the marching orders of the whole journey. "It came to pass when the ark set forward, that Moses said, *Rise up, Lord,*

and let thine enemies be scattered, and let them that hate thee flee before thee. And when it rested, it said, *Return, O Lord, to the many thousands of Israel!*"

When the journey was ended and the land of Canaan was plainly in view of the people, it was *before the ark*, that the waters of Jordan were cut off; before the ark, for where the ark was, there was Divine Power. When Jericho was besieged, it was the ark of the covenant that was carried round the city. (Josh. vi. 6.) "So," as we read, "*the ark of the Lord compassed the city . . . the priests going on and blowing with trumpets.*" The tabernacle itself was a tent mainly to enshrine the ark of the Lord. When King David purposed to build the Temple (and it was as much David's temple as Solomon's) it was to find a permanent habitation for the ark, which had hitherto dwelt *within curtains* (2 Sam. vii. 2), this marvellous chest having been preserved through all the changes and wars of four hundred years down to this time.

When a superstitious use came to be made of the ark, and, without Divine authority, it was taken away from its rightful place in the Tabernacle to be carried about with the army, victory did not follow. The people had forsaken the Living God, and thought only of His material representative. The ark then was taken by the Philistines. The aged High Priest Eli hears of the defeat, and of the death of his two sons, with comparative calm. But when he heard that the Ark of God was taken, he fell to the ground stunned and heart-broken. And a child just then born, was named by its dying mother *Ichabod*, meaning "*no more glory!*" for she said, "The glory is departed from Israel." For the ark differed from the altar, and the golden table, and the golden lamp-stand, in this—that they were only glorious by reason of the use that was made of them. The ark was glorious in itself, as having within it, and upon it, continually, the sign of the Divine Government in the Tables of the Law, of Divine Power in the rod of Aaron that budded, of Divine providential care in the pot of Manna, and most conspicuously, of Divine Mercy in the golden covering of the ark, overshadowed by the wings of the Cherubim.

No Temple in this world ever had an object within it like this ark, and it finds its true fulfilment in connection with Christian worship, not in any outward and visible thing, but in the Presence of the Divine Son of God, in all the assemblies of His people, whether small or great. He in Himself is there, having all the Divine attributes of rule, power, providence, and mercy, to the end of the dispensation where providence and mercy are needed by mankind.

The remaining contents of the Tabernacle are referred to very briefly in the Book of Exodus, and need not be dwelt upon at length here.

Chief of these was the ALTAR FOR BURNT OFFERING. The various offerings thereupon, their value and significance, will be alluded to later on; sufficient at present to say that it was square in shape, about seven feet in length, seven in breadth, and four feet high; made of fine wood, with projections called *Horns* on the corner (there is historical significance in this), and a grating of network of brass to cover it. On this altar were to be offered the actual bodies of animals just slain. Another altar, very much smaller, was to burn incense upon. This altar was to be overlaid in all its parts with pure gold, and a crown of gold was to be placed upon it.

The *Table of Shewbread* was a peculiar feature of the Tabernacle. This table was very small, only three feet in length by two in breadth, and two feet high. This also, though made of fine wood, was to be overlaid with gold, and a golden crown was to be upon it.

The special use of this Shewbread, consisting of twelve loaves, one for each Tribe, is not clearly discernible, except that it was to be in some measure a provision for the priests, and lawful to be used by them alone. But in it there is a foreshadowing of the Bread of Life sent down from Heaven, even of the Eternal Son of God. The Table of Shewbread, and not the Altar, is thus the true type of the Table of the Lord in the Christian Church.

The great Lamp-stand, or, as it is translated, candlestick, was a striking feature of the Tabernacle, and most minute specifications are given (chap. xxv. 31) as to its construction and ornamentation.

The size of this lamp is not given. But it is strange that amid the universal wreck of the architecture, and nearly all visible memorials of early Hebrew history, the form of this candelabra still remains visible in carving on the arch of Titus in Rome. The well-known representation of the Roman victor's triumph has a still almost perfect picture of the Jewish captives bearing the sacred vessels of the despoiled Temple of Jerusalem. And the candelabra is there amongst them, corresponding exactly with the description written more than three thousand years ago (chap. xxv. 31, etc.) of a candlestick, with "six branches coming out of the sides of it," with "three bowls like unto almonds" on each side, and ornaments of knobs and flowers! eloquently, though silently, testifying amidst those ruins of Old Rome of the truth of the sacred records of three thousand years ago.

The last of these vessels of the Tabernacle to be noticed is the *Laver* for washing.

This Laver (chap. xxx. 18) was to be made of brass; and was to be placed at the entrance of the sacred tent, that Aaron and his sons might therein wash their hands and feet, before proceeding to offer sacrifices or to minister.

From this description of the Tabernacle, which, in all its details, was closely followed in the construction of the Temple, it is evident that neither of them corresponded in any way with a church for Christian worship.

The Tabernacle was not a place for the meetings of the congregation, for none but priests could enter it; it was not a place of preaching, teaching, or instruction, for it was entirely wanting in adaptation to such purposes. It was not even a place of united prayer of the congregation.

Its purpose was purely sacrificial and ceremonial. All that the priests did was to make offerings on the people's behalf; to appear, in fact, for the people, before the Almighty Ruler and Governor.

And it is to be remembered that there was but one Tabernacle, and afterwards but one Temple for the whole nation. This one particular demonstrates its unsuitableness to be a type or model of a place for Christian assemblies. The true type or model of the Christian place of assembly was the Synagogue, which was at once a place of meeting, as its name signifies, and a place of instruction and prayer; and of which in later times, there was at least one in every town and city in the land, subsisting along with the central Temple in Jerusalem, but having functions of an entirely different character.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE RELIGIOUS SYSTEM OF THE JEWS.

(Continued.)

PRIESTS AND SACRIFICES.

The Religious system divinely prescribed to Moses had this great peculiarity, that there was only one place of sacrifice and sacred worship in the land. Instead of a multitude of Temples as in Egypt, Greece, and Rome, there was only one, viz., the movable sacred Tent for nearly four hundred years, and after that the Temple at Jerusalem—permanent and magnificent, and lasting about a thousand. But there was only one Temple, as there had been only one Tabernacle. And this carried with it important consequences; principally that the order of priests in the land was composed of comparatively few persons, a wise and far-sighted provision indeed. Its wisdom can be appreciated when considering the abuses that have arisen in many countries, both ancient and modern, from the large and unreasonable multiplication of a Priestly class.

The Priests of the Jews were wholly confined to one family, the children and descendants of Aaron.

The manner of the setting apart of these Priests, their dress and their duties, is all set forth with extraordinary particularity in the books of Exodus and Leviticus. And they will well repay careful consideration on the part of Christian people, for they all have a direct bearing on the great and abiding realities of the Christian faith. The Jewish priesthood, Temple, and Sacrifices, with all appertaining thereto, have passed away; and were intended to pass away. But the realities of which they were types and object-lessons were intended to abide. And they do abide, and shall so abide, until the end of the Christian age. For He who is set forth in shadow by the High Priest of the Hebrews *abideth a Priest forever*.

1. The setting apart of the Priest to his office was mainly by the solemn ceremony of ANOINTING, the prototype of all those anointings by which kings and priests were set apart for many ages, and which finally culminated in the manifestation of the Messiah, as the ANOINTED ONE. For the name by which the Son of God is universally known, is the CHRIST; simply a Greek form of the word Messiah, and both meaning *anointed*.

(This same ceremony of anointing was used for the Hebrew kings, and it is interesting to note that it still survives in the order for the crowning of the Sovereigns of England.)

A solemn *washing* was also part of the ceremony of induction, along with the offering of sacrificial animals. Upon the head of the chief animal, the *priest is to lay his hands*, a ceremony peculiar to all sacrifices for the purging of sin. Then finally the blood of another animal is to be taken, and *with it is to be touched the right ear, the right hand, and the right foot of the priest*; ceremonies of which the significance is most clear. The cleansing blood is to affect the ear that takes in knowledge, the hand that executes purposes, and the foot that carries the priest about amongst the people; and it is a significant reminder to one who executes the office that his whole being is consecrated to the service of the Living God.

The Dress of the High Priest is of a no less remarkable character than the ceremony of induction, and is significant in a high degree of the "*good things to come*" in a higher and permanent dispensation.

A whole chapter (chap. xxviii.) is devoted to this dress, and nearly every part of it is full of significance and foreshadowing.

The dress principally consisted of an Ephod or Tunic (the word Ephod is Hebrew and untranslated) of rare and costly materials, "*of gold and blue, and purple and scarlet, and fine twined linen.*" But the significance of the garment was not in its beauty or costliness. On the shoulders of the Ephod were to be fastened *two onyx stones, on which were to be engraved the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel, six names on one stone and six on the other, according to the order of their birth. With the work of an engraver in stone like the engraving of a signet shalt thou engrave the two stones; thou shalt make them to be set in ouches of gold for stones of memorial. "And Aaron shall bear their names before the Lord upon his two shoulders, before the Lord for a memorial."*

Thus, whenever the High Priest ministered before the Lord in the Tabernacle, he carried the whole people with him, bearing their sins, their prayers, their thank-offerings in his own person. And surely, without any straining of minute symbolism, we can see in this beautiful arrangement a prefiguring of the great High Priest that was to come *who bore our sins and carried our sorrows and sicknesses, upon whom all the burdens and cares of His people are to be laid; also upon whose shoulder, the government of*

the true Israel is to rest until the end of time." (Isaiah ix. 6.)

But fastened to this Ephod was a Breastplate, and this breastplate was more remarkable still. This breastplate was called the "*Breastplate of Judgment*," and over it were disposed in four regular rows, twelve precious stones, engraved with the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel, "*every one with his name shall they be, according to the twelve tribes.*"

The purpose of this is set forth in the twenty-ninth verse, which carries with it a singular touch of pathos and beauty.

"*And Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breastplate of judgment UPON HIS HEART, when he goeth it into the holy place, for a memorial before the Lord continually.*"

Thus the High Priest not only bore the whole Israelitish nation in symbol upon his shoulder, he had them pressing close upon his heart! An exquisite picture of loving affection in itself; and, as subsisting for fourteen hundred years until the time of abrogation, must surely have drawn out the affection of devout Israelitish souls towards their great Lord and Governor. Of such an affection, the Psalms are full.

But beyond this, how true a foreshadowing is all this of the deep fathomless love to His people of the great Redeemer and Saviour of the World. "*Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them to the end.*" And He loves them specially in His great office of High Priest, for it is as such He intercedes for them, sympathizes with them, and bears their names on his heart before the Eternal Throne.

There was, however, something more upon this glorious and jeweled breastplate, viz., what is termed the *Urim* and *Thummim*. These Hebrew terms, untranslated, and in the plural number, signify *Lights and Perfections*, and their use was stated to be that *Aaron should bear the judgment of the children of Israel upon his heart before the Lord continually.*

But in what manner this judgment was to be exercised, the revelation to Moses does not make known.

From the few passages in the Old Testament where these are referred to, it would appear that, whatever was their form and substance, they could be used to obtain understanding of the Divine will on special occasions.

And, certainly, they admirably prefigure Him who was the *Light of the world*, the *Perfection* of humanity, and with whom is the *Judgment* of Almighty God.

The remaining portion of the dress of the High Priest

was the *Mitre*, upon the forefront of which was a *plate of pure gold*, with the words "HOLINESS TO THE LORD" engraved thereon. This was to be upon Aaron's forehead, "that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things, which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts. And it shall be always upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before the Lord."

There is no special symbolism or foreshadowing in this. But there is undoubtedly very significant teaching, which teaching is as applicable to these Christian times as to the old dispensation, viz., that there may be *iniquity* even in *holy things*! The service rendered with the lip may not be with the heart; there may be formalism, hypocrisy, irreverence. The offering may be utterly unworthy and insufficient; there may be, indeed, what the Prophet in scathing language calls, "*robbery for burnt offering*;" that is, the gifts presented to the cause of God may be the fruit of dishonest practices, or the spoiling of the goods of the poor. This the Lord hates. That such a warning was needed, the history of medieval Christianity makes only too plain.

That the foregoing description of the dress of the High Priest cannot be rightly taken as a model for the dress of Christian ministers, is plain from a consideration, first, that all parts of the dress are symbolical and typical; *Shadows of good things to come*.

Second, that the office of priest under the old dispensation, was a totally different one from that of a minister of Christ, even if he is *called* a priest. Third, that the service of the Tabernacle and Temple was for a wholly different object from that of a Christian church. Every part of those services belonged to a system which has passed away and been replaced by a spiritual system founded on better promises.

THE SACRIFICES AND OFFERINGS.

The great business of the Priest was to present the sacrifices and offerings brought by the people. Respecting these, certain great leading principles will be found pervading the minute, numerous and complicated directions given to Moses on the Mount, and which are mainly found in the books of Exodus and Leviticus.

These principles are as follows:

1. All atonement for sin is by the shedding of blood and the taking of life. It is not the mere shedding of blood, for blood may be shed, as we well know, without the taking of life. The animal offered in sacrifice must die. Only as a sign of death is it that "*the blood maketh an atonement for the soul.*"

2. All animals offered in sacrifice must be absolutely perfect of their kind. A male, without blemish, is the only acceptable sacrifice for sin. One of the sins of the people in after ages was that they insulted Divine justice by bringing the blind and the lame for a sin-offering.

Even when the wrong-doing had been involuntary, or by inadvertence, an offering of blood was required. But for this offering a female would be accepted, only without blemish.

3. There were grades of offerings. Those who could not bring a bullock or goat might be allowed to bring a lamb, or a pair of turtle-doves, or young pigeons.

4. Thank-offerings must be sprinkled with blood to be accepted. And all offerings must be purified with salt, salt being the great instrument, then as now, of preservation from corruption.

5. All offerings for sin (except alone on the Day of Atonement once a year) must be brought by the person who has sinned.

This person must lay his hand upon the head of the animal, when presenting it to the Priest, the laying on of hands being then, as now, the sign of transmission.

In the case of the sinner, it was the sign of the transmission of guilt to the animal, which was then slain as an atonement for the soul of the person offering.

6. All sacrifices were to be made and offerings offered at the Tabernacle only.

7. In addition to these offerings by single persons for their own sin, a lamb, perfect and without blemish, was to be offered every morning, and another lamb every evening throughout the year continually.

8. And, once a year, a great and solemn act of Atonement is to be made (Leviticus xvi.) On this day alone is the High Priest to enter within the veil. He is there to offer a bullock, two kids, and a ram, first for the sins of himself and his house, and then for the sins of the whole people; sprinkling the mercy seat seven times with the blood of the offerings.

Then follows the striking ceremony of the SCAPEGOAT, which goat has been previously chosen for the purpose. To this end Aaron (Leviticus xvi. 21) shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness.

And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited.

This whole day is to be a day for affliction of soul, a *Sabbath of holy rest*, and to be on the tenth day of the seventh month.

And on this day an atonement is to be made for the *holy sanctuary, and for the tabernacle of the Congregation, and for the altar, and for the priests*, and for all the people; thus again making prominent the idea that there may be, and probably has been sin, even in the offering of sacrifices, and in the service of the holiest things by the consecrated priests.

It was to be a rule of perpetual obligation that the priest should *take no wine* at the time of his ministrations.

This ordinance was first made after the transgression of the sons of Aaron in offering *strange fire* before the Lord (Leviticus x. 9), and suggests that the reason of the transgression was intoxication, a warning not without application in Christian times.

THE FESTIVALS.

Amongst the most striking of the ordinances delivered to the people by the hand of Moses, and which have had the greatest permanency in their history, are those relating to the Yearly Festivals. These were partly religious and partly national, or rather they were national celebrations to be carried out in a spirit of religious devotion by great assemblages of people gathering before God in the place where His name was recorded.

The obligation to come to this centre of national life was only binding upon males. This was for obvious reasons. In time, when all the land of Canaan was occupied, an obligation for women to travel from the distant corners of the land, from the rough mountainous country of Gilead beyond Jordan, or from the remote parts of the tribe of Dan in the north, would have been burdensome in the extreme. But there was no reason why women should not *voluntarily* come to the centre of the Festivals when it was easy and convenient to travel.

And that it was customary for women in later times to come to the Feast of the Passover at least, is evident from the incident of our Saviour's first appearance as a child in the Temple; when He was certainly accompanied by His mother. (Luke ii. 48.)

Of these Festivals, that of the *PASSOVER* was the most striking, having the most remarkable origin as a record of terrible judgment and wonderful deliverance, being intimately associated with the history of the Saviour of the

world, having been perpetuated by Him in the form of a sacred memorial celebration for His disciples, binding on them to the end of time, and universally celebrated wherever Christians are known. For *Christ, our Passover*, says St. Paul, speaking by the Holy Ghost *was sacrificed for us*. And, as is well known, wherever Hebrews are to be found throughout the world, the Feast of the Passover is celebrated still by them.

The Feast in itself was a *family* ordinance, ordained as such from the beginning, as we read in chapter xii, to be observed by every family putting away all leavened bread and all leaven for seven days, having the feast of a lamb with bitter herbs in the house; one of its objects being the instruction of the children of the house, who are to be encouraged to ask the meaning of the service, and to be told of the great redemption it commemorated.

But beside this family celebration, there was to be a great gathering before the Lord, *in the place He should choose* as the centre of the nation's worship. This gathering was to be, like the other Festivals, a *Holy Convocation* (Leviticus xxiii). During the whole week *offerings by fire* were to be made; burnt offerings, meat offerings, drink offerings, "everything upon his day," the whole carrying the mind backward to the night when they were delivered from bondage, while their first born, by the sprinkling of the blood of a spotless lamb slain, were saved from death.

How significant all this is in a Christian sense, every disciple of Christ knows. And surely when celebrating our great Christian memorial feast, Christians may well think of the ancient people Israel, and pray that the veil may be speedily taken from their hearts, that they may see Jesus Christ as the true Paschal Lamb, slain from the foundation of the world, for the Jew as well as the Gentile.

The second Festival is one of National Thanksgiving, and was celebrated after the gathering in of the Harvest. It was what we would call a Harvest-home feast. Then the males of the land are to journey to the place of convocation, each bringing a sheaf (or as it is in the margin, a *handful*) of the fruits of the harvest. This handful was evidently of Wheat in stalk and ear, for it was to be *waved before the Lord* by the Priest, as the essential feature of the celebration, which nevertheless, like the Feast of the Passover, was to be a week of continual burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin.

It was a strict injunction that no bread was to be made of the new crop of corn, nor any parched corn or green corn to be eaten until the day when this offering of thanks had

been made to the Lord of the Harvest. This Feast was not commemorative of a past event of history, like the other two, but for a yearly calling to mind of the great truth that the fruits of the ground in every shape, whether of corn, vine, or olive, were from the ever-operating power and providence of Him who ordered the seasons and the soil, and made both to be co-operative with the labor of the husbandman. The three Festivals, in fact, were such as to impress on a thoughtful and devout soul the great facts and wonders of Creation, Providence, and Redemption—Creation in the Festival of Harvest, Providence in the Feast of Tabernacles, and Redemption in the Feast of the Passover.

The third of these Festivals was the picturesque and beautiful Feast of Tabernacles or Tents. This was a commemoration of the long period when the whole people lodged in Tents during the march through the wilderness; and were fed with Bread from Heaven. This Festival, like that of the Passover, was observed by every family at home, as well as by all the males of the family going up to Jerusalem, and spending a week in a Holy Convocation. It was to be observed by every family taking "*boughs of goodly trees, branches of Palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook.*" Of these branches and boughs booths or arbors are to be made, outside the house or (in a city) on its roofs (roofs all being flat). In these leafy arbors the family is to dwell for a whole week, and "*rejoice before the Lord.*" The rejoicing is not to be of that unhallowed and secular sort which so often, in the feasts and rejoicings of the world, leads to abuse and excess, but to be "*before the Lord*"—doubtless with singing of voice and heart, and sound of instruments of music, calling gladly to mind the goodness of the Lord who led their fathers so marvelously through the wilderness, and was with them in pillar of cloud and fire throughout the whole journey.

This Festival strikingly corresponds with our modern custom of inhabitants of cities spending a few days of the summer in the country. It must be remembered that it applied to poor as well as rich, and by them would be more highly appreciated, just as amongst ourselves with the poor there is no enjoyment so great and beneficial as a few days of country air and country life, as a relief from the hot and crowded city streets in the time of summer.

These three were the only divinely instituted Festivals. In after ages two others were introduced, one to commemorate the Dedication of the Temple, the other the deliverance of the nation in the time of Queen Esther.

OTHER LAWS AND ORDINANCES.

Scattered throughout the books of Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy are to be found many laws and ordinances of a religious or semi-religious character. Of these, nearly all that are prohibitive refer to the scandalous vices and wicked practices of the people of Egypt and Canaan. And the mere prohibition gives us an insight to the debased moral condition of those people, proving, as the history of Greece and Rome confirmed, how a low depth of moral debasement might co-exist in the same people with high developments in art, literature, and civilization. The general rule is given in Leviticus, chap. xviii. 3: "*After the doings of the land of Egypt wherein ye dwelt, shall ye not do, and after the doings of the land of Canaan whither I bring you, shall ye not do.*"

Then follow prohibitions against marriage with near of kin, which correspond somewhat closely with those prevalent amongst ourselves. But along with these are prohibitions against the practice of unmentionable vices, prohibitions which lift the veil as to the inner life of the Egyptian and Canaanitish people, and throw some light on the strict injunctions against having any intercourse whatever with the people of the land to which they are going.

The prohibition against *eating blood* is connected with some of those idolatrous religious practices. That against the practice of *enchantments and divination* and intercourse with *familiar spirits* is accompanied by the solemn declaration that by these *the land is defiled*, clearly intimating the close connection between these practices and the scandalous vices before mentioned.

CRITICAL NOTES TO CHAPTER XVII.

It has often been noticed, not without a certain amount of wonder, how strenuously, in ages subsequent to Moses, the sacrifices of the Mosaic revelation were discredited, and put aside as valueless, in comparison with obedience and good moral conduct. And occasion has been taken from hence to infer a merely human origin to both the Mosaic sacrifices, and the writings of Prophets and Psalmists. It is impossible, it is argued, that the same Divine Being can have ordained the sacrifice of lambs and bulls and goats, and yet have declared that he did not *care* for such sacrifices, as in Psalms 50 and 51, that he did not *desire* them, as in Psalm 40, that to *obey was better than sacrifice*, as in I. Samuel xv. 22, and that such sacrifices and offerings were a *burden*, and even an *abomination*, as in Isaiah i, 11 and 13.

But a very little consideration of circumstances will shew that there is neither contradiction nor inconsistency in the last series of Divine declarations. For they are all plainly directed against an hypocritical or formal celebration of outward rites by disobedient or wicked men. In the case of Saul there was plain disobedience, in the case of David there was scandalous wickedness, and in the men, of the Prophet Isaiah's time there was both. The language employed shows that it was not the sacrifices in themselves that were displeasing; but that kind of sacrifice which was offered by men who drew nigh to God with their lips while their hearts were far from him.

When the prophet Samuel declared that to *obey was better than sacrifice*, he uttered a plain truth with which all the revelation of God is in accord. For the merit and value of all sacrifice, was that it was done in obedience, and offered from the heart. The very Psalm which declares that God *desires not sacrifice*, and delights not in burnt offering, ends with the thankful declaration that when men come with a penitent soul to God, he will be *pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering, and whole burnt offering*; and that "*then shall they offer bullocks upon His altar!*"

This great truth that all rites, ceremonies, and observances have their sole value in the sincerity with which they are offered, is carried through into the Christian dispensation. Our Lord severely rebukes the Pharisees for drawing nigh to God with the mouth while the heart is far from

Him. And the Apostle Paul, speaking, by the Holy Ghost, still more emphatically of the great rite of circumcision, and of descent from Abraham, declares that "*he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter.*"

The application of all the foregoing to the worship and observances of the Christian faith is obvious. The repetition of liturgical prayers, however perfect the form may be, is offensive to God unless the heart is with the lip. Baptism is vain unless the true disposition of mind be with the rite. And the Supper of the Lord, unless observed with faith and thanksgiving of soul, is rather an abomination than an acceptable service.

In short, it is plain that the theory of the Roman Church, and of those who follow Roman teaching in these matters—a theory commonly called *opus operatum*, and meaning that the outward act in the sacraments communicates spiritual blessing apart altogether from the disposition of the worshipper, is contrary to the mind of God as declared both by prophets of the old dispensation and by Jesus Christ and the Apostles in the new.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SOME OBSERVATIONS AS TO THE EFFECT UPON THE PEOPLE OF THE RELIGIOUS SYSTEM REVEALED TO THEM. ALSO UPON TITHES AND OFFERINGS.

It is not difficult to see, it rather indeed lies upon the surface, that the effect of such a system of worship and observance as that committed to the Jews, was, in the first place, to develop a high degree of awe and reverence for the great Being who was the object of it. This was specially the case with regard to the mysterious Ark, hidden within a veiled canopy, that was never to be seen, and never touched; which yet was to be the place where the Divine Lord would reveal Himself in grace and mercy. For the ark, as we have seen, contained momentous signs of the Divine Government, Divine Providence, and Divine Power. What Hebrew, approaching the Tabernacle, could avoid thinking of the Tables of Stone, written with the finger of God, that were to be the Law for him and his for all time, how help remembering the Manna, marvellous sign of Divine Love and care in the wilderness; how forget the rod of Aaron that budded at the Divine touch, when Moses and Aaron confronted the gods and magicians of Egypt? How, indeed, without a feeling of reverential love, could he think of that golden Mercy Seat, or throne of grace, or of the golden cherubim, signs of high and glorious intelligences such as were manifested to their great ancestor Jacob on going to, and coming from the country of Haran!

If he looked at the High Priest, he saw there the jewels engraved, by Divine command, with the name of his own tribe, whichever it might be; and also those mysterious blazing jewels on his breast, the Urim and Thummim, signs of Divine counsel! But the spiritual benefit was not conveyed by mere eyesight. If there was much to see, there was also much to *believe*. For the things he saw could only convey spiritual lessons when viewed in connection with the teaching respecting them. The mere sight of a tent of great cost and beauty would teach, by itself, no more than would the costly tent of a Chief or Sheikh of modern days. Children and people of larger growth, too, would absolutely need to be *taught* that this Tent was the sanctuary of the Most High. So with the sacrifices and offerings. *What mean ye by this serv'ce?* the children of the family were supposed to say, when the Passover celebration took place.

And the query would apply to all that transpired within the sanctuary. What is the meaning of this killing of animals and the burning of their bodies? Why is there a veil stretched across the Tent? What is there inside the veil and what is its object and meaning? Why this incense? Why are these loaves on this gilded table? And why this seven-branched lamp-stand, and this great basin of washing? The answer to these questions revealed great spiritual truths as to the Divine law and counsel, the Divine goodness and mercy, the Divine glory and honor; all of which truths had to be received by the *mind*, and accepted by the *heart*, before any spiritual benefit could come to the worshipper.

So it was not the mere looking at beautiful, and glorious sights, but a reception by the mind of what they meant, that constituted the worshipper to be a worshipper *in spirit and in truth*. If there was much to see, there was more to believe, and that, even apart from their typical foreshadowing of the realities of another dispensation.

How the heart of the devout Hebrew was drawn out to the glorious sanctuary of worship is evident from those many beautiful passages in the Psalms which have become channels for the flow of devout feeling for many ages in the Christian dispensation.

Thus we read:

Psalm 84.—*How lovely are thy Tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts! The sparrow and the swallow make nests for their young; even so are thine altars to me, my King and my God!*

For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand!

And how beautifully the Psalmist pictures the journeys of the men who come to keep the solemn feasts:

Psalm 84.—*They, passing through the vale of weeping, it becomes a well of water to them. They go from strength to strength; every one of them appeareth before God in Zion!*

And again:

Psalm 42.—*As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul, after thee, O God!*

When I remember these things I pour out my soul in me; for I had gone with the multitude; I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with the multitude that kept holy day!

Again:

Psalm 27.—*One thing have I desired of the Lord, and that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in His Temple.*

The very prophet who so sternly denounces the hypocrisy of the false worshippers and the emptiness of mere cere-

monies, cries out in a deep transport of holy reverence: "*Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities, . . . thine eye shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down!*"—Isaiah 33.

And to the mind of this great prophet all the glories of a coming dispensation, yea, of the heavenly world itself, were shadowed forth by the glories of the holy Temple (for the Temple of Solomon was then standing) and its surrounding courts.

Yet it is easy to see that a religious system like this, with so much that appealed to the eye, so much of that which was ceremonial, might easily, as human nature is constituted, degenerate into a most formal and empty style of observance, without faith, affection or understanding. And this, as we have seen, was the case; and to a greater extent after the building of the Temple than during the time of the Tabernacle.

This is the well-known tendency of modern systems, or developments of systems in which worship is observed in costly buildings of beautiful architecture, and where the accessories of artistic decoration, pictures, statues, elaborate ceremonies, robes of priests, are employed to charm and interest the worshipper.

In every one of these, as experience in modern times has demonstrated, the tendency is towards a mere dead and formal style of observance, exactly corresponding to that of which we read as denounced by the prophets of the old dispensation, and the Divine Teacher of the New.

The "*drawing nigh with the lip*" while the "*heart is far away*," the burning of incense and the offering of a so-called sacrifice by godless priests, and even what was denounced as "*robbery for burnt offering*," are all developments that have been connected with the costly and magnificent shrines of Christian lands. So, then, all the things written of the misdoings of the worshippers of Tabernacle and Temple are for our admonition too.

THE ATTENDANCE OF MALES AT THE FESTIVALS.

The requirements that every male should go up to Jerusalem at the three annual festivals was calculated to have a far-reaching influence both nationally and spiritually. Nationally, it would develop a spirit of broad patriotism, such as a constant visit to the centre of national life and government could not fail to bring about. The requirement would lift men out of the narrowness and meanness which a constant dwelling in some country locality is apt to generate. Especially it would tend to prevent a regard for a

man's own *tribe* from overshadowing his national citizenship, and lead every man, on arriving home, to train up the boys of the family in a high regard for his country as a whole.

Spiritually it could not fail to develop a spirit of reverence for the religion he professed, the services and outward forms of which in the tabernacle and its priestly services were so grand and imposing. For, as there was only one place of sacrifice and worship in the land, it can be seen of what high importance it was to attach men to it.

FREE WILL OFFERINGS AND TITHES.

The Tabernacle, and afterwards the Temple, were built and furnished wholly by the *free-will offerings* of the people. Yet they were the rarest and costliest erections of the kind known. For though the Tabernacle was only a Tent, yet considering its costly contents, there was no tent like it for beauty and splendour of accessories in the world. As to the Temple of Solomon, no one can read in the historical books of Scripture, of the amassing of rare and costly materials by King David without being convinced that it was unique for splendour in all ages. Yet, for the erection and furnishing of these, no tax was laid, no contribution exacted. There was not even a general estimate of what each man's share might fairly be. The only appeal was to each man's regard and love for the Great Being who was at once the Redeemer and the Governor of this unique race of people. It was the highest possible appeal, and calculated to draw out the highest possible virtue. And it did draw it out. No tax or levy, no fixed contribution, could possibly have developed such results as were attained by the appeal to each man's heart and honour.

And, it may be observed, that the same principle has held good, in the church life and development of modern times.

TITHES.

But we must distinguish. While the contributions for the erection and furnishing of the Tabernacle were wholly of free-will, the *maintenance* of the Priests and Levites, and the sums necessary for the carrying on of the services of the Tabernacle, were provided by a continuous system of graded contribution. These were in the shape of a Tenth part of the increase of each year's crop, called Tithes; reckoned, not only upon corn and other grain, but on all the product of the fruit trees of the land, as well as on the increase of the flock and the herd.

Leviticus 27, 30, 32.—*All the Tithes of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's. And concerning the tithe of the herd, or of the flock, even of whatsoever passeth under the rod, the tenth shall be holy unto the Lord.*

Of this system of giving a tenth to the Lord, through the medium of His priests, we have the well-known example, in such an early time as that of Abram, who gave a tenth of the spoils of war to the kingly priest Melchizedek. In like manner was this system of tithing perpetuated in these ordinances delivered to Moses.

It should be borne in mind that these tithes were in lieu of an inheritance in the land.

The Lord spake unto Aaron, *thou shalt have no inheritance in their land. I am thy part, and thine inheritance among the children of Israel. And behold I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for the service of the Tabernacle of the Congregation.* (Numbers xviii. 20.)

There was thus established a fixed and regular contribution for the maintenance of the men who were separated for the service of the sanctuary. This contribution, unlike the other was not left to free-will and voluntary offering. And there was reason for the difference. There was no absolute necessity that the Tabernacle, or the Temple should be costly and splendid. All that was done in them would have doubtless been as well done, and have been as acceptable to God, if the materials and furnishings of both had been of the plainest description. Their costliness and splendour were the signs of a high order of devotion, evoked once for all in each case, under highly quickening circumstances. But the maintenance, year by year, and generation after generation, of an established order of men who were debarred from an inheritance in the land was a necessity. And the necessity was to be a constant one, subsisting, age after age, through all the changing circumstances of national life, in war and peace, in prosperity and in adversity. It was right, then, that as their being debarred from a portion in the land was by statute, their maintenance should be by statute too.

It is to be noted, however, that the Tithe did not consist of the tenth of every man's *income*, but only of the tenth of the *increase* of the land and what grew upon it. Thus it was not one-tenth of the whole crop, but one-tenth of the augmented quantity that was reaped over and above the seed sown. And a fair interpretation of the passages relating to tithe, would suggest that a farmer in estimating what was due should deduct not only the seed, but the

labor expended to produce the crop, the tithe being really a tenth of the net profit. For this net profit is the only real increase. The true ideal of the Mosaic Tithe would really seem to be to give back to the Lord a tenth of what has been wholly the result of His Almighty power, working by the laws of nature, as distinguished from what is the result of human provident care in saving seed, and human labor in sowing, planting, tending, and reaping. This imposition of tithes would therefore have wholly the aspect of directly rendering to the Lord what had been directly received from Him. And the arrangement bears that noticeable air of equity and reasonableness that so remarkably characterizes all the laws delivered through Moses to the Hebrew people. There was an entire absence of anything that resembled exaction, of taking more than could be well afforded. None of those heavy burdens were laid upon the Hebrews which rulers and their deputies laid upon the same land in after ages, which indeed they lay upon them now, and by which cultivators were and are kept in perpetual poverty, generation after generation.

