

Uncle Daniel's

BIBLE CLASS BOOK

FOR SCHOOLS, PUPIL TEACHERS, AND FAMILIES;

WITH

EXPLANATORY NOTES ON PLACES, CUSTOMS, ARTS, ANTIQUITIES,

AND NATURAL HISTORY;

AND

POEMS ON THE SUBJECTS OF THE LESSONS.

BY
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THE

BIBLE CLASS BOOK.

PERIOD I.

FROM THE CREATION TO THE DELUGE.

B.C. 4004—B.C. 2348. 1656 years.

1. THE CREATION AND THE FALL OF MAN.

Genesis i.-iii.

**** *The words, phrases, &c. of which explanations are given, are preceded by a full-point (·) ; the names of places noticed are in italics.*

In the ·beginning God ·created the ·heaven and the ·earth. And the earth was ·without form, and void ; and ·darkness was upon the ·face of the deep. On the first day God created ·light. On the second day God made the ·firmament. On the third day God ·divided the waters from the land, and created ·plants. On the fourth day God made the sun, moon, and stars. On the fifth day God created the ·fishes and the birds. On the sixth day God created the ·cattle, the beasts, and ·creeping things ; and last of all he ·made man, ·in his own image. God having created all things in six days, pronounced them to be ·very good. He ·rested on the seventh day, and ·blessed it.

And the Lord God planted a garden ·eastward in *Eden ;* and out of the ground he made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food ; the ·tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the ·tree of knowledge of good and evil. And the Lord God put ·Adam, the man whom he had formed, into the garden of Eden, to ·dress it and to keep it. And the Lord God brought unto Adam every beast of the field and every fowl of the air, to see what he would call them ; and whatsoever he called every living creature that was the ·name thereof.

And God said " It is not good that the man should be alone, I will make him a ·help meet for him ;" so he formed a woman and brought her unto the man. And Adam called his wife's name ·Eve, because she was to be the mother of all living.

God permitted Adam and Eve to eat of all the fruits that grew in Eden except one; that one was the tree of knowledge. The serpent deceived Eve, and tempted her to sin. She ate of the fruit which God had forbidden and gave also to her husband; thus they both disobeyed God. God cursed the serpent, and promised a Saviour to redeem man from his power. He said to the woman that her sorrow should be increased with the increase of children; and to the man he said, "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken; for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

When God had thus sentenced Adam and Eve to suffering and to death, he expelled them from the garden of Eden.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

beginning—the commencement.

created—caused to exist.

heaven—the expanse which surrounds the earth, including the celestial bodies—planets, stars, and comets.

earth—the planet on which we live, with its various productions.

without form and void—not in its present shape, nor occupied by the numerous beings and productions which exist upon it.

darkness—absence of light.

face of the deep—surface of the waters which covered the whole earth.

light—the medium of vision.

firmament—the atmosphere, or aerial medium surrounding the earth, and in which it revolves; by its means light and sound are transmitted, and animals exist.

divided, &c.—gathered the waters into channels, or hollow places, thus causing the dry land to appear.

plants—everything included in the vegetable kingdom, viz.: grass, herbs, and trees; there are more than 80,000 species of plants.

fishes and birds—the animals of the waters and the firmament.

cattle and beasts—domestic and wild animals.

creeping things—this term is supposed to apply to such animals as the lizard, snake, &c. as well as creeping insects.

made man—formed man in his bodily parts and gave him a living soul.

in his own image—having dominion; Ps. viii. 6; true knowledge, Col. iii. 10; holiness, Eccles. vii. 29; Ephes iv. 24.

very good—admirably adapted for the purposes intended.

rested—ceased from further acts of creative power.

blessed—added happiness to a holy observance of it.

eastward—toward the sun-rising.

tree of life—the means of renewed and prolonged existence to man.

tree of knowledge—the test by which it should be known whether man would remain *good*, or prefer becoming *evil*.

Adam—'the ground,' or 'earth;' the human body is composed of earthy elements. Paul says, the first Adam is of the earth, 'earthy;' Cor. xv. 47.

dress and keep—to keep the trees and the plants in order, and to preserve the various species, not only by observing their various habits, but by pruning, grafting, planting, &c.

name—many of the Hebrew names of animals express some peculiarity or quality of size, form, disposition, &c.

help meet—a being endowed with a rational soul, and having feelings similar to his own.

Eve—'life;' the companion and 'help-meet' of Adam, and the mother of the whole human family. Neither Adam nor Eve had to pass through the years of infancy and childhood.

serpent—the devil. Rev. xii. 9; xx. 2.

deceived—caused to err, by making her believe a lie.

tempted—offered inducements; spoke of the advantages of disobedience.

cursed—given over to punishment and misery.

redeem—to restore by paying the price.

in sorrow—with feelings of anxiety, care, and trouble, yet not without hope

sentenced—pronounced the punishment for disobedience.

expelled—drove out.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

EDEN is supposed to have been situated near the head of the Persian Gulf, where the rivers Euphrates and Tigris empty their waters; but several other situations have been assigned to the garden of Eden. The name, Eden, means pleasure or delight, thus indicating the great beauty and richness of Adam's first inheritance; hence it was not uncommon for pleasant localities to be called Eden.

GOD'S EXISTENCE SHOWN IN THE UNIVERSE.

"GOD CREATED THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH."

Who gave the sun his noonday light?
Who taught the moon to shine by night?
Whose hands the sheet of heaven unrolled,
All set with stars like drops of gold?

Who gave the winds their course to know?
The ocean-tides to ebb and flow?
And day and night preserve their bounds?
And changing seasons know their rounds?

Could man conceive the vast design?
Could he the grand machine combine?
Stretch his weak hands from pole to pole,
And bid them on their centre roll?

'Twas God who gave creation birth,
God formed this wondrous globe of earth,
And breathe'd throughout the mighty whole,
The likeness of a living soul.

Bow then to God, O all that live!
To God eternal praises give;
Who fashioned by his mighty hand
Sun, moon, and stars, and sea, and land.

ROSCOE.

2. CAIN, ABEL, AND SETH.

Genesis iv.-v. 5.

·Cain was the eldest son of Adam and Eve. His brother ·Abel was their second son. Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a ·tiller of the ground. They both brought ·offerings to God. Cain's offering was of the ·fruits of the earth. Abel's offering was of the ·firstlings of his flock. God ·accepted Abel and his offering, but unto Cain and his offering he had ·not respect. Cain became very angry, and his ·countenance fell. The Lord reproved Cain, and said "Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? ·If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?"

And Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him. The Lord then said unto Cain, "What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground, and now art thou ·cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand; when thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a ·fugitive, and a ·vagabond shalt thou be in the earth." Cain feared that some one would slay him, but the Lord said unto him, "Whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold." And Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and dwelt in the land of *Nod*, on the east of Eden. Here he built a city, and had many ·descendants. One of his descendants, named Jabal, ·invented ·tents; another, Jubal, invented ·musical instruments; another, Tubal, was an ·artificer in brass and iron.

God gave Adam and Eve a son who was called ·Seth. He was a good man. His descendants were called the children of God. The descendants of Cain were called the children of men. Adam was one-hundred-and-thirty years old at the birth of Seth. Adam and Eve had many other sons and daughters. Mankind increased very fast because they lived so long. Adam lived nine-hundred-and-thirty years.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

Cain—'possession;' implying a high sense of value; Eve imagined this child was the promised deliverer, hence she exclaimed on first seeing him 'I have gotten a man from Jehovah.'

Abel—'vanity;' this name plainly shows that our first parents had their hopes centred in Cain, in contrast with whom they esteemed this child as 'vanity.'

tiller—a husbandman, a cultivator of the ground.

offerings—things dedicated to God, as expressive of the gratitude and dependance of the offerer.

fruits—produce of the soil.

firstlings—the first born.

accepted—showed favour towards by a visible sign.

not respect—not regard; took no favourable notice of it.

countenance fell—looked sullen and revengeful.

If thou doest well—Isa. i. 16,17; Ezek. xxxiii. 11-19; Rom. ii. 6,7.

cursed from, &c.—not a spot on the surface of the world would yield him comfort; unhappiness and discontent would be his portion.

fugitive—banished from the presence of his parents and kindred.

vagabond—conscious guilt would render him unsettled in his habits even though distant from his father's home, the scene of his awful crime.

descendants—offspring, children, grandchildren, &c.

invented—found out; contrived a new thing.

tents—these were the constant dwellings of men in early times; the coverings of the tents were generally of coarse hair-cloth. Lessons 7,20,116.

musical instruments—many are mentioned in the Bible which will be described under their respective names.

artificer—a clever workman in arts executed by the hand; a worker in metals.

Seth—'a substitute;' because given instead of Abel; the invention of letters is ascribed to him.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

NOD—'land of wandering;' was a country east of Eden. It was so named because Cain the "fugitive" dwelt there, when he fled from the presence of his bereaved and sorrowing parents, after he had murdered his brother.

THE CURSE OF CAIN.

"WHERE IS ABEL THY BROTHER?"

O the wrath of the Lord is a terrible thing!
Like the tempest that withers the blossoms of spring,
Like the thunder that bursts on the summer's domain,
It fell on the head of the homicide Cain.

And lo! like a deer in the fright of the chase,
With a fire in his heart, and a brand on his face,
He speeds him afar to the desert of Nod—
A vagabond smote by the vengeance of God.

All nature to him has been blasted and bann'd,
And the blood of a brother yet reeks on his hand;
And no vintage has grown, and no fountain has sprung,
For cheering his heart, or for cooling his tongue.

The groans of a father his slumbers shall start,
And the tears of a mother shall pierce to his heart,
And the kiss of his children shall scorch him like flame,
When he thinks of the curse that hangs over his name.

And the wife of his bosom—the faithful and fair—
Can mix no sweet drop in his cup of despair;
For her tender caress and her innocent breath,
But stir in his soul the hot embers of wrath.

And his offering may blaze—unregarded by Heaven;
And his spirit may pray—yet remain unforgiven,
And his grave may be close'd—but no rest to him bring:
O the wrath of the Lord is a terrible thing!

W. KNOX.

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3. ENOCH. METHUSELAH. NOAH. THE DELUGE.

Genesis v. 6-vii.

·Enoch was a descendant of Seth. God ·took him to heaven when he was three-hundred-and-sixty-five years old, because he ·walked with God. Seth died some years after, being nine-hundred-and-twelve years old. Enoch had a son named ·Methuselah. He was the oldest man that we read of. He lived nine-hundred-and-sixty-nine years. Methuselah had a son named ·Lamech. Lamech was the father of ·Noah. When Noah was born Lamech said he should comfort them. Noah became the father of three sons, ·Shem, ·Ham, and ·Japheth.

The ·wickedness of men ·increased on the earth. God said he would destroy mankind by a ·Flood, but he would save Noah and his family. God commanded Noah to make an ·ark of wood. He said "Behold I do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die. But with thee will I ·establish my ·covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee. And of every living thing of all flesh, two of every sort shalt thou bring into the ark, to keep

them alive with thee; they shall be male and female. Of fowls after their kind, of every creeping thing of the earth after his kind, two of every sort shall come unto thee, to keep them alive. And take unto thee of all food that is eaten, and thou shalt gather it to thee; and it shall be for food for thee, and for them."

Noah obeyed God by building the ark; while it was being built he warned mankind of the approaching flood. He then went into the ark, as God had commanded him; the rain began to fall, and the fountains of the great deep were also broken up. The waters increased on the earth forty days and forty nights. The waters rose above the highest mountains. All flesh died, except Noah, his family, and the living things that were with them in the ark. The waters prevailed on the earth one-hundred-and-fifty days.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

Enoch—'dedicated;' this highly favoured saint foretold the judgment of God upon the wicked. Jude 14,15. This prophecy had, no doubt, a primary reference to the flood which God brought in upon the ungodly.

took him—removed him from this world without dying. St. Paul says "God translated him that he should not see death."

walked, &c.—his feelings, thoughts, and conduct were in agreement with the known character of God.

Methuselah—'blessed be God.'

Lamech—'sending;' he died about five years before the flood.

Noah—'rest,' or 'comfort;' his father probably had a prophetic intimation that this son should be the peculiar object of the divine favour and the medium of blessing to the world; hence, concluding that he was the promised Saviour, he called him Noah.

Shem—'name,' 'renown;' his five sons peopled the most delightful districts of the East. From him descended the Messiah, who is called 'the plant of renown,' whose fame shall extend all over the earth. Ezekiel xxxiv. 29.

Ham—'hot;' referring, no doubt, to the regions his descendants would inhabit.

Japheth—'extension;' fulfilled in his numerous and wide-spread posterity.

wickedness—daring sin; opposition to God's will, and denial of his power.

increased—became daily less tolerable.

flood—the waters were to cover the earth as they did at first. Less. 1.

ark—a vessel to float on the waters.

establish—make sure; confirm.

covenant—the divine promise. Less. 4.

warned—told them of their danger.

fountains—sources of rivers and springs. Job xxviii. 10,11, and Ezek. xxvi. 19.

all flesh died—because the human family had become morally corrupt.

WALKING WITH GOD.

"ENOCH WALKED WITH GOD."

To "walk with God"—this Enoch did,
And thus God's children do;
They "walk by faith, and not by sight,"
With Jesus full in view.

To "walk with God"—as two dear friends,
Conversing every day;
Such company will make amends
For troubles by the way.

To "walk with God"—that child who would,
Must with his God agree;
Sin he abhors—and loves what's good—
And heaven he longs to see.

To "walk with God"—Ah! this is bliss!
Our heaven begun below;
And in a world of snares like this,
It saves from many a foe.

To "walk with God" is my desire,
Whatever others do;
And lest I weary grow, and tire,
I'll lean upon him too.

Yes, gracious God! I'll lean on thee—
Thy promises, thy word,
My strength and my support shall be,
Along this painful road.

And, when my journey here is done,
O let me come to thee;
And sit with Jesus on his throne,
Thy glorious face to see.

COWPER.

PERIOD II.

FROM THE DELUGE TO THE DEATH OF JOSEPH.

B.C. 2347—B.C. 1635. 712 years.

4. HISTORY OF NOAH AFTER THE FLOOD.

Genesis viii. ix.

God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that was with him in the ark; and God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters assuaged. The fountains also of the deep and the windows of heaven were stopped, and the rain from heaven was restrained. And the waters returned from off the earth continually, and after the end of one-hundred-and-fifty days the waters were abated; and the ark rested on the mountains of *Ararat*. Noah sent forth a raven and a dove; the raven did not return, but the dove returned. Seven days after, Noah sent forth the dove again and she returned with an olive leaf in her mouth. Noah sent forth the dove again seven days after, and it returned no more. God commanded Noah to leave the ark. Noah did so, and offered a sacrifice to God which he graciously accepted. God then promised that seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, should never cease. God promised never more to destroy the earth by a flood, and as a token of his promise he set his bow in the cloud. He said, "And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth that the bow shall be seen in the cloud; and I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh."

After the flood, Noah planted a vineyard. He made wine of the grapes, of which he drank and was drunken. His son Ham mocked him. When Noah rose from his wine, he foretold that the descendants of Ham should be servants to the descendants of Shem and Japheth, whom he blessed because

they were dutiful. One of Shem's descendants was Heber, from whom the Hebrews were probably named. Shem is called the father of all the children of Heber; so that it would appear the Hebrews descended through Shem, the son of Noah.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

remembered—had a gracious regard towards them

assuaged—decreased; became less and less.

windows—'flood-gates;' the clouds which retain the rain. Mal. iii. 10.

restrained—kept back. Gen. i. 7.

returned—gradually sank into their natural beds or channels.

abated—became less and less.

raven—a bird that would be lured to feed on dead bodies if any were visible.

dove—a bird strong in flight, that feeds on the earth, and that loves its home.

olive—a beautiful and valuable evergreen; it is abundant in the East.

sacrifice—an offering, or a thing devoted to God. Sacrifices were generally consumed by fire.

promised—Lesson 3, 'covenant.'

seed-time—from the beginning of October to the beginning of December.

harvest—from the beginning of April to the beginning of June.

cold—from the beginning of February to the beginning of April.

heat—from the beginning of August to the beginning of October.

summer—from the beginning of June to the beginning of August.

winter—from the beginning of December to the beginning of February. In Palestine and the neighbouring countries the Arabs still reckon the six divisions of the year here spoken of.

token—a sign or mark of remembrance.

bow—rainbow; thus constituting that which is the invariable result of the sun shining through the rain as a sign of the unchangeableness of God's promise.

vineyard—a plantation of vines.

mocked—jeered; laughed contemptuously. Lesson 9, 'offence.'

servants—slaves; Africa, whence the negro slaves are procured, is peopled by Ham's descendants.

Heber or *Eber*—'from the other side'; referring to the emigration of his far-famed descendant, Abraham, from Mesopotamia to Canaan.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

ARARAT—'cursed;' a mountainous district lying near the centre of the kingdom of Armenia; in the north-east portion of the mountain range there are two peaks, the highest of which is said to be 17,000 feet above the level of the sea. It was probably on one of the lower slopes of this mountain that Noah, his family, and the living creatures which had been preserved during the deluge disembarked from the ark.

THE BOW IN THE CLOUD.

"AND THE DOVE CAME IN..AND LO IN HER MOUTH WAS AN OLIVE LEAF."

Sweet Dove! the softest, steadiest plume
In all the sunbright sky,
Brightening in ever-changeful bloom
As breezes change on high;—

Sweet Leaf! the pledge of peace and mirth,
"Long sought, and lately won,"
Bless'd increase of reviving Earth,
When first it felt the Sun;—

Sweet Rainbow! pride of summer days,
High set at Heaven's command,
Though into drear and dusky haze
Thou melt on either hand;—

Dear tokens of a pardoning God,
We hail ye, one and all,
As when our fathers walk'd abroad,
Freed from their twelvemonths' thrall,

God, by His bow, vouchsafes to write
This truth in Heaven above;
As every lovely hue is Light,
So every grace is Love.

KEBLE.

5. THE BUILDING OF BABEL. THE PEOPLING OF THE EARTH.

Genesis xi. 1-9, x. & xi. 10-23.

About one-hundred-and-thirteen years after the flood, many people having journeyed from the East, settled in the plain of *Shinar*. And they said one to another, "Let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth."

They all spoke one language; but God said he would there confound their language, that they might not understand one another's speech. It was because God wished them to be settled in various parts of the world, that he made them to speak different languages. So they left off to build the city and the tower, and separated from each other. Therefore the name of the place is called *Babel* because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth; and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth. Thus were they punished.

The descendants of Shem dwelt in Armenia and the East. The descendants of Ham peopled *Canaan, Arabia, Egypt,* and *Africa.* The descendants of Japheth inhabited western *Asia* and *Europe.* Nimrod, a descendant of Ham, built several cities in Babylonia. He was the first king. Asshur was a descendant of Shem; he built *Nineveh,* and other cities. A son of Ham, named Canaan, had eleven sons; they lived in different parts of the land of Canaan, and their descendants were called Canaanites; the eldest, Sidon, was the father of the Sidonians; the other sons of Canaan were the fathers of the Hittites, Jebusites, Amorites, Girgasites, Hivites, Arkites, Sinites, Aradites, Zemarites, and Hamathites.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

settled—had fixed their residence.

plain—an open level tract of country.

name—make ourselves, 'renowned' by the confederacy we have formed, and the work we have undertaken.

one language—the original language which God gave to Adam.

confound—confuse, so as to break up all possibility of working in harmony.

in various parts—that God's design in creating man—to replenish or fill the earth—might be carried out.

separated—parted from each other; spread abroad.

Nimrod—'rebel;' the first who assumed dominion over his fellow-men.

Asshur—from whom the country called Assyria received its name.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

THE EAST—the portions of the world thus spoken of in the scriptures are generally those which lie east of Judea, particularly Mesopotamia, Armenia, and Persia.

SHINAR—an extensive & very fertile plain, and the proper name of Babylonia; it comprehended much of the countries between the rivers Euphrates and Tigris.

BABEL—'confusion;' the seat of the great confederacy of man to thwart the design of God.

CANAAN—the country inhabited by the descendants of Canaan, a son of Ham. It was a land of great fertility, flowing with milk and honey. God promised Abraham that his posterity should possess this land. Less. 6.

ARABIA—a large country south and east of Canaan and to the east of Egypt.

EGYPT—an ancient and a celebrated country and kingdom of Africa.

AFRICA—one of the five great divisions of the earth; known in Scripture as the land of Ham.

ASIA—the largest of the five divisions of the earth; the principal countries mentioned in the Old Testament, except Egypt, were in Asia.

EUROPE—the smallest of the five divisions of the earth; its inhabitants are intelligent and enterprising.

NINEVEH—the metropolis of Assyria, it was founded by Asshur, and situated on the river Tigris; its remains have been recently discovered, and some of its sculptures brought into England.

THE VAIN EFFORTS OF MAN.

"LET US MAKE US A NAME."

"Deep be the building laid,
The tower shall reach to heaven;"
The boasting word was said,
The proud command was given,
And well the work was plann'd,
Firm was the base and wide,
And who shall stay the hand,
And stop the builder's pride?

The Lord the work surveyed,
He saw the tower arise,
Whose top they proudly said
Should reach unto the skies.
Wise men the work had plann'd,
Strong men the building raise;
Why do the workmen stand,
And all confounded gaze?

With labour vast they toiled,
Their labour proves in vain;
By change of speech they 're foiled
In their work on Shinar's plain.
And children! have you power
To strive against the Lord,
Who the men of Babel's tower
Confounded by his word.

M. A. STODART.

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6. FAMILY OF TERAH. THE CALL OF ABRAM.

Genesis ix. 28,29; xi. 23-xii. 9.

Terah, a descendant of Shem, had three sons, named Abram, Nahor, and Haran. Haran was the father of Lot. Terah lived at *Ur* in *Chaldea*. Noah was alive when Terah lived in Chaldea. Noah lived to be nine-hundred-and-fifty years old. He probably lived in Armenia after the flood, and died there. Soon after the death of Noah, Abram was born. Haran, the eldest son of Terah, died before his father in the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chaldees, leaving one son named Lot,

and two daughters named Milcah and Sarai. The two remaining sons of Terah married the daughters of Haran; Milcah became the wife of Nahor; and Sarai was married to Abram.

God called Abram to leave Chaldea, and he, together with the whole house of Terah, came to *Haran*, at which place they remained some years. Terah died at Haran. Abram was then seventy-five years of age; the divine command was renewed. God said to him, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land which I will shew thee; and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing; and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee; and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

Abram separated himself from the household of Nahor, and obeyed the call of God, for he came into Canaan with Sarai, his wife, and Lot, his brother's son. And when they came to the plain of *Moreh*, the Lord appeared unto Abram, and said, "Unto thy seed will I give this land." Here Abram builded an altar unto the Lord, and he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of *Bethel*, and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west, and *Hai* on the east, and there he builded an altar unto the Lord, and called upon the name of the Lord.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

Abram—'high father;' a prophetic intimation of his future greatness.

nativity—birth-place; one's country.

Sarai—'my princess;' she was the grand-daughter of Terah, and the niece of Abram.

kindred—relations by blood of every degree—fathers, brothers, cousins, &c.

father's house—the residence of his ancestors.

a land—God had not yet named it to him, that his faith might be exercised.

a great nation—to be the parents of a numerous progeny, which should constitute in after years a great nation, was an object of ambition among the ancients.

bless thee—give happiness to him personally, and in his family.

name great—cause him to be universally known and respected.

shalt be, &c.—good men are the means of blessing to others.

in thee—Abram and his descendants were the preservers of the divine truth during successive ages, till Christ came who brought salvation unto all men.

this land—Abram's faith being proved, God now names his inheritance.

altar—a low building of stone or other materials on which sacrifices were placed.

name of the Lord—the known character of God; proofs had been given of his terrible power, his goodness, and his faithfulness; as well as of his forbearance towards sinners notwithstanding his hatred of sin.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

UZ—'fire' or 'light;' probably a sacred city, specially devoted to the worship of the celestial bodies.

CHALDEA—or BABYLONIA; the original name of this region was Shinar. Chaldea is often used for Babylonia, and the Chaldeans and Babylonians are mentioned as the same people.

HARAN—this name was given to the city by Haran, the father of Lot; it was situated in the north-western part of Mesopotamia. Terah died there after a residence of about sixty years.

MOREH—this place was in the vale of Shechem; near it grew a remarkable oak-tree. Gen. xxxv. 3; and Josh. xxiv. 26.

BETHEL—'house of God;' at this time the place was called Luz, but Moses calls it Bethel by anticipation. It was first called Bethel by Jacob after his dream of angels ascending and descending.

HAI or AI—a city about nine miles distant from the place where Jericho afterwards stood. Lesson 31.

WALKING BY FAITH.

"FAITH IS..THE EVIDENCE OF THINGS NOT SEEN."

'Tis by the faith of joys to come
We walk through deserts dark as night;
Till we arrive at heaven our home,
Faith is our guide, and faith our light.

The want of sight she well supplies,
She makes the pearly gates appear;
Far into distant worlds she flies,
And brings eternal glories near.

Cheerful we tread the desert through,
While faith inspires a heavenly ray,
Though lions roar, and tempests blow,
And rocks and dangers fill the way.

