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Can. Witter;  
Mary L. T.  
**THE EDOMITES;**

**THEIR HISTORY AS GATHERED FROM  
THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.**

BY

MARY L. T. WITTER,

Author of "A Book for the Young."

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*"All His ways are judgment."*



HALIFAX, N. S. :  
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1888.



## PREFACE.

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**A**S "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for correction, for instruction in righteousness," surely the study of a people to whom reference is made—sometimes frequent reference—in twenty-four of the books of the Bible cannot be without profit. That the history of the Edomites is extremely fragmentary is admitted, but that circumstance has been to my mind an incentive to attempt the compilation of one that is connected. The young—and it is for the young only that I write—would be unlikely to do this for themselves. I should much regret should any make this little work a substitute for the study of the sad story of Edom in God's Word; but hope it may be an aid in that study.

Among the works I have consulted I would acknowledge my special indebtedness to Josephus, Smith's Bible Dictionary, Bush's Notes on Genesis, and Barnes' Notes on the Acts of the Apostles.

MARY L. T. WITTER.

BERWICK, NOVA SCOTIA.

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# THE EDOMITES.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THEIR ANCESTRY.

**E**SAU, or Edom, from whom the Edomites descended, and from whom they derived their name, was the twelfth from Noah, and the twenty-second from Adam. Among his ancestors are to be found all the eminently pious men of whom there is a record, who up to his time had lived. Of two of these it is said by the spirit of truth that they "walked with God," an expression denoting the closest similarity to God of which the human soul in its earthly tabernacle is capable; and one of Esau's ancestors, Enoch, delivered the only antediluvian prophecy which has come down to us. The prophecy is remarkable for its early date—man having been then on the earth less than a thousand years—and for its contents. Enoch speaks of ungodly men doing ungodly deeds in an ungodly manner; and of saying hard things against the great God; and also of the ultimate triumph of right, as the Lord would come as Judge, attended by a vast number of angels. As

far as we know, Enoch was the only man of his age who was conscious of the existence of angels. May he not have been so Godlike as to have had this consciousness without any special revelation?

Esau's immediate ancestors were scarcely less remarkable for their piety than those who were more remote; both his grandfather and his father being noted for their unwavering faith, their unquestioning obedience, and their cheerful submission to the Divine will. To Abraham appertains the high honor of being called the friend of God—an honor which is unique in the history of the Old Testament saints. Though Abraham and Isaac were altogether dissimilar in their mental characteristics, they were severally endowed with qualities which fitted each for his peculiar duties. Abraham was energetic, resolute, decided, magnanimous. Isaac was meek, gentle, forbearing, enduring, not resisting evil, but overcoming evil with good. To Abraham it was easier to do than to suffer; to Isaac it was easier to suffer than to do. Abraham so loved adventure that it was not a very heavy trial to leave his country and many of his kindred to go he knew not whither, to sojourn he knew not where. To Isaac it was a privilege to be under parental protection, and subject to parental control; and he so loved peace that for its sake he would even give up the valued possession of a well of living water. But diverse though

they were, they both so loved and revered God that he was not ashamed to be called their God. The Infinite One seemed even to delight in acknowledging his relations to them, often designating himself the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac. These two men are among the small number of our fallen race whose residence in glory is an historic fact.

Though Abraham was comparatively young when he received the promise that his seed should be so numerous as to be fitly compared to the stars in the firmament or the sand on the seashore, yet his brow was whitened with the snows of a whole century before Isaac was born; and for Isaac a wife was not sought till he had seen four decades of years. Even then it seems to have been the steward of the household, not Isaac or his father, who was the first to move in the matter. It is presumable that Eliezer had heard the heartrending groans of Abraham as he looked on the finely chiselled features of his beloved Sarah cold in death; that he had seen his tears as they fell in quick succession on her marble brow; that he had witnessed his agony when he perceived that his dead, though dearer to him than all the living, must be buried out of his sight; that he had stood by his side as he bargained for Macpelah's cave; that he had seen him weigh the four hundred shekels of silver and pay them to Ephron; that he had assisted in

carrying the remains of his late mistress to her final resting-place; that he had reverently looked on, as Abraham according to the custom of his native Ur, laid the corpse on its left side with a bowl filled with dates in its hand, and the right hand laid over the bowl as if the departed were eating; that he had observed how his limbs trembled and every muscle quivered as he motioned to be led homeward; and as deep grief has a strong attractive influence when experienced by one who is already an object of kind solicitude and tender love, did not Eliezer from this time love Abraham with an intensity to which he had hitherto been a stranger, and watch over him henceforth as affectionately and untiringly as a mother watches over her babe? May we not conclude that his efforts to comfort and soothe were unavailing? Did he not plainly see that the heart of his master was desolate, and at length come to the conclusion that the presence of a daughter-in-law would be the best remedy for his loneliness? It is probable that Eliezer, full of this new project, on his own responsibility entered on a negotiation with some of the Canaanites among whom he dwelt, relative to the procuring of a wife for his master's son, and that Abraham no sooner learned of the well intended efforts of his steward than he resolved to give these efforts another direction. Though at this early age of the world there was no law prohibiting the followers of the

true God from intermarrying with idolators, yet Abraham instinctively shrank from allowing his son to enter into such a relation. He, therefore, called Eliezer to him and required of him an oath to the effect that he would not take a wife to his son from among the people by whom they were surrounded, but go to his country and to his kindred and take for him thence a wife. Eliezer was accustomed to the most prompt obedience to the commands of his master, but, like every other pious man, he feared an oath, and, in his opinion, it was at least possible that he would not be able to find a suitable woman who would consent to accompany him so great a distance in order to become the wife of one whom she had not even seen. He suggested the difficulty, and asked if he should conduct Isaac to Abraham's native land. There are times in the experience of every man in which reasons for and against certain measures are so evenly balanced that it is difficult to decide as to the path of duty. Thus it was with Abraham in the instance before us. He doubted not that it was the will of God that Isaac should marry one connected with his own family; he felt, too, that the fears of Eliezer were not without foundation, yet might not Isaac, if he went among his relatives, be persuaded there to remain? God had promised that the land in which he then sojourned should become the possession of his descendants, and he had lived in reference to

that promise. Confident that God's promise could not fail he had purchased a family burial-ground, and already he had there made a most precious deposit, and had directed that his remains should be there interred. But if Isaac should go to Haran, and there reside, it would be a virtual abandonment of the promise, and would not that be dishonoring the Promiser? With these considerations before his mind Abraham told his steward not to conduct Isaac to Haran. God would, he believed, send his angel before him and hence his efforts would be successful; but if, as Eliezer had suggested, the woman chosen should not be willing to follow him, he should be released from his oath. Eliezer no longer hesitated, but "sware to him concerning the matter."

All the goods of Abraham were in the hands of his steward, and he, far more solicitous about the honor of the family than were they themselves, made ample arrangement to exhibit their rank and wealth. He, taking jewels of silver, jewels of gold, changes of raiment, the choice fruits of his favored land, ten camels, and a number of men-servants, set off.

The long, toilsome journey is passed over in silence. Intent upon his errand—the obtaining of a wife for his master's son—the difficulties encountered are patiently and even cheerfully endured. May not Eliezer be considered as a type of the servants of God.

seeking a bride for their Master, Christ? and has he not set an example of self-abnegation which it would be well for all such to follow?

When Eliezer arrived at the city of Haran he halted by a well in its suburbs, as he knew that it was the custom for young women of all ranks of society to go out at eventide to draw water, and hence he would have a favorable opportunity for prosecuting his business. Eliezer, believing in combining prayer with effort, now presents his case before God. There are some who act as if religion was not designed to influence their conduct towards any except the great God, and approach him in prayer, while a servant, a child, or a domestic animal, suffers on account of the time chosen for devotional exercises. Such was not the piety of this man. There is much doubt in my mind whether, if Eliezer had lived in modern times and in this climate, he would have enjoyed the services of the sanctuary while his horse was standing exposed to winter's chilling blasts and piercing cold. At any rate, we find him caring for the comfort of his camels, and causing them to kneel—their usual posture of rest—before he offers prayer. One reading the narrative seems to see the weary, aged man on his knees, with hands uplifted to heaven, and hear him plead for the success of the undertaking, and for such and such tokens as proof that God would show kindness unto his master. This prayer is invested with peculiar interest, as it

is—if we except one ejaculatory prayer—the first on record. One would not expect to find any of Abraham's household altogether ignorant of the true God. Irrespective of their nationality he would acquaint them with man's fall, and the implied promise of man's redemption. But while some knowledge and some faith might reasonably be looked for in a servant of Abraham, the degree of faith exercised by Eliezer is very remarkable, and his humility is scarcely less remarkable than his faith. In both these respects he resembles one who, in regard to time, is about midway between him and ourselves to whom the adorable Redeemer said: "O woman, great is thy faith."

Vague indeed must have been Eliezer's conception of the wonderful Personage in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed; but his faith triumphed over his lack of knowledge, "for it is a distinction of faith that it can receive a mediation it cannot distinctly trace and admit into the consciousness what it cannot master in thought." Though he did not understand how it was effected, he evidently felt that a way was opened by which sinners could be reconciled to that Being who cannot look upon sin without abhorrence, and that, through the merits of the Reconciler he could draw near to God. His humility, however, prompted him to make the appeal for his master rather than for himself, and to designate the Al-

mighty the God of Abraham rather than his God. To us who have the precious Bible and are familiar with the strangely kind words: "The very hairs of your head are all numbered," it is a delightful, heartfelt fact that the Infinite One, who humbles himself to behold the things which are in heaven, does take an interest in all that concerns his children, and that nothing, however trifling in itself, that adds to or interferes with their comfort is thought beneath his notice. So great is God that to him nothing is insignificant. But that Eliezer, with so little knowledge of God, should believe that events would be so overruled that she who was destined to become the wife of Isaac should say just such words and perform just such acts evinces faith of no ordinary character. He believed in God's sovereignty.

While Eliezer was engaged in prayer, Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel, Abraham's nephew, came out of the city with her pitcher on her shoulder to draw water. She was very beautiful, and Eliezer at once conceived the hope that she was to be the wife of his master's son. He evidently believed that before we call God answers, and while we are yet speaking He hears; and that he is so willing to bestow benefits that they not so much follow our prayers as go before them. Rebekah does not appear to have heeded the presence of the stranger, but, as if quite alone, "went down to the well and filled her pitcher

and came up." Eliezer was not one of those who pray and then act as if they neither expected nor desired that their petitions should be granted. His conduct was in conformity with his prayers. He did all in his power to bring about the answer. When Rebekah had filled her pitcher and was about to re-enter the city he ran to meet her, and most respectfully asked: "Let me, I pray thee, drink a little water of thy pitcher." The few moments which intervened between his request and her answer probably seemed to him quite a length of time. He may not have known that there was a devil, and the devil was not then as fearfully malignant a being as he is now, but one can scarcely doubt but Eliezer was tempted to think God had not heard his prayer. Hope and fear struggled in his heart. But if the temptation was sharp it was short. With joy he heard the courteous reply: "Drink, my lord;" and afterwards her very kind offer to draw water for the camels. "He was filled with admiration of the Divine providence which had made the event to correspond so exactly with his desires. The maiden's conduct, so amiable in itself, and so exactly in unison with his previous wishes, struck him with a kind of amazement, accompanied with a momentary hesitation whether all could be true."\*

After Rebekah had watered the camels Eliezer gave her a nose-ring and two bracelets

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\* Bush.

of gold, and asked her father's name, and whether he, with his attendants and camels, could be accommodated at her father's establishment. Rebekah, in reply, told him not only the name of her father, but also the names of her paternal grandfather and grandmother, and that without inconvenience the wants of the whole company could be supplied. Pleasantly did the names of Nahor and Milcah fall on the ear of Eliezer. Often, no doubt, had he heard his master Abraham speak of the grief he experienced when Lot, Milcah and Iscah were left fatherless by the early death of his brother Haran, and of the consultation held between Terah, Nahor and himself, in which it was decided that Lot should be a member of his family till he chose to assume the responsibility of an independent household, and that Milcah and Iscah should respectively become the wives of Nahor and himself. The name Bethuel, too, was one with which Eliezer could not have been unacquainted. Long years had passed without any communication between Nahor and Abraham when one came from Mesopotamia, and told that Nahor and Milcah were the parents of eight sons, of whom Bethuel was the youngest. The names of these sons, from Huz to Bethuel, though hardly household words, were never forgotten.

How did it happen that Rebekah told Eliezer so much of the history of her family? May one hence infer that the Lord had by

dream, or vision, or mental impression, or celestial visitant, told Rebekah that Abraham was about to send a servant asking her to become the wife of his son, the heir to great possessions and still greater promises? As the great God is so near to us that he lays his hand upon us, as in him we live and move and have our being, can he not at his pleasure and in whatever manner he sees fit acquaint us with coming events? Does he not sometimes do so in this late age of the world? Does it not even appear that more prophets are to be expected under the present dispensation than those that preceded it? Does not the prophet Joel declare that in the days in which we are living old and young, male and female, should be blessed with the spirit of prophecy?

It is presumable that the parents of Rebekah were surprised that she lingered so long at the well, and still more surprised when they saw the golden ring by which her face was adorned and the massive golden bracelets which encircled her wrists, and heard what Eliezer had said. The stranger who had bestowed such valuable gifts, was accompanied with so many servants, had so large a number of camels, and, above all, who had manifested so deep reverence for the great God, evidently had made an impression on the mind of the young girl, and her description of what she had seen and heard made scarcely less impression on the minds of the

other members of the family. Laban, the brother of Rebekah, without delay went out to invite the traveller to accept of his hospitality, intimating that as he was a servant of God he was peculiarly dear; and added: "I have prepared the house and room for the camels." To us who are acquainted with the character of Laban, and have seen his mercenariness in disposing of his daughters, his duplicity in his dealings with Jacob, and his idolatrous practices, his effort to appear generous and pious but lessen him in our estimation. To Eliezer, however, he probably appeared a generous, warm-hearted, and godly man. Laban was one of that class of men, not yet extinct, with whom it is better to have a slight than a thorough acquaintance; for those who knew him best esteemed him least. Eliezer, pleased to find himself at the end of his journey, gladly accepted the proffered hospitality, and received the most courteous and respectful treatment. But he, far more anxious about the faithful discharge of the business on which he had been sent than about procuring ease and comfort for himself, refused to eat till he had told his errand. One listening to his story cannot fail to be impressed with his unselfishness as a man, his fidelity as a servant, and his trustfulness as a believer. He says nothing of the alacrity with which he undertook the journey, of the toil he had endured, nor of the responsible position he had long filled in the house-

hold of his master. But he exalts Abraham, tells of his flocks and herds, his silver and his gold, his men-servants and his women-servants, his camels and his asses, and then very adroitly refers to the fact of Abraham's advanced age, and that he had given his vast possessions to Isaac. He, too, ingeniously intimated that Isaac's bachelorship was not the result of unpopularity among the women of Canaan, but from his father's desire that he should obtain a wife from among his own kinswomen. He then told of his prayer at the well, and of the remarkable answer to that prayer. Bethuel and Laban listened eagerly to the narrative, and when at its close Eliezer asked for their decision, they told him that it was so evidently the will of God that Rebekah should become the wife of Isaac that every objection was silenced. Eliezer, believing in particular providences, received their decision as coming from God, and in accordance with this belief acknowledged God's goodness first, and then manifested his gratitude to the family by the presentation of several very valuable gifts. His mission being thus brought to a successful termination, he partook of the offered refreshment, and retired to rest.

Let us now pause for a little to learn something of the history of the family with whom Abraham's servant is lodging. Haran, where they at this time were living, is situated in a beautiful tract of country between the Khe-

bour and the Euphrates, below Mount Masius. But this was not the home of their ancestors. Ur of the Chaldees was their home. Terah, the grandfather of Bethuel, was the father of three sons. Haran, who was the eldest, and but the half-brother to the other two, died early in his Chaldean home. Here Terah hoped and expected to live and die. But such was not the will of God. He appeared to Abraham and commanded him, saying: "Get thee out of thy country and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall show thee." Though Abraham, it may be, had never before beheld any manifestation of God's presence nor had ever heard him speak, he knew God had commanded and he determined to obey. Like many who in these later times set out for the heavenly Canaan, he, it may be presumed, encountered opposition, and, as has often happened, his firmness and decision caused others to accompany him.

There are few who do not mentally fill up this part of the Scripture narrative. One seems to see the tears of Sarah and to hear her lamentations as she hears that her husband has resolved to leave Chaldea. One also seems to hear the remonstrance of Terah. He may have been willing to admit that, in the early history of man, the great God often conversed with his servants, and had given them visible tokens of his presence; but centuries had elapsed since he had been seen, or his voice had been heard. He would, per-

haps, also maintain that the command itself was absurd, and, therefore, could not have been given by God. Would God command him to leave the wife he had so lately espoused, leave his father whom he, by the nature of things was required to honor, and enter on a life of wandering which would end he knew not when or where? Abraham could not prove that God had either appeared to him or addressed him, though he doubtless was as sure of both as of his own-existence, and, therefore, told his father that he *knew* God had commanded and he was resolved to obey. The late quiet of the family would now give place to disorder and confusion, earnest entreaty, and heartless recrimination, and Abraham had to endure that trial so painful to the sensitive heart—foes in his own household. The sequel shows that Sarah, or Sarai as she was then called, decided that since her husband had decided to leave Ur she would go too, and, with true wifely feelings, chose to share his adventures, whatever they might be, rather than be parted from him. Lot afterwards concluded that since his uncle and she who stood to him in the double relation of sister and aunt were about to leave he would not be left behind; and finally, to the equal surprise and delight of Abraham, Terah declared his intention of going too.

Knowing, as we do, that it was to Abraham the command was given, and that he was willing to go alone, one is struck with the

phraseology of Scripture relative to the departure of these persons from Ur. "Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife, and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees." Do not these words show that Abraham so honored his father as to place him at the head of the emigrating party? They travelled as far as the city in which we now find Eliezer, remained there until the death of Terah, and then went to the land of Canaan. When or wherefore Nahor and Milcah removed to Haran is left entirely to conjecture.

Though Laban was fond of being seen and heard, yet the fact that Bethuel, on so important an occasion as the giving of his daughter in marriage, stands so entirely in the background, forces the conviction on us that he must have had some infirmity of mind or body which incapacitated him for the proper performance of his duties as head of the family.

Eliezer remained at the house of Bethuel only one night. Anxious faithfully to perform his mission, he arose at the early dawn of the morning and respectfully and earnestly entreated: "Send me away to my master." The request to return immediately seems not to have been anticipated; and to take an only daughter from her parents may be likened to depriving them of the fragrance of flowers, the song of birds, and the light of the sun.

Is there on earth any other relation so tender as that which exists between mother and daughter? Is it possible that even a husband, however affectionate, considerate and devoted he may be, can sympathise with his wife as does a daughter with her mother? That Rebekah's mother should be unprepared to part with her daughter with so short a notice cannot excite surprise. Desirable as it was, in their opinion, that Rebekah should marry, and honorable as was the proposed connection, they shrank from her immediate departure. Now they became the suppliants. "Let the damsel abide with us," said they, "a few days, at least ten, and after that she shall go." One feels that the middle clause in this sentence came from the lips of the mother. No one ever comes between a daughter and her mother without causing the latter a pang. God only knows the severity of that pang.

Though Rebekah's family were very desirous that she should remain a little longer with them, yet, as they had consented to the proposed union, Eliezer now had the first claim to her, and he wished with as little delay as possible to depart. Rebekah is called on to decide. It is to her, scarcely less than to her mother, a trying hour, the more so as on her is laid the responsibility of a decision. She was doubtless unwilling to leave her mother, but she was convinced that it was the will of God that she should go, and that his claims upon her were infinitely superior to those

of the fondest mother, or the most devoted father; and, perchance, feeling the kindlings of the flame of love toward the man who in a far-off land was waiting to receive her, she, with the most heroic decision, the most amiable frankness, and the most charming naivetè, replied, "I will go."

Preparations were at once made for the journey. Not only from what Eliezer had said, but from his retinue and from the munificent presents of which he had been the bearer, it was evident that the family into which Rebekah was about to marry was one of great wealth, and both herself and her friends would naturally be solicitous that her dower and the number of her attendants should be such as was fitting her position. It was well for both mother and daughter that there were many things which required their attention, for such is the structure of the human mind that earnest, energetic action does much to lessen the acuteness of feeling.

There is no record of the parting scene except the wish expressed by Laban that the descendants of Rebekah should be numerous and powerful; but no description could be so touching as is this silence. One seems to see the mother as, in tearless, speechless agony, she clasps Rebekah to her bosom and smothers her with kisses, and then retires to her room and pours out her soul in prayer. One seems to hear the scarce audible whisper, "God bless my child." She rises from her knees, paces

to and fro—she does not dare trust herself to look upon the receding company—and again bowing before God presents the same petition, “God bless my child! God bless my child!”

The name of but but one of Rebekah's attendants is given, that of her nurse Deborah. We may presume that she voluntarily followed her young mistress to her new home in a far distant land. As she is one of the few women mentioned in the Bible with whose burial-place we are made acquainted, and as she was so much lamented that the oak under which she was laid was thence called Allan-backuth, (the oak of weeping), it may be pretty safely predicted that she was truly pious. That she was greatly mourned is the more remarkable from the fact that she, at the time of her death, was very aged, having lived about one one hundred and twenty-six years after she left Haran. The pious, and the pious only, become more and more loveable as they increase in years. There is no more beautiful sight on earth than the old man or woman growing the more cheerful in faith as feebleness increases, and more and more mellowed in love, and pervaded and brightened by religion as the limbs tremble and the outward senses become dull. It has been said that the devil has no happy old people. The Lord has. “The path of the just is as the shining light.” And the nearer the believer approaches the true Light the more brightly does that Light shine on his path, and the

brighter the light which he himself emits. It is when flesh and heart fail that God is most emphatically the portion of his people. Though "the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the window be darkened," yet even then "light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart."

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## CHAPTER II.

### REBEKAH'S JOURNEY.

**H**IS journey, which was a distance of about five hundred miles, must have been rather a formidable undertaking. Now a journey of that length can be performed in two or three days, then it occupied long, weary months. The first great difficulty would probably be the crossing of the Euphrates, the largest and longest and most important river in western Asia, and, even where most shallow, of very considerable depth. There were no bridges at this early date, hence the manner in which Rebekah and her nurse and maids were conveyed over the river must remain a matter of conjecture. As there is not even a hint relative to their route there can be no certainty as to the tract of country through which they passed, but one may presume that

after crossing the Euphrates they traversed the fertile plains of Damascus, through districts familiar to Eliezer, and through the plateau of Bashan, afterwards the kingdom of Og, and then entered Gilead. Travellers have described the scenery from this elevated tract of country as very fine, at times almost enchanting, its plains being covered with a fertile soil and its hills with forests, and presenting at every turn new and varied features of the landscape. The caravan, for thus may this company of travellers be designated, crossed, one may presume, the swiftly flowing Jabbok and the muddy, circuitous Jordan, both of which are now rich in historic interest; the former for a mysterious contest between God and man, and the latter for having been thrice miraculously divided, and more especially for having been the baptismal font of the Son of God. Having reached the western side of the Jordan we may imagine them travelling south-westerly till they come to Luz, and thence nearly south till they reach Salem, the capital of the kingdom of Melchizedec. The origin of this king is so obscure that he is described "as being without father, without mother, without descent," and although he was living in the midst of an idolatrous people he was a priest of the most high God—the first priest of which there is a record. The sight of Salem would naturally remind Eliezer of events which had occurred some fifty years previously, and one imagines

him telling the story to Rebekah as follows: "When your cousin Lot was living in Sodom it, with the neighboring cities, was invaded by Cherdorlaomer and three other kings, who carried off not only much spoil but also many of the inhabitants, among whom were Lot and his wife and daughters. My master, on hearing of this disaster, immediately armed a few hundreds of his trained servants, and with his three friends, Aner, Eschol and Mamre, pursued the plunderers. They were overtaken on the northern limits of this country, just after they had bivouaced for the night. When my master came in sight of the watch-fires of the enemy he, dividing his men into four companies, placed them severally under the command of himself and his three confederates, and commanded that not one word should be spoken, and that noiselessly as possible they march upon them and make a simultaneous attack in four different quarters. The darkness of the night was favorable to the manœuvre, and it was attended with the most decided success. Cherdorlaomer and the accompanying kings evidently supposed that they were surrounded by a numerous army, for they fled with the greatest precipitation. Anxious only to preserve their lives they left both their captives and their spoils. They, however, were not permitted to escape unhurt, but were pursued as far as Hobah, and many of their number slain. Your cousin Lot fell at my master's

feet and prayed for blessings on my master's head, but Lot's wife seemed to rejoice more over the goods that had been retaken than over the rescue of her daughters. It was on that eminence yonder," he would say, "that Melchizedec met my master with bread and wine for the refreshment both of himself and his attendants. These were gratefully received, and my master gave Melchizedec tithes of all that had been retaken. The whole matter was to me inexplicable. I could not understand why my master should treat even this man, king and priest though he was, as his superior, but I have since learned that he was a type of the promised Seed. It was there in that dell that Bera, the wicked king of wicked Sodom, came to my master, and, instead of expressing his gratitude for the rescue of so many of his subjects, he assumed great generosity, saying, 'Give me the persons and take the goods to thyself.' The goods were the lawful property of my master. But he, rich in the promised blessing of God who cannot lie, and fearing that his motives in the rescue of the captives might be misconstrued, together with the fact that Bera was an unprincipled, vain-glorious man, had solemnly sworn not to retain any portion of the spoil, and so returned all to its former owners."