It is to be noted that the imposition of Church tithes in medieval and modern times has been much more burdensome than in the Mosaic law. One-tenth of the *whole produce* of the land, year by year, is the modern tithe, a far different thing from one-tenth of the *increase*. The burden, on an average, is probably two or three times as heavy. It seems, however, most probable, that the Tithes as originally imposed in Christian lands were intended as a provision for the Poor as well as for the support of the Clergy, and also for the maintenance of the Fabric of the church.

Yet all the Tithes of the Mosaic law were not for the maintenance of the Priest and Levite. The person paying tithe was directed (Deut. xiv.) to bring his tithe to the place where God had placed his Name, and there to keep a festival of rejoicing. And if he could not bring the tithe in kind, by reason of distance, he was to turn it into money (v. 25) and then to bind it in his hand, travelling to the appointed place, and observing the festival as before.

From the time of Moses downward to the end of the Old Testament revelation there is scarcely a word as to tithes, though a striking passage in the Book of Proverbs (chap. iii. v. 9) probably refers to them, without naming them; "*Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thine increase.*" is a precept which, whether referring to tithes or not, is instinct with the spirit of their observance.

But in the last of the Prophets there is a reference of a very distinct kind. The Prophet Malachi had sharp and

strong words of remonstrance to speak to the people. "Will a man rob God?" he exclaims! And, speaking in the name of the Most High, he answers, "Yet ye have robbed me! But ye say, wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings."

The times were evil. The whole worship of the Temple was being treated with contempt. Blind and lame, and sick and torn beasts were offered in sacrifice. The table of shewbread had *polluted bread* placed upon it, evidently such as was unfit for food. The priests despised the very service they performed and called it "a weariness" (Malachi i.). Is it any wonder then that the people, in these evil times, and with such an evil example, should neglect to bring their tithes?

But throughout the whole of the Old Testament this is the only place where such neglect is charged. With all their sins and misdoings they seem to have been faithful to duty in this important matter.

But, in considering the obligations of these Hebrew people, and specially of the rural inhabitants, it must not be forgotten that they were bound to give up the very best animals of the herd and the flock for *sacrifice*. There is nothing analogous to this in these Christian times. If one of the farmers of a Christian country were bound to bring, periodically, the choicest animal he had, the finest bullock, the best ram—to be slain in the sanctuary, as an offering for the sins of himself and his family, he would have brought before him very vividly the meaning of the word *sacrifice*! Yet this was going on constantly, with every cultivator of the land. And in the aggregate, the value of such sacrifices was very great.

In the New Testament there is not a word said about Tithes, except when our Lord was rebuking the Pharisees for excessive attention to the minutiae of the law, while neglecting its great spiritual obligations. *Ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin*, he said; and he pictured the self-satisfied Pharisee as declaring in his prayer, that *he paid tithes of all he possessed*.

These, however, were dwellers in the cities. When our Lord was referring to country life, as he so constantly did, he never referred to Tithes at all. The gifts cast into the Temple Treasury (Luke xxi.) seem to have been entirely voluntary.

But one of the most remarkable things to be noted in the teaching of our Lord and His Apostles is the *entire absence of any* precepts respecting funds for the maintenance of the ministry. That our Lord and His Apostles had a common fund for their support, appears

from the fact that the traitor Judas "*bore the bag.*" He was the Treasurer of the little band. We have only the scantiest hints as to how the funds were supplied. Beyond the intimation in Luke viii. 2, 3, that certain women of position, out of gratitude for healing, "*ministered to him of their substance,*" nothing is said as to how the funds were derived.

When the Church itself was organized after Pentecost, and large numbers of people who had embraced the faith were detained in Jerusalem long after the time they had calculated on, some extraordinary measures needed to be taken to supply their wants. The emergency was met, not by asking for voluntary contributions, still less by making an assessment upon the multitude of the faithful, but by the pouring out upon the richer disciples of a spirit of extraordinary self-abnegation and liberality. It is to be noted that as the occasion was extraordinary, the mode of meeting it, evidently under Divine guidance, was extraordinary too. For the rich amongst them gave up all their property for the common sustenance. No man counted anything he had as his own. All things were common property. And there was a *daily administration* by the Apostles of the funds placed at their disposal. Yet, as we learn from the incident of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts v.) even this was purely a matter of voluntary offerings. The Apostle Peter expressly told Ananias that even after he had sold his property, the money was at his own disposal.

This state of things has been made use of as an argument for community of property as an ordinary rule of life, by all persons, and in all places. But it is evident from further narratives and teaching in the New Testament that the conclusion is erroneous. After the people dispersed from Jerusalem we read no more of community of goods. On the contrary, every man's property is considered as his own. And this very fact is made the basis of exhortations to hearty and liberal *giving*. (2 Cor. viii. 12, 13, etc.)

But the liberal giving referred to is not for the support of the apostles or of the elders of the Church; still less for the erection of buildings; but wholly for the relief of the poor. The very full and striking exhortations in the Epistles to the Christians of Corinth refer to this alone. And the direction to have a weekly *laying by* "*as God had prospered*" (1. Cor. xvi.) was for a special purpose at a certain season, viz., the relief of the poor saints in a time of scarcity at Jerusalem. In the many and detailed directions with regard to the ministry of bishops, elders, deacons, or evangelists, there is not one *command* or *injunction* to provide funds for their support.

The only word on the subject is the general assertion by the Apostle Paul of the principle that *they who preach the gospel shall live of the gospel.*" (I. Cor. ix.)

It is however most curious to notice that though the argument by which this principle is maintained is drawn from "*the law of Moses,*" not a word is said of the Mosaic precepts as to tithing, as would have been naturally the case if tithes were to be a rule binding upon Christians.

There would seem to be in this matter a most careful avoiding of anything approaching to the creation of a legal obligation on the part of Christian disciples.

This was beyond doubt, of the Holy Ghost; the will of God at that time being, to all appearance, that whatever was needed, in any place, by any apostle or other minister from time to time, should be provided by the hearty love and zealous affection of the people.

But, indeed, the majority of Christian disciples were poor themselves, and there seems reason to believe that with the exception of the apostles and their companions in travel, the officers and ministers of congregations were men who pursued their ordinary avocations, and required no support. The narratives of the Acts of the Apostles would lead to the conclusion that the elders who were set over congregations, were from within the congregation and never left it. And those Epistles of St. Paul which refer specifically to the qualifications and setting apart of bishops and deacons suggest the same conclusion.

That the Apostle Paul pursued a secular avocation and earned a livelihood by it, even when travelling about with "*the care of all the churches*" upon him, is one of the most striking facts of the New Testament.

But in spite of this, he strenuously asserted his right to a maintenance should he at any time call for it.

FURTHER THOUGHTS ON THE RELIGIOUS SYSTEM OF THE HEBREWS.

Two other aspects of the religious system instituted by Moses, under Divine guidance, may be noticed.

1. The absolute freedom of the whole ceremonial and ritual either of tabernacle worship or of national festival from incitements or temptations to impurity. The utmost care was taken in all tabernacle arrangements, in the dress of the High Priest, in the order of the sacrifices and offerings, in the ordering of festivals, and particularly of the Passover, to prevent the slightest approach to those grave and terrible impurities which have been associated with heathen forms of worship and religion from time immemor-

ial. No man or woman could attend the temples of the gods of the nations round about, without having the mind and conscience defiled.

The very worship itself, the rites and ceremonies of religion, were acts of impurity and scandalous wickedness. So it was indeed in many of the developments of temple worship even in the days of high civilization in Greece and Rome.

But everything in the Mosaic ritual was a suggestion of the necessity of purity. The sacrifices were to "cleanse" from sin. The Laver was an emblem of the washing of the soul. The Ark contained the Law of Righteousness, and its golden covering was the Seat of Mercy. The worshipper confessed sin upon the head of the animal to be slain. The greatest festival of all was the day of national atonement, when the sins of the whole people were put upon the head of the scape-goat, and borne away to a land uninhabited. Everything seen, everything done, in the Mosaic worship, was calculated to strengthen righteousness and to weaken the force of evil.

In all this a profound contrast is presented to all false systems of religion. The sacrifices of heathen temples, even when the rites were not impure, were not to bring about the forgiveness of sin, or to develop righteous conduct, but simply to propitiate the arbitrary wrath, or obtain the arbitrary favor of a capricious Baal, Ashteroth, Jupiter, Mars, Neptune.

Righteousness and moral conduct were profoundly studied indeed in Greece and Rome. But these studies were by Philosophers, and were unconnected with religion. And in whatever degree any modern religious system, whether it be wholly false or a corruption of the true, departs from the system revealed in Scripture, to that extent there is always a separation between religion and the practice of righteousness.

The last characteristic of the Mosaic religious system is the entire absence of any provision for Teaching or Preaching. The Tabernacle was entirely wanting in adaptation for an assembly to gather together and hear spiritual truth unfolded. So was the Temple—that is to say, the Temple proper; though in its many surrounding courts there was abundant room for such exercises. But they never formed part of the worship or of the order of the Tabernacle service. It seems to have been intended that, nearly all religious instruction should be conveyed in the *family*, for strict injunctions are given for heads of families to be diligent in studying the law for themselves, and in teaching it to the

children of the house. The striking exhortations both to study and to teach in Deut. vi. were not given to Priests or Levites, but to the whole people: "*And these words, which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart. And thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.*" These are precepts for every head of a family amongst the whole people. And such heads of families were evidently to be held responsible for the religious education of the nation.

The contrast between this absence of provision for preaching or teaching in the services of the Temple, and the remarkable prominence given to both in the system instituted by our Lord and His Apostles, shows the utter unwisdom of taking the services of the Mosaic system as a model for those of a Christian Church.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE INCIDENT OF THE GOLDEN CALF.

Exodus 32.

Considering the events of unparalleled solemnity that had so recently transpired, and that the people were still encamped under the awful Mount, this narrative of their conduct might be deemed almost incredible. Yet its very unreasonableness is the strongest proof of its absolute verity. For no man making up a story would ever invent such a narrative of folly and wickedness as this. Like many another narrative of human depravity, it is too bad to have been invented. Truth, alas! in this respect has often been stranger than fiction.

And the narrative of unreasonable wickedness is a striking proof of the absolute impartiality of the narrative, and of its being written under Divine guidance. For it is hard to imagine that a patriotic writer would not draw a veil over such an outbreak as this, and refuse to record his people's shame.

The Divine narrative, however, is always "*for our Learning.*" The record of wickedness is there given as it really was, standing out as a beacon to warn men from falling away from God and truth, even when it seems most unlikely that they should do so. The lesson is thus used by the Apostle Paul in writing to a people—the Christians of Corinth—whose temptations were precisely similar to those of the Hebrews in the desert. (I. Cor. x.)

While Moses remained day after day, delaying to come down out of the Mount, the people, and especially the elders and leaders amongst them, might surely be waiting in quiet expectation and in prayer. Only a few days before, they had entered into a solemn covenant, apparently with all their heart and soul, saying, "*all that the Lord hath spoken, we will do!*" (Exodus xiv.)

But this narrative only shows how utterly devoid of stability in righteousness and good purposes these people were, and how deeply ingrained was the love of the idolatry of Egypt, and of the licentious freedom which accompanied Egyptian religious festivals. It has within it, also, a shadowing forth of that reaction after religious excitement which has been only too frequently noticed in our own times. From an absolute and hearty acceptance of their

position as "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation," given when first the awe of the great mountain was first upon them, they fall off to a defiant outbreak against God and His servant, and also of scandalous licentiousness. For the dancing and the "play" in which the people indulged, was evidently the licentious and wicked dancing that formed part of certain heathen festivals.

If it had been mere innocent mirth, it never would have been reprobated and held up for warning by a Christian Apostle.

In this narrative, and in subsequent ones of what transpired in the wilderness, we can see the influence of men who were leaders and spokesmen amongst the people. Such always arise under similar circumstances. Men of strong character and able to speak, come to the front and are generally able to lead the people, especially when they are proposing to rebel against a system of religious restraint, and to strike for liberty and indulgence.

Moses delayed day after day to come down from the Mount. There was then a gathering of the people towards Aaron. And the leaders cried, "Up, make us gods, to go before us!" the style of language indicating previous consultation, and a determined conclusion. They went on to deride Moses, and showed plainly enough that they had already begun to chafe and fret at the restraints of a religion of holiness. Moses! cried they. Moses has gone we know not where; let us have some gods to lead us. And there is implied, though they were too shrewd to say it—let us have some gods like the gods of Egypt; who had no severe laws of restraint like this terrible God of Sinai!

The weakness of Aaron was extraordinary. No remonstrance, no outbreak of indignation, no command to remember their allegiance, burst from him as one might have expected. He was evidently frightened at the determined aspect of these daring leaders. They were set on mischief, as he said to excuse himself. And he did a scandalous thing, as men sometimes do in an hour of weakness, even though they be good men on the whole. Calling on the people to bring their golden ornaments, he cast them into a mould prepared after the image of the chief god of Egypt, the sacred bull. And after finishing it with graving tool, he delivered this golden image of a young bull or calf to the people.

The leaders then shouted: "these are the gods that brought thee out of the land of Egypt!" The words were not Aaron's words, as has been supposed by some. The text says plainly, *they* said, i.e., the leaders in this audacious rebellion.

But Aaron went on, probably now under a great con-

straint of fear. Having failed at the outset, the power of evil has the mastery of him, as is commonly the case. *Facilis decensus avari.* He has almost at once fallen. And he stands before us as a conspicuous example of the truth that "*the fear of man bringeth a snare.*"

Aaron builds an altar and makes proclamation: *Tomorrow is a festival to Jehorah!*

These words were probably used by Aaron on further reflection, sincerely desiring to draw back the people to their allegiance; he himself wavering between desire to do his duty and fear of the bold leaders of rebellion; the whole affair being a picture of what has too often happened in Christian times, and indeed has become common in a whole church system, viz., the celebration of Christian festivals with a strange admixture of pagan wickedness, the multitude indulging in shameful licentiousness, while a few devout souls celebrate in spirit and in truth.

This setting up of a golden image, the erecting of an altar, the dedication of it in a Festival to Jehovah, with the feasting, dancing and licentiousness that succeeded, are all a striking foreshadowing of the setting up of images in the medieval churches of Christendom, the bowing down to them in Festivals to the Lord and to His Saints, the dancing, drunkenness and licentiousness on the part of the multitude that almost invariably accompanied them. Even to this day, in communities that have for generations been wholly under the influence of the Roman Church, religious festivals are characterized by the same development. The people go to church, they adore the image of the Saint, then they "*sit down to eat and drink, and rise up to play,*" the evening being always a time of riotous excess, the singing, dancing, and drinking bringing about the results that always follow.

Indeed, so great is the force of habit when confirmed by generations, that the same things were once only too common in the country parishes of the English Church. Such sacred festivals as a Confirmation, when the young people of both sexes and many parishes are gathered together to renew baptismal vows, have been known to be followed by scenes of drunkenness more befitting an annual fair than a religious gathering. Indeed, the annual fair itself, in its original form, was nothing but a celebration of a patron saint, and the scenes of riot and dissipation that too often characterize it are a survival from medieval and Catholic times. This, so far as the multitude was concerned; but there were always devout souls who wept in secret at such manifestations and prayed and hoped for better times. These were the faithful men and women, who welcomed the times of Reformation, and were persecuted for it.

Turning back to the scenes of Mount Sinai, while the people were riotously feasting below, we find a very remarkable colloquy taking place above. The Lord spake to Moses, again and again, on this Mount, and elsewhere, *as a man speaks to his friend*. And now, somewhere up in the quiet retreat of the Mount, it may have been in the very cave to which Elijah retreated in an after age, while Moses is pondering the marvellous manifestations that had been committed to him, he is startled by a peremptory command to return to the camp. "*Get thee down,*" says the Divine voice, "*thy people have become corrupt! They have turned aside quickly out of the way, and have made a Golden Calf!*" It is noticeable that the Lord, in the very manner of his speaking, has disowned these people. It is not, as formerly, *my* people, but, *thy* people whom *thou* hast brought out of Egypt! And then come the terrible words, "*Let me alone, that I may consume them!*" As if Jehovah had said, Do not pray for them; they are irredeemably bad. This monstrous iniquity is past condoning. I have cast them off. I will make a great nation of *thee*.

One may marvel, considering the boundless grace and goodness of the Most High, as revealed in that very system then being delivered, that such words could possibly be spoken. But we are bound to receive them reverently, and to consider them as a revelation of a phase of the Divine nature not often made prominent, but not the less real. We speak of many-sided men, but who can fathom the depth of the many-sided God! The revelation here is of deep and inextinguishable hatred of sin, and especially of the sin of spiritual treason and rebellion; and a casting off of men who have cast off God. A deep and abiding truth, and fully consistent with the revelation of mercy and grace to the repentant, as unfolded both through Moses, and through the Divine Son of God. For the whole revelation of the old dispensation as well as the new, is of mercy to the penitent man and the penitent people, but of judgment to the persistent transgressor.

But Moses, great man as he was, was a man of profound humility. *Who am I?* This was the keynote of his life, and the real mark and stamp of his greatness as a servant of God. He was also a man of absolute unselfishness, his whole mind and heart being given up to the people. So now we find him absolutely refusing personal aggrandisement, and pleading for the perverse and stupid multitude. In many respects Moses was a type and foreshadowing of the Divine Son, and he is strikingly so here, when as an intercessor he prays in spirit, if not in words, as the Divine

Son did in after ages, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." The offence then was essentially the same, and so was the intercession.

The prayer of Moses is a striking one indeed. He appeals to the Divine bringing out of Egypt, to the honour of God in the eyes of the Egyptian people, who would have occasion to say that Jehovah was a fickle and cruel divinity, who purposely brought them into the mountains to slay them; but, above all, to the great Covenant with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, that *their seed* should inherit the land.

This prayer is a most natural and *human* prayer; the thoughts are just such as would occur to a man like Moses, who had a name in Egypt such as no other Hebrew had, yet who was intensely patriotic, both nationally and spiritually.

Yet we must not imagine that such arguments were needed to move the All-Wise and Supreme Lord who was guiding these events. All the revelations we have of Him, in the various manifestations of his character in this sacred word, show that He often, in the depths of His wisdom, placed men, or ordered so that they would be placed, in circumstances calculated to bring out to the highest degree, whatever of faith or consecration, or love, or patriotic devotion there was in them. So it seems to have been here.

And the Lord repented of the evil which He thought to do unto His people. His people! (v. 14). The intercession had prevailed, and the people were acknowledged to be the Lord's again. As to the expression, "*the Lord repented*," what has been said before in the course of these lessons can be said again, viz., that the expression is one of those in which the ways and thoughts of the Most High are brought within the comprehension of the multitude of men, although in themselves, and in essence, they are incomprehensible and past finding out. All men can understand how a father, righteously indignant over the rebellion and profligacy of a son, would threaten to cast off and disinherit him, and how he might be induced to change his purpose by the earnest intercession of a generous brother.

Such is the picture before us; first, of outrageous rebellion and wickedness, second of a threat to cast off from an inheritance, third of earnest pleading and intercession, and last the announcement of a favourable answer; all of which is perfectly consistent with all that has been revealed of the Divine Being as at once merciful and just.

Moses descending the mountain with Joshua (who had been all this time waiting upon him there) had the two tables of the Testimony in his hand.

These are not called the Tables of the Law. *Testimony* is the word used, as it is in that great 50th Psalm, where "The Mighty God" calls the whole earth to judge of His righteous ways as against a disobedient and hypocritical people. These two tables, like that Psalm, are the Testimony of the Supreme Governor against the idolatry, the spiritual treason, the unrighteousness of the race of mankind. The very form of the Law is a protest. It implies plainly that great and crying evils had become universally prevalent. "*Thou shalt not worship other gods. Thou shalt not wrong thy fellow man.*"

This is the Divine Testimony that has been continuously sounding out through the world from that day to this.

But this Testimony was not only divinely given, it was divinely *written*. In this particular it was absolutely *unique*. The fact is stated with the utmost particularity: "*The Tables were two, they were of stone, they were written on both their sides (this is contrary to the general conception of them), and the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God graven upon the Tables (chap. xxxii. v. 15, 16).*"

There is nothing unreasonable in this revelation of the testimony being the actual writing of the Supreme Legislator of the world. It is easy to say that Moses, or Moses and Joshua between them, palmed off a fable to this effect upon the people; but there is every probability against it. And there is everything to justify the reasonableness of these commands being Divinely written, which before had been Divinely spoken. Let the unique solemnity of the occasion be considered. These commands were to be for all the people of the world, and to last to the very end of time, as the expression of the will of the Supreme, the Eternal, the Lord of the whole earth. That they have endured for more than three thousand years we ourselves are witnesses. If it is urged that it was more probable that Moses carved or caused to be carved, the tables himself, than that the Almighty should stoop to become a writer on stones, it may be asked why should not the Almighty have exerted his power to carve the writing on these Tables? A simple exercise of will would accomplish it. And certainly the occasion was worthy of it.

Moses coming down with the Tables in his hand, Joshua being with him, the shouting of the riotous multitude below reached their ears. Joshua, the soldier, said, *there is a noise of war in the camp*. But Moses, listening more attentively, replied, "No; this is not the shout of victory;

nor is it the wailing of defeat. It is the sound of singing that we hear."

Thus, wondering, they descend; and as they approach the camp, the scandalous truth bursts upon them. There is the golden calf—well-remembered idol of Egypt—and there is the crowd with their licentious and wicked dances, for they were *naked* (v. 25). (The word *naked* must evidently be taken literally.) Can it be wondered at that the great leader burst into a very storm of righteous indignation. *His anger waxed hot, and he cast down the tables out of his hands*, signs of a broken covenant, and brake them beneath the Mount. Then he proceeds to very strong measures, measures which reveal the energy of his character, and his ascendancy over the people. This calf had been, in the madness of that day, extolled as a god; now will he shew whether it is a god or no. So he took the calf which they had made, and *burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder*. Sufficient demonstration surely, of their miserable folly; this god ground to powder before their very eyes. But this is not enough. He takes the dust of this golden idol, scatters it over the water, and then actually makes the people *drink of it*; the people, overcome with awe of this terrible leader, swallowing down in the evening the very thing they had danced before as a god in the morning.

Could human wit have devised a method more calculated to develop a shame and horror of their wickedness! But it was not human wit, it was Divine wisdom that devised this extraordinary method of humiliation and punishment.

This being done, after a word of colloquy with his brother, in which the weakness of Aaron is strikingly conspicuous (excusing himself by reason that the people were *dent on mischief*), Moses, casting his eyes over the crowd, many of whom were still naked, took his place in the gate of the camp.

From thence he issued a proclamation that rang through the whole camp. The day had been a day of treason, a day of rebellion; now the people were solemnly challenged to declare themselves.

WHO IS ON THE LORD'S SIDE? the great leader called out; WHO? LET HIM COME UNTO ME! And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves unto him. But, let it be noticed, the invitation was to all the people to return to God.

Then was opened one of those strange commands of judgment and punishment which seem so terrible as the work of a beneficent Being. But in considering these we can but see in them the manifestation of the Supreme as the Judge and Ruler, who while He loves righteousness *must*

also hate iniquity. And it is unquestionable that at times the actions of earthly rulers who are at once beneficent and just, are hard to understand, unless we consider that for the welfare of a whole community, and for the sake of future generations a just punishment has, in times of crisis to be unreservedly carried out. So it was here. The retributive command against those who were still rebellious went forth. Sword in hand the Levites went through the camp and slew that day about three thousand men, the leaders in this scandalous treason being certainly included.

One might wish to draw a veil over these strange works of judgment (for judgment is God's *strange work*, Isaiah 28, 21). But let us reflect. This narrative is a Divine revelation, and opens up features of the Divine character which are undoubtedly necessary to a complete comprehension of it. Righteousness and judgment are the very foundation of His throne, but the same Scripture adds, "*mercy and truth shall go before thy face*" (Psalm lxxxix. 14). The revelation of Jesus Christ is in no wise different. The same voice that spoke in pitiful tenderness to the weary and heavy laden, spoke in terms of a really fierce wrath against the hypocritical and hard-hearted Pharisee. And it was in the very lifetime of some of our Lord's Apostles that the dreadful storm of wrath broke over Jerusalem, compared with which this judgment on the rebels of Mount Sinai was mere child's play.

CHAPTER XX.

THE SECOND GIVING OF THE LAW AND REVELATIONS CONNECTED THEREWITH.

Exodus 33 and 34.

After the storm, a calm. A severe judgment had fallen on the leaders of rebellion. The slaughter related in the previous chapter was not an indiscriminate massacre, as some might suppose, but a punishment meted out under Divine direction. Three thousand *men*, let us note, were slain. But no women; the reasonable supposition being that women only took part in the outbreak as they were constrained to do.

But judgment has done its work, and the people, being now disposed to listen, Moses reminds them of their heinous *sin*: *Ye have sinned*, he said to them, *a great sin*; but he adds, I will go up to the Lord, and *peradventure* I shall make an *atonement* for you.

What was exactly in his mind, we know not. But it is very possible, as we may infer from what followed, that he was prepared, if necessary to offer up his own life as a sacrifice. The word "*peradventure*" suggests that he was pondering the question of atonement; and no man knew better than he, that nothing but life could be accepted as a sin offering. In this spirit he again sought the presence of the Lord, appearing for the people, confessing their sin, praying forgiveness for them, and in effect offering himself up on their behalf. If thou *canst* forgive, forgive. Then, with hesitation, hoping, yet fearing, he adds: "*But, if not*" (and how can there be forgiveness without atonement) "*if not, blot me. I pray thee, out of the book, which thou hast written.*" Great and noble spirit, worthy to be the leader of a great nation, and to be the medium of a Divine revelation to mankind!

Worthy predecessor of the great Apostle to the Gentiles, also a great patriot and lover of his own people, who declared, in a passionate burst of fervor and concern that he could wish himself "*accursed from Christ for his countrymen who were Israelites:*" ready, like Moses, to have his name blotted out from the Book of Life, could he only bring salvation to them. Nay, can we not see a foreshadowing of the Divine Son of God, who became, in very deed, *a curse for us*, that he might obtain *eternal redemption* for all who believe.

The answer was hardly what might have been expected, for it was an assertion of the eternal rule of justice: "*Whoso hath sinned against me,*" said the Divine voice, "*him will I blot out of my book!*" A very deep and abiding truth. *The soul that sinneth, it shall die.* Yet, withal, there is a way of forgiveness; and the whole system then being revealed to Moses is full of it.

This "*Book,*" which it is declared that God has written, is the first intimation that within the outward Israel, there was another Israel. There was a roll of the natural descendants of Jacob. The roll was religiously kept, as may be seen from the Book of Numbers. But there was another roll, in which were entered his spiritual descendants alone, and this was in the keeping of God.

This is the *Book of Remembrance* spoken of by the last prophet of the Old Dispensation (Mal. iii. 16), and the *Book of Life* referred to by the Apostle Paul (Phil. iv. 3), and by the last of the Apostles in the Apocalyptic visions that closed the revelation of God.

This Book of Life is the roll of all faithful souls. It is the Lamb's book of Life, and none can enter the heavenly Jerusalem but those whose names are written therein.

There was no formal declaration of forgiveness, for the people showed very little sign of that penitence without which forgiveness would be a mere abrogation of justice. And there was some punishment, though of what nature is not stated. For "*the Lord plagued the people because they made the calf, which Aaron made.*"

But, for the present time, there was a mingling of mercy with judgment; just, as in the case of a rebellious and profligate son, who has been severely dealt with by his father, and shows some signs of reforming his ways, there would be a course of leniency adopted; not, however, without fear, and with care that leniency should not go too far and so give encouragement to a renewal of wicked ways.

So here, the Supreme Leader, though sending some kind of a plague amongst the people, evidently not of a severe character, gives the promise (an all-important promise in the circumstances) that He will send an Angel before them, and that He would *drive out* the Canaanitish tribes from the land to which they were going. This is mercy. But there is with it a warning word, "*I will not go up in the midst of thee.*" The reason for this is somewhat remarkable. "*for thou art a stiff-necked people; lest I consume thee by the way,*" the idea apparently being that the Almighty Ruler himself must deal with them after the manner of strict justice, according to which they would be in danger of

being consumed; while the dispensation of mercy would be through the promised Angel, or Divine Messenger who would lead them. Here we touch the border of those mysterious hints of a Divine dispensation of mercy through a Messenger sent from God, which appear here and there throughout the Old Testament, and which, when all put together, correspond so marvellously with the life and death of Jesus the Divine Son, the embodiment of God's mercy in the salvation of the world.

One thing had been required of the people, as an outward sign of submission, and, it might be, of penitence, viz., that they should *strip off their ornaments*. This command was obeyed; in fact, the fear and awe of the Mighty Power of God was now upon them; and apparently they had no desire for gay clothing.

They *mourned* when they heard that God would not accompany them; and especially, when the withdrawal of the presence of God was brought visibly before them by the removal of the Tabernacle beyond the bounds of the camp. This measure was apparently designed to mark the difference between those who sought the Lord in earnest and those who did not. For the one would go out to the place, while the other would not.

But when the cloudy pillar, sure sign of the Divine presence, appeared at the Tabernacle door, far off as it was, the awe of the Divine presence fell upon them, and *all the people rose up and worshipped, every man at his tent door*.

But Moses only was permitted to approach; and it is added, *the Lord spake to Moses, face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend*, a deep foreshadowing of the intimate communion between the Divine Son of God, and those who love Him, whom he calls *not servants, but friends* (John xv. 15), and this on the very ground that the Father's will is made known to them.

So now, as a friend, in intimate communion, before the great march through the wilderness is commenced, many colloquies ensue between Moses and the Lord, and many revelations are made. Throughout these, Moses always speaks as a man who knows his frailty and weakness, is earnestly desirous of more knowledge and goodness, yet speaks with the confidence of a child to a good and tender father.

"*Thou hast given me this great charge, yet I know not whom thou wilt send with me.*" (This evidently refers to the promised Angel and Messenger; a very human curiosity filling the mind of Moses as to who he would be.) *I pray thee, then, show me now thy way!*

Then, with a touch of wonderful tenderness, he adds: "*And consider that this nation is thy people.*" Thy people. Yes, Moses is still the intercessor for this people. Stiff-necked and foolish as they were, they were still the children of Abraham!

To this appeal the Lord answers, in mercy, "*My Presence shall go with thee. And I will give thee rest!*" The word had just been spoken that the Lord would not go *with the people*. But apparently, the Divine presence was to be with Moses, and would give him *Rest*. Rest; yes. In the midst of heavy care and responsibility, with this people to manage and guide day by day, composing quarrels, restraining from evil, watching and comforting, and providing, and stirring up to duty, a thousand anxieties pressing upon him day by day in that wilderness march, God would give this man *rest!*

Again we see the foreshadowing of that great and wonderful *peace* that passeth all understanding which is the heritage of all faithful souls, who in this age and dispensation, cast their care upon God, and *by prayer and supplication make known their requests to Him*. Many a man in these Christian times, heavily pressed with the cares of business, or government, or family, looking forward wearily to the life-journey before him has sighed and breathed out the prayer, "*show me thy way!*" and has been lifted up as the Divine voice (through this very word) has said to him, "*My Presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee Rest!*" As Mentor with the son of Ulysses, the Divine guide is about the path and steps of all faithful disciples, leading them often through strange and devious ways, yet always to the Eternal city of Habitation. "*Let not your heart be troubled. In my Father's house are many mansions.*"

Moses, moved by the grace and goodness of God to himself, is now emboldened to plead for all the people. *If thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence; for how shall it be known that I, and thy people have found grace in thy sight, if not in that thou goest with us!* The tender pleading of the great patriot strikes upon our ear with a touching force, and there is in it the same spirit noticeable in the petition of Abram for Sodom, viz., that as more is granted, more is asked. Note the steps of the plea. The Lord, in righteous judgment, withdraws his presence, and directs the removal of the Tabernacle from the camp. But Moses intercedes. *Show me thy way;* a prayer certain to be heard; but he adds, "*Consider that this nation is thy people.*" The answer comes speedily, with promise of blessing so far as he himself is concerned. But this is not sufficient. The door of grace being opened for himself, his heart is enlarged to pray that

they all may be received. With a strong, and, what proves a prevailing purpose, he cries out, "Carry us not up hence. If thy Presence go not with us—with us all—not with me only, but with *all* this people; for how can we know that thy grace is with us, except thou goest with us!"

The blessed prayer of strong importunity prevails. The Lord answers, "*I will do this also.*"

Are not these things written for *our* learning too; for us Christian people, often tried by wayward and rebellious children, or others with whom we have to do, and for whom we are bound to pray. And is not this a perfect example of that very perseverance and importunity in prayer, so strongly inculcated by the Blessed Master.

Undoubtedly it is; and the result is for our encouragement.

But Moses, thus encouraged, passes on to a higher plane of desire and spiritual aspiration. For he now says, "*I beseech thee show me thy glory.*" This cannot refer to material manifestations of power and majesty, for of these there had been almost a superabundance. Certainly, the period from the beginning of the plagues of Egypt to the awful solemnities of Sinai had been more fruitful in manifestations of Divine power than any period of like extent in the history of the world.

But there is other glory besides the glory of material power. The glory of the Divine righteousness and mercy, the glory of His wisdom and providence, the manifestations of graciousness, benignity and truth; in short, the glory of the DIVINE LOVE,—this is that which touches the heart of man, and draws out corresponding qualities in him. For in all these things, man is capable of being a *follower* (or, as the original has it, *an imitator*) of God (Ephesians v. 1); as dear children may be of a parent of high and noble character.

The answer is gracious, but most peculiar in form, and such as to suggest some material manifestation. Moses was directed to take his place in one of the clefts of the rocks of the Mount, while the *glory of the Lord passed by*; from thence he would see, not the *face* of the Lord, but another manifestation of Him.

But the sequel showed that this was no manifestation visible by mortal eye. Nothing was visible but the cloud, and there was nothing special about that; all the people had seen it for many months past. The revelation of the glory of the Lord was addressed solely to the mind.

Moses was directed to prepare two new tables of stone (God promising to write on them the words as before), and

to come up alone to the highest part of the Mount. This he did.

Then from some rocky cleft he saw the Cloud of Presence descending till it stood before him. Then the *Lord stood* with him there and proclaimed THE NAME OF THE LORD! (Name in the Old Testament, is always significant of attributes, character, personality.) And this name evidently is the *glory* which Moses was aspiring to see.