So Abram by divine command
Left his own house to walk with God;
His faith beheld the promise'd land,
And fire'd his zeal along the road.

WATTS.

7. HISTORY OF ABRAM & LOT. ISHMAEL BORN.

Genesis xxii. 9-xvi.

Abram went into Egypt, because there was a ·famine in Canaan. He told Sarai his wife to say to the king of Egypt, that she was his sister. The king took Sarai to his house, but God sent ·plagues upon ·Pharaoh, who soon after sent Sarai and Abram away.

Abram was very rich in cattle, and silver, and gold. Lot had also many flocks, and herds, and tents. They journeyed together to Bethel. Their ·herdsmen quarrelled because there was not food enough for all their cattle. Abram wished that there should be no strife between them. He told Lot to choose a part of the land for himself, and he chose the *Plain* of *Jordan*, near Sodom, because it was well watered. Abram dwelt in Canaan. The men of Sodom were very wicked. God renewed his promises to Abram, who removed to the plain of *Mamre*.

Four kings made war against the cities of the plain of Sodom. They conquered the kings of the plain, and they took Lot prisoner. Abram armed his servants, and pursued the four kings. He defeated them, and brought back Lot and all his goods. ·Melchizedek, ·king of *Salem*, and ·priest of the most High God, met Abram and blessed him. God afterwards renewed his promises to Abram, and said his seed should be as numerous as the stars of heaven. Abram then had a ·vision, and God made known to him the future ·bondage of his descendants in Egypt.

·Hagar was Sarai's ·handmaid whom she gave to Abram. Hagar ·despised her mistress, and fled from her. The angel of the Lord found Hagar in the wilderness. He told her to return, and ·submit to her mistress. He said she should have a son, and call his name ·Ishmael. He said Ishmael should be a ·wild man ; that his hand should be against every man, and every man's hand against him. Hagar called the name of the Lord that spake unto her "Thou God seest me." The well was called *Beer-la-hai-roi*. Soon after this Ishmael was born ; at which time Abram was eighty-six years old.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

famine—scarcity of food, probably from long continued drought.

plagues—'strokes;' inflictions of Divine vengeance on account of sins.

Pharaoh—'the sun;' a name assumed by several of the ancient kings of Egypt.

herdsmen—care-takers of cattle; the patriarchs who followed the pastoral life had large possessions of flocks and herds. At this early period, the land was not enclosed for culture. In summer the shepherds moved northward for the protection which the hill-country afforded from the heat, and in the winter they removed to the plains of the south.

Melchizedek—'king of righteousness;' it is not known whether he had a predecessor or successor in his kingly and priestly office. He was probably one of the chief princes of the Canaanites.

king—the chief magistrate or highest authority in a country.

priest—one appointed to offer sacrifices for others.

vision—a supernatural appearance of future events, usually shown in dreams at night, or in a trance.

bondage—servitude by compulsion, not by mutual agreement; slavery.

Hagar—an Egyptian slave, a descendant of Ham. Les. 4, 'servants.'

handmaid—a female servant who waits at hand.

despised—scorned; behaved contemptuously or disrespectfully.

submit—to yield meekly and obediently, not answering again.

Ishmael—'God shall hear;' because God heard Hagar's sighs of grief when in the wilderness.

wild—of a roving disposition; not subject to the restraints of a settled community; living by plunder; at continual war, but never in subjection. Such are the descendants of Ishmael, the Arabs, at the present day.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

PLAIN, &c.—the southern part of the valley of the river Jordan; this region was very fertile, part of it was called the plain of Siddim, where stood Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboim, and Zoar.

JORDAN—'fast-flowing;' so called from the rapidity and the strength of its current. Notwithstanding the turbid state of the river, yet when its water is drawn off and allowed to stand, it speedily becomes clear and agreeable, and retains its purity for a long time.

MAMRE—a plain near Hebron; it is supposed that the name Mamre was derived from one of the three chieftains who accompanied Abram in the pursuit of Chedorlaomer.

SALEM—'peace;' the city of which Melchizedek was king; it is supposed to have been the first name for Jerusalem.

BEER-LA-HAI-ROI—'the well of Him that seeth me;' it is in the wilderness of Shur, on the south of Canaan.

THE ALL-SEEING GOD.

"THOU GOD SEEST ME."

Lord thou hast search'd and seen me through,
Thine eye commands with piercing view,
My rising and my resting hours,
My heart and all its inward powers.

My thoughts, before they are my own,
Are to my God distinctly known;
He knows the words I mean to speak,
Ere from my opening lips they break.

Within thy circling power I stand;
On every side I find thy hand:
Awake, asleep, at home, abroad,
I am surrounded still with God.

Amazing knowledge, vast and great!
What large extent; what lofty height!
My soul, with all the powers I boast,
Is in the boundless prospect lost.

O may these thoughts possess my breast,
Where'er I rove, where'er I rest!
Nor let my weaker passions dare
Consent to sin, for God is there.

WATTS.

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8. THE DESTRUCTION OF SODOM.

Genesis xvii.-xix. 29.

When Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to him, and said unto him, "I am the ·Almighty God; ·walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my ·covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly." God then said to Abram, "And thou shalt be a father of many nations; neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be ·Abraham, for a father of many nations have I made thee." God also changed the name of Sarai to ·Sarah; and said she should be a mother of nations. Sarah was then nearly ninety years old. God said the name of Abraham's son should be ·Isaac.

Three ·angels visited Abraham, and were entertained by him. The promise of a son was repeated, and the coming destruction of the cities and people of Sodom was made known to him. God said their sins were very ·grievous. Abraham ·interceded for Sodom, saying, "Wilt thou also destroy the ·righteous with the wicked?" The Lord answered that he would not destroy the city if there were ten righteous men in it.

Two angels went to Lot, and he entertained them in his house. The men of Sodom wanted to do wickedly. The

angels struck the men of Sodom with blindness. They hastened Lot and his family from the city, the Lord being merciful to him. God permitted Lot to take refuge with his daughters in *Zoar*. God then rained upon *Sodom* and *Gomorrah* brimstone and fire from heaven. He overthrew the cities of the Plain of Jordan, and all the inhabitants. Lot's wife disobeyed the divine command, not to look back as they fled from the city; she looked behind her, and became a pillar of salt. Abraham arose early the next morning and looked toward Sodom; he saw that the smoke of the country went up like the smoke of a furnace.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

Almighty God—the True God, the only Lord who has all power in heaven, and in earth; the worshippers of idols supposed their deities to possess attributes limited to their rank and duties. The true object of worship is, however, ALMIGHTY.

walk before—obey me confidently and cheerfully, as one who walks in the full light of day. The term implies unceasing obedience.

covenant—the solemn promise or engagement of Jehovah to bestow peculiar blessings on Abram and his posterity; which promise enjoined upon them the duty of unswerving obedience to his will. When parties who were equal made covenants either was at perfect liberty to accept or not accept the proposal of the other; but when God covenants with any of his creatures he only proposes and man accepts.

Abraham—'father of many nations;' not only was he the father of the Israelites, but the Ishmaelites, the Midianites, and other nations traced their origin alike to him.

Sarah—'princess of a multitude.'

Isaac—'joy;' because Abraham laughed with delight when God repeated his promise of a son, whose mother should be Sarah.

angels—'messengers;' the holy and blessed spirits who are in the presence of the Lord, ever ready to execute his will.

grievous—heavy; hard to be borne; causing a feeling of grief.

interceded—prayed for; stood for a time between them and punishment.

righteous — persons who regulated their life by the laws of God, so as to please him. Those who act justly and benevolently are 'righteous.'

merciful—compassionate; pitiful. Ps. ciii. 8. 13.

permitted—allowed in answer to his prayer.

refuge—shelter; protection.

brimstone..the inflammable and suffocating properties of this mineral rendered it an effective agent in this work of speedy and complete destruction.

furnace—metals are melted in furnaces, therefore an intense heat is required; the quantity of fuel they consume occasions much smoke.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

ZOAR—'small;' though threatened with the same destruction as that which fell on the other cities of the plain of Sodom, it was spared at Lot's entreaty; its former name was Bela.

SODOM AND GOMORRAH—two of the cities of the plain of Siddim; the Dead Sea or Salt Lake which now covers the site is about fifty miles long and eight miles wide; the Arabs call this lake the 'Sea of Lot.'

THE DEAD SEA.

"AND HE OVERTHREW THOSE CITIES, AND ALL THE PLAIN, AND ALL THE INHABITANTS."

THE wind blows chill across those gloomy waves—
Oh! how unlike the green and dancing main!
The surge is foul, as if it roll'd o'er graves;—
Stranger,—here lie the cities of the plain.

Yes, on the plain, by wild waves covered now,
Rose palace once, and sparkling pinnacle;
On pomp and spectacle beam'd morning's glow,
On pomp and festival the twilight fell.

Lovely and splendid all,—but Sodom's soul
Was stain'd with blood, and pride, and perjury;
Long warn'd, long spare'd, till her whole heart was foul,
And fiery vengeance on its clouds came nigh.

And still she mock'd, and dance'd, and taunting, spoke
Her sportive blasphemies against the Throne;—
It came! The thunder on her slumber broke:—
God spake the word of wrath! Her dream was done.

Yet, in her final night, amid her stood
Immortal messenger, and pausing Heaven
Pleaded with man, but she was quite imbued,
Her last hour wane'd, she scorn'd to be forgiven!

'Twas done!—down pour'd at once the sulphurous shower,
Down stoop'd in flame, the heaven's red canopy,
Oh! for the arm of God in that fierce hour!—
'Twas vain, nor help of God or man was nigh.

They rush, they bound, they howl, the men of sin;—
Still stoop'd the cloud, still burst the thicker blaze;
The earthquake heave'd!—then sank the hideous din!—
Yon wave of darkness o'er their ashes strays.

CROLY.

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9. THE BIRTH OF ISAAC. THE TRIAL OF ABRAHAM'S FAITH.

Genesis xx.-xxiii.

After the destruction of the cities of the plain Abraham went southwards and sojourned in *Gerar*. He deceived Abimelech, the king, by saying Sarah was his sister. God came to Abimelech in a dream and told him to restore Sarah

to Abraham. Abimelech reproved Abraham for his deceit, but afterwards made him presents.

The son which God promised to Abraham was born. Abraham called the child's name Isaac. Abraham was then a hundred years old. He and his family lived at *Beersheba*. Ishmael mocked Isaac; and for this offence he and his mother were cast out of Abraham's house. Hagar went with her son into the *Wilderness* of Beersheba. Hagar thought Ishmael would die of thirst, but God provided water for them both. God promised Hagar that he would make of Ishmael a great nation. Ishmael grew up in the wilderness, and became an archer. His mother took him a wife out of the land of Egypt.

God commanded Abraham to offer up his son Isaac as a sacrifice. Abraham prepared to obey God. He went to a mountain which God told him of in the land of *Moriah*. There he built an altar, upon which he laid his son; but as he was about to slay him the angel of the Lord said, "Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me." Abraham then offered up a ram which God had provided instead of Isaac. Thus was Abraham's faith tried, and the sacrifice of Isaac prevented. God again blessed Abraham for his obedience. Sarah died at the age of one-hundred-and-twenty-seven years. Abraham bought of Ephron, the Hittite, the field and cave of *Machpelah* for a burying-place. There he buried Sarah. Sarah is the only woman whose age is recorded in the Bible.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

destruction—complete burning up of the inhabitants and the plain; the site was then overflowed by the waters of the Jordan.

southwards—towards the meridian, or place of the sun at noon.

sojourned—resided for a time, not settled; we are sojourners upon earth as our fathers were.

Abimelech—'father of the king;' a common name of the kings of Gerar, indicating the hereditary nature of their royalty.

dream—God often made known his will to the ancients in dreams. Lesson 7, 'vision,' and Job xxxiii. 14-16.

deceit—falsehood in word or act; the fear of man was a snare to Abraham, and caused him to lie.

presents—'gifts;' either to make amends for his detention of Sarah, or to secure Abraham's friendship now that he knew he was the 'friend of God.'

offence—sin; God has always expressed his displeasure against the sin of mocking. Les. 4, 'mocked' & 'servants.'

archer—skilled in the use of the bow and arrow, both as a hunter and a warrior.

offer up—slay him as a being devoted to God in sacrifice.

angel of the Lord—'messenger;' one that is sent to execute the orders of Divine Providence.

lad—a youth; Isaac was at this time about twenty-five years of age.

ram—a male goat or sheep, much used in sacrifice in after times.

tried—proved his faith in God's power to raise Isaac again from the dead. Hebrews xi. 19.

Ephron—a descendant of Heth; the owner of the plot of ground which Abraham purchased for a burial-place; this curious transaction is fully recorded at the close of the twenty-third chapter of Genesis.

cave—a natural or artificial excavation; caves were used in ancient times as burial places.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

GERAR—a royal city and country of the Philistines, near Gaza, the territory of which was extensive.

BEERSHEBA—'the well of the oath;' was the place in the south of Canaan where Abraham and Abimelech, king of Gerar, made a covenant of peace.

WILDERNESS—an uncultivated and dreary district; the wilderness here spoken of extended southward from Palestine to Mount Sinai. Less. 25. 'W. of Paran.'

MORIAH—the name of a mountain on the north-east of Jerusalem.

MACHPELAH—the name of the cave, near Hebron, which Abraham purchased of Ephron, the Hittite. Several of the patriarchs and their wives were buried there.

HAGAR IN THE DESERT.

"GOD OPENED HER EYES, AND SHE SAW A WELL OF WATER."

Injur'd, hopeless, faint, and weary,
Sad, indignant, and forlorn,
Through the desert wild and dreary,
Hagar leads the child of scorn.

Who can speak a mother's anguish,
Painted in that tearless eye,
Which beholds her darling languish,
Languish unreliev'd, and die.

Lo! the empty pitcher fails her,
Perishing with thirst he lies,
Death with deep despair assails her,
Piteous as for aid he cries.

From the dreadful image flying,
Wild she rushes from the sight;
In the agonies of dying,
Can she see her soul's delight?

Lo! the angel of the Lord,
Comes thy great distress to cheer,
Listen to the gracious word,
See, divine relief is near.

"Lift thine eyes, behold yon fountain,
Sparkling 'mid those fruitful trees;
Lo! beneath yon sheltering mountain
Smile for thee green bowers of ease.

"In the hour of sore affliction,
God hath seen and pitied thee;
Cheer thee in the sweet conviction,
Thou henceforth his care shall be."

MRS. TIGHE.

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10. THE MARRIAGE OF ISAAC.

Genesis xxiv.-xxv. 6, 12-18, & xi. 10,11.

When Abraham was very old, he called his ·faithful servant ·Eliezer to him; and made him ·promise not to take a wife for Isaac from the daughters of the Canaanites. He told him to journey into *Mesopotamia*, and bring Isaac a wife from Abraham's own kindred. Eliezer obeyed the directions of Abraham, and went to the city of Nahor. It was ·evening when Eliezer came to a well near the city, to which the women usually came to ·draw water; and while his·camels rested, he prayed to the Lord for success, saying, "O Lord God of my master Abraham I pray thee, send me good speed this day, and shew kindness unto my master Abraham. Behold, I stand here by the well of water; and the ·daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water; and let it come to pass, that the ·damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy ·pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink and I will give thy camels drink also; let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that thou hast shewed kindness unto my master." As soon as he had finished his prayer, ·Rebekah, a daughter of ·Bethuel, Abraham's nephew, came to draw water. The servant asked her to give him drink, she did so, and also drew water for his camels. When Eliezer knew who she was he ·blessed God for having brought him to his master's kindred. He afterwards went to her father's house, where he told his errand, and asked Rebekah in marriage for Isaac. Bethuel,

and his son Laban, answered, "The thing proceedeth from the Lord;" and Rebekah consented to go with Eliezer. They blessed her and sent her away with her nurse. Rebekah first saw Isaac when he was meditating in the fields. She became his wife, and Isaac loved her.

Soon after Isaac's marriage, Abraham married Keturah, and had six sons. Ishmael became the father of twelve princes. Shem was the last of the race who had lived before the flood. He died at the age of six-hundred years.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

faithful—true to his master's commands; loyal.

Eliezer—'God's help;' it is thought he was a kinsman of Abraham.

promise—this was in the form of an oath, which form pledged Eliezer to act true to his own convictions of God's faithfulness to Abraham and his seed.

evening—in the east evening or early dawn is better suited to laborious duties than the middle of the day, owing to the great heat at noon.

draw—the wells being generally deep, the water is drawn up by means of a bucket attached to a rope.

camel—'carrier;' an eastern beast of burden which has been called "the ship of the desert." The camel is endued with great strength. He is taught to kneel to receive his load, to be disburthened, to drink, &c.

daughters—women of every rank perform this laborious task.

damsel—a young unmarried woman.

pitcher—an earthen vessel with two handles; it was carried on the head or left shoulder, and held by the right hand, and when presented to any one was supported on the left hand.

Rebekah—'noose;' she was cousin to Isaac.

Bethuel—the father of Rebekah; he was a son of Nahor, Abraham's brother.

blessed God—praised the Lord for his goodness.

Laban—Rebekah's brother; the eldest son of Bethuel.

proceedeth, &c.—they saw the whole affair was of God's appointment.

consented—being one who trusted in the Lord, and feared to offend him, she offered no objection to this uncommon proceeding.

blessed—wished her great prosperity.

nurse—in the east this domestic is regarded as a second parent; she not only rears the children but often accompanies a married daughter to her new home to be her adviser, assistant, and friend.

meditating—probably thinking devoutly of God's promises with regard to his seed.

princes—chiefs of tribes or clans.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

MESOPOTAMIA—a large province of Asia, situated between the rivers Euphrates and Tigris. In a part of Mesopotamia, called the Land of Shinar, were the first dwellings of men after the deluge, when they began to build the Tower of Babel. In the same plain after many years, the great city Babylon was built. Mesopotamia became a part of the Assyrian Empire, and afterwards, successively, of the Babylonian, Persian, and Macedonian Empires. It is now included in Persia.

ISAAC AND REBEKAH.

"SHE BECAME HIS WIFE, AND HE LOVED HER; AND ISAAC WAS COMFORTED AFTER HIS MOTHER'S DEATH."

It was the solemn hour of eve,
When twilight shades were gathering o'er him,
That Isaac wander'd forth to grieve
The recent loss of her that bore him;
And when that tender friend is gone,
The heart conceives it hath no other;
And all the joys that life has known,
Seem parted with a parted mother.

But while to him the path of life
Look'd darksome through the tears of sorrow,
Rebekah came—his promis'd wife—
To bid him dream of joy to-morrow;
And if there be a human art
Unknown to sister, friend, or brother,
It is a wife's to wean the heart
From sorrowing o'er a parted mother—

It is a wife's with radiant eye
To light a husband's path of sadness,
As twilight stars steal on the sky
To fill the darkening vales with gladness;
It is a wife's to soothe the breast;
(The breast that loves her—loves no other),
With earnest of that holy rest,
When he shall join a parted mother.

W. KNOX.

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11. THE HISTORY OF JOB.

Book of Job.

Job, it is supposed, lived in the time of Abraham. His possessions were in the land of *Uz* in *Idumea*. He was a very good man, and God had blessed him with large flocks and herds, and with seven sons and three daughters, and he was the greatest man in the East.

Satan obtained leave to tempt Job; one messenger came to tell him that all his cattle had been carried off by a band of Sabeans; another messenger came and said the fire of God

had fallen from heaven, and burned up all his sheep; another came and told him that three bands of Chaldeans had fallen upon his camels, and carried them away; another brought him word that a wind had smitten the house in which all his children were assembled, and they were slain.

Job's faith in God was not shaken by these ·calamities; he ·bowed with ·submission to ·God's will and said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord."

After this Satan was permitted to tempt Job still further, and Job was ·smitten with a painful disease, which covered his body from the sole of his foot to his crown. His wife then tempted him to forsake God, but he answered, "What! shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil." In all this Job did not sin with his lips. Three of his friends, ·Eliphaz, ·Bildad, and ·Zophar, came to him to comfort him; instead of which they ·aggravated his distress, by telling him that his afflictions were sent upon him as a punishment for some great sin. Job denied the accusation, and in declaring his own innocence, ·evinced some impatience at the afflictions he endured. He allowed that God afflicts the wicked, and blesses the righteous, but he also shewed them that the righteous often have to bear severe ·trials. One of his friends named ·Elihu, a younger person than those who had spoken, then reproved Job's three friends for condemning Job, and shewed that God is just in all his ways. He called on Job to ·reflect upon his own impatience, and to remember that God's power and wisdom are far beyond man's ·comprehension.

After this God addressed Job out of the whirlwind, showing him by ·reference to his own mighty power as displayed in the formation and ·condition of the ·universe, and the strength and structure of many of the large animals which inhabit it, the ·insignificance and ·ignorance of man. Job then humbled himself, and said, "Behold I am ·vile, what shall I answer thee, I will lay mine hand upon my mouth." He also said unto the Lord, "I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought is ·withholden from thee. I repent in ·dust and ashes."

God reproved the three friends of Job; but he healed Job of his disease, blessed him with greater riches than he had possessed before, and gave him, also, another family of sons and daughters, many servants, and large possessions.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

Job—'to repent,' 'to praise;' it is generally supposed that this much tried yet highly favoured servant of God, lived in the time of Abraham; others consider that he lived in the time of Moses.

obtained leave—without the Divine permission, not even Satan himself can inflict injury upon one of God's children. 1 Cor. x. 13.

tempt—try or prove; Job's profession of faith in God and submission to his will was tested by severe afflictions. James v. 11 and 1 Peter i. 7.

Sabeans—the descendants of Sheba, one of Shem's posterity; their territory lay in the northern part of Arabia, between the Red Sea & the Indian Ocean.

calamities—troubles; painful bereavements.

bowed—fell prostrate; this expressive mode of showing respect, humility, and grief still prevails in the East.

submission—the yielding up of one's own will unreservedly. 1 Pet. v. 6.

God's will—made known by those painful dispensations which were not the result of Job's folly or wickedness, but which had their origin in the sovereign will of Him who has power to give life or to take it away.

smitten..a sudden personal affliction manifested upon him.

Eliphaz—'God my strength;' a native of Teman, a city of Idumea.

Bildad—a resident of Shuah, a district east of Arabia Petrea.

Zophar—'forward;' a citizen of Naamah, in Edom.

aggravated—increased; made more distressing by their suspicions of his moral rectitude.

evinced—showed; expressed.

trials—sufferings; afflictions.

Elihu—'God Jehovah;' he was a native of Buz in Arabia.

reflect—to meditate upon; to remember his impatience with grief.

comprehension—understanding; grasp of thought.

reference—pointing to; naming expressly.

condition—state and relation of the various elements of the material creation.

universe—the world, and all the beings which inhabit it; the system of worlds above and around us.

insignificance—littleness; weakness.

ignorance—want of knowledge.

vile—mean; a creature of earth—as a worm compared with God.

withholden—kept back; concealed.

dust and ashes—sitting in dust, as a token of humiliation, and casting ashes on the head as a symbol of great grief, were practices common in the East.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

Uz—an extensive district in Idumea; it was first settled by the descendants of Uz or Huz, one of Shem's posterity.

IDUMEA—the country to the south of Canaan, called also Edom; it extends into Arabia Petrea and to the borders of the Red Sea; it was first inhabited by a powerful tribe called Horites, and afterwards by the descendants of Esau, who are called Edomites; its climate was agreeable, and its soil fruitful, and it was defended by a natural fortress of rocks. Less. 13. 'Mount Seir.'

"I WAS NOT IN SAFETY, NEITHER HAD I REST, NEITHER WAS I QUIET; YET TROUBLE CAME."

Of all my race there breathes not one,
To comfort or deplore me;
Pain wakes a pulse in every bone,
And death is closing o'er me.
Still doth his lifted stroke delay,
Protracted tortures dooming,
I feel ere life has pass'd away,
His very worm consuming.

Night spreads her mantle o'er the sky,
And all around are sleeping,
While I in tears of agony,
My restless couch am steeping.
I sigh for morn—the rising day
Awakes the earth to gladness,
I turn with sickening soul away
It smiles upon my sadness.

A crown of glory grace'd my brow,
While nations bent before me;
Princes and hoary sires would bow,
To flatter and adore me.
To me the widow turn'd for aid,
And ne'er in vain address'd me;
For me the grateful orphan prayed,
The soul of misery bless'd me.

I rais'd the drooping wretch that pine'd
In lonely anguish lying;
Was balm unto the wounded mind,
And solace to the dying;
Till one stern stroke of all my state,
Of all my bliss, bereft me;
And I was worse than desolate,
For God himself had left me.

All hope on earth for ever fled
A higher hope remaineth;
Ev'n while his wrath is o'er me shed,
I know my Saviour reigneth.
The worm may waste this withering clay,
When flesh and spirit sever;
My soul shall see eternal day,
And dwell with God for ever. DALE.

12. THE HISTORY OF ISAAC. HE BLESSES HIS SONS.

Genesis xxv. 20-xxviii.