As there were at this time, and, indeed, for more than three centuries afterward, few families in Canaan who were worshippers

of the true God, Abraham and Melchizedec, though residing at a distance from each other, and meeting but seldom were doubtless true friends. If they knew, and it is presumable that they did, that the one was a type and the other an ancestor of him who was to bruise the head of the serpent, with what reverence would they regard each other, how exalted would be their intercourse. It is strange that believers ever speak contemptuously of each other, however they may differ in social position, education, or intellectual power, since they are children of the same Father and heirs of the same inheritance?

The heart of Rebekah was, no doubt, pained as she from time to time met with evidences of idolatry even in its most revolting forms. It is quite possible that it might have so occurred that as she was passing the ravine, afterwards known as the valley of the son of Hinnon, the welkin rang with the sound of the toph and cymbal, intermingled with shrieks of agony; and if Rebekah asked what it meant she would be told that a babe had just been offered to the idol Moloch. She would be further told that, although the mother was a devotee to that horrid idol, and had voluntarily given her first-born for the sin of her soul, yet when she heard the cries of her babe her mother nature so triumphed over her religious prejudices as to cause her to utter the fearful shrieks which had been heard, and that in this country such scenes

were not unfrequent, for mothers were taught that the sacrifice of a child, especially if that child be the first-born, was the most meritorious of all acts. "Though the religious element," Eliezer would say, "is a component part of the very soul of woman, yet in sacrificing her female children she may not be actuated wholly by religious motives, for life here among this idolatrous people is to woman, for the most part, barren of enjoyment. In nothing else does the household of my master contrast more strongly with the households by which we are surrounded. In his family females are loved, protected, honored, and the life of the weakest infant or the most decrepit old woman is guarded as carefully as his own life."

As they came within sight of Mount Moriah Eliezer would naturally recall the tragedy which occurred there some fifteen years previously, and almost as naturally he would relate the strange story to Rebekah, especially as he whom she was to marry was the designed victim of that tragedy. Eliezer would tell Rebekah that Isaac, was from his infancy the object of his father's tenderest and deepest affection, and that he was not less surprised than pained when, after the boy had risen to manhood he received the command. "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains I

will tell thee of." Eliezer would, no doubt, also tell Rebekah that his master knew that no such command had been given in the whole history of man, and that the great God had said: "Whoso sheddeth man's blood by man should his blood be shed." And besides, to take the life of Isaac would seemingly render the fulfilment of the promise impossible, but so strong was his master's faith that he accounted that God was able to raise Isaac up even from the dead. If Rebekah expressed astonishment that such a sacrifice should be commanded by God, or would be at all acceptable to him, she would be told that it is quite possible that the great God had a special object in view, namely the trial of Abraham's faith, love and obedience, and the teaching of the doctrine of substitution. These remarks were probably followed by a number of questions by Rebekah as to how Isaac was affected by the command. Did he believe that God had so ordered? Was he willing that his life should be thus cut short, or did he determine to resist? Did he resist, or how did it happen that the command was not executed? These questions, or such as these, would very likely follow each other in such quick succession that Eliezer would make no attempt to reply, but when her excitement subsided so far as to render an answer possible he, perhaps, told her that, with her permission he would relate the story to her just as Isaac had told it to him, and would proceed about as follows:

“In rising one morning at the usual hour I was surprised to find the household all astir. The servants were running hither and thither, one was making cakes, another cleaving wood, and another still bringing two asses from the field. I saw at once a journey was contemplated, and, on enquiry, learned that my father was about to set off for the land of Moriah, and that he had told the servants that it was his will that I should accompany him. There was a peculiar tenderness in the expression of my father’s countenance, and he seemed even more than usually solicitous that I should be supplied with every comfort. He fastened on my sandals with his own hands. I entreated him not to perform so menial an office, but he assured me that he regarded it as a privilege. We were soon on our journey. My father and I walked together, and were followed by two servants, the one carrying wood and the sacrificial knife, and the other leading an ass laden with provisions. My father talked but little, and seemed blind to the beauties of the ever-varying landscape. He ate but little too, and slept still less than he ate. More than once he half audibly whispered, ‘I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth; God has said it, and his word cannot fail of fulfilment;’ and at times when he would half lose himself in sleep he would say, ‘It must be, yes, it must be,’ and then press me to his heart as if he feared some one would take me from him by force. On the

morning of the third day after we left home I awoke at early dawn and missed my father from my side. I arose at once and went in search of him. At length I found him kneeling on the cold ground, his head wet with dew, his hands and eyes uplifted to heaven, his body swaying to and fro, and every lineament of his face bearing the expression of unutterable anguish. I looked on him with awe, and hardly dared approach him. He was usually serene and even happy, Wherefore now this agony? Why did he conceal its cause from me? These and similar questions suggested themselves, but to them I could furnish no answer.

“When we came to the base of Mount Moriah my father told the servants that they need proceed no further. ‘I and my son,’ said he, ‘will go yonder and worship, and we will return to you again.’ He then laid the wood on my shoulders, and, taking the sacrificial knife and a brand from the fire by which the servants were preparing their meal, bade me ascend with him to the top of the mount. My father’s step was uneven, his knees trembled, and his face was livid as death. We walked on in silence till silence to me became unbearable, so turning to him I said, ‘My father.’ He started as one awaked suddenly from a deep sleep, and after gazing on me a few minutes he replied, ‘Here am I, my son.’ I called his attention to the fact that, though we were provided with the wood,

the knife, and the fire for a burnt-offering, the offering itself was wanting. For some time my father was choked with emotion, and then in a tremulous voice he said, 'My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering.' The thought occurred to me then, for the first time, that I was about to be sacrificed. This enabled me to understand what had been before wholly unaccountable in my father's conduct. Though I knew that if my father intended to sacrifice me God had so ordered, yet a shudder passed over me, and my first impulse was to resist. We were alone, and in physical strength I was by far my father's superior. I looked at the knife as it glistened in the sun, and the blood curdled in my veins. Soon, however, I had such a view of the goodness and mercy of God, accompanied with such a sense of his favor, that I had no fear of death even in the form which, but a little before, had seemed so terrific. I felt that it would be but the door of a better life, higher joys, and a more exalted state of existence. Never was I more tranquil than when building that altar, and placing the wood in such a manner that it could not fail to burn as soon as touched by fire. When all the arrangements were completed my father tenderly clasped me to his heart and pressed his quivering lips against mine, and then, taking the girdle from his loins, he bound my hands and laid me on the altar. He placed his left hand under my

chin, and in his right hand held the glittering knife. I expected in a few moments to be ushered into the unseen world, but felt no fear either of the anguish of the death-stroke, or of the pangs consequent upon dissolution, or yet of the untried state on which I was about to enter. But, while I felt no fear, I lived an age in that moment of time. My whole life appeared as a panorama before me, and oh, how different it seemed then from what it had previously! I had long thought that I loved God but then saw that my love was so far below what it ought to be that it scarcely could be called love. I had thought that I regarded God with great reverence, but then I had such a view of his purity that my deepest reverence seemed irreverent, my highest conception of his holiness altogether unworthy of his nature, and that I ought to humble myself on account of the pride of my most profound humility, and repent of my most sincere repentance. I, too, felt my obligation to love, honor and obey my parents as I had never felt it before; I saw it was a sin to swerve from the wishes of my father, or to refuse to comply with the requirements of my mother. Some things which I had hardly thought of as sins, then arose in terrible array against me, such as a lack of regard for the feelings of my father's servants, or indifference relative to the comfort of our domestic animals. But notwithstanding the long catalogue of crimes which might justly be laid to my

charge, I knew that I was forgiven through the merits of ~~One~~ who, in the ages to come, was to bruise the head of the serpent. and that, though sin was *in* me it was not *on* me, but on the promised Seed; and that when the union between spirit and body was dissolved I should enter into glory. I raised my eyes to my father, wishing to speak some word of comfort to him; but he was in no need of comfort. His face, which but a moment before was expressive of unutterable agony, then shone with a lustre scarcely less resplendent than that which emanated from the cherubim which kept the way to the tree of life. I seemed to see God as I looked on him. Every emotion of my father's heart, every faculty of his mind was evidently so attracted toward God that his love for me was comparative hatred. Every other desire was destroyed by or absorbed in his desire to glorify God. Just at this moment a voice from heaven called 'Abraham! Abraham!' The voice was one with which my father had long been acquainted, but which I had never heard before, and yet I knew and rejoiced to know it was the voice of God. I loved to think of him as near. God's almightiness had filled me with terror; then, though I quivered with awe, I yet rejoiced in it.

"When my father heard God speak he, ready and willing to obey any and every command of God, gladly responded: 'Here am I.' The great God then addressed my

father thus: 'Lay not thy hand upon the lad, neither do anything unto him; for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing that thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me.' As God spake my father saw a ram caught and held by his horns in a thicket. I arose from the altar, and this ram, which God had caused to wander thither for the express purpose, was offered as a sacrifice." Rebekah, one imagines, had listened almost breathlessly to the narrative, and when Eliezer ceased to speak she asked, "Was the ram slain in Isaac's stead? Do the animals sacrificed die in our place? Can there be efficacy in their blood? Sacrifices must point to something in the future, but to what, to whom? All seems to me mysterious, so mysterious! More is known, I think, of God in your master's household than in my paternal home. About all I know of God is that he is an independent Being, and a holy Being, and, knowing that I am both sinful and dependent, I am never quite easy, as I fail to understand how I can become reconciled to him."

The return journey from Haran to Lahai-roi was quite unlike that from Lahai-roi to Haran. Then the travellers were all men, now they were a mixed company. Then there was some uncertainty as to the result of their enterprise, now that enterprise had been brought to a successful issue, and they were conducting a bride to her husband.

Eliezer and Deborah were doubtless happy, but they could not have been merry; they were carrying too heavy responsibilities for that. The other travellers were among the merriest of the merry. Those connected with Abraham's household would never weary telling of his silver and gold, camels and asses, men-servants and maid-servants, and Rebekah's maids would be as eager listeners as they were speakers; but while they listened eagerly to a careful observer it would have been apparent that they were anxious to make it appear that Bethuel was no less important a personage than Abraham. But there was one in this company for whom this long journey, with its consequent toil and privations had been undertaken, who was shielded from every danger, relieved from every care, whose every wish was anticipated, but who must have been very far from being merry. Indeed her reticence might have been, by some, mistaken for sadness. Rebekah, no doubt, had learned that God had promised Abraham that all nations should be blessed in him, and that it was in the line of Isaac that the Deliver was to come; and like Mary, the mother of that Deliverer, she pondered these things in her heart, so pondered them as to be at times oblivious of what was passing around her. She thought on the seemingly strange promise, and, one may presume, questioned within herself whether it could be possible that she should be the ancestress of that wonderful

personage who was to exercise so powerful an influence on all generations. All mankind blessed in an individual! How blessed? Wherefore blessed?

Rebekah's mind would also at times be occupied with the lesser but not unimportant question whether or not her husband would be pleased with her. Might it not so happen that while she bore the name, and enjoyed the amenities of a wife, some other woman would have the chief place in Isaac's affections?

Eliezer had, no doubt, despatched a messenger on a swift dromedary to Abraham, informing him of the success of the undertaking, of the manner in which Rebekah was employed, and of her conduct through the whole affair; and, if he was a close observer of human nature, he would be able to form a pretty correct opinion of his prospective daughter-in-law. That she was obliging, industrious, and courteous he could infer from her readiness to give water to a stranger, and from her drawing water for ten camels. That she possessed a large share of modesty might be pretty safely predicated from her spending no unnecessary time with the travellers ere she informed her parents of their coming, and her decision of character would be learned from her prompt "I will go."

As with Rebekah so with Isaac, though in an inferior degree, the period of time occupied by the journey could not have failed to be one of anxiety. A woman depends vastly more

for happiness on her husband than does a man on his wife. Indeed it may be said that she is happy or miserable as is his will. Not so with a man. Many sources of enjoyment are open to him, even though his home be not a happy one. But as Isaac was to be the husband of one whom he had never seen, and of whose tastes and inclinations he was necessarily in a great measure ignorant, he would naturally question within himself whether she would be a true help-meet, soothing his cares and anxieties, sharing his toils, alleviating his sorrows, and in the hour of pain and sickness be the tender, affectionate, self-sacrificing nurse, or would she be one of the too numerous class of women who consider their own ease and comfort of paramount importance, and think themselves injured if anything is allowed to cross their plans or interfere with their wishes.

At eventide Isaac went out to pray or meditate in the fields. Was it his custom to spend the hour of twilight in intercourse with heaven, or did he retire to pray, on this occasion, because his anxieties were too heavy to endure unaided? Either view exhibits his piety in a favorable light, for, in a season of absorbing worldly interests he is found seeking communion with God.

Having finished his devotions, as we may presume, and being on his return to his tent, he sees the caravan approaching. For many days it may have been expected, and much

anxiety may have been experienced relative to its safety. Fear is always commingled with hope in regard to anything which very materially affects our happiness. Again and again Isaac may have strained his eyes to learn if something might not be seen of them in the distance, but now "he lifted up his eyes and saw, and behold, the camels were coming." The self-same ten camels that had set off from Lahai-roi, and on one of these a fair young girl was seated whom he knew to be his bride. He at once went to meet her. Isaac was happy, inexpressibly more happy than he would have been had he not felt that his bride was a gift from God; for religion enhances joy as much as it mitigates sorrow. It is the privilege of the believer to receive every blessing as coming from the hand of a loving father, and to be sure that these blessings will be continued as long as their possession is for God's glory or his good.

The solitary man walking in the field was not less noticed by those who composed the caravan than they were by him. Rebekah seems to have been the first who observed Isaac, and, on learning who he was, she at once dismounted and caused herself to be covered with the bridal veil; by the former act she avoided treating Isaac as an inferior, and by the latter she showed her subjection to him as her husband. I can scarcely avoid remarking in this connection that every true woman shuns every act that could be con-

strued as implying that her husband is her inferior. Though in this enlightened Christian land a conventional superiority is acceded to woman, she is far from arrogating to herself that superiority.

When Rebekah dismounted, her attendants doubtless dismounted too, and walked in procession till she was presented to her husband. Isaac conducted Rebekah to his late mother's tent, and, as Deborah raised the veil, he would look for the first time on the face of his bride. Rebekah possessed personal charms of a very high character, and the respect and admiration which the report of Eliezer had elicited, as we have supposed, now culminated in love. The sacred historian exhibits the conjugal happiness of the newly-married pair in an equally pleasing and impressive manner by the following words: "He loved her; and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death."

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### CHAPTER III.

#### THE BIRTH OF ESAU—HE SELLS HIS BIRTHRIGHT.

**T**HE happiness of parents should always be increased by the addition to their families of sons or daughters-in-law. New relations do not release us from our obligations to those already existing. It is both sad

and surprising that when men become husbands and women wives they sometimes act as though they thought themselves freed from filial duty. If they do not say, "It is a gift by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me," they virtually declare that all their attention, time, and money are needed for their own families. It is indeed true that, "If any man provide not for his own, and especially those of his own house, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel." But parents are always included in a man's "house," however remote their dwelling from his own. These thoughts have been suggested by reflecting on the change which would be made by Rebekah's presence in Abraham's household. But Isaac's character warrants the belief that he would ever be the affectionate son. It is reasonable to conclude that the man who tenderly mourned for his mother for three years would ever be respectful, attentive and affectionate toward his father. He surely would not allow all his time to be monopolized even by his young and beautiful wife. Isaac must have felt that his father having sent Ishmael away that there might be none to interfere with his rights, and afterwards for the same reason the six sons of Keturah, placed him under peculiar obligations to make the declining years of his father not only comfortable but happy.

It is somewhat remarkable that although Rebekah was a wife twenty years before she

became a mother, no impatient word relating to the matter escaped her lips. She knew that He who was to bruise the serpent's head was to descend from Isaac, and, as year after year elapsed, she must have feared, if not expected, that the line was to be continued by some other than herself. But in this matter, as far as we are able to judge, God's will was hers. Isaac could have lawfully taken another wife; but his ardent love for Rebekah prevented him from doing so. He went to God and entreated him to give children by her. Isaac expected to be heard, and was not disappointed. "The Lord was entreated of him." O the amazing condescension of the Infinite One to permit frail, erring man to have power with him! What encouragement this instance affords to make all our wants known to God, whether these wants be of a spiritual or temporal nature. God cares for us. He desires our happiness; and if we lack those things which are necessary to make us happy it is either because we ask not, or ask amiss. A father may be indifferent to the wants of his child, and even a mother, with all her wealth of love, may become indifferent too, but God never. Human love, even in its loftiest heights and deepest depths, is but hatred when compared with love divine. Among the many proofs of God's love is his willingness ever to listen to our prayers. Some, when they kneel to pray, ask for what they think they ought to desire,

not for what they really do desire. This is not prayer; for prayer is the asking for the supply of felt wants, the outpouring of the soul to God, and may be wholly inaudible, or expressed in words, or cries, or sighs, or groans. To the believer prayer is a perfectly natural exercise, insomuch that there is not even one believer on the face of the earth who does not pray. To the learned and the illiterate, the weak and the strong, to the babe in Christ and the matured Christian, prayer is alike necessary. Often the last words of the dying saint are words of prayer. Does the Word of God teach that the exercise of prayer is to cease with this life? While very little—much less than is generally supposed—is revealed of the future state, is there not presumptive evidence that prayer is offered by the redeemed in glory? The souls of the martyrs are represented as praying, and we are expressly taught that our Adorable Redeemer, at the right hand of the Father, intercedes for us. Will not the saved desire to know more and still more of God, and to be more and still more like Him? And will not these desires find expression in prayer? May it not be that through endless cycles prayer will be continually offered and continually answered? Can the finite ever so nearly approach the Infinite that there will be nothing to desire, or for which to ask? Will not the period arrive in which the human soul will as far exceed its present capacity as

it now exceeds the capacity of the lowest orders in the animal kingdom? And when arrived at that exalted state will it not see more in God to desire than it does in its present condition; and will not these longings of the soul to be like God increase in strength as its capacity increases; and will not these longings find expression in prayer? May it not be that through the illimitable future God will be continually pouring out of himself into the soul, and yet the soul be more and more conscious of its own littleness when compared with Him? And will it not then, with an emphasis unknown on earth, exclaim: "Who in the heaven can be compared unto the Lord? Who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the Lord? And when, after countless ages, the glorified spirits have been increasing in knowledge and holiness, will they not with all the strength of their exalted powers, with all the depth of their sanctified affections, with a degree of reverence to which saints on earth are strangers, pray God to make them more and still more like him? It is very significant that those who are "in the midst of the throne and round about the throne" are represented as most deeply impressed with the perfections of God. "They rest not day and night saying, Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty, which was and is and is to come." Are not the words, "Blessing and honor and glory and power be unto him who sitteth upon the throne, and to

the Lamb for ever and ever," in effect a prayer; a prayer offered by the glorified hosts?

The reader will pardon this digression, and return to the narrative. God gave Rebekah twin boys, and while the younger had the soft, velvety skin of ordinary infants, the elder "was red all over like a hairy garment," and was thence called Esau. This family was now a very happy one. Rebekah, like the mother of her husband, would exulting exclaim, "God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me." And the scarcely less exultant would say, "I love the Lord because he hath heard my prayer, and attended to the voice of my supplication." Abraham too, though bowed under the weight of one hundred and threescore years, would fondly clasp the little ones to his bosom, but his thoughts would not be so much on them as on Him who was to be a descendant of the younger babe, and through whom all the families of the earth should be blessed. He saw the day of Christ and was glad. If one excepts the parents and grandfather, none would be more pleased with these infants than Deborah. She would be scarcely less happy than the father, or less devoted than the mother. Few persons can have failed to observe with what readiness women, who have no children of their own, lavish the wealth of their affections on children entrusted to their care. This is well,

both for the nurse and the child. The child generally reciprocates the love of the nurse, and where it is not reciprocated it is far from being a useless expenditure. Love is the root from which happiness springs, and by which it is nourished. It is even more blessed to love than to be loved; and one is not only happier but better for loving. This is most emphatically true if the love be toward God, and measurably so if toward man.

Deborah, it may be presumed, had the chief care of Esau from his birth; and Rebekah's partiality for Jacob may have arisen in part from his being more dependent on her than was Esau for his well-being and well-doing. Those mothers sustain heavy losses who entrust their children to the care of others. Among the losses may be numbered a lessening of their children's love toward themselves, and of their love toward their children.

As there had been a striking difference between the babes, so as they became lads it may be presumed they manifested contrary dispositions. The one mild, gentle, submissive, affectionate, the home-child, the darling of his mother, and at the same time artful, subtle, insidious; the other possessing all the physical energy of both parents, their fiercer but not their gentler qualities, bold, restless, impatient of restraint, adventuresome, averse to ordinary labor, delighting in the capture of wild animals, and deriving as

much delight from the pursuit, from the difficulties to be overcome, and even from the very dangers to which he was exposed, as from the capture itself; and yet, with these varied qualities, loving, forgiving, generous, brave. The divergence in their characters would naturally increase as the boys became men; for, being then under very little control, their natural tendencies would be developed into full strength. Esau became a fearless ranger of the mountains, a wild, fierce, and cunning hunter; and Jacob a plain man, dwelling in tents. Isaac was contemplative, and so was very naturally drawn toward his son who was his opposite—active and daring. But the reason assigned in the Scriptures for this preference is such as would not be suspected, seems unworthy of a pious man, and detracts from the respect which his general character elicits. "Isaac loved Esau because he did eat of his venison." It was an infirmity and not a sin, but a most contemptible infirmity. "Rebekah loved Jacob." The reasons for her partiality are not given; but among those which suggest themselves may be mentioned his being the object of her special care, the prophecy relative to him which had been uttered while he was yet unborn, and the very fact that Isaac preferred the other son. "But whatever may have been the grounds of these preferences, it is clear from the sequel that nothing could be more unhappy than the consequences to which they led. The dis-

tresses which embittered the remainder of Isaac's life are to be traced directly to this source; teaching us by an impressive example the lesson which all parents may expect to learn from the exhibition of a similar weakness. A distinction among children, while it sows the seed of discord between the heads of the household themselves, produces effects upon its objects equally disastrous. It kindles the flames of jealousy and resentment between brothers and sisters, and renders the heart, which should be the seat of every gentle and kindly emotion, the habitation of anger, malice, and revenge; and if such baleful passions do not break out into deeds of violence and blood it will be simply because a kind providence in some way interposes, and spares those that have sown the wind from reaping the whirlwind."\*

Esau's natural disposition was somewhat sanguinary. This would influence him in his choice of employment, and his employment would so react upon him as to render him more sanguinary still; for the heart that does not become more softened by witnessing the sufferings of either men or brutes becomes hardened. The great Creator, in order to increase the comfort of his creature-men, has given him permission to kill the lower animals; but he who does not slaughter in such manner as to inflict the least possible amount of pain is guilty of cruelty which the amiable

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\*Bush.

Cowper has fitly designated the most devilish of all vices ; and there is no vice of which the reflex influence is more pernicious. To cause happiness is to be thus far like our Father in heaven. To cause misery is to be like the devil.

An incident connected with Esau's occupation as a hunter determined, humanly speaking, his destiny for life, and that of his posterity to all generations. On one occasion he became so excited in the pursuit of game that he was oblivious of thirst, hunger and fatigue, and when it was at length captured he was nearly exhausted. Slowly and wearily would he thread his way homeward. He would sit down to rest, but needing food quite as much as rest, he would again rise and urge himself forward. The stalwart man would be so overcome with fatigue that he would bow beneath his burden, lay it down, and proceed without it ; but, reflecting on the disappointment his father would experience should he return empty-handed, he would retrace his steps and, again throwing the carcass over his shoulders, would finally reach his home. He was very hungry before, but his desire for food is greatly stimulated by the appetizing fragrance of vegetable soup. The weary, hungry man would throw down his game at the door of his tent, and entering find, to his disappointment, that it is neither his mother nor one of his servants who is preparing the soup, but his brother Jacob,

between whom and himself there is but little sympathy. Esau would not expect much favor from Jacob, but would hope to exchange a part of the game for the coveted food. He would tell his brother what he had captured, and request him to take as much of it as he wished and in return give him some of the soup. To this the subtle Jacob would reply that he did not care for the game, but he might perhaps be induced to part with the food in course of preparation, on which he had bestowed so much pains, if Esau would take it in exchange for his birthright. Esau, thinking only of his present necessity, answered: "Behold, I am at the point to die; and what profit shall this birthright do to me?" Jacob, no doubt, had long been devising plans for obtaining the exalted privileges connected with primogeniture; and indulged the hope that by some costly sacrifice they might become his own. But when he perceived that Esau was willing to part with it for a single meal he would be nearly beside himself for joy. He, however, would conceal his emotion, and, as if quite indifferent about the matter, say it would really be a disappointment, after all this trouble in preparing his favorite dish, to part with it for an uncertain good; but, since his brother wished the food so much, he might have it if he would on oath renounce his birthright. Esau took the required oath, and ate the lentile soup. Ah! never since our first parents ate of the tree

of the knowledge of good and evil was food so dearly purchased. But Esau, so far from expressing any regret relative to the bargain, or endeavoring to induce Jacob to cancel it, "ate and drank and went his way," as if perfectly satisfied with the transaction.