What, then, was this wonderful Divine NAME. As it sounded in the ears of Moses, he was evidently awe-struck. For thus proclaimed the voice: THE ETERNAL, JEHOVAH, GOD. MERCIFUL AND GRACIOUS. LONG-SUFFERING AND ABUNDANT IN GOODNESS AND TRUTH. KEEPING MERCY FOR THOUSANDS, (notice how these words of love and graciousness multiply). FORGIVING INIQUITY, AND TRANSGRESSION, AND SIN.

Wonderful revelation, of that which is of the very heart and essence of Divine nature. But is this all?

Some, in ignorance, and some in unbelief, think it is or should be. But it is not. For the same word that heaps up epithets of graciousness and love, goes on to display another side of the Divine Name, in the very noticeable words, "*That will by no means clear the guilty,*" which word "guilty" is not in the original, and is supplied to make up the sense. But the sense is obviously rather the "impotent," or the "unbelieving," or the "hard-hearted;" it is these whom the Divine Lawgiver will by no means absolve.

Then the voice went on to say, "*visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and fourth generation,*" the meaning of which has been fully set forth in the reflections on the second commandment.

Then Moses hasted, and bowed his head to the earth and worshipped. But when he went to press his former petition, for so awed had he been at the Divine Name that he had forgotten the gracious answer. Thus he said, "*If now I have found grace in thy sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray thee, go amongst us; and pardon our sin, and take us for thine inheritance.*"

A prayer of broken utterance but of deep feeling, uttered with anxiety, as to what the people, after all, might do,—and what would become of them.

The answer to this was noteworthy indeed. It is to announce a solemn Covenant, a covenant on the part of the Supreme to do *marvellous and terrible things*, viz., to *drive out the wicked nations that inhabited Canaan*, involving an obligation on the part of the people to *make no covenant with these peop'e, lest it become a snare, but to destroy their altars,*

break their images, and cut down their groves, lest the people be beguiled and seduced to follow their gods; and specially lest by marrying amongst them, the sons and daughters of these chosen people should go wandering after these heathen gods, and become like the corrupt and degraded people that worshipped them.

Does this seem severe? Does it not seem inconsistent with the declaration of mercy and longsuffering just made? The question might be asked, "Is He the God of the Jews only; is He not of the Gentiles also?" (Romans iii. 29). And the answer to this question could be written large from the revelations of the Old Testament. For in no part of the Divine word is the fact of the God of the Hebrews being the Lord of the whole earth more strongly emphasized than in the books of the Old Dispensation. "*The God of the whole earth, shall He be called. All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship thee.*" Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, *all ye lands.* These and very many more show that the revelation of God to Moses and the Prophets was not of a tribal god, as some have erroneously supposed.

This idea of a tribal god is a purely heathenish conception. The idea of one god for the sea, another for war, another for the sky, another for love, another for the chase—or the idea of one god for this nation and another god for another nation—these are all the product of human fancies groping after the knowledge of the One Supreme and Eternal, and are all false.

But the great question of the Divine Government as it had reference to the Canaanitish people, must be considered at length later on.

Meantime, let it be said that what the Divine Being is to individual men has been most clearly set forth, viz., that the Lord is an absolutely righteous being; that He must, as a foundation, require righteousness on the part of every man; but that, as there is an ineradicable tendency to wrong-doing in mankind, a way for the exercise of mercy, forgiveness and salvation on a righteous foundation was found in the institution of sacrifices, embodied first in the ritual of the Hebrews, and afterwards confirmed and opened up to all mankind in the sacrificial death of the Son of God.

Thus to every individual man the door is open to Divine forgiveness and blessing.

But the ways and counsels of the Most High with regard to nations and tribes are not always easy to understand. The facts are set forth, but we may ask many questions, in our ignorance and very limited understanding, and receive little or no answer. And after the deepest considera-

tion that can be given, there will still remain so much that is unexplained that we must finally fall back, as we have already been constrained to do, on the truth that unlies all other truth, viz., that the Judge of all the earth, **MUST DO RIGHT.**

For the perplexities of Nature and Natural Providence are as inscrutable as those of Revelation, while Nature and Providence shed no light upon the way of reconciliation and peace.

Moses remained upon the Mount forty days and forty nights supernaturally sustained. *He neither ate bread nor drank water.* manifestly an exercise of Divine power, and for which there was adequate reason. The circumstances were such as had never occurred before in the history of the world, and have never occurred since. The miracles of the Divine word are always justified by the circumstances.

So we shall find reason for the remarkable fact with which the narrative part of the Book of Exodus closes, viz., that the face of Moses *shone* with a supernatural light when he came down from the Mount. It was not the mere flush of extraordinary excitement, but a shining which made it difficult to look upon his face. Supernatural certainly, but with a deep and wonderful meaning, that through him, and the tables of Testimony in his hand, the light was to shine which was to enlighten the world for all time to come.

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CRITICAL NOTE.

The expression "*that will by no means clear the guilty,*" is one of the very rare cases in which the words inserted by translators to make up the sense of a passage, rather obscure than elucidate it. That the Divine Ruler did clear the guilty under the Mosaic dispensation is a truth that stands out conspicuously in it, for the whole sacrificial system was designed to bring it about. It is the impenitent, the unbelieving, the men who turn away from the sacrifices or dishonour them, these it is whom Divine Justice will not clear. Instead of "guilty," the word should have been "impenitent."

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THE BOOK

OF

NUMBERS

W. O. BROWN

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CHAPTER I.

THE PREPARATION FOR THE MARCH ACROSS THE DESERT.

Numbers 1 to 10.

The great host of the children of Israel had been encamped for more than a year about the cluster of lofty mountains near the centre of the southern part of the peninsula that separates Egypt from Arabia. There they heard the Law, and saw the manifestations of Divine majesty, such as the world had never before witnessed. And this had been a time of discipline as well as instruction. They had learned by some severe examples that God, the God of the whole earth, who had delivered them from bondage, was not to be trifled with. He had a right to unreserved obedience, and that obedience He would exact. Yet this was no hard condition. For the obedience required was simply to do what, by the universal conscience of mankind, is adjudged to be *right*. "*The commandment was holy, and just, and good.*" The service was *reasonable*. To obey was to *prove how good and perfect* the will of God was. (Romans xii, 2)

And probably there had been some measure of military discipline as well. The host were certainly armed when they came out of Egypt, for they had a serious battle with the fierce Amalekites before they had been two months in the wilderness. They came out of Egypt in marching order; *harnessed*, as our version has it; *armed*, as the revised version gives; but the original suggests *in ranks of five*. The encounter with the Amalekites made it plain that they must be prepared to fight their way to the promised land. It brought out also the military quality of the young man Oshea, afterwards so highly distinguished under his changed name of Joshua.

But after the lapse of fourteen months from the great departure, their Divine Leader deemed that the time had come for them to set forth on the way which would lead them straight to the land of Promise. Hitherto they had marched in an entirely contrary direction—for wise purposes—as has been seen. Now they must set their faces steadfastly towards the land of their fathers. But before setting out, certain preparations were necessary. The first of these was

THE TAKING OF THE CENSUS.

Not, however, of the whole people, but solely of the men able to bear arms; *from twenty years old and upwards; all that are able to go forth to war.* This was the Divine direction, and a plain intimation of the nature of the enterprise they were upon. They were to fight their way.

Now, the question must strike a thoughtful reader at once, why should this "numbering of the people" be right at this time, when the very same thing should be so severely condemned and punished when done by King David? For David's numbering, as we see from the narrative (II. Samuel, xxiv., 9), was for military purposes, and, on the face of it, would suggest the provident foresight and preparation of a ruler who had hostile tribes around him.

What then was the difference?

Much, every way.

For David's numbering was by a temptation of Satan. To what would Satan tempt a king like David? To what but to the besetting sin of kings, to pride and vainglory; to a lifting up of himself as a warrior, and a forgetfulness of the tenure by which all Israelitish power was held, viz., Faith in God. Pride and vainglory! Deadly sins in any man; doubly so in a man who had received so much from God as he had. Forgetfulness of God! How could forgetfulness and want of faith be otherwise than a deadly crime in a man who knew so much, and who had taught others to know so much as David had?

But this numbering by Moses was directly at God's command. That stamped it as wise, and right, and good.

Thus, the same action may be right or wrong, according to the motive, the spirit, the circumstances, the time. The Census, therefore, was taken, tribe by tribe, Levi only excepted, for Levi could not war. And the results, with the names of the leading men of every tribe, are carefully recorded in this fourth book of Moses, called, from this very thing, the Book of NUMBERS.

One may sometimes say, and men have said, captiously, why *record* all this in a revelation of God's will to mankind? Of what interest can all this be to men living in this Christian dispensation?

But let us consider.

These records of the census, and of the heads of tribes, are part of the history of a people who were chosen by Divine wisdom to preserve the knowledge of God for more than a thousand years. These particulars were of high interest to them, for they had to do with the titles to land when they settled in Canaan, and with the preservation of

the true descent of families. So, clearly, as long as the Jews were a nation, that is, down to the time of the Messiah, these records were of value and importance.

But when these Scriptures became diffused throughout the world, what object was served by retaining in them these long lists of persons, and the numbers of men in the various tribes who were fit for war, with many other particulars of which the value had passed away? To answer this it is sufficient to ask, what object would there have been in going through the books of Moses, and taking out of them all that was deemed not to be of interest to Christians? And if it had been deemed desirable, who, or what body of persons, was to do it? None of the early Christian writers, or any council of the church, appear to have thought of such a thing. They had too much to do with propagating and defending the Christian faith to busy themselves with such work as the excision of names from these lists. And, further, who would dare to tamper with records which all acknowledged to be Divine? They have been left intact by the combined wisdom and judgment of the whole church in all the centuries. And much may be learned from them. Remembering the typical character of much that was done by this people, and through them, and to them (I. Cor., x.), we can understand that, in the Christian dispensation, God will remember the names and works of all that faithfully serve Him, and specially those who have stood "in the high places of the field." The apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the Philippians, speaks of his fellow workers whose names are in the Book of Life.—(Chap. iv. 3.)

After the census came

THE ORDERING OF THE CAMP FOR THE MARCH.

Here, in Chapter II., we have a set of marching orders that remind us of the detailed directions that great commanders have given at the outset of a campaign. In the lives, both of Wellington and Napoleon, are passages that strikingly correspond to this chapter of directions for the march of these Israelites through the wilderness three thousand years ago. It is true of Scripture narratives; as well as of other ancient records, that in parts they seem very *modern*; and this leads to the remark, that in these narratives of Moses there is that very remarkable mingling of human effort, human wisdom, human foresight, human courage, with Divine help at critical times and when urgently needed, that would be expected in a story that in its very foundation professes to

tell of a direct Divine interposition in human affairs. There is never help from heaven when the courage and wisdom of man is sufficient. The miraculous events recorded, wonderful though they be, are all manifestly *rational*. They are the working of a mind and a power of infinite wisdom. They are thus in absolute contrast with the silly tales, and "*old wives' fables*" which form the staple of all myths and miracles of false religions, and of corruptions of the true. Let any comparison be made, for example, between the miraculous events recorded in these books of Moses and the legends of the Brahminical faith, or the Mohammedan, or the medieval miracles of the Roman church, and it will be at once apparent that there is a fundamental difference between them. The one are true records of the working of a power adequate to the production of the events, and wise to intervene when help was needed, the other are mere grotesque fancies without reason or object, save to exalt some church, shrine, or saint.

Thus, then, with all due consideration of needs and circumstances, this host of adult men was organized in divisions like an army, in the form of a square, three tribes on each side. Every tribe had its own standard, *with the ensign of their father's house*. The first order given was that every man was to *pitch by his own standard*, round about the Tabernacle in definite order. Judah headed the Eastern division, Reuben the Southern, Ephraim the Western, and Dan the Northern. The tribe of Levi was to remain with the Tabernacle. *So they pitched by their standards*; and so they set forward. And the division of *families* was as carefully observed as the division of tribes (Chap. ii., 34).

NOTE.—It is a curious question, and interesting, what these respective standards consisted of. No precise indication is given in the narrative. But from the reference to *the ensign of the house of their fathers*, it seems probable that some at least of these standards had their origin in the prophetic forecast of the Patriarch Jacob, as recorded in Genesis, Chap. 49. There Judah is prefigured as a *Lion*, Benjamin as a *Wolf*, Issachar as a *strong Ass*, Dan as a *Serpent*, Naphtali as a *Stag*; all of which have reappeared in modern heraldry. The striking reference to the Divine Son of God as the *Lion of the Tribe of Judah* in the Apocalypse (Rev. v., 5) is doubtless a survival of the tradition of these standards.

Before setting out, there was a very *formal*

SETTING UP OF THE TABERNACLE,

and a rehearsing of the minute directions relating thereto. The part that each principal family of Levi was to take in the ordering of the sacred tent is carefully set forth; every man's place appointed there, exactly as the place of every tribe was set forth in the encampment.

Thus is evidenced the working of the same Divine Mind that brought order out of chaos at the beginning. And thus is foreshadowed and typified the orderly arrangements of the Christian church. "*For God is not the God of confusion*" in that higher sphere (I. Cor. xiv., 33-40), and the command is given that all things in the assemblies of the Church are to be done "*decently and in order.*"

THE NAZARITES.

It appears to have been before the setting out, that directions were given respecting those who took upon them the Vow of the Nazarite. (Chap. vi.)

These were not a separate order of persons, like the Pharisees of subsequent Jewish times, or the monks of the Roman or Greek church. Any person, man or woman, could take the vow of a Nazarite, and for a definite time, at their own discretion. Apparently, with some it was for life, as in the case of Samson. The vow was a vow of *separation* from ordinary pursuits, and it was certainly for religious purposes. *All the days of his separation he is holy unto the Lord.* The conditions of the separated life were two. The first, that he should take no wine or strong drink, is natural, corresponding as it does to the pledge of total abstinence of our own day. But the abstinence of the Nazarite went far beyond this, and included the separation from everything *that came from the vine; from vinegar, or any liquor of grapes, or grapes themselves, or raisins; nothing was to be taken, even from the kernel to the husks!* The reason for this extreme thoroughness is not apparent, unless it be that the vow must on no consideration be tampered with.

The second condition was that no razor should come upon the head. The hair must be suffered to grow during the whole period of the vow. This requirement is the exact opposite of the usage of the religious orders of Christian times. Monks and friars shave the greater part of the head.

This condition of letting the hair grow seems purely arbitrary.

When the days of his vow were accomplished, the Nazarite was released by solemn offerings and sacrifices, in which the hair that has grown is burnt with the sacrifice.

During this time of preparation for the journey, a beautiful

FORM OF BLESSING

was ordained that has survived to these times:

THE LORD BLESS THEE, AND KEEP THEE.

THE LORD MAKE HIS FACE TO SHINE UPON THEE, AND BE GRACIOUS UNTO THEE.

THE LORD LIFT UP HIS COUNTENANCE UPON THEE, AND GIVE THEE PEACE!

(Chap. vi., 23 to 26.)

How have these ideas survived through the changes of three thousand years!

By these very words, Christian congregations are still blessed in their churches. For the ideas are eternal.

It was at this time also that an extraordinary example of zeal for the house of God was manifested in the shape of

COSTLY OFFERINGS FOR THE TABERNACLE.

The details of these are in Chapter vii., and they fill the mind with astonishment at the abundance of silver and gold that these people had brought with them out of Egypt. Truly the ages of bondage were recompensed at the last, by the gifts that were lavished upon them at their going out.

The offerings for the Tabernacle were so numerous and bulky as to fill six covered waggons, drawn by twelve oxen. Each of the princes or heads of tribes took a day, and twelve days of solemn ceremonial were thus observed, during which these costly treasures were poured out for the service of the Lord. The nature of these can be understood from a description of one of them. (Chap. vii., 12.)

He that offered his offering the first day was Nahshon, the son of Amminadab, of the Tribe of Judah, and his offering was:

One silver charger, weighing a hundred and thirty shekels.

One silver bowl, of seventy shekels, both filled with fine flour for a meat offering.

One spoon of ten shekels of gold, full of incense.

Also, in addition:—

A bullock, a ram, and a lamb for a burnt offering.

A kid of the goats for a sin offering.

And, for a peace offering:—Two oxen, five rams, five he-goats, and five lambs.

This was the offering of NAHSHON. Then, on the second, and every succeeding day, the head of each tribe came with an offering exactly similar.

By these large gifts, the people at the very outset of their career as a nation were taught that all they had should be considered as the Lord's, and that when required for His

service, nothing could be held back as too precious or costly. This spirit was also very powerfully manifested at the outset of the Christian church.

The last order of preparation (Chap. x.) was that two

SILVER TRUMPETS

should be provided, to be used for the calling of the assembly, and for the journeying of the camps while on the march. Careful directions are given as to the manner in which blasts are to be blown, and their various signification. But the use of the trumpets was to be a perpetual ordinance. They were to be in charge of the priests, and to be used in days of gladness, in solemn days, in the beginnings of the months, and at the time of the burnt offerings, and over the sacrifices of peace offerings. The greatest of all the occasions for the blowing of the trumpets was on the morning of the year of jubilee. Then the trumpet was to sound loudly through the land; liberty was to be proclaimed to all the inhabitants thereof, and every man was to return to his own possession, and to his own family! (Lev. xxv., 9.)

All being now prepared, it remained only to make the whole host understand that they were under heavenly guidance, viz., that of the Cloud of the Divine Presence, and that the cloud was to be followed in journeying or in abiding during the whole of their journey. A cloud by day became a fire by night; and whatever sins, and grievous sins did they commit, were chargeable to this people, they do seem to have been, on all but one or two occasions, faithful in this matter of following the cloud. There are few more pathetic and beautiful passages in all Scripture than that in which their obedience in this respect is recorded. (The passage was evidently written towards the close of their long wilderness wanderings.) In Chapter ix., v. 15, and on, we read:—

“And on the day that the Tabernacle was reared up, the cloud covered the Tabernacle.

“And when the cloud was taken up from the tabernacle, then after that the children of Israel journeyed, and in the place where the cloud abode, there the children of Israel pitched their tents . . . and when the cloud tarried long upon the tabernacle, according to the commandment of the Lord, they abode in their tents. . . And so it was when the cloud abode from even unto the morning, and that the cloud was taken up in the morning, then they jour-

neyed. Whether it was by day or by night that the cloud was taken up they journeyed.

"Or whether it were two days, or a month, or a year, that the cloud tarried upon the tabernacle, remaining thereon, the children of Israel abode in their tents, but when it was taken up they journeyed.

"At the commandment of the Lord they rested in their tents, and at the commandment of the Lord they journeyed; they kept the charge of the Lord, at the commandment of the Lord by the hand of Moses."

Well would it have been had they kept the "charge of the Lord" in all things.

NOTE.—Of all the events reviewed in this chapter, this one of the cloud is the only one that is supernatural.

All else was such as was natural under the circumstances. The census, the ordering of the camp, the offerings, the provision of silver trumpets, the setting up of the tabernacle, were such as might have taken place, or, in fact, have taken place, in the setting out of Pilgrimages, or of a division of Crusaders, or of a great company of Emigrants to some land of promise, in these modern days.

But it is very striking to note the spiritual significance of all the events, both natural and supernatural.

Almost every feature of the life and history of this people is a type or image of some spiritual reality in the individual soul, or in the organized body of Christian disciples. We, in these days, speak of ourselves as having left an Egyptian bondage, viz., that of sin; we have the promise of a heavenly land of corn and wine, and we cheer our hearts by constantly singing of it; we are marching through a wilderness on the way thereto, and expect to meet with enemies whom we are prepared to fight; all Christians are organized, under one standard or another, while thus marching, the aggregate making up the Catholic church. Of that march, too, and what we expect on the way, we are constantly singing:

"Like a mighty army
Moves the Church of God."

Both individually and collectively we are fed with bread from heaven on the way, and we have the pillar of fire and cloud for our guide.

It is this spiritual significance for ourselves and our own day which gives life and power to these ancient narratives. They are no curious stories of a time long past, interesting only to the historical student or antiquary. They are of the present. They are real. They are instinct with power. They are, in a word, profitable for teaching, and for instruction in righteousness.

CHAPTER II.

MURMURINGS AND SEDITION ON THE MARCH.

Numbers 10, 11, and other chapters.

All being ready, that great March began, which was to be distinguished by such unlooked-for events, which events have left an ineffaceable stamp on the history of this people; which also have been so fruitful of instruction to Christian people individually, and to the church of God collectively, in all ages since.

It was on the twentieth day of the second month of the second year after the people left Egypt that the sentinels of the camp saw a movement in the cloud which was resting on the tabernacle. (Chap. X.) That was the momentous signal they had waited for. Word was now passed through the camp. Every man took his place. Every family ranged itself under the banner of its tribe. Then the standards were unfurled, and the vast host began to move.

Their faces were now turned northward, and the land of promise was before them, distant about a hundred and twenty miles. It was a stony and sandy wilderness they had to traverse, in places mountainous, intersected by deep ravines, and difficult even for a small caravan to traverse, as travellers find to their great discomfort in these times. Much more then was it to a host like this. But they might reasonably expect to compass the entire distance, and be on the borders of Canaan in sixty or seventy days. And doubtless their hearts beat high at setting out, with expectation of so doing.

Little, alas, could they have dreamed of what was before them; little could they think that they would reach the very border of Canaan, and then, through cowardice, refuse to enter it; above all, they could not dream that the host would be condemned to wander forty years in this wretched wilderness, and that none of the men whose names had been enrolled for war would enter the land, save only two faithful ones. This, however, was what came to pass.

HOBAB, THE MIDIANITE.

They had not proceeded far before they met the encampment of Hobab, the brother-in-law of Moses, and son of that famous Midianite Jethro who had given such sagacious

counsel. (He was called indifferently Jethro and Ragucl, as we see by the book of Exodus.) The heart of Moses went out to his relative, and he endeavored to persuade him to cast in his lot with Israel. We are journeying, said he, to a land which the Lord has promised to us. It is a good land. *Come thou with us, and we will do thee good!* But Hobab refused. He wanted, apparently, no better land than this wilderness, with its freshness and its wild freedom; just as its denizens of the present day, the Arabs, do now. Moses, however, pressed him, saying that Hobab could be of great use to them on their journey, being accustomed to camping in the wilderness, and to keeping a watchful eye on enemies round about. *Thou mayest be to us instead of eyes,* said the great leader. And he added, pleading still with a loving earnestness, *it shall be, if thou shalt go with us; yea, it shall be, that what goodness the Lord shall do unto us, the same will we do unto thee.*

Apparently, this plea prevailed, for we know, from the book of Judges (Chap. I.), that the family of Hobab was with the Israelites when they crossed the Jordan forty years afterwards.

How strikingly this incident typifies what often passes into experience in Christian times, when a minister or godly relative is endeavouring to persuade some wanderer to turn his feet towards the heavenly Canaan! saying, as Moses said to Hobab, *Come thou with us, and we will do thee good!* And how often it is that the message of love is at first refused, but that by loving entreaty, and the power of the Spirit of God, the obdurate heart is softened, and the wanderer's steps are turned homeward.*

It is at this point that we have given to us that famous watchword of the camp, which survives in one of the most striking of the Psalms (Psalm lxxviii). *For it came to pass when the ark set forward that Moses said, "RISE UP, LORD, AND LET THINE ENEMIES BE SCATTERED!" and when it rested, Return, O Lord, to the many thousands of Israel.*

THE FIRST MURMURING.—Chap. XI.

It must strike an attentive reader that in all the previous narrative of the march there is no mention of any provision

* NOTE.—This incident is noticeable, too, as an instance of the exercise of human foresight and wisdom which went along *pari passu* with trust in Divine power, that characterized the great men of Bible times. Moses knew that God was to guide them by a cloud. Yet he said to Hobab—Come, for thou mayest be to us instead of eyes! So it is in these times. Pray, said Cromwell at Dunbar, but keep your powder dry.

for supplies of Food. This army apparently had no Commissariat! A marvellous thing indeed, and stamping the march as unique in history.

But had it no Commissariat? Indeed it had. For He who was responsible for the provisioning of this army was the Supreme Lord of all the harvests of the earth, whose care it was, and is, to see to the feeding of all mankind. From Him they had the Manna, a most suitable food, day by day. And having this, they could not lack.

But it was respecting this that the first of the great murmurings broke out. Let us bear in mind, in considering this, that they were an army on the march, and that they had a land flowing with milk and honey promised them, which land was at no great distance, and to reach which, surely, an army could submit to some small deprivation of the luxuries of settled life. It does not seem that the women and children complained. It was the men, doubtless. Yet they suffered no such privations as numbers of armies, in both ancient and modern times, have had to submit to, for they had a sufficiency of a food that was suitable. They were only deprived of meat and vegetables! surely a small matter when they had other food—and suitable food—in abundance. But previously to the great outbreak, there had been a sort of muttering before the storm, a complaining respecting we know not what. But it was highly displeasing to the Lord, and was punished by a fire breaking out. This, however, is told in the briefest manner, and it seems to have been confined to the outside boundaries of the camp. (Chap. xi, 1.)

But now arose a great murmuring about the food, and in a very noticeable way. There was a "*mixed multitude*" about the camp, a riff-raff of various nationalities, gathered from the cities of Egypt doubtless; the scum of the population. There are always such in the track of an army, and of both sexes, camp followers of loose life, seeking plunder for the most part. Such a multitude went out with the great Crusades, and their evil ways of licentiousness and plunder brought disgrace upon the enterprise again and again. Why this mixed multitude was suffered to remain about the Israelitish camp we know not. Doubtless it was because they could not be got rid of. For if banished, they could return, and hover about the outskirts of the host as long as they could find subsistence.

These people had no moral stamina, neither faith, nor hope, nor courage. For they had no part in the promise of the good land. Living only for pleasure and self-indulgence, they now broke out in open revolt, lusting for flesh. And, as is so commonly the case, their evil ways

infected the rest of the camp. True it was then; true in the days of the Apostle Paul, as it is true now (1. Cor., xv.), that "*evil communications corrupt good manners.*" Shameful to say, the Israelitish host forgot their position, forgot the promised land, forgot their high hopes, and broke out into wretched and childish complaints. *Who shall give us flesh to eat?* And again, looking backward, they cried like children for the *fish which they ate in Egypt freely; the cucumbers and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick!* Miserable creatures, and unworthy of the destiny before them; at heart slaves still.

Can we wonder that the anger of the Lord broke out, even as now a ruler would be angry, who had bestowed infinite pains upon the education of his people, and at great cost had given them the means of a high development, if they should, after all, prefer sottish pleasures and low amusements, choosing ignorance and brutality rather than enlightenment. Even so the Lord of this people was wroth with them.

Moses was now troubled beyond measure. For the time, he was overbalanced and complained himself. Seeking the Lord (ah, he did well to bring his trouble before the Lord), he poured out his bitter complaint. Why has such a terrible burden been laid on me? Have I begotten all these people, that I am to be responsible for feeding them as if they were my children? I cannot bear it. The burden is too heavy for me. And so terribly were his feelings wrought up, that at last he cried, "*and if Thou dost deal thus with me, kill me, I pray Thee, out of hand.*"

This is not like the calm and heroic Moses whom we have seen doing such great things. But is not the picture true to human nature? Are great men always great? Are they never weak, and become like other men? Did not Abram's faith fail twice? Did not the rock-like Cephas once behave like a sick girl?—as Shakespeare says Caesar did.

Moses, under the guidance of the Divine Spirit, thus records his own weakness, that weak-hearted souls—weak-hearted though sincere—in after days may be comforted.

For God was not angry with Moses at this time, though He was subsequently. He gave a most gracious answer. *For He knoweth our frame, He remembereth that we are dust.* He commanded that seventy men be looked out, men of weight and mark amongst the people, who should assist Moses in bearing the burden of the people, promising to take of the spirit of Moses, and to put it also upon these.

From this it may be inferred that Moses had not acted upon the wise counsel given him a year before by his

father-in-law (Exod. xviii.), and had still endeavored to rule the people alone. He was not the only ruler who has broken down under such an attempt, for the dislike to devolve authority upon others, and the love of ruling alone is the common temptation of men in high position. Very recent English history has given us examples of this, and of its consequences.

Now, however, the step had to be taken, for it was not by the advice of a father-in-law, but by the command of the Living God, that Moses was directed to look out for men to take counsel with him. (There is a survival of this body of seventy in the Sanhedrim, or Council of Elders, of which we read in the New Testament.) (Acts v. 34 et al.)

But now a terrible punishment awaited the murmurers, a deserved punishment, and one well fitting the offence. They were allowed to have their own way, which is indeed, at times, the very worst punishment that can befall either adult or child. They lusted for flesh. Flesh was given, yet flesh which, while most dainty at first, would provoke over-indulgence amongst men of undisciplined *morale*, and bring about deadly consequences. Moses, however, could not see how a supply of flesh was to be provided. When the voice of God announced it, the great leader is seized with a spirit of disbelief. For God had announced that flesh should be given sufficient for a whole month; an astonishing provision indeed, and sufficient to stagger the strongest faith. Yet unbelief was unreasonable, as it is always unreasonable, in these days, as in days gone by.

"Blind unbelief is sure to err."

For, how could Moses doubt, when for a whole year the host had been fed upon manna? What could possess him to say, "*Shall the flocks and the herds be slain for them, or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them to suffice them?*" Here, indeed, was blindness; as unbelievers of every shade are blind to-day when speaking of miracles, and the developments of the Supreme Power, whom some allow to exist, but will not allow to work.

The answer of Jehovah was an appeal to reason. "*Is the Lord's hand waxed short?*" In a single sentence the whole suggestion of unbelief was silenced.

For an event happened of a totally unexpected kind; yet one that is perfectly natural in that region. Moses, when dwelling so long in the desert, must have seen at times great flocks of birds winging their way from Arabia to Egypt in annual migration. This was the agency made use of by the Lord to bring the supply of flesh they craved

for. The birds came in extraordinary numbers (they were a game bird, somewhat similar to a partridge), they were caused to fly low, and to cross the camp in countless numbers, as flocks of certain species of birds do occasionally in our own day. The flocks becoming exhausted by long flight, rested on the ground, were caught and gathered up, and spread about the camp to dry. Then evidently commenced a ravenous eating, an eating to excess, a gorging with this dainty food; and, quite as a natural consequence, an outbreak of great and deadly sickness that carried off numbers of the people. There the dead were buried, and from this circumstance the place was named *Kibroth-Hattaavah—The Graves of Lust*.

If the people who died were wholly of the mixed multitude, one might say that this terrible event, by which their very gluttony was the means of destruction, was overruled to the ridding the camp of a most dangerous element. It is very probable that this was the case, for we read of this mixed multitude no more.

ELDAD AND MEDAD.

In this Chapter is a suggestive and instructive narrative of another sort of murmuring, the murmuring of a well-meaning but uninstructed soul.

The seventy men who had been set apart, were, it seems, endowed with the spirit of prophecy. How exercised, and what was said, is not recorded.

But there were two other men *not written in the number of the seventy*, who also received the spirit of prophecy, but exercised it in the camp, and not about the tabernacle. A young man, zealous for order, ran to Moses, and told him of this, and Joshua, then in attendance upon Moses, with a true military instinct of "order," answered, and said *My Lord Moses, forbid them*. A perfect type is Joshua in this, of those, who, in modern days, also with a well-meaning zeal for order, have repeatedly forbidden men whose names "were not written in the roll," but who were, beyond question endowed with the spirit, and able to prophesy, if not in the tabernacle, in the camp.

The reply of Moses was that of a large-hearted and generous soul. But it was more. The reply was of the Spirit of God. For Moses said, *Enrises thou for my sake? Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord could put His Spirit upon them!* (v. 29.)

In the very same spirit (and how could it be otherwise) was the reply of the Divine Teacher to certain zealous disciples, who saw one casting out devils in the name of

Christ, and forbid him, because, said they, *he followeth not with us!* Here, also, was one whose name was "not written in the roll." But what said our Lord? *Forbid him not; for there is no man that shall do a miracle in My Name that can lightly speak evil of Me.* (Mark ix., 39.)

Thus is the matter put on the true ground. If the men who prophesy and preach, can only shew the fruit of devils spiritually cast out, and miracles of salvation wrought, through their means, by the power of Divine grace, the word of the Lord is equally to-day, as it was in olden times, *Forbid them not!*

THE SEDITIOUS OF MIRIAM AND AARON.

The people journeyed from the scene of disaster at Kibroth-Hattaavah for a few days, still facing northward, when a very strange and unlooked-for occurrence took place. The spirit of murmuring seems to have become infectious (so easily do bad examples spread), for it now actually broke out in the family of Moses himself, a family that might well have been called "the holy family" of that people.

Miriam, the sister of Moses, was some years older than himself, for it was she who was set to watch the floating cradle on which the infant Moses was placed on the Nile. It is probable that Aaron was older too.

They had been, as a family, perfectly united in the service of God from the time when the great call was given to Moses and Aaron to deliver the people from Egypt. Moses and Aaron together went before Pharaoh. Miriam it was who led the women of Israel in their joyful songs after the crossing of the Red sea. Aaron, indeed, had miserably failed in duty in the matter of the golden calf. But he had been forgiven. And since then he had been endowed with the great office of High Priest, and it had been ordained that the priesthood, for all time, should appertain exclusively to him and to his descendants. He, then, had no cause for envy or jealousy.

But the spirit of jealousy broke out in this family, nevertheless, and it was manifested in a manner that shows only too plainly how these eminent persons were subject to "like passions with ourselves." For the quarrel arose primarily from the jealousy of Miriam towards her sister-in-law, the wife of Moses, who had joined him in the desert. Now, there is not, in the narrative, the slightest appearance of any assumption on the part of this woman, or of any favoritism towards her children on the part of Moses. Indeed, nothing is more noticeable, in all the life of Moses,

than the entire absence of any attempt to found a family, or to make himself the head of a tribe, or to have his sons succeed in any way to high office. His two sons, Gershon and Eliezir, simply took their place, and shared their lot with the rest of the tribe of Levi, and did not even aspire to the priesthood.

But, for all this, the spirit of jealousy arose in the mind of his sister. And jealousy is always unreasonable. She was evidently the moving spirit in this outbreak, and she prevailed on her brother Aaron to join in it. He appears here, as he did on a former occasion, as a weak-minded man, of good intentions, but easily influenced in a wrong direction. And he was persuaded to join in this attack upon Moses, ostensibly by reason of his brother's marrying a woman who was not an Israelite. (She is called an Ethiopian, which word, both here and in other places, is misleading to us, who have been accustomed to the modern Ethiopia on the Nile. The original word indicates a woman of Asiatic origin, a "Cushite," or woman of Cush, her country being the region, part of which is now called Arabia, but stretching further northward and eastward.)