Abraham died at the age of one-hundred-and-seventy-five years. His sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah. Twenty years after Isaac and Rebekah were married they had two sons. The Lord told Rebekah before they were born, that the elder should serve the younger. This was fulfilled many years after in their descendants. Esau was the first-born, and Jacob was the younger son. Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field. Jacob was a plain man dwelling in tents. Esau came from the field weary and faint. He asked Jacob for his red pottage. Jacob would not give it to him except for his birthright. Esau thought his birthright was of little use, and sold it to Jacob for his pottage. They were then thirty years of age.

There was a famine in Canaan, and Isaac went to Gerar. God confirmed to Isaac the promises he had made to Abraham. Isaac told the men of Gerar that Rebekah was his sister. The king afterwards reproved Isaac for his deceit. Isaac's flocks and herds increased very much. The herdsmen of Gerar quarrelled with Isaac's herdsmen about the wells of water. Isaac left Gerar, and dwelt in Beersheba. Some years after, Ishmael died in the presence of his brethren.

When Isaac was old his eyes were dim, and he could not see. He called his son, Esau, to bless him. Rebekah wished Jacob to have the blessing, and she and Jacob deceived Isaac. Isaac gave Jacob the first-born's blessing, saying, "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 every one that curseth thee, and blessed be every one that blesseth thee." When Esau came in, Isaac knew that he had been deceived, and he blessed Esau also, saying, "Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above; and by thy sword shalt thou 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." Esau hated Jacob for having obtained their father's greatest blessing; and he said he would slay Jacob. Jacob fled to Laban, his mother's brother, at *Padan-aram;* on his way he had a vision at Bethel. God promised to protect and bless him in all places, and bring him again into Canaan.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

His sons, &c.—though living at a distance from one another, it would seem that they maintained a friendly intercourse.

fulfilled—took place as had been foretold.

Esau—'covered with hair;' he was of a daring, hasty spirit; resentful, but forgiving; it does not appear that he was under the influence of the fear of God. He was called Edom, or 'red,' from the circumstance of selling his birthright for a mess of red pottage.

Jacob—'heeler,' 'supplanter'; he was a man of domestic virtues and affections; eminent for piety; a man of faith and prayer. In all his troubles he sought for succour from God alone, whose hand he recognised in all the affairs of life.

cunning—clever in the chase; skilful in the pursuit of one's calling. Exod. xxxv. 35; 1 Kings vii. 14.

plain—quiet; prudent; fond of home; not given to daring exploits.

tents—are still used in the East. Esau's life sometimes compelled him to take shelter in trees and caves, or to lie exposed upon the ground; Jacob preferred the calmer life of dwelling in tents. Lesson 2, 'tents.'

birthright—the chief blessing belonged to the first-born by right; still it might be forfeited voluntarily, as in this case, or on account of crime; 1 Chron. v. i. The chief blessing included special consecration to the Lord's service, great dignity, and superiority over brethren.

presence—surrounded by his relatives; probably the children of Abraham and Keturah are referred to in the term 'brethren.'

dim—a film had obscured his power of sight; as old age advances a gradual decay of the senses takes place.

deceived—Rebekah being aware that Jacob was the object of God's special favor, felt, as was natural, peculiarly anxious about him; but this feeling was not kept in proper subjection to the law of God, hence she conceived a plan for deceiving her husband, into which Jacob unhappily fell. She did this to render sure the promise of God that 'the elder should serve the younger;' but he who promised that Jacob should have the sovereignty over his brother was able to bring it to pass, without necessitating any of his children to acts of dishonour and injustice. Lesson 13, 'deceived.'

hated—a feeling of indignation and contempt at Jacob's deceit; and dislike and resentment towards him for having obtained that blessing which some years before he had bartered for a mess of pottage. Esau's hatred did not however continue to the end of his life; Lesson 13. 'reconciled.'

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

PADAN-ARAM—a district in the northern part of Mesopotamia in which some of Abraham's kindred were settled.

PRAYER OF JACOB.

"I AM WITH THEE AND WILL KEEP THEE IN ALL PLACES WHITHER THOU GOEST."

O God of Bethel! by whose hand
Thy people still are fed;
Who, through this weary pilgrimage,
Hast all our fathers led!

Our vows, our prayers, we now present
Before thy throne of grace;
God of our fathers, be the God
Of their succeeding race.

Through each perplexing path of life
Our wandering footsteps guide,
Give us each day, our daily bread,
And raiment fit provide!

O spread thy covering wings around,
Till all our wanderings cease,
And at our Father's love'd abode
Our feet arrive in peace!

Now with the humble voice of prayer
Thy mercy we implore;
Then with the grateful voice of praise
Thy goodness we'll adore.

LOGAN.

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13. JACOB SERVES LABAN. HE RETURNS TO CANAAN.

Genesis xxix-xxxiv.

Jacob came into the land of the people of the east; he inquired for Laban, the son of Nahor, when he came to a well at Haran. To this well Rachel, a daughter of Laban, came to water her father's sheep. Jacob made himself known to Rachel, and Laban received him with much kindness. While Jacob lived at Padan-aram he kept the flocks of Laban, his uncle. He agreed to serve Laban seven years, for his daughter Rachel. Laban deceived him, and gave him Leah. He served again other seven years for Rachel. He married both Laban's daughters, and he had many children.

God blessed Jacob, and his riches increased exceedingly; he had much cattle, and many maid-servants, men-servants, and ·camels, and ·asses. He stayed with Laban twenty years. Laban and his sons ·envied Jacob, because of his great riches. Jacob left Laban, and took with him his wives and children. Laban followed him and overtook him on *Mount Gilead;* but ·God came to Laban by night and said to him, "Take heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad."

Rachel had stolen her father's ·images. Laban searched for them, but found them not, for she sat upon them; and Jacob was wroth with Laban: and said, "What is my trespass? what is my sin, that thou hast so hotly pursued after me?" He also said, "This twenty years have I been with thee; thy ewes and thy she goats have not cast their young, and the rams of thy flock have I not eaten. That which was torn of beasts I brought not unto thee; I bare the loss of it; of my hand didst thou require it, whether stolen by day, or stolen by night. Thus I was; in the day the ·drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from mine eyes. Thus have I been twenty years in thy house; I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and six years for thy cattle: and thou hast changed my wages ten times. Except the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac, had been with me, surely thou hadst sent me away now ·empty. God hath seen mine affliction and the labour of my hands, and rebuked thee yesternight." Laban and Jacob ·covenanted not to do harm to each other.

The ·angel of God met Jacob at *Mahanaim.* Jacob heard that his brother Esau was coming towards him, and he feared to meet him; so he prayed to God to deliver him and his family from Esau's hand; he also sent messengers before him with a great ·present. At *Peniel* God changed Jacob's name to ·ISRAEL. The two brothers met, and were ·reconciled to each other. Esau returned to *Mount Seir.* Jacob journeyed to *Succoth;* he bought a parcel of land from the Shechemites, and erected an altar there. Dinah, the daughter of Jacob, was [illegible]n by the prince of *Shechem.* Afterwards, her brothers, [illegible]n and Levi, deceitfully slew many of the Shechemites.

a well—in eastern countries wells are of vast importance; those near towns are frequented by the women of every family, hence they are suitable places for travellers to make inquiries.

Rachel—'ewe;' she was Jacob's cousin, her father being the brother of his mother Rebekah. This young and beautiful woman followed the avocation of a shepherdess, a thing not uncommon in those times. Exod. ii. 16,17. Rachel became the mother of two children—Joseph & Benjamin.

deceived—a certain retribution attends every act of disobedience to the divine laws. Jacob had been guilty of deceiving his father, and now he is himself deceived by his own uncle. Moreover Jacob was not privileged to see his mother any more, by whose aid he had deceived his father.

Leah—God compensated Leah for being less loved than Rachel, by making her the happy mother of seven children—Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, and Dinah.

camels—beasts of burden adapted for travelling over sandy deserts. Less. 10.

asses—eastern asses are larger and very superior to those with which we are familiar; in many respects they are preferable to horses.

envied—envy leads to other crimes, as in the case of Cain; and there is little doubt that the envy of Laban's sons would have urged them to some desperate act, had not Jacob fled according to the Lord's command.

God came—as God's intervention is never unnecessary, it is evident that Laban and his company had intended to inflict some injury upon Jacob.

images—probably small figures in human shape; such household gods were long a source of iniquity in Israel.

drought, &c.—so excessive are the summer heats in Canaan that the grass is often burned up; while the night dews render the atmosphere very cold.

empty—Jacob apprehended that Laban intended to rob him of all that he had acquired in Padan-aram—his wives, children, and property.

angels met, &c.—to comfort him after one trial, and to prepare him for another just at hand.

present—in the East gifts are presented to superiors; the presentation of which indicates the inferiority of the party presenting them.

Israel—'beholding God,' or 'the prince that prevailed with God;' the surname of Jacob which was afterwards applied to his whole posterity.

reconciled—friendship was restored, and distrust of each other removed.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

MOUNT GILEAD—'heap of testimony;' the mountains of Gilead lie east of the Jordan, and extend from Antilibanus southward into Arabia Petræa. On one of these hills was Galeed, the heap of witness, of Jacob and Laban.

MAHANAIM—'two hosts;' a Levitical city beyond the Jordan, between Mount Gilead and the brook Jabbok: its name was given to it by Jacob because the angels of God met him there on his return from Padan-aram into Canaan.

PENIEL or PENUEL—'the vision of God;' a place east of the Jordan near the ford of the brook Jabbok, at which Jacob received the name of ISRAEL.

MOUNT SEIR—the mountainous tract to the south of Canaan extending from the southern extremity of the Dead Sea to Ezion-geber. This country was inhabited by the posterity of Esau, and called Edom. Less. 11, 'Idumea.'

SUCCOTH—'tents;' the first encampment of the Israelites after they left Egypt; also a city of Gilead at which Jacob dwelt before he went to Shechem.

SHECHEM—'part or portion;' a city of Ephraim, forty miles from Jerusalem, situated in the valley between Mts. Ebal and Gerizim. At this place the sons of Jacob, Simeon & Levi, slew the Shechemites deceitfully. Near Shechem was Jacob's well, and the parcel of ground which Jacob gave to his son Joseph.

BROTHERLY FORGIVENESS.

"AND ESAU RAN TO MEET JACOB, AND EMBRACED HIM, AND FELL ON HIS NECK, AND KISSED HIM."

We walk together side by side,
Within one hamlet we abide,
And play beneath the same green tree;
Along the self same path we roam,
The like temptations round us come,
And all are pilgrims hastening home,
Where Christ our Lord shall ever be.

We must not linger in the race,
To look into each other's face,
And count the sins our brothers do,
And tell them o'er, as though we found,
A pleasure in the grievous sound,
As though our own hands were not bound,
And we had nothing bad to rue.

Each has his own appointed part,
To watch the sins of his own heart,
To keep his bridal garment bright;
The beam is dark in his own eye,
He must not scan too curiously,
The little motes that dimly lie,
And darken less his brother's light.

VERSES FOR HOLY SEASONS.

14. BENJAMIN BORN. JOSEPH'S EARLY HISTORY.

Genesis xxxiv.-xxxvii. & xxxix.

After Jacob had lived some time at Shechem God commanded him to remove to Bethel, and to put away the strange gods from his household; he built an altar at Bethel. At this place God had appeared to him when he fled from Esau on his way to Padan-aram. God appeared to Jacob again at Bethel, and blessed him, and called his name ISRAEL, and God said, "The land which I gave Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, to thee will I give it and to thy seed after thee will I give the land." As Jacob journeyed from Bethel to *Ephrath*, Benjamin, his youngest son, was born. Rachel, the mother of Benjamin, died, and was buried at Ephrath. After that, Jacob came to his father at Mamre. Esau became rich, and had many children; his descendants were called *Edomites*. The des-

cendants of Jacob were afterwards called ISRAELITES, from his new name ISRAEL.

Jacob loved Joseph more than his other children, but his brethren hated him. Joseph dreamed dreams, showing that his father and his brethren would bow down before him. His brethren hated him the more for these dreams, and sold him to a company of *Midianites* which came from *Gilead* with their camels bearing spicery, balm, and myrrh, which they were carrying down into *Egypt*. His brethren dipped his coat in the blood of a kid which they killed, and showed it to their father. Jacob thought some evil beast had devoured Joseph. The Midianites took Joseph into Egypt, and sold him as a slave to Potiphar, an officer of Pharoah, king of Egypt. And the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man. And his master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand. And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand. And it came to pass from the time that he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the Lord was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field. And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand; and he knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat. And Joseph was a goodly person, and well favoured. Potiphar's wife spoke falsely of Joseph, and had him cast into prison. While Joseph was in prison in Egypt, Isaac died in Canaan. His sons Esau and Jacob went to Mamre, where Isaac had lived many years, and buried him. The age of Isaac was a-hundred-and-fourscore years.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

strange gods—household divinities; such as those which Rachel stole from her father. Lesson 13, 'images.'

household—not only those which his wives possessed, but the idols belonging to his servants, male and female.

Benjamin—'son of my right hand;' this name was given him by Jacob instead of Benoni, 'son of my sorrow,' which the dying Rachel had called him.

Joseph—'adding;' was the elder of Rachel's two sons; he was a youth of upright principles and conduct; and was afterwards of great service to his aged father and his brethren. Lesson 16.

hated—because he told his father of their misdeeds.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

EDOMITES—from Edom 'red,' a name given to Esau. Lesson 12, 'Esau.'

EPHRATH—'abundance;' the ancient name of Bethlehem, on the way to which place Benjamin was born, and Rachel was buried. Though celebrated on many accounts, it was a very small place; it was on an eminence about six miles south-west of Jerusalem.

MIDIANITES—descendants of Midian, the fourth son of Abraham & Keturah; their country was in Arabia Petrea. The merchants who bought Joseph of his brethren are called Midianites and also Ishmaelites; the party was probably composed of descendants of both Midian and Ishmael.

GILEAD—a country east of the Jordan, celebrated at this time for its medicinal balsams, and for its spices. Lesson 13, 'Mount Gilead.'

EGYPT—called also Mizraim after one of Ham's sons, lay on the borders of the river Nile; it measured in extent about 11,000 square miles. Though the climate of Egypt was extremely hot, yet the inundations of the Nile rendered it a very fertile country, so much so, that for a long period it was reckoned the granary of the world. Less. 5, 'Egypt.'

DIRGE OF RACHEL.

"AND RACHEL DIED, AND WAS BURIED IN THE WAY TO EPHRATH, WHICH IS BETHLEHEM."

And Rachel lies in Ephrath's land,
Beneath her lonely oak of weeping,
With mouldering heart and withering hand,
The sleep of death for ever sleeping.

The Spring comes smiling down the vale,
The lilies and the roses bringing;
But Rachel never more shall hail,
The flowers that in the world are springing.

The Summer gives his radiant day,
And Jewish dames the dance are treading;
But Rachel, on her couch of clay,
Sleeps all unheeded and unheeding.

The Autumn's ripening sunbeam shines,
And reapers to the field is calling;
But Rachel's voice no longer joins
The choral song at twilight's falling.

The Winter sends his drenching shower,
And sweeps his howling blast around her;
But earthly storms possess no power,
To break the slumber that hath bound her.

Thus round and round the Seasons go,
But joy or grief no more betide her,
For Rachel's bosom could not know
Though friends were bound in death beside her.

W. KNOX.

15. THE EXALTATION OF JOSEPH.

Genesis xl.-xlvii. 26.

God was with Joseph and gave him ·favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison. Pharaoh's ·chief butler and chief baker were in prison also, each of whom had a ·dream which Joseph interpreted. After some time Joseph was released from prison to interpret the dreams of the king. The king's dreams were to show him, that there would be seven years of great plenty in Egypt; and then seven years of grievous famine. And Joseph said "Now therefore let Pharaoh look out a man ·discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt. And officers to gather all the food of those good years that come, and lay up corn under the hand of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities. And that food shall be for store to the land against the seven years of famine, which shall be in the land of Egypt; that ·the land perish not through the famine." Pharaoh acknowledged the wisdom of Joseph and made him ·governor over all Egypt; he also gave him to wife ·Asenath, daughter of ·Potipherah, the priest of *On*. Joseph had two sons, ·Ephraim and ·Manasseh. During the years of plenty the earth brought forth by handfuls, and Joseph stored up much corn; and in the years of famine ·people from many lands came to Egypt to buy corn.

The famine was sore in all lands, but there was corn in Egypt. Jacob sent his sons, except Benjamin, from Canaan to Egypt, to buy corn. Joseph knew them, but they did not know him. They ·bowed themselves to the earth before him. He ·treated them roughly, said they were spies, and put them in prison. He ·heard them speaking to each other of their cruelty to their brother Joseph. He bound ·Simeon, and sent the others to Canaan with corn. He commanded them to bring their ·youngest brother with them. Jacob was unwilling to let Benjamin go; at last he consented. They came the second time to Joseph, then he made himself known to them. He ·forgave them, and sent waggons for his father, and his brothers' families. When Jacob heard that Joseph was governor of Egypt, and when he saw the waggons which had been sent by him, he said, "It is enough, Joseph my son

is yet alive, I will go down and see him before I die." Seventy souls of the house of Jacob came into Egypt.

Pharaoh received Joseph's father and brothers very kindly. He gave them the land of *Goshen* to dwell in. He told Joseph to make some of his brothers rulers over his own cattle. Joseph nourished his brethren and their families with bread. During the famine he bought up all the land of Egypt for the king, in exchange for corn, except the land of the priests.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

favour—respect and esteem on account of his virtuous conduct.

chief butler, &c.—two officers of great trust in eastern courts.

dream—the importance attached to dreams in ancient times as intimations of future events, shows how ardently men desired communications from the Deity. Dreams are no longer considered as a channel of instruction from God to man, because Revelation is complete—"life and immortality having been brought to light by the Gospel."

discreet—wise; cautious; prudent.

the land—by a figure of speech, the land is used for the inhabitants.

governor—Pharaoh also gave Joseph the new name Zaphnath-paaneah, which means 'the revealer of secrets,' in allusion to his ability to interpret dreams.

Asenath—daughter of an idolatrous priest or prince, and the mother of Ephraim and Manasseh, the heads of two of the tribes of Israel.

Potipherah—'sun's own;' Joseph's father-in-law; he held a post of great importance as a religious chief, or civil ruler, or as both.

Ephraim—'fruitful;' the younger of Joseph's two sons; his name though given by Joseph, as expressive of his own prosperity, referred chiefly, by prophetic intimation, to Ephraim's future greatness, as the head of a numerous and powerful tribe. Less. 16.

Manasseh—'forgetting;' the birth of a son caused such joy to Joseph that he forgot all his sufferings, both from the conduct of his own brothers, and that of his Egyptian master and mistress.

people from—though Egypt's fertility was great, yet the wisdom and prudence of Joseph in disposing of the abundance of the land was necessary that a suitable supply of corn might be stored up against the years of famine.

bowed—how literally were Joseph's dreams fulfilled!

treated, &c.—not from vindictive feelings, but to bring to their remembrance their past sins, and their cruelty towards himself.

heard—they, imagining that Joseph was an Egyptian, and not acquainted with their language, (for he spake unto them by an interpreter) and that he was ignorant of their history, spoke of their crime towards their brother with remorse, even in his hearing.

Simeon—'hearer;' he who assisted Levi in the slaughter of the Shechemites, had probably been foremost in persecuting and selling his brother Joseph; he was bound and retained in Egypt.

youngest—Benjamin was innocent of any unkindness towards Joseph; he was the youngest member of the family.

forgave—this was another proof of Joseph's goodness of heart.

rulers—the care of cattle was not agreeable to the Egyptians, probably because Egypt had been recently under the dominion of shepherd-kings, who

had conquered the former kings and established a new dynasty.

bought up—the Egyptians who held their lands independent of the will of their sovereign, had from this time to pay a tribute of one-fifth of the produce to the king; the land was no longer their own.

except—the lands of the nobility and priesthood were left in their own hands by the policy of Joseph.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

ON—a city of Egypt near to the land of Goshen, noted for its idolatry. Heliopolis, one of its names, means 'the city of the Sun;' and Bethshemesh, another name of the city, means 'the house or temple of the Sun.' It was the daughter of the priest of On whom Pharaoh gave in marriage to Joseph.

GOSHEN—'approaching;' the district of Egypt which Pharaoh gave to Jacob and his family, in which they settled, where Jacob lived seventeen years, and where he died. It was on the eastern side of the Nile and had excellent pastures; it was preserved from the plagues with which the other parts of Egypt were afterwards afflicted.

JOSEPH'S EXALTATION.

"AND JOSEPH'S BRETHREN CAME AND BOWED DOWN THEMSELVES BEFORE HIM."

In lofty halls of gorgeous state,
The wond'ring shepherds stand,
And humbly bend before the prince,
The ruler of the land;
They little dream their brother sits,
On that exalted seat,
And they fulfil the word of God,
In bowing at his feet.

God is not man, that he should lie,
His purposes shall stand,
And vain it is for worms of earth
To rise against his hand;
God is not man, that he should change,
His word is fixed and sure,
Though heaven and earth shall pass away,
His word shall still endure.

M. A. STODART.

16. DEATH AND BURIAL OF JACOB. DEATH OF JOSEPH.

Genesis xlvii. 27-l.

When the time of Jacob's death drew nigh he charged Joseph not to bury him in Egypt. He made Joseph's two sons heads of tribes, saying, "Thy two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, are mine; as Reuben and Simeon they shall

be mine." He then blessed them, saying, "God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the ·Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth." And when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand upon the head of Ephraim, it ·displeased him: and he held up his father's hand to remove it from Ephraim's head unto Manasseh's head. And Joseph said unto his father "Not so, my father: for this is the firstborn; put thy right hand upon his head." And his father refused, and said, "I know it, my son, I know it: he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great: but truly his younger brother shall be ·greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations." And he blessed them that day, saying, "·In thee shall Israel bless, saying, God make thee as Ephraim and as Manasseh: and he set Ephraim before Manasseh." Jacob then called his ·sons to him to tell them what should ·befal their descendants in the ·last days. He spoke to them of the future ·condition of their children under various ·expressive ·figures. He predicted the coming of Christ in the tribe of Judah, saying, "The ·sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a ·lawgiver from ·between his feet till ·Shiloh come, and unto him shall the ·gathering of the nations be."

After Jacob had made an end of blessing his sons he charged them thus, "I am to be gathered unto my people; bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, in the field of Machpelah which is before Mamre in the land of Canaan." All the time that Jacob lived in Goshen was seventeen years; he died at the age of one-hundred-and-forty-seven years.

Jacob's body was ·embalmed in Egypt before it was taken into Canaan. Joseph and his brethren went from Egypt to Canaan to bury their father. Many of the Egyptians went with them to a place which was called *Abel-mizraim*. When Joseph and his brethren had buried their father, they returned into Egypt.

After the burial of Jacob, Joseph repeated his forgiveness to his brethren, who had feared he would punish them. Joseph spoke kindly, and said God intended their evil for good, to save much people alive. He nourished his brethren and their families while he lived; he died at the age of one-hundred-and-ten years. Before he died he said to his brethren, "God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence." Joseph's remains were then embalmed and put in a coffin in Egypt.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

charged—Jacob's confidence in the faithfulness of God to give Canaan to his posterity, was so unwavering that he gave this last testimony to it.

Angel—'messenger;' Jacob experienced many deliverances by the interposition of a spiritual *messenger*.

displeased—the feelings of paternal affection in Joseph were, as in the case of Isaac, drawn more towards the first-born than the younger; hence he felt displeased at discovering what he conceived to be an unfortunate mistake on the part of his aged father.

greater—the preference was on moral grounds; personal religion can alone render a man acceptable with God.

in thee—or 'by thee;' their posterity should be the standard and example of fruitfulness to all the other tribes.

sons—the heads of the twelve tribes of Israel, viz: *Reuben*, 'behold a son;' *Simeon*, 'hearing;' *Levi*, 'joined;' *Judah*, 'praise;' *Dan*, 'judging;' *Naphtali*, 'wrestling;' *Gad*, 'a troop;' *Asher*, 'blessed;' *Issachar*, 'reward;' *Zebulon*, 'delight;' *Joseph*, 'adding;' and *Benjamin*, 'son of my right hand.'

befal—come to pass, or happen unto.

last days—including their history from the conquest of Canaan down to the second coming of Christ.

condition—circumstances of their civil, social, and religious state.

expressive—distinct; plain; forcible.

figures—emblems, or representations; the sceptre for royalty, a star for a king, a lion for power, &c.

sceptre—the emblem of royalty. Though the national independence of the Jews was quite gone at the coming of Christ, yet there was an appearance of sovereignty in the person of Herod: so that this prophecy was literally fulfilled.

lawgiver—referring to Moses, who was heard by the people in the teachings of the Scribes and Pharisees, whose duty it was to instruct the people in all things pertaining to the laws of Moses. Matt. xxiii. 2,3; Acts xv. 21.

between—as a lion standing over his young securely defends them from danger, so the tribe of Judah—the most powerful of the twelve, protected and perpetuated the ritual religion of Moses till Christ came in whom it was fulfilled.