There are few, perhaps none, who do not condemn Esau's conduct in this matter, yet there are many who may find in him their prototype. Those who, in this land of Bibles, neglect the great salvation, are guilty of a folly compared with which Esau's conduct was wisdom. His conceptions of the spiritual blessings he forfeited must have been very vague, while we live in the full blaze of gospel light. "If I had not," says Christ, "come and spoken unto them they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin." Is it not possible there are some surrounded by religious privileges who so neglect to improve these privileges as to be in a measure ignorant of what God requires of his rational creatures? Does the ignorance of such at all palliate their guilt? Is it not itself a great sin? One in vain enquires how Esau was affected by his father's removal to Gerar; what he said relative to the Philistines filling the wells which had been digged by his grandfather; how he brooked the request to leave the country; whether he assisted his father in building the altar at Beersheba; and whether he there called on the name of the Lord, for to these questions

the Bible does not furnish an answer; but is it not nearly certain that the spirited words addressed to Abimelech, Ahuzzath and Phichol, though coming from the lips of the passive, forbearing, peace loving Isaac, were virtually the words of Esau? When Esau was forty years old he married two women, probably not at the same time, but within a year. These were both descendants of Canaan, the son of Ham, whom Noah cursed. Isaac knew full well that his father had been at great pains to prevent him from forming a similar connection, and there can be little doubt but he and Rebekah were much grieved on account of Esau's choice, and an intimate acquaintance with their daughters-in-law developed traits in their characters which by no means atoned for their nationality.

The young reader will perhaps ask why the wives of Esau are called by different names in the history from those they bear in the genealogical table of the Edomites. Though there have been various opinions relative to these names, as well as the different names and different nationality ascribed to the fathers of these women, yet candor obliges the writer to admit that to her the subject seems involved in great if not hopeless obscurity.

Polygamy invariably leads to other evils; and this was more especially the case when ungodly women were united to an ungodly man. As children were born into the family

domestic difficulties would increase, each mother endeavoring to promote the comfort of her own children, though at the expense of all the others, and each jealous lest the father should prefer the children of the other wife or wives to her own.

Among the many blessings brought to women by Christianity is the limiting of man to one wife. In this respect she is raised to her primeval state. She is no longer either a chattel, a toy, or a slave, but is nourished and cherished and even honored. Now her love can be fully reciprocated, and her devotion to her husband be rewarded by like devotion. There is now true union, the union of hearts. The husband is in truth the house-band, and she and her children with him form one house.

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#### CHAPTER IV.

ESAU IS DEPRIVED OF HIS FATHER'S BLESSING.

**T**HE thirty-five years which follow Esau's marriage is altogether barren of any record relative to him; but when he reappears on the historic page he is still the favorite of his father, who was quite blind, and bearing the burden of something more than thirteen decades of years. Isaac being under the impression that he would soon die, called Esau to him and requested him to pro-

cure venison and prepare savory meat in order that he might eat of it and then bless him, and thus confirm him in all the blessings and privileges connected with priority of birth. Isaac was, it may be presumed, ignorant of the fact that Esau had sold his birthright, and Rebekah had been made acquainted with it, and this renders the conduct of both of them relative to the blessing less irrational than it would otherwise appear.

It so occurred that Rebekah heard the words of Isaac addressed to Esau, and no sooner had he gone in search of game than she concocted a plot to deceive her husband which is almost unparalleled in history, and is an indelible stain on her otherwise blameless character. As a daughter she was dutiful, modest, industrious; as a bride trustful, loving, decided; and, as a wife, faithful, patient, submissive; but now, when the snows of more than one hundred years had passed over her, she is seen not only deceiving her husband, but also encouraging her son in lying and imposture, and exhibiting so little fear and reverence for the great God as to express her readiness to incur his wrath.

Rebekah called her son Jacob to her and desired him with as much despatch as possible to kill and dress two kids, telling him that she would make of them savory meat such as his father loved and that he by carrying it to his father would find no difficulty in procuring the blessing for himself. But

though Jacob was extremely anxious to obtain his father's blessing, and by no means over scrupulous as to the means employed, yet he hesitated, for he feared that his father might detect the fraud, and in that case he would bring upon himself not a blessing but a curse. He mentioned his fears to his mother, and her answer, "On me be thy curse, my son," showed the intensity of her love toward him, and, at the same time, the obtuseness of her moral perceptions. It is vain for any one to offer to bear the punishment due to the sins of another. Our own sins if not atoned for will crush us beneath the anger of Almighty God forever and forever; and so great are our obligations to him that even in the holiest and most self-sacrificing lives there are no works of supererogation which can be set against the former sins of the individual or the sins of any other person. The great God has a right to the most fervent love, and the most cheerful obedience of every one of his creatures during the whole period of their existence. He and He only who was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, could bear our sins, could be made a curse for us. Jesus Christ possessed life in himself and of himself, and had a right to dispose of his life as it pleased him. His sufferings consequently were vicarious. His death bought life. His blood cleanses from sin.

We will now have a look into the tents

belonging to the aged patriarch. In one we seem to see Isaac as he lies alone, his sightless eyeballs turned toward the door, and his head raised on one hand that he may the more easily catch the first sound of Esau's footsteps. The other tent is in strong contrast with this, for in it the greatest activity prevails. Two kids have just been slain, and the very choicest pieces having been selected are now in course of preparation for the table. Though maid-servants are not wanting in the establishment, this food is considered of too much importance to be entrusted to any one except the mistress of the family. The savory meat having been prepared, Rebekah assists her favorite son in the arrangement of his dress, which is far from being of the ordinary character. The sacred stole, the sole right of the first-born, is brought forward, and in it Jacob is arrayed, and portions of the skins of the kids which had been killed are fastened on his hands and on the smooth of his neck. She then gave the savory meat and bread and wine into Jacob's hands, and he enters his father's tent. Would he not hesitate? Would he not be half inclined to relinquish the project? May it not be that he did turn toward the door, but his eye meeting the eye of his mother, which seemed to accuse him of cowardice, he determined to go forward, whatever might be the result. Summoning all his fortitude he walks toward the patriarch, and, with a husky voice, says

"My father." The aged man is as one awakened from a dream. He had been probably listening for the sound of Esau's footsteps, and was not aware of the presence of anyone till he heard himself addressed. Arousing himself he replied, "Here am I; who art thou, my son?" Jacob answered that he was Esau, the first-born, and that having complied with his father's request it but remained for him to eat of the venison and pronounce the blessing. The fears of Isaac were excited. The voice was the voice of Jacob, and it was strange that the game should have been caught and the savory meat prepared in so short a time. Isaac asks for an explanation, and Jacob tells him that the easy capture of the animal was to be attributed to God's aid. Isaac now thinks of a test in which he, though blind, could not be deceived—that of *touch*—and causing Jacob to come near to him feels of his neck and hands and finds them to be hairy—the distinguishing characteristic of Esau. It must be my first-born thought Isaac, yet he once more, with the greatest earnestness, puts the question: Art *thou* my VERY son Esau? Jacob now tells the fourth lie, and sets the mind of the patriarch at rest. The venison and bread are now eaten and the wine drunk and Isaac blessed Jacob saying:

"Therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven,  
And the fatness of the earth,  
And plenty of corn and wine;  
Let people serve thee,  
And nations bow down to thee;

Be lord over thy brethren,  
And let thy mother's sons bow down to thee ;  
Cursed be everyone that curseth thee,  
And blessed be he that blesseth thee."

Poor Jacob! he obtained the blessing, but at a tremendous cost. He was guilty not only of deception and repeated lying, but also of profanity. Little did he imagine when he listened to his mother's solicitations how deeply he would be plunged in guilt. He would have shuddered at the thought of using the name of God irreverently; but before the scheme is accomplished he dares use that holy name in connection with a lie. Little did Cain suppose when he first indulged in angry feelings toward his brother Abel that he would imbrue his hands in that brother's blood. Little did David think when he entertained the first impure thought toward Bathsheba that he would be guilty of adultery and murder; and little did Judas expect when he abstracted the first coin—perhaps of very trifling value—from the common pursé that he would betray his Master. "It is one of the most fearful perils of deviation from the right way that no bound is set to it. The transgressor knows not whither it will lead him."\* It is useless for one to say that he will go so far in an evil course and then stop. He may not, he probably will not, have the power to stop. Such is the nature of sin that the man who

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\* Conant.

indulges in it finds that each descending step renders it the more difficult to avoid the next. His moral power to return to the path of wisdom is continually decreasing, while more and still more power would be required for that purpose. May not the religious talent, the power to honor, love and obey God, by disuse become entirely extirpated? Is there, then, hope of salvation for such an one?

The conduct of both Rebekah and Jacob in this affair merits the severest censure, and cannot be contemplated, even at this great distance of time and place, without pain; yet the designs of God were thus accomplished, his will fulfilled. But had Jacob absolutely refused to listen to his mother's suggestions he, doubtless, would have obtained the blessing, for God will bring about his own purposes. A Being of infinite resources, infinite power, and infinite wisdom, cannot be frustrated in his designs. Let none, therefore, under any pretext whatever, "do evil that good may come."

Jacob had but just gone out from his father's presence when Esau, having returned from hunting and having prepared the savory meat, brought it to Isaac, saying, "Let my father arise and eat of his son's venison, that thy soul may bless me." The mind of the aged man was filled with surprise, grief, and anguish, and he called out, "Who art thou?" Isaac could scarcely believe it possible that he had been duped; for had he not taken the

precaution to feel the hands of the man who had brought him the venison before he ate it? and were they not hairy? and was not that a characteristic in the physique of Esau which was unique and which could not be counterfeited? and yet the present speaker had Esau's voice; what could it mean? For some time Isaac remained silent convulsed by agony. In the forcible words of Scripture, "He trembled very exceedingly." And when his tumultuous feelings allowed him to speak, he cried "Who, where is he that hath taken venison and brought it to me, and I have eaten of all before thou camest and have blessed him." When a sudden calamity overtakes a man his character appears for the time at least in its true light, and Isaac is never more clearly seen to be the true believer than in this unexpected trial. His faith in God triumphed over his partiality as a father, and now it may be for the first time fully comprehending the import of the words, "The elder shall serve the younger," he meekly submits to the divine will and with the deepest solemnity adds, "Yea and he shall be blessed."

Esau seeing his father's decision was filled horror, and the welkin rang with his wail of woe. He was the prey of hatred, anger, and remorse. He cried with an exceeding great and bitter cry, and when his passions became so moderated as to render words possible, he plaintively entreated, "Bless me, even me also O my father."

It had been wise in Esau to recall to his mind that he had voluntarily bartered away his birthright for the mere gratification of his appetite, and that the loss of the blessing was the natural sequence of the loss of the birthright. But instead of this he throws all the blame upon his brother, saying his nature was but the counterpart of his name, and that he had supplanted him twice. Like most angry men Esau exceeded the bounds of truth, for while he acted both foolishly and wickedly in selling his birthright it was a legitimate business transaction in which he who sold was far more guilty than he who made the purchase. As Esau was in his own opinion unfortunate rather than criminal, worthy of pity rather than blame, he appeals to his father's affection and imploringly enquires, "Has thou not reserved a blessing for me?" Though Isaac was so weak, not to say so sinful as to prefer Esau to Jacob, his piety was stronger and deeper than his favoritism, and with perfect calmness and the utmost candor he replies:

"Behold I have made him thy Lord,  
And all his brethren have I given him for servants,  
And with corn and wine have I sustained him;  
And what shall I do unto thee my son?"

The state of Esau's mind almost precluded reflection and without attempting to answer his father, he pleaded, "Hast thou but one blessing, my father! bless me, even me, also, O my father," and then gave vent to the anguish of his spirit in cries and tears. The heart of

Isaac must have yearned over his erring and wretched son, and no doubt every lineament of his face as well as the subdued tones of his voice evinced the depth of his sympathy and the tenderness of his heart ; yet he dared not, nor even wished, to do otherwise than obey the promptings of the spirit, and therefore said :

“ Behold thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth,  
And of the dew of heaven from above ;  
And by thy sword thou shalt live,  
And 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 neck.”

These prophetic words were far from being satisfactory to Esau. He saw as every reader does that they made his hated brother his lord. They evidently decreased his love to his father, increased his dislike to his brother and made him rebel against the decrees of God. He seems to have left his father's presence abruptly, and one imagines him walking to and fro and soliloquizing thus : “ I will see whether I and my children will serve Jacob. He become a powerful nation, ha ! ha ! nothing can be more easy than to destroy this highly favored nation in its germ. Jacob is now childless and childless shall he ever be ; for the days of mourning for my father are at hand, the sooner they come the better, and I will slay my brother Jacob. Nations bow down to him ! People serve him ! The dew of heaven, the fatness of the earth, and corn and wine

will add much to the comfort of the dead! Hard work it will be to break his yoke from off my neck!"

How vain it is to hope to frustrate the purposes of the Almighty! As well might man attempt to prevent the earth from turning on its axis or revolving round the sun. Though the threat against Jacob had been uttered when Esau supposed there were none to hear, indeed he may not have been conscious that his bitter, malicious thoughts had been clothed in words, yet God so ordered in His providence that the threat was heard by one who reported it to his mother. One seems to see Rebekah as she listens to the wrathful words of Esau. Though she feigns to disbelieve them, a tremor passes over her, her cheeks and lips become colorless, and great drops of perspiration stand on her brow. She, doubtless, knew that Esau was mastered by his passions, instead of his passions being mastered by him; and hence feared that should Jacob be found by him alone he would be slain, even before the days of mourning for his father had arrived.

Rebekah's informant having left her, she calls Jacob to her, and, after assuring herself that no other human ear could hear, gives him an unvarnished statement of facts, and advises him what to do. She exhibits in this instance all the energy and decision that might be expected from what has been previously learned of her character; and, at the

same time the most admirable tact in adapting her counsel to the exigencies of the case. Jacob must go out of the way of Esau, and where so well go as to her own family. He may there find a wife, and thus be rewarded for his toilsome journey. Esau's wrath would be as short-lived as it was violent, and then Jacob would return. But while Rebekah was drawing this fair picture the thought suddenly crossed her mind that perchance Jacob would be slain ere he would be able to leave, and thus one son would be lost by death, and the other, becoming a fugitive and a vagabond, would be worse than lost. Her noble spirit was for a moment crushed, and she sobbed rather than said, "Why should I be deprived of you both in one day?" These words show that Rebekah was not devoid of womanly tenderness. A woman destitute of tenderness would be an anomaly.

Rebekah did not think it for the best to acquaint her husband with the threat of Esau. Was her reticence on this subject prompted by love? Did she fear the grief it would occasion might hasten his death, or was she afraid he would reproach her as the cause of the trouble? This is one of the many instances in which it is difficult, if not impossible, to determine the motives by which one is actuated, and consequently the act cannot be pronounced either good or bad, the moral character of any act or course depending wholly on the intention. We often

err when we attempt to judge of motives. May not our own motives be so complex as to baffle analysis even by ourselves?

Not very long after Rebekah's conversation with Jacob she went to her husband, ostensibly with some complaint against her daughters-in-law, but in reality to obtain his consent for Jacob to go to Haran. Isaac would listen patiently to her complaints, and then endeavor to palliate the offence by adducing some excuse for the offenders. But Rebekah would say, "Something of the kind is an almost every day's occurrence. I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth; if Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these which are of the daughters of the land, what good shall my life do me?" To this Isaac would reply that it was not kind to reproach Esau for his unfortunate marriages, as he seemed to be under the necessity of selecting his wives from surrounding nations or not marrying at all, and would add that he thought it ought not to occasion either regret or surprise if Jacob should follow his brother's example. This or some similar remark was, probably, what Rebekah hoped to call forth; but, as if the thought had just occurred to her mind, she would ask: "How would it do for Jacob to go to Haran and marry into my brother's family? You remember that Laban is the father of two daughters who by this time must be marriageable, and one of them has the reputation

of being exceedingly fair." Isaac would scarcely know what to answer. Being very infirm he would shrink from the thought of a separation from either of his sons, but, calling to mind, as we may presume, the pains and expense his father had incurred rather than allow him to marry a Canaanite; and the annoyances to which both himself and Rebekah had been subjected on account of the impiety of Esau's wives, he finally acquiesced in the proposal.

Preparations had already been made for the journey. Such preparations as could be made for a solitary individual performing a long journey on foot. Jacob must have been very scantily supplied even with what would be considered necessaries, his strength being insufficient to enable him to carry either many changes of raiment or supplies for the recurring wants of many days.

Isaac is neither the first nor the last husband who has been asked to give his consent to measures which had been determined on whether his consent was or was not given; but he, quite ignorant of what had passed between Jacob and his mother, called the former to him and blessed him, and said unto him, "Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan. Arise and go to Padan-aram, to the house of Bethuel, thy mother's father, and take thee a wife from thence of the daughters of Laban thy mother's brother. And God Almighty bless thee, and

make thee fruitful and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people; and give the blessing of Abraham to thee and to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger which God gave unto Abraham."

Jacob now sets off on his long tedious journey, the same journey which had been made about ninety-five years previously by Eliezer. The two travellers present a very strong contrast. One alone, the other with several attendants. One on foot, the other riding a camel. One but illy supplied with either clothing or provisions, the other having every comfort and convenience. The one, if he would marry, has no dower but the labor of his hands, the other has gold and silver, jewels and raiment for the expected bride.

The question naturally suggests itself: Why did Jacob travel alone? Had Isaac, who had inherited so much wealth, and who had been so greatly blessed at Gerar, lately become reduced in circumstances; or was Jacob so little loved that none of the servants cared to accompany him? He would be likely to wish for one or more attendants and for a camel on which to ride, for he was not, as is sometimes represented, a young man, and hence full of the ardor and hopefulness and love of adventure common to youth, but one on whose head three-quarters of a century had shed their frosts. One would like to follow the lonely Jacob and to see him take

the stones of a certain place and put them for his pillows. Did he not, before he laid himself down to sleep, weep and make supplication to God? and was it not in answer to his earnest prayers that God vouchsafed a glorious vision—one of the most glorious visions ever vouchsafed man—and made to him the far-reaching promises which had been made to Abraham and Isaac, as well as some of a special nature suited to his present condition? But we must leave Jacob to return to Esau. We find him, not long after Jacob's departure, deliberating as to the best way of making amends to his father and mother for his unhappy marriages; it being quite apparent to him by the charge given to Jacob that "the daughters of Canaan pleased not Isaac his father." Being not only the husband of two women, but also the father of several children, he was almost precluded from going to the distant Padan-aram to seek a wife among his mother's relatives. There was, however, one Mahalath, or Bashemath, the daughter of Ishmael, the half-brother of his father, against whom he thought there could not be the same objection as against his present wives, and besides, he may have been attracted by the manner of life practised by the Ishmaelites. Whether actuated by one or both of these reasons, he went and married her. But it is improbable that either Esau, or his parents, or his other wives were made happier by the presence of this Ishmaelites

in the household. Polygamy is, from its very nature, so entirely destructive of domestic bliss, or even peace, that every additional wife, however amiable she might be, must add to the discomfort of all concerned. The reader needs but call to mind Sarah and Hagar, Rachel and Leah, Peninnah and Hannah, to recollect their heart-burnings and jealousies. If pious women united to pious men lived in a broil, what would the condition of the domestic circle be likely to be when irreligious women were united to an Esau? There are probably few Bible readers who have not wished that they could know how Rebekah was affected by the departure of her loved Jacob. May we not suppose that she gazed on his receding figure till it could no longer be seen, and that she then retired to her own tent and wept? There is no record of Rebekah ever shedding a tear; perhaps she never allowed any one to see her weep; but nothing is more certain—strong-minded and intensely active as she was—than that she sometimes wept. Tears are women's heritage. And did not Rebekah on this occasion pray ~~as~~ well as weep? She had, long years before this, when full of anxiety, gone to God and poured out her sorrows into his ear, and had been heard and answered. Would she not remember the loving-kindness of God and be thus encouraged to go to him again? She must have felt that her sin was very great, yet did she not plead for forgiveness

through the promised Seed? Is it not possible that the great God who multiplies pardons said to her, "Daughter, go in peace."

Rebekah and Jacob never met again on earth, and the only record we hear of her afterwards is the place of her burial—the cave of Machpelah, and there too, at his own request was Jacob buried.

Some time within the next twenty years Esau removed to Mount Seir though still retaining some interest in his father's property in Southern Palestine. God intended that Jacob should return to Canaan with vast flocks and herds, and so made room for him by the removal of Esau before Jacob came, "their riches being more than that they might dwell together." Nothing, however, was farther from the mind of Esau than the wish to make room for his brother. He moved to Seir because it pleased him to do so; but why he chose thence to remove is unknown. It is possible that his father's piety caused his own impiety to appear in so unfavorable light as to lessen his self esteem, and thus render him unhappy. He did evil and did not wish that evil should be reprov'd; or it may be that the mountainous district of Seir afforded abundance of game, and as he was skilled in hunting, that was an inducement for his removal thither. There is still another alternative—Aholibamah, one of Esau's wives, was the daughter of Anah, a Hovite chief, and as Esau was not very happy among his own

people, she may have persuaded him to go and live among hers. But whatever were Esau's motives the purposes of God as has been already said were thus accomplished. It was the will of God that Mount Seir should be the possession of the descendants of Esau, and Canaan the possession of the descendants of Jacob. It was not till the iniquity of the Canaanites was full that God caused Israel to wage against them an exterminating war and to appropriate to themselves the houses and vineyards, the flocks and herds of that devoted nation; and there can be no doubt that when Esau gained possession of Seir the Hivites had sunken so low in iniquity that it was necessary that they as a nation should be wiped off the face of the earth.

In the destruction of one nation and in the placing of another in its stead we see the sovereignty of the great God. God's sovereignty is indeed one of the truths to which prominence is given in the Holy Scriptures. God commands Pharaoh to give freedom to some millions of serfs; he refuses to do so, but the serfs are freed though at the tremendous cost of ruin on Egypt, misery on her people, and death to her mighty warriors and her king. All nations are given into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar and all attempts to oppose him are entirely futile. Strong walls are broken down and stronger hearts are forced to submit to his rule. God wills that His temple should be rebuilt, and a heathen ruler

makes the following proclamation: "Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, all the kingdoms of the earth hath the Lord God of heaven given me; and he hath charged me to build him a house in Jerusalem which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? The Lord his God be with him and let him go up." Though Cyrus knew not God he was guided by him. God has said "The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea;" and neither can the wickedness of earth nor the malice of hell prevent the dawn of that glorious day. Men may talk of the impossibility of sending the gospel to all peoples, and of the waning piety of professedly christian nations, but God's kingdom will come and His will be done on earth as it is in heaven. "All nations shall serve him." Heaven and earth may pass away but God's Word cannot pass away.

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## CHAPTER V.

### THE LAND OF EDOM.

**T**HE land which God gave to Esau as a possession was the Mount Seir to which he removed, as has already been stated, not very long after Jacob had supplanted him in reference to his father's blessing. Why this.

tract of land was called Seir is not certainly known; some scholars supposing it to have been so called from a man of that name, and others from the rugged nature of the country. It may be pretty safely predicated that it took its name Edom from the removal of Esau or Edom thither, and from its occupation by his descendants. This district was also called the Mount of Esau as in the terrible prophecy of Obadiah. It was wholly mountainous and was situated to the south of Moab. It is generally supposed to have been but one hundred miles long by twenty miles in width. Bozrah was its ancient capital, and was, it may be presumed, the birth place of Jobab, one of Edom's kings. With the name of this city all Bible readers are familiar from the fact that it is met with in that very remarkable portion of scripture, the sixty-third chapter of the Prophecy of Isaiah, in which a victory over the Edomites is typical of the triumphs of the Lord Jesus Christ over all his enemies.

Sela, better known by its Greek name Petra, seems to have become its capital, at any rate it was its chief fortress, and was almost impregnable; Elath and Ezion-geber, on the Red Sea were Edom's seaports, which, however, unhappily for her, were often in the hands of her enemies. The first navy of which we read was that which was builded at Ezion-geber, not by Edom—she never had a navy—but by the powerful Solomon, whose greatness in part caused Edom's littleness and kept her little.

The glens of Edom are said to have been remarkable for their fertility, but their limited dimensions rendered it impossible that any considerable population could be sustained by the products of the soil; the inhabitants may have even thought that they were under the necessity of having recourse to plunder. But had they determined to live honestly the Sovereign of heaven and earth, the Proprietor of the universe would have spread a table for them without their trespassing on the rights of others. It is true alike of nations and individuals that "Such as turn aside to their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity."