But the murmuring soon passed from its original cause, as such outbreaks generally do. It became an assault upon Moses as the sole medium of communication from Almighty God to the people.

Hath the Lord indeed, they said, only spoken by Moses? Hath He not spoken also by us?

There does not appear to have been the shadow of foundation for this assumption, but, as we know, jealousy and envy do not proceed upon *reason*. There is no sign whatever that these two ever received any Divine communication apart from Moses. And the Lord very speedily vindicated His servant.

We may notice, by the way, the statement here made, that *the man Moses was very meek, above all the men upon the face of the earth*; a statement which, being written by Moses himself, has been assailed as a piece of singular conceit. But, in reality, remembering that Moses wrote, as he certainly did, under Divine inspiration, this verse indicates, not the judgment that Moses formed of himself, but the Divine judgment of him. Such he was in the sight of God.

But now comes the act of vindication, which is certainly striking. The Lord spake *suddenly* (a remarkable word, indicating the strenuousness of the Divine purpose), to all three, commanding them to appear at the Tabernacle. The occasion, indeed, required strenuousness, for the authority of Moses was assailed, and disaffection might easily spread

if not at once stopped. What transpired afterwards showed clearly what elements of disturbance there were in the camp.

When the three appeared, the Lord called Miriam and Aaron to appear before him; to appear as culprits, and have their offence rehearsed. And they were told, what they surely knew, that their brother, above all the prophets to whom God had spoken, had had a wonderful nearness of access to the Divine Presence, being spoken to face to face, clearly, and not in vision, and beholding the very similitude of God, so far as any similitude could be shown to mortal man. Miriam and Aaron well knew this; they knew that their brother had been called up to the holy mount, and had received communications far transcending anything before spoken to man, and that in a very high and special sense he was a servant of God, as a faithful steward in God's house.

Knowing all this, the Lord adds, *were ye not afraid to speak against him?*

This having been said, the cloud departed from off the tabernacle, the Lord withdrawing Himself in indignation.

But judgment at once fell upon Miriam, plainly indicating that she was the chief offender. She was struck white with leprosy, which, when Aaron saw, in alarm he cried out to Moses to intercede for her, confessing his and her folly and sin.

The intercession of Moses for these penitent souls is an example for all time. Divine mercy was exercised. Yet there must be judgment, and that in sight of the whole host. Miriam was of necessity put outside the camp, but the period of her separation was limited to seven days. Then she was healed. But while she was thus separated, the camp moved not forward. Doubtless sorrow struck the hearts of the people at this judgment on one so eminent. But when she returned to the camp, they moved steadily on, day by day, till they reached the borders of Canaan.

CHAPTER III.

THE MISSION OF THE SPIES, AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

Numbers, Chap. 13, 14.

When the host had proceeded forward until it came near to the border of Canaan, a remarkable direction was given to Moses by the Lord, viz., to send out men to *search the land*.

What the special object of this search was it is difficult to see at first sight, for no matter what the search revealed, it could not possibly affect the Divine purpose to give them the land, nor the Divine promise to drive their enemies out. And as to the land itself, it had been certainly described as a land of milk and honey. But God's ways are not seldom beyond our understanding. It is for Him to devise, for his servants to obey. It is so, even in the smaller sphere of earthly authority, as has already been reasoned out in these studies. (See the chapter on the offering of Isaac.) Much more, then in the Divine.

The command was to send picked men, one of every tribe, except Levi, all of them leading men in the camp. These men were, therefore, looked out, and their names are given in the record. Joshua, though then a young man, was one. And it was then that his name, Oshea, was enlarged to Jehoshua (signifying a Divine Saviour), which became shortened to Joshua, and is, in the Greek tongue, the gracious name of our own Divine Saviour, Jesus. (It is to be noted that once in the New Testament the word Jesus is used for Joshua [Hebrews iv., 8] which much obscures the sense. The revised version corrects it.)

The directions given by the great leader to these men are distinguished by as much sagacity and forethought as if there had been no Divine promise to give them the land. So it ever is, with all the dependence of God's servants on His promises, they are bound—for this is the Divine order—to use their own faculties to the utmost. Pray, as if there were nothing but Divine help; but work as if it did not exist at all. Thus, then, Moses directs the search to be made exactly as the search of men for land in these days would be made. And here are his directions:—

See the land, what it is, and the people that dwell therein, whether they be strong or weak, few or many.

And what the land is that they dwell in, whether it be good or bad; and what cities they be that they dwell in, whether in tents or in strongholds. And what the land is, whether it be fat or lean, and whether there be wood therein or not.

Thus might the president of a land company, or the head of an exploration speak to a searching party in our time, when sending them out to some unoccupied region in the far North-West of our own territory, or of the interior of the dark continent to seek out a place of settlement. But Moses adds, knowing something of the men he was sending, albeit they were the choicest men of their tribes, *and be ye of good courage, and bring of the fruit of the land!*

The party then set out, cross the border, and proceed north beyond what we know as the Sea of Galilee to Hamath, on the borders of Syria; then, returning, they stop at Hebron, and cut down an extraordinary cluster of grapes, which they find in a valley there, called Esuicot, meaning a cluster of grapes, the name being derived from this event. The search occupied forty days. They passed in safety through the land, which had changed marvellously since the days when their ancestors, Abraham and Jacob, had pastured their flocks therein. For it was now a well-peopled country, with many walled towns, and villages, and farms, and vineyards.

Returning, they make their report to this effect, addressing themselves to Moses and the Congregation. (v. 26.)

We came to the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey, and this is the fruit of it. (Ah! then the description was certainly true.) The hearts of the people now beat high with expectation, when suddenly their hopes are dashed to the ground. For the spies go on; *Nevertheless,—nevertheless? What is the drawback? Nevertheless, the people be strong, and the cities are walled, and very great. And we saw the children of Anak there!* At these words a strange terror filled the hearts of the people, much as some prospective settlers in a region occupied by Iroquois in the old time might hear of this formidable tribe inhabiting it, and be afraid to venture into it. And little heed was paid to the rest of the report, which told that the Amalekites (whom they knew as bitter enemies) dwelt in the south, near the wilderness; the Hittites, and the Jebusites, and the Ammonites occupying the mountains, and the Canaanites the country by the sea, and also the valley of the Jordan.

There was now rising a spirit of excitement and alarm in the host, but Caleb, who was probably spokesman, as representing the royal tribe of Judah, went on to quiet the minds of the people, and to say: *Let us go up at once,*

and possess it, for we are well able to overcome it. Here spoke the man of faith in God, the faith which laughs at impossibilities as Napoleon did, but for a very different reason. WITH GOD, ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE! said our blessed Lord, himself a man of the tribe of Judah.

But, alas! the rest, excepting Joshua, were of a different spirit. They looked simply at the human aspect of the enterprise, and forgot the Living God. In blind unbelief they erred (as men have done, often, in these very days), and brought untold disaster upon the host. *We cannot do it*, they said, *the people are stronger than we*. Very true. But what of the Mighty God who had brought them out of Egypt? Him they forgot.

Then the majority of the spies follow up this cowardly report by a lying statement as to the land; indeed, a ridiculous statement, viz., that the land was one that *ate up its inhabitants!* And this, when, a little while before, they had reported it to be flowing with milk and honey! Still more is the absurdity of the report manifest when they go on to say that all *its inhabitants are of goodly stature*, and that the giants, the sons of Anak are there. But, worse than all is the miserable cowardly statement that in comparison of these giants *"we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight!"*

Evidently these are not the men who are fit for the enterprise of conquering the land. For, although humility and diffidence of one's own powers is a pre-requisite to all successful work for God; it must be accompanied by a pronounced faith in Divine strength, and of this there was an entire absence in these men.

And, in the light of this report, we may have some idea of the reason why this expedition was sent at all. It was God's method of testing and proving them; a procedure in entire harmony with all the Divine ways. Not that He did not know them thoroughly; but that He would make manifest to all about them, and to themselves, what they really were. But what reception did these contradictory reports receive from the people? Did they believe Caleb and Joshua, and say, "let us go, for God has promised it." This would have been a course agreeable to sound reason, as all Scriptural faith is, of the New Testament as well as the Old.*

*NOTE.—An able writer, some years ago, wrote a treatise, entitled "Reason and Faith, their Claims and Conflicts." But there is, and can be, no conflict, between sound reason and the faith inculcated by our Lord and His apostles, or the faith of Old Testament saints and heroes. The true conflict is between reason and *superstition*, or reason and *credulity*. Superstition and credulity rest on the inventions of men, too often in the Church itself, but faith on the solid rock of the word and power of Almighty God.

It would have been rational for this people to believe Caleb and Joshua, for their report was in harmony with all that had happened since they left Egypt. But, again, it must be said that unbelief is blind as well as cowardly. *We were as grasshoppers*, said they, and the mass of the host, instead of turning from them ashamed of such faint-hearted leaders, believed them, and began again their miserable murmuring against Moses and Aaron.

The old cry, "Would God we had died in Egypt," became later on the cry, "Would God we had died in this wilderness!" In this last prayer they were heard. They longed, in their folly, to die in the wilderness, rather than quit themselves like men, and do the will of God by entering the land of Canaan. And die in the wilderness they did, every one of these murmurers. And it was their children, whom they pretended to be grieved for, who had the glory in after years of accomplishing what their fathers had proved utterly unfitted for.

But now, some one of these murmurers, more bold than the rest, bold to do wrong, though cowardly to do right, raised the cry, "*Let us make a captain, and let us return to Egypt!*" And this cry, mad as it was, spread about amongst the people, and they said one to another, "Yea, let us return." Bold to do wrong; for to return was far more difficult and dangerous than to go forward. To begin with, they certainly could not have found the way, and next, they would have no provisions for the journey. They could not imagine that God would send them manna from heaven, when they were marching in defiant rebellion against His command and will. And even if they got back safely to Egypt, what then? What but to be condemned to a harder bondage than ever. So short-sighted, so blind, are men when bent on wrong-doing. But the God of Abraham had better things in store for His descendants. The children of these rebels inherited the land, promised long before.

Moses and Aaron were simply confounded at the madness of the people, and fell on their faces, doubtless before God in prayer, crying out in anguish. But Joshua and Caleb broke out in strenuous remonstrance. *The land is surely a good land*, they say. And they reminded the people that *the Lord had promised to give it to them*, which these unbelieving people had utterly forgotten, saying further, in earnest pleading, like patriots as they were, *Only rebel not against the Lord, fear not the people of the land. The Lord is with us; fear them not.* (Chap. xiv., 9.)

If there had been a particle of loyal and honorable feeling in this people, they would have been moved by this appeal.

But they now appear, as they really were, utterly base and corrupt. God's touchstone of trial revealed their true character. For they actually bade the two faithful servants of God *to be stoned!*—the first instance recorded of the persecution of men by others of their own company because of faithfulness to God. The first, but, alas, not the last, for what a long line of persecuted ones for righteousness' sake could the history of this very people Israel show, culminating in the rejection and murder of the Son of God!

But can Christians, so called, afford to despise and condemn these Jews? Alas, no. For the Christian Church itself, while it rejoices in its noble army of martyrs, has itself been the instrument of putting thousands of them to death!

But while the "congregation"—the Jewish church of the time—was breathing out murderous thoughts, the Lord appeared in glory for the protection of His servants. This generation had been put to the proof, they had utterly failed, they were unfit for the work. God will disinherit them, and make Moses the head of another nation. Here Moses himself is put to the proof. A greater nation, a worthier nation, shall spring from him, and own him as its progenitor and head!

But Moses comes nobly through this ordeal. Rejecting all thought of himself, of his family, of his prospects, he is concerned *only* for the Divine glory, which, as it appears to him, would be sadly dimmed if the Lord destroyed this people. For the Egyptians would hear of it, the Canaanites would hear of it, and they would say: Ah! this God of the Hebrews has failed! He promised to bring the people to the land of Canaan, and he is not able to do it!

Wonderfully does this man thus plead with the Divine Ruler, as was said of him, *face to face*, as man talks with man, and friend to friend. (Thus it was said that Luther prayed.) But it is the Divine glory that Moses is concerned about. And it is for the sake of this, that he earnestly pleads that the people might be spared. **THE GLORY OF GOD!** The greatest thought that can fill the mind of man! And this was the chief note of the answer to his prayer.

The prayer of Moses was, that swift punishment for the iniquity of the people might not be executed for the sake of the Divine glory. And the answer was, "I have pardoned according to thy word. *But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord.*"

Thus is the longing of the great leader satisfied, and more than satisfied; for here is an anticipation of times that were then thousands of years distant, when the glory of

the Lord should fill, not the land of the Jews only, but the whole earth. Many foreshadowings of the same kind are to be found in the Old Testament. The Psalms are full of this great thought, which, beginning with the Second, runs like a golden thread through them all. But the fulfilment is not even yet.

But this people—what is to be done with them? They refuse to carry out the Divine purpose. They cannot return. They must therefore remain as denizens of the wilderness until a wholly new generation has arisen, who may be trusted to accomplish the Divine will.

For that purpose cannot be allowed to fail. That land of Canaan has been sworn of old time to be given to the descendants of Abraham, and given to them it shall be. But not to this generation.

The sentence, therefore, goes forth, that for Forty Years they shall wander in the wilderness, a year for every day of searching; until all the adults amongst them have been consumed and die, save only Joshua and Caleb, these faithful ones amongst that faithless host. The children then shall go in and inherit the land.

Another marching order is now given. *To-morrow turn you, and get you into the wilderness by the way of the Red Sea!* These silver trumpets were to sound a retreat; the saddest note that can break upon the ears of an army. But, on hearing this, a perverse spirit breaks out again. The very genius of contradiction possessed them in this wilderness. Well might it afterwards be called "*a day of provocation, and of hardening of hearts.*" (Psalm xc.)

The people had refused to advance when they were ordered to advance. Now they refuse to retreat when ordered to retreat. They made a show of acknowledgment of sin, and expressed determination, now, to go up and possess the land. The developments of human nature are striking enough here. It is certain that their confession of sin was in word only. It did not come from the heart, for all genuine repentance leads to obedience. But, as they refused to obey the command to turn, they refused to listen to the warning of Moses not to go forward, and in their self-will presumed to advance into the hill country that stretched between the host and the land of promise. They seem to have been utterly incapable of understanding their position as a people divinely guided and protected. They were, in truth, a godless race.

Though warned that the Lord would not go with them (and how could they expect it?), they pushed on in rashness, the ark of the Lord not being with them. And the

natural consequence followed. Amalekites and Canaanitish tribes were round about. Doubtless they had been hovering about during the whole journey. But they dared not attack a host so perfectly disposed for defence as Israel was. Now, however, the people went up without the military guidance of Joshua, and probably not in good marching order. So they fall an easy prey to their foes, who occupy the higher part of the hill side, posted in an advantageous position, and who *come down*, as the narrative says—charging down, as we would say in modern military language—and smiting and discomfiting them, chase them back to the camp.

Thus ended this ill-starred and rebellious expedition. And now, with sorrowing hearts on the part of some, but apparently with a smouldering sulkiness and rebelliousness on the part of most, they turned their faces away from the land of milk and honey, a land which, even now, bad as its government is, charms the eye of the traveller by contrast when emerging from the very wilderness where these perverse Israelites were now encamped. What happened to them afterwards we learn from subsequent chapters of the Book of Numbers.

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CHAPTER IV.

THE REBELLION OF KORAH, DATHAN, AND ABIRAM.

Numbers, Chap. xvi.

The seditious outbreak of this man Korah, a Levite, and the men of the tribe of Reuben, who joined him, was as wicked and unreasonable as the quarrel of Miriam and Aaron with Moses. For usually, rebellion is provoked by tyranny, more or less pronounced. But of this there was not a trace in anything that Moses had said or done. He simply went on, executing the duties of his office, without fear, and without favor. The outbreak of these men was utterly causeless; in was, in fact, the outcome simply of envy and jealousy. They seem to have gone about in the camp, for some time, intriguing, and conspiring, until they had obtained the adherence of two hundred and fifty men, "*princes of the assembly,*" they are called; "*famous in the congregation,*" "*men of renown.*"

Famous, indeed, they did become, especially the three leaders of the outbreak, but in a very different way from what they had designed. For, whereas they aspired to share the honors of leadership with Moses, their conduct has doomed them to everlasting infamy. Their names are a by-word for unlawful assumption and treason, their doom one of the terrible events of history.

The prime mover in this business, Korah, was a cousin of Moses, as we see from a passage in the book of Exodus (Exod. vi., 18 to 21). The same kind of envy arose in him that had been so lately punished in Miriam, viz., the envy of one member of a family against another. No quarrels are so bitter as family quarrels. The contentions of brother with brother *are like the bars of a castle*, said the wise king. And possibly this Levite had privately endeavored to take upon him the office of priest, and been refused (as how could it be otherwise, when it was contrary to the Divine law), whereupon he determines to foment a sedition, and take the office forcibly.

In company, then, with these two hundred and fifty "*men of renown,*" Korah and his companions, Dathan and Abiram, gathered themselves together, and in an interview with Moses and Aaron stated their case bitterly and forcibly. *Ye take too much upon you,* they said to the two leaders. And they support this complaint by a false application of

a truth revealed; than which there is nothing more common in ecclesiastical controversy. Now, as then, God's revealed truth, some sentence or sentences of the teachings of Jesus Christ and his Apostles, are constantly quoted to impugn lawful claims, or to support unlawful ones, to bolster up some false tradition, or some denial of the analogy of faith.

For what is it that these men said? They quote the declaration made to the people when encamped before Sinai, that they should be a *kingdom of priests, and a holy nation.* (Exod. xix., 6.) *All the congregation are holy, every one of them,* they say; an undoubted truth, in the sense that all the congregation were a separated people from the rest of the world. But from this truth they drew a false inference, and one plainly against the rest of the Divine revelation by Moses, viz., that, because all the congregation were holy, none amongst them should be separated to high office, none should be leaders, none should be priests.

Wherefore, then, they say to Moses and Aaron, *lift ye yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?*

It is hard to conceive such a pitch of hardy defiance of God's own appointments, as this hypocritical reasoning implies. Why, was not Korah himself a Levite, and "lifted up above the congregation," by being set apart to the service of the tabernacle? And did not the same Divine word that declared the whole nation to be priests, ordain and set apart Aaron and his sons to exercise the *office* of priests, and to serve as such in the tabernacle; the most careful directions being given as to the manner in which they should serve, the dress they should wear, the sacrifices they should offer, and this to the exclusion of all others? And had not the visible sign of all this been before their eyes every day, in the cloud resting on the tabernacle, where this ministry was to be exercised? Was not the tabernacle set apart from the rest of the camp, all the tribes except Levi being disposed round about it to guard it; the tribe of Levi being separated and released from military service for the purpose?

But, as has been observed already, the passions of jealousy and envy are not governed by reason, and, filled with this wicked and unreasonableness spirit, these men rushed on to their own destruction.

Moses, hearing all this, and seeing the large number that joined in it, again "*fell on his face,*" bowing before the Lord, carrying this trouble to Him as a sure refuge, appealing to God to vindicate His own choice of servants for the execution of His will. He then arose, confident and calm. While he was in prayer, God had spoken to him. For, evidently, what he says to Korah is not of his own devising. It is the

mind of the Lord that he conveys when he says, "To-morrow the Lord will shew who are His, and who is holy."

Then, still by Divine direction, he speaks in tones of authority, summoning Korah and his companions to a solemn trial.

"This do: Take ye censers, Korah and all his company, and put fire therein, and put incense in them, before the Lord to-morrow. And it shall be that the man whom the Lord shall choose, he shall be holy."

He closes this summons with the sarcasm, "Ye take too much upon you, ye sons of Levi!"

Then, going on, he remonstrates and appeals to them as having been specially set apart to the service of God in the tabernacle, to consider the honor that has been put upon them, and be content therewith.

Evidently all this was to give Korah and his company time for reflection and repentance; pity indeed they did not so use it. But Dathan and Abiram, the other two, were not amongst them that gathered together for the interview with their leader. Moses, therefore, sends, and calls for them specially. But they are even more defiant and stubborn than Korah, and break out into a tirade of unreasonable fault-finding:—

"We will not come up," they say, and then go on to complain that they had been brought out of a land that floweth with milk and honey (thus they describe Egypt, forgetting the task-masters, and the bondage), to be killed in the wilderness! Also, that Moses wanted to make himself altogether a prince over them. Dathan and Abiram surely forgot who Moses was, and what he had done, or rather, what Almighty God had done by him. Then, their spirit of insubordination growing still more unreasonable, they go on, "Moreover, thou hast not brought us into a land that floweth with milk and honey, or given us an inheritance of fields and vineyards!" What? Dare these men say this, after their own cowardly refusal to enter and possess the land? Was ever such a pitch of blindness and perversity! How they do heap condemnation upon themselves, and justify the Divine rejection of them as unfit for the promised inheritance.

They cap the climax of their folly by exclaiming at last to Moses, "Wilt thou put out the eyes of these men? We will not come up?" Can we wonder that on hearing such outrageous words, even the patience of Moses gave way, for he said, addressing the Lord, *Respect not Thou their offering; I have not taken one ass from them, neither have I hurt one of them!*

That day passed; a day that ought to have brought reason

and repentance. But the heathen proverb is true—"Quem deus vult perdere, prius dementat, whom the gods will to destroy, they first make mad. It has been so a hundred times in the history of the Church of God, and in the history of the nations of the world. Was it not so in the history of the chiefs of the French Revolution? of Napoleon? and of the chiefs of the South before the Civil War?

The morrow came, and Korah and his company had the hardihood to stand the trial. How apt is the Scriptural phrase, *hardness of heart*, to such a case as this. They came with their censers, thus taking upon them the priests' office. They put fire therein. They then stood at the door of the tabernacle—defiant, and, as it were, daring Moses to do his worst.

Then that awful and solemn appearance called the GLORY OF THE LORD gathered about the tabernacle in the sight of the whole congregation, for the congregation as a whole was now gathered on the side of Korah and his followers. On this, sentence was passed upon the whole multitude. It was a terrible scene, and a moment of extreme crisis. But Moses and Aaron interceded for the congregation, crying out in anguish, "*O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and wilt thou be wroth with all the congregation?*"

Inaccurate language, but its very inaccuracy shewing its reality, and the intense agony of spirit that prompted it. Here was the true priest, standing between the living and the dead, pitiful, interceding, a real type of the compassionate Saviour that was to come, who wept over Jerusalem, shed His blood for the men that murdered Him, and now ever liveth to make intercession for all that come to God by Him.

The prayer was heard. The people were spared, as a whole, but the command goes forth,—*Separate yourselves; get you up from about the tents of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, —touch nothing of theirs, lest ye be consumed in their sins.* The command is obeyed. The three rebellious men are left standing at their tent doors, the wives and children of Dathan and Abiram by them. The sons of Korah, however, were not there. (See next page).

Then comes an awful and solemn appeal to the Almighty power of God from Moses, and a challenge to the whole congregation:—*Hereby shall ye know:—If these men die the common death of all men, or they be visited with the visitation of all men, then the Lord hath not sent me!* The people hear with a strange awe this forecasting of some singular doom that was to visit the men who had rebelled. Korah and his companions doubtless heard it too. And, even at

this last moment, had they laid down their arms, and yielded to the Divine will, and acknowledged the authority of the men whom God had chosen, they might have been spared. They would have been, according to all the analogy of the dealings of God with men; witness the "long suffering in the days of Noah," the willingness to spare Sodom, if only ten righteous men could be found in it, the annual sparing of Nineveh when it repented at the preaching of Jonah, and the pardoning of the penitent thief at the last moment on the cross.

But the men were obdurate. Not a sign of relenting or of penitence was visible. They brought destruction on their own heads.

For Moses went on to say:—

If the Lord make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth and swallow them up, with all that appertain to them; and they go down quick into the pit, then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the Lord!

And almost before he had done speaking, this terrible thing happened. The earth did cleave asunder; a great gap appeared at the spot where the tents of the men were standing, and they, and all that appertained to them, went down into the abyss; even as men, in our own day, venturing into dangerous places in snow mountains, are swallowed up alive in crevasses, and seen no more.

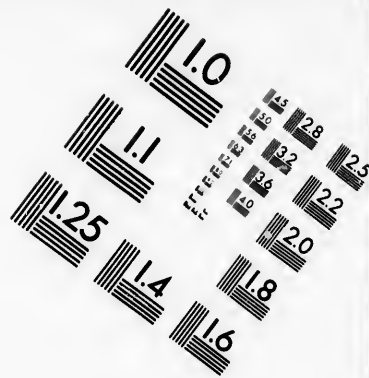
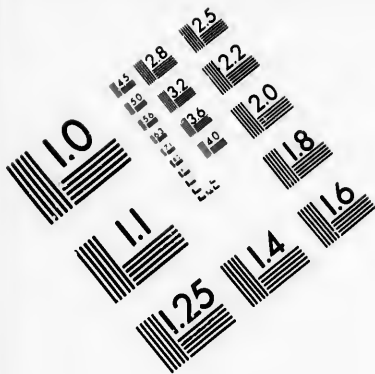
For this convulsion of the earth was of short duration, as earthquakes always are. The gulf soon closed up, the parted earth came together, and all was as before, save only that these three men, with their tents, and their goods, and all that appertained to them, were no more found in the congregation.

Yet we learn from a subsequent Chapter (Chap. xxvi., 11), that *the sons of Korah died not*. There is an indication of this in the narrative itself, for it is noticeable (v. 27) that, while Dathan and Abiram stood in the door of their tents, *with their wives and children*, before the convulsion, Korah alone is mentioned when the narrative speaks of him. His sons, doubtless, had refused to follow their father.

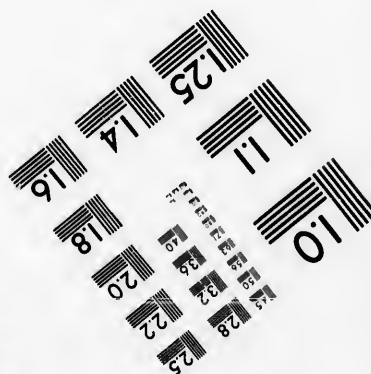
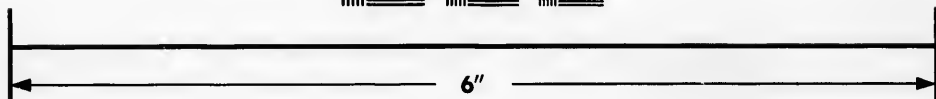
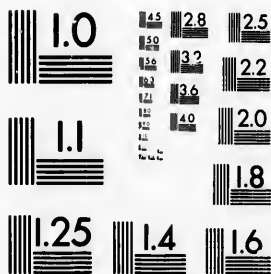
Thus perished these three dangerous traitors to God's ordinance and appointment. But this was not the end. For a fire from the Lord came out upon their two hundred and fifty followers, most of whom were doubtless Levites, even while they were offering incense, and they, too, perished.

The censers they used were taken out of the burning, and of them, by Divine command, were made broad plates for a covering of the altar; that all men might see, when worshipping, a memorial of the wickedness of men, and





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the justice of God, and be warned that *no stranger, not of the seed of Aaron, should come near and execute the priest's office* by offering incense before the Lord. This act has a significant bearing on certain points in the subsequent history of the people.

Thus ended this terrible day—a day of vindication, and of retribution; a day that displayed the terrible side of the God of government and law, even as similar catastrophes, and far more terrible, both in ancient times and modern, have displayed the terrible side of what men call Nature. For what is this event of the earth swallowing up Korah and his company compared with the earthquake of Lisbon, by which tens of thousands lost their lives? And what is the destruction of their followers by fire from the Lord compared with the overthrow of Herculaneum and Pompei?

Even the great plague which is spoken of in the latter part of the chapter as carrying off fourteen thousand people, is that to be named in comparison with similar outbreaks of the same scourge in modern times?

The things that happen in what may be called "the world of Nature" are, many of them, more terrible than any we read of in the Sacred Chronicle, with, perhaps, the sole exception of the great Flood. Yet none can doubt the general beneficence and supreme wisdom of natural laws; of this there are a thousand evidences everywhere throughout the world.

But on the morrow, after these events, a murmuring broke out again. There is in this people an inveterate and ineradicable spirit of blindness, and, what is so well called "hardness of heart," an utter inability to see and understand the working of an Almighty Lord and Ruler. Even such an event as that of yesterday could not make them understand that there is "*verily a God which judgeth in the earth!*" It is always Moses, Moses, or else Moses and Aaron, of whom they think; never of the Living God; in which they are in truth singularly like certain men in these days who can never see beyond the mere human instruments and natural causes of events, and are blind to the signs of a supernatural over-ruling in them. In all which the old human nature goes on asserting itself as in former ages. *Seeing, men see, but do not understand; hearing, they hear, but do not perceive.* And this, in many cases, with an evident wilfulness, so that blindness and unbelief become moral qualities, and partake of the nature of sin.

The murmurers after this break out again in bitter complaint against Moses and Aaron, "*Ye have killed the people of the Lord.*" they said: And the disaffection rapidly spread

through the camp. The congregation gathered against Moses, and against Aaron, and this, evidently, with hostile intent. The lives of the leaders were in danger. Thus, again, all in a moment, as it were, a storm arose, which, unchecked, would have wrecked the whole Divine enterprise, destroyed the character of this people as separate and consecrated, and would undoubtedly have resulted in their sinking into the condition of the wandering tribes of Amalekites and Canaanites by which they were surrounded, blotting them out from the records of history, and altering (unless by another Divine intervention) the whole destiny of the human race.

It is considerations like these that enable us to understand the tremendous force with which the Divine arm was put forth in this crisis. For, indeed, the mighty arm of God was now displayed in retribution, just as it had been in their deliverance from the bondage of Egypt.

For the protection of His servants, that well-known and (in these circumstances) much-to-be-feared "GLORY OF THE LORD," again appeared before the tabernacle, and an edict of death to all the murmurers went forth. Stayed it was, indeed, by the intercession of Moses and Aaron; Aaron, the true priest, taking a true censur and demonstrating the reality and power of his priestly office by its saving effect. But wrath had gone out, the plague had begun. Aaron hastily and immediately obeyed the summons of his brother to exercise his priestly office. He took fire from the altar (the altar, let us bear in mind, of atonement and mercy), ran into the midst of the congregation, stood at the point to which the plague had extended (for it was passing like a fire amongst the people—the dead were before him, the living people behind), when, in presence of the High Priest with censur and incense, and coals from off the altar, all emblems of mercy and atonement, the plague stopped, even as a destructive fire might be quenched in our own day. "He stood between the living and the dead, and the plague stayed."

A perfect type (or *example*, as these events are called in the Epistle to the Corinthians) of the eternal spiritual realities of the new and present dispensation, of the blindness and deadness of the natural man, and his enmity against God; of the doom pronounced by eternal justice, "the soul that sinneth it shall die," of the plague carrying off thousands of souls, of the intercession of the great High Priest, who, having by the Eternal Spirit offered Himself to God, and made atonement, is now continually appearing in the presence of God for us; of His thus standing between the living and the dead, and staying the plague of Divine

retribution, sending the message of deliverance abroad through the world by His servants to whom he has given the command to proclaim it to every creature.

It is this that gives life and interest and reality for us to these old, old narratives, and makes them, for us, instinct with spiritual power, and evermore profitable for teaching, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness.

NOTES ON THIS CHAPTER.

(1.) If the the incident of the opening of the earth, and its swallowing up of Korah and his company be hard to believe, let us remember that such a phenomenon could not be an unnatural one in that region, though it was supernaturally brought about. All the supernatural events related by Moses are natural in their character and surroundings, as for example, the whole of the plagues in Egypt.—as has been seen in a former chapter. And, if it seem strange that such a violent disturbance as an earthquake should be brought about merely to punish these few men, let us remember the very great seriousness of the occasion, and the necessity that a *new* and strange thing should be done for the vindication of God's servants.

(2.) If it is thought that the punishment of being swallowed up alive is too great for almost any offence, let us remember that this death would not be nearly so painful as a death by fire, or by many forms of disease, or a lingering death after wounds on a battle field; being nothing more than a death suffered in our own day by many an Alpine explorer who falls into a crevasse.

(3.) The sedition of Korah, and its punishment, is sometimes used by zealous upholders of ecclesiastical authority, in these days, as a warning to men who dissent from such authority and claim to exercise ministry according to their own reading of the Divine word. But this style of reasoning will not hold. For those who dissent have no desire to usurp the office of *priests* in *any* Christian communion, or to minister sacraments in the manner of priests, or to perform any of the functions which are supposed to appertain to priests.

They simply claim to be ministers, pastors, teachers, spiritual guides; but as to aspiring to the priestly office, and rudely claiming it—they are so far from doing that, that they do not believe in it at all. The sin of Korah, therefore, is not theirs.

CHAPTER V.

THE END OF THE FORTY YEARS OF WANDERING, AND INCIDENTS CONNECTED THEREWITH.

Numbers 20, 21.

After the quelling of the rebellion of Korah, there is an absolute blank, so far as incidents are concerned, until very near the end of the destined period of wandering. And truly is it designated as a "wandering," for there was no aim nor purpose in their journey, save, doubtless, the necessary removal from place to place, as their fathers had done before them, and as the Bedouin Arabs do now, to find water and pasturage for their flocks. But alas! the high purpose which was the very reason of their being in the desert at all, had to be laid aside and forgotten. They were no longer a faithful people, journeying, as Moses said to Hobab, to a land which God had sworn to give unto them. That promise, so far as all the adults were concerned, had been forfeited. All that remained was that they should live the nomad life of the wandering Arab, until the expiration of their sentence, only taking care of the children, who were to be the future heirs of the promise. This they did.

The record of their encampment in the various periods of their journey after the refusal to enter the land is given in the 33rd Chapter of this Book of Numbers. It is a mere bare chronicle. "*They departed from Hazeroth, and pitched in Rithmah, and they departed from Rithmah, and pitched at Rimmon-Perez;*" and so on, and so on, year after year, in unbroken monotony, until they come to the final encampment at that famous place, Kadesh Barnea, which was near the spot where they had turned back some forty years before. During this time they seem to have wandered over a wide stretch of country, going as far south as Ezion-Geber, on the eastern arm of the Red Sea, famous afterwards as the port from which the ships of King Solomon sailed.

But, when the forty years was nearly over, they set themselves forward to the promised land once more.