Shiloh—'sent;' a title of the Messiah, employed especially to denote the consummation of the kingdom of Judah, and priesthood of Levi in him. In the next generation after the death of Christ the Romans came and overthrew the temple and city of Jerusalem, so that the ecclesiastical and civil government of the Jewish people were together destroyed.

gathering—while the last sentence refers to Christ's first coming, this looks forward to the time when he

shall return to receive the unreserved obedience of all men—Gentiles as well as Jews; for "unto him every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess."

embalmed—the practise of preserving the dead prevailed, and probably originated in Egypt. The process of embalming lasted about ten weeks, and generally cost a large sum of money. When embalmed, the body was laid in a coffin of stone or wood, and placed upright against a wall where it remained a long time, in some instances for years, before it was removed to a vault. The Hebrews did not practise embalming, but in the case of Jacob, and in that of Joseph, it was necessary, as their remains had to be conveyed to a considerable distance for interment. A few specimens of the embalmed bodies of ancient Egyptians may be seen in the British Museum.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

ABEL-MIZRAIM—a place on the west of the Jordan to which the Egyptians accompanied the sons of Jacob when they conveyed their father's body to Canaan for burial. It was called Abelmizraim, or 'mourning of the Egyptians', by the Canaanites; it was previously known as "the threshing-floor of Atad."

DEATH-BED OF JACOB.

"BEHOLD I DIE; BUT GOD SHALL BE WITH YOU, AND BRING YOU AGAIN UNTO THE LAND OF YOUR FATHERS."

I die, my son! behold, I die!
  But cease, my Joseph, cease to weep;
For God, who is our strength on high,
  Shall thee and all thine offspring keep;
  And while his stormy wrath shall sweep
The spoil from many a heathen hand,
  Our faithful race shall safely reap
The harvest fruits of Canaan's land.

I die, my son! behold, I die!
  But thou shalt like a cedar grow;
Shalt lift thy branches to the sky,
  And firmly fix thy root below:
  For though the archers drew the bow,
And chase'd thee from thy sire's abode;
  Yet thou, where'er thy steps might go,
Wast shielded by the arm of God.

I die, my son! behold, I die!
  And thou shalt lay these limbs distrest
Where Abraham and Sarah lie,
  Where Isaac and Rebekah rest;
  Where Leah's fond and feeling breast
To death's consuming couch I gave;
  Where sleep the faithful and the blest,
In far Machpelah's sacred cave.

W. KNOX.

PERIOD III.

FROM THE DEATH OF JOSEPH TO THE DEATH OF MOSES.

B.C. 1635—B.C. 1451. 184 years.

17. BONDAGE OF ISRAEL. MOSES' EARLY HISTORY.

Exodus i.-iv. 17.

The children of Jacob's sons increased greatly in Egypt. A new king, also called Pharaoh, ruled over Egypt, but he knew not Joseph. He oppressed the Israelites with a cruel bondage, and made them work like slaves in making bricks. The children of Israel increased so much, that the king ordered that their male infants should be destroyed. Just before this decree Aaron was born. His father and mother, Amram and Jochebed, were of the tribe of Levi.

The parents of Aaron had another son born. They hid him for three months. When they could no longer hide him, they placed him in an ark of bulrushes on the brink of the river *Nile*. The king's daughter came to the river to bathe; she found the child, and called its name Moses. Miriam, the sister of Moses, who was watching the child afar off to see what would become of him, was told to call a nurse for the child, and she fetched his mother.

Moses was instructed in all the knowledge of Egypt. At forty years of age he saw an Egyptian smiting an Israelite; and he slew the Egyptian. The next day he saw two Hebrews quarrelling and he reproved him that did the wrong. He replied to Moses, "Wilt thou kill me as thou didst the Egyptian yesterday." Moses was then afraid to stay in Egypt because the deed he had committed was known. He fled into Midian, where he fed the flock of Jethro, a priest, forty years. He married Zipporah, Jethro's daughter.

God knew of the bondage of the children of Israel in Egypt; and he remembered his promise to give them the land of

Canaan. He appeared to Moses, in a ·burning bush, on Mount *Horeb*, and there appointed him to go into Egypt, and ·demand the release of the Israelites from bondage. Aaron, the brother of Moses, was appointed to be ·spokesman to the people and to Pharaoh, whenever they should appear before him, because Moses was slow of speech. Moses was commanded to take his ·rod with him wherewith he should do ·signs.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

oppressed—treated with harshness or severity.

cruel—inhuman; as natural enemies; like some beasts with their prey.

bondage—slavery; unpaid servitude. Lesson 7.

bricks—were made of clay found on the banks of the Nile; the clay was mixed with straw in order to bind it better together; the occupation was dirty and unwholesome, & the drudgery so severe that it was always performed by slaves or criminals.

ordered—the power of the king to doom his subjects to death or banishment was admitted in the east, and is still exercised by barbarous and despotic sovereigns.

decree—a royal command; a law.

Amram—was a son of Kohath, and a grandson of Levi; his wife was named Jochebed; they were the parents of Moses, whom they hid for three months to save him from being drowned.

Aaron—was the elder son of Amram and Jochebed, and the brother of Miriam and Moses. After the delivery of the Ten Commandments, he became the high priest of the Israelites.

hid—to evade the cruel decree of Pharaoh.

no longer—his cries and sportive laughter would attract attention at this age.

bulrushes—the bulrush grew on the banks of the Nile; baskets and small boats were made of it, such boats being generally coated with pitch both within and without. This plant was also called the papyrus, and from it the Egyptians made their paper; it was also applied to many other useful purposes.

bathe—this necessary act of ablution is more regularly performed in the east than in this country; and precautions are taken to render public bathing-places safe from observation and intrusion.

Moses—'drawn out;' Pharaoh's daughter not only had this child *drawn out* of the water, but she adopted him as her son. This practice of adopting, or receiving into a family, the offspring of others, has prevailed from the earliest times; and the children so received became entitled to all the privileges of the household as fully as if they had been related by birth. Moses became entitled to the throne of Egypt by this adoption into Pharaoh's family, therefore he was educated in all the arts and literature of Egypt.

Miriam—'high;' she was probably ten years of age at this time.

mother—as Jochebed did not resort to an unjustifiable stratagem to save her child from the effect of the king's decree, but simply cast herself and her child upon the care and interposition of God, she was rewarded not only by seeing her child rescued from death, but also restored to her own bosom, accompanied by the lavish bounties of the king's daughter.

Jethro—supposed to have been a descendant of Abraham; he is also called Raguel and Reuel.

burning bush—a beautiful emblem of the preservation of the Israelitish nation in the midst of their fiery furnace of trial in Egypt.

demand—to ask authoritatively, with a determination not to receive refusal.

spokesman—the deliverer of a message; Moses was less qualified than Aaron to be spokesman to the king.

rod—shepherd's staff.

signs—wonderful acts; miracles as evidences of his divine mission.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

NILE—the principal river of Egypt which overflows its banks at certain seasons, and thus waters and enriches the surrounding countries; a figurative allusion to which is made by Jeremiah, the prophet. The chief cities, towns, and villages of Egypt are built along the banks of this river. In Exodus it is called "the river," in Isaiah and Jeremiah it is spoken of as the "Sihor."

HOREB—'desert;' 'solitude;' a celebrated mountain of Arabia to the west of Sinai. Less. 27, 'displeased;' Less. 29, 'Meribah.'

MOSES IN THE DESERT OF MIDIAN.

"I WILL NOW TURN ASIDE, AND SEE THIS GREAT SIGHT WHY THE BUSH IS NOT BURNT."

Go where a foot hath never trod,
Through unfrequented forests flee;
The wilderness is full of God,
His presence dwells in every tree.

To Israel and to Egypt dead,
Moses the fugitive appears;
Unknown he live'd, till o'er his head
Had fallen the snow of four-score years.

But God the wandering exile found
In his appointed time and place;
The desert-sand grew holy ground,
And Horeb's rock a throne of grace.

The lowly bush a tree became—
A tree of beauty and of light,
Involv'd with unconsuming flame,
That made the noon around it night.

Thence came the eternal voice that spake
Salvation to the chosen seed;
Thence went the Almighty arm that brake
Proud Pharaoh's yoke, and Israel freed,

By Moses, old, and slow of speech.
These mighty miracles were shown,
Jehovah's Messenger,'—to teach
That power belongs to God alone.

J. MONTGOMERY.

18. THE RELEASE OF ISRAEL DEMANDED. THE PLAGUES.

Exodus ix. 27-xi.

Moses met his brother in the mount of God, and kissed him. They went to the elders of the children of Israel; and Aaron told them all the words which the Lord had spoken unto Moses, and did signs in their sight. The people believed, and bowed their heads, and worshipped. After this Moses and Aaron went before Pharaoh. They demanded the release of the Israelites. The king would not let the people go, but he made their bondage harder; and the people of Israel were wroth with Moses and Aaron. They went again, at God's command, to require Pharaoh to let the Israelites go, but Pharaoh would not hearken to them. God then sent the following plagues on Egypt to punish Pharaoh and the Egyptians :—

1. He turned the waters of Egypt into blood for seven days; the fish died, the river stank, and the Egyptians could not drink of the water.
2. He caused frogs to come up from the streams and rivers and ponds, which covered the land of Egypt, and when they died the land stank.
3. He smote the dust of the land, and it became lice on man and beast throughout all the land of Egypt.
4. He sent swarms of flies into the house of Pharaoh, and into the houses of all his people, and the land was corrupted.
5. He sent a grievous murrain on the cattle of the Egyptians, and their cattle died; but not one of the cattle of the Israelites died.
6. He sent boils and blains on man and beast, throughout all the land of Egypt.
7. He sent hail, rain, and fire on the land of Egypt, and it smote all that was in the field, both man and beast, and it smote every herb of the field, and brake every tree.
8. He sent locusts, which ate up every herb of the land that the hail had left.

9. He sent a thick darkness over the land for three days; the Egyptians saw not one another, neither rose any from his place; but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.

The Israelites were free from all the plagues. During each plague Pharaoh promised to let the Israelites go;—but after each plague was removed by the entreaties of Moses, he refused to let them go. God then threatened to destroy all the first-born of Egypt, both of man and beast.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

kissed—a mode of salutation common in the East.

elders—men of age, character, wisdom, experience and skill in judging; Moses and Aaron went to them first, because they were the representatives and guides of the people; it was therefore natural for them to suppose the people would be guided by the advice of the elders.

believed—though in the lowest degradation of slavery, and surrounded by the grossest idolatry, they retained the knowledge of the True God, and cherished the remembrance of his promises to their fathers respecting Canaan; they admitted the miracles of Moses as proofs of his mission, and believed that the time of God's promised visitation was at hand.

wroth—angry; because their hopes of immediate deliverance from their servile bondage were disappointed. God's messengers often experience undeserved reproach and unmerited blame.

1st plague—the Nile was one of the principal objects of Egyptian worship; the change of its water into blood manifested that their idol was powerless. Considering it merely as a physical punishment, it was severe, as water is in constant demand in hot climates for quenching thirst, as well as for other purposes. Ancient and modern writers unite in praising the peculiarly agreeable qualities of the water of the Nile.

2nd plague—the frog which was common in the Nile, was one of the sacred animals of Egypt; in this case the object of their superstition became the instrument of their punishment. It is not known whether the Egyptians esteemed or disliked frogs, but in both ancient and modern times objects of dislike or fear have been regarded as deities.

3rd plague—great care was taken by the Egyptians not to harbour any kind of vermin. The priests were shaved every third day that no detestable creature might harbour upon them when they were performing their duty to their gods. This plague would consequently be most noisome to them. Some commentators consider that mosquitos are the insects referred to under the word 'lice.'

4th plague—it is generally thought that the 'flies' were the species of beetle called the cockroach—the sacred beetle of the Egyptians; it devours every thing that comes in its way—clothes, books, plants; and it also inflicts severe bites on man. Thus the Egyptians were again chastized by one of their own idols.

5th plague—it was especially provided that the cattle of the Israelites should sustain no harm when those of the Egyptians were slain by the deadly murrain. Pharaoh sent to ascertain if this was the case; he found it so, but he still refused to allow the Israelites to depart.

6th plague—this infliction was one of such severe pain on the bodies of the Egyptians—boils and blains, ulcers and inflammations, that even the priestly magicians could not stand in the presence of their sovereign.

7th plague—rain is seldom seen in Egypt, hail is almost unknown; such a visitation would be awful. Thunder and lightning are unfrequent and never injurious. How then must the king and his people have been alarmed by the terrible thunder and lightning that "ran along the ground!" This plague alarmed the king. He sent hastily for Moses and Aaron and acknowledged his sin; he afterwards again hardened his heart.

8th plague—all the vegetation left by the hail and rain was devoured by the locusts—the next infliction of divine anger on Egypt; these insects are of the form and appearance of crickets and grasshoppers, but much larger; there are many distinct species, and they are all destructive; some species migrate in immense numbers, and wherever they settle they destroy not only the hopes of the husbandman, but every vegetable production within their reach, even the bark of trees. They destroy much more than they devour. Locusts are extensively used as an article of food by the Arabs.

9th plague—a darkness so thick and intense that it seemed a material substance; perhaps accompanied by a wind which filled the air with dust or sand during its continuance; such winds are not uncommon in eastern deserts. Some imagine that a dark dense fog was spread over the land which would be appalling to the inhabitants, as fogs are never naturally produced in Egypt. Whatever was its nature it obscured the glory of their great deity, the sun, for three days.

entreaties—earnest prayers.

THE PLAGUES OF EGYPT.

"I WILL..MULTIPLY MY SIGNS AND MY WONDERS IN THE LAND OF EGYPT."

When Pharaoh dare'd to vex the saints,
And thus provok'd their God,
Moses was sent at their complaints,
Arm'd with his dreadful rod.

He call'd for darkness, darkness came
Like an o'erwhelming flood;
He turn'd each lake and every stream,
To lakes and streams of blood.

He gave the sign, and noisome flies
Through the whole country spread;
And frogs, in croaking armies, rise
About the monarch's bed.

Through fields, and towns, and palaces,
The tenfold vengeance flew;
Locusts in swarms devour'd their trees,
And hail their cattle slew.

Now let the world forbear its rage,
Nor put the church in fear:
Israel shall live through every age,
And be the Almighty's care.

WATTS.

19. THE TENTH PLAGUE. THE DEPARTURE.

Exodus xii. 1-39.

Before the ninth plague was sent on Egypt, ·God instituted the ·passover; he told the Israelites to kill a ·lamb, and sprinkle its blood on the sides of their doors; the lamb was to be roasted, and they were to be ready to depart when they ate of it. They were also to eat ·unleavened bread six days. God said he would smite all the ·first-born in Egypt, but he would pass over the doors of the Israelites, when he saw the blood of the lamb upon them. God commanded the Israelites to keep the Lord's passover ·every year; and when they should come into the land which he would give them, if their children should ask the meaning of this service, they were to say, "It is the sacrifice of the Lord's passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he ·smote the Egyptians, and ·delivered our houses." And at midnight the Lord smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of ·Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the ·captive that was in the ·dungeon; and all the firstborn of cattle. And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was ·a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead. Pharaoh then called for Moses and Aaron, and told them to depart with the children of Israel; and to take with them their flocks and herds. The Israelites ·borrowed jewels from the Egyptians, silver and gold, and raiment. They departed from *Rameses* in Goshen. They numbered about ·600,000 men on foot, besides children. The period which elapsed from the time of the call of Abraham to the departure of the Israelites from Egypt was ·four-hundred-and-thirty years. God had ·foretold this bondage of his descendants to Abraham.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

God instituted—appointed; established by his command.

passover—a solemn feast commemorative of the *passing over* the houses of the Israelites when the destroying angel smote the first-born of Egypt.

lamb—the lamb was to be without blemish.

unleavened—unfermented; there was not sufficient time for the fermentation of the dough from the moment when Pharaoh commanded the Israelites to leave Egypt to the time of their actual departure.

first-born—the eldest male-child of a family; the expression first-born is some-

times expressive of great dignity. The first-born of the sacred animals died also, and we are informed, that when a sacred animal died the lamentation was louder than on the death of a child.

every year—so that this great event should not be forgotten by the Hebrew nation. The feast of the passover not only referred to the great events in Egypt, but it also prefigured the coming and sacrifice of Him who is our paschal lamb—the lamb of God, without sin, which taketh away the sin of the world. 1 Cor. v. 8; John i. 29.

smote & delivered—smote the Egyptians with plagues, and not the Israelites—smote the first-born of Egypt, and delivered Israel from their long and bitter bondage.

Pharaoh—this was not the Pharaoh by whose daughter Moses was brought up.

captive—a prisoner.

dungeon—a prison-house; the prisons in the East are generally unwholesome.

a great cry—lamentation and bitter weeping in every Egyptian family. As the people went about the streets lamenting loudly when a death took place, the outcry, when every family had lost a member, must have been awful.

borrowed—not according to our idea of borrowing, that is to be returned; but asked, or demanded, without any intention or intimation of returning the articles thus obtained. The Egyptians had long profited by the slavish toil of the oppressed Hebrews; who were now leaving behind them much valuable property. The Egyptians gave readily in their panic, and the justice of the proceeding cannot be questioned, for it was by God's command.

600,000—it is computed that the entire population of the Hebrews, men, women and children at the time of their departure was not less than 2,400,000.

430 *years*—the actual stay of the Israelites in Egypt, from the time that Jacob went thither with his sons and their families to the Exodus, was 215 years; but the sojourning of the Israelites and their fathers in the land of Canaan, and in the land of Egypt was 430 years.

foretold—Lesson 7, 'vision;' 'bondage.'

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

RAMESES OR RAAMSES—a treasure-city in Egypt which the Israelites built during their bondage; it is supposed in the land of Goshen. From this place the Israelites departed, when they left Egypt, after the death of the first-born.

DEATH OF THE FIRST-BORN.

"AT MIDNIGHT THE LORD SMOTE ALL THE FIRST-BORN IN THE LAND OF EGYPT."

'Tis midnight—'tis midnight o'er Egypt's dark sky,
And in whirlwind and storm the sirocco sweeps by:
All arid and hot is its death-breathing blast—
Each sleeper breathes thick, and each bosom beats fast.

And the young mother wakes and arouses from rest,
And presses more closely her babe to her breast;
But the heart that she presses is death-like and still,
And the lips that she kisses are breathless and chill.

And the young brother clings to the elder in fear,
As the gust falls so dirge-like and sad on his ear,
But that brother returns not the trembling embrace:
He speaks not—he breathes not—death lies in his place.

And the first-born of Egypt are dying around;
'Tis a sigh—'tis a moan—and then slumber more sound:
They but wake from their sleep, and their spirits have fled—
They but wake into *life*, to repose with the *dead*.

And there lay the infant still smiling in death,
And scarce heav'd its breast as it yielded its breath;
And there lay the boy, yet in youth's budding bloom,
With the calmness of sleep—but the hue of the tomb!

And there fell the youth in the pride of his prime;
In the morning of life—in the spring-tide of crime:
And unnerv'd, is that arm and fast close'd is that eye,
And cold is that bosom which once beat so high.

And the fond mother's hope, and the fond father's trust;
And the widow's sole stay, are returning to dust:
Egypt has not a place where there is not one dead,
From the proud monarch's palace to penury's shed.

And the hearths of that country are desolate now,
And the crown of her glory is struck from her brow:
But while proud Egypt trembles, all Israel is free—
Unfetter'd—unbound as the wave of the sea.

ROGERS.

20. THE PURSUIT. PHARAOH'S HOST DROWNED.

Exodus xii. 40-xiv.

After God had given further instructions relative to the keeping of the Passover, he commanded the Israelites to sanctify their first-born unto him, as a memorial of the destruction of the first-born of Egypt. Moses took with him from Egypt the bones of Joseph. And the Lord went before the people by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light.

The Egyptians repented that they had let the Israelites go, and Pharaoh and his host pursued them. They overtook them, encamping by the *Red Sea*, beside *Pihahiroth*. And when Pharaoh and his host of chariots drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto the Lord; and they said unto Moses, "Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians,

than that we should die in the wilderness." And Moses said unto the people, "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will show to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace."

By the command of God, Moses was to lift up his rod over the sea, and the water would divide, that the Israelites might pass through the sea. The angel of the Lord then went behind the camp of the Israelites; the cloud also removed from before their face, and stood behind them. And the cloud was darkness to the Egyptians, but it gave light by night to the people of Israel; so that the one came not near the other all the night.

Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the waters were divided. The children of Israel passed through the sea on dry ground. The Egyptians pursued them with their chariots and horses. Moses, by the command of God, again stretched his rod over the sea; the waters returned, and Pharaoh's host was drowned. Thus the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

further instructions—all the congregation were to eat of the passover. Strangers and proselytes who were dedicated to God might eat of it; it was to be eaten in one house, roasted whole, & not a bone broken.

sanctify—set apart; to devote; to keep from every employment but that of the Lord's public service. Less. 24, 'instead.'

memorial—a means by which the memory of an event or person is preserved; stones, pillars, statues, are sometimes erected as memorials.

took—in obedience to Joseph's dying injunction (Less. 16); though they left Egypt in haste they did not omit this duty.

went—that is the visible tokens of God's presence, as their unerring guide and protector, accompanied them; they were thus prevented from going astray, while they had evidence that they had a more exalted leader than Moses.

repented—regretted; wished they had not let the Israelites depart: they had overcome their first grief and terror, and wished to have their slaves again in bondage.

his host—a large number of warriors; a mighty army.

encamping—preparing to pitch their tents that they might have some rest, for they had by this time walked about 100 miles.

chariots—cars on which to ride; two kinds are mentioned in the Bible—those used merely to ride in, and war-chariots.

thou—an ungrateful return to Moses for his pious and patriotic devotion to their national welfare. Such conduct is not to deter the great-minded from doing good as they find opportunity.

tell thee—long-continued oppression had bowed down their spirits, and deprived them of those aspirations for liberty and independence which men naturally feel.

fear, &c.—insensibility to danger is not here enjoined, but calm reliance on the power of God.

divide—hemmed in by mountains, no escape was left them but by the miracle which was thus wrought in their behalf; the spot at which the waters were divided cannot now be pointed out with certainty.

went behind—the pillar of fire which had gone before the Israelites was now removed to the rear; it gave light to the Israelites, while the cloud concealed them from the Egyptians.

drowned—it is by no means clear that Pharaoh perished in the Red Sea with his army.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

RED SEA—called also the Arabian Gulf, separated Arabia on the east, from Egypt and Abyssinia on the west; it is 1,400 miles in length, and averages 140 in width.

PIHAHIROTH—'opening of the valley;' the route of the children of Israel was at first direct for Canaan, but when they came to the 'edge of the wilderness' God commanded them to *turn*, an order which they obeyed, and which led them into a narrow defile—the Red Sea being on their left, and a mountain range on their right, 'shut in by the wilderness' without any means of escape, unless through the sea. The Egyptians were thus tempted to follow them to their own destruction.

SONG OF MIRIAM.

"SING TO THE LORD FOR HE HATH TRIUMPHED GLORIOUSLY; THE HORSE AND HIS RIDER HATH HE THROWN INTO THE SEA."

Ye daughters and soldiers of Israel, look back,
Where—where are the thousands who shadow'd your track—
The chariots that shook the deep earth as they roll'd—
The banners of silk, and the helmets of gold?

Where are they—the vultures, whose beaks would have fed
On the tide of your hearts ere the pulses had fled?
Give glory to God, who in mercy arose,
And strew'd mid the waters the strength of our foes.

When we travell'd the waste of the desert by day,
With his banner-cloud's motion he marshall'd our way;
When we saw the tire'd sun in his glory expire,
Before us he walk'd, in a pillar of fire.

But this morn and the Israelites' strength was a reed,
That shook with the thunder of chariot and steed:
Where now are the swords and their far-flashing sweep,
Their lightnings are quench'd in the depths of the deep.

O thou—who redeemest the weak one at length,
And scourgest the strong in the pride of their strength—
Who holdest the earth and the sea in thine hand,
And rulest Eternity's shadowy land—

To thee let our thoughts and our offerings tend,
Of virtue the Hope, and of sorrow the Friend;
Let the incense of prayer still ascend to thy throne,
Omnipotent—glorious—eternal—alone.

NEW YORK AMERICAN.

21. THE BITTER WATER. AMALEK CONQUERED.

Exodus xv.-xix.

When Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea-shore they feared the Lord, and believed the Lord, and his servant Moses. Then the Israelites sang a song of praise to God. They entered the wilderness of *Shur*, and after three days' journey came to *Marah*, where the waters were bitter. They murmured, saying, "What shall we drink?" The Lord shewed Moses a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, they were made sweet. They came to *Elim*, where were twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten palm-trees; here they encamped.

They left Elim, and came into the *Wilderness of Sin*. Here they murmured against Moses and Aaron, because they wanted bread. Then the Lord said unto Moses, "I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall gather it every day." On the sixth day they were to gather a double portion, because the morrow was the sabbath, when there should be none. A pot of the manna was laid up, and kept; so that their children might see the food with which the Lord fed them in the wilderness. God also gave them quails, saying, "At even ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread."