Of the mountains of Edom, Hor is the highest and the most conspicuous. Its height is said to be about four thousand eight hundred feet above the Mediterranean, and it is remarkable for its double top. Close beneath Mount Hor lies the wonderful Petra, though neither is visible from the other. But the mount is chiefly distinguished as being the place of the death and burial of the first Levitical high priest. Aaron, the high priest to whom reference has just been made, had with his brother Moses and sister Miriam wandered, at the head of the nation to which they belonged, in the wilderness thirty-nine years. The two brothers had lately buried their sister, a very highly gifted woman at Kadesh-barnea. There then remained of the immense host who had left Egypt but four

persons who, at that time, had arrived at manhood. Two of the four were to be privileged to see the fulfilment of their long and fondly cherished hopes, and enter triumphantly into the promised land, through the Jordan that was driven back.<sup>1</sup> The other two, Moses and Aaron had publicly dishonored God and their chastisement must be such as should be known to all the congregation of Israel. By the command of God Moses and Aaron and Eleazar, Aaron's eldest son ascend the mount in the presence of all the people with the certainty that the high priest would there die. With what intense interest must Aaron have been watched by the multitude. Annually, had he entered, on their behalf, into the most holy place before the symbol of the divine presence, and they had stood without praying and anxiously awaiting his return; but now he was to enter into the presence of God Himself to return to them no more. Let us look at these men as they ascend the mount. Is it not probable that Aaron precedes the other two, and that his footstep is firmer and more elastic than theirs? One seems to see the congregation standing with their eyes steadfastly fixed on Aaron. At one time he would be hidden, for a moment, by an out-jutting rock and every eye would be strained to catch the first sight of him as he re-appeared; and would they not with one mouth exclaim, "Thank God?" But he would grow smaller and still smaller and still smaller till he would

be a mere speck, even that speck would cease to be seen; and the tinkling of the golden bells would no longer be heard. The people return to their tents with the conviction that sin demands punishment; and while they would acknowledge the righteousness of God's judgment they would accuse themselves as being the cause of it. Had not our fathers and ourselves murmured they would say Aaron had not sinned, and had he not sinned he with us would enter Canaan. While these things are occurring at the base of Hor the three men would be slowly and silently climbing its heights, and when they reach its castellated summit Eleazar would be more a statue than a living man. For the first time, perhaps, in his life he would be conscious of the omnipresence of God, that in reality He beset him behind and before and laid His hands upon him. Aaron would give the signal to be disrobed. Weak and impulsive as he is by nature, a follower not a leader among men, he would be now strong in the strength of the mighty God, and immovable as the rock on which he stood. Grievously as he had sinned, his is the blessedness of the man whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered. As morning and evening he had offered the blood of the slain lamb, may it not be that he by faith saw the Lamb of God who in the fullness of time would put away sin by the sacrifice of himself? and would not his faith cause him to submit so calmly and

even joyfully to the will of God that he would bear on his countenance the impress of peace and love and bliss? But Moses though scarcely less remarkable for his strength of resolution than for his meekness would doubtless be greatly agitated. Had he been a mere spectator he might have fallen to the earth; but he was called to act and earnest action blunts the edge of feeling. God's command was Moses' rule of duty, and the command now was "strip Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son." Tenderly and lovingly would Moses take from off Aaron the golden crown on which was inscribed "holiness to the Lord," the linen mitre, the curious girdle of the ephod of gold, blue, scarlet, purple, and fine twined linen, the ephod with its onyx stones bearing the names of the twelve tribes of Israel, the wonderful breast-plate with twelve oracular gems and the mysterious Urim and Thummim and the robe of the ephod all of the blue ornamented with balls and pomegranites of gold. Eleazar would bow reverently; and then it may be his tremulous tenderness giving place to holy awe he would suffer himself to be arrayed in the sacerdotal robe. The Scripture word of Aaron's death is given in the fewest possible words. "Aaron died there in the top of the mount." But is it not lawful to imagine the scene something as follows: a smile lit up the face of Aaron as he looked on the new high priest and then raising

his hands and his eyes to heaven he triumphantly exclaimed: The Lord is my strength and my song and he has become my salvation," and as he ceased to speak a luminous cloud overshadowed him, and he was not for God had taken him. The temple which was once the house of the worshipper was all that remained on earth.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### ESAU'S INTERVIEW WITH JACOB AT THE JABBOK.

**T**HE life of Jacob at Padan-aram had not been all sunshine. The conduct of his father-in-law had never been remarkable for its straightforwardness, but latterly it had become even more crooked than ever; and it was evident to Jacob that he was losing his favor. Jacob was perplexed, and in his perplexity he doubtless went to God in prayer—all believers do that—and the Lord told him to return to his own country and promised to be with him. In obedience to this command in a short time he, with his wives and children, flocks and herds, was going Canaanward. Esau probably intended, on the demise of his father, to return to Canaan himself, and hence he no sooner heard of the migrating family than he determined to intercept them. For

this purpose he armed four hundred of his adherents, and went to meet them, intending either to murder his brother and his family, or make them his prisoners, and thus gain possession of the flocks and herds. Of the intentions of Esau Jacob was wholly ignorant, but, remembering the feud which existed before he left the parental roof, he thought it but prudent to send a deputation to his brother. The messengers were instructed to address Esau as follows: "Thy servant Jacob saith thus, I have sojourned with Laban, and stayed there until now; and I have oxen and asses, flocks and herds, men-servants and women-servants; and I have sent to tell my lord that I may find grace in thy sight." The more closely we examine this message the more conciliatory it is seen to be. He calls himself a servant and Esau his lord. He was a mere sojourner while with Laban, his time, however, had not been unemployed; on the contrary, he had amassed considerable wealth—he knew that would be likely to commend him to his brother's favor—and he wished for Esau's friendship and esteem. The message was, no doubt, faithfully delivered, but the answer was evidently very unsatisfactory, for the messengers returned in haste, and reported that Esau, with a large band of warriors, was coming to meet them. One imagines that a panic would seize the whole caravan. One would propose returning to Padan-aram with all possible speed, another to take refuge in

the first ravine that could be found, and another still to arm themselves as best they could and sell their lives at the dearest possible rate. The children would cry and the women weep, and Jacob himself was greatly distressed. He would begin to question whether the voice which bade him return to Canaan was indeed the voice of God. If God was with him would he be exposed to this danger? What if his beloved Joseph should be slain before his eyes, or what would be even worse, be carried captive! How could he endure to see the beautiful Rachel become the property of another! Even Leah, the tender-eyed Leah, whom he had married, not from choice but necessity, would be dear to him now; and the thought that she who had borne seven should be either slain or made a prisoner stings him almost to madness. But Jacob, though tortured with doubts and fears, is still a believer, and the believer always finds a refuge in God. He is a stronghold in the day of trouble. Jacob goes to God, and speaks to him as his covenant God: "O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac." He pleads the promise: "I will deal well with thee." He acknowledges his unworthiness: "I am not worthy of all the mercies and of all the truth which thou hast showed unto thy servant;" prays for the safety of his family: "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;" and again pleads God's promises: "Thou saidest I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea which cannot be numbered for multilude." There was, I think, no assurance given Jacob that his prayer was accepted. But, whether hope or fear predominated, he acted prudently and wisely. He neither sank into despair on account of the threatening danger, nor neglected the use of means because God had promised to be with him. He used his utmost efforts to appease the wrath of his brother, arranged for the safety of his family—or at least for a part of it—in case that wrath could not be appeased, and put his hope and confidence entirely in God.

Esau met his brother not far from the Jabbok; and how different the meeting from that which he had anticipated! He meets five droves of animals—in all five hundred and eighty—and on asking the drivers to whom they belonged and whether they were going, received on each occasion the same strangely kind answer: "They be thy servant Jacob's; it is a present to my lord Esau; and behold also he is behind us." Esau would be at first suspicious. He would think it another act of subtlety in the subtle Jacob; but his suspicion would give place to surprise, and surprise to amazement, and finally every other feeling would be displaced by tenderness. "Can it be possible," he would

exclaim, "that Jacob, so far from preparing to resist me or endeavoring to escape, sends me this munificent present, acknowledges me his lord, and comes to throw himself upon my mercy? Why really he yields to me the supremacy due to my birth, and what more can I ask or even desire?" While Esau is thus soliloquizing he sees Jacob approaching, but oh! how changed. For twenty years he had endured the frost by night and the sun's heat by day, and the previous night had not only been an entirely sleepless one, but, during the hours he had had a most remarkable and mysterious contest with Omnipotence. Up to that time such an event had never occurred; down to the present age the instance is without a parallel. Jacob had pleaded his cause before God, he had filled his mouth with arguments, but an answer was withheld. Yet was he not undone without God's aid? In this extremity he caused all his family to pass over the Jabbok that he might be alone with God. He is on his knees engaged in earnest prayer when suddenly he is seized by One who seems to be an enemy, who would not only interrupt his devotions, but also throw him to the earth; and Jacob endeavors to gain some advantage over his assailant, whom he soon perceives is no other than the mighty God; and, hence, to lose his hold of him would be to lose all hope. His agonized efforts are but the counterpart of his agonized feelings. The assailant would

at once have been the victor had he not imparted the strength against which he combatted. Had he not, as Bush puts it, "fought for Jacob with his right hand while he fought against him with his left." The strength with which Jacob sustained the contest with the Almighty was not the strength of bones and sinews, nor was the non-prevalence of the Angel—thus the great God is here designated—anything else than his will not to withstand the power of unwavering faith, pleading his own promises. That Jacob might be humble though victorious, God by a touch dislocated his thigh, leaving him no alternative but to allow himself to be vanquished or to cling to his combatant with all his might. "Let me go," says the mighty God, which was as much as to say, "I cannot go without your consent." The worm Jacob, strong in the strength of the mighty God, replies: "I will not let thee go unless thou bless me." God yields to the power he had imparted to his servant and blesses him. This tremendous struggle left, no doubt, such an impression on Jacob's face as could not fail to strike the beholder. Was not the tabernacle so rent that the indweller could be seen; the casket so shattered that through it the jewel shone?

Esau would look on Jacob with astonishment mingled with awe; and would be pained as he saw him prostrate himself again and again before him, till at length he fell at his feet. He would be entirely subdued. The

stern features of the old warrior would relax and be expressive of more than woman's tenderness. In vain would he recall to mind that he was surrounded by a band of soldiers who had left their homes with the expectation of becoming the possessors of the whole caravan; and that they might accuse him of pusillanimity. They had long placed in him the most unbounded confidence, and he was unwilling to forfeit that confidence; they had been true to him in many a dangerous enterprise, and carried on their persons many honorable scars, and they are now anxiously awaiting the command to seize the company. But what could Esau do? His heart was as wax before the fire. He would no longer see in Jacob the supplanter, nor remember that he had taken advantage of his hunger and fatigue to obtain his birthright; and of his father's blindness to appropriate to himself the blessing. All past broils would be forgotten and he would see in him only the twin brother who had been nourished at the same breast, led by the same tender hand, and instructed by the same gentle voice. Formerly his heart, it may be, was filled with bitterness against God because he had declared even before his birth that he should serve his younger brother; but now he would have so deep a sense of God's right of sovereignty over all the creatures he had made that even rebellious thought was subdued; and he would bless God that there was nothing in his decrees

to exclude him from eternal blessedness. Esau dropped his weapons of war, "ran to meet Jacob, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept;" and for some time they could do nothing but weep for their hearts were too full for words. Formerly each thought of the other's wrong-doings, now each would think of his own. Never even in the days of their childhood had they loved each other as they would love now. They would be astonished that there should ever have been any alienation of feeling between them and resolve to be firm friends the remainder of their lives.

While the brothers were in each other's arms the wives and children of Jacob drew near and bowed themselves before Esau. Is it not presumable that the fair face of Rachel brought that of Esau's mother before him, and awakened more tender emotions toward her than he had previously experienced? He had never had very fervent love for his mother and for the lack he had thought himself excusable; but he would think differently now. He would not be at all surprized that his mother had preferred Jacob to himself, but surprized, rather, that his father had not shared in that preference. Formerly he had blamed every body but himself for his misfortunes, now he would blame himself and himself only. Had not old things with him passed away and had not all things become new? The tree is known by its fruits, and

the good tree at once began to produce good fruit. The brothers now become rivals in generosity, Esau is unwilling to accept his brother's present, and will not consent to do so till he is convinced that its acceptance will give his brother pleasure and in return wishes to accompany him, with his men to Canaan. This kind offer Jacob with much politeness declines. Esau then asks to be allowed to send a sufficient number of men to insure the safety of the family. But Jacob feeling that he is encompassed with God's host has no apprehension of danger and replies: "What needeth it? Let me find grace in the right of my Lord." Esau withdrew his request; and after obtaining a promise that Jacob would at some future time visit him, "returned that day on his way to Seir." There is no record of this visit but this is not proof that it was never made. It is presumable that Jacob did visit Esau; and that the friendship commenced at the fords of the Jabbok was then so firmly cemented that it was never afterwards broken.

After the lapse of another twenty years we meet with the two brothers together again. They are at Hebrón, a city about twenty miles to the south of Jerusalem, picturesquely situated in a narrow valley surrounded by rocky hills. But the scenery, charming as it was, would be scarcely noticed by these men; for they are carrying with them the lifeless body of their father. With measured tread they enter Mackpelah's cave, where had already

been deposited the remains of the beautiful Sarah, and the faithful Abraham; and at a comparatively recent date, their own mother, the fair Rebekah. They would lay the body of their father in its final resting place and sitting down on the dank earth cry, "my father, oh my father," and their voices would at times be lost in the wild shrieks of Leah and her companions.

The extreme brevity of this part of the scripture narrative renders it impossible for one to ascertain what length of time Esau, on this occasion passed in Canaan. Is it not reasonable to suppose that Jacob sent for him as soon as he perceived that Isaac was drawing near to death? and that they together stood by the bed of the dying saint, and listened to the last words which fell from his lips? No plotting now; neither would have any desire to interfere with the rights of the other—for love to God is wholly incompatible with hatred to man they cannot co-exist—but on the contrary each would be anxious to occupy the position, to fill the niche designed him by the great God.

The days of mourning for Isaac being ended Esau returned to his mountain home and thus yielded to Jacob his father's tents, and wells, and perchance all his flocks and herds. Jacob must have been by this time a very wealthy man, but he was by no means exempt from trials. Not many years had elapsed since the death of his loved and loving

Rachel and the anguish of her last hours would be ever before him; and in vain would he endeavor to erase the remembrance of it from his mind by changing the name of the motherless boy from Ben-oni to Benjamin. But much as Jacob mourned for Rachel, he mourned still more for Joseph, her first-born and his favorite son. He had suddenly disappeared and there were reasons for believing that he had become a prey to wild beasts. There is a deep pathos in the words, "I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning." The scene at Peniel changed Jacob's nature scarcely less than his name. He had been a believer for at least twenty years previously; but he was then brought nearer to God than ever before. From that event he ceased to be crafty, subtle and underhanded, and was truthful, honest, straightforward and sincere. It is evident that from that time he would rather fail of an end, however desirable, than accomplish it by unfair means, and the severe trials through which he passed are an illustration of the words uttered by our adorable Redeemer many hundreds of years afterwards: "Every branch that beareth fruit he purgeth it that it may bring forth more fruit."

We never meet with Esau after the burial of Isaac; and he, alas, is one of the many relative to whose eternal state we cannot speak with certainty. He sold his birthright and hence is designated by the spirit of truth, "Profane Esau." He also meditated the

murder of his brother, and afterwards the murder or the carrying off captive of his brother and his family. But do not his conduct at the Jabbok, the uninterrupted friendship of twenty years, his assisting at the burial of his father, and then returning gently to Seir, furnish presumptive evidence that he was a new man? "Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles?"

While there is a possibility, if not a probability that Esau late in life became a believer, his long course of sin had its natural effect on his descendants. No man can destroy the effect of the influence he has exerted however much he may wish to do so. Manasseh was pardoned, but his evil example had so thoroughly contaminated his subjects that long years after his decease God punished them for sins of which they might never have been guilty had that king never lived; and during the long series of years in which Esau lived in rebellion against God, the nation of which he was the head became so permeated with iniquity that they never ceased to do evil and learned to do well. As all influence others, and cannot avoid influencing others, is not piety, earnest sincere piety, the truest philanthropy?

Let no one expect to be finally saved though he continues in sin because a Manasseh or an Esau was converted late in life. It is most irrational for one to do that of which he means to repent. Besides, one may be sud-

denly summoned to appear before the Judge; or time for repentance may be given and yet repentance not granted. The consciousness that death is near may occasion not repentance but remorse. The power to love God may be entirely lost. "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin;" and sin is the most cruel and imperious of all masters. "The wages of sin is death." Reader, are you serving this Master? will you work for such wages? Stop and think.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### THE HORITES.

**T**HE renowned conqueror, of whom it is said that he never tasted bread, and who boasted that the grass never grew where his horse had set his foot, has been designated "the scourge of God." Might he not have been more fitly denominated God's sword? there being Scripture authority for such an appellation. Nimrod is the first sword of God in human form with whom we meet on the historic page, and next in order is Chedorlaomer, (ravager of the west). Little do such men think when straining every nerve in order to gratify their love of domination and lust of power, that they are carrying out the purposes of the Almighty, and should they

wish to go further than would be ultimately for the extension of his glory, he would put hooks into their jaws and cause them to return. Chedorlaomer was one of the Lord's swords in the twentieth century before the birth of Christ. We first meet him with three other kings or sheiks, accompanied by a band of warriors, spreading terror and desolation wherever they go. For the ravages committed in some states they had a reasonable pretext; in others their only right was their might. Among the latter the Horites are probably to be classed. They were the original inhabitants of Mount Seir, but of them very little is known. Even the origin of their name is obscure, some supposing it to have been derived from the name of one of their early ancestors, Hori, and others from their habits as cave-dwellers. They were of Hamite blood, on whom the fearful curse rested—"a servant of servants unto his brethren."

Caves, as is well known, were among the first human habitations, and the country of the Horites afforded peculiar facilities for this kind of dwelling. The Horites may have lacked skill to erect houses, and had they possessed skill they might not have used it for that purpose, as in their country it was much easier to excavate than to build. There is no proof that they cultivated the earth, but they kept flocks and herds which supplied them for the most part with food and clothing.

Chedorlaomer by his invasion appears to have reduced them to the greatest extremity. When the patriarch Job would convince his friends that the calamities which had befallen him were absolutely unprecedented, really intolerable, he refers to this down-trodden, half-civilized race, "fleeing into the wilderness," living "in caves of the earth and in the rocks," digging for roots to satisfy the pangs of hunger, and obtaining even these by stealth; yet they, even they, the abhorrest of all others, abhor him. They, the most wretched of the sons of wretchedness, the vilest of the vile, even *they* dare treat *him* with disrespect.

Though the Horites were reduced by Chedorlaomer to the extremest poverty they retained their independence, and were governed by their own dukes or sheiks. The names of seven of these sheiks have been handed down to us. These are as follow: Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan. These men were the sons of Seir, and possessed the chieftainships simultaneously in different parts of the country. The occupation of Anah, a chieftain, gives us a hint as to the manner in which the magnates among this people lived. He fed the asses of Zibeon, his father. If, as some among the learned suppose, the word translated "mules" in the twenty-fourth verse of the thirty-sixth chapter of Genesis should have been translated warm springs, Anah,

the Horite, may have been the first to discover that some of the lower animals are endowed with the faculty of snuffing moisture in the air and thus finding latent waters.

God's judgments are unsearchable, and his ways past finding out; and it was His righteous will that the Horites should not only lose their property but their independence also; and that they finally as a nation should become extinct. Though we are told that the children of Edom destroyed the Horites, it is by no means certain that there was not at all times a friendly feeling existing between the Edomites and some of the Horites. It is quite conceivable that wars occurred between the different clans of the last-named people, and that Esau was called upon to aid one clan in the destruction of another, and still another, till they became too weak to make any resistance. It may, indeed, have been that they never wished to be rid of the Edomites, for, finding it easier than it was formerly to dispose of their daughters in marriage, and to avenge themselves on their enemies, they would think their condition bettered by the presence of the newcomers.

While the Horites as a people became extinct, some of the race were continued by intermarriages with the people of Edom. Indeed, the marriage of Esau with the daughter of Anah may have been the beginning of the acquaintance between these

peoples. If it were allowable to draw on the imagination, one might suppose that Esau, in his occupation as a hunter, wandered into Seir, and meeting with Anah in charge of his flocks, was invited to enter his subterraneous dwelling and partake of his hospitality; and that there he made the acquaintance of Anah's daughter. One would imagine her young and beautiful, dressed in a robe of fur, with hair hanging in luxuriant tresses about a slender neck, and that, with a cromlech for a table, and shells and leaves for dishes, she took venison, milk and fruit and courteously-served her father's guest. Under these circumstances he would be little inclined to eat, even though he had fasted many long hours. May we not suppose that Esau was charmed with the weird landscape of fertile dells, and jagged rocks, and cliffs with sharp serrated edges; and that, meeting with a fair girl in circumstances so entirely new, he nearly lost self-consciousness? And may it not be that he never left Seir till Aholibamah consented to go with him to his paternal home? But whether this supposition be correct or not, we learn from the sacred record that Aholibamah was one of the women who most unfortunately caused Rebekah to be weary of her life.

Eliphaz, the eldest son of Esau, followed his father's example in marrying a Horite wife. Her name was Tinna, and she was a descendant of Seir. Tinna became the mother of five sons, the eldest of whom, Teman, was

so considerable a personage that from him a tract of country took its name. The people who resided there were proverbial for their wisdom. "Is wisdom no more in Teman?" inquires the inspired Jeremiah, as if it would certainly be found there if the land had not become depopulated. The reader will readily call to mind Eliphaz, the Temanite, who leads in the interesting discussion with the affiliated Job on the providences of God. Though against him, as well as against Bildad and Zophar, the charge is brought that he had not spoken of God the thing which was right, yet for depth of thought and beauty of diction his speeches are almost without a parallel. Is it possible for any one to read his description of a specter without a tremor? The gloaming, the undiscernible form, the passing and the standing still, the silence and the voice, and the solemn and impressive words uttered, alike rivet the attention and permeate the soul till all one's bones are made to shake, and the hair of one's flesh stands up.

It is probable that when Esau removed to Seir he had but five sons, yet, as he had daughters and grandchildren, his descendants may have been numerous, and, like his paternal grandfather, he had hundreds of retainers, the migrating party might, therefore, have been both large and powerful.

Anah had but one son, and it is possible that at his death a part of his possessions fell to his daughter, the wife of Esau. Is it

not presumable that it was thus he acquired his first real estate in his new home? May not Eliphaz, too, have acquired property in Seir through his wife? This conjecture is the more probable from the fact that names of districts are identical with the names of these women.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE DUKEDOMS AND THE EARLY KINGDOM OF EDOM.

**I**T is probable that the Edomites were governed by dukes several centuries after their removal to Seir; for not only are the names of many of these dukes recorded, but we hear the Israelites after their miraculous passage over the Red Sea exultingly exclaim, "The dukes of Edom shall be afraid."

It has been well said by Bush that "the English word 'duke' must not here be taken as implying any thing like the order of nobility with which in modern times, we usually associate it, but rather in the sense of the Latin *dux*, *leader*, from which duke is derived." We have seen one of the Horite dukes taking the care of a herd of asses, and there is a probability that the dukes or shieks of Edom engaged in like humble employments. The Edomites, too, like Seir's original inhabitants,

became troglodites, and even excavated rather than builded where they lived, in Southern Palestine. The Nabathians were the first builders in the land of Edom.

We are not forbidden to hope that many of the Edomites were worshippers of the true God, but as a people they were idolators; and in accordance with the custom of most ancient nations, they adopted the gods of the country to which they had come. It is a remarkable fact that one of the kings of Judah carried the gods of Seir to his own country and set them up to be his gods.

Sometime during the forty years that Israel wandered in the wilderness the ducal or patriarchal government in Edom gave place to the monarchical, or the latter was grafted on the former; for when the Israelites would pace the land of Edom they presented their request to the king of that country. The message sent by Israel was well calculated to enlist the sympathies of the people of Edom. Reference is made to the relation existing between the two peoples, to the long and distressing bondage of Israel in Egypt; to their groans and cries to God; to His interference on their behalf; to their long and toilsome journey; and to their desire to pass through the country simply to pass through in the king's highway; and they promised that if they or their cattle should drink of the water of the wells for it payment should be made. This request was most per-

emptorally denied, and when the Israelites ventured to make a very respectful remonstrance, the answer was a host of armed men prepared to resist by the sword an entrance into their country. That the Edomites should dare oppose six hundred thousand men shews that they were either very strong or very brave; but, perchance, theirs was the bravery of despair. An engagement would no doubt have ensued had not the great God forbidden his people to meddle with them.

From this time till the reign of Saul, the son of Kish—a period of about four hundred years—all the information that we have relative to this people is contained in nine verses of the thirty-sixth chapter of Genesis and the parallel passage in Chronicles. A great deal of matter is, however, contained in this brief passage. The names of eight kings are given, and the names of the cities to which they severally belonged; and the names of the fathers of four of these kings. We also learn that one of them was a foreigner, and that another successfully warred against the Midianites in the fields of Moab; and of another still we are told the names both of his wife and his mother-in-law. Why, one naturally asks were the names of these women recorded? Had they become noted for some exploit? or was Matred and Israelitish woman who had been carried a captive into Edom; and did the sacred historian hence infer that those for whose benefit he more particularly

wrote, would be interested in the fact that her daughter had been raised to so elevated a position?