The first incident recorded is another outbreak of the spirit of murmuring, and under the same pretext. There was again a scarcity of water, and again an utter forgetfulness of who they were, and what help they could rely on. They, like their fathers, were creatures of sense, and not of faith. There was no calling upon God, in confident faith

and expectation; no recalling of the deliverances of the past; but a childish, peevish, petulant complaining against Moses; almost in the very same words as of old. "*Would God we had died when our brethren died! Why have ye brought the congregation of the Lord into this wilderness, that we and our cattle should die here. This evil place! It is no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates! Neither is there any water to drink.*" So did their history repeat itself. (Chap. xx. 5.)

Now occurs that scene that forms almost the sole blot on the memory of Moses. Yet one can sympathize with him in it all. For it is very *human*. These men are men "*of like passions with ourselves,*" as was said afterwards by an Apostle of himself and his companion, Barnabas. And so the narrative approves itself as a real one, and no mythical tale.

Moses and Aaron fall prostrate in prayer. They are commanded to take the famous *rod*, to gather the assembly, to speak to *the rock* before their eyes (they had rocks ail around them), then the rock should give forth *his* water that the congregation might drink.

Now what did Moses do?

It is necessary to note particularly that we may see in what the offence consisted which led to his being excluded from Canaan. He gathered the people before the ledge of rocks that encircled the valley. But instead of speaking to *the rock*, as he was commanded, he calls out, in a very human outburst of passion, "*Hear, now, ye rebels;— must we fetch you water out of this rock.*" (Note here the tone of self-glorification.) Then he did what he was not commanded to do at all. He smote the rock, and then smote it again, evidently, all the while, in a state of passion, entirely contrary to his general character. This, however, did not prevent the coming of the blessing. The wants of the people and their flocks were really urgent, and the Divine compassion and power were put forth; the water gushed forth *abundantly*; sufficient for the wants of the people and their flocks and herds.

But the Lord was deeply displeased with Moses and Aaron. Note the perfect truth of the narrative. It is most natural under the circumstances. These two men, Moses and Aaron, are not set forth before us as a kind of superior beings, exempt from the possibilities of wrong-doing. The story of the life of Moses would have been of little value to us had it been set forth in that way. It is almost certain that it would have been so set forth in a merely human chronicle, or if the story were largely mythical. But, no. The Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Wisdom, with a view to the

guidance of men in coming ages, caused to be recorded the failure of Abraham's faith in Egypt, the double dealing and fraud of Jacob, the cowardice of Aaron, this passionate outbreak of Moses, and above all, the lust and cruelty of David, and the almost unbelievable folly of Solomon. In all these cases, there was failure and fall in the very elements of character where we might have expected to find men strongest. Thus is explained the emphatic warning, "let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall," that is, if any man *think* that he is particularly strong in some grace, some virtue, some trait of Christian character, let him be particularly on his guard *there*.

It seems, to our human apprehension, a hard sentence for what might seem to be a light offence, viz., that neither Moses nor Aaron should enter the promised land. But one cannot rightly judge. He who *is* the Judge, He doeth all things rightly. And there is not a word to indicate any murmuring on the part of Moses and Aaron at the sentence. Moreover, let their position and character be considered, and that "to whom much is given, of them much will be required."

The words in which the sentence is conveyed are most noticeable: "*Because ye believed Me not, to sanctify Me in the eyes of the children of Israel; therefore ye shall not enter the land.*" The action of Moses we thus see to be an action of unbelief, that is, he doubted whether a mere speaking to the rock would be sufficient, though this was precisely what he had been commanded to do. And, evidently, the people knew what he had been commanded to do, so that the action of Moses was dishonoring to the God who was leading them.

But now all was ready for them to move forward to the land of promise. And, apparently, the intention at first was to proceed due northward by the same route that the spies had followed forty years before. That route would have led them to the border of Canaan within a few weeks at most, for they were distant from it not more than fifty miles. But a Canaanitish king, Arad by name, heard of their intended movement, massed a force in opposition, made a raid into the Israelitish camp, and took some of them prisoners. Then the spirit of the people was roused. They sought the Lord, who heard (as he is always ready to hear them that call upon Him), and gave them victory over the Canaanitish king. They destroyed his host, and his towns, and called the name of the place Hormah, a word meaning DESTRUCTION.

From their camp at Kadesh it might have been expected that the victorious host would now move on to Canaan.

But no. That was not the Divine counsel. What might have happened had they gone forward at once none can tell. But some things would certainly not have happened that have left a permanent impress upon the history of this Israelitish people, and have been of permanent interest to the Church of God. There would have been no incident of the Serpent in the Wilderness; or of the death of Aaron on the lonely summit of Mount Hor; nor the still more remarkable death of Moses on the top of Pisgah, after viewing the promised land. The striking incidents connected with the prophet Balaam, too, would have never transpired; with much else of undying interest and instruction for after ages. Hidden as all this was from the ken even of Moses himself, all was present to the Divine mind; forming a reason for directing a course of action which, like many other mysterious providences, are inscrutable at the time, but prove to have been perfectly wise in the end.

It was probably much to the astonishment of Moses that he was directed to turn from the way leading up to Canaan, and shape the course of the host eastward, with the object of passing to the south of the Salt Sea, and so through the territories of Edom and Moab until they were face to face with the land of promise, the river Jordan only lying between. This was a course involving far greater difficulties than any they had encountered before. Even at this day the route is almost impassable, and cannot be traversed without extensive preparation and much negotiation with the marauding tribes inhabiting the region.

Such negotiations as travellers have in these days is exactly of the same kind as that which Moses deemed expedient three thousand years ago; so singularly do modes of living, dress, travel, survive in the East generation after generation.

The shortest way for the host was now, therefore, through the territory of Edom, then occupied by the descendants of Esau. These were more closely allied to the Israelites than any others on the face of the earth. But brethren though they were, they were not friends. It had been foretold of Esau, their progenitor, "*by thy sword thou shalt live,*" and true it remained so long as Edom was recognizable as a separate people. They took a hostile position on this their very first meeting with Israel since the parting of Jacob and Esau; for, when Moses sent them a friendly message, desiring liberty to pass through their territory, they replied, "*thou shalt not pass by me lest I come out against thee with the sword.*"

Yet the request of Moses was couched in such terms as

should have ensured a friendly answer. It appeals to the tie of relationship: We are brethren. Thou knowest our sad history, how our fathers went down to Egypt; where we and they were sorely oppressed. But our God (the God of their ancestors as of Israel's) heard the cry of our oppression, and sent an angel, and hath brought us forth out of Egypt. And we are now in Kadesh, in the uttermost part of thy border:

Let us pass, I pray thee, through thy country. We will not pass through the fields, or through the vineyards; neither will we drink the water of the wells. We will go by the king's highway; we will not turn to the right hand, nor to the left, until we have passed thy borders. (Chap. xx., 14 to 17.)

But then, as now, these children of the desert were suspicious. They wanted no strangers in their territory. They distrusted all promises and representations, for they themselves were ready at any time to gain an advantage by making specious promises which they never intended to keep. The plea of brotherhood they cared not for. Bitter jealousies and hostile feelings between nearly related tribes were common enough, and doubtless they considered the plea of relationship as a trap.

The answer, then, was no; and it was accompanied by the characteristic threat of *the sword!* Even the offer to *pay for the water* used did not avail to change their purpose. In this, certainly, they were much unlike the inhabitants of the same region in these times. For money now will open every door, no matter how tightly barred it might be.

Thus, Edom refused, and laid the foundation of a deep and bitter feud, which lasted for generations.

THE DEATH OF 'AARON.

The only alternative now was to take a more southerly, and very much longer course, and through a much more savage and wild country. This brought them under the shadow of Mount Hor.

Then it was that the striking and picturesque scene of the death of Aaron transpired, according to Divine foreordination. Aaron was probably an older man than Moses, and possessed of no qualities of leadership. He could be of no service in the difficulties of the way. His work was done. He could not enter into the land of promise, because he, along with Moses, had disobeyed at the water of Meribah.

His time being come, it was ordained that he must die upon a mountain, even as his brother died, not very long afterwards, on Mount Pisgah. But there was this great dif-

ference, that Moses died alone. Never, to this day, has the exact spot of his death been revealed. For the Lord buried him. Aaron, however, went up *Mount Hor in the sight of the whole congregation.*

And surely in all history there have been few more touching events than the ascent together of these two old men, Aaron's son, the future high priest, accompanying them; all well knowing that Aaron would never descend from the Mount but would there lie down and die. And seldom has a more solemn scene transpired than the stripping Aaron of the garments of his High Priesthood, and of the putting them upon his son in this wild spot. These garments were all typical and symbolic (see studies on the Book of Exodus) not only of the qualities of the high priesthood of Aaron, but of the far greater high priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ. They set forth, amongst other things, that the government should be upon *His shoulder*, that His redeemed people should be near *His heart* at all times, and that He should be to them the source of *light, judgment and perfection.*

These garments were therefore always the same, and were doubtless handed down in succession from one descendant of Aaron to another until worn out or lost in the chances and changes of after years.

So Aaron died in the top of the mount, *and when all the congregation saw that he was dead, they mourned for him thirty days.**

THE BRAZEN SERPENT.

The way southward from Kadesh, by the way of the Red Sea, to compass the land of Edom, was through one of the most rugged and broken of the many defiles of that region. Rocky, full of loose sand and gravel, with no shade, no water, the fierce glare of the sun reflected from the savage rocks that bordered it, this defile, called now the Arabah, is well known at this day as a place to be shunned. And shunned it is by even the very Arabs themselves. No wonder, then, that *the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way.* (Chap. xxi. 4.)

*NOTE.—One may well wonder how it was possible for a man of great age, and immediately about to die a natural death (for it is impossible to imagine he could die otherwise), to have the strength to ascend to the top of one of the rugged mountains of that wild region. The only possible answer is that some supernatural accession of strength must have been given him, which, having accomplished its purpose, was succeeded by the exhaustion of nature, and a lying down to sleep the sleep of death.

Nor can we wonder that, considering what most of these people were, there was another outbreak of murmuring. This murmuring was not only against Moses, but against God himself. And, according to the Divine ways at that time, there was swift judgment and punishment. "*The Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, and much people of Israel died.*" This judgment, like others before it, was executed by means that were strictly conformable to the circumstances around them. Poisonous serpents, whose bite produces a fiery inflammation, are perfectly natural in such a region. Such serpents were evidently there then, and such are there now. The Arabah abounds with these reptiles. And as to their being sent, in judgment, it may well have been that the people were led to traverse a portion of the valley where they abounded more than in other places.

But this judgment quickly had its effect. The people came to Moses, *confessed their sin*, and implored his intercession, that the serpents might be taken away. And the Lord heard.

And now the command is given to Moses that has been remembered in all subsequent ages; for what was done was the most striking of all the many pictures and symbols that set forth in the old time the great redemption of the Son of God. And we may well believe that it was designed to be so. For the great work of redemption was fore-ordained from the beginning in every part of its manifestation. The Son of God *was slain from the foundation of the world*. It was ordained not only that He should be slain, but *how* he should be slain, viz., that He should die by crucifixion; being thus *lifted up* from the earth; and that, being thus lifted up, he should draw to himself the regard, the hope, the trust of men, who, looking up to Him with the eye of the soul, that is, by faith, should be healed of the deadly bite of *that old serpent, the Devil*, and live the life eternal.

Thus then, in anticipation of this great spiritual deliverance in after ages, Moses was directed to make a serpent of brass, a fiery serpent, and to set it up on a pole; and the great promise was given that whosoever looked upon it should live. The disease was natural, the medium of cure was natural, viz., the serpent of brass and the pole. But the cure itself was Divine. Yet it required the co-operation of the person bitten. He must *look*. Now none *would* look but those who believed the Divine promise. The cure, therefore, was by faith. The hard-hearted, the unbelieving, would not look, but mock and deride, or keep sullenly silent. But the look was sufficient to cure. All

which is strikingly fulfilled in Christ. And he accordingly said, in plain terms, when speaking to a teacher in Israel, that *as the serpent was lifted up in the wilderness, even so should the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.* Thus, in both cases, there was a deadly disease by the bite of a serpent, the one natural, the other spiritual. In both there was a lifting up of the instrument of healing, in both the cure was by looking, in one case with the natural, and the other with the spiritual eye, and in both the effect was to restore life; natural in the one, spiritual and eternal in the other.

And the experience of tens of thousands of souls in all Christian ages has proved that the words of the Divine Saviour express a great and wonderful reality.

FINAL NOTE.

THE SERPENT OF BRASS; WHAT BECAME OF IT.

This brazen serpent, having accomplished its purpose, could be of no further use, and, but for a passage in the later history of the kings, one might imagine that it had been destroyed. Indeed, there was no reason for preserving it. It formed no part of the furniture of the tabernacle, and it was not commanded to be kept and handed down to other generations. But some Jews, like some Christians, thought they might please God by doing things not commanded, and therefore took means to have this serpent of brass preserved. And preserved it was until the reign of King Hezekiah. It had evidently, by that time, become an object of idolatrous worship. From being a memorial of a Divine deliverance, it had come to be an object of adoration in itself, a process exactly similar to what has happened again and again in Christendom, and which prevails extensively now. Hezekiah, a great and good king, did wonderful things in restoring the worship of God in the land: *He removed the high places of idolatrous worship, and cut down the groves connected with them.* (2 Kings, xviii.)

And, as part of the work of rooting out idolatry from the land, *he brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made.* For to such a height had veneration of this relic been carried that the people had come to *burn incense before it*, as if it was a divinity. The action of the king was thorough, and a true forecast of the action of some image-breakers and reformers of Christian times. He not only took it down, but he brake it in pieces, and he called it,

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in contempt, Nehushtan, a *piece of brass*. His action evidently had the Divine approval, and the men who pour obloquy on the memory of Christian iconoclasts and reformers, and call them bigots and fanatics, may learn a lesson from the manner in which this great reformer of the Jewish Church is spoken of in the Divine word.

CHAPTER VI.

MARCHES AND CONQUESTS.

Numbers, xxi., 10 to end.

Nothing in the whole history of the migration of this people is more remarkable than the change of habit and tone which took place after the incident of the brazen serpent. Previously to that, there was, with an occasional gleam of courage and faith, an almost unbroken record of fears and murmurings; an utter want of appreciation of their position as a people chosen out by the Most High God, and under His guidance and protection. The least difficulty, the most ordinary privation, such as are patiently endured by ordinary travellers, or by soldiers and explorers, were the occasion with these people of childish complaints, petulant murmuring, or open rebellion against God or His servant. And this continued until within a short time of their reaching the borders of Canaan.

But after the striking deliverance through the medium of the serpent of brass, a different spirit becomes at once discernible. There was no more murmuring, or complaining, or looking back to Egypt, or rebellion. They began to quit themselves like men. It is probable that the new generation now began to assert itself; for the greater part of the generation of hardness of heart and *provocation* must now have passed away. Some of them sinned, indeed, again, and grievously, before reaching Canaan; but their sins were those of a new and younger and more vigorous race. The tone of the host became confident and exultant, and we read, for the first time since they left the shores of the Red Sea, of their singing songs of thanksgiving and victory.

The reason of this striking change, doubtless, was their late exercise of faith, and its consequences. They had been saved from death by looking up, individually, in believing expectation, to the serpent that God had commanded to be made. The men that had thus been saved had proved the power of confidence in God. And having proved this once, they became changed men. Faith develops more faith, as is declared by the Apostle Paul in the Epistle to the Romans (Chap. i.). And as faith works by love, and purifies the soul, leading to obedience, courage, and more and more confidence in God, we cannot wonder that this

people, from the working of this new and powerful element of character, from this time forth entered on a course of hopefulness and victory.

From the desolate defile of the Arabah, they moved eastward (v. 10) for a considerable distance before turning northward to the borders of Moab and the Ammonites. During all this way the spirit of hopefulness and confidence is manifest. The narrative speaks of what is written "in the book of the wars of the Lord" (a book that has not come down to us, like others that are referred to in Scripture, the Holy Ghost not seeing fit that it should be preserved as a whole). There must have been conflict and victory, for a tone of exultation is manifest in the reference to "what He did in the Red Sea, and in the brooks of Arnon, and at the stream of the brooks that go down to the dwelling of Ar" (v. 14-15).

For they are now in a region of brooks and streams, a secondary but powerful cause of rejoicing, and though they had skirmishes with hostile bands on the way, they were able to push steadily forward with their faces set towards the land whither they were bound; all which is a lively type of the journey now being pursued by thousands of faithful souls to a spiritual Canaan, as well as of the conflicts of the Church of God in the great war of subduing the world to the obedience of Christ.

At one point they broke out into a general song of rejoicing, when they came to a spot where they were directed to dig a well,—"*that is the well whereof the Lord spake unto Moses; gather the people together, and I will give them water.*" (v. 16)

Then Israel sang this song:—

Spring up, O well. Sing ye unto it.

The princes digged the well;

The nobles of the people digged it, with their staves.

The law-giver leading them on!

A picture of joyful and confident co-operation, at God's command, in perfect assurance of success, the highest and lowest of the people all joining in the work, princes and nobles shouldering their mattocks like the rest, and all together singing as they labor, "*Spring up, O well. Sing ye unto it.*" Truly a wonderful change has come over this people.

For the whole action was one of faith. There was evidently no well in that spot before. And they knew not that they could get water there until the Divine word came, at that spot, "*gather the people together, and I will give them water!*" And they did gather. They believed the word, they obeyed the direction, they set to work heartily and

rejoicingly, they were confident of success. And success came. The water sprang up, the whole congregation was refreshed, and the incident was recorded as an example and encouragement to the church and people of God in all subsequent times.

After various sojournings, still proceeding northward, the host came to the border of the Amorites. Thence the same message was sent to the king, Sihon by name, as had been sent to Edom, "*Let me pass through thy land,*" with the same promise of keeping to 'he king's highway, and medd'ing not with wells, or fields, or vineyards.

But Sihon sent a more pronounced refusal than Edom; for he did not merely threaten to use the sword, but gathered his forces together, and made an attack.

But he was defeated with great slaughter. Not only so, but all his territory was subdued. His towns and cities and villages were occupied by the victorious host, a welcome change from the life of the desert. This territory formerly belonged to Moab, but had been wrested from that people by Sihon, who had made Heshbon his capital. A powerful and warlike chieftain evidently.

Again there is a breaking out of triumphant song; and snatches are given of the rough and warlike ode, in which is celebrated, first the victory of the Amorites over Moab, and then the victory of Israel over them.

*Come into Heshbon;
Let the city of Sihon be built and prepared;
For there is a fire gone out of Heshbon,
A flame from the city of Sihon.
It hath consumed Ar of Moab,
And the lords of the high places of Arnon!*

*Woe to thee, Moab!
Thou art undone, O people of Chemosh;
He hath given his sons that escaped,
And his daughters, into captivity to Sihon, king of
the Amorites.*

Thus far the conquest of Sihon. Then comes a sudden burst of exultation, brief, but powerful, representing Israel's triumph over the conqueror:

*We have shot at them!
Heshbon is perished, even unto Dibon!
And we have laid them waste,
Even unto Nophah, which reacheth unto Medeba!*

Thus Israel dwelt in the land of the Amorites.

But, good land though it was, it was not the land promised to their fathers. Thus, after a brief sojourn, they moved further northward and eastward to the border of the rich pastoral uplands of Bashan, a region well known to their fathers, for in it was the valley and ford of Jabbok, and the region of Malanaim, celebrated in the old-time history of their father Jacob. It was now occupied by a Canaanitish tribe over whom Og was king. This Og, without any provocation, marched out against Israel, and attacked them.

But the voice of the Lord was heard, speaking words of cheer and encouragement, "*Fear him not, for I have delivered him into thy hand. And thou shalt do unto him as thou didst unto Sihon, king of the Amorites;*" all which came to pass, for the people were inspired with faith and courage. Believing God, they fought in faith, and conquered. They smote this Og, the king of Bashan, and his sons, and all his people, and possessed his land.

These two conquests made a lasting impression upon this Israelitish people. They were never forgotten. We find them referred to in a stirring address by Jephthah to the Ammonites. They formed the inspiring theme of songs and psalms of after ages, in which psalms these conquests were ranked with the great deliverance from the power of Egypt. Thus in Psalm 135 beginning with a Hallelujah, we have the words:

*Who sent tokens and wonders into the midst of thee,
O Egypt;
Who smote great nations, and slew mighty kings;
Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, the King of
Bashan, and all the kingdoms of Cunaan.*

And in the next Psalm, which is a glorious outburst of praise for that Divine mercy, *which endureth for ever*; after recounting the marvels of power and goodness in creation, the inspired poet goes on to celebrate the goodness of God in redemption:

*To Him that smote Egypt in their first-born, and
brought out Israel from among them;*

To Him which smote great kings, and slew famous kings;

Sihon, king of the Amorites,

And Og, the king of Bashan,

And gave their land for an heritage,

Even an heritage unto Israel, His servant.

A true picture is all this of those great spiritual conquests over the rulers of the darkness of this world, that have been achieved through many ages by the Church of God, and which are being achieved now. And as the spiritual corresponds to the natural in the work to be done, and in the obstacles to be encountered, so it does in the means to be employed, and the spirit in which the battles are to be fought. The work is the Lord's. It is His voice that leads on the host, and which says, *Fear them not.* The spirit of those that fight the battle, when it is rightly fought, is ever a spirit of faith and confidence in God. The enemies to be overcome are false systems and corruptions of the true; idolatries, both without the Church and within; and, even where true doctrine is nominally held, the influence of the world, the flesh, and the devil. The true weapons are not carnal, but spiritual, and *mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds!* (2 Cor. Ⅹ.) And the sword is the *sword of the spirit, which is the word of God.* (Ephesians, vi.)

But, sad to say, there are hindrances from within. There has been, in ages past, a turning away from spiritual weapons, and a reliance on secular forces, on the power of the State, and even on the force of arms. Conquests for the truth, so-called, have been won by the movements of armies, compelling an outward subjection when there was no yielding of the heart.

And, along with this, and working out the same result, there has been a persistent movement in the direction of weakening the force of the spiritual sword by joining with it other weapons of inferior temper (some of which are of a contrary character), and exalting these as equal in force and authority to that which is Divine. Then, in the opposite direction, we have had a movement on the part of those who profess to regard the weapon as Divine, yet spend their strength, not in using the sword in conflict with the powers of darkness, but in interminable examinations of its outward surface and its handle; also, in disputes as to the particular armory in which it has been forged, all which undermines faith, destroys power, wastes time, and plays into the hands of the enemies of God and His kingdom.

FINAL NOTE TO CHAPTER VI.

The manner in which these first conquests are referred to in the farewell address of the great leader is very worthy of note. Let us turn to the Book of Deuteronomy. (Chap. ii. and iii.)

After recounting the commands given that the Moabites and the Ammonites were not to be disturbed, they being descendants of Lot, Moses recites the Lord's stirring exhortation to the people: "*Rise ye up; take your journey, and pass over the river Arnon; behold, I have given unto thine hand Sihon the Amorite, the King of Heshbon.*" (v. 24.)

It was, therefore, with confidence in this Divine promise that they met the attack of this warlike chief, and Moses adds that, having defeated him, *they took his cities, and utterly destroyed the men, and the women, and the little ones of every city, we left none to remain.* (v. 34.)

Here is the beginning of that work of exterminating the Canaanitish people that has occasioned so much cavil in modern times. The matter will be fully treated of in the studies on the book of Joshua; but it may suffice, at present, to say that this extermination was a work of Divine judgment for long-continued and predominant wickedness. *For the iniquity of the Amorites was now full.*

Then the recital proceeds to the entering into the region of Bashan, and to the Divine promise and exhortation with regard to Og, its king. Warlike and powerful as he was, the people were not to fear him, though he was a giant in stature, as the Lord would deliver him and all his people into their hand. And so it turned out to be. The people when attacked fought in faith and conquered, taking three score cities, of which it is said, *they were fenced with high walls, gates and bars*, a statement which may help us to understand that these countries at that time were not inhabited by barbarous tribes, but by a people of a somewhat advanced civilization. But we know, both from ancient and modern history, that advanced civilization and abandoned wickedness often go together.

We learn also that the Israelites pushed on their conquests northward as far as Mount Hermon. And the statement is made that this mountain is called by the Sidonians, *Sirion*, or as it is rendered in Chap. iv., 48, *Sion*. (This may explain a passage in Psalm 133, which has perplexed commentators; for the mountains of Zion there mentioned are evidently the hills about Mount Hermon, and not the mountains about Mount Zion in Jerusalem.)

All the region now conquered became part of the in-

heritance of Israel, and was divided amongst three of the tribes, viz., Reuben, and Gad, and Manasseh.

And these conquests were put before Joshua to quicken his faith in the enterprise entrusted to him beyond the river: "*Thine eyes have seen all that the Lord your God hath done unto these two kings; so shall the Lord do unto all the kingdoms whither thou passest.*"

A lesson that was well learned.

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CHAPTER VII.

BALAAH.

Numbers 22, 23, 24.

Soothsayers and magicians have played a prominent part in the affairs of many nations and kingdoms; and secular history confirms all that the sacred record relates as to their conferences with kings and governors, and the importance attached to their utterances. It might be supposed that people of such high development as the Greeks and Romans would rise superior to such superstitions, but the histories that have come down to us show how remarkable was the power of the soothsayer, the keeper of the oracle, the augur, the magician, to influence the course of political events, and especially the direction of war and the movements of armies. For the most able and enlightened of the peoples of the old world had faith in them. Without this, their influence would have been nothing.

But of all the magicians and soothsayers whose words and deeds have come down to us, few can be compared to this extraordinary man, Balaam. He appears suddenly on the scene of action when the Israelites were very near the end of their journey, and the record of what he did and said is before us in these three chapters of the Book of Numbers.

After the conquests referred to in the last chapter, the host of Israel moved forward and encamped in the lowland plains of Moab, at the foot of the hills, which rise like a wall to the eastward; which mountain wall forms so striking an object when the country is viewed from the western side of the river Jordan.

It was in these hills that occurred a series of very remarkable events.

The king of Moab, in his ignorance of the real disposition of Israel towards him and his country, and of the Divine command that they were to be friendly, and not molest him, became alarmed, and assumed a hostile attitude.

In the farewell address of Joshua, delivered some twenty years afterwards, he is stated to have "*warred against Israel*". But in this Book of Numbers, no actual conflicts are reported.

But what is mentioned is that the king of Moab, Balak by name (notice the word Baal, as forming part of the name of this king), in his needless alarm, conceived the idea of invoking the aid of magic and charms in his warfare, an idea most natural to a man in his circumstances and condition.

There was a man living at that time, whose fame as a soothsayer or prophet had spread far beyond the bounds of his own country. He lived in a far Eastern region; apparently somewhere in the wide Euphrates valley. He is described as dwelling *by the river of the land of the children of his people*. To him the king of Moab sends for help.

The record concerning this man, Balaam, is indeed a marvellous one, not only for what he did but for what he said. For many of the things he said have become a part of the precious heritage of Divine revelation. Yet he was no true prophet, and not a true man, but a soothsayer, practising his craft for money, and imposing on the superstitious fears of the chiefs who consulted him. He was a heathen, and became an enemy of Israel in the end. Yet he had real Divine communications, and he pronounced real Divine blessings on the chosen people, all under an irresistible Divine influence which carried him on in spite of himself, and, in fact, against himself. For when this influence was withdrawn, we find him relapsing into his former self and dying fighting against the very people whom he had not long before blessed in some of the loftiest strains of poetry contained in Scripture.

Certainly, the Divine ways are at times hard to unravel, and past finding out. Why the Lord of all Wisdom should choose to put Divine words into the mouth of such a man we cannot tell. Suffice it for us to consider the words themselves; and also the deeds of the man that uttered them.

The king of Moab sends to Balaam in order that he may curse this people and blast their enterprise. His messengers take the fees in their hands which diviners and soothsayers were accustomed to receive, and for which they would either curse or bless any one who might be named; exactly as some lawyers will undertake to serve the cause of any client, or a physician to undertake the case of any patient. And it was then as it is now, that the more important the case the larger the fee.

Balaam, in ordinary circumstances, would have taken his fee, accompanied them at once, performed his incantations, and pronounced his curse. But it is evident that some strange and unlooked-for power had begun to work

in the man's soul from the very outset, and that he had come to understand that this power was not to be trifled with; that, in fact, it was Divine; that it must not be disobeyed. And now Almighty God appears, speaks, forbids him to curse, and declares the people of Israel *blessed*.

He is thus under constraint, refuses the fee, and refuses to go. There the matter might have ended. But Balak was bent on obtaining what he thought to be supernatural aid, and sends a message of such urgency as a general would in the crisis of a battle: *Let nothing hinder thee from coming unto me*, holding out a prospect of *very great honor*, and whatever fee Balaam chose to ask. The king evidently thought Balaam was playing the part of a cunning bargainer, and had only refused to come in order to heighten the reward. He had only to offer enough, so his thoughts ran, and the soothsayer would be sure to come. Accordingly, he does what is sometimes done now where the services of a man of high distinction are desired; he desired him to "name his own price." *I will do*, says the king, *whatever thou sayest unto me.* (v. 17.)

But Balaam dare not. He returns for answer, "*If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God to do less or more.*"

In this striking answer the prophet (for he may for the time be called such) goes beyond what he had formerly said, and acknowledges THE LORD—the JEHOVAH of these Hebrews—as his God. There can be little doubt that a man of the intelligence of Balaam must have known of the Hebrews, and who and what their God was. But like other heathen, accustomed to gods of various kinds and ranks, he probably considered that Jehovah was only one of many; one, indeed, of very exalted rank, of superior power, and therefore to be conciliated and obeyed in anything which concerned these Hebrews. It is scarcely probable that when he spoke the words, "*the Lord my God*," he meant more than this.

There was now, however, a change in the Divine procedure—a permission to go, but a strict injunction to speak only what was commanded. But, when the morning came, and Balaam rose and saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Moab, strange to say, God's anger rose up against him. A perplexing development, truly. God permits and even commands him to go, yet is angry when he obeys the command. Yet, consideration may help to clear up the perplexity.

For here, as is so often the case, the New Testament throws light upon the Old. The Apostle Peter, in his Second

Epistle (2 Peter, ii, 15-16), refers to Balaam as a man *who loved the wages of unrighteousness*, and had gone astray thereby; and was *rebuked for his iniquity*. *The dumb ass, speaking with a man's voice, forbade the madness of the prophet*. It is evident, then, that when he went with these princes, he went with his heart set upon the wages of unrighteousness; he was astray at that very time; outwardly complying with the Divine direction to go, but inwardly bent upon securing the reward and honor that Balak had promised if he would only curse these Israelites. And so bent was he upon this that it became a veritable *madness* of persistence in opposition to the Divine will. Thus far St. Peter. With him agrees the Apostle Jude, who speaks of some in his day as "*running greedily after the error of Balaam for reward*," conveying the same idea of Balaam as carried away by the hope of reward in what he did.

It was, therefore, in a spirit of covetousness and disobedience that he went; hence the Divine anger, and opposition. For in verse 32 we learn that Balaam's way was perverse at this very time.

So far there is nothing more remarkable in the narrative than in many that had preceded, in which God is reported as communicating with men. But what follows is so remarkable as to have given rise to much cavil and ridicule.

That an angel of the Lord should appear to bar the way is only in the order of Divine procedure as it was in those times. But that the ass should see the angel again and again, while Balaam did not—that is beyond question mysterious. Then that the ass should open its mouth and speak in remonstrance at its master's treatment is more remarkable still.

An ass speaking with a man's voice; that has been found hard indeed of belief, even by some who have not found difficulty in giving credence to other narratives of miraculous events. For it is undoubtedly much like some of the "*old wives' fables*" of mediæval times. There are also stories like it in the old Jewish commentators, but nobody of sense believes them. Can we then with any show of reason believe this?

But why not?

It is impossible to deny that the whole narrative is one of Divine intervention on behalf of these Hebrews, God's own chosen people. When Balak desires Balaam to curse the Israelites, he does it in order that he may attack them with success. That attack, whether it succeeded or not, would have cost many lives and much suffering. Is it any wonder, then, that God interferes? He speaks to Balaam—this is miraculous, yet real. He sends an angel to oppose

him; that is miraculous, too, yet real. And all is so far consistent and reasonable. For God has evidently a purpose in view, viz., not only to prevent His people from being attacked, but also to make this soothsayer an instrument for the utterance of thoughts of such far-reaching import that some of them are the current speech of the Church of God in these distant days; and some speak of things to come, of which all are not even yet fully accomplished.

Thus, then, Divine intervention and Divine action in the case being certain, all we have to consider is, whether the nature and extent of such action corresponds with the need of the occasion, and to judge—so far as we can judge in such a matter, of the reasonableness of what was done.

Now, with regard to Balaam's not seeing the angel, while the angel was plainly discerned by the ass,—it is to be noted that Balaam's two servants did not see the angel either; which leads to the thought that such supernatural beings are not visible in the way that mortal men are. They can be visible or invisible at the Divine pleasure. And it pleased God that the prophet, for his perverse way, should be brought into such humiliation as to be rebuked by the very animal he rode upon—that a beast should be wiser than he to discern danger, and see what his master could not see. Balaam's perverseness made him blind. None are so blind as those who have determined to do wrong after having had time for deliberation. This is the madness of many men when they are pursuing the pleasures of sin. And this was the "*madness of the prophet,*" spoken of by St. Peter.

But is it not incredible that an ass should speak? Is not the conformation of its mouth and tongue such as to make it impossible? Certainly. If the mouth of an ass were so formed that it *could* speak, it would speak beyond doubt. There would be no wonder, no marvellous event, no miracle at all in that case. But it is because the ass under natural conditions cannot possibly speak, that its speaking on this occasion must be referred to conditions *super-natural*, viz., to the power of Almighty God. For with Him, "*all things are possible.*" (Matthew xix., 26.)

And as to the reason for this strange event, the passage from the Apostle Peter expressly states that the speaking of the ass was to *rebuke* the madness of the prophet. To be rebuked by an ass! What more confounding to the pride of this man, who carried himself as "*some great one,*" and was so believed to be by multitudes; yet who, at this very time, was acting in defiance of the power of the God of the Hebrews, though, only a few hours before, he had professed submission to Him.

That the intention was to break down his pride and self-will is evident. For while the ass was in the act of speaking the angel suddenly revealed himself with a drawn sword in his hand. This appearance was so sudden and terrible that the man fell flat on his face. Such a demonstration of power was like that which overwhelmed Saul of Tarsus, when he, too, was on an errand of madness and opposition to God. And as did Saul, so did this man Balaam, *He humbled himself under the mighty hand of God*, (1. Peter, v. 6), acknowledged that he had sinned, and offered to return home again.