The Israelites again murmured against Moses, because they wanted water. God told Moses to smite the rock in *Horeb*, and water should come out of it. He did so, and the Israelites drank. The *Amalekites* came against Israel at *Rephidim*. Moses stood on the top of the hill, and held up the rod of God during the battle; when he held up his hand Israel prevailed, but when he let it down Amalek prevailed. Moses' hands were heavy; and Aaron and Hur seated him on a stone and stayed up his hands until the going down of the sun, when the Amalekites were discomfited. And the Lord said unto Moses, "Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua; for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven." After leaving Rephidim the Israelites came into the *Wilderness of Sinai*. God called to Moses out of the Mount Sinai, saying,

"Thus shalt thou tell the children of Israel, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then shall ye be a ·peculiar ·treasure unto me above all people; for all the earth is mine, and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of ·priests, and a holy nation." The Lord then commanded that the people should be sanctified, for the third day he would come down in the sight of all the people upon Mount Sinai. Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, came to him bringing with him Zipporah, Moses' wife, and her two sons, ·Gershom and ·Eliezer; Jethro ·rejoiced with Moses for all the goodness which the Lord had done to Israel. By the advice of Jethro Moses appointed ·rulers to assist him in the government of the people. Jethro returned to his own land, and Moses went up into the Mount Sinai.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

murmured—grumbled; complained; reproached Moses again.

bread—the dough and other food which they had brought with them out of Egypt had now been consumed.

heaven—the sky; the clouds. Lesson 1, 'heaven,' and 'firmament.'

double—two-fold; the quantity required for two days. This miracle was repeated weekly for forty years in order to preserve inviolate the Sabbath, or rest of the Lord; and in attestation of its sanctity.

manna—the name of the 'bread from heaven' on which the Israelites were fed for forty years. When first it was seen by them they exclaimed Man-hu, 'What is it?' from this question arose its name.

quails—the quail is a bird similar in form and habits to the partridge, but not so large. At this season, spring, the quails migrate in immense flocks from Asia into Europe; a strong wind would therefore take them out of their direct route, and bring them over the camp of Israel, about which they fell from fatigue.

rock—St. Paul refers to this rock as a type of Christ. 1 Cor. x. 4.

rod of God—that which was once the humble staff of Moses when tending the sheep of Jethro, is here called 'the rod of God,' because of its connexion with the miracles performed by the Lord in Egypt and in the wilderness.

prevailed—overcame; gained the advantage.

Hur—one of the chief men in Israel; he was the son of Caleb. Less. 25, 26, and 32.

discomfited—routed; compelled to flee.

write—Moses was commanded to *write in a book*—this is the first mention of writing that we find in Scripture.

memorial—a thing to be remembered by. Lesson 20.

rehearse—repeat; make it known; let it not be forgotten.

Joshua—'the Lord saves;' he was the captain of the army of Israel at the battle with the Amalekites; he is called the minister of Moses, and he was the leader of the Israelites after the death of Moses. Lessons 29 and 30.

utterly—completely; none shall remain.

remembrance—the remembrance of their country which cannot now be determined with certainty; while that of their deeds and doom was *written* by Moses.

peculiar—particular; pre-eminent; select; having special advantages.

treasure—wealth; riches; they should be the preservers of the riches of divine revelation, and of the true worship of God.

priests—their sacrifices being according to God's appointment were acceptable unto him; while the sacrifices of the heathen were abomination in his eyes.

Gershom—'a stranger;' his father thus named him, "because," said he, "I have been an alien in a strange land."

Eliezer—'God my help:' at his birth Moses felt secure from the "sword of Pharaoh," therefore he expressed his gratitude to God in the name he gave to his second son.

rejoiced—this shows that Jethro was a worshipper of the true God; it is generally believed that he was a descendant of Abraham. The Kenites and the Rechabites descended from Jethro; they afterwards lived among the Jews and became proselytes.

rulers—by Jethro's advice they were to be able men, such as fear God, men of truth and hating covetousness.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

SHUR—a sandy tract of wilderness, west of Arabia Petrea, and between Canaan and Egypt. Hagar fled to this wilderness the first time she left her mistress.

MARAH—'bitterness;' a place in the Wilderness of Shur to which the Israelites came after three days' journey from the Red Sea, and where they found the waters so bitter that neither they nor their cattle could drink of it. It is supposed that the bitterness was not permanently removed, for travellers inform us of a well, named *Hawarah*, the waters of which are now bitter, the locality also corresponding with that of Marah.

ELIM—the place in the wilderness of Sin at which the Israelites encamped after they left Marah.

WILDERNESS OF SIN—the wilderness which the Israelites traversed between Elim and Mount Sinai. In this wilderness God first sent the Israelites manna, and commanded the observance of the Sabbath.

HOREB—refers to a mountain district, or group of mountains, from one of which, called Sinai, an extensive and terrible wilderness derived its name. The *Mount Horeb* where Moses fed Jethro's flocks was another part of this mountain chain. Lesson 17.

AMALEKITES—a powerful tribe, living chiefly by predatory warfare; they were descended from Ham; their country lay towards the southern extremity of the land of Canaan. They were the first of nations to oppose the Israelites in their progress to Canaan. Their existence, as a nation, was endangered by Saul, and extinguished in the time of David. Lessons 45 and 53.

REPHIDIM—one of the noted encampments of the Israelites in the wilderness, near to Mount Horeb, where they wanted water, and complained bitterly to Moses for bringing them out of Egypt.

WILDERNESS OF SINAI—the desert which the Israelites traversed between Rephidim and Taberah. In this wilderness Jethro visited Moses, judges were appointed, the Tabernacle was erected, and Aaron and his sons were consecrated. This wilderness had its name from one of the principal mountains of the Horeb range named Sinai.

THE HEALING OF MARAH'S WATERS.

"THEY COULD NOT DRINK OF THE WATERS OF MARAH FOR THEY WERE BITTER."

Marah! whate'er the tree might be
Which made thy bitter waters sweet,
The christian in its power may see
Of power divine an emblem meet.

Full many a cup from which the lip
Draws back as from a poisoned bowl,
Through love's divine discipleship
Is rendered grateful to the soul.

The world's distaste, pride's heartless scorn,
A toilsome life, perchance a grave,
Are things as loveless and forlorn
As ever was thy bitterest wave.

But these endure'd for Jesus' sake,
Are render'd, through his love divine,
A cup 'tis pleasure to partake,
Change'd by his power like Cana's wine.

The tree which Marah's waters heal'd,
Which sweetness gave, or could restore,
Is of his cross a type reveal'd,
Which he who bears repines no more.

O may this love in us abound
Guide to our Elim's happy shore,
Where wells for every tribe are found,
By living palm-trees shadow'd o'er!

BARTON.

22. THE DELIVERY OF THE LAW.

Exodus xx. 1-21.

The people were sanctified and gathered around the mountain, and the third day there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud, so that all the people that were in the camp trembled. And God spake all these words, saying, "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

1. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

2. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

3. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

4. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days

shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

5. Honour thy father and thy mother; that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

6. Thou shalt not kill.

7. Thou shalt not commit adultery.

8. Thou shalt not steal.

9. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

10. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's."

When the people saw the Law delivered amidst thunders and lightnings, and the mountain smoking, and heard the noise of the trumpet, they feared exceedingly and stood afar off. The glory of God was on Mount Sinai six days, and on the seventh day God called Moses into the mount, and he remained there forty days. Then God gave him the two tables of stone, with the Ten Commandments written on them.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

sanctified—externally purified.

God spake—the voice of the Lord God was heard speaking out of the fire; the commandments were spoken audibly, so loud as to be heard by the immense multitude gathered round the mount, but no similitude or form was seen whence that voice proceeded.

I am, &c.—God proposes himself as the sole object of religious worship.

jealous—God will not allow half-heartedness in his service; people cannot give themselves partly to God and partly to the world.

upon the, &c.—that is if their character [illegible] of their fathers—haters of God.

[illegible]—to dislike those habits and practices which are pleasing to God is to dislike him; to prefer any pleasure to that of worshipping God in spirit and in truth is to hate him. Luke x. 16.

in vain—unnecessarily; thoughtlessly.

holy—separate; implying that it was not to be a day of labour.

nor, &c.—this blessed provision for the advantage of God's creatures extends to the domestic animals which labour for man, and to those persons who are strangers to religion, as well as to faithful servants of God.

hallowed—consecrated; set apart for religious service.

honour—respect; reverence; esteem; obey.

that thy—filial piety, or the cultivation and practice of the domestic virtues, draw down God's blessing; undutiful children are generally godless, and as the condition upon which God promised to preserve Canaan to the Israelites was obedience to his commands, so any violation of them would render their possession of it less secure.

covet—to long for; to desire earnestly that which is another's.

glory—a brilliant and splendid display. Psalm xix. 1; Less. 23, 'glory.'

Ten Commandments—the first forbids idolatry in its worst form—worshipping any other being or thing than God; the second forbids the making of any supposable likeness of the Great Being for the purpose of worshipping God through a representation; the third inculcates the utmost reverence for the name of God, forbidding its use in a light, thoughtless, or unnecessary manner; the fourth commands scrupulous abstinence from manual labour on the sabbath, and the entire dedication of the day to the Lord's service; these four commandments teach our duties to God. The fifth enjoins on children the duty of obedience to parents, and adds the promise of a blessing to those who observe it: the sixth forbids anger, hatred, revenge, and such other feelings as lead to murder; the seventh forbids all uncleanness and pollution in thought word, or act, for these sins are included in adultery; the eighth forbids injustice, cheating, evading the payment of debts, and all extravagance under the term theft; the ninth forbids lying, deceit, equivocation slander, backbiting, talebearing; and the tenth forbids us to wish to possess the goods of another, including discontent, ambition, self-love, envy, which are all sources of covetousness. These six commandments show us our duties to our fellow-creatures.

THE SPIRITUAL LAW.

"BUT THE WORD IS VERY NIGH THEE, IN THY MOUTH AND IN THY HEART, THAT THOU MAYST DO IT."

Say not the law divine
Is hidden from thee, or afar remov'd;
That law within would shine,
If there its glorious light were sought and lov'd.

Soar not on high,
Nor ask who thence shall bring it down to earth;
That vaulted sky
Hath no such star, didst thou but know its worth.

Nor launch thy bark
In search thereof upon a shoreless sea,
Which has no ark,
No dove to bring this olive-branch to thee.

Then do not roam
In search of that which wandering cannot win,
At home! At home!
That word is plac'd, thy mouth, thy heart within.

Oh! seek it there,
Turn to its teachings with devoted will;
Watch unto prayer,
And in the power of faith this law fulfil.

BARTON.

23. THE GOLDEN CALF. THE TABERNACLE.

Exodus xxxii.-xl.

While Moses was in the mount, the people became ·impatient; and Aaron, at their desire, made them a golden ·calf, which they ·worshipped. God told Moses of the heinous sin which the people had committed; and he said, "This is a ·stiff-necked people, now therefore let me alone that my wrath may wax hot against them; and I will make of thee a great nation." And Moses ·besought the Lord for the people; reminding him of his promises to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, that he would multiply their seed as the stars, and give them the land of Canaan. Then the Lord ·repented him of the ·evil which he said he would do unto them. Moses then came down with the two tables of stone in his hand; but when he saw the people ·dancing, and worshipping the golden calf, he was greatly grieved, and he ·threw down the two tables of stone, and broke them. He ·reproached Aaron: and according to God's command, he appointed the ·Levites to punish the Israelites for this sin. Three thousand of those who worshipped the calf were slain by the Levites.

Moses again besought the Lord to ·pardon the people; but God said, "Whosoever hath sinned, him will I ·blot out of my book." God then sent a plague among them. The Lord also refused to go with them up to Canaan. The people mourned for their sin, and prayed that God would forgive them. Moses also entreated the Lord to go with them. The Lord then consented to lead the people.

The Lord wrote again the Ten Commandments on two tables of stone, and gave them to Moses. God directed two ·wise-hearted men, Bezaleel and Aholiab, to ·construct the ·Tabernacle; the people brought gold and silver, brass, wood, and other free-offerings for the work, more than enough, and the tabernacle was made with its ·curtains and coverings according to all that the Lord commanded. Bezaleel and Aholiab also made the vessels and furniture for the tabernacle; the ·Ark was made of ·shittim-wood; the ·mercy-seat —which was the lid or covering of the ark, was of pure gold; and on it small winged figures, called ·cherubim, were placed.

The ·table was made of shittim-wood, and the dishes, spoons, and covers, which were kept on it, of pure gold. The ·candlestick, with six branches, was made of pure gold; the ·incense-altar was of shittim-wood, overlaid with gold; the altar of ·burnt-offering was of shittim-wood, overlaid with brass; and the vessels of the altar—the pots, shovels, basons, flesh-hooks, and fire-pans, were made of brass; the laver, which held water, in which the priests washed their hands and feet was also made of brass. ·Vestments were made for the priests; the chief of these were the ·ephod, with its ·breastplate of precious stones, the ·robe, the ·broidered coat, the ·girdle, and the ·mitre.

After all was finished the tabernacle was erected in the wilderness; the coverings were put on it, the furniture and vessels were anointed and placed within it, and the tabernacle was ·consecrated to the Lord. Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the ·glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And when the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the children of Israel went onward in their journeys; but if the cloud was not taken up, then they journeyed not till the day that it was taken up.

God chose Aaron and his sons to be priests. They were to offer prayers and sacrifices to God for the people. Moses consecrated them with oil, and the blood of bulls and rams. They were required to live holy lives. God promised to ·sanctify Aaron and his sons, to serve him.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

impatient—unable to bear delay; and in the absence of Moses they desired some visible image of the Deity.

calf—in imitation of the idolatry of Egypt; where a calf, or young bullock was worshipped at their principal feasts.

worshipped—not as God, but as his representative.

stiff necked—self-willed; headstrong; obstinate.

besought—prayed earnestly.

repented—God changes not his purposes as man does, nor regrets as though he had committed an error; but he is moved with compassion towards the miserable, or he is entreated by their prayers, and does not execute his threatenings. Ezekiel xviii. 21-32.

evil—harm; injury; destruction.

dancing—according to the custom of the Egyptians at their religious festivals. This custom was followed in ancient times not only by idolaters but by the worshippers of the True God. 2 Sam. vi. 14; Ps. xxx. 11. This sacred dancing was not for amusement.

threw down—from a sudden and powerful emotion of displeasure.

reproached—severely blamed; chided.

Levites—descendants of Levi. Lesson 32, 'Levites.'

pardon—forgive; pass by without punishment.

blot out—take them from the living; just as the names of those who died were blotted out from the registry of their respective tribes. Less. 26, 'die.'

wise-hearted—skilful in design and execution.

construct—form; erect; build.

tabernacle—tent of the Lord; it had moveable walls of boards, and within it the services of God's worship were performed until the completion of Solomon's temple. Lesson 68.

curtains—to divide the tent, and to separate the most holy from the holy place; also for covering it, and for hanging before the entrance.

ark—a chest in which were deposited the pot of manna (Lesson 21) and the tables of the law; it was placed in the inner division of the tabernacle; the ark was overlaid with gold.

shittim-wood—considered to be a species of acacia which grows abundantly in the deserts of Arabia.

mercy-seat—the lid or covering of the ark. It was so called because a cloud rested upon it indicative of the presence of Jehovah. Before it the high priest stood to ask counsel of the Lord and blessings for the people.

cherubim—small figures with the human face, and the wings of a bird; they were placed at each end of the mercy-seat, covering it with expanded wings.

table—upon it were placed twelve loaves of new bread every Sabbath, the old loaves having been previously removed by the priests. Leviticus xxiv. 8. These loaves were set before God in gratitude for his bounty, and as a lively emblem of the oneness of the twelve tribes—for they were all one bread. The priests ate of this bread; but it was unlawful for others to do so. Less. 48, 'hallowed.'

candlestick—the seven sockets were daily filled with pure olive oil, and the lights were certainly kept burning from sunset until sunrise, and probably during the day also.

incense-altar—incense was composed of gums & spices which God expressly named; frankincense being the chief ingredient. None but the priests were to burn it, and they were to burn it morning and 'evening before the Lord.'

burnt-offering—the sacrifice; a type of the sacrifice of Christ for our sins.

vestments—garments; priestly robes.

ephod—a small cloak made of linen for the ordinary priests; of cotton, coloured with crimson, purple, and blue, for the High Priest. On each shoulder of the ephod was a precious stone, on which were engraved the names of the twelve tribes, six on each.

breastplate—the breastplate formed the front part of the ephod, it was set with twelve precious stones in frames of gold, bearing the names of the twelve tribes. It is believed that upon it were presented visible manifestations of the Divine Will with reference to any inquiry made by the priest.

robe—a long linen gown of light blue, all of one piece, with a hole at the top for the head to pass through, and on each side for the arms. To this robe bells and pomegranates were attached.

broidered coat—a robe with sleeves to the wrists, it was worn both by the high priest and the ordinary priests.

girdle—this was made of fine twined linen, embroidered with blue, purple, and scarlet; it was long enough to be wound several times round the body, and was worn over the coat.

mitre—a turban of fine linen with a plate of pure gold in front, on which was inscribed "HOLINESS TO THE LORD."

consecrated—formally set apart for God's service.

glory—the cloud was the token of God's presence. Lesson 22.

sanctify—Lesson 20. The priesthood was from this time vested in the sons of Aaron, and continued in his family till Christ came. The other families of the tribe of Levi had duties assigned to them connected with the service of the tabernacle, but they were not eligible for the priesthood.

WAITING FOR DIVINE GUIDANCE.

"AND WHEN THE CLOUD WAS TAKEN UP FROM THE TABERNACLE, THEN THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL JOURNEYED."

How beautiful the lessons taught
By Israel's journeyings still appear;
With what divine instruction fraught,
For christian pilgrims to revere.

And many a law whose influence sway'd
The earlier chosen of the Lord,
Divinely understood, may aid
Our holy progress Zion-ward.

Have we no ark in this our day?
Are tent and tabernacle gone?
No cloud to tell us when to stay?
No radiant light to lead us on?

What if those outward signs are fled,
Their hidden meaning long shall last,
And souls, by Christ their Captain led,
Learn present wisdom from the past.

Such when the cloud has veil'd from sight
Their ark within, awhile must rest,
And wait the dawning of that light
Whose guidance heretofore has blest.

But when the fire with brightness burns,
And when the shadowy cloud is gone,
These, as the light of grace returns,
In hope and gladness journey on.

BARTON.

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24. NADAB AND ABIHU SLAIN. THE LEVITES.

Leviticus ix.-Numbers x.

When Aaron made his first offerings to the Lord for himself, and for the people, as Moses commanded him, the glory of the Lord appeared unto all the people, and there came a fire out from before the Lord, and consumed the burnt-offering upon the altar, which when all the people saw they shouted and fell upon their faces.

Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them

not. And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord. The people took the bodies of Nadab and Abihu and buried them outside of the camp. God then commanded that the priests should not drink wine nor strong drink when they went into the Tabernacle, lest they should die.

God gave Moses many laws for the Israelites. Some of them are called the ceremonial law; they relate to sacrifices and offerings in general, to religious feasts and fasts, to cleansings of various kinds, to forbidden food and forbidden pleasures. The principal offerings were the Burnt-offering, Meat-offering, Peace-offering, Sin-offering, and Trespass-offering. Another class of laws were for the guidance of the judges and rulers in the government of the nation; these laws are called the civil code. All these ordinances and laws the Israelites were commanded strictly to observe.

Two men strove together in the camp, and one of them blasphemed and cursed God. He was put into prison. Moses inquired of the Lord how he was to be punished. God said he was to die. The people took him outside the camp, and stoned him until he died. His mother was Shelomith, an Israelitish woman, but his father was an Egyptian.

The descendants of Levi were called Levites. When the children of Israel journeyed in the Wilderness of Sin, God said the Levites were to serve him in the Tabernacle. He accepted them instead of the firstborn of the Israelites. Moses consecrated them. Their business was to instruct the people, to wait on the priests, and to take care of all things belonging to the tabernacle. The sons of Levi were Gershon, Kohath, and Merari; their descendants constituted the three orders of Levites; the Gershonites had charge of all the coverings, hangings, and curtains of the tabernacle; they were to encamp on the western side of the tabernacle. The Kohathites were appointed to carry the ark and the sacred vessels, the table, and the candlesticks: they were to encamp on the southern side of the tabernacle. The Merarites had the care of the boards, pillars and sockets, of the tabernacle, and of the court round about; they were to encamp on the northern side of the tabernacle.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

fire—probably the mode by which God testified his acceptance of Abel. Less. 2, 'accepted;' & Less. 81, 'fire.'

censer—a pan, or small vase, used for carrying the fire in which the incense was burned from the altar to other places.

strange—irregular; the fire they used was not taken from the altar, but from fire in common use.

devoured—consumed; burned up. Less. 88, 'consumed.'

when—perfect sobriety in all who conducted the service of the Lord was henceforward enjoined, which leads to the conclusion that Nadab and Abihu were drawn into the sin of which they had been guilty by an improper indulgence in wine.

laws—rules; directions to be observed.

burnt offering, &c.—with the exception of the peace-offering, which was a sacrifice of gratitude for mercies received, or of supplication for blessings needed, the other offerings were atonements for sin.

code—book; body, or series of laws.

ordinances—observances; ceremonies ordered to be observed.

stoned—this horrid mode of destroying life was inflicted on idolaters, blasphemers, sabbath-breakers, and rebellious children; the witnesses against them were required to commence the dreadful punishment, after which the assembled multitude completed it. Lesson 26, 'stoned.'

instead—it was commanded that the first-born of all the tribes should be devoted to God, as Israel's expression of gratitude for their deliverance from the destroying angel; but now God chose the tribe of Levi, and accepted them for his service instead of the first-born of all Israel. Less. 20, 'sanctify.'

constituted—formed of parts or sections.

THE STRANGE OFFERING.

"AND THERE WENT OUT FIRE FROM THE LORD AND DEVOURED THEM."

This is the abode where God doth dwell,
  This is the gate of Heaven,
The shrine of the Invisible,
  The Priest, the Victim given.

O holy seat, O holy fane,
  Where dwells the Omnipotent,
Whom the broad world cannot contain,
  Nor Heaven's high firmament.

Here, where the unearthly guest descends
  To hearts of innocence,
And sacred love her wing extends
  Of holiest influence.

Let no unhallow'd thought be here
  Within that sacred door;
Let nought polluted dare draw near,
  Nor tread the awful floor;

Or, lo! the avenger is at hand,
And at the door doth stand!

CHILD'S CHRISTIAN YEAR.

25. MIRIAM'S LEPROSY. THE SPIES' REPORT.

Numbers x. 33-xiii.

When the children of Israel journeyed from Mount Sinai, the ark of the ·covenant went before them three days' journey to seek for a resting place for them. And when the ark set forward, Moses said, "·Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee." And when it rested, he said, "Return, O Lord, to the many thousands of Israel."

The people again complained, and the Lord was greatly displeased; he sent down fire, which consumed many of them. Moses prayed for them, and the fire was quenched. The place was called *Taberah*. They came to *Kibroth-hataavah;* there they murmured for flesh, God was angry and sent them quails; the people ate them and were ·afflicted with a great plague; and many died. Moses complained of the great burden of governing the people; God appointed seventy ·elders to assist him. The spirit of God which rested upon Moses descended on the seventy elders, and they ·prophesied. Two of them, called Eldad and Medad, did not go into the tabernacle, but taught in the camp; Joshua desired Moses to forbid them from prophesying, but Moses would not; he said, "Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them!" Miriam and Aaron ·spake against Moses, because he had ·married an *Ethiopian* woman. For this the Lord ·punished Miriam with ·leprosy; she became white as snow, and was shut out of the camp for ·seven days.

God commanded twelve men to be sent to search Canaan; a man out of each tribe. Moses therefore sent twelve men, that were heads of the people, from *Kadesh-barnea;* and he said unto them, "Go see the land what it is; and the people that dwelleth therein, whether they be strong or weak, few or many; and what the land is that they dwell in, whether it be good or bad; and what cities they be that they dwell in, whether in tents, or strong holds; and what the land is, whether it be fat or lean, whether there be wood therein or not, and be of good courage, and bring of the fruit of the land."

So they went up, and searched the land, and after forty days, they returned. They brought a bunch of grapes from *Eshcol*, so large, that two men were required to carry it. All the spies said that Canaan was a good land,—a land flowing with milk and honey. Caleb and Joshua, two of the spies, wanted the people to go and take possession of it; but the ten told them they were not able. They said, "The cities are strong, and the people who dwell therein are giants." The people believed the false report, and lifted up their voice and wept that night.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

covenant—the ark was so called because it contained the tables of the law on which were inscribed the terms of agreement between Jehovah and the children of Israel; by the observance of which they should have secured to them possession of Canaan, the privilege of being a peculiar people unto God, and all the temporal blessings connected therewith. Jer. xxxi. 31-34.