The reigns of the eight kings may have extended over the whole four hundred years; for though it would be absurd to suppose that the average length of their reign was a half century, there probably were as many interregnums as reigns. The monarchy was evidently elective, and as all, or nearly all men seek for sovereign power but those who know it is unattainable, it may be presumed that on the demise of each king there were many aspirants to the crown, and much time would elapse if not much blood be shed before the authority of any one would be firmly established. From the record the inference may be drawn that none of the kings were deposed or met with violent deaths.

Some have entertained the opinion that Bela, the son of Beor, was the king who refused Israel a passage through Edom and that he was identical with Balaam, the son of Beor, the poet, prophet, and diviner, who, loving the wages of unrighteousness, wished to curse the Israelites and yet most emphatically blessed them. In like manner Joab has been by some writers thought to be no other than the Job who was so remarkable for his piety and the afflictions he endured; whose professed comforters were tormenters, and whose story will be read with interest as long as there are minds that think, and hearts that feel.

The last named in this list of kings was quite probably, an ancestor of the little prince Hadad who fled for his life during those terrible months in which the sword of the invincible Joab drank Edom's richest blood.

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## CHAPTER IX.

### DOEG.

**T**HE Edomites are reckoned among the enemies of Saul over whom he was victorious. Of Doeg, the Edomite, we know nothing till we find him in the land of the conqueror of his people. With truly good men the love of country is often stronger than the love of life. It was not thus with Doeg. He was not good, nor patriotic. The most important of all questions to his mind, evidently was, "How can I most effectively serve myself?" This he evidently concluded could best be done by going to the land of Israel and offering his services to the enemy of his country. It is evident that his services were accepted for we find him chief of the herdsmen of Saul. In that innocent and lucrative employment he might have remained till the end of his life, but for a seeming accident. Saul, as is well known, became acquainted with the fact that David, the son of Jesse, was destined to succeed him on the

throne; and consequently pursued him with the most implacable hate, often obliging him to flee in order to save his life. On one of these occasions David called at Not—a city belonging to the priests, situated on an eminence near Jerusalem, and where the tabernacle was then stationed—and asked Ahimelech for bread. The priests, surprised that the king's son-in-law should be travelling without a suitable retinue, asked for an explanation. David gave an answer which satisfied the priest, but which must have been most unsatisfactory to himself. Circumstances may palliate a lie but can never render it justifiable. The day was the Sabbath, on each return of which, the high priest removed from the gold-plated table—where it had been lying seven days—the twelve loaves called the Shew or presence bread, and laid twelve hot loaves in their places. Ahimelech seems to have been carrying these loaves when he was met by David, and although he wished much to oblige him, he had doubts as to the propriety of the act, as the law required that that bread should be eaten by the priests. Ahimelech, however, being convinced that it was right in that emergency, gave David and his attendants the hallowed loaves. Food, however, was not David's only want; for, being obliged to flee with the utmost haste he was not well armed; so he asked Ahimelech if he could provide him with sword or spear, and was told that the only one there was that which was formerly

owned by Goliath of Gath. On the mention of that sword the scene of the ever memorable day on which it was won would, we may suppose, rise as a panorama before the mind of David. He would see the valley of Elah spread out before him. On one side would seem to stand the army of Israel, and on the other the army of the Philistines from among whom would stride forth the great Goliath. He is arrayed in a coat of mail of glistening brass and he has a helmet on his head, a target between his shoulders, and on his legs greaves of the same strong, shining metal. His head reaches the clouds, the earth quivers under his footstep, his voice is as the lion's roar, and he utters the imperious boast: "I defy the armies of Israel this day; give me a man that we may fight together." David in imagination again takes a stone from his scrip, places it in his sling, and causes it to sink into the giant's forehead; Goliath reels, a moment more and he lies prostrate on the earth. David seems to stand on the carcass, draws the giant's sword from its scabbard and dismembers the head from the body. He seems to see the Philistines flee and to hear the triumphant shouts of Israel. His heart is strengthened. He believes that God who gave him the victory over Goliath will ultimately make him the victor over all his enemies, and he exultingly exclaims, "Give me the sword of Goliath, there is none like that." Evidently, David had supposed that no one had heard the conversation between

the priest and himself, but just as he was about to leave the courts of the tabernacle he saw Doeg the Edomite. David is alarmed lest some evil come to the priest. Brave men are always unwilling to risk the safety of others. When themselves only are concerned they shrink at no danger; but when others might be the sufferers, they are timid as women. David is no stranger to the intense selfishness of Doeg's character. He knows that he would stoop to anything by which he might ingratiate himself still further into the favor of the king; that he would think nothing mean by which he could obtain riches or raise his social position; nothing cruel which does not interfere with his individual rights or cause his precious self to suffer. David was also acquainted with the impulsive, rash revengeful character of Saul; and knew, but too well that Ahimilech would experience little mercy should his conduct be reported. But what could he do? Himself a fugitive he was powerless to aid others.

Some time after the interview between David and Ahimelech Saul learned that David with a band of men was living within the limits of his kingdom, and hence inferred that he was befriended by some of his servants. When he received the intelligence he was standing under a wide-spreading tree surrounded by some hundreds of men, himself, the handsomest, tallest, grandest, of them all, the very perfection of manly beauty; but his words

are in strange contrast with his appearance, being weak, puerile, pitiable, contemptible: "Will the son of Jesse, give everyone of you fields and vineyards, and make you all captains of hundreds and captains of thousands; that all of you have conspired against me, and there is none that sheweth me that my son has made a league with the son of Jesse, and there is none of you that is sorry for me or sheweth unto me that my son hath stirred up my servant against me as at this day?"

Doeg, it may be presumed, had long waited for an opportunity to manifest his zeal for the king his master, and now that it had occurred he was resolved to improve it irrespective of its costs to others. He would remember the dreary day he had passed in the court of the tabernacle. To the truly pious man it would have been a rich privilege, to him a disagreeable duty. The burning of sacrifice, the sprinkling of blood, and the rising clouds of incense would alike be regarded with indifference. He it may be, had led thither a bullock, or a ram, to be offered as a sacrifice by the godly Jonathan; and was obliged to remain there till the offerer came, "detained before the Lord." How wearisome the hours! But now he would think the detention most fortunate. "I saw," said he "The son of Jesse coming to Nob, to Ahimelech the son of Ahitub, and he enquired of the Lord for him and gave him victuals, and gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine." "There was no

good reason why Doeg should at all mention Ahimelech's conduct which he knew did not proceed from malice ; but if he must report it, he should have declared how Ahimelech was imposed upon by David, and that he intended to show respect to Saul in that very action, but on the contrary he spoke as if David came to take Ahimelech's advice about his subsequent proceedings, and as if Ahimelech was joined with David in a conspiracy against Saul ; though nothing could be more contrary to the truth than this insinuation. Doeg, therefore, slandered Ahimelech and bare false witness against him, though the general charges adduced accorded with facts."\* One imagines that when Saul heard the words of Doeg that he turned deadly pale, his limbs trembled, his lips and chin quivered, and his eyes flashed fire ; and that he gave utterance to something like the following words : " What sacrilege ! Dared he thus dispose of hallowed bread ! would he presume to give away that wonderful trophy taken from the Philistine giants. I was so solicitous for God's honor that I would not keep it in my own palace ; but caused it to be carefully wrapped and deposited by the holy ephod, in the tabernacle. But was it safe there ? No. He who ought to have preserved it at the risk of his life, gave it to one who aims at subverting my government and placing my crown upon his own head. The son of Jesse wishes to remind my

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\* Scott.

subjects that he killed Goliath and to hear the women again sing "Saul hath slain his thousands and David his ten thousands." As soon as Saul's paroxism of rage was over he sent for Ahimelech and all the other priests then residing at Nob. They came at his bidding in all eighty-five persons; and in their sacerdotal robes presented themselves before him. The king then addressing Ahimelech said: "Why have ye conspired against me, thou and the son of Jesse, in that thou hast given him bread and a sword, and hast enquired of God for him, that he should rise against me, to lie in wait as at this day?" The good Ahimelech who had not been guilty of any distoyalty to his king, or impiety toward God, was surprised at the accusation: He did not wish to deny that he had aided David, and he had supposed that in doing so he had also served Saul. "Who" he ingenuously enquires, "is so faithful among all thy servants as David, which is the king's son-in-law and goeth at thy bidding, and is honorable in thine house." And then in his astonishment at being censured for inquiring of the Lord for him, he adds, "Did I then begin to enquire of the Lord for him? be it far from me; let not the king impute any thing unto his servant, nor to all the house of my father; for thy servant knew nothing of all this less or more." These are the words of an innocent, kind hearted judicious, God-fearing man, who while endeavoring to exculpate himself is careful not to

criminate David. To Saul's attendants it was evident that Ahimelech had been guilty of no wrong, and it would also have been evident to Saul had he not degenerated since he was made king. He had so long and so persistently turned aside to his wicked ways, that he now had no clear perception of right; he had so long violated the dictates of his conscience that now conscience was for the most part silent. The evil spirit from the Lord came upon him, and he was deaf to reason, insensible to pity. Heeding not the apology of Ahimelech, he said to the footmen who stood about him: "Turn and slay the priests of the Lord." But these footmen knowing that the priests were innocent, nobly dared to disobey the king, rather than sin against God and their own consciences. Saul seeing that his orders were not executed, said to Doeg: "Turn thou and fall upon the priests." Doeg waited not for a second bidding. True they had been convicted of no crime, on them the sacred oil had been poured and they were devoted to the service of God. But what mattered that to him? Did it not give him the better opportunity to manifest his zeal for the king? and would he not be likely to receive the richer reward? Doeg, one imagines to have been as remarkable for his physical strength as for the weakness of his moral principles, and his great strength may have caused him the more willingly to undertake the slaughter. He would expect resistance

for that man would calmly submit to being slain because their sovereign had so ordered, was something wholly beyond his conception. With fiend-like satisfaction he began the work of death while the priests meekly yielded to their fate, as their accuser, now their murderer slew man after man till the whole eighty-five were weltering in their blood. One would gladly believe that he who consented to be the perpetrator of this bloody deed did not belong to the genus man; but rather that he was an incarnate demon. The infamous Doeg however, guilty as he was, was far less guilty than the king his master; and the rage of the latter was not yet appeased. Doeg and other tools of Saul's cruelty and injustice were sent to Nob with orders to slay all the inhabitants. This shocking mandate was carried out to the very letter. Neither the hoary-headed man, who leaned on his staff for very age, nor the helpless woman, nor even the tender infant was spared; and as if there was not enough of human blood in that city to satisfy the king's thirst, all the domestic animals were also slain. In Saul's first act of flagrant disobedience his conscience so admonished him of his wrong that it was difficult to disregard its admonitions. To use his own expressive language he "forced" himself; and at the close of his career, when told by Samuel of his approaching death it tortured him as with scorpion sting; but here in the midst of life the godlike monitor within was altogether silent.

One and one only of all the people of Nob escaped. This was Abiather the son of Ahimelech. He fled to David and told him what Saul had done. David like a true penitent, takes the blame on himself. We seem to hear the throbbings of his heart as he confesses "I have occasioned the death of all the persons of thy father's house." David did for Abiather all he, at that time, could do. He accepted him as one of his company, and assured him that his life should be as carefully guarded as his own.

The historian has not told us how Saul rewarded Doeg for his service. He was probably loaded with wealth and honors. If this supposition be correct David was not the only mourner when Saul was slain. With intense anxiety would Doeg await the issue of that battle; and he would tremble as a reed shaken by the wind when he learned that Saul, Jonathan, Abinadab and Melchishua, were all dead; not that he loved them, for he was incapable of love; nor did he care that the battle had made many wives widows and many children fatherless. There was one cause for anxiety above and beyond all these. He was in danger of losing his wealth; there was agony in the thought of that. We may presume that after a night of utter restlessness he resolved with all his movable possessions to return to his own country. True the noble, generous Abner had caused Saul's only surviving son Ish-bosheth to be proclaimed

king, and was making the most vigorous efforts to defend his house. But well did Doeg know that there was a strong party in favor of the son of Jesse ; and even if Ishbosheth should ultimately be established on the throne of his father, sacrifices, for the time, would be called for from his friends. There were many things so lightly esteemed by Doeg that he was ever ready to sacrifice them. Among these things were character, principles, and the reputation, property and lives of others ; but his own comfort and convenience he would rarely sacrifice, and his wealth never. True to himself though false to everyone else, a few days after the disastrous battle on Gilboa's bleak and barren heights Doeg was probably safe in the far-famed Petra.

Not long after David's ascension to the throne he warred against Edom. It is not quite supposable, that as he had caused, though unintentionally, the murder of all Abiathar's relatives, he resolved to avenge that priest's wrongs, and to this end demanded that Doeg should be delivered up to him ; and that the Edomites refusing compliance with this demand, war was declared against them ? The eldest son of Teruah, Abishai was for some time at the head of his uncle's forces in Edom. We read of but one engagement and that occurred in the Valley of Salt. Abishai gained a complete victory. He is not seen in Edom after that battle. May he not have

been so severely wounded as to be obliged to return home? His brother, the invincible Joab, took his place. He remained in Edom six months and during that period prosecuted the work of death. As has been said of Edward I., king of England, so it may be truthfully said of King David: "He was never cruel but from motives of policy." One hence infers that if this worse than exterminating war was carried on by his command from month to month, there were, undoubtedly, reasons for it which are not apparent. But is it not possible that Joab exceeded his commission? The approbrious epithet, "a bloody man," which Shimei, not altogether without reason, applied to David, is most emphatically true when applied to Joab. Like the war horse described in the book of Job, Joab said among the trumpets, "ha! ha!" and smelled the battle afar off. It is evident that David, though king, was at times unable to control the conduct of Joab and that of his brothers, the brave Abishai and the light-footed Asahel; for on one occasion we hear from him the plaintive exclamation: "These men, the sons of Teruah be too hard for me." That Joab was a skillful general none can doubt, for he never lost a battle. He was also incontestably brave; and in the main, if not entirely devoted to his uncle's interest. That he was capable of very strong attachment is shewn by his carrying the lifeless body of his youngest brother a long distance, and that after a day of hard

fighting, in order to inter it in the family burial ground. But he loved war ; it was his element. To him the sight of human blood seems to have been exhilarating ; and on more than one occasion he shed the blood of war in a time of peace. In the latter part of the reign of David there was a deeper, stronger reason than the natural temperament of Joab which rendered it difficult if not impossible for the king to oblige him to comply with his wishes. David committed enormous sins, and to these sins Joab had been privy. If the king should displease him might not these sins be made public ? and would not that be fatal to the king's reputation ?

Though there is much to hate as well as much to admire in the character of Joab, there probably are few persons whose eyes have not been blurred with tears as in imagination they have looked on the grand old man as he fled to the courts of the tabernacle and laid hold of the horns of the altar, and heard him utter those resolute yet pathetic words : " Nay, but I will die here." But I have digressed too far for I am not writing an obituary of Joab, but telling of the woes of Edom.

How dark is the picture which the historian presents to us in the following short sentence : " For six months did Joab remain there with all Israel, till he had cut off every male in Edom." It is probable that one battle followed another till the Edomites had no longer an enemy to bring into the field, and that Joab

and his men then hunted them as if they were beasts of prey. The men, perchance at times took refuge in their excavated dwellings; and as Ahimilech many years previously, when his enemies sought for safety in the tower of Shechum, pitted combustible materials around it, and then setting them on fire suffocated or burned all the inmates, so Joab may have kindled fires at the entrances of these caves and left the poor wretches no alternative but to die of suffocation or rush into the flames.

At the end of these terrible six months king David went to Edom. May he not have heard of atrocities committed by his nephew? and did he not determine to ameliorate the condition of this miserable people? May not the king have been both pained and surprised to find, that the slain had lain unburied? and that in many instances decomposing corpses had produced pestilence among the survivors? Orders for the interment of the dead were at once issued, and reliable men sent to see that the orders were promptly obeyed. Did not even bearded men weep as they looked upon the groups of the slain? How many mothers would be found like Bizpah watching over their dead, suffering neither the birds of the air to touch them by day, nor the beasts of prey by night. In one place, perhaps, were found a group of half famished children, lavishing their kisses on the lifeless form of a once loving father, and frantically calling on him to awake; in another would be seen

aged parents with grief too deep to find its way to the eyes in tears, bowed over the corpse of a son on whom they had leaned for support; and in still another place would be seen the young wife who through the intensity of her anguish had fallen down dead on the dead body of her husband. In one cave they would find the charred remains of a band of men; and in another, the helpless invalid emaciated more by hunger than disease, with no one to minister to his wants. But I forbear for the heart sickens as one contemplates the sad scenes which would continually present themselves to those who were engaged in the work of interment.

The sufferings of this nation were not confined to the fearful half year, during which the work of destruction was going on; but necessarily extended to a lengthened period of time. Not to speak of the utter desolation of heart experienced by childless mothers, widowed wives, and fatherless children, their outward condition must have been most wretched. Take from any community all the men between the ages of sixteen and sixty, and there is taken from it all the bone and sinew without which it is scarcely possible that life can be sustained. This would be true of any community, in any country, but the more especially in the mountainous district of Edom, where there were but limited portions of fertile soil, and the inhabitants depended chiefly on the skill of the husbandman and the spoils of war.

We are ignorant as to the length of time king David remained in this conquered, half depopulated country, or how he was employed while there; but it scarcely could have been otherwise than that he who sings so beautifully of the Lord being good to all and His tender mercies being over all his work, did all that could safely be done to mitigate the sufferings of this unhappy people. David, however, took due pains to secure the conquest that had been made, leaving all the fortified towns and cities garrisoned by his own soldiers. The almost impregnable Petra was among the cities which at this time came into David's possession. Was it not because the great God had given him assurance that Edom should be vanquished by his arms and that eyrie-like fortress should become his which caused him to indite the following triumphant song:—

“Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine :  
 Ephraim is also the strength of my head ;  
 Judah is my law giver ;  
 Moab is my wash-pot ;  
 Over Edom will I cast out my shoe ;  
 Philistia, triumph thou because of me !  
 Who will bring me into the strong city ?  
 Who will lead me into Edom ?  
 Wilt not thou, O God, who has cast us off ?  
 Wilt not thou, O God, go forth with our hosts ?”

## CHAPTER X.

## HADAD.

**T**HE name Hadad is one with which every bible reader ought to be familiar, it being met with in the dynasties of Syria and Edom. It was the appellation of the sun in the first named country, and was thence transferred to the king. I have spoken of it as a *name*, but it probably was, like Pharaoh and Ahimelech, an official title rather than a name. It had been well for mankind if kings, like the sun, dispersed light and comfort, and not as has been often the case, exercised an influence which would be fitly represented by the sun's absorbing the greater part of the fruits of the earth into himself. The Hadad, who is the subject of this chapter, is the only one referred to in the bible who appeals strongly to our sympathies. His misfortunes, his adventures, and his patriotism, alike interest us, and respectively call forth our pity, our wonder, and our admiration. The record we have of him is brief, but it is as suggestive as brief. We first meet with him during Edom's reign of terror. It is presumable that his father was slain and that he had reason to believe that Joab intended to slay him too. Though but a little child he determined to save his life by flight, or if he must perish, to perish while endeavoring to escape. This

resolution he would of course name to such of his late father's servants as he knew were devoted to his interests. They consented of course to accompany him, and they probably departed as soon as they were shrouded by the curtains of night; and were out of the territory of Edom before it was generally known that they had left the palace. His mother, if she was still living, would be as anxious for his departure as she would have been under ordinary circumstances to have him near her. A mother's is the only earthly love which is wholly unselfish in its nature. A Jochebed laid her boy in the flags at the river's brink with the hope that he might become the possession of another since his life was insecure with her; the mother in the days of Solomon yielded her babe to false claims rather than it should be slain; and in modern times the beautiful and accomplished Anna Boleyn when about to be executed by the king her husband, spoke of him as a good and gentle prince, a most gracious sovereign, hoping thus to gain his favor for her child, the then little princess Elizabeth.

All that we are told relative to the journey is "They arose out of Midian and came to Paran, and they took men with them out of Paran and came to Egypt." There is so much obscurity as to what is here to be understood by either Midian or Paran that of the first part of their journey, at least, it is in vain even to attempt to conjecture the scenes through

which they passed. It is evident, that either from choice or necessity some years elapsed between Hadad leaving his home in Edom and his arrival in Egypt. It may be, that he like the great and good Alfred lived for some time *in cognito* in the cottage of a peasant, and like him was required to assist in domestic duties. But wherever Hadad lived, or however he was employed, he was a little child when he left home, and a *man* when he presented himself at the court of Paraoh. Though he was homeless and penniless his reception was, in all respects, such as was fitting a king to bestow on a king's son. Pharaoh did not content himself with mere courteousness toward the young prince; but also bestowed on him the most substantial benefits. He settled on him such a salary as enabled him to live in a manner corresponding to his rank, furnished with a suitable residence, and made him the owner of considerable territory. The Edomitish prince was, no doubt, a frequent visitor at the royal palace; and as women in Egypt, at that time, were neither toys, nor slaves, but on the contrary occupied much the same place that they do now in this country, that is to say, they were the loved and honored companions of their fathers, husbands, and brothers. Hadad there, it is presumed, made the acquaintance of the sisters of Tahpenes the queen. From being mere acquaintances they became friends, and ultimately their friendship ripened into love.

Hadad, though a prince and living in princely style, was but a pensioner on the bounty of Pharaoh; and it was, doubtless, with the greatest diffidence that he asked the king, his benefactor to allow him to become his brother-in-law. The request, however, seems to have been no sooner made than granted; and the marriage was in due time consummated. Time passed on and Hadad became the father of a boy whom he named Genubath. The birth of the prince seems to have given scarcely less joy to Pharaoh and Tahpenes than to his parents, and they determined on educating him with their own sons. They were so anxious to have him in their own palace that they would not consent to his remaining longer with his parents than while he was a nurseling; but he was brought to the royal palace even to be weaned.

Though Hadad was living, we may presume, in domestic bliss and in the enjoyment of all the favors Pharaoh could bestow, he never forgot or ceased to love his own country. The patriot never does that. He, on the contrary would embrace every opportunity of learning what was passing in Edom and in the kingdom of Israel, in order that he might if possible, aid the former and avenge himself on the latter. At one time his hopes may have been raised by learning that a son of king David had rebelled against him, and that the rebellion had assumed so serious an attitude that the king was obliged to leave

his capital and flee for his life. It was even said that one Shimei, who was connected with the former dynasty, reproached him as one addicted to the shedding of blood, and invoked curses on his head, and that the fugitive king did not deem himself safe till he had passed over the Jordan. Hadad, however, would have had hardly time to congratulate himself over these tidings, ere he learned that the rebellion had been crushed, the leader slain, peace restored, and that the king had become more popular than ever.

Years passed, Genubath was a bearded man and the head of Hadad was whitened with the snows of age; and as yet no opportunity occurred of serving his country and avenging her wrongs. Meanwhile the boundaries of the kingdom of Israel had come in such close proximity to Egypt that it was no unusual thing to meet with Israelites in that country. On one occasion we will suppose that Hadad met an Israelite, and so far conquered his aversion as to enter into conversation with him, and the Israelite, taking Hadad for an Egyptian, and seeing he was interested in what was going on in the kingdom of Israel, spoke as follows: "Great changes have taken place in our country during the past few years. Not only is the warlike king David dead, but his brave nephews, Joab and Abishai, are also dead, with many others whom we once considered the bulwarks of the nation. These losses, however, heavy as they are in

themselves, are scarcely felt ; for not only are we blessed with universal peace, but our king is in possession of almost super-human wisdom. It is admitted by all, that in wisdom, riches, and honor, he surpasses every other king on the face of the earth. You can infer the vast number of his household from the fact that they consume daily thirty measures of fine flour, and sixty measures of meal, thirty oxen, and one hundred sheep, besides harts and roebucks, and fallow deer, and fatted fowl. The grandeur of the king's palace is in perfect keeping with the number of his attendants ; but there are few things which excite greater surprise and admiration, than the throne which is made of ivory—a new importation—and overlaid with fine gold. This throne is reached by six steps made of gold and on each side of every step golden lions are placed as if on guard. The king has made two hundred targrets and three hundred massive shields of beaten gold ; but unfortunately they are not very often seen being kept in the house of the forest of Lebannon. All the drinking vessels in the palace are of gold, none of any other material being allowed in the king's presence. It has been suggested by some, that gold may not always be seen in such abundance, in our country, but there appears to me to be no cause for fear ; for all the kings of the earth with other valuable gifts bring vessels of gold, and a short time since a queen from Southern Arabia brought king

Solomon no less than one hundred and twenty talents of gold. There are so many sources from which our king receives gold that his average annual receipt is six hundred and sixty-six talents. But even without this supply the king's treasuries are seemingly exhaustless. You have doubtless heard of the numerous conquests of the late king, and of the immense sums of gold thus accumulated. The Edomites were among the most stubborn of King David's foes and they were treated with the severity they so richly merited. Not only was every man capable of bearing arms slain but every shekel of gold carried away. I presume that people will give us no further trouble, for during the past forty years the tribute imposed upon them has been punctually paid, though the collectors say that the people in order to raise it are obliged to live on the meanest fare. A short time since a young princess, the last relic of the royal family, was by the king's command, brought to Jerusalem. There are rumors that the king intends she shall be his wife; and although the apartments allotted her and the number of her attendants go to strengthen that rumor, it appears to me incredible that one so wise and great as our king, should ally himself to one who belongs to so vile a nation." Hadad doubtless would so conceal his feelings in such a case as to cause the speakers to think that his sympathies were with Israel, but his heart would burn with indignation, and when he

entered his palace he would give vent to his long suppressed anguish in sighs and groans. If an interview like that just related, was an actual occurrence, Hadad's cheerfulness would forsake him. He would be fond of solitude, reticent in company and sometimes he might half audibly say, "My bleeding country, my down trodden people." At length he resolved to return to his own country and effect her deliverance from Israel's yoke, or with his countrymen die. Hadad's choice would compare not unfavorably with that of Moses in somewhat similar circumstances, were it not that the latter loved his people chiefly because they were the people of God, and the former because they were his own people. The love of country is one of the noblest motives by which a man can be actuated; the love of God is the noblest.