This is the turning part of the whole narrative. Balaam, henceforth, so long as he is with the king of Moab, acts as an obedient servant of Almighty God. There is, for the time, neither covetousness, nor pride, nor self-will about him; *but the word which God puts into his mouth, that word he speaks* (v. 38).

And truly, a remarkable word it is; not only in the matter, but in the highly poetical manner of its utterance. Doubtless, Balaam was a man of natural poetic genius, and had become known as such amongst his own people, which poetic genius, doubtless, had gradually developed into that sort of soothsaying which is so nearly allied to genuine prophecy. If all that had ever been written had been preserved, it is most probable that poetic compositions of Balaam celebrating the praises of Baal or Chemosh would have been found amongst them. It has generally been the method of the Divine Spirit in revelation to take the natural faculties of men as they were found, and to turn them into a Divine channel; not to create them, where they did not before exist. David was doubtless a man of poetic genius, and would have been a bard of his nation, even had he not been filled with inspiration. Solomon was of the opposite temperament, viz., that of the philosopher. He does not compose psalms, but appears as the thinker and teacher. So with Isaiah and the prophets. And so with the men who wrote the histories, in this case the Divine Spirit directing the mind to sift the true from the false, the important from the trivial, and that which was suitable for the great purpose of Divine revelation from the mass of events which had no bearing on it, highly interesting as they might be in themselves.

Then it was, that God, having ordained in His wisdom that important truth should be given to the world through this man, Balaam, took hold of his poetic temperament, illumined it with a Divine light, and directed it into a Divine channel. Under this influence he spoke the things which must be considered in a subsequent chapter.

CHAPTER VIII.

BALAAH'S WORDS AND PROPHECIES.

Numbers 23, 24.

Balaam, having been brought into a condition of penitence, and of humility, and being made willing to speak as God should direct him, can now be a fitting channel for Divine revelations as to the destiny of Israel and of mankind. Yet even now there lingers somewhat of the spirit of the necromancer in the directions he gives to the king of Moab as to the building of altars and the offering of sacrifices thereon. But it is noticeable that God does not interfere with him in these matters. Provided he utters God's message, he may stand where he pleases, and have as many altars as he pleases (save only in the camp of Israel). And utter God's message he does, in such a manner that it has never been forgotten.

And what was this message? It was not one message, but several, each distinct and peculiar to itself. It is difficult to characterise these messages without quoting them. This chapter will, therefore, be largely one of quotation.

The king brings the prophet to one of the high mountain tops of this hilly region of Moab; (on one of these Moses died). Here was a temple of Baal; here were built seven altars; and, strange as it may seem, Balaam was suffered to offer sacrifice on them. Doubtless the heart of the king beat high with expectation that now the much-desired word of cursing would be spoken.

What then must have been his vexation, when, from the mouth of the prophet proceeded these words (v. 7 to 10):

*"Balak, the king of Moab, hath brought me from
Aram,
From the mountains of the East,
Saying:
Come, curse me Jacob,
And come, defy Israel!
How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed!
Or how shall I defy, whom the Lord hath not defied!"*

Ah! Is this the message? might well think the king.
But let the prophet proceed:—

*"For from the top of the rocks I see him,
And from the hills I behold him;
Lo, the people shall dwell alone,
And shall not be reckoned among the nations!
Who can count the dust of Jacob,
And the number of the fourth part of Israel?"*

A striking forecast, indeed, of the destiny of a people, who, to all human appearance, were simply like the rest of the many tribes and nations inhabiting the world. Yet, how certain it has been that both in ancient and modern times this people *did* dwell alone; that they were a peculiar and separate people, unlike the nations around them in religion, law, customs, and hopes; and that they have preserved their separateness, even to this day, as is witnessed before our very eyes in these modern times. A mere random guess of this necromancer, may a sceptic say! A random guess, indeed. Why that would be a greater marvel than the supposition of a Divine guidance, if by a random guess the destiny and character of the most remarkable people that ever lived in the world were so accurately set forth so as to correspond to the facts of the development of thousands of years. No. These are no random rhapsodies. Reason and experience tell us that this man's words were by the Spirit of Him to whom the destinies of all peoples, for all time, were as open as the day.

But the closing words of the prophet are not prophetic at all; and they do not relate to Israel, but to himself. Yet they are equally remarkable with what went before:

*"Let me die the death of the righteous,
And let my last end be like his!"*

says this man, who certainly was no righteous man himself. The words betray a vague longing and yearning; the tribute of a hard and selfish man of the world to the beauty and excellency of righteousness, such as has been paid again and again by men who never submitted themselves to the obligations of righteousness.

But does it not mean more? Why should this man desire to *die the death* of the righteous? The death of the righteous, considered in its merely human aspect, is like the death of other men. Disease gives them the same weariness and pain, accident or sudden death the same torture. Why then this longing to *die the death* which the righteous die? Is there not here one of those intimations,

not so few in the Old Testament as is often said, in which a life after death is opened to our contemplation, a future life in which it is *well with the righteous*, and *ill with the wicked?* (Isaiah iii., 10.) And was this longing put into the mouth of this man, because it would be uttered to a heathen king and to his people, who might remember it, and hand it down, and so transmit it, as that it should become part of that heritage of truth embedded in error which ultimately took form in traditions and poetic imaginations of an elysium of blessedness for the good, and of pain and torture for the wicked?

This is a reasonable view to take of this remarkable utterance, which has as much force now, and may be as fervently uttered by a man in these days as it had in the mouth of this man of three thousand years ago. So wonderfully do these Scriptures come home "to the business and bosoms of men," in all ages, and in all conditions of civilization.

But what we read with such profound interest, was heard by the king of Moab with rage and disappointment. *I took thee*, said he, *to curse mine enemies, and behold, thou has blest them altogether!* But Balaam answered in a manner that proved how great was the fear of Almighty God upon him: *Must I not take heed*—mark that expression, "*to take heed*"—*to speak that which the Lord hath put into my mouth!* Most true. Indeed, after his experience, he knew that it was at the peril of his life he did anything else.

THE SECOND UTTERANCE.

After this disappointment, Balak was still undaunted, and determined yet, if possible, to obtain that malediction of Israel on which he had set his heart. And, imagining that the influence of the place would have much to do with the utterance, he brings Balaam up to a higher point in the mountains, even to the top of that very "PISGAH," or *The Hill* (as the word signifies), from whence Moses himself, soon after, looked over the whole land. And there, as before, altars were built, and burnt sacrifices offered.

Then another word was put into the prophet's mouth. And he uttered it; a word of force and power that has rolled down the centuries, and speaks to us at this day. But it was not a word of malediction, as the king had hoped. For Balaam took up his story, and broke out in another vivid poetic strain:—

*“Rise up, Balak, and hear,
 Harken unto me, thou son of Zippor,
 God is not a man, that he should lie;
 Neither the son of man, that he should repent.
 Hath he said, and shall he not do it?
 Or, hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?
 Behold, I have received commandment to bless.
 And he hath blessed!
 And I cannot reverse it!”*

In these pregnant words the prophet sets forth the fixedness of the Divine purpose, the absolute truth of the Divine word, in contrast with the deceitfulness of man, and the changeableness and fickleness of his plans and counsels. Men make promises and break them, but God never. His word is “*a rock*.” They that trust Him shall never be confounded; a truth that shines through all the dispensations, and most of all in Jesus Christ.

But it is objected, or perhaps, noted with perplexity, that there are instances in Scripture itself, of a change of purpose in God,—as when He threatened Nineveh, and then spared it; or promised Canaan to the Israelitish people who went out of Egypt, and then condemned them to wander forty years in the wilderness. What is to be made of such facts as these?

What, but to give a clearer insight as to the ground and foundation, both of Divine promises and threatenings. For all through the Scripture, wherever the conduct of man, as a free and responsible being, is concerned, there is an unchangeable purpose in God, viz., of evil to the wicked, and reward to the righteous. So that, if judgment is threatened against a particular course of action, it will surely follow that course of action, as certainly as that fire will burn, or water drown. But if a man withdraws himself by a change of conduct from the operation of this retributive law, that is, if, in technical and theological language, he repents and turns from his evil way, accepting of the sacrifice God has provided for atonement, then he is out of the way of the fire that burns, or the water that drowns. He is safe. Or, as we may otherwise put it, he is *sared*.

And conversely, the promises of good to the righteous are just as sure, either generally, or as applicable to some definite course of conduct. But if the righteous man fall into the way of disobedience, he forsakes the realm in which reward is operative, and passes over to the other in which evil will certainly pursue him. (Ezekiel, xxxiii.)

These are the eternal principles of Divine action, and they are unchangeable. For the Divine Ruler is not fickle, nor arbitrary. *Hath He said, and shall He not do it?*

It seems strange that the next utterance of this man should be of such a nature that some theologians and metaphysicians of Christian times have quoted it to support a doctrine which has been as strenuously assailed on the one side as it has been upheld on the other. For the prophet went on to say:

*"He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob,
Neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel!"*

This utterance has been held to mean that when a man, or a community of men, enter into the company of God's chosen, God's elect ones, thus making salvation certain, what would be iniquity and perverseness in one outside the pale of the elect is no iniquity in him. He is beheld in the light, not of his own character, but in the "*face of God's anointed.*" Being *found in Christ*, and judged as being clothed with Christ's righteousness, God sees in him neither iniquity nor perverseness, no matter what his conduct may be.

This is a bold and plain mode of stating an extreme doctrine of an ultra-predestinarian school; which doctrine is seldom openly avowed, but has certainly been acted on by some whose wish was father to the thought, and who, fixing their eye on one aspect of Scripture, become blind to the teachings of Christ and His Apostles as a whole. For these teachings, one and all, declare that *without holiness no man shall see the Lord.*

But these words of the prophet evidently will not bear the meaning which has been imputed to them. The facts of the history of the people at that very time demonstrate this. For it is plain that while they were in that very region, God *did* see iniquity and perverseness in His people, *did* condemn them for it, and punish them severely in consequence. The incidents related in Chap. xxv., and numerous incidents of their subsequent history demonstrate this.

What then may these words, and the striking words that follow them mean? It is evident that the words are intended to carry the mind back to the beginning of the history of the twelve tribes, when the patriarch, Jacob, surnamed Israel, was being marked out, by Divine ordination, as the head of that race through whom all nations of the earth were to be blessed. Jacob was separated from Esau, he was passed through long and severe discipline, which, by Divine grace, purified his character. He became an eminently good man, worthy to be the head of a chosen race; faithful to His God, redeemed from the iniquity and perverseness of early years. And it

is mainly to him personally, and to him also as the head of this chosen race, that the thought of the prophet was turned when he is directed to say that the Divine ruler had not beheld iniquity in Jacob, nor perverseness in Israel; that God was with him and his descendants; that by God's power they had been brought out of Egypt; that no magic, or enchantment, or divination, could do them harm, and that their history would be such that it would be said of Jacob and of Israel, in the time to come, *What hath God wrought!* And how marvellously all this came to pass in the history of this man, and his family! How they grew to be a mighty nation, who were once a family nearly starved for want of food, and then a swarming multitude of oppressed slaves; how they, through the mighty hand of God, became like a great lion in strength, able to crush down their enemies, until their destiny was accomplished.

All this, which we read in these days with profound interest (for it applies spiritually to the true Israel, the Church of the Living God) was nothing but gall and wormwood to Balak, who now entreats the prophet to say no more. *Neither curse them at all, nor bless them at all. But Balaam answered and said unto Balak, Told I not thee, saying, all that the Lord speaketh, that must I do!*

THE THIRD UTTERANCE.

Balak then determined to make a last attempt. As before, he changed his position to another mountain top. And again there was the utterly vain ceremony of the building of altars, and the offering of sacrifices on them, God apparently permitting them that he might pour contempt upon them.

Then, as Balaam, leaving his old enchantments and charms, turned his face to look at the Israelitish host encamped on the plain below, *the Spirit of God* came upon him once more.

NOTE.—Here, in this expression, we have the key to the whole of Balaam's utterances. They are by the Spirit of God; hence their undying interest, for *the word of the Lord endureth for ever.*

He describes himself as *falling into a trance*, but *having his eyes open*, while he beholds the beauty and order of the camp of Israel, and bursts out into a strain of poetry of—for those times—unequalled beauty, while he sees in his vision the strength, the growth, the order, the conquering power of this strange people. But when he concludes with the invocation, *Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed*

is he that curseth thee, the auger of the king of Moab knew no bounds. His wrath was kindled against the prophet; he smote his hands together, and cried out in his desperation, *I called thee to curse mine enemies, and behold thou hast altogether blessed them three times.* And he goes on to use threatening language. *Flee to thy place,* he cries—probably intimating that when his councillors and princes came to know what he had said, his life would be in danger, prophet though he was. For this was often enough the case. When the prophet prophesied smooth things, kings honored and rewarded him; but if he was bold and honest enough to reprove, and remonstrate, they imprisoned or killed him. Scripture is full of instances of this, and so is the history of the Christian Church.

THE FOURTH UTTERANCE.

Though Balak spoke in such threatening tones, the prophet was unmoved, for he was under a Divine restraint. Yet that he would gladly have accepted the king's money and honor is evident from the words of his reply: "*Spake I not to thy messengers,* said he, *that if Balak would give me his housful of gold and silver, I cannot go beyond the commandment of the Lord?*"

That houseful of gold and silver, how greedily he contemplated it! But he dare not venture upon it. The commandment of the Lord, he had found, was no commandment to be trifled with. The covetous disposition was still there, though restrained by such a mighty hand, and the reward of the covetous man he could not get.

But now, again taking up the note of prophetic utterance, still speaking *by the Spirit of the Lord*, he rises into a loftier strain, and his eyes are opened to a wider range of vision. "*I go to my people,*" he says to the king. "*Come, I will advertise to thee what this people shall do to thy people in the latter days!*" And thus he begins:—

*Balaam, the son of Beor, hath said,
And the man whose eyes are open hath said,
He hath said, which heard the words of God,
And knew the knowledge of the Most High,
Which saw the vision of the Almighty,
Falling into a trance,
But having his eyes open;*

What might be expected to come, after such a preamble as this, but something far transcending the mere temporal destiny of even the favored people? What but something

which should concern the higher destiny of all mankind, and the universal and spiritual kingdom of God? And thus it came. For he went on to say:

*"I shall see Him, but not now,
I shall behold Him, but not nigh.
There shall come a Star out of Jacob,
And a Sceptre shall arise out of Israel,
And shall smite all the corners of Moab,
And destroy all the children of Sheth,
And Edom shall be a possession,
Seir also shall be a possession for his enemies;
And Israel shall do valiantly."*

*"Out of Jacob shall come he that shall have dominion,
And shall destroy him that remaineth of the city."*

Now, what is a reasonable interpretation of this remarkable utterance?

Who is this personage whose existence at some future day is thus revealed to the prophet? Whom he is to see, but not now; to behold, but not nigh? Who is this that is to arise, like a star out of Jacob; who is to wield a sceptre as a king? Who is to war against the enemies of Israel, and smite them down? No personage at all answering to that description arose out of this people for many generations. There was no sceptre at all in Israel for hundreds of years after Balaam. But at length one did arise, who corresponded to this description, viz., David, the son of Jesse, who did arise like a star, and did wield a sceptre in Israel, and who did smite the corners of Moab, and destroy many of the children of Sheth, adding their lands to his own dominion. And even if the scope of the prophecy ended here it would be one of the most noteworthy in all Scripture.

But this does not exhaust the meaning of these remarkable words. For it is certain that David was a type of that greater Son of David, who was David's *Lord* as well as *his son*; certain also that many of the things spoken aforetime of David and fulfilled in him in a secular sense had also a far wider reach, and a spiritual application in the teaching, the reign, the spiritual conquests, and the world-wide dominion of the Messiah. Of Him it was spoken by the the prophet Isaiah that He should be "*a great light*" in the darkness of a coming age; also that *the government should be upon his shoulder*; that He should sit upon the *throne of David for ever* (Isa. ix.) that there should be battle and conflict, and a breaking of the yoke of the oppressed through Him.

Now, in considering whether all this is implied in these utterances of Balaam, let us remember that he is speaking by the *Spirit of God*. It is not Balaam that speaks, but that Divine Spirit "who spake by the prophets," and through whom was manifested all that concerned the coming and reign of the Messiah. Was this not so?

Did not the Divine Teacher after His resurrection speak to His disciples that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the Psalms, concerning him? (Luke xxiv. 44.)

True. And it is significantly added that *He opened their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures*, implying the need of a Divine enlightenment that the true import and value of these ancient forecastings might be apprehended.

Further still, St. Peter, in his First Epistle, speaking by the same Divine Spirit, declared that the very prophets themselves had to *search* and enquire what was the meaning of their own prophecies, and that they were taught that it was for a coming age, and not for the time then present, that they prophesied (I. Peter i., 10-11). And it is most noticeable in this striking saying, that the prophets of old time are said to be speaking "*by the Spirit of Christ that was in them.*" And to this clearly corresponds that very pregnant saying in the Apocalypse (Rev. xix., 10), that *the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.*

Now, it is in the light of these revelations of a subsequent time we must consider all Old Testament prophecies. Is it not then certain that when Balaam speaks of the rising of *a star out of Jacob*, he was speaking—all unconsciously to himself—of one who would arise in the darkness of a coming day, who would be the *bright and morning star* (Rev. xxii., 16), as well as *the root and the offspring of David*. And when he speaks of a *septre* rising out of Israel, who would smite Moab, and Seth, and Edom, is it not certain that a wider and spiritual idea is conveyed by the prophecy, viz., the setting up of a spiritual kingdom by the Messiah, under whom there should be perpetual conflict with the rulers of this world's' darkness, the spiritual Moab and Edom of the time. It was foretold of the Messiah that He should sit on the right hand of God *until His enemies were made His footstool*. And in the marvellous imagery of the Apocalypse, written in the times of the Messiah Himself, is He not represented as going forth to war (Rev. xix., 11 to 16), and as *smiting the nations with a sharp sword!* Yet this is not the sword of secular power, as some have vainly supposed, but the sword of the Spirit, *the Word of God*, which idea is emphasized by the significant

image of the sword as not being held in His hand, but proceeding *out of His mouth*. For the weapons of this war are not carnal, but spiritual; and the enemies to be smitten are not earthly states and kingdoms, but systems and powers of darkness, idolatry, and falsehood.

Not that all the words of the prophets had a bearing upon the Kingdom of Christ, and the far-distant future. Some of them (and the latter portion of Balaam's words amongst them) had their entire fulfilment in the time of the chosen people.

Yet they are preserved in the Divine record, as all the movements of Divine government are of instruction for us, whether the purposes of that government related to times now gone by, or to the everlasting kingdom of the Messiah.

CHAPTER IX.

THE TEMPTATIONS IN MOAB.—THE CALL OF JOSHUA.

Numbers 25-27.

It might seem incredible, did we not know the "depths of Satan," and the extraordinary deceitfulness of the human heart, that after all the scenes through which this man Balaam had passed, and the marvellous things he had been permitted to see and say, that the next thing we read of him is that he led the women of Moab in a daring course of temptation to the children of Israel. The temptation was to worship their gods, and to join in the scandalous and licentious rites connected with that worship. "Can it be possible," we exclaim involuntarily, "that it was this same prophet Balaam that did this; that fell to such a depth of wickedness as this, immediately after the Spirit of God had rested upon him?"

But it was even so. And it is here that the real character of the man is revealed. He had been elevated beyond himself for a time, and his last words had such a touch of Divine pathos that it would seem as if his heart was softened, and that, as "*he went his way*," from the mountain of Divine vision, he would, during the rest of his life be a changed man.

"*He went to his place*," intending to proceed to his own country, a distant country; but before going, perhaps in concert with Balak, "Satan having entered into him," he conceives the diabolical design of trying what could be done to curse the Israelites, by tempting them with Moabish women. As is well known, such women were employed about some of the temples of nearly all ancient religions, even down to the times of Greece and Rome. Such, indeed, are to be found in India to this very day. And the device succeeded. Israel, while abiding in the plains opposite the land of Canaan, fell into the snare. The people were invited to the sacrifices of the gods; many of them consented; they were tempted to bow down to these gods, and led on thence to commit fornication. Thus Israel joined himself to *Baal-Peor*, for it was one of the many forms of Baal-worship, all wicked and licentious, that prevailed in Moab at that time. And, as we learn from the words of Moses later on (Chap. xxxi., 16), all this was *through the counsel of Balaam*.

Need it be wondered at that the anger of the Lord was kindled against these Israelites, and that the command was

issued to put to death every man who had joined himself to this detestable idolatry.

Is this a harsh sentence, and cruel? Death, for merely attending idolatrous worship, and falling into the snare of licentiousness?

But let us remember the time, the occasion, the danger, and the absolute necessity for keeping this people clear of the abominable idolatries of the people round them. It was no time for trifling, for leniency. The occasion called for strict justice, for sharp dealing. Now, idolatry in this people was *treason*; treason that struck at the very foundation of their national existence. They had been constituted *a peculiar people, and a holy nation*. Falling away from this, they would, if they continued, lose their peculiar character and value, and become as the rest of the nations around them. All these nations have long ceased from the world; and so would the Jews had they fallen persistently into idolatry. Hence the severity of the penalty. Idolatry was treason against the state, and all states punish treason with death.

One Israelite, more bold and defiant than the rest, had dared to bring one of these women into his tent in the sight of all the congregation; an act of such scandalous impurity as to rouse almost to a pitch of madness Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the high priest, who rushed into the tent and slew both the man and the woman on the spot. This act was justified by the command given when the outbreak occurred, *Slay ye every one his men that were joined to Baal-Peor*.

And the zeal of Phinehas was so highly esteemed as to be accepted as a sort of atonement for the sin of the people. A plague had broken out, probably the sort of plague that dogs the steps of the fornicator. But after the deed of Phinehas, the plague was stayed.

And to Phinehas, he being in the direct line of succession to the high-priesthood, a remarkable blessing was conveyed:—

"Behold," said the Lord, "I give unto him my covenant of peace!"

And he shall have it; and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood, because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the children of Israel.

Several things are noticeable here.

First, that in the priesthood (including, naturally, the sacrifices offered in connection with it), there was the

foundation of *peace* in the relations of the people with their God. The law of Sinai affirmed great rules and principles of righteousness, which could not but bring into condemnation the people of a race like mankind, inheriting, as they do, an inveterate tendency to evil-doing. Under the law, simply as law, there could be no peace. But along with the law of the commandments, there was the law of sacrifice; the shedding of blood for atonement, and this was to make peace by Divine appointment, even as, in a time to come, then far distant, peace was to be made by the blood of the Cross!

Then, further, that the covenant was one of an *everlasting* priesthood, foreshadowing, as so many other things did at this time, a priesthood of far greater dignity and power that was to come, even the Eternal Priesthood of the Son of God.

This occurrence, with its evil consequences, led to the command to *vex the Midianites*, as they vexed Israel *with their wives*, a phrase which may help us to understand what happened shortly afterwards, when, after defeating the Midianites in battle (Chap. xxxi., 7-8), the command was given to put to the sword, not only all the males, but all the grown-up women. For, as the great leader reminded them, it was they *that caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the Lord!* (v. 16.)

When considering the severity of the measures taken with regard to the Canaanitish and Midianitish people, it is too often forgotten to what an abandoned depth of wickedness these people had descended, both men and women.

Previously to this war against the Midianitish tribes (the word Midian, here, and in other places, evidently being sometimes used as a generic name for all the tribes east of Jordan), a new census of the people able to bear arms was taken, that is, all the males from twenty years old and upwards.*

*NOTE.—The fact that the whole male population from this age and upwards was expected to bear arms, and go out to war, will explain how it came to pass that the number of the Israelitish combatants in the battles we read of was so enormous. We are altogether misled if we judge of these things by modern standards. The Dominion of Canada under the same rule could place an army of eight hundred thousand men in the field; an utterly impossible thing under the conditions of modern warfare, but quite possible if our whole population was embraced within the area of a few of our larger counties, and every man of twenty years old and upwards was enrolled in the ranks.

It was in this war against Midian that the soothsayer Balaam was found in the ranks of the enemies of Israel, and *was slain with the sword*, a melancholy ending to what might have been, after such experiences and revelations, a life of high elevation, bringing light and blessing to all the tribes of the East. But, alas! When the experiences and revelations were past, he sank to his own native moral level, and was destroyed. Thus this *bright and shining light* went out in utter darkness.

This was the last of the great enterprises of Moses. His days were drawing to a close, and the command was given that he should ascend up to the *Mount Abarim* (a generic name to the Moabitish range), from whence he should *see the land* given to Israel. Then he should be gathered to his people. (Chap. xxvii., 12.)

THE CALL OF JOSHUA.

But who should succeed him as leader of the people, and how should he be chosen or appointed? It was impossible, under the circumstances, that there could be any but a *Divine* appointment, a *direct* Divine appointment, and not merely an indirect, such as any appointment may be conceived of as under Divine Providence, either express or implied. There was no recognition of the hereditary principle in the secular leadership, as there had been in the priesthood. The honor did not pass to the sons and descendants of Moses. The hereditary system was not established till many hundreds of years afterwards, and then only in fulfilment of prophecy, and as a special reward for faithfulness in the case of David. As to the elective system, so far as the chief leadership is concerned, there is hardly a trace of it in the whole history. Even in the unsettled times of the Judges, the leader was always called out by a Divine indication.

When it was made known to Moses that he must shortly give up his charge, the narrative indicates that his spirit was most deeply stirred as to this all-important question. The words in which he laid the matter before the Lord are very brief, but most emphatic, most weighty, indicating a heart almost overwhelmed by the consciousness of the issues involved in it. They seem to indicate thoughts such as these:—I dare not, I cannot, I am not wise and far-seeing enough to presume even to suggest the name of a successor. "LET THE LORD, THE GOD OF THE SPIRITS OF ALL FLESH, SET A MAN OVER THE CONGREGATION, *which may go out before them, and which may go in before them, and*

which may lead them out, and which may bring them in; that the congregation of the Lord may not be as sheep which have no shepherd! (Chap. xxvii., 17.)

What a terse and striking description of the office. For this is no mere formal office of dignity, but of real leadership. And he is not to be the arbitrary ruler, but the *Shepherd*, caring for the people, living for them, not considering his own ease, but his people's welfare, ready like a shepherd to defend them if attacked; leading them out to new fields of occupation, or bringing them in when the enterprise is accomplished.

Such a shepherd, David the Son of Jesse is described to have been, when he was anointed king. (Psalm lxxviii., 70-71), and such were many kings of his line.

NOTE.—It is interesting to note, in this connection, that this idea of a king being a "shepherd" of his people was that which—according to the old historians—animated Cyrus the Great. He is said to have observed, one day, to his courtiers, that, "*a prince ought to consider himself as a shepherd. It is his duty, to watch that his people may live in safety and quiet, to burden himself with anxiety and cares, that they may be exempt from them; to place his delight in seeing them increase and multiply, and valiantly expose his own person in their defence and protection.*"

In answer to this solemn appeal Moses received a remarkable direction, viz., to take Joshua, a man in whom is the Spirit; to lay hands upon him, and to set him before Eleazar, the priest, and before all the congregation, and then to give him a charge in their sight.

Let us note the various particulars of this, the first instance in the Divine records of the appointment of a successor to a great office of government and leadership. For we have here the germ and root of ideas and practices which have survived through innumerable changes and chances of history, and are in full force in these modern days, when the same thing has to be done.

(1.) The first point is that the designated successor of Moses is a man in whom is the Spirit. This is undoubtedly the Spirit of God, an expression that has appeared again and again even at this early period, and which we shall find again and again as the history proceeds, foreshadowing the fuller development of the idea in the times of our Lord and his Apostles. Even thus early it can be seen that the Spirit of God, filling the mind of a man, quickened and strengthened every faculty in him that was needed for the work he had to do, whether it was leadership in Moses, administration in Joseph, skill of handiwork in Bezaleel (to build the tabernacle), generalship in Joshua and Gideon, poetry and prophecy in Balaam. And even to this day, no man

is accepted as eligible as a candidate for the Christian ministry, in any communion, who is not believed to be "moved by the spirit" for the work.

(2.) The next point is that Moses was directed to *lay his hands* upon him. The first instance on record, and the precedent for all those subsequent layings on of hands which form so striking a feature in the setting apart of men to ecclesiastical office in these days.

The idea of transfer of character and gift by the laying on of hands was fully recognized in the ritual of atonement revealed on Mount Sinai. The man who brought his burnt offering to the tabernacle was directed (Lev. i., 4) to *put his hand on the head of the burnt offering to make an atonement for him*. But it is in the significant ceremony of the Seape-goat on the day of atonement that this transfer by the laying on of hands is most strikingly set forth. The high-priest, having offered one goat as a sin-offering, takes the live goat, laying both his hands on its head, confessing the transgressions of the people, *putting them upon the head of the goat. And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities to a land not inhabited.* (Lev. xvi., 22.)

Thus were the Israelitish people familiar with the idea of the passing of either demerit or merit by the putting on of hands. And it is significantly said of Joshua in the last chapter of Deuteronomy, *that he was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands upon him.*

There is very little more of this rite in the history of the Old Testament. But how large a part it bears in the New is familiar to all its readers.

(3.) Then, in the presence of the High Priest and the congregation, Moses gives to his successor a solemn *charge*. The charge itself is not given in the Book of Numbers, but the substance of it is found in the Book of Deuteronomy. It consists first of an exhortation and mandate (Deut. xxxi.), peculiarly suitable to the circumstances and the work Joshua would have to do. *BE STRONG, AND OF GOOD COURAGE*, words that are repeated again and again, not only by Moses himself, but directly by the Lord Himself to Joshua, after he had assumed office. To a soldier, whose whole future life was to be spent in military operations, this exhortation goes to the very root of the matter. The enterprise before him was difficult. It was fear, and want of courage, that led to the people turning back forty years before; for ten out of the twelve spies declared that the country was full of strong fortresses, and walled cities, inhabited by a warlike people, and that they could not conquer it. That this description of the country and its inhabitants was true we know from the history of Joshua

himself. Well, then, might be the first note of the charge be COURAGE! *Fear not.*

But the second portion of the charge was a great *Promise*, a promise so great that it has become part of the permanent heritage of the people of God in these Christian times. The promise was this:—THE LORD—HE IT IS THAT DOTI GO BEFORE THEE. HE WILL BE WITH THEE. HE WILL NOT FAIL THEE, NEITHER FORSAKE THEE!

A mighty promise, indeed; a repetition in very emphatic form of the words spoken to their father Jacob in the wonderful dream at Bethel:—*"I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest;* also of the words spoken to Moses himself in a time of darkness and fear when encamped near Mount Sinai, *"My Presence shall go with thee!"* And now this great covenant of Presence and protection is passed on to the new leader and commander of the people. From him we trace it down through the long course of history, repeated again and again to men who had great duties and responsibilities laid upon them, the idea of God's accompanying *presence* shining out conspicuously in the Psalms and the Prophets, as an inspiring and comforting force. Thus, with David, *"I have set the Lord always before me; because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved."* (Psalm xvi., 8.) And again, *"Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, FOR THOU ART WITH ME."* (Psalm xxiii., 4.) And let us listen to the stirring strains of Isaiah, the Prophet, *"When thou pass'st through the waters I will be with thee, and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee!"* (Chap. xliii., 2.)

The very words of the charge given to Joshua are repeated in the Epistle to the Hebrews, by the Apostle who is exhorting these Christians of Jewish blood to faith and constancy, by reminding them of the promises given to their fathers, *"Let your conversation be without covetousness,"* says the exhortation (Hebrews xiii., 5), and be content with such things as ye have, *for He hath said,—"I WILL NEVER LEAVE THEE, NOR FORSAKE THEE!"*

NOTE.—This quotation is in accordance with a great principle enunciated in other parts of the apostolic writings, viz., that *"all the promises of God are 'yea and amen in Jesus Christ'"* (II. Cor., 1-20), and applicable to them that believe in Him; they being the spiritual heirs of Abraham, and of the blessings promised through his seed, even Jesus Christ.

The final word spoken with regard to Joshua, in this solemn transaction, was that he should ask counsel of the

Lord through the mysterious breast-plate of Urim on the High Priest.

There is not much said further of this breast-plate, in the subsequent history, or how it should operate in the obtaining of counsel. But the idea conveyed is noteworthy, viz., that in the secular affairs of daily life, in the guidance of one's own house by man or woman, in the conduct of business, in the sphere of government, a man should seek counsel of the All-wise, and the Almighty. And this, not only in private prayer, but in the worship and services of the congregation; in the house of God, and through the medium of the ministry of the Divine word.

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CHAPTER X.

THE ALLOTMENT OF LANDS EAST OF JORDAN TO THE TRIBES OF REUBEN AND GAD.—THE APPOINTMENT OF CITIES OF REFUGE.

Numbers 32-35.

When the Israelitish host had subdued the country East of Jordan, it seems to have been at once a question what was to be done with it. For, originally, the idea of the people seems to have been wholly confined to the region on the West side of the river. That was the land of Canaan proper. It was in that region that their fathers Abraham and Isaac had dwelt; and in which they had moved about from Dan to Beersheba pasturing their flocks; and where the most striking events of their lives had taken place. Here were Shechem, and Bethel, and Hebron, and the well La-hai Roi, the three first being well-known places now. It was here, also, that the strange and mysterious personage Melchi-Zedek appeared, coming down from the heights where Jerusalem now stands, to the valley now called the Valley of Jeshoshaphat, he being the king of Salem (afterwards Jeru-salem) at the time. But these patriarchs never moved across the Jordan, and none of the events of their lives took place there except the memorable meeting between Jacob and Esau at the ford of Jabbok, and the mysterious scene of wrestling that preceded it. All this territory East of Jordan was then occupied by Esau, and warlike chiefs like him. And it is noticeable that in this return of Jacob from the north country, where he had become a wealthy and prosperous man, although he must perforce pass through this country, and although it was a region eminently suitable to flocks and herds, he showed no disposition to remain in it, but hastened to cross the river into the region of Canaan proper. (Gen. xxxiii., 17.)

Doubtless, this Eastern region was not then safe for a man of peaceable pursuits to dwell in.

But hundreds of years had passed. The region itself was as good as ever. The warlike tribes that had occupied it had been subdued. And now it was natural that the leading men of some of the tribes of Israel should consider whether these lands would not be suitable for them to occupy.

And thus it came about that the people of Reuben and Gad, having been over the region, and seeing that it was a place for cattle, and having a *very great multitude of cattle*, made petition that their portion might be in this territory.