Rise up, &c.—whether the people moved forward or rested Moses offered a prayer to God.

afflicted—punished for their murmuring.

elders—a selection from the large number of elders already recognised by the several tribes. Lesson 18, 'elders.'

prophesied—spoke with the authority of God's messengers, or that of appointed teachers.

spake against—they were jealous of the extraordinary favour bestowed upon him by Jehovah.

married—the wife of Moses was the daughter of Jethro, a priest of Midian, (Lesson 17) in Hebrew she is called a Cushite; this term is generally applied to the Ethiopians of Arabia.

punished—Miriam was evidently the chief offender, as Aaron was not included in the punishment.

leprosy—a loathsome and contagious disease in the skin, still common in Syria and the East; it especially affects the knees and elbows, and sometimes the whole body. There were several kinds of leprosy; in this case, and in those of Gehazi and Uzziah, the disease was a judgment inflicted by the Almighty. Lessons 91 and 104.

seven—this number of days was appointed for her cure.

two men—it is generally supposed that the grapes were borne on a staff between two men, not because of the size of the cluster, but that the grapes might not be bruised. Travellers state that some of the species of grapes of Palestine and Syria are extraordinarily large, and also that the bunches are larger than those of France and Italy; the valley of Eshcol still produces grapes of large size and delicious flavour.

flowing with—a phrase proverbial of great abundance.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

TABERAH—'burning;' a place of encampment in the Wss. of Paran.

KIBROTH-HATTAAVAH—'graves of lust;' the encampment of the Israelites at which they lusted for flesh.

ETHIOPIA—southern Arabia was thus called.

KADESH-BARNEA—a city near the wilderness of Paran on the southern border of the promised land. From Kadesh-barnea the Israelites had to turn back into the wilderness, when condemned to wander therein forty years for their rebellions.

ESHCOL—'a cluster of grapes;' when the land was divided, the valley of Eshcol lay between Simeon and Dan.

"MY COVENANT..TO GIVE THEM THE LAND OF THEIR PILGRIMAGE."

Pilgrim to the land of rest,
Canaan fair beyond the skies,
Through the desert oft distress'd,
Where the fiery serpent flies.

Zion's road's a chequer'd scene,
Sorrows mingle with our joy,
Lights and shadows intervene,
Here a song and there a sigh.

Earth, 'tis but a howling waste,
Storms of pungent sorrows blow,
Waters bitter to the taste,
From the brooks of Marah flow.

Forward press through sore dismay,
Griefs, and groans, and heavy woes,
Flame by night, and shade by day,
Still the cloudy pillar goes.

See the wat'ry deep divides,
Pharaoh's host to bury there,
Still the flaming pillar guides,
Leads the van, and guards the rear.

Thus the dreary path they trod,
Follow'd by the cloud and flame,
Murmur'd oft against their God,
We, alas! have done the same.

Did they kiss their calves of gold,
Bow and shameful homage pay?
Let it ne'er in Gath be told,
We have kiss'd them every day.

Thou art still our cov'nant God,
Let thy guiding pillar show,
While we tread the self same road,
Where to stand, and when to go.

Eshcol's clusters we have eat,
Sweet their taste, their number few;
Lord, thy visits now repeat,
While we pass the desert through.

Soon with yonder blood-bought crowd,
We shall sing on Canaan's shore,
Songs of triumph, sweet and loud,
War with Amalek no more.

KENT.

26. ISRAEL'S REBELLION. OF KORAH, &c.

Numbers xiv.-xxii.

Then all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron; and the whole congregation said, "Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness! Let us make us a captain and let us return into Egypt." Then Joshua and Caleb spake unto all the people, saying, "Rebel not ye against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land; their defence is departed from them, and the Lord is with us." But all the congregation spake of stoning them. The glory of the Lord then appeared in the tabernacle before all the people; and the Lord said unto Moses, "How long will this people provoke me? I will smite them with a pestilence." Moses prayed to the Lord not to destroy them. God then said that all the men that came out of Egypt, except Caleb and Joshua, should wander forty years, and die in the wilderness, and that their children should possess the land. God commanded the Israelites to turn back again into the wilderness. The unfaithful spies died of the plague. The next day the people marched towards Canaan, contrary to God's will. They were met by the Canaanites and the Amalekites, who defeated the Israelites, and slew many of them. The Lord permitted the Israelites to be thus punished because of their great disobedience.

While the Israelites continued in the *Wilderness of Paran* a man was found gathering sticks on the Sabbath day. God commanded him to be stoned. God had declared that all who worked on the Sabbath should surely die.

Korah, Dathan, Abiram, and On rebelled against Moses and Aaron. The earth opened and swallowed them up; and fire came and devoured two-hundred-and-fifty men who offered incense with them. The next day the people began to rebel, but God sent a plague among them, and 14,700 died. According to God's command a rod for each tribe was placed in the tabernacle; and on the next day it was found that Aaron's rod had budded, blossomed, and brought forth almonds. The Lord said, "Bring Aaron's rod again before the testimony, to be kept for a token against the rebels." The rod was a token that God had chosen Aaron and his house to be priests, and none other.

the whole congregation—though the Israelites were divided into twelve distinct tribes, they are, nevertheless, spoken of as but one assembly.

Would God, &c.—they wished they had died in Egypt, or in the wilderness.

Let us, &c.—they came to the resolve that instead of going forward to Canaan they would go back to Egypt. Did they expect that the cloud of God would lead them, and the manna fall to sustain them in their rebellion?

provoke—excite to wrath; arouse to indignation; not that Jehovah was provoked as man is, but that their conduct deserved his anger and punishment.

pestilence—a destructive and contagious disease.

wander—and die—this was the sad punishment for their unbelief and disobedience. Heb. iii. 17-iv. 2. Lesson 23, 'blot out.'

turn back—the first command to turn back (Lesson 20, 'Pihahiroth') was to bring them into a position of peril where their faith should be tried, and where they should experience God's power and goodness; but now the command to turn is for their punishment. They had arrived within a short distance of the southern border of the land of Canaan; and they were ordered to turn back into the 'terrible wilderness' through which the Lord had safely led them.

contrary—instead of humbling themselves before God, they rashly proceeded to further acts of disobedience.

Korah—Korah was of the tribe of Levi; he grew jealous of the dignity conferred upon the family of Amram—Moses being the chosen lawgiver, and Aaron & his sons the appointed priests.

Dathan, &c.—these leaders were of the tribe of Reuben, Jacob's eldest son; probably they were displeased with the pre-eminence of Moses and Aaron, and submitted to Korah's guidance.

the earth, &c.—Moses proposed to try the question of his divine mission and authority by submitting the decision to God; he therefore separated the people from the rebels, saying, that if Korah and his company should die a natural death then the Lord had not sent him. As soon as the separation was complete the judgments of God fell on the rebels.

offer incense—the spiritual leadership was the subject of contention. Korah and his company advanced the plea that all the congregation were holy—any of them being equally acceptable to God as priests and teachers. This opinion was refuted by the sudden destruction of the rebels.

rod—a shepherd's staff; the great mass of the people having become disaffected, a plague was not only sent among them, but a miracle was performed in order to shew that the spiritual guidance of Israel was vested in the tribe of Levi and in the family of Aaron. The rods were emblematical of spiritual leadership. Psalm xxiii. 4; Isaiah xl. 10,11. John x. 11-14.

almond—the Hebrew name of the almond-tree denotes its hasty growth & early maturity; it grows extensively in Palestine, and around its borders, and blossoms very early in the year, so early as January; it is supposed that the rods of all the chiefs were made of this tree; the miracle of Aaron's rod alone budding, blossoming, and bearing fruit at the same time determined the controversy as to the priesthood; there were no more disputes or rebellions on this subject.

testimony—meaning the ark of the testimony, or ark of the covenant. Less. 25, 'covenant.' The tables of the Law constituted the covenant, or agreement, between God and the people.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

WILDERNESS OF PARAN—lay south of Beersheba, and was near to Edom and the wilderness of Zin. Into this wilderness Hagar and Ishmael went when expelled by Abraham. Lesson 9. The Israelites entered this wilderness after leaving Mount Sinai; it is called by Moses, "the great and terrible wilderness."

"NOW ALL THESE THINGS HAPPENED UNTO THEM FOR ENSAMPLES, AND THEY ARE WRITTEN FOR OUR ADMONITION."

When Israel's host belov'd of God,
From Egypt sought the desert dread,
By day the cloud before them sped,
By night the fiery pillar led;
Unhurt the Red Sea depths they trod;
He rain'd down bread from Heaven's blue height,
He bade the rock yield water bright,
Till promis'd Canaan met their sight,
With blushing vine and fertile sod.

We seek a land of more delight
Than aught that promis'd Canaan gave;
We have escape'd from sin's dark grave,
Have pass'd the pure baptismal wave;
Christ leads us on by day and night,
The Bread that feeds our weariness,
The Rock that, in the wilderness,
Still gushes pure and free to bless
Our souls with spiritual might.

We must not be like Israel's band,
Who tempted God by deed and thought,
Who scorn'd the law His prophet taught,
Who loath'd the precious food he brought,
And wish'd again for Egypt's land;
His holy faith they would not hold,
But lov'd the tales the heathen told,
And made them idol gods of gold,
Provoking His almighty hand.

These things are our examples given,
That we, who walk in brighter day,
May hold our faith more pure than they;
Nor in this bad world go astray
To sin by evil passions driven;
Till He, whom type and lay foretold
In mystic signs and songs of old,
Shall lead us o'er life's dreary wold,
Safe to our happy home in Heaven.

27. MIRIAM'S DEATH. THE FIERY SERPENTS.

Numbers xx. xxi.

Then came the whole congregation of Israel to *Kadesh*, in the Wilderness of Zin; here Miriam died and was buried. At this place there was no water for the congregation, and they gathered themselves together, against Moses and against Aaron. God commanded Moses to speak to the rock, and water should come forth. Moses smote the rock twice, saying unto the people, "Hear now, ye rebels, shall we fetch water out of the rock." Moses thus displeased God; and God told him he should not take the Israelites into Canaan.

Moses sent messengers to the king of *Edom*, to ask him to allow the Israelites to pass through his land; saying, "We will not pass through the fields, or through the vineyards, neither will we drink of the water of the wells; we will go by the king's highway, we will not turn to the right hand nor to the left, until we have passed thy borders." And Edom said, "Thou shalt not pass by me, lest I come out against thee with the sword." The people then journeyed to *Mount Hor*. Here Aaron died; and his son, Eleazar, was appointed high priest. Aaron was not permitted to enter Canaan, because he and Moses had disobeyed God. Aaron's age was one-hundred-and-twenty-two years.

The Israelites again rebelled against God and against Moses. God punished them by sending fiery serpents among them. The people acknowledged that they had sinned and asked Moses to pray unto the Lord to take the serpents away. And Moses prayed for the people. Moses was then directed to make a brazen serpent and to put it on a pole, that all those who had been bitten by the fiery serpents, when they looked up to the brazen serpent might be healed.

The Israelites sent messengers to Sihon, king of the *Amorites*, asking leave to pass through his land; but he and Og, the king of *Bashan*, came against Israel, with their armies. They were defeated, and themselves, with their armies, slain. The Israelites took possession of their countries, and cities, from the River *Arnon* to *Mount Gilead*, and all Bashan.

displeased—God will have his commands strictly observed; Moses was desired to *speak* to the rock, instead of which he *struck* it twice in a presumptuous spirit. God said, "the water shall come forth;" "Shall we fetch water," was the reprehensible language of Moses.

should not, &c.—God is no respecter of persons; the multitude who came out of Egypt were denied entrance into Canaan for their rebellion; and for one act of disobedience the honor of leading Israel into their long-promised possession was denied to Moses.

then journeyed, &c.—they did not fear the threatened assault of the warlike Edomites, but God had forbidden warfare with their brethren, the children of Esau, saying, "meddle not with them, for I will not give you of their land, no, not so much as a foot-breadth; because I have given Mount Seir unto Esau for a possession." Lesson 13.

fiery serpents—it is generally supposed that these serpents are called *fiery* on account of their *burning* bites; some commentators suppose they were winged serpents; and we are informed by ancient writers that this wilderness was formerly infested with serpents having wings.

brazen—the brazen serpent became the cause of idolatry in the time of Hezekiah. Lesson 107. Christ refers to it as a type of his own death and of the efficacy of faith in him. John iii. 14.

looked—God appointed the simplest means of cure that his gracious interference might be acknowledged, and that all who chose might avail themselves of it.

healed—several ancient writers assert, that the bite of the serpents, which abounded in this wilderness, was so venomous and deadly as to be beyond the reach of art to cure it.

possession—though Moses was not permitted to go over Jordan, he had the gratification of seeing the first fruits of God's promise, which was to put Israel in possession of a part of their inheritance.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

KADESH—not *Kadesh-barnea*, from which place the Israelites were commanded to turn back again into the wilderness; but Kadesh, near *Ezion-geber*, on the western border of the territory of Edom.

EDOM—the country to the south of Canaan, called also Idumea; it extends into Arabia Petrea and to the borders of the Red Sea; it was peopled by the descendants of Esau who are called Edomites.

MOUNT HOR—a mountain of Arabia Petrea on the borders of Edom, where Aaron died and was buried. It is said to be the highest of the mountains of Seir.

AMORITES—the descendants of Emer, or Amor, the fourth son of Canaan; they inhabited the mountainous tracts to the east of the Dead Sea. After the kings of the Amorites were slain, their territory on the east of the Dead Sea was occupied by the tribes of Reuben and Gad; and on the west by the tribe of Judah. The Gibeonites were Amorites.

BASHAN—a fertile district of Canaan, east of Jordan and the sea of Galilee; it was celebrated for its oaks, its pastures, and its cattle. Its king was a man of gigantic stature, hence his name Og, which means 'giant'.

ARNON—a river which rises in the mountains of Gilead and falls into the Dead Sea; it divided the country of the Amorites from that of the Moabites.

MOUNT GILEAD—'heap of testimony;' the mountains of Gilead lie east of the Jordan, and extend from Anti-libanus southward into Arabia Petrea.

GRACE AND SIN.

"THEY PROVOKED HIS SPIRIT SO THAT HE SPAKE UNADVISEDLY WITH HIS LIPS."

Moses, the patriot fierce, became
The meekest man on earth,
To shew us how love's quickening flame,
Can give our souls new birth.

Moses, the man of meekest heart,
Lost Canaan by self-will,
To shew, where grace has done its part,
How sin defiles us still.

Thou who hast brought me in thy fear,
Yet seest me frail at best,
O grant me loss with Moses here,
To gain his future rest!

CHILD'S CHRISTIAN YEAR.

28. BALAK AND BALAAM. IDOLATRY IN MOAB.

Numbers xxii.-xxxi.

When the people of *Moab* saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites, they were sore afraid. ·Balak, the king of Moab, sent for ·Balaam to ·curse the Israelites. At first God would not permit Balaam to go. Balak sent again, and Balaam was ·permitted to go, but he was to speak only that which God told him. On his way to Moab, the angel of the Lord met him, and he was again told not to curse the Israelites. Balak took Balaam to the top of *Mount Peor;* there instead of cursing the Israelites, he was forced to bless them and to foretell their greatness. He desired to die the death of the ·righteous, which was a good prayer from a wicked man. Balak said to Balaam, "What hast thou done unto me? I took thee to curse mine enemies, and behold, thou hast blessed them altogether." And Balaam answered, "Must I not take heed to speak that which the Lord hath put in my ·mouth? God is not a man that he should lie; neither the son of man that he should ·repent; hath he said, and shall he not do it, or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? Behold I have received commandment to bless; and he hath blessed; and I ·cannot reverse it." When Balaam had further foretold the prosperity of Israel, Balak's anger was kindled, and he ·smote his hands together,

and said, "Flee thee to thy place; I thought to promote thee to great honour, but the Lord hath kept thee back from honour." Balaam replied to Balak, "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold I cannot go beyond the commandment of the Lord."

At *Shittim*, in Moab, the Israelites were ensnared into idolatry with the *Midianites*. This was done by the advice of the wicked prophet, Balaam. For this sin God sent a plague on them and 24,000 of the people died. During the plague, Zimri, an Israelite, sinned greatly in taking a Midianitish woman named Cozbi, into his tent. Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the high priest, slew them both. Then the plague stopped, and God promised great blessings to Phinehas.

The Israelites were numbered at Shittim. Many directions were given them about dividing the land, its inheritance, their offerings, feasts, &c. To punish the Midianites, God commanded Moses to take 12,000 men, and make war against them. The Israelites slew all the men of Midian, with their kings, but spared the women. Balaam was slain in this battle.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

Balak—the same request that had been made to the king of Edom (Les. 27) was made to Balak, but he would not consent; he and the neighbouring kings were probably ignorant of the miraculous supply of food, daily provided for the Israelites, and imagined that a famine would be the result of supplying food to so large a number; they might also apprehend that admission into their territories being granted, the Israelites would then attempt to conquer their countries.

Balaam—'devourer of the people;' it is not known whether he was only a pretender, or a divinely inspired prophet; it is however certain that he was deterred from cursing the Israelites, and compelled to pronounce over them the inspired language of blessing.

curse—according to the notion of idolaters, that priests or diviners could influence the decision of their gods—Balak hoped that Balaam might, by incantations and sacrifices to the God of the Hebrews, cause the destruction of the people whose approach he dreaded.

permitted—the character of Balaam was that of a covetous and greedy man; he "loved the wages of unrighteousness," and therefore eagerly desired to obtain them from Balak. Lesson 11, 'obtained.'

righteous—alluding to the Israelites, whom he esteemed as a holy nation, or probably to the happy death of Israel after whom this people were called—an intimation which he might have obtained from God.

mouth—a plain declaration that the message he had to pronounce was not in accordance with his own feelings.

repent—not likely to reverse his decisions; he would assuredly fulfil his promise to Abraham by giving Canaan

to his posterity. In another sense repentance is sometimes ascribed to God. Lesson 23.

cannot—notwithstanding his fame as a diviner, he confessed his utter inability to influence the will of the Most High.

smote—from a feeling of bitter disappointment and rage.

the Lord—Balak was evidently ignorant of the true God, although he had heard Balaam apply the name Jehovah to the God of the Hebrews. Balaam, it appears, understood that Jehovah was the God of gods—the Almighty.

advice—he who did not dare to curse Israel, wickedly suggested a plan whereby they might be made to draw down the displeasure of God upon themselves.

great blessings—the promise of perpetual priesthood to him and his seed.

all—not the entire nation, but all that horde which was concerned in the seduction of Israel; other hordes or tribes were at a distance from this scene of destruction. Lessons 36,37.

slain—justice speedily overtook this wicked man, and that too among the people who had given themselves up to his teaching and authority.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

MOAB—'father's progeny;' the part of Arabia Petrea on the east of the Dead Sea; it was inhabited, after the gigantic race of the Emim were conquered, by the descendants of Moab, one of the sons of Lot. The territory of Sihon had belonged to the Moabites, but they were dispossessed of it by that warrior chief, who in his turn was subdued by the Israelites under Moses.

MOUNT PEOR—one of the heights of the Abarim mountains.

SHITTIM—the place in the plains of Moab where the Israelites were ensnared into idolatry by the Midianites, and the idolaters were slain.

MIDIAN—a country of Arabia Petrea, the people of which were descendants of Midian, the fourth son of Abraham and Keturah. The Moabites & Midianites were neighbours and appear to have lived on terms of friendship. The Midianites were an unsettled race, and like the Ishmaelites lived a wandering life; sometimes living by plunder, sometimes following the avocation of merchants. Lesson 14. They joined with the Moabites to obtain the services of Balaam to curse Israel; and their looser morals, arising from their unsettled habits, rendered them better agents for ensnaring the Israelites into idolatry and other sins.

BALAK AND BALAAM.

"HOW GOODLY ARE THY TENTS, O JACOB, AND THY TABERNACLES, O ISRAEL!"

Upon the hill the Prophet stood,
King Balak in the rocky vale,
Around him, like a fiery flood,
Flash'd to the sun his men of mail.

'Twas morn;—'twas noon;—the sacrifice
Still roll'd its sheeted flame to heaven;
Still on the Prophet turn'd their eyes,
Nor yet the fearful curse was given.

'Twas eve;—the flame was feeble now,
Dried was the victim's purple blood;
The sun was rushing broad and low
Upon the murmuring multitude.

"Now curse, or die!"—The gathering roar
Around him, like a tempest, came;
Again the altar stream'd with gore;
And blush'd again the sky with shame.

The prophet was in prayer;—he rose,
His mantle from his face he flung;
He listen'd, where the mighty foes
To heaven their evening anthem sung.

He saw their camp, like endless clouds,
Mix'd with the horizon's distant blue;
Saw on the plains their marshall'd crowds;
Heard the high strain their trumpets blew.

A sudden spirit on him came,
A sudden fire was in his eye;
His tongue was touch'd with hallow'd flame,
The "Curser" swell'd with prophecy.

"How shall I curse whom God hath bless'd?
"With whom he dwells, with whom shall dwell!"
He clasp'd his pale hands on his breast,
"Then, be thou blest, O Israel!"

29. CITIES OF REFUGE. DEATH OF MOSES.

Numbers xxxii.-Deuteronomy xxxiv.

The tribes of Reuben and Gad had a very great multitude of cattle; and when they saw that the land of *Jazer* and Gilead, which had been taken from Sihon and Og, were good for pasturage, they asked Moses to give them those lands for their possession. Moses told them that Canaan must be first conquered; these tribes then proposed to leave their wives and children in possession of the country, while they went fully armed before their brethren, to conquer Canaan; and then they would return and possess their land.

The Lord appointed forty-eight cities to be given to the Levites. Six of them were to be cities of refuge for those who had slain others by accident. Three of the cities, *Bezer*, *Ramoth*, and *Golan*, were on the east of Jordan, and the other

three, *Kadesh-Naphtali*, *Shechem*, and *Hebron* were on the west of Jordan. The man-slayer who had slain another unawares, might flee to a city of refuge, and remain there safe from the avenger of blood, until the death of the High Priest, when he might go abroad without fear of punishment.

God made it known that he had appointed Joshua to succeed Moses. Moses wished to go into Canaan, and prayed, saying, "I pray thee let me go over and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain and *Lebanon*." But the Lord would not permit him to go over because he had smitten the rock at *Meribah*, when God had commanded him to speak to it only. Before Moses died he repeated the Law to the Israelites; exhorted them to obedience; forbade idolatry; and prophesied of Christ. He foretold that Israel would worship idols after they entered Canaan; that they would be taken as slaves into a strange country; and after that be scattered over all the world.

Moses ascended Mount *Nebo*, and from thence he beheld the promised land. He again exhorted the Israelites to obedience. He blessed them and then died. His age was one-hundred-and-twenty years. He was buried in a valley of *Moab*. The people mourned thirty days. And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses whom the Lord knew face to face, in all the signs and the wonders, which the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land, in all that mighty hand, and in all the great terror which Moses shewed in the sight of all Israel.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

leave—God had promised protection to their wives, children, property, and lands, at those seasons when all the men of Israel were to appear before him in the place which he should choose; and as it was a duty on these men to assist their brethren when they crossed over Jordan, they relied on the same promise that their inheritance would be preserved free from the invasion of their enemies. Exodus xxxiv. 23, 24.

forty-eight—these cities were chosen out of all the tribes of Israel; the Levites were consequently dispersed throughout the entire population, thus fulfilling a great object of their appointment to the priesthood—that of being the religious instructors and judges of the people. Lesson 32, 'forty-eight.'

refuge—this protection extended only to those who had caused death by

accident; if a murderer escaped to one of these cities he was forbidden protection, the command being, "If a man come presumptuously upon his neighbour, to slay him with guile, thou shalt take him from mine altar, that he may die."

avenger—the person to whom the right belonged of avenging the blood of the deceased by slaying the offender; he was generally the nearest kinsman of the person slain. If, however, the man-slayer escaped to one of the cities of refuge, the avenger dared not harm him until the case had been investigated; when, if innocent, he was received within the city; but if guilty, he was delivered up to the avenger.

death—Jewish writers inform us that to make the homicides in the cities of refuge contented with their lot lest, growing dissatisfied, they should wish for the death of the high priest, the mother of the existing Pontiff, or other friend interested in his prosperity, usually supplied them with many of the necessaries and even with the comforts of life.

go abroad—the 'avenger' dared not pursue him. When a homicide died before the High Priest, his remains were given to his relatives to be buried among his own people.

repeated—the chief portions of the ceremonial and civil laws, as well as the moral laws. Lesson 22, 'Ten Commandments;' Lesson 24, 'laws,' 'burnt offering,' 'code,' 'ordinances.'

foretold—Lesson 35, 'served.'

taken—Lessons 108, 118, 120. This prophecy has been literally fulfilled.

buried—the Lord buried him over against Beth-peor; but this was not made known to the Israelites, the probable reason being lest future generations should attach the superstitious idea of peculiar sanctity to the spot.

face to face—apparently as closely and familiarly as one man speaks to another.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

JAZER—'he that helps;' a city at the foot of the mountains of Gilead, near a small river of the same name, which falls into the Jordan.

BEZER—was in the tribe of Reuben; it was situated in a desert part of the country, near Arabia.

RAMOTH—was in Gilead, in the portion of Gad; it was not far from the Jabbok, and but sixteen miles from Rabbah; it was in after years the scene of many wars.

GOLAN—belonged to the tribe of Manasseh; it stood a short distance west of the lake of Galilee. The district around it was afterwards called Gaulonitis.