As Hadad did not lack decision of character, he would no sooner resolve to return to Edom than begin to carry his resolution into effect. First of all, however, he would think it necessary to obtain the consent of the king his brother-in-law, to whom he was very deeply indebted. The consent was given, though Pharaoh might not be able to understand how one surrounded by so many comforts could wish to change his situation for one of toil and privation. He had endeavored to anticipate all Hadad's wants; but did not his wish to depart show that something had been left undone! "What hast thou lacked

with me," Pharaoh ingenuously inquires, "that behold thou seekest to return to thine own country?" To this question Hadad gave a very respectful answer without at all committing himself. "Nothing, howbeit let me go in any wise," Pharaoh appears to have made no further remonstrance; but he probably dared not furnish Hadad with an army. Not only was the kingdom of Israel great and powerful; but her renowned king was his son-in-law, and therefore more nearly related to him than the Edomitish prince. He wished to serve Hadad, but he wished still more for the friendship and esteem of Solomon. Hadad finding that Pharaoh would neither aid nor oppose him, seems quietly to have left his adopted country, where for about half a century, he had enjoyed all the privileges connected with royalty, without its onerous cares and heavy responsibilities.

As Hadad neared the frontiers of Edom he would, one would suppose, doff everything which betokened his rank, and would be in appearance an Egyptian in the common walks of life. When he entered his late father's dominion his spirit would die within him. True, there were to be seen a large number of stalwart men whom he would recognise as his own countrymen; but they would all be engaged in the most servile and laborious occupations, and all positions, of trust and authority would be filled by Israelites. He would be especially pained to see that all the

fortresses were garrisoned by Israelitish soldiers, and under the command of Israelitish officers; and that not a single Edomite was in the possession of arms. Hadad as an Egyptian could consult freely with all, whether Israelites or Edomites; and he would continually notice superciliousness of the conquerors; and the stern hatred and indignation of the conquered. The feeling of hatred would be more particularly strong among the women. With them the names of Joab and Abishai would be synonymous with blood shedding and murder. So far would they be from wishing to conceal their hatred they would make it their boast. To hate the Israelite would be one of the first lessons the mother would teach her babe; and the cry for vengeance on their oppressors would be a part of every prayer. Old women—there were no old men—would gather their children and grand-children around them, and talk for hours of the horrible cruelties perpetrated by Joab during the never to be forgotten six months in which their fathers, and husbands, and brothers were either slain in battle or mercilessly butchered. The half century which had elapsed since the tragedy, so far from obliterating it from their enemies, but burned it the more deeply, till the anguish was as that of cancerous sore. This state of feeling would cause Hadad to be the more hopeful, for he well knew that while the soul asserted its freedom the victory of the conquerors was incomplete.

We will now leave Edom to notice occurring events in the kingdom of Israel, as it is probable, these, in a great measure, determined Hadad's line of policy.

Solomon had not been king very long when he married a daughter of Pharaoh king of Egypt. That Solomon was of commanding presence, and his bride exceedingly fair, may be inferred from some passage in the song which bears his name. While there are few christians who do not believe that that inimitable piece of composition: "The Song of Solomon," refers to the Lord Jesus Christ the husband of the church, and to the church his bride, probably all will admit that it had an historical foundation.

Though the marriage of Solomon with an Egyptian princess must have startled the people of Israel, she met with a magnificent reception. Gifts were lavished on her, and for her special use a stately palace was erected at an enormous cost, and there with the virgins, her companions, that followed her she lived in the enjoyment of such pleasures as money could purchase. The frontier city Gezer had threatened the tranquility of Israel; this Pharaoh conquered and gave to his daughter as a part of her dower, which would have a tendency to render the marriage popular.

Though Pharaoh's daughter was Solomon's chief wife and is by him designated "my wife," as if he had no other, he was at the time of

his marriage with her the husband of at least one other woman. Even at the time of his father's death he was not only a husband but the father of a boy some twelve months old. The mother of this boy was Naamah an Ammonitess; and it has been conjectured that this marriage was brought about by king David to serve political purposes. Had the Egyptian princess been blessed with a son, it is probable that he and not the son of Naamah would have been the successor of Solomon. After the marriage of Solomon with Pharaoh's daughter one wife after another was added in quick succession till he had seven hundred wives princesses, and three hundred secondary wives. But the wants of a harem of a thousand women and their attendants was a very small part of the king's expenses. The creation of fine buildings was with him a passion. One followed another with ruinous rapidity. He too, was scarcely less fond of fine horses than fine buildings. Immense as was his income his expenditures were still more immense so that in time the treasury became exhausted; and the people no longer fascinated by his magnificence, groaned under his taxes. While this state of things existed it was rumored that the king's health was not firm; and although he had just passed life's meridian he seemed the old man. It may, too, have been rumored that he was subject to fits of melancholy, and that sometimes he would remain silent for a long time and then

with a deep sigh exclaim: "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." The people very naturally began to think of a successor. Rehoboam, Solomon's only son, had never manifested any interest in the affairs of the kingdom. Pleasure had thus far been the business of his life. Surrounded by the young, the gay, and the thoughtless, his days were spent in feasting and, perchance, his nights often in revelry. His father's wise and prudent counsellors would look on him with distrust, and were treated by him with disrespect, not to say contempt. As for Solomon's two daughters, they were very common place women and were both married, Taphath, to the son of Abinadab, and Basmath to Ahimaaz, both commissariat officers to the king. It was quite evident that neither they nor their father, nor the people expected that either of them would ever come to the throne. Public feeling was still more agitated by learning that a prophet of the Lord had told one Jeroboam, a servant of Solomon, that he should reign over ten of the tribes of Israel. There was still another difficulty, Regon, who at this time reigned at Damascus, made raids into the kingdom of Israel, and thus kept the people in continual alarm; and it is possible that Solomon, supposing that Edom was completely subjugated, recalled his troops from that country in order to protect the northern part of his kingdom. If this was indeed done, Hadad would be ready to take advantage of this juncture and

declare the independence of his country; and they, perhaps, in return,—he had doubtless, long before this made himself known to his countrymen—would proclaim him king. There is no intimation as to the way by which Hadad avenged himself on Israel. It is presumable that he and Regon acted in concert, for they alike had an old grudge against the house of David, which had developed into deep rooted, implacable, inexorable hate. To use the forcible language of Scripture, “they abhorred Israel.” The injuries inflicted by Hadad must have been of a very grave nature, for Regon was “an adversary to Israel all the days of Solomon,” and side by side with him is mentioned “the mischief that Hadad did.”

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## CHAPTER XI.

### EDOM, A DEPENDENCY OF JUDAH.

**A**FTER the reign of Solomon the Edomites have no place on the historic page for fifty years, that is till the time of Jehoshaphat; and there are probably few Bible readers who have not wished to exhume this portion of their history in order to learn whether or not Edom through Hadad obtained her independence, and that he regained his ancestral throne, was succeeded by his son Genuboth. If that prince—an Egyptian by

birth, and by his mother's side—sat on the throne of Edom when Jeroboam, with his Egyptian wife, ruled the kingdom of Israel, and Shishak was ravaging the kingdom of Judah, he, no doubt, looked on with intense interest; and, perchance, imagined that the whole of Palestine would ultimately become the property of Egypt. Genubath did not know that the great God had said that the sceptre should not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet till the Shiloh should come, and that heaven and earth might pass away rather than His word be unfulfilled.

When Edom again appears in history her king was only such in name, being a mere deputy. That Edom was a dependency of Judah is seen from Jehosaphat being in possession of her seaport on the Red Sea, Ezion-geber, and there fitting out a fleet. It was evidently a deputy or viceroy who accompanied the kings of Judah and Israel when they invaded Moab. He does not appear to have been consulted relative to the undertaking, but to have gone with Jehoram and Jehosaphat by the bidding of the latter. His reticence on this occasion is very observable. Neither in the danger to which they are exposed for want of water, nor in the interview with the prophet Elisha, does he presume to speak; but meekly submits his will to the will of his superiors. And that Elisha knew that the king of Edom occupied but a subor-

dinate position may be inferred from the fact that while he, with great severity, reproves Jehoram for his sins, and tacitly commends the piety of the king of Judah, no allusion is made to him.

By the command of Elisha the valley in which the allied armies were encamped was made full of ditches, and these ditches were miraculously filled with water. As the whole military force of Moab went out to meet the invading army the sun shone upon the water and it became red by his reflected rays. The Moabites, being acquainted with the locality, and knowing it was not supplied with streams of water, came to the conclusion that the water was in reality what it was in appearance, blood. They were jubilant. "The kings," said they, "are surely slain, and they have smitten one another, and now, therefore, Moab to the spoil;" and they eagerly rushed upon the camp of the confederate kings. To their equal astonishment and dismay they found an armed host ready to receive them. A horrible carnage ensued. The Edomites seem to have remained inactive, and one infers—base as would be such an act—that they sent a messenger to the king of Moab saying that, if he would unite his forces with them, they would aid in opposing Judah and Israel. Hastily did the king of Moab take seven hundred of his choice men, and with them sword in hand endeavor to cut his way through opposing hosts to join the forces of the Edom-

ites. His utmost efforts were vain. Seeing that the valor of even his picked men was of no avail, Mesha—for that was the name of the king of Moab—concluded that he had incurred the displeasure of Chemosh, his god, and that, at whatever cost, he must be propitiated. Judging of what would be most acceptable to Chemosh by what was most precious to himself, he resolved to give his first-born for his transgression, the fruit of his body for the sin of his soul. There was no time to be lost. They had taken refuge in Kir-haraseth, a very strong fort, but even in this, their last resort, the slingers still continued their work of death. Suddenly the Moabites cease to fight. Mesha and his eldest son, the heir-apparent to the throne, ascend the wall. All eyes are turned toward them. A fire is kindled. Mesha plunges his sword into the heart of the trembling boy and then throws the body, still instinct with life, into the flames. A wild shriek of agony rends the air. Terror seizes every heart, and palsies every arm. The allied army return home.

Moab, stung to the quick with her defeat, determined to embrace the earliest opportunity to retrieve her honor. Though the slaughter among her troops had been really dreadful, and the injury done to the country irreparable, her treasury was not exhausted. She, therefore, entered into a league with the Ammonites and the Edomites to invade the kingdom of Judah. Ammon was the natural

ally of Moab, and Edom, Judah's vassal, was willing to incur the risk of having a heavier tribute imposed on her, as she seems to have indulged the hope that she might possibly rid herself of it altogether. They did not declare war, for they were not in a condition to do that, but they so arranged as to come upon the kingdom of Judah unawares. So well concerted were their measures, and so faithful had they been to each other in preserving secrecy, that they were within thirty-five or forty miles of Jerusalem before Jehosaphat heard of their approach. Even then the tidings came to him accidentally. I have said, accidentally, but it is doubtful whether the word accident should not be expunged from the believer's vocabulary. Can an accident befall one who is made an object of care so tender that the very hairs of his head are numbered, and who is so precious to the omniscient God that to touch such an one is to touch the apple of His eye?

There is a mystery in the sovereignty of God as connected with man's free agency which I am unable to solve. The Lord Jesus Christ was delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, yet was He taken by wicked hands, crucified and slain—none the less wicked because they were carrying out the purposes of the Almighty God; and, in the instance before us, the Divine will was accomplished by man's free, responsible, and sinful conduct. God

had determined that Jehosaphat should have a complete victory without the loss of a single man, and it was brought about in this wise. While the allies were preparing for battle some dispute arose among them. Perhaps it was relative to the manner in which their armies should be arranged in opposing the army of Judah. The Moabites and the Ammonites were on one side of the question, whatever it may have been, and the Edomites on the other. The contention became so sharp that words were followed by blows, and blows with armed men meaning ghastly wounds and death. So far did they indulge their rage that the conflict continued till all the Edomites were slain, and then the men of Moab and Ammon slew each other. Edom had cause to rue her temerity, for so far was she from gaining her independence from this invasion that she lost very heavily in men, money and arms; and her taxes were probably increased in the same ratio that her ability to pay them decreased.

We hear nothing more of Edom during the remainder of the reign of Jehosaphat. She was in much the same condition that she was in the latter part of the reign of David—without an army or a sufficient number of men to make one. They submitted to Judah because there was no alternative but submission.

Jehosaphat was succeeded by his son Jehoram, a wicked man, aided in his wicked-

ness by his wicked wife. Athaliah was one of the very few women who have ever lived who had not a single virtue. One fain would wish that she never had had an existence. A woman without tenderness is an anomaly from which one recoils with abhorrence. As Jehoram had forsaken his father's God his reign was as disastrous as his father's had been prosperous. The Edomites who had partially recovered from their misfortunes, and who were never subdued in spirit, took advantage of the depressed state of Judah to revolt, and declare themselves independent. Jehoram determined to reduce them again to obedience. Though he was not beloved by his subjects, yet, as their own honor and interests were in a line with his wishes, they cheerfully aided him in his undertaking. Jehoram, therefore, mustering all his hosts went, with all his war chariots, to the frontier of Edom, expecting that the enemy would be so terrified by their numbers as to offer little if any resistance. It would seem that they were so free from the fear of an attack that they neglected to watch, for they suddenly found themselves surrounded by the Edomites. Their chief dependence was on their war chariots. They expected to mow down the ranks of Edom as the grass of the field. But their circumstances rendered these chariots but an incumbrance. They, therefore, cut their way through the Edomites in the quarter where the least resistance could be made, and

retreated with the greatest precipitation. Edom was thus left to the enjoyment of her independence. She had long served the descendants of Jacob, but now experienced the fulfilment of the latter part of Isaac's prophecy :

“And it shall come to pass when thou shalt have the dominion,  
That thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck.”

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## CHAPTER XII.

### THE KINGDOM OF EDM.

**W**E are left entirely to conjecture as to who at this time reigned over Edom, but one imagines him to have been a descendant of the half Egyptian Genubath, and that he, being at the head of the army, obliged Judah to retreat, and thus saved Edom instrumentally from another devastating war. Edom was unmolested for the next half century, that is, till the reign of Amaziah, king of Judah. She, notwithstanding the losses she had sustained in the time of Jehosaphat, was now quite a strong nation; for when Amaziah determined on making an invasion he deemed it necessary for that purpose to hire one hundred thousand men, though he was already at the head of an army three hundred thousand strong. The occasion for

this war is not given, but it was evidently just, for God was with the army of Judah. In the time of which I write to obey God insured worldly success; but to us who live in the full blaze of gospel light it is far from being the case. We do not need that kind of proof that God hates sin and loves righteousness. Now the best men are often the least prosperous. God's favor is seen not by what we receive but by what we become. "Love your enemies," says our adorable Redeemer, "Bless them that curse you, and do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you," not that you may be wealthy and be respected and honored. No. Something infinitely better than that—"That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven." No gift which God can bestow is so valuable as the impartation of Himself. The heaven of heavens will be to see Christ and to be *like Him*.

But to proceed with the history. As in the war in the days of David so now, the first engagement took place in the Valley of Salt. This seems to have been disastrous ground to Edom; for she on this occasion, as well as on that referred to, suffered a signal defeat. Ten thousand of her men were slain, and another ten thousand were taken prisoners. These prisoners occasioned Amaziah some anxiety or inconvenience, and he summarily disposed of them by throwing them headlong

from a rock. A series of successes attended the army of Judah, and they again obtained possession of the renowned Petra. As the vain, hard-hearted, ambitious Elizabeth acknowledged God's hand after the destruction of the Spanish fleet by the motto: "He blew with His wind and they were scattered," so the wicked Amaziah admitted that it was by God and not by the prowess of himself or his men that the almost impregnable Petra had been taken, by naming that city Joktheah—subdued of God. Troubles at home obliged the king of Judah to return thither much sooner than he had intended; and, entering almost immediately on another war which required the whole of his forces, he was unable to retain the conquests he had made in Edom, and so she again broke the yoke from off her neck.

It was only by constant and strenuous effort that Edom maintained her independence during the reigns of the good Uzziah and the almost faultless Jotham; but when the throne of Judah was occupied by the infamous Ahaz that kingdom was reduced to such extremity by her northern neighbors, Israel and Syria, that so far from attempting to subject other nations to her sway, she had to struggle for her own existence. Edom did not fail to take advantage of these misfortunes. She made raids into that kingdom, and not only took much spoil but also killed many of the people, and carried others captive. Edom, on various

occasions, had suffered very severely from the people of Judah, and whenever they were in her power she paid them their own with fearful interest. The great God not only permits but requires us to imitate Him in His love, in His mercy, in His tenderness, and in His long suffering and forgiveness. But vengeance is not the prerogative of man; it belongs to God only. The unregenerate, however, are prone to take the execution of vengeance into their own hands, and this spirit is sometimes exhibited even by the professedly pious. But it prevails in all lands and among all peoples where the Bible is unknown; and Edom was more relentless, more implacable, and more cruel in her vengeance than most other nations. "Her anger did tear perpetually, and she kept her wrath forever."

Open enmity is inexcusable, but to injure those for whom one professes friendship is much worse. There is a meanness as well as a wickedness in such a course which all detest. To this execrable meanness the Edomites stooped during the siege of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans. For Zedekiah they professed friendship, and to him they sent ambassadors encouraging him to oppose the king of Babylon and at the same time they had emissaries in the camp of the besiegers selling information relative to the condition and plans of the besieged, information of which they could not have been the possessors but for their duplicity.

But any description I could give of Edom's conduct during that memorable siege with its disastrous termination would be puerile when compared with the graphic picture drawn by the pen of the inspired Obadiah. It has been conjectured that Obadiah was a converted Edomite and the tender pathos commingled with the dreadful denunciations of that prophet favors that conjecture. The seven times repeated "Thou shouldest not seem the remonstrance of one who was bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh, but like his pious progenitor, Isaac, he dared not disobey the promptings of the spirit, though his heart yearned over them with woman's pity, yet in faithfulness to his God he uttered the terrible words: "Thou shalt be cut off forever."

I would remark in passing that in this prophecy we are taught that consanguinity involves claims which cannot with impunity be disregarded. Edom was more guilty than other nations and exposed herself to severer punishment, though she was but "as one of them."

"On the conquest of Judah by the Babylonians, the Edomites, probably in reward for their services during the war, were permitted to settle in southern Palestine, and the whole plateau between it and Egypt; but they were about the same time driven out of Edom proper by the Nabatheans. For more than four centuries they continued to prosper and retained their new possessions with the excep-

tion of a few towns which the Persian monarchs compelled them to restore to the Jews after the captivity. But during the warlike rule of the Maccabees they were again completely subdued, and even forced to conform to Jewish laws and rites and submit to the government of Jewish Prefects. The Edomites were now incorporated with the Jewish nation and the whole province was often termed by Greek and Roman writers Idumeah. According to the ceremonial law an Edomite was received 'into the congregation of the Lord,'—that is to all the rights and privileges of a Jew 'in the third generation.'\*\* They were in this respect placed on an equality with the Egyptians, but for reasons vastly different. The privilege was granted to one people on account of relationship; to the others because the Israelites had been for many years sojourners in their land. Though the Egyptians as a rule, had treated Israel with great severity, the former people had conferred some favors on the latter, and for these could not fail of a reward: "Whatsoever good thing any man doeth the same shall he receive of the Lord."

"Never was a deed but left its token,  
Written on tables never broken."

As to the number of Edomites who were believers in the living and true God we have no record. May we not indulge the hope

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\*Smith's Bible Dictionary, Vol. I., page 664.

that the number was large. It has ever been true, and ever will be, that of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues, all of who fear God and work righteousness are accepted of Him.

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### CHAPTER XIII.

#### THE HERODIAN FAMILY.

**T**HOUGH many of the members of the Herodian family are called Jews, from their submitting to the rites and embracing the faith of that people, they are admitted to be Edomites and this little book would be incomplete without some notice of them. I shall, however, in accordance with the plan of this work, confine my remarks almost exclusively to those members of the family to whom reference is made in the Bible.

The first Edomite of whom we read in the New Testament is Herod, falsely surnamed, *The Great*. He was the second son of Antipator, a clever Idumæan noble, who was alike noted for his base sycophancy towards Rome, his inveterate hatred of the Asmonæian line, his insatiate ambition, and his unscrupulousness in satisfying the demands of that ambition. Herod inherited his father's ability, his father's ambition, his father's unscrupulousness, and far more than his

father's cruelty. Does Antigonus become obnoxious to Herod? He has the address to cause his life blood to flow beneath the rods and axe of the Roman lictor. Does the young Aristobolus become a favorite with the people? He is, as it were, accidentally drowned in a tank. Does Asmonian blood flow in the veins of two of his own sons? To allay his fears he strangles them. Does the beautiful Marianne excite his jealousy? She dies by the axe of the executioner. Such was the character of him who reigned in Judea, when Christ our Lord was born in Bethlehem. Herod was at that time not far from fifty-five years old and had been a public man about forty years. Though one cannot even hope that he was actuated by other than selfish motives, he spent much time and immense sums of money in repairing and beautifying the temple. About five hundred years had elapsed since its erection by Zerubbabel, and it was, even from the first, far inferior to that builded by Solomon; but Herod restored it to more than its pristine beauty. "Whatever the exact appearance of its details may have been, it may safely be asserted that the triple temple at Jerusalem,—the lower court standing on its magnificent terraces—the inner court raised on its platform in the centre of this—and the temple itself rising out of this group and crowning the whole—must have formed, when combined with the beauty of its situation, one of the most splendid

architectural combinations in the ancient world."\* But while the Jews looked on this temple with pride, and were ever ready to call the attention of the passer-by to "the manner of stones," they were not likely to be misled in regard to the king's principles. While he rebuilt the temple at Jerusalem, he rebuilt also the temple at Samaria, and made provision in his new city Cæsarea for the celebration of heathen worship; and it has been supposed that the rebuilding of the temple furnished him with the opportunity of destroying the authentic collection of genealogies which was of the highest importance to the priestly families. Herod, as appears from his public designs, affected the dignity of a second Solomon; but he joined the license of that monarch to his magnificence, and, it was said, that the monument which he raised over the royal tombs was due to the fear which seized him after a sacrilegious attempt to rob them of their treasures."†

It was near the close of Herod's eventful life, when he was in infirm health, and engaged in judicial murders, that our Lord Jesus Christ, though God with God, came to this earth to live among men, himself a man. Herod could not have been ignorant of the fact that the Jews expected that about this time one would come who would raise them to great national glory. Had he not learned that this personage was

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\* Smith's Bible Dictionary, Vol. I., page 3207.

† Smith's New Testament History, p. 36.

to be looked for when the sceptre departed from Judah? And well did he know that it had departed, for he, a descendant of Esau, then held it. Nothing is so impotent as guilt; and little faith as Herod had in the Hebrew Scriptures he would often quail with fear lest the expectations of the Jews might be realized. These thoughts would make him unhappy, and his unhappiness would increase his irritability and cruelty. While in this state of mind he became cognizant of the fact that several persons had come from a distant eastern country with the professed object of rendering worship to a new-born infant who was the king of the Jews, and saying that they had been guided thither by a star. Herod was still more troubled than ever; he would conclude that the looked-for deliverer had been born, "and how," he mentally asked, "will his birth affect me?" When Herod first entered on his course of cruelty and injustice he must have had many qualms of conscience, and, no doubt, again and again resolved to lead a better life; but for many years the inward monitor had probably been, for the most part, silent, but now it would lash his soul to fury. The enormous crimes of which he had been guilty, and a sense of a terrible retribution would haunt him day and night. Though stung with remorse he experienced no true repentance. for he resolved to commit still another crime by slaying the new-born king at whatever cost. He would think it

wise, however, to conceal his real intentions, and, assembling together the learned in his kingdom, he, as if a seeker after truth, demanded of them where Christ should be born, and they showed him from their sacred books that Bethlehem should be his birthplace. Herod dismissed the priests and scribes courteously, probably promising to seek for the wonderful infant, and, if he could be found, to yield to his superior claims. In order to carry out his nefarious plans, and in seeming conformity to his promise, he sent to the magi requesting them to come to his palace, and, with the greatest duplicity, told them that he was not less anxious than they to honor the remarkable person whose birth had been for centuries the subject of prophecy, and had, to them, been heralded by a star. Herod would tell them further that he had made enquiries of those who were the most competent to judge in the matter, and that they were unanimous in the opinion that the Messiah was to be born in a small village, known chiefly as the birthplace of David, lying a few miles south of Jerusalem, and that they would be more likely to be successful in finding the child than any embassy which he could send. He, before dismissing them, learned the precise time at which the star had first appeared, believing, no doubt, that its appearance synchronized with the child's birth. He exhorted them to search diligently, and as soon as they found the new-

born king to return to him that he might go and render him due worship. The magi had lost sight of the star, perhaps they had not seen it after they had left their own country ; but when they came out of Herod's palace it was again visible, and went before them till it came to the house where the young child was. There it stood till they entered the house, and probably it was never again seen.