Moses, however, received this petition very suspiciously. He had had experience of the waywardness of the people so often that he might almost be pardoned for thinking ill of them now. And think ill of them he did; though the sequel shows that in so doing he did them injustice. He suspected that they wished to escape the troubles and perils of the war, so he warmly and angrily remonstrated with them:—*“Shall your brethren go to war, and shall ye sit here? And wherfore discourage ye the heart of the children of Israel from going over into the land which the Lord had given them?”* And he goes on to remind them of the cowardice and perverseness of their fathers when they turned back at Kadesh Barnea; and accuses them of doing the same thing. *“Behold,”* says he, *“ye are risen up in your fathers’ stead, an increase of sinful men, to augment the fierce anger of the Lord towards Israel. For if ye turn away from Him, He will yet leave them in the wilderness, and ye shall destroy all this people!”*

These words were evidently spoken in haste; prompted by a zeal for God, and a warm love for the people; but it was—as the event proves—“a zeal not according to knowledge,” leading to an arraignment of those who were not purposing to do wrong, and who did not deserve reproach. For the tribes who were accused had no intention of escaping the toils of war, and so discouraging their brethren. They came near to Moses—evidently deeply moved and grieved by his reproaches—and said:—*“We will build sheep-folds here for our cattle, and cities for our little ones. But we ourselves will go ready armed before the children of Israel, until we have brought them unto their place. . . . We will not return unto our houses until the children of Israel have inherited every man his inheritance.”* (Ver. 16 to 18.)

Moses, thereupon, was satisfied, and said, *“If ye will do this, ye shall be guiltless before the Lord, and before Israel.”* Yet he adds, with a touch of suspicion still lingering in his mind: *“But, if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the Lord.”* AND BE SURE YOUR SIN WILL FIND YOU OUT!

This last most pregnant utterance, though it contained an undeserved reflection on the people it was addressed to, is yet one of those mighty truths that abide in full force through all ages and times. It has been presented to Christian congregations in these days, and has been, as the

word of God is said to be in the Epistle to the Hebrews (Heb. iv., 12), *like a two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and discerning the very thoughts and intents of the heart.* Yes. *Be sure your sin will find you out!* And as the words ring through the congregation, the hearts of men are stirred; they are moved to reflection, to recollection, to repentance, to confession of some sin to God which has never been acknowledged before, and, in some cases, to open acknowledgment and restitution!

But it must be confessed that the manner in which the great leader received the proposal of these tribes is rather of the nature of warning to others in a like position. Moses was evidently, by nature, a man of warm temper, and given to hasty words; and it is an evidence of the power of Divine grace that he had become what he is described to have been, viz., a man of most remarkable meekness. For he was not so naturally, and we have more than one instance where the old temperament broke out in violent words and hasty deeds. It was for an outburst of this kind, on the occasion of striking the rock, that he was excluded from Canaan. When he cried out at Meribah, "*Hear now, ye rebels*" (Chap. xx., 10), he was evidently in a heat of passion. And so he was when he dashed the tables of the law to the ground on descending from the mount. (Exod., xxxii., 19.) Now, when the people of Reuben and Gad approached him, he might well have given reasonable consideration to their proposal instead of assuming at once that they desired to do wrong; and sharply reproving them for it.

All this is but a confirmation of what has been noted before, that the best of men need to guard themselves against that which they might think themselves least liable to. It is on that very side where a man *thinks* himself to be strongest that he has *to take heed lest he fall!*

NOTE.—It is, however, noteworthy that every one of these outbursts on the part of Moses was in the way of zeal for God, and indignation against wrong-doing, or what he thought was wrong-doing. This is a form of passionate outbreak to which men of a high order of spirituality and goodness are peculiarly liable. Moses would have scorned to be angry because of any wrong-doing to himself. He could bear that with all possible calmness. So could many good men in these times.

But, when dealing with wrong-doing to God, to His cause and kingdom, or His people and Church, it is needful to be careful that righteous indignation does not become mere animal passion, and that unjust suspicion does not lead to unfair reproof of men who are doing no wrong.

The end of this incident was good on both sides. The people of Reuben and Gad agreed with readiness to take their full share in the war. *"Thy servants will do as my lord commandeth. Our little ones, our wives, our flocks, and all our cattle, shall be in the cities of Gilead. But thy servants will pass over, every man armed for war, before the Lord to battle, as my lord saith."*

And thus it came about, that for all time to come, so long as Israel occupied the land as tribes, the tribe of Reuben and the tribe of Gad (and with them also a part of the children of Joseph), had their territory on the East of Jordan, in the country often called the land of Gilead.

THE APPOINTMENT OF CITIES OF REFUGE.

Towards the close of the Book of Numbers there are several directions as to matters of importance, given through the great leader in the closing days of his long life. Amongst these the most prominent are the directions to set apart six Cities of Refuge.

Previously, however, to this, the mandate had been given forth, that, on entering the land of Canaan, not only were the then inhabitants to be driven out (as has been noticed already), but that their pictures and molten images were to be destroyed, and their high places plucked down.

This is the first mention of *pictures* in the Divine record, and it is evident that these were such as are customary in many heathen temples of the East even now, viz., indecent and shameful representations, naturally enough connected with the indecent and shameful rites of the worship of Baal and other divinities. The molten images were, many of them, of the same character; hence the injunction to destroy them, an injunction only partially carried out, as is evident from the subsequent history.

Even in modern times, and in Christian lands and cities, and by artists who have worked under the patronage of Christian potentates, art has not seldom been degraded to the production of works whose effect can only be to stimulate the lusts of the flesh, and stir up the passions of sinful men. And in defence of this the strange doctrine has been put forth, that art has nothing to do with morality, as if anything that men do or say can be removed from the sphere of right and wrong. As well say that trade, or politics, or handicrafts, or farming have nothing to do with morality.

Here, however, in this Divine record, we may learn that pictures and statues may be highly inimical to the best interests of mankind, and that it may be a duty, in certain circumstances, to destroy them.

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The injunction is then given to divide the land *by lot* to the several families of the tribes, a wise and far-seeing provision designed to prevent those jealousies and envyings which could scarcely fail to arise were the division to be in any other way. And the command is given that *every man's inheritance shall be where the lot falleth*; practically intimating that every man must be content with the land as it falls to him, and not be hankering after any other.

The final command was that when they had obtained possession of the land, the people were to set apart certain cities to be for the possession of the Levites, which cities should have a space round about them of half a mile in extent, as measured from the walls; this space to be devoted to their cattle and flocks. It should be borne in mind that neither the Levites nor the Priests were to devote their whole time to the work of attending on the Tabernacle. It is evident that, with the possible exception of the High Priest, all the rest were to follow the ordinary occupations of the people, and to be in no way distinguished from the people, except in the obligation to proceed to the Temple in their appointed courses. And as the work of the priest was largely outward and mechanical, no special training or education was needed or commanded. Still less was it in the case of the Levites. But it is evident that the Levites were all to be dwellers in towns, and to follow such occupations as townsmen devote themselves to; no doubt principally to trade and handicrafts. The land round about their cities was not large enough to enable them to live by agriculture, but must be conceived of as given for garden purposes, and for such small pasturage as town dwellers often find it convenient to have. These cities are to be forty-eight in number.

But amongst these cities of the Levites six are to be set apart for that notable use of being

CITIES OF REFUGE.

The object of these cities was not to shelter the murderer. A man who was guilty of wilful murder was to *be surely put to death*. (Chap. xxxv., 18.) But if *a man thrust another, or cast a stone at him, without enmity*, that he die,—then the congregation was to judge the matter at the demand of the revenger of blood. And if it were found that there were no enmity or lying in wait, then he should abide in the city until the death of the High Priest, and there be protected.

This institution of the manslayer and the revenger of blood was not originated by the law of Moses. It was doubtless a long traditional custom, suitable to a life like that

of the wilderness, where there were no courts of justice, and each man was bound to defend his own family, and to execute justice on any who did them wrong. How liable to abuse such an institution was is evident from a consideration of the passions of human nature. The blood-feud between families has survived to modern times in certain parts of Europe, and has been fruitful of dark deeds of revenge and bloodshed in countries where it prevails.

Now, while the Mosaic law did not originate this custom of each family executing justice upon its assailants, it did not abolish it. But to prevent its abuse—such abuses as we have seen even in Christian countries—and the perpetration of blood-feuds, which are considered a matter of obligation, this setting apart of cities where a man might find refuge was ordained. And that there might be a final termination of the blood-feud, and to prevent its being perpetuated, as it tends to be, from generation to generation, it was ordained that after the death of the High Priest every man who had taken refuge in one of these cities might return in peace to his home.

All this legislation is founded upon the idea of the sacredness of human life, and the importance of surrounding it with all possible safeguards. "*Ye shall not pollute the land wherever ye are; for blood defileth the land. And the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that sheddeth it.*" (Chap. xxxv., 33.) A great principle indeed, and all modern experience confirms this as the rule that must ensure the peace and safety of a community. When bloodshedding is passed by with light punishment, and without the death penalty, more bloodshedding follows. Thus the humanitarian theory defeats itself. For in place of one guilty man suffering the death penalty, the lives of many innocent men and women are put in jeopardy and sacrificed.

In due time, when the people had obtained possession of the whole land, these cities were set apart and so chosen that no man would be more than one day's journey from the nearest of them. Thus in the land of Canaan proper, there was Hebron in the South, Shechem in the centre, and Kadesh of Galilee in the North; places about forty miles distant from each other. And East of Jordan, there were Bezer in the South, Ramoth Gilead in the centre, and Golan in the North, also distant from each other about forty miles. Thus no man would be more than twenty miles from a city of refuge, and the majority of men would be much nearer. The idea of the Cities of Refuge as being types of the refuge attained by a sinful man under the

redemption of the Gospel has often been noted, and although a prudent judgment is needed in applying these events which are considered to be typical (for there has been very much vain speculation in this direction), yet the analogy is near enough to make such a typical application in this case reasonable. There is, to begin with, the analogy of a man who is in danger of death—as is every sinner, by reason of broken law. Then there is the Divine provision of a sure refuge, viz., by fleeing to Jesus Christ the Redeemer, and abiding in Him; not seeking safety or salvation in one's own merits, but trusting solely to His; with the further thought of continued safety so long as this position is maintained. And there is a phrase in the Epistle to the Hebrews which is evidently founded on this analogy. In chapter vi., 18, we have the expression, "that we might have strong consolation *who have fled for refuge* to lay hold upon the hope set before us," the Apostle thus carrying the mind of these Hebrews back to that ancient institution of their fathers which was ordained through Moses before they entered the land of Canaan.

NOTE.—The idea of these cities of refuge survived to the medieval times of the Christian Church, and was evidently the origin of the custom of making abbeys and other holy places sanctuaries for criminals. The events connected with this custom show how liable it was to abuse. For, whereas, doubtless, at the beginning it was designed for the protection of persecuted and innocent men, against lawless tyranny, the doors of the abbey being thrown open to protect such until they could be properly tried, it came, at length, to be a means of escape for notorious criminals—for thieves, and even murderers—known to be such, who were received within the abbey gates, kept there in safety, and thus enabled to set the law at defiance; all which was for the encouragement of crime, and the defeating of the ends of justice. The Broad Sanctuary, near Westminster Abbey, reminds us to this day how this custom once obtained in that venerable fane.

The closing chapter of the Book of Numbers deals with a question of the very greatest importance, viz., as to how the identity of the separate tribes is to be preserved, when they all formed one nation, speaking one language, and were so contiguous to one another that very close intercourse was certain to arise. Marriages would—in the ordinary course of things—take place between members of one tribe and another. Thus the inheritance of land in one tribe would pass to a family of another tribe, and so, in course of time, identity would be lost. A case of this kind was brought before Moses. A man of the tribe of Manasseh had no sons. His land would then pass to his daughters. If any of them married into another tribe,

that other tribe would then have a part of the inheritance of the tribe of Manasseh.

This led to an enactment of the highest importance, viz., that every person must marry within their own tribe; so shall not the inheritance of the children of Israel remove from tribe to tribe; for every one of the children of Israel shall keep himself to the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers.

This command was given by the Lord to Moses in the plains of Moab, and it became a part of the law that was binding on all the children of Israel. So was the identity of the tribes preserved.

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THE BOOK

OF

DEUTERONOMY.

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CHAPTER I.

ADDRESSES ON VARIOUS MATTERS.

(Chap. 1 to 20.)

The Book of Deuteronomy contains no original account of historical events, and no original biography, with one exception, viz., the account of the death of Moses. Otherwise, it is wholly composed of addresses delivered by Moses during the closing days of his marvellous life, when the Israelites were encamped on the plains of Moab, opposite to Jericho, and were making ready for the great enterprise of invading the land of Canaan. The reason for their remaining there as long as they did is not given in the sacred record; but probably it was that they might make the many preparations necessary for the expedition. But they did so remain, and during this time it was that the addresses were delivered which are gathered together in this book.

(It should be noted, however, that the two first verses of Deuteronomy belong rather to the Book of Numbers, as they refer to words spoken by Moses at various points on the journeys recorded in that book.)

The record of Deuteronomy begins at the third verse with the words:

"And it came to pass in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first day of the month, that Moses spake unto the children of Israel, according to all that the Lord had given him in Commandment unto them."

The key-note of the whole book is, therefore, that the words are not the words of Moses, but of God.

The word Deuteronomy, as is generally known, means the second law, but this is not another law, in addition to the former, but rather in part a repetition of precepts that have been given before, with expansions and amplifications, together with a series of stirring exhortations and warnings, and a recalling of historical events from the time they left Egypt.

In these addresses there are many passages of striking force and permanent value, so that there is hardly one of the Old Testament records that is referred to so often in the New, or that may be read with so much interest in these days, as bearing both on the secular and spiritual life of man.

The First address is a short summary of the events that befell the people from the time they left Sinai to their encampment on the plains of Moab. These have all been narrated before, but there is a short and touching prayer

breathed by Moses that has not been hitherto recorded:—thus—

“O Lord God, thou hast begun to show Thy servant Thy greatness and Thy mighty hand: for what God is there in Heaven or in earth that can do according to Thy works, and according to Thy might. . . . I pray Thee, let me go over, and see the good land that is beyond Jordan; that goodly mountain and Lebanon.” (Chap. iii., 24.)

One can imagine the natural longing of a heart like that of Moses, as he saw the mountain range of Judea right opposite, and casting his eye northward, could catch a glimpse in the far distance of that goodly mountain of Hermon, and possibly some part of Lebanon—to go over and tread the sacred soil that God had promised forty years before. And thus he prayed. But this was one of the prayers that are not answered in the letter, though we can be sure it was answered in spirit; he being carried over another Jordan, into a higher and better Canaan, than the land that lay before him.

The succeeding chapters of this first address contain an exhortation and rehearsal in which are many striking passages—thus:—

The change *neither to add to, nor diminish the word commanded them* (Chap. iv., 2)—a passage repeated in the last Chapter of the New Testament; and very applicable in Christian times.

The repeated declaration, *Ye saw no similitude* (v. 12.) expressive of the very essence of the revelation of God to mankind.

The solemn warning that, if unfaithful, they would be *scattered among the nations!* (iv., 27) a word that is being fulfilled before our very eyes:

Then, after a repetition of the Ten Commandments (Chap. v.), (in slightly varied terms, showing that Moses was speaking from memory.) we have that memorable summary—quoted by our Lord (Luke x. 27.)

THOU SHALT LOVE THE LORD THY GOD WITH ALL THINE HEART, AND WITH ALL THY SOUL, AND WITH ALL THY MIGHT (v. v.),—a word that goes far deeper than mere outward command, and reaches to the thoughts and intents of the heart (Heb. iv., 12). Also the command:—(Chap. vi., 5, 6, 7.)

These words . . . shall be in thine heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes: And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thine house, and on thy gates:—

A command that was observed in the letter and broken in the spirit by the Pharisees, and has been set aside almost wholly by the successors of the Pharisees in modern times; viz., by those who exalt the traditions of the Church to equal authority with the word of God.

Then follows (Chap. vii.) a repetition of that most stringent prohibition against intercourse with the Canaanitish nations; and specially against *marriages* with them, that was so distinguishing a feature in the revelation to Moses; and which can only be understood by remembering that the sword of Divine judgment for long continued, and abandoned wickedness was about to descend on these nations, through the instrumentality of these Israelites.

The Addresses beginning at the Eighth chapter are most impressive, and refer largely to Israel as a nation, and to their position and duty as such; as well as to the Land they are to occupy:—

“For the Lord thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills: a land of wheat and barley and vines, and fig trees and pomegranates: a land of oil olive and honey; a land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack anything in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass.” (Chap. viii., 7, 8, 9.)

A description largely true to this day; for, in spite of long ages of neglect, abandonment, oppression, and scandalous misgovernment, it is still a land of fruitful valleys, a land of corn and wine, and oil olive and honey; capable under a well-administered government of producing four-fold what it does at present, and of sustaining five times its present population. But the people have been *robbed and spoiled* for ages;—yet, in the light of prophecy, we may look for better things in days to come.

And we, in this Dominion of Canada, can recognize in the words of the great Leader, a singularly faithful description of the “goodly land” in which our own lot is cast.

And we can appreciate the force of the warning that in the days of prosperity, *“when we have eaten and are full,” and have built goodly houses, and dwelt therein; and our herds and our flocks, and our silver and our gold, and all that we have are multiplied;—that then our hearts be lifted up; that we forget the Lord our God, and say in our heart: my power, and the might of my hand hath gotten me this wealth! But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God; FOR IT IS HE THAT GIVETH THEE POWER TO GET WEALTH!* (v. 10 to 17.)

Most pregnant saying,—profound and philosophic; constantly forgotten in these days of national expansion and

increase of wealth;—days when men on this continent, ourselves included, are in the habit of pluming ourselves on our wealth and progress, comparing ourselves with others who have not done so well; as if we had created the soil, and planted the forests, and placed the coal and the silver and the gold in the mine, and created the rivers and the seas that are the habitation of the fish. To hear some people talk, one would suppose all these to be the creation of men. But, even when we are ready to acknowledge a creating Hand in all this, how apt we are to glorify ourselves for all the results of industry and mechanical skill, forgetting that even these are all from Him; that the contriving brain, and the skillful hand, and the seeing eye, and the persevering will are all of Him, as their ultimate source and sustaining strength. He it is that gives men the power to get wealth—a mighty and far reaching truth indeed, but how seldom realized; rarely thought of, and practically never given thanks for. It was a profound knowledge of human nature that led to this warning of three thousand years ago, a warning that has been so eloquently brought before us at this very time in that pathetic lyric,

"Lest we forget, lest we forget."

Further on in the same address the boundaries of their future possession are declared to be from the Wilderness to Lebanon north and south, and from the River Euphrates to the Mediterranean Sea, east and west. The first was realized during the days of Joshua; the last only after the victories of David. (Chap. xi. 24.)

The address then reverts to matters of Religion and Worship. After a repetition of the command to destroy all the altars, images, and groves of the Canaanitish nations, there is the injunction that in *one place*, and *one place only* shall burnt offerings and sacrifices be offered; and that the place shall be Divinely chosen. And the injunction is repeated:—with the command that their times of sacrifice and fulfilment of vows shall be times of *rejoicing*. (Chap. xii., 5 to 12.)

This injunction that there shall be, in the whole land, only one place of sacrifice; one tabernacle, one temple, one altar, is perhaps the most remarkable feature in the whole Mosaic system.

It seems to have been designed to weld the people together as one, to develop a high degree of national, as opposed to a tribal spirit, to develop in the young people of every part of the land a love and admiration for their religion, by seeing it in its most beautiful manifestation

three times a year; and also to make them acquainted with the different parts of their country, as they traversed it on the way to the chosen centre, again and again. And it did answer this purpose for many generations, viz., until the time of the great separation through the folly of King Rehoboam.

The address then turns to the subjects of *enticements from their religion*. If by a pretended prophet, he is to be put to death. If a man's *own brother*, or *sou*, or *wife*, or *dearest friend*, so entice, the injunction is equally severe. *Thine eye shall not pity, neither shalt thou spare*:—(Chap. xiii., 8.)

The offence is capital, because to turn away was treason against God and the State, and struck at the very foundation of their existence as a nation. And all their after experience shows that the temptation to fall away was enormously strong.*

The address passes on to repeat the injunctions respecting *clean and unclean animals and birds*; also as to the *year of release*; also, and particularly, as to *care for the poor*; a marked feature in this legislation; and the foundation of that care for the poor which passed on to Christian times, and has been perpetuated even to this day. (Chap. xv., 11.)

For the poor shall never cease out of the land; said the law giver, and our Lord repeated it when He also said, *The poor ye always have with you*. (Mark xiv.)

The injunctions as to *Gleaning* from the field or the vineyard, or the olive grove, are all of the same character, as well as those which allow a man walking through fields of corn to pluck the ears as he passes—evidently with an eye to poor weary way-farers.

There is in these addresses a good deal of reiteration, which shows that this book was not written as a man of letters would write in these days, but that its contents were spoken, on different occasions, at different times, and strictly in an extempore manner.

And one of the most striking repetitions is the injunction to make the great religious festivals times of *rejoicing*—not such rejoicing as that of the heathen festivals, which were

*NOTE.—Such passages as these have been taken to justify persecution in Christian days; in utter forgetfulness of the difference of times and circumstances; and of the fact that the Divine Saviour expressly forbade a resort to the sword in defence of His revelation. No Christian state has ever been divinely established in such circumstances as the Jews. To profess a different form of the Christian religion from that of the head of the State is no offence against God. The case has no analogy whatever to that of the enticements to idolatry referred to in this address of Moses.

times of rioting and drunkenness, as indeed those of the Medieval Church became too often, but of that joy in the Lord which became a holy and consecrated people, which would express itself, in the joyful singing of psalms and hymns; and in kindly words and deeds, and mutual congratulations as friend met with friend, and *walked to the house of God in company*. And in these rejoicings it is interesting to note how all the members of the household and the poor and the stranger are to be included.

Thou shalt rejoice in thy feast, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy man-servant, and thy maid-servant, and the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless and the widow that are within thy gates. Our great Church Festival seasons when properly observed, are but a continuation of these ancient festivals, as ordained by God through the hand of Moses. (Chap. xvi. 14.) But these, it should be remembered, have no Divine authority.

Following upon this is a striking injunction as to the *Administration of Justice*; which administration is viewed in the Mosaic economy as a part of religious duty, to be done in the fear of God.

Thou shalt not wrest judgment; Thou shalt not respect persons (v. 19.) (Here is enunciated the true doctrine of the equality of men; so profound and wise as contrasted with the *sham* and unworkable doctrine of equality, as it has been put forth in modern days.)

Thou shalt not take a gift; (another far-seeing direction striking at corrupt practices which always tend, and everywhere, to creep into the administration of justice), *for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous.*

The wisest Englishman that ever lived, Lord Bacon, was a sad witness to the truth of this.

A system of Appeal from a Lower to a Higher court is outlined in the direction given as to matters of life and death in this chapter.

After directing that nothing shall be determined except on the testimony of more than one witness, *two or three* being necessary, the command goes on (Chap. xvii.):—

“If there arise a matter too hard for thee in judgment, between blood and blood, between plea and plea, and between stroke and stroke (how expressive, how modern, so to speak, all this sounds), being matters of controversy within thy gates, then thou shalt arise and get thee into the place which the Lord thy God shall choose. And thou shalt come unto the Priests, the Levites, and unto the Judge that shall be in those days and inquire. And thou shalt do according to the sentence of judgment.

Here then is a clear indication of a Superior Court, to be held wherever the seat of worship for the land is fixed; to be presided over by a mixed tribunal of Priests, Levites and Judges; whose decision is to be final. It is interesting to note that, though the Priests and Levites have no office of teaching or prophesying formally assigned to them, they are always to take part in these higher forms of the administration of justice.*

In the same address, other matters of secular administration are touched upon, thus—

AS TO A MONARCHY.

It was foreseen that the time might come when the people would desire a king. Respecting this the following weighty commands are given:—

1. *The King must be divinely chosen.* (Chap. xvii., 15.)
2. *He must be an Israelite.*
3. *He must not multiply horses unto himself, nor go down to Egypt to buy them;*
4. *Neither must he multiply wives unto himself; that his heart turn not away;*
5. *Neither must he greatly multiply unto himself silver and gold.*
6. *When he sitteth on the throne of his Kingdom, he shall have before him a copy of the Law, and he shall read therein all the days of his life; that he may fear the Lord, and that his heart be not lifted above his brethren.*

It is evident that the great idea was to prevent the development of a military monarchy, like those that afterwards became so dominant in the East; but to provide for a king who would be a real shepherd and leader of the people, and not lifted up too high above them. The prohibition to multiply horses would prevent the formation of a powerful standing army; for it was by a numerous force of cavalry and chariots that the standing armies of the east were largely distinguished:—

The prohibition to multiply wives was of the same character. More wives than one were allowed by the law of Moses, but under very strict regulations, such as could not be carried out if wives were multiplied, after the fash-

* NOTE.—It should always be borne in mind that the Priests and Levites of the Mosale Law were not an ecclesiastical caste, living a life separated from the people. They were, as has been shown, in all respects like the rest of the people, following ordinary occupations, with only the obligation to proceed to the city of worship, and take their course of service at the time appointed. But, doubtless, in time, the Priests and Levites would gather in increasing numbers about the central city, and become more and more fit to exercise judicial functions.

ion of the monarchs of the East, in all ages; even till now. And how needful this prohibition was is shown by the wretched developments in the later life of King Solomon. The prohibitor to *greatly* multiply silver and gold is in the same direction. It wisely recognizes that considerable treasure is needful to a monarch. But it forbids a *great* accumulation; such accumulations as those of Croesus for example, which foster pride, and tempt the cupidity of powerful neighbours; bringing about forgetfulness of God, and developing covetousness and hardness of heart; and promoting luxury and effeminacy, these destroyers of monarchs.

In this respect also the career of Solomon furnishes a terrible warning; indeed, in almost every one of these matters, his course as a monarch, after he had built the Temple, was in complete violation of these Divine commands.

Connected with this subject of government are precepts as to

THE CONDUCT OF WAR.

Some of these are very noticeable. The first is that, in going out to war, they are *not to be afraid of a superior force*, not even a force of horses and chariots, generally so terrible to an undisciplined host, but to remember that the *Lord was with them*. (Chap. xx., 1.)

How important this is every commander knows. Courage and confidence are everything in war. Napoleon's profane dictum that "Providence is always on the side of the heaviest battalions" is not true, as both ancient and modern experience have proved. What do Marathon, and Salamis, and Agincourt, and the repulse of the Armada, and numbers of other instances teach, but that soul and spirit and discipline are as powerful forces in war as mere weight of numbers. To ensure that the army should be inspired by faith in God, it was ordered that the Priest shall address the people before a battle began, saying to them: "*Hear O Israel, ye approach this day unto battle; let not your hearts be faint: For the Lord your God is he that goeth with you to fight for you against your enemies, to save you!*" What an inspiring force this could be let the story of Gideon, and Barak, and Jephthae and David prove.

But along with this, some very remarkable directions are given; all tending to make the army a compact, united force, full of spirit and courage, ready to do and dare anything through confidence in God and their cause.

"*The Officers*, it is said, *shall speak unto the people*, saying:

What man is there that hath built a new house, and hath not dedicated it? Let him return to his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man dedicate it." Similarly with the man who has planted a vineyard, and not eaten the fruit of it; also *the man who is betrothed to a wife, and hath not taken her; all these are to return home. Finally, the remarkable challenge is thrown out. What man is there that is fearful and faint-hearted? Let him go and return!* and the sage reason is given *lest he make others faint-hearted also.* (v. 5 to 8.)

One can imagine that very few would have courage enough to answer a challenge like that; and it is plain that its real effect would be to excite every man of the army to the highest pitch of courage and enthusiasm. In fact, in these directions we may almost see the germ of the famous proclamation of Nelson:—ENGLAND EXPECTS EVERY MAN TO DO HIS DUTY!

THE PROPHET THAT WAS TO COME.

It is in the foregoing part of the addresses of Moses that there occurs the striking premonition, that at some coming time, the Lord would *raise up a Prophet from among them*. like unto Moses, who should speak with the authority of God, and to whom all should be bound to listen. (Chap. xviii., 18.)

This was universally received as an intimation of the rise at some future time of some extraordinary prophetic personage, a belief that was in full force in the time of John the Baptist, as can be seen from the question put to him. "Art thou THAT PROPHET?" (John I. 21); and he answered: "No."

But that prophet was already in the world, raised up from the people, speaking with Divine authority all the words the Father had commanded him, even JESUS, the SON OF MAN and SON OF GOD.

CHAPTER II.

VARIOUS PRECEPTS AS TO SECULAR AND RELIGIOUS MATTERS.

(Chap. XX., 10 to end.)

Continuing the commands as to the carrying on of War; we find a direction as to a *besieged city*, viz., that in every case a *proclamation of peace* shall be made, which, if accepted by the inhabitants, they shall simply become tributaries. But, if they refuse, all the men are to be slain, but the women and the children are to be retained as servants. (v. 10 to 14.)

This looks, at first, a barbarous and cruel precept, but it must be remembered that in those days every man capable of bearing arms would be a soldier. And it is hard to form a right judgment at this distance of time and in such changed circumstances, as to the cruelty or otherwise of certain precepts.

There is also a further direction with respect to a long siege, where there are abundance of fruit trees about the city, that they are not to be cut down to be employed in the siege. *For thou mayest eat of them; for the tree of the field is man's life. Only the trees thou knowest to be trees not for meat thou shalt cut down.* (v. 19.)

Certainly a humane and thoughtful provision, designed to mitigate the ravages of war, and to prevent those desolations of large tracts of fruitful country which have so generally resulted from war, even in these Christian times.

As a contrast, let us think of the condition of large portions of Europe, especially during the devastating wars of Napoleon, whose maxim was that the country in which war was carried on must support the war. Even the war between the North and the South, though conducted on far more humane principles, led to an amount of devastation that it required long years of peace to recover from.

There is then a precept as to *Captives* which presents a striking contrast to what was customary in ancient times, viz., that, if amongst the captives of war, a man finds a woman whom he desires, she must be made a *lawful wife*; and not be made a slave; nor be sold for money, after she has become a wife. (Chap. xxi., 10 to 13.)

A precept, this, far in advance of the practice even of some modern nations.

It is to be noted, however, that the command to proclaim peace to a besieged city is not to apply to the cities of the Canaanite nations. These were doomed to total destruction, as a Divine judgment, and *lest they should teach the Israelites to do after their abominations.*

Amongst the precepts relating to Secular life in these later addresses, the following stand out prominently.

If a *dead body* (Chap. xxi.) be found lying in the field, and if be not known who hath slain him, most careful enquiry is to be made, with a sacrifice as a solemnity, and the elders of the nearest city are to be put upon an oath, and protestation, that this blood is not of their shedding.

Here we may discern the germ of the Coroner's Inquest of these times.

If a man have *two wives*, of whom he likes one better than the other, he must make no difference in his treatment of their children:—(v. 15 to 17.)

If a man have a *rebellious son*, a glutton and a drunkard, and incorrigible in wickedness, he is *to be brought to the elders of the city*, and by the men of the city *shall be stoned to death.* (v. 21.)

These Mosaic regulations, let it be remembered, are divinely ordained, and, though they be hard to understand, some of them, as being terribly severe, it must be remembered they are ordained by One who is unquestionably as merciful as he is just. And all the experience of our own time with regard to the punishment of crime is that severity is oftentimes the greatest mercy; especially in cases where life has been taken. To spare a murderer has again and again led to the destruction of innocent people. Modern humanitarianism thus often defeats its own object. To save one life, and that a murderer's, a sacrifice of many innocent people has been made.

Now this punishment of a wicked son, which would be well known, would be deterrent in a very high degree. And this is the end of all punishment for crime. The criminal is punished to prevent others being injured by other acts of crime. And certainly a son, with vicious propensities, could hardly fail to be strongly restrained in the exercise of them when he knew he was liable to be stoned to death by the people if his wickedness became intolerable.

The same principle applies to other severe punishments, for example, to those punishments of stoning to death for *offences against chastity* (Chap. xxii. 20 to 25), which read so hardly to us, without considering the circumstances. For these offences struck like idolatry, at the very foundation of the character of the nation, as a separate and consecrated people.

Such things were common features in the life of the nations round about, and the temptation to sink to their level was constant, pressing, and hard to resist. It was needful to raise the strongest barriers, both of law and religion, to prevent this. For, as has been said before, were this people of Israel to become idolaters and immoral like the people around them, they would be in danger of extinction along with them.

Yet, along with these precepts of extreme severity, there were many others of great tenderness and consideration. Thus in Chap. xxii., we find:—

1. Precepts to care for a brother's stray ox or sheep, or raiment, or any other lost thing, and to restore them; also to lift up a brother's ox or ass that has fallen down.

2. To care even for such a small thing as a *bird's nest* when the parent bird is sitting.

3. To provide a *battlement for a house*, that blood may not be brought upon the house, if any man fall from it.

4. Prohibiting the *ploughing with an ox and an ass together*, evidently because they would pull unequally, and one or the other of them be hurt.

5. And here is a precept that would have been most pertinent on this continent up to forty years ago:—

Thou shalt not deliver unto his master the servant which is escaped from his master unto thee: He shall dwell with thee in the place he liketh best, thou shalt not oppress him. (Chap. xxiii., 15.)

In the days of Southern slavery, the institution was constantly justified by an appeal to Mosaic law. But the bondage allowed by that law was utterly different from the slavery which made the man a chattel. And this precept would absolutely forbid the enactment of a fugitive slave law—a law which, after all, was over-ruled to bring slavery to an end. (The case of Onesimus in the New Testament has evidently no bearing on the question.)

6. And here is a beautiful precept respecting a couple newly married:—

When a man hath taken a new wife, he shall not go out to war, neither shall he be charged with any business, but he shall be free at home one year, and shall cheer up the wife which he hath taken! (Chap. xxiv., 5.)

Certainly, if practicable under the conditions of modern life, every newly married pair would be glad indeed if this were the rule of society, and that they could have a honeymoon extending over a whole year!

7. *Man stealing* is made a capital offence! (v. 7.)

How enormously are these Mosaic statutes in advance

of the customs and habits even of modern times. Man stealing is still practiced, and on a large scale, by Mohammedan Arabs in North Africa, and that without any protest from Mohammedan nations. And how comparatively recent in the Christian era has been the abolition of the slave trade by Great Britain.