KADESH-NAPHTALI—a city, as its name imports, in the portion of Naphtali.

SHECHEM—a city in the valley between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim. Lesson 13.

HEBRON—a very ancient city, formerly called Kirjath-arba; it was in the inheritance of Judah. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob resided at Hebron, and it was a place of much importance in the later history of the Israelites.

LEBANON—'white;' so called from its snow-capped summits; an extensive mountain range on the northern boundary of Palestine; its cedars, streams, and wines are often referred to in Scripture. At present there are not more than 500 cedars growing upon its sides, while the vines which once grew in abundance on its declivities have nearly disappeared for want of culture. Moses longed to see "that goodly mountain, even Lebanon."

MERIBAH—'strife;' one of the places where the Israelites encamped; it was on the western arm of the Red Sea. Lesson 27, 'should not.'

NEBO—one of the mountains in the Abarim range; it was opposite Jericho, and commanded an extensive view of the promised land.

MOAB—the country on the east of the Dead Sea. Lesson 28.

"AND MOSES WAS A HUNDRED-AND-TWENTY YEARS OLD WHEN HE DIED; HIS EYE WAS NOT DIM, NOR HIS NATURAL FORCE ABATED."

How lightly o'er thy guarded head
The lapse of silent years had sped,
  How poor the spoils of time,
To leave thee thus, in life's last stage,
A living greenness in old age
  So splendid and sublime.

Thy natural vigour unimpair'd,
An eye whose lustre still declar'd
  Age could not dim its ray,
How brightly must thy sun have set,
Which on the verge of night had yet
  The radiance of noon day.

Had age so vigorous and serene,
E'en in that distant era been
  A thing regarded not,
Not thus had history's page unroll'd
Thy triumph o'er decay, and told
  Thy proud, peculiar lot.

But thus conspicuously was shown
Vigour and brightness not thy own
  To life's last parting hour,
That Israel in that wond'rous sign
Of might more glorious far than thine,
  Should own Jehovah's power.

That we, who sooner reach life's close,
May in our weakness yet repose
  On his eternal truth,
Who, if to Him alone we live,
In age unto the soul can give
  Spring's renovated youth.

BARTON.

PERIOD IV.

FROM THE ENTRANCE INTO CANAAN TO THE ANOINTING OF SAUL.

B.C. 1451—B.C. 1096. 355 years.

30. JOSHUA SUCCEEDS MOSES. JERICHO TAKEN.

Joshua i.-vi.

Seventy souls of the house of Jacob went into Egypt when Joseph sent for his father, his brothers, and their families. Six hundred thousand Israelites left Egypt besides the women and the children. Of this large number only two, Joshua and Caleb, were permitted to enter into Canaan. After the death of Moses, Joshua became the leader of the Israelites as God had appointed; the Lord said unto Joshua, "Arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to the children of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses. There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life; as I was with Moses so I will be with thee; I will not fail thee nor forsake thee. Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I sware unto their fathers to give them. And this book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success." Joshua sent two spies to *Jericho;* and they came into Rahab's house, and lodged there. The king of Jericho heard of them, and he sent men to take them; but Rahab concealed the men, and afterwards let them escape through a window. Before the men left her house she told them that terror had fallen upon all the people of the land because of the Israelites; and she made them promise that when God should give the city into their hand, they would spare her life, and the lives of her parents, and brethren, and sisters.

The spies returned and told Joshua all that had happened. Early the next morning, Joshua and all the people removed from Shittim, and came to *Jordan*. The priests, carrying the Ark of God, went ·forward, and the people followed. The river Jordan ·divided, and all the Israelites passed over. As soon as the priests and the people had ·reached the opposite side, the waters returned, and flowed as before. ·Twelve stones were set up as a memorial that the waters had divided for the Israelites to pass over. The Tribes encamped at *Gilgal* and kept the passover. They ate of the old and also of the new ·corn of the land, and the manna ceased falling. The Canaanites were much afraid when they heard that God had dried up the waters of Jordan for the Israelites to pass over.

The "·captain of the Lord's host," appeared to Joshua before Jericho, and gave him directions about taking the city. He said, "The men of war shall compass the city, and go round about the city once each day, for six days. And ·seven priests shall bear before the ark seven ·trumpets of rams' horns: and the seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times, and the priests shall blow with the trumpets. And it shall come to pass, that when they make a ·long blast with the ram's horn, and when ye hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great ·shout; and the wall of the city ·shall fall down ·flat, and the people shall ascend up every man straight before him." These directions were obeyed, and the city was taken. Rahab and her family were ·saved. The city was burnt; and Joshua pronounced a ·curse on whomsoever should rebuild it.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

600,000—the exact number was 603,550, and the number of the men when they came in sight of Canaan was 601,730, so that during their wanderings in the wilderness, one generation having died, their number was diminished 1820.

two—the two faithful spies. Lessons 25,26.

give—though God had reserved Canaan for Israel in the distribution which he made of the earth among the sons of Adam, (Deut. xxxii. 8), yet he did not dispossess those nations which had first occupied it until their wickedness had become insufferable.

book of the law—an ordinary book of the present day does not convey a correct idea of the *roll*, or *volume*, referred to. These rolls or volumes among the Israelites at this time were formed of the papyrus which grew on the Nile. Lesson 17, 'bulrush.' The stalks of this plant were split, and

pressed, the edges of the leaves united with paste, and thus formed into large *sheets* to the extreme ends of which two rollers were generally attached. When written upon, the sheet was rolled up on one of the rollers; & as it was read it was rolled back upon the second roller. Many other substances were also used for these written rolls, as the bark of trees, linen, cotton-cloth, skins of animals, &c. Literature had doubtless been cultivated among the Israelites; their 'house of bondage' was at this time as greatly celebrated for its learning as for its idolatry; in Canaan too there was a 'city of letters,' *Kirjath-sepher*, which was a seat of Canaanitish learning.

meditate—to think upon; to turn over and over in the mind.

that thou mayest, &c.—reading and meditating upon the word of God must lead to love of it, and produce cheerful and active obedience.

all that is written—Joshua was not at liberty to adopt such portions of the law as might be most agreeable to him: he was to observe ALL that had been written; so are we.

Rahab—her faith is commended by Paul, and James; Heb. xi. 31; James ii. 25; both Christian and Jewish writers speak highly of Rahab; by some she is made the ancestress of Christ.

escape—Rahab's house was seated on the town wall, the spies had therefore no difficulty but to keep watch from the roof, where they were hidden among the flax-stalks from the 'pursuers' sent in quest of them.

terror—dread; great fear; God weakened the courage of the Canaanitish idolaters, thus fulfilling his promise given through Moses, "There shall no man be able to stand before you; for the Lord your God shall lay the fear of you and the dread of you upon all the land that ye shall tread upon."

promise—the condition of this promise was that she should hang in her window, on the day when Jericho should be taken, the scarlet rope by which she had let them down.

forward—before the people. The priests of the Lord took the lead with the symbol of the Divine presence.

divided—as did the Red Sea for their fathers when they left Egypt. Ex. 20. The passage of the Jordan was effected at the most unfavourable season for fording—it being the time when, from the melting of the snows of Lebanon, it had overflowed its banks; its depth and the rapidity of its current being increased from the same cause. This miracle which took place at noon, and no doubt in the presence of many of the Canaanites, was calculated to strike terror into the people of the land as well as to inspire Israel with devout confidence in God.

reached—arrived at; the priests were the last to reach the shore, although the first to enter the bed of the divided river; according to God's command, they stood in the midst until all the people had passed over. The conduct of the priests and Levites reflects great honour upon them; they showed their faith in God's word, and their forward zeal to promote the welfare of their brethren of all the other tribes.

twelve—one for each tribe; they were taken from the middle of the river.

corn—the inhabitants of the plain fled on the approach of the Israelites, leaving behind them stores of old corn, besides the produce of their fields, either just reaped, or still standing, for it was now the time of the barley-harvest.

captain, &c.—a messenger from God in human form; Joshua fell down before him when he became aware of his sacred character, and while in that position, the angel delivered the Lord's message unto him respecting the taking of Jericho.

seven—the number is of very frequent occurrence in the scriptures. Seven days completed the week of creation and rest; every seven years formed a week of years—the seventh year being a year of rest; and at the close of every week of seven years—every fiftieth year, there was a Jubilee. The clean animals were taken by Noah into the ark by sevens; there were seven years of

plenty and seven years of famine in Egypt, and there are many other illustrations of peculiarity in this number. In the present instance seven priests, bearing seven trumpets were to precede the ark while going round the city once each day for six days, and seven times on the seventh day.

trumpets—this ancient instrument was much used in various observances of the Israelites; the ram's horns were hollowed out. Trumpets were also made of brass resembling horns.

long blast—the blowing of the trumpets indicated assaults upon the besieged town, while the long blast gave the idea of a general charge which should end in the breaking down of the city defences.

shout—following out the idea referred to above, the shout being one of victory.

shall fall—when, by their obedience to the directions given, they had proved their faith in God's power to give them success by means the most unlikely, then should they find that the victory was their's.

flat—the defences were really less formidable than they appeared to be to a people not accustomed to warfare. Doubtless Jericho was an important and well-fortified city; and its early fall increased the consternation of the Canaanites, already spiritless from hearing of the miraculous passage of the Jordan, while it was an encouragement to the unwarlike Israelites.

saved—because she observed the condition required by the spies.

curse—this curse was accomplished many years after. Lesson 78.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

JERICHO—was about six miles west of the Jordan, and twenty-two north-east of Jerusalem; it is called by Moses 'the city of palm-trees;' because the palm-tree flourished in the low and very sultry plain in which Jericho stood. The 'plain of Jericho' was part of the 'plain of Jordan;' it was formerly extremely fertile though now scarcely any signs of vegetation appear.

JORDAN—this celebrated river of Canaan, rises at the foot of Mount Lebanon, and flows southward through the marshes, formerly called the waters of Merom; thence through the Lake of Cinnereth; and thence southward to the Dead Sea, into which it falls. Its length is about 150 miles. Less. 7.

GILGAL—'rolled off;' a city on the east of Jericho about 18 miles north-east from Jerusalem, and the place where the Israelites encamped after they had passed over the Jordan. It was about five miles west of the river, and it became the seat of government during the wars of Joshua. Here too the tabernacle remained till its removal to Shiloh. Lesson 32.

THE FALL OF JERICHO.

"THE MEN OF WAR SHALL COMPASS THE CITY, AND GO ROUND ABOUT THE CITY ONCE EACH DAY FOR SIX DAYS," &c.

"Ye warriors of Israel, encompass the wall
"Of this infidel city, that's destined to fall;
"Ye Levites, go carry the ark of our God
"Round the fortified bounds of this Gentile abode!
"And tell by the trump, while your voices are dumb,
"That the merciless hour of its judgment is come."

"Ye warriors of Israel! ye priests of the Lord!
"Ye last with the ark, and ye first with the sword!
"Seven times on the seventh day encompass ye round
"This city of Canaan that cumbers the ground;
"And when 'tis accomplish'd, the trump shall be blown,
"The people shall shout, and the walls be o'erthrown."

Around and around went the ark of the Lord,—
Around and around went the arm'd with the sword,—
Around and around the wide circle they passed,—
Till the city did reel like a drunkard at last,
And then came the shout, and the trumpets long sound,
And the high walls of Jericho fell to the ground.

The slaughter began—and the city was drunk
With the red streams that flow'd from the crowds as they sunk,—
From the youth that was strong, and the maid that was gay;
And the stricken in years, and the child of a day;
Till the fire of the victors the carnage consum'd,
And Jericho lay in her ashes entomb'd.

W. KNOX.

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31. ACHAN'S SIN. THE GIBEONITES.

Joshua vii.-xxii.

Achan, a man of the tribe of Judah, committed a trespass against God. He took from the spoils of Jericho, a Babylonish garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold, which he hid in the earth, within his tent. For his sin the Israelites were discomfited at *Ai*. Joshua then fell upon his face before the ark of the Lord, and said, "O Lord, what shall I say, when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies! For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear of it, and shall environ us round, and cut off our name from the earth: and what wilt thou do unto thy great name?" God told him of the sin that had been committed; and gave him directions for the discovery and punishment of the offender. Achan was discovered and put to death, and Ai was afterwards taken. Joshua then built an altar to God on *Mount Ebal*. The blessings of the law were pronounced from *Mount Gerizim*, and the cursings from Mount Ebal.

The inhabitants of *Gibeon* were afraid of the Israelites, when they heard what had been done to Jericho and to Ai; and they went to Joshua, in old shoes and old clothing, pretending that they had come from a far country. Joshua and the princes of Israel made a covenant of peace with them. Three days after, they found that the Gibeonites were neighbours, and that they had deceived them. The Israelites

would not destroy them, but made them hewers of wood, and drawers of water, for the camp and the tabernacle of Israel.

Five kings encamped against Gibeon, because its inhabitants had made peace with Israel. Joshua went to assist the Gibeonites. At this battle the sun and moon stood still at the command of Joshua, till the kings were conquered. The five kings fled to a cave at *Makkedah*. They were taken and hanged. Joshua also conquered many other kings of Canaan, and gave their land for an inheritance to Israel.

The tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half tribe of Manasseh returned to the *East of Jordan* when Canaan was conquered. They built an altar near the Jordan, for a witness that they belonged to Israel. The other tribes feared that it would lead them into idolatry, but the tribes of Reuben and Gad said their altar was not for burnt-offerings, nor sacrifices, but for a witness: and they called it *Ed*.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

Achan or *Achor*. Geographical Notes.

took—his sin consisted in appropriating what had been devoted to God. Devoted things could not be redeemed, neither could men or animals devoted to death. Lev. xxvii. 28,29. Carrying out the principle of devoting the first of every thing to God, this city, the first captured by Israel, was given up to him as a devoted city.

garment—as Babylon in after years became justly celebrated for its superior textures; so now the plain of Shinar, where Babylon afterwards stood, appears to have acquired a reputation for the manufacture of costly robes.

silver—gold—'they that will be rich fall into a temptation and a snare; for the love of money is the root of all evil' 1 Tim. vi. 9,10. 'No covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of God.' Ephes. v. 5. 'Covetousness is idolatry.' Col. iii. 5.

discomfited—though the number slain was small compared with the vast multitude of Israel, yet this repulse afforded evidence of the withdrawal of the Divine protection.

before—the ark was the emblem of God's presence and majesty; the Israelites prayed with their faces turned towards the ark, tabernacle, or temple; idolaters turn towards their idols; those who acknowledge no visible representation of God look upwards to the illimitable *space* of heaven, their idea of God's infinite character being thereby exalted.

environ—surround; enclose.

name—believing that the knowledge of the True God was sustained only by the Israelites as a nation, Joshua contemplated their extinction as fatal to the interests of true religion, and to the fulfilment of the promises made to their fathers.

discovery—this was by lot, a mode of deciding doubtful matters much resorted to in former times; the opinion being that God would cause the lot to fall on the guilty. Solomon says, "the lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord."

blessings—for obedience.

cursings—for disobedience.

old shoes—though the Gibeonites had asses, yet, as eastern travellers walk most of their journey alongside the

asses that carry their clothes, provisions, or merchandise, if their shoes had not presented an old and a worn appearance, suspicion and detection would have been the probable result.

covenant—a friendly agreement; the Israelites believed the evidence of their senses, and did not inquire of God. The elders then sat down with the princes of the Gibeonites, and ate of their victuals, according to ancient custom, in token of amity.

hewers of wood, &c.—for all Israel during the campaigns of Joshua; but only for the tabernacle service when the tribes obtained possession of their inheritance. This service was only severe at the great festivals. The Gibeonites were not slaves but tributaries.

stood still—the popular idea of the sun travelling round the earth is here expressed, but not the philosophical one that the earth revolves round its own axis; but in scripture, popular language is always adopted. There are many corroborations of this wonderful event in eastern writings—in the annals of China, in Herodotus, and in Homer.

many—thirty-one kings in all. This great number of kings for so small a territory as Canaan is not surprising, since the early nations consisted of small states independent of each other. These states generally included but one town or city, with an extent of country round it sufficient for its supplies of the fruits of the earth.

gave—Lesson 32, 'tribes.'

returned—they had been absent from their families and possessions about six years. Lesson 29, 'leave.'

altar—a huge pile of stones, intended for a witness to future generations.

feared—this state of mind was creditable to the nine tribes and a half, but, alas! they were soon led into idolatry.

but for a witness—this showed their attachment to the Mosaic institutions and also their feeling of just pride as belonging to the nation of Israel, in whom centered all the blessings promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

AI—a city of ancient Canaan between which and Bethel Abraham pitched his tent, and built an altar. It was about nine miles north of Jericho, and three miles west of Bethel.

ACHAN OR ACHOR—'distress;' the valley was called Achor from the circumstance of Achan's transgression and death.

MOUNT EBAL—a mountain in Ephraim, opposite Mount Gerizim; in the valley between them was the ancient city of Shechem.

MT. GERIZIM—a celebrated mountain in the tribe of Ephraim, near Shechem, and opposite to Mount Ebal.

GIBEON—'high;' the chief city of the Gibeonites; it was situated on a hill, about five miles north from Jerusalem. The Gibeonites were Hivites, a tribe of the Amorites, and the only people of Canaan who made peace with the Israelites.

MAKKEDAH—a city in the plain of Judah; it was one of the royal cities of the Canaanites.

EAST OF JORDAN—included the territory which belonged to Sihon and Og, but which was afterwards possessed by the Reubenites, Gadites, and half tribe of Manasseh.

ED—'witness;' this altar stood on the eastern side of the Jordan, in Gilead.

JOSHUA COMMANDS THE SUN TO STAND STILL.

"SUN, STAND THOU STILL UPON GIBEON; AND THOU, MOON, IN THE VALLEY OF AJALON."

"Stand still, refulgent orb of day!
The Jewish victor cries:
So shall at last an angel say,
And tear it from the skies.

A flame intenser than the sun
Shall melt his golden urn;
Time's empty glass no more shall run,
Nor human years return.

Then with immortal splendour bright,
That glorious orb shall rise,
Which through eternity shall light
The new-created skies.

On the bright ranks of happy souls,
Those blissful beams shall shine;
While the loud song of triumph rolls,
In harmony divine.

O let not sordid base desire,
The soul's dark rayless night,
Unfit us for heaven's sacred choir,
Or God's eternal light!

BUTCHER.

32. CANAAN DIVIDED. JOSHUA'S EXHORTATIONS.

Joshua xiii.-xxiv.

When Joshua was old and stricken in years, the Lord said unto him, "Thou art old and stricken in years, and there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed." Joshua had conquered thirty-one kings and their countries, but he had not conquered the whole of the land. The Levites had forty-eight cities assigned to them, with land round them. Caleb asked for *Hebron* for his inheritance. The tribes of Judah could not drive out the *Jebusites* from *Jerusalem*, and they dwelt together. The Tabernacle was set up at *Shiloh*, and the cities of refuge were appointed. Canaan was then divided among the tribes by lot. The *Anakim* were destroyed. The children of Joseph's two sons had two portions allotted to them. God had fulfilled all the promises he had made to Israel. The bones of Joseph, which were brought from Egypt, were buried in Shechem, in a parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the Shechemites: it was the inheritance of the Ephraimites, who were called, "the children of Joseph."

Before his death, Joshua called for all Israel, and for their elders, judges, and officers, and said unto them, "Ye have seen all that the Lord your God hath done unto all these nations

because of you; for the Lord your God is he that hath fought for you. And the Lord your God shall expel them from before you, and drive them from out of your sight; and ye shall possess their land as the Lord your God hath promised unto you. Be ye therefore very courageous to ·keep and to ·do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses. That ye ·come not among these nations, these that remain among you; neither make ·mention of the name of their gods, nor cause to ·swear by them, neither serve them, nor bow yourselves unto them: but cleave unto the Lord your God." Joshua reminded the Israelites of God's gracious goodness towards them, he warned them against ·idolatry, and he said God would ·cut them off if they forsook him. He told them of their ·former idolatry, and said, "As for me, and my house, we will serve the Lord." The people answered, "The Lord our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey." All these ·exhortations were delivered at Shechem. So Joshua let the people depart every man unto his inheritance. Joshua died soon after, being a hundred-and-ten years old and he was buried in *Timnath-Serah*. And Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua, who had known all the works of the Lord, which he had done for Israel.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

stricken &c.—weakened by age; less active than formerly.

forty-eight—the suburbs of these cities extended to about 2,000 cubits or 3,000 feet round each; these suburbs were sufficiently extensive for their gardens and the pasturage of their cattle. It was not necessary that the Levites should engage in agriculture, as the tithes and first-fruits assigned to them, and brought by the other tribes, were more than sufficient for their wants.

could not—this was unhappily the case with other tribes, as well as with that of Judah. No doubt they were impatient to enjoy their newly acquired possessions, and were thus gradually weaned from their trust in God as their captain. This compromise with the remnants of the original inhabitants became afterwards a source of much trouble and sin in Israel. Lesson 33, 'tributaries.'

divided—(Divisions of Canaan.) See Geographical Notes.

tribes—the tribes were twelve, according to the twelve sons of Jacob; but the withdrawal of the tribe of Levi for the exclusive service of the tabernacle left the number but eleven. The two sons of Joseph having however been adopted as heads of tribes instead of ·their father, the number ***twelve***, among whom Canaan was to be divided, was thus rendered complete. Lesson 16.

keep—preserve from alteration and injury.

do—obey cheerfully and heartily.

come not—mingle not with them; form no intimate connexions with them. Lesson 35, 'look.'

mention—they were scrupulously to avoid every allusion to the idols of the people around them.

swear—the highest and most unexceptionable witness is appealed to by an oath; God is that witness, not those things of the imagination which idolaters swear by and worship.

idolatry—the worship of any being, creature, or thing, instead of God; and also the worshipping of the true God under any figure or other representation of him. These sins are forbidden by the first and second commandments. Lesson 22, 'Ten Commandments.'

cut them off—from their land by allowing other nations to carry them away captive. Many of them should also be cut off, or slain by the sword, famine, and pestilence. Lesson 108, 'taken.'

former—referring to the idolatry practised by Abraham's kindred on the other side of the river Euphrates.

exhortations—encouraging and warning addresses, or incitements to obedience.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

HEBRON—the district within which Hebron was included was given to Caleb, but the city itself belonged to the priests, inasmuch as it was one of the cities of refuge. Lesson 29.

JEBUSITES—Jebus was an ancient name of Jerusalem from its founder the father of the Jebusites, a tribe of the Canaanites who occupied the city and the surrounding country. Lesson 56.

JERUSALEM—'fountain of peace,' or 'vision of peace;' was the metropolis of the land of Israel. It is often spoken of in the Scriptures as the Holy City, because God chose it to place there his name, his temple, and his worship. It was in the southern portion of Canaan, and was situated partly in Judah and partly in Benjamin. Joshua partly conquered it, and the Israelites and the Jebusites jointly occupied the city, but in different parts. Lesson 27, 'Salem.'

SHILOH—'peace;' a place which was in the southern part of Ephraim about fifteen miles north of Jerusalem; it was situated on a mountain to the north of Bethel. At this place the Tabernacle was set up, and here the ark of God remained nearly three hundred and fifty years, until it was taken by the Philistines. At Shiloh the promised land was divided among the tribes by lot, and the cities of the Levites, and those of refuge were appointed.

ANAKIM—a gigantic tribe who lived in some parts of Canaan; they were descended from Anak, a son of Arba, who gave the name to Kirjath-arba, afterwards Hebron. The unbelieving spies saw them and were afraid of them.

TIMNATH-SERAH—a city in the mountains of Ephraim, the inheritance, residence, and burial place of Joshua.

DIVISIONS OF CANAAN.

REUBEN—the territory of the Reubenites was bounded on the south by the river Arnon, on the east by the Moabites and Ammonites, on the north by the tribe of Gad, and on the west by the Jordan. Reuben was guilty of gross immorality, and was thus punished; as the eldest son, the priesthood should have belonged to him, but it was transferred to Levi; while his birthright was transferred to Judah.

GAD—the Gadites were situated north of the Reubenites, east of Jordan, west of the Ammonites, and south of the half tribe of Manasseh.

MANASSEH (HALF-TRIBE)—Half the Manassites were east of the Jordan and north of the Gadites, bounded on the north by part of the Lebanon range, and on the east by the hills of Bashan and Mount Hermon.

NAPHTALI—this tribe inhabited the country over against the half-tribe of Manasseh, the river Jordan running between them; and had the Jordan on the east, the springs of Jordan and Mount Lebanon on the north, the tribe of Asher on the west, and Zebulon on the south.

ASHER—lay west of Naphtali; the western boundary of this tribe was the

Mediterranean Sea, Phœnicia was on the north, Naphtali on the east, and Zebulon on the south.

ZEBULON—this tribe had for its northern border the divisions of Naphtali and Asher, the Mediterranean Sea was its boundary westward, the Jordan eastward, and Issachar southward.

ISSACHAR—extended from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan, having Zebulon to the north, and the other half-tribe of Manasseh southwards.

MANASSEH (HALF-TRIBE)——the tract this half-tribe occupied lay southward of Issachar, its eastern and western borders being the same as those of that tribe, while to the south the Ephraimites had their portion.