There has been a good deal of discussion about this star. That it was wholly supernatural and not a natural phenomenon is evident. This removes it at once from the region of human speculation. It is called a star. This much, then, we know, it was a *star*. What *kind* of a star we are not told. We may be certain it was not one of the fixed stars, nor one of the planets, nor a comet, nor an ordinary meteor. But other things besides the above are properly called stars ; as, for instance, a mark of distinction worn on the robe of a prince, or flying on a flag, or a mark of reference in a book. Any luminous object, especially when seen in the air, is properly called a *star*. The star seen by the wise men was a miraculous light, sent, in the first instance, to inform them that the long-expected king of the Jews was born ; and again appearing to them at Jerusalem to guide them to the very house in Bethlehem where the young child was. This star might be described as "an angel carrying an electric light," or a celestial lantern sent to light the sages on

their way. So much of Christ was revealed to these men that they accepted him as their Saviour; and may we not hope that many are saved by his sacrificial death who have never learned of him either by the living voice or the written word? God is rich in love, rich in mercy, rich in power unto all—however shrouded by darkness—who call upon him.

The magi worshipped the infant Saviour. It is an interesting fact that Gentiles were the first worshippers of the incarnate God. Of the number of the magi, of their rank, or of the retinue by which they were attended, nothing is known; but their gifts—gold, frankincense and myrrh—indicate wealth, and were an acknowledgment of the superiority of the individual to whom they were offered. They had believed Herod to be sincere, and so intended to go back to him, as he had commanded; but God spoke to them in a dream, and bade them return to their own country by another way. Herod, doubtless, waited anxiously from day to day expecting the return of the magi, and when he was at length convinced that they had left his kingdom without giving him the desired information he would become perplexed, indignant, and greatly exasperated. Could Herod have gained possession of their persons they would have been the victims of his wrath. As has been said of James II. of England so it may truthfully be said of Herod: "When his own

person was reflected on he followed the delinquent like the panther prowling for his prey, . . . he never failed of pursuing his victim to death." But now his anger recoiled upon himself, and stung like a serpent and bit like an adder. Did the magi worship an infant, and dare disobey him? Should a subject be treated with greater respect than himself?

Herod had, doubtless, hoped to put the young child to death without it being generally known; his plans, however, being baffled, it but remained for him to pursue another line of policy. He who had been worshipped by the magi must be slain. Some of Herod's most trusty servants were, we may suppose, accordingly dispatched with orders to find the child, if he could be found, and put him at once to death. One imagines these men making the most rigid investigation of the matter, and at length returning to the king and reporting about as follows: "The people of Bethlehem told us that a few hours after the birth of a child of poor parents, who a little before had come from Nazareth, some shepherds declared that the child of such poor parentage and such mean surroundings—he was born in a manger—was the promised Messiah. 'We,' said the shepherds, 'were as usual watching our flocks by night, when an angel descended from heaven and we were enveloped in a luminous cloud. Our hearts quailed with fear, but the angel told us not to

fear, for the message he had come to announce was a message of great joy to all people, namely, that Christ the Lord was that day born in the city of David. The angel had hardly ceased to speak when suddenly there appeared a multitude of angels, bright and shining as himself, and with voices loud, sweet and clear, they sang:

‘Glory to God in the highest,  
And on earth peace among men in whom he is well  
pleased.’

“The people said they knew not what to say to the shepherds, for it could not be denied that the condition of the child was in exact correspondence with that described by the angels. We were also told that the child excited much interest when, on the fortieth day after his birth, his mother brought him, her first-born, to the temple to present him to the Lord, and that Simeon and Anna, who, you know, are allowed to have the spirit of prophecy, spoke of him as a light to the Gentiles and the glory of Israel.”

The changing color of Herod's face would plainly indicate his mental perturbation, and, before the report was finished, we may suppose him to have eagerly asked, “Where is the child now?” But the reply to this would be very unsatisfactory. Herod would be told that all that could be learned at Bethlehem relative to the family was that, the day after the magi left, Joseph bought a considerable amount of clothing for the child and his

mother, some provisions, and two of the best asses that could be found ; and that he paid for all these things in gold ; and also that he told the man of whom he made the purchases that he had myrrh and frankincense of which he would like to dispose. The king would also be told that those who were acquainted with Joseph said that his character was above suspicion, and yet they admitted that it was unaccountable that he who was so poor a few days previously that his wife availed herself of the privilege of offering turtle doves or pigeons instead of a lamb, should suddenly become the possessor of so much gold. Herod would probably conclude that the family had returned to Nazareth, and would lose no time in sending to that village and making the strictest inquiry respecting them. This inquiry, however, would but result in the establishment of the fact that they had not been seen there since they went to Bethlehem to be enrolled.

The next night would possibly be to Herod a sleepless one ; the troubled sea casting up mire and dirt being a fit emblem of his mind. That a child of whom wonderful things had been predicted had lately been born was clearly proved, and wherefore was he concealed ? Might it not be that even now a plot was laid to subvert the existing government and proclaim the infant king ? The child must therefore be slain. But how could he be slain when it was not known where he

was? Was there not a probability that he was still at Bethlehem? It was evident that he was born there; and might not the story about the things purchased by Joseph be told to deceive? The people of Bethlehem were proud of the place of their birth. Would they not expect peculiar favors from the Messiah? May they not have been all leagued together in order to the child's concealment; and may they not be maturing plans for an insurrection? As in chemistry a compound is often altogether different from the simples used in its formation, so the fiendish cruelty which henceforth characterized Herod was the product of remorse, fear and anxiety. He was wretched himself, and he seemed determined on making all around him equally wretched. He had long been an object of dislike, he was now an object of terror. It, at length, occurred to his mind that he could rid himself of at least one cause of anxiety. According to the story of the magi, the child who had given him so much trouble must be less than two years of age, and, consequently, if all the male children of Bethlehem at and under that age should be slain, he of necessity would be slain among that number. The resolution to murder their helpless, innocent children seems to have been no sooner made than carried into effect. It is not known how it was done. Matthew is the only historian who has recorded this act of cruelty and injustice; and he has left us alto-

gether in the dark in regard to the particulars of the tragedy. It would be quite in keeping with the general conduct of this Edomite if he ushered an edict requiring all the mothers in Bethlehem who had children at or under the age of two years to bring them to Jerusalem on a given day, and when they were assembled to cause them to be surrounded by the tools of injustice, and their babes forcibly taken from them and slain before their eyes. It is quite possible that the aged saints, Simeon and Anna—the latter a temple-dweller—were put to death on account of their prophetic words, and, it may be, the shepherds, too, for telling what the angels had said—he would have murdered the angels themselves if such a thing had been possible—and thus they would have participated in the coming sufferings of their Lord, and then entered the glory purchased by his prospective death.

Parents are mourned, and most justly, for they are their children's truest friends; husbands and wives are each by the other mourned, for they twain are one flesh and one spirit, and when separated by death the survivor not so much lives as endures life; children of mature age are mourned for they are the hope, this support, the pride of their parents, and to bury them is to reverse the order of nature. But to woman there is no bereavement which is so much the dividing asunder of soul and body, of joint and marrow, as parting from

her babe. It is the burying of a part of herself. What, then, must have been the agony of these mothers of Bethlehem when their little ones were ruthlessly murdered; themselves not even accused of any crime, and their babes incapable of doing evil! The profane historians of Herod's time did not, however, think it worth while to record the act of tyranny which extended over only a small tract of country, for the blood of these children "was but a drop in that crimson river in which he was steeped to the very lips." Besides, as they were only very little children, it may have been thought that their lives were of very little importance. But the Infinite One, who inspired the mother's heart with its deep, intense, unutterable tenderness, thought this infanticide of sufficient importance to make it a matter of prophecy some hundreds of years previous to its commission. Rachel, the beloved wife of Jacob is represented as lamenting the slaughter in inconsolable grief. Is it quite certain that this is a representation and not a reality?

Had Herod carefully studied the sacred writings of the people over whom he ruled he would have learned that he who was born in the manger of Bethlehem, though the Prince of the kings of the earth, King of kings and Lord of lords, had come to the earth, not to conquer and rule but to labor and suffer, to be despised and rejected, to bleed and die. Herod, however, in common with most of his

contemporaries, thought that the Messiah was to be a renowned temporal ruler, who would raise the Jews to great national glory, and he, therefore, had recourse to such measures as, in his opinion, could not fail to nip the incipient conqueror in the bud. Utterly futile were all his schemes. God, who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working, not only knew the intentions of Herod, but knew them afar off even before they were known to himself, and had sent an angel to the husband of the mother of Jesus the Christ and told him to carry both the young child and his mother to the land of Egypt and there remain till he received permission to return. Thus Israel's house of bondage became an asylum for the world's Saviour.

The massacre of the children of Bethlehem would but render Herod more and still more unhappy. Though he concluded that nothing farther was to be feared from the angel-heralded child, there was much to be feared from his own conscience, especially as it was now evident to himself—it had for some time been evident to others—that his end was approaching. His disease was painful and loathsome in the extreme, but at times his anguish of mind was even greater than his anguish of body. Pain in this instance was not reformatory, and although it was accompanied with the more unendurable sensation, remorse, it but rendered his hard heart harder still, his selfishness more intensely selfish, and

his cruelty more fiendish. Conscious that he was hated by his subjects, and yet being ambitious of being, at least in appearance, universally mourned, he ordered that the chief men in his kingdom should be shut up in the hippodrome, and then issued a decree that as soon as he ceased to breathe they should be murdered. Not satisfied with all the blood he had already shed, and with those prospective murders, he determined that one more of his own family should bleed. His son Antipator was the victim. Soon after the perpetration of this most revolting murder Herod was summoned into the presence of the great Judge. As in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus—if it be indeed a parable, and not the relation of an actual occurrence—it is said with emphasis of the rich man, “he was buried,” so the funeral of Herod was conducted with the greatest possible pomp. The lifeless body was clothed in purple and gold, and precious stones were set around in great confusion.

But four of Herod's sons outlived him. Herod, Antipas, Archelaus, Herod, Philip I., and Herod, Philip II. The three last named, will in accordance to the limits set to this work, be passed over in silence, the Bible not furnishing material for their history. The mere fact is stated that Joseph was afraid to make Judea his place of residence when he learned that Archelaus reigned there; and the inference one would draw from that, namely

that Archelaus was tyrannical and cruel is abundantly confirmed by profane history. Philip I. is simply alluded to as the husband of Herodias, and of Philip II we are told that he was tetrarch of Iturea and the region of Trachonites.

Though the scripture record relative to Herod Antipas the tetrarch of Galilee and Perca is very brief, yet it is of such a nature as to give us a pretty clear insight into his character; for as an artist can by a few lines bring out the features of the face of a man so that it is easily recognized by those who know him; so, at times, a very few acts shew us one's moral status. We first meet with Herod Antipas as a listener to the preaching of John the Baptist and yet living with Herodias the wife of his brother Philip.

John the Baptist was a preacher "intensely practical, painfully heart searching, fearlessly downright;" and it would be well for the interests of morality and religion if preachers of the present day more generally followed his example. To the tax gatherers John would say: "Exact no more than that which is appointed you;" to the soldiers: "Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely, and be contented with your wages." Did John not incur a great risk of injuring his popularity by such pointed admonitions? He too, was one of the very few preachers who are as plain and outspoken in their admonitions to the great as to those in obscure

positions; and he boldly declared to Herod: "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife." But lawful or unlawful Herod was determined to retain the possession of Herodias. He respected the Lord's servant, he listened to his teachings, he obeyed many of his injunctions, he complied with many of his requests, and thought that ought to satisfy him. Both with John and with his own conscience he would fain make a compromise. With John that was impossible. He could neither be blinded by gifts, nor seduced by flattery. He would persist in telling the tetrarch that it was in vain he left off some sins, and practised some virtues if he continued to hug his darling sin to his bosom; but if he would please God he must obey all His commands, yield Him his whole heart. Herod's conscience was for the time more easily silenced. Such is our moral nature that the man who continues in a course which he knows to be wrong, will feel less and still less uneasiness relative to it, till finally he will conclude that under his peculiar circumstances it is allowable. His conscience will become seared as with a hot iron. But let such a one beware. His insensibility will not make evil good, will not alter the nature of things. Conscience though silenced is not dead. She may even in this life inflict the dreadful pain, the keen anguish, remorse, and in the future state will be a never dying worm.

Herodias, having learned that John the

Baptist had reproved Herod for his unlawful relation to her, determined on revenge. Her malice carried her so far as to cause her even to wish that he should be put to death. She would not, it is quite likely, assign the true reason for this wish, but she could represent to Herod that the man from the wilderness in his camel's hair robe, confined by a leathern girdle, who lived on locusts and wild honey, was, despite his pretensions to holiness, possessed of a devil, and therefore ought not to be suffered to live. His life should be sacrificed to the general good. But much as Herod wished to please Herodias he dared not put John to death lest it should occasion an insurrection; for the popular belief was that he was a prophet. Herod at length concluded that he could satisfy Herodias without injuring his own popularity by imprisoning John and yet allowing him free intercourse with his friends and disciples. This was accordingly done. The place of John's imprisonment was a strong fortress perched on a lofty crag on the east side of the Jordan. There he remained for some time, and he might finally have been released had it not been for the implacable hate of Herodias. Woman, alas, is as strong, as undying in her hatred as in her love. Herod had, perhaps, quite forgiven if not forgotten John's reproof. Not so with Herodias. She was as firm in her resolve of accomplishing his death, and anxiously waited to find Herod in such a state of mind as

would enable her to induce him to issue an order for the prophet's execution. Unlike the Macedonian who appealed from Philip drunk to Philip sober, she would appeal from Herod sober to Herod drunk. Herod's birthday was observed as a season of feasting and festivity and she determined that on that day John should die. So far did her desire for revenge carry her that she was willing that her daughter, in violation of the rules of propriety, or even decency, should not only be present on that festive occasion but should also dance before the tetrarch and his guests. She had doubtless also arranged that if her daughter should be so fortunate as to please Herod and have the offer of any gift she wished she should ask for the Head of John the Baptist.

The next birthday celebration was at Machaesus where John was imprisoned. This was probably at the particular request of Herodias, professedly on account of the beauty of the situation, but in reality that she might the more easily carry out her fiendish design. The feast is prepared and all the lords, chief captains, and leading men of Galilee are assembled. In the midst of their revelry Salome enters. Herod and his guests are delighted, and even more surprised than delighted. But Salome does more than the mere allowing of these men, heated with wine, to gaze upon her beauty—she dances before them. The results are as Herodias had anticipated. Herod was charmed with the per-

formance, and promises on oath to give her whatever she shall ask. Well did the young girl remember the command of her mother, yet she could not believe that the head of John would really be preferred to all the valuable gifts in the power of Herod to bestow. She ran, therefore, to her mother, saying: "What shall I ask?" Herodias, perhaps annoyed that Salome had not at once acted in accordance with her instructions, would reply: "Have you forgotten what I said? Ask for the head of John the Baptist, and ask that it be given you immediately." Salome, having again entered into the presence of the tetrarch, said: "I will that thou forthwith give me in a charger the head of John the Baptist." Though Herod was partially intoxicated, yet when he heard the request of Salome he was horror-stricken. He knew that John was a good man, and that he had been most unjustly imprisoned; and he was extremely unwilling to stain his hands with that prophet's blood; and, besides, the murder could not fail of being known, and might render him unpopular. But what could be done? Had not his guests heard his promise and his oath, and would they not think him a coward should he show any hesitancy in the matter? Would it not be better to murder John, innocent though he was, than to sacrifice his honor? and would not his honor be sacrificed if he did not keep his oath? And then, really, was not his oath binding? was

he not under obligation in the eyes of heaven even to keep it? Since he was so situated that he could not avoid doing wrong, might he not commit the wrong which would gain for himself the esteem of his friends? Then, again, would it really be a wrong towards John? What comfort was there to him in life? He neither feasted nor wore soft clothing. To a prisoner would it not be a blessing to cease to be? Thus fortified, "immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought; and he went and beheaded him in prison, and brought his head in a charger and gave it to the damsel, and the damsel gave it to her mother." What a spectacle! A daughter presenting her mother with the bloody head of one of whom she was virtually the murderer! Even at the great distance to which we are removed, both in regard to time and space, the thought of the horrid sight chills one's blood? Is it possible that its reception gave Herodias joy? Can there be joy in the accomplishment of that which one knows to be sinful? Joy is one of the fruits of the Spirit; and is it not the perquisite of well-doing, and of well-doing only? Must not he who lives in the wilful commission of sin be to it necessarily a stranger? Even the laughter of the wicked is as the crackling of thorns under a pot, noise and a momentary flame, and then but as ashes to be trodden under foot. The tragedy was soon over; not

its consequences. They will exist forever. The tremendous guilt of Herodias by no means rendered Herod guiltless. He ought not to have imprisoned John; he ought not to have taken the rash oath; he ought not to have commanded John's execution. Though he endeavored to convince himself that his conduct was justifiable, he knew it was not. He probably experienced that fearful anguish which has been termed by that intellectual giant, Joseph Cook, "The innermost laughter of the soul at itself." Is it not the God within us which, to the finally impenitent sinner, will mock at his calamity and laugh when his fear cometh? Herod quailed with fear, though he preserved an outward composure. He was afraid that his guests would think him a coward if he did not keep his oath. His keeping it made him a coward. Every sin will ultimately be repented of, but the repentance may not be during the term of probation. It is a principle in God's government that what a man sows that he also reaps; and as in the natural so in the spiritual world, the harvest far exceeds the seed sown.

Our adorable Redeemer passed a large part of his life in Galilee, which was under the jurisdiction of Herod; and when Herod heard of the miracles which the Redeemer performed he became uneasy—if, indeed, he had ever been other than uneasy since the murder of John. Though a Sadducee he concluded that that prophet had risen from

the dead. As Herod did not believe in the resurrection of the dead, and John wrought no miracles, his coming to this conclusion plainly indicates that he was the subject of the most tormenting fears. Though in opposition to what he up to that time had believed, he felt that in some way he would again meet the murdered man. He could not rid himself of the expectation of suffering on that account. The verdict of his own conscience was "Woe unto the wicked, it shall be ill with him; for the reward of his hands shall be given him." Herod wished the miracles would cease, or that He by whom they were wrought would leave his territory; yet he did not dare to command Him to depart. The plan at last devised to induce the Lord Jesus Christ to leave the province of Galilee showed considerable tact, and had he been dealing with a mere man would probably have been successful. He sent emissaries to Christ who were connected with the sect opposed to that to which he himself belonged, and they came as if they were Christ's friends and wished to warn Him of approaching danger: "Get thee out," said they, "and depart hence, for Herod will kill thee." Their hopes of intimidating Christ were miserably disappointed. His answer: "Go ye, and tell that fox, behold I cast out devils, and I do cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected"—must have convinced them that he perfectly understood the design of their

coming, and the motives and character of Herod; and that he had a work to accomplish in which he would not permit himself to be interrupted.

Herod would receive the message of Christ with mingled indignation and alarm. His first impulse would be to punish the man who had dared to designate him by the opprobrious epithet "fox," but he would fear that it might not be safe to attempt to do so. It was beyond contradiction that he had wrought miracles; who could then prescribe limits to his power? He had restored life; might he not by mere volition take life away? Herod would, therefore, conclude that there was no alternative but to allow this personage, whoever he might be, to remain in his jurisdiction as long as he pleased to do so, and to go on unmolested with his work.

The Lord Jesus Christ, having finished the work his Father had given him to do in Galilee, went over to Perea, and thence to Jerusalem and its vicinity. The fears of Herod would now be allayed, and curiosity took their place. He would regret that he had not improved some opportunity of seeing the wonder-working man while he was in Galilee. He would then have known for himself whether he was John the Baptist or not. If he was not the man whom he had beheaded there was no cause for alarm. It might even be advantageous to have one in his tetrarchy who could open blind eyes

unstop deaf ears, and at his pleasure multiply provisions; and besides he would like to witness a miracle, he would like to see the arm in strength and beauty coming out from the shrivelled stump, or the dead returning to life. At length an opportunity of seeing Jesus Christ occurred, which gave Herod great delight and still greater surprise. He was at Jerusalem, and there learned that the wonder-working man who had occupied so much of his thoughts was arraigned as a prisoner before the Roman governor. Herod would probably have gone at once to the place where the trial was pending, had it not been that there was a feud existing between him and the said governor. The cause of the feud was this: Some of the subjects of Herod were offering sacrifices in the court of the temple at Jerusalem, and Pilate, under the pretext that they were inciting a riot, slew them, thus mingling their blood with the blood of the animals they had slaughtered.

During the trial—if trial it may be called—of the Lord Jesus Christ, Pilate learned that He had spent much of His life in Galilee, and hence might be considered as belonging to Herod's jurisdiction. Pilate at once resolved to send the remarkable prisoner to Herod, hoping thus to free himself from pronouncing either a condemnation or an acquittal; as in the one case he would do violence to his own conscience, in the other he would incur the displeasure of the Jews. And besides these

considerations he desired a reconciliation with the tetrarch ; and hence would be pleased to have an opportunity of giving him a token of respect, being so well acquainted with his character as to be convinced that a compliment paid to himself would be an equivalent for shedding the blood of his subjects.

Herod would look on the Lord Jesus Christ with astonishment. "This man is not John the Baptist," he would say to himself, "but who can he be, his countenance so marred and yet possessing such an awful grandeur? But may it not be that that which awes me so much is merely the rumor that he can work miracles? Well, really, I doubt the truth of that rumor. At any rate he is impotent enough now. If he has the power to raise the dead, as is commonly reported, surely he can deliver himself out of the hands of his enemies ; and nothing is more certain than that if he has such power he will exercise it." Herod now questioned Jesus with many words. He probably asked him of his parentage, of his trade or profession before he became a public teacher, of the number of his disciples, of his doctrine, and of his authority to teach that doctrine. But our Adorable Redeemer knowing that these questions were prompted by idle curiosity, answered him nothing. It is very significant that it was before Herod only that our Lord observed unbroken silence. Herod perceived by the vehement accusations of the Jews that they bitterly hated Jesus,

and seems to have determined to gratify their malignity by treating him with contempt and scorn, if he could convict him of no crime. Herod's body-guard, therefore, no doubt by his command, arrayed our Redeemer in a white robe—probably one which he himself had cast off—and rendered him mock homage, but our Redeemer still remaining silent, and the soldiers apparently tiring of the dreadful sport, led our Redeemer, wearing the white robe, back to Pilate, which seems to have suggested the further insult of arraying our dear Redeemer in *purple*, as if he aimed at the throne of the Cæsars. This act toward Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, is the last notice we have of Herod in the Scriptures; but we learn from profane history that he, at the instigation of Herodias, went to Rome with the hope of obtaining the title of king. His appearance in that city proved his ruin, for charges of so grave a nature were brought against him that he was banished to Gaul, where he passed the remainder of his life. Like his forefather, Esau, "he found no place for repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears."

Herodias voluntarily accompanied Herod to his place of banishment, and, although all right-minded persons must heartily detest her character, yet as she had shared with Herod his prosperity it was noble and womanly to share with him his reverses. It is scarcely possible for a woman to become thoroughly selfish.

## CHAPTER XIV.

THE HERODIAN FAMILY—(*Continued.*)

**H**EROD AGRIPPA<sup>1</sup>, the grandson of Herod the great, at his introduction to our notice, appears as a murderer. The family to which he belonged was a family of murderers. His ancestors in ancient times had been so much the enemies of God's chosen people that they typify all God's enemies—God always identifies Himself with His people as with the prophet Zachariah: "Whoso toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye,"—and his immediate ancestor had persecuted Christ. Agrippa's uncle, Herod Antipas, did not know when he arrayed Jesus of Nazareth in a white robe and rendered Him mock homage that He was the King of Glory whom all the host of heaven worshipped; but he might have known it, and hence his ignorance was not his misfortune but his crime. Though Agrippa persecuted the followers of Christ even unto death he may not have had any decided antipathy toward them, for he was one of that class of men—unfortunately not yet quite extinct—who are ready to sacrifice anything or any body if by such means they can promote their own interests. Agrippa saw that when any of the Jews declared themselves the followers of Him whom they had crucified they became obnoxious to their

fellow countrymen, and it may have been chiefly with the desire of increasing his own popularity that he became a persecutor. Saul of Tarsus was one of the bitterest and most relentless of persecutors ; but he was at the same time thoroughly conscientious. He "verily thought he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." Agrippa never felt the weight of the word *ought* and if that word had a place in his vocabulary it would be used only when speaking of the duty of others toward himself.