8. It is forbidden to take the upper or the nether millstone in pledge; for that, it is said, is taking pledge of a man's life;—or to go into a man's house to fetch his pledge (here is the root of the English idea of the sanctity of a man's domicile)—and if the man be poor, and pledge his raiment, it is to be delivered to him before the sun goes down, that he may sleep in it (according to Eastern habits). (v. 6, 11, 13.)

9. A hired servant is not to be oppressed. Whether he is an Israelite or a stranger, his wages are to be paid on the day they are due.

10. A widow's raiment is not to be taken to pledge.

11. The gleanings of the field or the vineyard are not to be gathered up, but to be left for the stranger, the fatherless and the widow:—

12. The ox that treadeth out the corn is not to be muzzled; evidently that the animal may be able to eat while working.

13. And if the punishment of stripes is to be inflicted, only forty stripes are to be given, and no more.

It was according to the spirit of Mosaic legislation that the practice became general of stopping at thirty-nine stripes, forty save one, as St. Paul expresses it. (2 Cor., XI, 24.)

The infliction of corporal punishment was very liable to abuse, and might become, instead of a sentence of impartial justice, a means of gratifying malice, and an occasion of barbarous cruelty. Hence, it has been largely replaced in modern jurisprudence by a system of imprisonments or fines. But experience has shown that in the case of crimes against the person, corporal punishment is a far more effectual deterrent than imprisonment, no matter how long it may last. The roughs and drunkards and wife-beaters of a community, the men who are guilty of assaults and crimes of violence, care comparatively nothing for fine or imprisonment. But there is not one of them who is not afraid of a flogging. And the knowledge that an assault would be followed by flogging would restrain the brutes that commit assaults in nine cases out of ten.

There is, after all, a profound knowledge of the workings of criminal human nature in the principle laid down, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth; not, as is sometimes wrongly supposed, as a matter of private revenge, but as a principle of Criminal Law. And in departing from it, un-

der the influence of sentimental sympathy for criminals, the community has been injured and the criminal not benefited.

The mixture of severity and tenderness in these Divine precepts is one of its very noticeable features. Yet it was not peculiar to the legislation through Moses. For the Apostle Paul noticed it (yet speaking by the Holy Ghost), in referring to the larger divine dispensations as to Israel and the Gentile world. "*Behold*, he says in his Epistle to the Romans (Chap. XI, 22) *the goodness and severity of God!* Yes, most truly, the one as manifest as the other. And so it is in the world of so-called Nature! The beneficent arrangements for the comfort and welfare of man and beast and fish and fowl, excite the admiration—the profound admiration—of all who have investigated them. And most able treatises have been written on the subject.

But the severity of nature is just as conspicuous as the beneficence. There are storms and hurricanes on the ocean, destructive earthquakes by land, terrible overflows of rivers and desolating tidal waves from the sea. There are fierce snow storms, killing frosts, disasters of floods and volcanoes. In fact, the ordinary workings of nature are edged about in all directions by severe penalties.

Fire will burn, and water will drown, and a fall will crush; no matter who is affected by them.

And so these severe operations of nature, as well as the beneficent ones, are proclaimed in one of the Psalms, when they are recognized as part of the operations of the same Almighty Ruler. He who *maketh the grass to grow on the mountains. Who covereth the heaven with clouds, and prepareth rain for the earth, Who giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry:—He giveth snow like wool; He scattereth forth his ice like morsels, so that none can stand before his cold.* Not only do the fruitful trees and all cedars, beasts and all cattle praise Him, but fire and hail, snow and vapour, and stormy wind fulfilling His word! (Psalms cxlvii., cxlviii. The *goodness and severity of Nature* are manifest. And thus do nature and revelation agree. The God of Nature, He it is who spake by His servant Moses, and gave laws to the Jews, also of goodness and severity, partly local and temporarily suited for them and their time alone, but partly containing eternal principles of action, suitable to all men in all ages and times.

Some other laws may be passed by briefly.

That law of divorce, which is referred to by our Lord as it was quoted by the Pharisees (Chap. xxiv., 1), was a law permitting divorce only in case of unchastity.

The only other case in which divorce was permitted was when a captive in war had been married by her captor. This gives no sanction to the loose methods of divorce that have become so prevalent in certain States of modern times, and which permit divorce because of fancy and whim, and mere dislike; so dangerously undermining the whole fabric of society.

The law requiring a man to marry the widow of a deceased brother, (Chap. xxv., 5), so as to preserve posterity to the brother, was evidently made in view of the land laws, which laws held the land strictly to the family once owning it, the land, even if alienated, coming back to the family at the year of Jubile. The law is expressly said to be "that the name be not put out of Israel." This law is accompanied by a severe and disgraceful punishment if the brother of the deceased should refuse to carry it out.

The injunction formerly given as to justice in weights and measures is emphatically repeated: *Thou shalt not have divers weights, great and small, nor divers measures.* But A JUST WEIGHT, A PERFECT AND JUST MEASURE shalt thou have. (Chap. xxv.)

One of the last words of the final address of the law-giver is to ordain a beautiful and touching ceremony of THANKSGIVING; which has generally been overlooked. The command relates to the ingathering of the harvest and directs:—

"When thou art come to the land which the Lord giveth thee, thou shalt take of all the fruit of the earth He giveth thee, and put it in a basket, and go to the place where the Lord hath put his name. (Chap. xxvi.)"

Then, thou shalt give the basket to the priest, and say, *a Syrian, ready to perish, was my father (referring to Jacob in the famine), and he went down to Egypt, and became a nation great and populous. And the Egyptians afflicted us, and laid bondage upon us. And when we cried, the Lord brought us forth with great terribleness.* And he hath given us this land which floweth with milk and honey. *And now, behold I have brought the first fruits of the land, which thou, O Lord hast given me. And thou shalt worship and rejoice in every good thing which the Lord thy God hath given thee; and unto thine house, thou and the Levite and the stranger within thy gates. (Chap. xxv., xxvi.)*

Thus, year by year, there was individual thanksgiving by the head of every house, and a remembrance of how, from a Syrian ready to perish, God had made them the nation that they were.

There is a further command of a solemn ceremony of

Protestation in every year of tithing. This tithing was only every third year; and, therefore, never burdensome. It was giving exactly according to what God had bestowed; there was, therefore, always the means of giving in the giver's own hand

And the tithe was to be, not only for the Levite, not for religious purposes only, but for the poor, for the *stranger* and the *fatherless* and the *widow!* an application of the title which has been sadly forgotten in modern times, when the whole was absorbed by the Church, leaving the poor and the orphan to be cared for by the State.

But in the third year, in bringing in his tithe to the priest, the Israelite was required to say before God: *I have given of the hallowed things to the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless and the widow, according to Thy commandment. I have not transgressed Thy commandment, neither have I forgotten them.* (Chap. xxvi., 12, 13.)

Well would it have been both for Church and State in Christian times if this had been perpetuated.

Having said all this, Moses offers up a solemn

PRAYER FOR BLESSING. (v. 15, 16.)

and a solemn form for covenant and consecration in the words:—(v. 17 to 19.)

"Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God; to walk in His ways, and to hearken to His voice. And the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people, as He promised thee; to make thee high above all nations, which He hath made, in praise and in honor; and that thou mayest be an holy people unto the Lord thy God," as he hath spoken:—

A form of consecration and covenant that is just as applicable to the people of Christian times; and most suitable, for example, when young men and maidens are taking the vows of God upon them in confirmation, or Christian profession, or when on some occasion of peculiar solemnity the whole congregation is renewing its vows of dedication to God.

After this, the command is given to set up Great Stones, *plastering them with plaster* and writing on them the words of the Law, which stones are to be set up on Mount Ebal, in the very centre of the land. How much of the law was so written it is impossible to say; probably not more than the Ten Commandments. On the same place an altar of rough stones was to be erected, and burnt offerings and peace-offerings offered thereon. This was doubtless a temporary arrangement, only intended for the one solemn ceremony of consecration, to be observed when the land was subdued. (Chap. xvi., 1 to 3.)

CHAPTER III.

THE CLOSING CHARGE AND SONG OF MOSES, WITH THE BLESSINGS AND CURSINGS.

(Deut. 27 to end.)

The closing words of the great Law-giver are of extraordinary weight and solemnity. First there is the command to assemble the tribes on the Mounts Ebal and Gerizim—half on Gerizim, half on Ebal, the place of each being designated, and there to have read out in the ears of the whole people, a terribly emphatic condemnation of certain sins to which, from their circumstances, they would be prone. And thus this word began:—

“Cursed be the man that maketh a graven or molten image, an abomination unto the Lord, the work of the hands of the craftsman, and putteth it in a secret place:—

And all the people shall answer, AMEN! (v. 15.)

Then the curses ring out against the man that *setteth light by his father or his mother*; against him that *removeth his neighbour's landmark*; against him that *maketh the blind to wander out of the way*; and against him that *perverteth the judgment of the stranger, the fatherless and the widow*.

Then follow denunciations against various forms of unchastity; also against crimes of violence; and finally this general one:—

Curseth be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law.

To each of which the people answer by a solemn AMEN.

One may conceive the effect of such a ceremony as this upon the young who hear for the first time the words of the Divine Law sounded out on these mountains,—the one answering the other,—and all the people by thousands responding with that expressive word of assent, which has come down to our own times, and is universally used in prayer by all people. How calculated to write deep in the heart the condemnation of iniquity, to stir the conscience, to call sin to recollection—to move to repentance! God, who knows the heart of man ordained this ceremony, and He knew what its effect would be.

The series of Blessings and Cursings which follow are amongst the most remarkable of all the remarkable things in this Book.

The blessings are chiefly of an outward and temporal character, but not wholly so, as has been erroneously sup-

posed. They are all contingent on the observance of God's law and commands, and comprise a superabundance of good; *Blessings in the city, in the field, in the fruit of the body, and the fruit of the ground; blessings on Cattle, on Sheep, on Basket and Store; blessings in coming in and going out; in war, and in peace, and in all that the people set their hands to.* (Chap. xxviii.)

Thus far as to temporal things. But there are higher blessings than these,—*For the Lord shall establish thee an holy people unto Himself; and all people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the Lord, and shall be afraid of thee.* (v. 9.)

Thus, in spiritual things and temporal alike, they should be blessed; the heaven would smile upon them, the rain should come in his season; they should lend and not borrow; they should be above and not beneath; but all contingent on their continuing faithful, and holding fast by the commandments of their God.

Some of these blessings would be fulfilled from the operation of natural causes (for godliness has always had the promise of the life that now is), by making men sober, honest, persevering and industrious in the affairs of life.

But some of these blessings are beyond the sphere of natural causes, and can only be referred to a special working of the providence and government of God.

This rule will apply to the Cursings also, which run on lines nearly parallel with the blessings, embracing the body, the estate, the national and the spiritual condition. The language of these cursings is far more emphatic than that of the blessings, and in places it is really terrible; almost "making the flesh creep," as we pass on from one shade of calamity to another. Plague, pestilence and famine, bodily disorders, and the loathsome diseases of Egypt, such as came from wickedness and licentiousness; defeat in war, the carrying off of sons and daughters into captivity, and a depth of degradation and misery such that they should become *an astonishment*, and a *proverb*, and a *by-word* with the nations amongst whom they were driven; all these are unrolled as a series of terrible pictures of misfortune such as have never been equalled since the world began. (v. 15 to end.)

Many of these terrible forecastings were literally fulfilled at an early period of their history. But some were strikingly prophetic, stretching out into far distant times and ages. What, for example, can be more striking than the following, as indicating the sufferings endured when the land was invaded, and Jerusalem besieged, time and again, but especially in that terrible siege under the Roman Gen-

eral, Titus, after the nation—as a nation—had rejected the Son of God:—

"The Lord shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flyeth; a nation of fierce countenance: (Chap. xxviii., 49) (how perfect a description of the Roman army).

"And he shall besiege thee in all thy gates, until thy high and fenced walls come down wherein thou trustest, throughout thy land!"

Then follows a terrible picture of Famine,—literally fulfilled more than once—but specially at the last great siege by the Romans:—*And thou shalt eat the fruit of thine own body, the flesh of thy sons, and of thy daughters, in the straitness of the siege! So that the man that is tender among you, his eye shall be evil toward the wife of his bosom, and the remnant of his children, so that he will not give to any of them of the flesh of his children that he shall eat:— (v. 54.)*

And, more terrible still, *The tender and delicate woman among you, which would not adventure to set the sole of her foot upon the ground, for delicacy and tenderness,—her eye shall be evil toward the husband of her bosom, and towards her children, 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. (v. 56.)*

If we did not know that such things had really happened, these awful pictures might be supposed to be the dreams of a wierd imagination.

But they are really foreshadowings cast upon the wall by Him who knows all the future of the nations; and to Whom the terrible events of the captivities and the sieges of distant ages were present as the events of to-day.

And how true are some other dark shadows of this picture, we have witness in the events of modern times in Europe, and even in those of our own day.

Is it not true of the Jews of these modern times, that they have been scattered amongst all people, and is not this a true description of what their circumstances have often been:—

"And amongst these nations thou shalt find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest. And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee,—in the morning thou shalt say, would God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, would God it were morning, for the fear of thine heart wherunto thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see! (v. 64.)

There have been persecutions of other people, and bitter persecutions too. But these have been only partial, and for a comparatively short time. Such persecutions have been utterly unlike those against the Jews.

The ill-will towards them has been against the whole race. The persecutions, the exactions, the outrageous tyrannies they have endured, have been directed against them simply as Jews; and it is as strange as it is shameful, to say that most of these persecutions have been by so-called Christian nations, nations who are heirs alike of the revelation and the salvation that came by this ancient people.

Even in these closing days—alas—of the nineteenth century, the manifestations of ill-will in some of the principal countries of Europe are as pronounced as ever.

All this is to the shame of Christendom; yet, for all that, like other developments of wrong-doing that have worked out the plans of Divine ordination, these persecutions have fulfilled the words spoken thousands of years ago. Thus, with the Apostle Paul, when speaking of this very subject of the destiny of his own people, we can but exclaim, *How unsearchable* are God's judgments, and *His ways past finding out*.

For, in spite of all these calamities, the race survives. And we have, later on in the last final address, an index to this feature of their history. For after the dark clouds of threatening comes the rainbow of promise, viz., that if, in captivity or misery, they turn to the Lord,—*Then the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion on thee, and will return, and gather thee from the nations whither the Lord thy God hath scattered thee. And the Lord thy God will circumsise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.* (Chap. xxx.)

And it is here that occurs the striking passage quoted by St. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans (Chap. x., 6, 7, 8):—

“For this commandment is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say—Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say—Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear and do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee; in thy mouth and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it. (v. 11 to 14.)

Having said this, and called Heaven and Earth to witness that he had set before them life and death, he went on to speak a few parting words of counsel:—

“I am an hundred and twenty years old this day,” so he begins, and goes on to charge them to be strong and of good courage. Then he gives the same charge to JOSHUA; after which he added the last words to *The Book of the Law*

which he had been writing, and delivered the book to the Levites to be placed in the Ark of the Covenant.* (Chap. xxxi., 1 to 9.)

Respecting this Law, the solemn charge was given, that in every seventh year, the year of release, when all Israel is gathered before God, it is to be read in their hearing. "Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and the stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear and that they may learn, and fear the Lord your God, and observe to do all the words of this law; and that their children which have not known anything, may hear and learn to fear the Lord your God, as long as ye live in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it." (v. 10 to 12.)

The closing chapters of Deuteronomy contain what is called the Song of Moses; a short lyrical poem of wonderful sublimity and beauty; the outpouring of a sanctified genius, and of a heart overflowing with zeal and tenderness to the people, and a high reverence to the God he had served so long. Yet, withal, not forgetting the grievous faults and sins of the nation; nor the punishment they might fear should they pass on in their trespasses. The nations round about them are also passed in review.

To this song all the people were gathered together to listen, but specially the Elders of the tribes, who probably were ranged in front of the vast congregation, as disposed along the sides of some of the adjacent hills, in a vast natural amphitheatre.

Give ear, O ye heavens, thus begins this sublime song, and I will speak. And hear, O earth, the words of my mouth.

My doctrine shall drop as the rain,

My speech shall distil as the dew—

As the small rain upon the tender plant,

And as the showers upon the grass. (Deut. xxxii.)

Images, these, often used by subsequent psalmists and poets as expressive of the benefits and blessings of the higher truth.

*NOTE.—This is an interesting intimation from a literary point of view; as it indicates that the writings which are gathered together under the general name of THE LAW (as our Lord spake of The Law and the Prophets, and the Psalms, meaning by the first the books of Moses) were, by Moses himself, arranged in order, and fastened together so as to form what we now call a book. This was very shortly before the solemn call to the mountain where he was to die. And certainly, it is remarkable in the highest degree that such books as these of Moses should have appeared in the world at such an early age, more than five hundred years before Homer.

Then he proceeds, lifting his soul up to the Eternal,—dwelling on His attributes and character:—

*“Ascribe ye greatness unto our God,
He is the Rock; His work is perfect,
For all His ways are judgment;
A God of truth, and without iniquity,
Just and right is He.”*

When we consider how far back in the history of the world was the time of this utterance, we cannot but be struck with its nobility, its perfection, the exalted conception it gives of the Everlasting Ruler, the God and Guide of these Hebrew people. But let us remember—Moses had seen God—face to face. This song is of Divine inspiration. Passing on, with a glance at the contrast between this high excellence, and the corruption, the folly, the crookedness of the people, he utters one of those pregnant truths which are both temporary and everlasting; temporal for the Israel that was; eternal for the true and spiritual Israel who abide in Jesus Christ for ever:—

*The Lord's portion is His people—
Jacob is the lot of His inheritance.*

The Earth is the Lord's, said a descendant of Jacob, *and all that is therein.* And another, that *His delights were with the children of men.* But it pleased Him to separate, select, and choose one people as His own, special and beloved; a peculiar treasure. And of this people, the song declares, using a figure of vivid impersonation:—

*He found him in a desert land,
And in the waste howling wilderness;
He led him about, He instructed him,
He kept him as the apple of His eye:
As an Eagle stirreth up her nest,
Fluttereth over her young,
Spreadeth abroad her wings,
Taket them, beareth them on her wings,
So the Lord alone did lead him;
And there was no strange god with him;
He made him to ride on the high places of the earth,
That he might eat the increase of the fields.*

(Verse 19 to 13.)

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future, is here; and what is said of the natural Israel is everlastingly true, as we may see by the New Testament, of the spiritual children of God; the faithful ones of Christ, as to the watchful care and good guidance of Him who is the Great Shepherd and Bishop of redeemed souls. This has often been pointed out as we passed along the field of this wonderful revelation of God's works and laws through His servant Moses, and we shall notice it again and again. *For all the promises of the old Scripture are Yea and Amen in Christ Jesus* (2 Cor., i., 20).

The eye of prophecy as it saw the goodness of God, saw also in vision the extraordinary perversity and folly that was to characterize this people, down to the very end of Old Testament history,—their perverse fondness for idolatry; their rebellious turning away from God in prosperity, their provocations in going after the abominations of the heathen; being *unmindful of the Rock that begat them, and forgetting the God that formed them*; and of the consequent anger of their God, leading to their being distressed by other nations, and to trouble in their own borders.

They shall be burnt with hunger, and devoured with heat; the sword without, and terror within, shall destroy both the young man and the virgin, the suckling with the man of grey hairs.

And as the great leader looked upon one scene after another in this prophetic unfolding of disaster (so certainly verified in their history), his heart burst out in a longing for better things:—

O, that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end! How should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight!

But the nations around, that would trouble and oppress them are not to be passed by without a recompense:—

Their rock is not as our Rock, our enemies themselves being the judges. Wrath is laid up in store for them, and scaled amongst God's treasures. To Him belongeth vengeance. Their foot shall slide in due time. The day of their calamity is at hand. Where are their gods; their rock in whom they trusted? Let them rise up and help you, and be your protection! See now that I, even I, am He, and there is no god without Me.

Most truly was all this verified in the subsequent history of the adjoining nations. The tribes that harassed them round about, the nations that attacked them, ravaged their land, and carried them away captive, passed away one after another, and have long ceased to exist.

The calamities of Israel were for chastisement and purifying, and for the accomplishment of high ends in the

dispensation of the Messiah. Yet Israel exists still; and when Israel turns to the Lord, their Saviour, then the *fulness of the Gentiles shall come in* (Romans xi., 25).

This wonderful song ends with a sublime picture of the Supreme, as a mighty Avenger, coming in wrath and power, *Lifting up His hand to heaven, whetting His glittering sword, His hands taking hold on judgment, rendering vengeance to His enemies*:—calling on the nations to rejoice with His people, because of the *avenging of the blood of His servants*. Thus will He be *merciful* to His land and to His people. (l. 40 to 43.)

Do we think this strange, as coming from a merciful and benevolent Being? We only think it strange when we form partial and imperfect conceptions, projecting our own thoughts into the region of the Divine.

Already we have noticed, more than once, that nature and revelation agree in opening to us conceptions not only of the *goodness* but the *severity* of the Lord of the Universe,—not only His benevolence and mercy, but His justice. Nature and the course of human affairs long ago suggested to the thoughtful Greeks the operation of a NEMESIS in the forces of the world; a being, or a force, or an influence, which made for righteous retribution. What these thoughtful Greeks imagined and guessed at, the revelation of the Divine word opens up to us as a truth; conformable to reason. *Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance?* enquires the great Apostle, writing to Roman Christians of Divine justice (Chap. iii., 5). And what does he answer, but *Nay, verily, for then how should God judge the world?*

And this is conformable to the instincts of humanity. Let a sentimentalist take his stand in the Roman coliseum and see the lions tearing to pieces fair Christian women, let him see a conqueror like Mahmoud riding over prostrate bodies through the streets of Constantinople, let him stand by an Auto de Fe in Spain, or by the burnings of martyrs in Smithfield, or by the floggings and lashings of slave drivers of the South, and a thousand other scenes of blood and cruelty, such as the impaling of children in Bulgaria, or the massacre of the Armenians in our own times—and he would be less than a man if he did not lift his voice to heaven in indignant remonstrance; if he did not cry out for a Divine hand to appear and punish; if he did not feel satisfaction when blood was made to answer blood, and God was seen coming out of His place, whetting His glittering sword, making His hand take hold on judgment, rendering vengeance to His enemies, and avenging the blood of His servants.

Men, at such times, and sometimes in spite of themselves, are compelled to say, with awe and trembling, as the sword of retribution flashes over guilty nations.—*Verily there is a reward for the righteous. Verily He is a God that judgeth in the earth!* (Psalm lviii., 12.)

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CHAPTER IV.

FINAL BLESSING AND DEATH.

(Chapters xxxiii. and xxxiv.)

A strange lingering solemnity seems to gather about these addresses of the great leader to the people, and it would seem as if, after uttering what were apparently the last parting words, some new thoughts crowded in, some heart-yearning rose up, some inextinguishable desire to say more. And this we can well understand. For Moses, though a hundred and twenty years old, was still abiding in strength of body and mind. "*His eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated.*" (Chap. xxxiv., 7.)

God was about to take him to Himself, but he was still able, to the last moment, with a far-seeing eye, and a vigorous mind, and being full of the Divine Spirit, to speak words of quickening and power.

But the end must come. The people could not abide longer in the plain. Preparations were all complete. Canaan lay before them, with the Jordan only to cross. The last words were therefore spoken, and these last words, like those of Jacob, were words of prophetic blessing; rising into a noble strain of thought, like the rays of the setting sun, illuminating the whole present and future with its glory. The tribes are passed in review, one by one, as they had been in the prophecy of Jacob. What is said of each is not a repetition of what was said before, nor is it an amplification. The ideas are new, the phases of character are distinct. But all is noteworthy, and some of the words have an abiding interest, and have been for support and consolation to thousands even in these Christian days of ampler blessing.

See to what high and noble thoughts the mind of the great law-giver was directed; as he spoke the blessing—wherewith he, *Moses, the man of God*, blessed the children of Israel before his death:—

And he said (the eye of prophecy and spiritual vision being opened) (Chap. xxxiii.):—

*The Lord came from Sinai,
And rose up from Mount Seir unto them.
He shined forth from Mount Paran.
And He came with ten thousands of His saints.*

*From His right hand went a fiery law for them;
 Yea, He loved the people;
 All His saints are in thy hand,
 And they sat down at his feet,
 Every one shall receive of thy words.
 Moses commended us a law,
 Even the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob,
 And he was king in Jeshurun,
 When the heads of the people,
 And the tribes, were gathered together.*

(Chap. xxxiii, v. 2.)

(It is noticeable that here, as elsewhere, he speaks of himself in the third person.)

After this noble exordium, in which Moses, for the first and only time in his life, is spoken of as a king, while Israel is idealized under the name of Jeshurun, or "the righteous one," the Blessing proper begins,—the names, however, after Reuben, the first-born, not coming in any sort of order.

REUBEN is dismissed with a word, *He shall live*, and his posterity shall not be few.

Then comes the tribe of JUDAH, always eminent. For him there is a divine invocation:—*Let Judah's voice be heard. Let him be brought to his people. Let his hands be sufficient. Let God help him from his enemies.* Brief, but pregnant, and with a touch of the Messianic times about it.

LEVI is the sacred tribe, and the blessing refers to that wonderful breastplate of the high priest, the *Urim and Thummim*, "lights and perfections," by which the mind of God could be ascertained. This is also in the nature of a prayer that it may be continued in efficacy, and that the descendants of Levi may be *teachers of Israel*, and ministrants at her altars of *incense and burnt offering*. All this, together with a special prayer for *blessing on his substance*, acceptance of his *work*, and protection against his *enemies*.

BENJAMIN comes next, and is mentioned with special favor as a *beloved of the Lord*, one whom the mighty JEHOVAH will defend and cover all the day long. It might seem as if there was here a prophetic premonition of that great Benjamite, the Apostle Paul, to whom certainly the blessing is specially applicable.

BUT JOSEPH has the crowning blessing, and it is noticeable that the blessing is not to *Ephraim* and *Manasseh*, the two existing tribes, but to the father of both, the great and good protector of the family in Egypt in former days. That blessing is peculiarly ample and rich:—(v. 13 to 17.)

Blessed of the Lord be his land; for the precious things of

heaven; for the dew, and for the deep that coucheth beneath. And for the precious fruits of the sun, and the precious things of the moon, and of the ancient mountains, and the lasting hills, and the earth and the fulness thereof; all of them rich foreshadowings of temporal prosperity. Then, as a final and crowning blessing, the goodwill of Him that dwelleth in the Bush; the memory of the old man now going back to the past and recalling vividly the wonderful Burning Bush from whence the mighty Jehovah spake and gave to him the commission of leadership and deliverance.

The tribes of ZEBULUN, ISSACHAR, GAD, DAN, and NAPHITALI are all passed in review, but the words designating them have no special significance.

But when the last of all is named, viz., the tribe of ASHER, a great principle of spiritual life is enunciated, which has been a source of consolation and strength to innumerable souls, down even to the time now present. Of Asher he said:—

Let Asher be blessed with children; let him be acceptable to his brethren, and let him dip his foot in oil. Thy shoes shall be iron and brass, AND AS THY DAYS SO SHALL THY STRENGTH BE! (v. 24.)

It is impossible to express, in more terse or emphatic language, the doctrine which shines out both in the Old Testament and the New, that grace and strength is given to God's faithful ones, day by day, as the day's needs arise.

What David expressed so tenderly in his psalm of shepherdly care and guidance, in the words, "*The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall want for nothing,*" is repeated in still more explicit terms by the Apostle Paul, "*My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus!*" (Phil. iv., 19).

Thus, these blessings of Moses, the servant of God, close with words of universal application to all redeemed souls, in all lands, in all conditions, in all ages, down to the end of time.

And now the end is at hand. But one last word remains, a word of sublime aspiration, of perfect faith and hope, the aged man lifting up his soul to mountain heights of spiritual vision, from whence he sees both God and man, even as he shortly after saw from the top of Pisgah the glorious land of milk and honey stretched beneath his feet. And he said:—

*There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun,
Who rideth upon the heaven in thy help,
And in His excellency on the sky.*

*The Eternal God is thy refuge,
And underneath are the everlasting arms!
And He shall thrust out the enemy from before thee,
And shall say,—Destroy them.*

*Israel then shall dwell in safety alone,
The fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn
and wine;*

Also His heavens shall drop down dew.

Happy art thou, O Israel!

Who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord?

The Shield of thy help,

And who is the Sword of thy excellency.

And thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee,

And thou shalt tread upon their high places!

v. 26 to end.)

These words are the last. And while these closing words are like many others spoken by men of poetic genius, in lyrical beauty, in splendour of imagery, in vigour of conception, in perfection of language, they have one quality in which they differ from all others, and leave them at an unapproachable distance, and that they were spoken under Divine inspiration; for the instruction and comfort of the faithful people of God; embodying truths, ideas, and promises of a spiritual order, that abide for all time, and are as applicable to-day as when spoken three thousand years ago.

THE ASCENT OF THE MOUNTAIN AND DEATH.

A very few words have sufficed in the Divine record to describe the closing scene of all. (Chap. xxxiv.)

Moses went up (surely, one may think, accompanied by his faithful minister, Joshua)—ascending the mountain range of Moab, to the top of Pisgah (or the Hill), doubtless the highest elevation of the range. That he had strength to do this immediately before his death suggests an accession of vigor, divinely bestowed for the purpose, as the same must have been bestowed upon Aaron to enable him to ascend Mount Hor, when he too was called to a mountain top to die.

Then, as the narrative states, "*The Lord shewed him all the land of Gilead, unto Dan*" (this was looking northward over towards the far-distant range of Hermon), then "*all Naphtali* (the eye turning westward), *and the land of Ephraim and Manassch, and all the land of Judah, unto the utmost sea*. The description is evidently that of an eye-witness, for this is precisely the way in which the eye

would range round, looking northward first (for there was nothing of interest eastward, and but very little southward), then, turning towards the north-west; then, still turning, the whole central portion of the land coming into view, until the eye embraced that noble territory of Judah stretching out nearly to the Great Sea; finally resting on the plain close beneath his feet, on the other side Jordan, where reposed secure behind its great ramparts, the City of palm trees, Jericho. One cannot resist the extremely probable thought that Joshua was there too, ministering to the aged chief; he also viewing the land he was to conquer, rendering the last kind offices, smoothing the dying couch, and again hearing in a few last broken words, a repetition of the solemn charge, to be strong, to be of good courage, to be faithful!

Then the last words ever heard by Moses on earth were heard, as the Lord said to him:—*This is the land which I swear unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying, I will give it unto thy seed!*

Thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither!

Thus, with the words of the everlasting covenant lingering on his ears, the eyes of the great chief closed in death, in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. And it is added, with a strange touch of sublimity and awefulness, that *the Lord buried him in a valley over against Beth-Peor; but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day!**

Thus passed away from the world a man, who, through Divine power and wisdom bestowed on him, has left both by his deeds, his writings, and the institutions sacred and secular which he was the instrument of founding, a more enduring mark on the history of the human race than any other that has lived, one only excepted,—that Son of Man, who was also the Son of God, *the Prophet like unto Moses*,—but infinitely greater, the Light, the Law-giver, the Autotype of all the Mosaic sacrifices, the Divine Saviour of the World.

*NOTE.—Joshua, if with him to the last, had doubtless received a Divine monition to leave.

FINAL CRITICAL NOTES.

As a matter of literary interest, the question has been often considered as to the exact point where the actual writing of Moses ends. The question does not affect the substance of the revelation; it is a mere literary one. But the probability is that the writing of Moses continued to the very day preceding his ascent of the mountain, and therefore includes his blessing of the tribes. But it may have continued even later than this. For if, as is probable, he was accompanied up the mountain by Joshua, then the final notes of the outlook over the land may have been by the hand of Moses too; that is, down to the fourth verse of the last chapter of the book.

AS TO THE GENERAL CHARACTER AND AUTHORSHIP OF THE PENTATEUCH.

It has already been stated, in the preface to these studies, that if it is concluded that these books are part of that system of Divine truth revealed through the medium of holy men who *speak as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*, the personality of the authors becomes a matter of very secondary moment. It is of small importance to those who are to inherit under a will what particular lawyer or notary drew it up; the vital matter is as to its contents, viz.: what it is that is bequeathed, to whom bequeathed, and what are the conditions of the bequest. The Church of God at large, to whom the office of teaching the nations in Divine truth has been committed by its great Head, has for ages recognized that its great business is to expound to actual or possible beneficiaries under this Will what interests they have in its contents, according to their varied conditions of life and character. And this it has done with more or less faithfulness, as it has realized the tremendous issues of spiritual wealth or poverty, of life and death, to multitudes of souls, involved therein.

This has been the key-note of these studies. Nevertheless, before closing, the author thinks it well to say, that as he proceeded with the study of these books, from Genesis to Deuteronomy, the conviction has been deepened and strengthened that, under Divine guidance, they are the product of one authorship, and not of several, and that the Church in all ages, both of the old dispensation and the new, has been right in interpreting the sayings of our Lord and His Apostles to mean that Moses was that one.

1. The contents of the books in style and character are such as would be produced by a man, who at one time has multitudinous affairs on his hands, and who, therefore, writes in hasty jottings, who repeats himself, and has no time to revise; while at another he has abundant leisure, and can amplify a narrative, and give attention to the niceties of composition, yet, all the while being under Divine guidance. Such a man in an eminent degree was Moses.

2. It is stated more than once that certain records are to be written by Moses *in a book*; as for example, the Defeat of the Amalekites when they attacked the host in the wilderness. But more especially is this form of words noticeable at the very close of the life of the great leader; when, after giving a solemn charge to Joshua, it is stated that *Moses had made an end of writing the words of this law in a book*; which book was commanded to be deposited in the Ark of the Covenant for a witness.

And of the noble song which is found in Chapter xxxii., it is said that Moses *wrote this song*, and taught it to the people. (The use of the third person is well known to be common in authorship.) All this indicates that Moses was a man accustomed to literary composition, and is conformable to what is stated of his early life and education in a community where literature had long flourished. He was *learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians*, said the martyr Stephen, speaking by the Holy Ghost on the day of his death.

Moses, therefore, beyond doubt, wrote and placed in literary form, the records of what is termed the Law, using that word in its comprehensive sense. And every reasonable probability points to these records being the same as are now contained in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

But the Book of Exodus is plainly a continuation of a former history; and no condition of probability is violated, but every condition of probability fulfilled, by accepting the judgment of the Church in all ages that not only the books containing the law were written by Moses, but that the introductory book of the whole series, the Book of Genesis, was written by him also; all under Divine guidance and inspiration.

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