James, the brother of John, was the first victim of Agrippa's cruelty. The burning zeal of this son of thunder rendered him an object of peculiar dislike to those Jews who continued to reject Christ, and he was feared even more than he was hated from the fact that he could and did attest that while Jesus was a man among men, he had on one occasion seen His glory so unveiled that His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was bright as the light, and had heard a voice from heaven saying, "This is my beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased." To Agrippa it was evident that both the character and the experiences of James enabled him to exercise a very powerful influence in favor of the new religion, and that hence the Jews would not be averse to his being put out of the way. James was accordingly murdered, probably decapitated. Though the murder was perpetrated principally from a desire to please

the Jews, Agrippa was not quite certain that it would have that effect, and when he perceived that it had greatly increased his popularity he was elated, and determined to ingratiate himself still further into their favor by continued murders. If he could make friends by shedding the blood of the followers of a crucified man he thought it well worth his while to do so.

Peter was one of the boldest, and most uncompromising of the advocates of salvation by Jesus Christ, and consequently he like James was both feared and hated by Christ's enemies. His searching appeal on the memorable day of Pentecost was still fresh in their memories, and still rankled in their hearts. They often seemed to hear the unwelcome words: "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God unto you by mighty works and wonders and signs which God did by Him in the midst of you, even as ye yourselves know; Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye by the hand of lawless men did crucify and slay; whom God raised up by having loosed the pangs of death; because it was not possible that He should be holden of it . . . . Let all the house of Israel, therefore, know assuredly that God hath made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified." They were filled with anger against the man who had dared prefer such a charge against them, and were as eager to imbue their hands

in his blood as they a little before had been to imbue their hands in the blood of his Master. What! charge them with killing their own Messiah! What! assert that he who had been crucified as a malefactor was in reality their own Messiah! how preposterous, how absurd! Such a man ought to suffer death as the enemy of his countrymen. Agrippa was not ignorant that this feeling relative to Peter prevailed, and, hence, selected him for his next victim. He was apprehended and cast into prison, and, as if he had been one of the worst of criminals, sixteen soldiers were appointed as his keepers. As four were on guard at a time, and they required to watch but three hours, and hence, could not be overcome with sleep or fatigue, Agrippa felt sure that his prisoner could not escape. The feast of the passover was at hand or in course of celebration, and it would have shocked the religious feelings of the Jews to try a criminal during these solemnities. They were, as Solomon puts it, righteous over much as well as overmuch wicked. Peter was kept in prison several days, and during that time the disciples met at stated seasons and prayed for his deliverance. As the time drew near when his execution might be expected they would become more and still more earnest in their supplications, but no assurance was given that they were heard. The next morning he was to be brought forth, not so much to be tried as to be executed. The faith of

some of the younger disciples, perhaps, began to waver, and hence they would ask if any one present really knew that the Lord had said, "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven." One imagines that on hearing this question a cloud passed over the face of Thomas as if he doubted whether the Lord had said these words, but John, and Philip, and Andrew in their earnestness almost simultaneously would answer, "Yes I heard him say so myself." Encouraged by this promise they would agree to meet at a given hour and pray till God gave them some token that their prayer was accepted. They would go to their several homes but very little would be said except what was said to God. Those who could would spend their time in their closets, not so much, however, in uttered petitions as in sighs or groans, or in the repetition of the name of the Almighty. As the little child when in deep distress will often cry "mother, mother, mother," so the child of God, when no human ear can hear, in agony will sometimes cry, "O God, O God." Domestic duties might deprive many of the privilege of retiring to their closets, but none of the privilege of prayer. The housewife would perform her accustomed duties but her heart would be lifted to God. She would say in a half whisper: "My Father for Christ's sake," or "Fulfil thine own promise." The father

would take his little boy upon his knee and tenderly caressing him; musingly say: "If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? if he ask a fish will he give him a serpent?" His heart told him that he would not thus treat his child, and he would feel assured that his Father in heaven possessed greater love and tenderness than himself.

At the appointed hour the disciples would again meet. There would be more of hope in their hearts, and their countenances would wear a more cheerful aspect, but many would bear traces of the struggle through which they had passed. Like Jacob they had wrestled with God; like Israel they had prevailed. Some of their faces, it may be, like the face of Moses on a certain occasion, *shone*, and that, like him, they would be unconscious of it, while to others it would be a source of great encouragement.

The trysting-place was at the house of one Mary, the mother of John Mark. There we will leave the disciples and go to the prison where Peter is incarcerated. Let us look at him as he lies on the cold, dank earth between two soldiers to whom he is chained. Sheckles and instruments of torture are the chief furniture of the room. The stone walls are thick and high, and the heavily spiked door is not only locked but guarded by armed men. Peter is sweetly sleeping. As God's will was his, he would be free from anxiety. To live

to him was Christ, and well did he know that to die would be gain even should he die by the axe of the executioner.

The praying disciples, the persecuting Herod, and the vigilant soldiers are not all who are interested about Peter. He who dwells in light unapproachable, who is worshipped by all the heavenly host, cares for him, and sends an angel to affect his release. Prayer from day to day had ascended to heaven, and had been presented to God the Father by our great advocate, God the Son. Is it not probable that much was eliminated from their prayers before they were presented? These petitions were accepted when offered; but the great God in this instance as in many others, put the faith of his children to a severe test that they might have a richer reward.

Suddenly the cell is filled with light, and Peter is awakened by an angel who bids him arise. Peter did not say "Do you not see that I am chained to my guards and cannot rise till it is their pleasure to do so;" but he at once made an effort, and the chains fell from his hands. He then, in obedience to the commands of the angel, girds himself, binds on his sandals, casts his garment about him, and follows where he leads.

One naturally asks: Where or in what condition were the soldiers to whom Peter had been chained? Were they asleep, or were they awake but their senses so holden that they were insensible to what was passing

around them? or, again, were they fully conscious of what was passing but so awed by the angel's presence that they dared not make any resistance, and, indeed, felt that to attempt resistance would be utterly vain? Bolts and bars and adamantine walls seem not to interfere with the passage of spiritual bodies, but Peter was flesh and blood, and, consequently, if he would leave the prison, needed some way of egress; and it would appear that, by the touch of the angel's hand or by his mere volition the heavy iron bolts drew back, and the ponderous door opened. By some means the soldiers at the prison door, like those to whom Peter had been chained, were rendered powerless. There was a court or avenue which connected the prison with the city, at the termination of which was an iron gate which opened to them of its own accord. Having done all that was needful to do for Peter in order that he might procure his own safety—God never does or causes that to be done for us which we can do for ourselves—the angel left him to minister to some other heir of salvation.

One would like to follow Peter, to notice the lighting up of his countenance as the fact that God had indeed sent a glorious angel and released him from prison was felt to be a reality; to observe his eagerness to reach the house of Mary and tell of his deliverance; and to see the surprise—it is strange that they should be surprised—and the delight of the

disciples at his coming. But we leave him to learn how Herod Agrippa is affected by the escape of his prisoner.

When the watch was relieved, to the utter astonishment of those who had just come on duty, there was no prisoner to watch. The doors were unlocked, and he who kept the keys deposed on oath that he had not unlocked them, and that the keys had been all night in his possession. Blank astonishment and black despair were depicted on the faces of the soldiers. They had neither been guilty of the commission of any crime nor of the neglect of any duty; but their prisoner had escaped, and they knew that they would be put to death.

Herod Agrippa, full of schemes to increase his popularity by persecuting the followers of the crucified One, had, we may presume, passed a sleepless night. In his imagination he would see the lifeless body of Peter carried forth, and hear the populace applaud his zeal. While busy with these thoughts, it is presumed, Blastus entered his chamber, his countenance plainly indicating great perturbation of mind, and that, before he had time to tell of the strange event Agrippa anxiously asked: "What is the matter?" Blastus would tell him that Peter had made his escape, and that the guard declared that they were altogether ignorant as to the means by which it had been effected. Agrippa would pale with anger and disappointment, and order that the most

diligent search be made in every place where it was possible that the late prisoner could have secreted himself. The guard would be then examined and condemned to death. This sentence excited no surprise, for, if it was not admitted that Peter's escape was miraculous, it would be incredible that he should leave the prison without the aid, or at least the connivance, of his keepers. Is it within the range of possibilities that one could escape who was chained to two men, and within a prison securely locked, closely barred and well guarded ?

Agrippa was doubtless convinced that Peter's rescue had been effected by superhuman power, but he would not think it prudent to avow his convictions. To admit that the great God had interposed for the safety of a follower of Jesus of Nazareth was equivalent to acknowledging that Jesus was in reality what he claimed to be, the Son of God ; and would not that acknowledgment cause some of his friends to become his enemies ?

One end which the Lord Jesus Christ had in coming into the world was to bear witness unto the truth ; and to all his true followers truth is even dearer than life. But to truth Agrippa would never have been a martyr. He probably asked not what he ought to believe, but what would be most for his interest to profess to believe ; not what he ought to do, but what would be most for his interest to do. But the all important question, "How can I most

effectually serve myself?" could not now be easily answered. Would it not look like a diminution of zeal should he cease to persecute the followers of Jesus of Nazareth? But his utmost efforts had been baffled, and might they not be baffled again? and would not that have a tendency to lessen the respect in which he was held by his subjects? At length Agrippa concluded to return to the official residence of his family, Cæsarea. There being few, if any, believers of Jesus in that city, he, of course, would not be expected to continue the work of persecution.

Cæsarea was built by Agrippa's grandfather, Herod the great, and was about seventy miles from Jerusalem, on the great road from Tyre to Egypt. It was, in every respect, a very desirable place of residence, and there Agrippa, no doubt, hoped and expected to spend many years in pleasure. True, he had been thwarted in his efforts to become renowned as a zealous Jew; but might he not gain notoriety as a worshipper of pagan gods? And, indeed, was it not possible that he might himself be regarded as a god?

Men are most ready to grant favors when they themselves are happy. The Tyrians and Sidonians were evidently aware of this, and, although they had incurred the displeasure of Agrippa, and feared that the result of his displeasure would have a disastrous effect upon their commercial relations, they deferred making an effort for a reconciliation till the

time of the celebration of the annual games, and, even then, they took the precaution, before they approached the king, to gain the friendship of Blastus, the king's chamberlain, who seems also to have been his favorite. During the festivities a large deputation from the renowned cities of Tyre and Sidon came to the king, desiring peace. The deputation was, doubtless, successful, not perhaps, because the king saw the justice of their claims, but because the circumstances by which he was surrounded, disinclined him to a refusal. Little did Agrippa think that his kingly power was about to come to an end. On the second day of the games Agrippa entered the theatre arrayed in a silver robe, which so reflected the rays of the rising sun as in brilliancy to become the sun's rival. The feelings of the common people, who are always easily affected by external splendor, are kindled to admiration's loftiest heights; and when he made an oration, in which—having much of the fond nature of Herod Antipas—he flattered the assembly into a willingness to flatter himself, their admiration culminated in adoration, and the impious shout arose: "It is the voice of a god and not of a man."

Agrippa had now reached the zenith of his ambition. The long, loud applause was to him as grateful incense. He was, at length, duly appreciated. Was it not likely that sacrifices would be offered to him? Were not sacrifices his right from the ignoble herd that

had been permitted to look on his face and listen to his voice? An angel of God smites Agrippa, perhaps the same angel that for a different cause and with a different effect smote Peter; or it may have been he who hundreds of years previous smote the Assyrians. Ah! what means this pain? Pain so excruciating as to exact all his powers of body and mind. Fain would he conceal his condition from his worshippers, but concealment is impossible. He is constrained to leave the theatre and to retire to his chamber and his couch, and there writhe in agony till the disease terminates in death.

Tophâr, the Naamathite says: "The triumphing of the wicked is short." This is invariably true; for even if the whole life of the wicked should be a season of triumph—and sometimes "they are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men"—and life be prolonged to its remotest verge, yet, when compared with eternity, it would be but as a moment. But the season of triumph was emphatically short. In the midst of his days he was unexpectedly and suddenly arraigned before God his Judge, to receive according to his deeds, to reap the harvest of that which he had sown.

Agrippa II., the seventh and last male member of the Herodian family who is mentioned in the Scriptures, is referred to but once; that, however, is on an occasion of great interest, and one which gives us a pretty clear

insight into his character. Agrippa visited Festus shortly after the latter was appointed procurator of Judea, and during this visit Festus told Agrippa that he had in his custody a prisoner against whom the Jews were very clamorous. He had supposed, he would say, that the prisoner, a travel-worn old man, had been guilty of some flagrant crime, as the malice of his persecutors had remained unabated during the space of two years, but when the said prisoner was brought out for trial, though accused of sedition, the accusation was not confirmed by even the semblance of truth. All, indeed, that the accusers could prove, and that the accused did not wish to deny, was that he differed from them on some religious questions, and affirmed that one Jesus whom they had crucified as a malefactor, between two other malefactors, had risen from the dead and ascended to glory. Festus further told Agrippa that he, being conscious of his unfitness to judge in such matters, asked Paul, for such was the prisoner's name, if he would go to Jerusalem and there be judged, but the prisoner had objected to being sent thither, and had appealed unto Cæsar.

Agrippa would be deeply interested in the recital of Festus, and especially in hearing the affirmation of Paul relative to Jesus of Nazareth. He undoubtedly had heard of the infanticide of which his great-grandfather had been guilty with the expectation of destroying this personage in his infancy; he

must also have heard of the insults heaped on Jesus Christ by his great-uncle, Herod Antipas; and full well did he know that his father had killed one of this man's disciples and imprisoned another. Nor of Paul could Agrippa have been wholly ignorant. He could hardly fail to know that for several years he had been under the instruction of the far-famed Gamaliel, and that in early manhood he had not only been a strict observer of Jewish rites, and a zealous advocate of Jewish laws, but also a most uncompromising foe of the followers of Jesus, insomuch that the bitterest enemies of the new sect were even more surprised than delighted at his conduct; for although he was a man of cultured mind and refined feelings, he invaded the sanctity of the domestic circle, and brought not only fathers and husbands but wives and mothers to Jerusalem to be imprisoned or scourged, "being exceedingly mad against them." To Agrippa it must have seemed strange beyond measure that such a persecutor should join the persecuted, and maintain, in the face of the strongest opposition, that one who had been publicly executed some quarter of a century previously was still alive. From all that Agrippa had learned of Paul he naturally and rationally would come to the conclusion that if he was perfectly sane there must exist good reasons for his apparent absurdities. The curiosity of Agrippa was aroused, and he "said unto Festus I would also hear the man

myself." To this Festus courteously replied :  
"To-morrow thou shalt hear him."

On the next day Agrippa and Bernice and the chief men of the city being assembled in the place of hearing, "at Festus' command Paul was brought forth," and Festus, in a few clear, terse sentences, sets the case of the prisoner before them. A brief silence would ensue, and all eyes would be turned towards the diminutive, pale, blear-eyed, wrinkled, grey-haired old man who stood there a prisoner before them, and relative to whom the Jews had given the procurator much trouble. Agrippa broke the silence by telling the prisoner that he was permitted to speak for himself. The chains clanked as Paul rose, yet was there not something in his bearing which convinced all present that he was no ordinary man? Would not both king and procurator, despite their efforts to appear unmoved, quail before him? But if they were convinced of Paul's superiority as they merely looked upon him, how were these convictions heightened as he proceeded in an address of almost unrivalled eloquence! The address "may be compared to a great tide ever advancing irresistibly toward the distant shore, but broken and rippled over every wave of its broad surface, and liable at any moment to mighty refluxes as it foams and swells about opposing sandbank or rocky cape."\*

Of this address, so universally and so justly

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\* Farrar's Life of Paul, p. 67.

admired, I shall notice only such passages as aid in the understanding of the character of Agrippa. Though the euphemisms found in the writings of Paul indicate that he was no less the gentleman than the scholar and the Christian, yet such was his fidelity to truth that one cannot doubt but Agrippa really was what he is here represented as being. Agrippa then was "expert in all customs and questions which were among the Jews." It is difficult, if not impossible, to ascertain just what this implies, but surely one is safe in saying that it implies a thorough knowledge of the Mosaic ritual, and of the various questions which were debated between scrupulous Pharisee, the pleasure-loving Sadducee, and the austere Essene; and, consequently, Agrippa must have read and reflected much, and have been in the habit, when listening to a discourse, of garnering the thoughts presented. He who does this is intellectually above ordinary men.

The character of Agrippa is further seen by Paul's appeal to him when Festus accuses him of insanity: "The king knoweth of these things before whom I speak freely; for I am persuaded that none of these are hidden from him, for this thing was not done in a corner." Agrippa then not only read and reflected much, but was also carefully observant of passing events, and kept his mind open to conviction, even to unpalatable truth. Did not Agrippa possess a considerable amount of candor?

“King Agrippa,” said Paul, “believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest.” Knowledge is necessary to belief. We may hence infer that Agrippa was a diligent student not only of the Pentateuch, but also of the other parts of the Old Testament. He believed the Scriptures to be the Word of God, that “holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, and his misconceptions of the promised Messiah had arisen from his looking for a temporal not a spiritual king, and from reflecting on such prophecies as spoke of the glory and extent of the Messiah’s kingdom, to the exclusion of those that told of a period of humiliation and suffering, terminating in death. To us who read prophecy in the light of history it appears marvellously strange that one could read the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, for instance, and not understand that the Christ was to suffer and die. But it can excite no surprise that this unregenerated Edomite should expect a temporal king, when we remember that Christ’s own disciples, under his daily instructions, clung with the greatest tenacity to the same idea. What pathos in the words: “We trusted it had been he who should have redeemed Israel.”

Agrippa had, doubtless, followed Paul with the most intense interest as he told of the vehemence of his hatred against Christ, and against Christ’s followers, which had caused him to persecute them even unto strange

cities ; of the arrest on the way to Damascus, the light which eclipsed the noonday sun, the voice from heaven, the identification of Jesus with his persecuted followers, the commission received, his willingness to accept this commission, of the persecutions he had since endured, and of his determination still to proclaim to Jew and Gentile salvation through the sufferings and death of Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ of God. To Agrippa's logical mind it would be evident that if Paul's story was true—and his change of conduct could be accounted for on no other hypothesis—he who had been crucified as a malefactor between two thieves was indeed the long promised Messiah, through whom alone salvation was obtainable ; and that, hence, he ought to accept him as his Saviour, and acknowledge himself a disciple of that Saviour. These were his convictions, but then what would follow such an acknowledgment ? Would not all present, including Festus and Bernice, think him weak ? And would not his own subjects look upon him with suspicion if not with contempt ? Might it not cost him even his crown and dignity ? His convictions must be stifled at once. Having come to this conclusion Agrippa, with his lip curled with scorn, said to Paul : “ With but little persuasion thou wouldest fain make me a Christian ; ” and perchance added, “ but thou hast mistaken me ; I have too much manliness to be thus duped.” To Paul it would be evident that he

could no longer hope for the salvation of Agrippa, and it must have been with feelings of unutterable sadness he answered: "I would to God that, whether with little or with much, not thou only, but also all that hear me this day might become such as I am, except these bonds."

Agrippa may have talked of manliness in refusing to become a Christian, but did he not feel that he was actuated by the basest cowardice? Poor Agrippa! there is no prof that either by little or much he was ever persuaded to be a Christian, or was ever again as near the kingdom of God. He might have yielded to his convictions and openly confessed Christ, and the confession of his lips would have strengthened the belief of his heart. As the man with the withered hand received the necessary strength when he made the necessary effort, so if Agrippa had confessed his conviction of the truth of Christianity stronger convictions would have been experienced, and greater faith imparted. To a many, and only to as many, as receive Christ power is given to become the sons of God. Nothing can be more dangerous than trifling with convictions. The Spirit may be grieved. He may withdraw his influence, and then the soul is lost, eternally lost; for none can come to Christ unless drawn by the Father.

From Josephus we learn that when the troubles commenced which ended in the destruction of Jerusalem Agrippa used his best

endeavors to procure peace and order; but finding his efforts vain he joined his troops with the Romans, and aided in the destruction of that once highly favored but then devoted city. He afterwards went to Rome where he died at an advanced age. He seems to have been freer from vice than any other member of the family to which he belonged.

Four women connected with the Herodian family are mentioned in the New Testament—Herodias, Salome, Drusilla, and Bernice. About all that is there said of the first mentioned woman has already been told in the history of the Herods. Her virtues were few, her vices many. Salome has been referred to in connection with circumstances which do not raise her in our esteem. But both her dancing in the presence of Herod and his guests, and her asking for the head of John the Baptist were virtually the acts of her mother, who seems to have been one of the very few women whose iron will subjects other wills to their own. Salome was twice married, first to her paternal uncle, Philip the tetrarch of Trachonitis, and secondly, to Aristoboleis, the king of Chalcis. "Drusilla was daughter of Herod Agrippa I., and Cypros, and sister of Herod Agrippa II. She was at first betrothed to Antiochus Epiphanes prince of Camuragene, but he refusing to become a Jew, she was married to Azizus, king of Emera, who complied with that condition. Soon after Felix, procurator of Judea brought about her

seduction by means of the Cyprian sorcerer, Simon, and took her as his wife. We find her in company with Felix at Caesarea, and the narrative implies that she was present at the apostles preaching. Felix had by Drusilla a son named Agrippa, who, with his mother, perished in the eruption of Vesuvius under Titus.\* Drusilla is said to have been remarkable for her beauty which may have been the cause of her fall. One would like to know how she was affected as Paul "reasoned of righteousness, temperance and judgment to come." Did she, like Felix, *tremble*? May she not have been present at the many interviews Felix had with Paul? her object, let us hope, being not to obtain money but to learn of Christ.

Bernice was less beautiful, less amiable and more wicked than her sister Drusilla, she is mentioned in the Bible but once. On that occasion she is in company with her brother, Agrippa, with whom she lived under circumstances of great suspicion. One may well say of her as has been said of Herodias, "She took upon her to confound the laws of her country." She with Agrippa listened to Paul's relation of his experience, but as a course of sin has a deadening influence it may have been heard with perfect indifference.

"Immediately before the siege of Jerusalem by Titus, in consequence of the influence of John of Gischala, twenty thousand Idumaeans

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\* Smith's Dictionary of the Bible, Vol. I., page 626.

were admitted into the holy city which they filled with robbery and bloodshed. From this time the Edomites as a separate people, disappear from the page of history though the name Idumea still continued to be applied to the country, south of Palestine as late as the time of Jerome."

"The character of the Edomites was drawn by Isaac in his prophetic blessing to Esau—'By the sword thou shalt live.' War and rapine were the only professions of the Edomites. By the sword they got Mount Seir, by the sword they exterminated the Morites, by the sword they long battled with their brethren of Israel and finally broke off their yoke, by the sword they won Southern Palestine, and by the sword they performed the last act in their long historic drama, massacred the guards in the temple and pillaged the city of Jerusalem."\*

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## CHAPTER XV.

### CONCLUSION.

**T**HE Scriptures plainly teach that the great Supreme is a God of justice as well as a God of mercy. The destruction of the ante-deluvians, of the cities of the plain, and the story of the Amalekites may be ad-

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\* Smith's Bible Dictionary, Vol. I., page 664.

duced as instances in proof of this assertion. But in the history of no people is God's displeasure against sin, and his inflexible justice more legibly written than in that of the Edomites. There, as in letters of fire we read, "It is an evil thing and bitter to sin against God."

Esau cannot have failed to have had religious training. He was born of pious parents, with whom he lived between eighty and ninety years, and for fifteen years—the most impressible years of his life—he had the counsel, the instruction, and the example of one of the most remarkable of saints, his grandfather, Abraham. Hence, we may conclude that Esau, when he went to Mount Seir, possessed very considerable knowledge of the true God, and this knowledge ought to have been preserved in his household. If "the invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they, —those who have no light but that of nature —are without excuse," what shall be said of the guilt of those who, in addition to the light of nature, have much of God's revealed will, and yet leave his worship for the worship of idols? God justly gives those over to a reprobate mind who do not like to retain Him in their knowledge. God delights in mercy. He multiplies pardons and judgment is His strange work; yet, "He cannot be an en-

swathing kiss without being a consuming fire."\* One trembles as he reads the terrible words: "The Lord hath sworn that the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation;" or these still more terrible, found almost at the close of the Old Testament canon: "Whereas I have said, 'I will impoverish, but we will return and build the desolate places;' thus saith the Lord of hosts, 'They shall build, but I will throw down, and they shall call them the border of wickedness, and the people against whom the Lord hath indignation for ever.' These people had their time of grace, and their time of grace passed away for ever. With individuals as with nations the day of grace may pass away. One may be unjust so long that he necessarily will be unjust for ever. There is in the nature of things a tendency to permanence of character. One may so long be accustomed to do evil, that it is just as possible for the Ethiopian to change his skin or the leopard his spots as for him to do good. How solemn and awful are the words: "Because I have called and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded; but ye have set at naught all my counsels, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh, when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind, when distress and anguish cometh upon you;

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\* Cook.

then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me; for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord, they would none of my counsel, they despised all my reproof, therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices."

But it is probable that the greater number of those who are lost are not those who sin away the day of grace while here, nor those who are guilty of enormous sins, but those who simply "neglect the great salvation." The way to eternal life is still narrow and the gate strait, and they who would enter therein must make a strenuous effort to do so, while it is easy to float with the multitude down the broad way. "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." But "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, **THOU SHALT BE SAVED.**"

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