EPHRAIM—had the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan for its western and eastern boundaries, Manasseh on the north, and parts of Dan and Benjamin on the south.

BENJAMIN—this tribe had part of the Jordan and the Dead Sea for its eastern border, Ephraim on the north, Dan on the west, and Judah on the south.

DAN—extended from the lot of Benjamin to the Mediterranean, having Ephraim on the north, and the Philistines and part of Judah on the south.

JUDAH—lay west of the Dead Sea, south of the tribe of Benjamin and part of Dan, east of the land of the Philistines, and north of the land of Edom.

SIMEON—the inheritance of Simeon was within that of Judah, being placed in its southern extremity, having Judah and Dan north, and Edom on the south and west.

HOLY RESOLUTIONS.

"AS FOR ME AND MY HOUSE WE WILL SERVE THE LORD."

God of my life, through all its days
My grateful powers shall sound thy praise;
The song shall wake with opening light,
And warble to the silent night.

When anxious cares would break my rest,
And griefs would tear my throbbing breast,
Thy tuneful praises raised on high
Shall check the murmur and the sigh.

When death o'er nature shall prevail,
And all its powers of language fail,
Joy through my swimming eyes shall break,
And mean the thanks I cannot speak.

But O! when that last conflict's o'er,
And I am chain'd to flesh no more,
With what glad accents shall I rise,
To join the anthems of the skies.

Soon shall I earn the exalted strains,
Which echo o'er the heavenly plains;
And emulate with joy unknown
The glowing seraphs round thy throne.

The cheerful tribute will I give,
Long as a deathless soul can live;
A work so sweet, a theme so high
Demands, and crowns eternity.

DODDRIDGE.

33. DISOBEDIENCE OF THE ISRAELITES.

Judges i. ii.

Now after the death of Joshua it came to pass, that the children of Israel ·asked the Lord, saying, " Who shall go up for us ·against the Canaanites first to fight against them ?" And the Lord said, " ·Judah shall go up: behold, I have delivered the land into his hand." And Judah said unto Simeon his brother, " ·Come up with me into my lot, that we may fight against the Canaanites; and I likewise will go with thee into thy lot." So Simeon went with him. And Judah went up: and the Lord delivered the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hand; and they slew at *Bezek*, ten-thousand men. They found Adoni-bezek, at Bezek, and they ·cut off his thumbs, and great toes. And Adoni-bezek said, "·Threescore and ten kings, having their thumbs and great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table: as I have done, so God ·hath requited me." And they brought him to Jerusalem and there he died. *Hebron* and several other cities of the Canaanites were afterwards taken. The tribe of Judah took Hebron. Caleb ·promised to give his daughter, Achsah, to the man who should take the strong city, *Debir*. ·Othniel, the nephew of Caleb, went up against the city, and took it. Achsah asked Caleb to give her the ·water-springs, after he had given her a south land; so Caleb gave her the upper and the nether springs.

The tribes of Israel did not drive out all the Canaanites from the cities they took, but they dwelt among them and in some of the cities they made the Canaanites ·tributaries. An angel of the Lord came ·from Gilgal to *Bochim* and reproved them; he said, " ·I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I sware unto your fathers: and I said, I will ·never break my covenant with you. And ye shall make no ·league with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall ·throw down their altars: but ·ye have not obeyed my voice: why have ye done this? Wherefore I also said, ·I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you." When the angel spake these words the people lifted up their voice and wept.

About fourteen years after the death of Joshua, the Israelites began to worship the idols of the Canaanites. They forsook God, and served Baal and Ashtaroth, and God delivered them into the hands of the spoilers, and they were oppressed. They also intermarried with the Canaanites which God had forbidden.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

asked the Lord—they inquired of God through the high-priest in the tabernacle, for God made his will known to the high-priest so long as the Israelites served him.

against the, &c.—they mustered in great numbers, and retook several of the cities which the Israelites had captured; besides which much of the land still remained in the possession of the Canaanites.

Judah—besides enjoying the privilege of the birth-right, this tribe was the most numerous and powerful of all the tribes.

come, &c.—Judah invites Simeon; the strong asks the aid of the weak, engaging to render similar services in return; as the territory of these two tribes was in one general lot or division, those who were enemies to one tribe would be enemies to the other also.

cut off—a common practice among eastern warriors to disable their enemies from handling a weapon or running with agility. Adoni-bezek then confessed his own cruelties.

three-score and ten—Lesson 31, 'many.'

requited—repaid; punished in the same way.

promised—offers of this nature were made to inspire young men with feelings of emulation and intrepidity. Saul made a similar offer. Lesson 46.

Othniel—'lion of God;' he was the son of Kenaz, Caleb's brother. He verified his name not only in the taking of Debir, but also by delivering the Israelites from the oppression of the king of Mesopotamia. Lesson 35, 'judge.'

water-springs—the land included in the gift of Caleb to Othniel is called a *south* land, that is a *dry* land; hence we see the importance of Achsah's request, for it is well-known that scarcity of water is a severe calamity in oriental countries.

tributaries—they paid a tax in money or gave a certain amount of labour as an acknowledgment of their subjection; this was contrary to the Divine Law. The Asherites seem to have not even exacted this tribute, for they dwelt among the Canaanites as if they had been one nation. Lesson 32, 'could not.'

from Gilgal, &c.—the angel first appeared at Gilgal, and it is probable that he accompanied them to Bochim, reproving them as he passed along. This accounts for the general weeping of the people.

I made—here, as in many other angelic appearances, the angel speaks in the name, and with the authority, of Jehovah.

never—God's promises shall surely be fulfilled; He is faithful and true.

league—confederacy; mutual agreement; friendship.

throw down—as long as there remained so long would temptations to the practice of idolatry present themselves to the Israelites.

ye have not—they had grown slothful, tired of war, and influenced by the love of ease, they allowed many of the Canaanites to settle down among them, and to follow their idolatrous practices.

I will not—'you will not drive them out, and therefore I will not'; was the language of Jehovah; thus their sin was made their punishment. When their hearts were right with God he went before them to drive their enemies

from before their face, now God allowed them to reap the bitter reward of their indolence and sinful confederacy.

worship—pay religious adoration unto. Lesson 35, 'served.'

Baal, or Bel—'master or lord;' this title of distinction was not given exclusively to one deity; it was applied generally to the superior objects of pagan adoration. Several nations worshipped the sun under this appellation; and many idols mentioned in Scripture have this title prefixed to the name of the place to which they belonged, as Baal-peor, Baal-meon, Baal-gad, Baal-beerith, &c. which names are supposed to refer to some distinction in the nature of the rites observed at different places. The worship of Baal was almost universal; it was followed by the Babylonians, Assyrians, Carthaginians, Phœnicians, Canaanites, & probably in the British Isles.

Ashtaroth—the worship of this idol prevailed chiefly among the Sidonians, who lived upon the northern boundary of Canaan. In this idolatry the moon was adored, and her image was generally accompanied by the seven stars. The rites connected with the worship of this goddess were grossly impure and revolting. Ashtaroth was worshipped by the Israelites under the title of the 'queen of heaven.' Jeremiah vii. 18; xliv. 17.

spoilers—enemies; those who would oppress them.

intermarried—they took wives from the daughters of the Canaanites, and gave their daughters to the Canaanites. Lesson 35, 'took their.'

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

BEZEK—a city of the Canaanites of which Adonibezek was a king; it came into the possession of the tribe of Judah.

HEBRON—it is supposed by many, and with much reason, that this was the second time Hebron was taken from the Canaanites. 'Against,' p. 93.

DEBIR—'oracle;' supposed to be a seat of learning among the Canaanites; it was also called Kirjath-sepher, which means 'city of books.' This time it was re-captured by the Israelites.

BOCHIM—'weeping;' a place supposed to be the same as, or near to, Shiloh; it is only mentioned as the place of weeping at which the Israelites were reproved.

TURN FROM YOUR IDOLS.

"THEY FORSOOK THE LORD AND SERVED BAAL AND ASHTAROTH."

Where cedars wave on Syrian height
Were altars rear'd for votive rite;
And silver Jordan swept along
To anthem loud and choral song.

But not for great Jehovah's praise
Did Israel's matrons pour their lays,
And not for Him, in wooded glade,
On sunny height, the shrine was made.

And Judah's maids wild dances trod
To many an unclean heathen god;
And impious sires, in lone green wood,
For offering pour'd their children's blood.

They drank their flowing cups at noon,
They prais'd at night the fair round moon;—
The chosen of the King of kings,
They bowed down to created things.

Yea, gods they made of wood and stone;—
Poor human hearts! thus ever prone
To leave the ways that God has shewn
And make false idols of their own.

We do not bend the adoring knee
To demon gods neath forest tree;
And when the fair round moon returns,
No heart in votive rapture burns;

But wrong desire, and cherish'd sin,
And selfish care enshrin'd within,
And angry passions, prompt to wake;
These are the idols Christians make.

The great Lord God enthron'd on high,
He sees the soul's idolatry;
He claims the first love of our hearts,
Nor takes what is but His in part.

VERSES FOR HOLY SEASONS.

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34. MICAH'S IDOLATRY. THE DANITES.

Judges xvii.-xxi.

There was a man of *Mount Ephraim* whose name was ·Micah; he stole from his mother eleven hundred ·shekels of silver which she had ·saved. She cursed the robber of her treasures in her son's hearing. After a time, Micah, stung by ·conscience, restored the money to his mother; whereupon she said, "Blessed be thou of the Lord my son. ·I had wholly ·dedicated the silver to make a ·graven image and a ·molten image." So she took ·two-hundred shekels of silver, and gave them to the founder, who made thereof a graven image and a molten image: and they were in the house of Micah. And Micah had a ·house of gods, and made an ·ephod, and ·teraphim, and ·consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest. In those days there was no ·king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes. He afterwards obtained a ·Levite of *Bethlehem-Judah* to be his priest.

The Danites sent five men to seek an ·inheritance, they came to the house of Micah, and ·asked the Levite, whom they knew, whether their way should prosperous. The Levite told them to ·go in peace; so they proceeded to *Laish*. At Laish

the people lived carelessly, and without feeling shame for their misdeeds. The Danites returned to their tribe, and told them that at Laish there was no want of any thing that was in the earth. Six hundred men were then sent to Laish with the five spies as their guides. On their way thither they went into Micah's house, and took away his image and his priest. Micah followed them, but they warned him to return. They then went against Laish, which they took, and put the inhabitants to the edge of the sword. There was no one to assist the people of Laish, for they had no dealings with any other people, and they lived quiet and secure, and free from all danger. Having changed the name of the city to *Dan*, they brought in Micah's image, and set it up, and appointed Jonathan, the Levite, to be their priest. The Danites as a tribe, thus commenced idolatry.

A Levite of Ephraim was returning home with his concubine. He entered into the city of *Gibeah*, in Benjamin. The inhabitants abused her and she died. The Levite sent to all the tribes, and they assembled at *Mizpeh*. The Benjamites would not give up their wicked brethren. War was declared against the tribe of Benjamin by the other tribes. In the end, Benjamin was defeated with the loss of 25,000 men. The city was destroyed, the land desolated, and men, women, and children were put to the sword. Only 600 men of Benjamin, who had fled to the rock *Rimmon*, were left. The Israelites had sworn not to give their daughters in marriage to the men of Benjamin. The city of *Jabesh-Gilead* was taken, because its inhabitants had not gone with the Israelites against the Benjamites;—the men were put to the sword, and the young women were taken as wives by the Benjamites.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

Micah—'humble.'

shekels—'weights;' a shekel weighed half an ounce, value about 2*s.* 1*d.* of our money. The sum stolen by Micah was therefore nearly equal to £115. sterling,

saved—carefully put by; spared from expending.

conscience—the knowledge that he was the dishonest person. Conscience is that sense of right and wrong which shews us the moral character of our actions, and produces in us feelings of remorse or satisfaction as their result.

I had, &c.—this mistaken idea of honouring God, by dedicating a graven image to him, was the introduction of idolatry in that gross form forbidden by the second commandment.

dedicated—set apart as for a religious purpose.

graven—cut out of stone or wood.

molten—melted; formed of metal that had been reduced to a liquid state.

two-hundred shekels—value in our money about £21.

house of gods—probably in imitation of the tabernacle at Shiloh, in which was the ark of the covenant surmounted by the cherubim. Lesson 23, 'cherubim.'

ephod—Lesson 23, 'ephod.'

teraphim—household divinities or gods for family use, such as Laban's. Lesson 13, 'images.'

consecrated—to anoint or set apart his son to be a priest was an act of awful presumption, as indeed all his proceedings were. Could the sudden destruction of Korah and his company for their assumption of the priestly office have been unknown to him? Lesson 26.

king—God, their captain, judge, and king was forsaken, and every one followed the bent of his own corrupt imagination.

Levite—this man was the son of Gershom, and the grandson of Moses.

inheritance—their lot was in the north-western corner of the tribe of Judah, and being found insufficient, five men were sent forth to look out for a suitable place where they could draft off a certain portion of the tribe.

asked—consulted him as a priest of the Most High, thus shewing their own lamentable ignorance.

go in peace—signifying that their project was approved, and that they should be successful. This answer corresponded with the event, and seemed to sanction the idolatry.

lived carelessly—in an indolent and thoughtless round of pleasures.

shame—they were quite destitute of every feeling of decency and propriety; their wickedness was great, every man might be as bad as he would, for there was no law nor magistrate to restrain or punish them.

no want—the fertility of the place was made to contribute to their sensual excesses, and at the same time strengthened their idolatrous ideas of the all-producing powers of the sun and moon—their chief deities.

took away—they not only stole Micah's idols, but they prevailed on his priest to accompany them, so that their idolatry commenced with theft, and the hireling Levite accompanied them "because he was a hireling."

Micah followed—they frightened Micah from attempting to rescue his idols, and as he had no faith in their power to protect him he gave them up.

edge of the sword—slew them; because of the impure idolatry of the Canaanites generally—these as well as others—God commanded that they should be slain.

no one to assist—they were emigrants from Phœnicia, far from Sidon, and could not suddenly obtain help.

they lived, &c.—being far removed from other tribes, in a fertile and beautiful locality they took no trouble to prepare for danger, not apprehending it.

set it up—this was ever a snare and reproach to the Israelites. This Danite colony thought probably that as Shiloh was far distant, and the trouble of going thither three times a year was great, it was better to establish a representation of the tabernacle among themselves; but this they ought to have known was forbidden.

concubine—an inferior wife. In the east, a man may have several wives, but the first is the chief, the rest are all subordinates.

abused her—this great sin is considered as the beginning of the corruption of Israel that followed, and is thus spoken of by the prophet Hosea, "Thou hast sinned from the days of Gibeah." Hosea ix. 9; x. 9.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

MOUNT EPHRAIM—a hilly part of the territory allotted to the tribe of Ephraim.

BETHLEHEM-JUDAH—the same place as Bethlehem, it is also called Bethlehem-Ephrath; it was always a small town, but celebrated by events in the histories of Ruth and David. It was also the birth-place of our Saviour.

LAISH or DAN—was a city and small territory in the northern extremity of Canaan; it was near the foot of Lebanon, and near the springs of the river Jordan. To this city Abraham pursued the kings when he rescued Lot from their hands; it was then called Laish; when the Danites took it they called it Dan, after the name of their father. When it came into the possession of the Danites, it changed its character, for instead of the inhabitants having, 'no business with any man,' it became in their hands, a city of commercial importance.

GIBEAH—'hill;' a town in the territory of Benjamin, whence it was often called Gibeah of Benjamin; it was a few miles north of Jerusalem, and it was the birthplace of Saul.

MIZPAH—'high place; a town of Benjamin, near Jerusalem, at which the Israelites often held their national assemblies. At this place Saul was anointed king.

RIMMON—there is a conical chalky hill and village which still bear this name in the vicinity of the ancient site of Gibeah.

JABESH-GILEAD—a city in eastern Manasseh, at the foot of one of the mountains of Gilead. It is mentioned several times in the history of Saul.

THE FATE OF THE WICKED.

"IN THOSE DAYS...EVERY MAN DID THAT WHICH WAS RIGHT IN HIS OWN EYES."

The fate of the wicked a season may spare him
He may put forth his boughs like the green spreading bay;
But the anger of God, like the lightning, shall sear him,
And his bloom, like the smoke-wreath, be scattered away.

He may dig a deep pit as a snare for his brother,
He may spread a dark net for the feet of his friend;
But the trap he has laid for the fall of another
Shall prove but the cause of his own in the end.

He joy'd not in blessing—and blessings flee past him
To the dwellings of those whose destruction he scheme'd;
His pride was in cursing—and curses shall blast him
Rebounding in wrath from the heaven he blaspheme'd.

For the vengeance of God, in its fierce indignation,
Shall blow him away like the chaff on the wind;
And his name may be sought in the next generation—
But a branch of his stem shall not linger behind.

W. KNOX.

35. SERVITUDES AND DELIVERANCES OF ISRAEL.

Judges iii.-v.

The children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, and Perizzites, and Hivites, and Jebusites; and they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their daughters to their sons, and served their gods. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and forgat the Lord their God and served Baalim. Then the anger of

the Lord was ·kindled against them, and he caused them to be oppressed for eight years by Chusan-rishathaim, the king of Mesopotamia; but when the Israelites cried unto God, he ·raised up Othniel to deliver them. Othniel was the first ·judge of Israel.

For forty years the Israelites served God, but for twenty-two years after, they again did evil, and God allowed Eglon, the king of Moab, to oppress them eighteen years; after that, he raised up ·Ehud to deliver them. Ehud slew Eglon, at Gilgal, and the Israelites slew 10,000 Moabites at the *Fords of Jordan*, near Moab. The *Philistines* afterwards were permitted to ·oppress Israel. But God raised up ·Shamgar, a husbandman, who slew six-hundred Philistines with an ·ox-goad, and thus delivered them.

God then permitted ·Jabin, king of Canaan, who reigned in *Hazor*, to oppress the Israelites forty years. They cried unto the Lord, and he raised up ·Deborah, a ·prophetess, and ·Barak, a valiant man of Naphtali, to deliver them. Barak pursued the host of Sisera, Jabin's captain, and destroyed them. Sisera fled to ·the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber, the *Kenite*. Jael gave him ·milk to drink, and he lay down to sleep in her tent. While he slept, she took a ·nail of the tent, and a hammer, and ·smote the nail into his temples, and he died. Thus Israel was delivered from their fourth servitude, and Deborah and Barak sang a song of praise to God for the deliverance of Israel; in this song, they recited the deeds of those who had helped ·valiantly, the ·manner of Sisera's death, and the supposed impatience of the mother of Sisera for her son's return loaded with spoil. They concluded their song thus, "So let all ·thine enemies perish, O Lord: but let them that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might." And the land had rest forty years.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

took their dau.—this was strictly forbidden by the law of Moses. One who was married to an idolater was sure to be alienated from the service of Jehovah; their children too would grow up irreverent and unholy.

served their gods—the service of idols was stupid, immodest, degrading and cruel while the worship of God was pure and elevating. Moses foretold this awful defection. Lesson 29; compare also, 'Baal and Ashtaroth,' Lesson 33; and 'no want,' Lesson 34.

Baalim—the plural of Baal, including the several deities worshipped under this name. Lesson 33, 'Baal.'

anger—God was displeased with them, as he was with their forefathers, when they worshipped the golden calf. Lesson 23.

kindled—as a fire to consume them. Lesson 24, 'fire,' Lesson 26, 'Korah.'

raised up—stirred up; by infusing into him a spirit of resistance and bravery, and a feeling of dependence and trust in God.

judge—from this time till the appointment of Saul, as king, the Israelites were governed by a succession of men called judges, who were raised up in times of danger.

Ehud—he was sent by the Israelites with a tax or tribute to Eglon; on announcing that he had a confidential message to him, Eglon's servants were commanded to withdraw; Ehud then slew Eglon and fled. As soon as the Israelites heard of it, they rose up and slaughtered the Moabites, after which Ehud became their judge.

oppress—to rule over with severity; to exact tribute and service by force.

Shamgar—he was doubtless aided by his neighbours, himself acting as leader; by God's help he discomfited the enemies of Israel.

ox-goad—an instrument used for spurring on oxen when drawing the plough; it was from seven to eight feet long, and armed with a pointed spear at one end, and a plate of iron at the other.

Jabin—'discerner;' king of Hazor; a former city of this name was destroyed by Joshua, and its king also called Jabin, put to death. The city, it appears, was rebuilt, and regained its former importance.

Deborah—'a bee;' she was eminent for piety and zeal; her judgment-seat was under a palm-tree in Mount Ephraim, between Ramah and Bethel. Lesson 69, 'tree.'

prophetess—female prophets were not common among the worshippers of the true God; among the heathens they and priestesses were numerous.

Barak—the city of Hazor was near the border of the tribe to which Barak belonged. Lesson 32, 'Naphtali.'

the tent of—it is probable that the men were absent, and that the necessity of immediate refreshment induced him to venture into a woman's tent uninvited; perhaps he imagined he should be less likely to be discovered by his pursuers in a woman's tent. In entering it, however, he acted contrary to present & former customs.

milk—he asked for water, and she gave him milk—shewing him all the hospitality her tent afforded.

nail—a tent-pin with which the cords of the tent are fastened to the ground.

smote, &c.—this was a horrid and cruel act for a woman to perform; she probably intended kindness to him at first, but afterwards was led to consider him as the determined enemy of God and Israel, and under this sudden impulse of abhorrence determined on his death.

valiantly—bravely; nobly.

manner—by Jael's instrumentality; shewing that it was in accordance with God's retributive will.

thine enemies—not only were they the enemies of Israel, but they hated God.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

FORDS OF JORDAN—shallow passages across the river which could be waded through at certain seasons, both by men & cattle. The Jordan, between Lake Tiberias and the Dead Sea is sixty miles in length; but the level of the Dead Sea is nearly 1000 feet lower than that of Lake Tiberias. Lesson 30, 'Jordan.'

PHILISTINES—they occupied the west and south-west coast of Canaan, it is believed by some that they had their origin from the shepherd-tyrants who overran Egypt before the time of Moses. Lesson 17. Their kingdom was divided into five principalities, each of which had its own prince, all being united under one sovereign head.

HAZOR—a city in the north of Canaan, near the waters of Merom, of which Jabin was the powerful king; he was conquered by Joshua; but in the time of Deborah and Barak, another king Jabin, of Hazor, oppressed the Israelites.

KENITES—this people, it is supposed, were Midianites, and had their residence near the Amalekites. Jethro, who was a Kenite, is expressly called a Midianite.

SISERA.

"WHY TARRY THE WHEELS OF HIS CHARIOT?"

Forth looked the mother from her lattice high,
To Judah's valleys turned her proud dark eye;—
"Why do his chariot wheels delay so long?
Why tarries thus the valiant and the strong?
Have they not sped? have they not won the day?
To every man hath been a glorious prey;
The gorgeous work by Syrian maidens plann'd,
And fair young slaves, the brightest in the land.
Sure he will deck his lov'd ones with the spoil."
In vain she looketh toward that favour'd soil;
With shout and song, in peace returning home,
He cometh not; nor e'er again shall come.
Far, far away, within the Kenites' tent;
His brow is pierced, his stately head is bent;
Where Kishon's ancient waters hurry by,
On Taanach's plains his trampled warriors lie.
For Israel's God hath led the glorious fight,
Abinoam's son has conquered in His might,
And she who sat by Bethel's judgment tree
Has risen to chant the song of victory.

VERSES FOR HOLY SEASONS.

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36. THE MIDIANITES' OPPRESSION. RUTH.

Judges vi. 1-7. Ruth.

The children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and he delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years. So severe was the oppression of the *Midianites* that the people of Israel were driven to take refuge in the dens of the mountains, and in the caves, and strong holds. And the Midianites and Amalekites came and destroyed the increase of the earth, and left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass. For they came up with their cattle, and their tents, and they came as grasshoppers for multitude, and they entered into the land to destroy it, and the Israelites were greatly impoverished. They cried unto the Lord for deliverance, and he sent a prophet to reprove them, and to show all the good that he had done for Israel, but that they had not obeyed his voice.

·Elimelech and his wife ·Naomi were Israelites, who were driven from Canaan by the famine, and they went to reside in Moab. They had two sons, Mahlon and Chilion. Their sons, married wives of the Moabites, and died. Elimelech also died. Some time after, Naomi and her two daughters-in-law, Orpah and ·Ruth, departed into Judah. Naomi wished her daughters-in-law to return to Moab. Orpah returned, but Ruth would not leave her mother-in-law; she said, "Intreat me not to leave thee or to return from following after thee, for ·whither thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge; ·thy people shall be my people, and ·thy God my God; where thou diest I will die, and there will I be ·buried; the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me." They both came to Bethlehem, in the beginning of ·barley harvest, and they ·gleaned in the ·fields of ·Boaz, a rich man, and a relative of the family. He afterwards ·married Ruth, and she became the mother of ·Obed, who was the father of Jesse, and the grandfather of David, from whom Christ descended.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

delivered—no nation has a right to assail and subdue another people; yet God permits it as a punishment for sin. Lesson 51, 'guiltless.'

dens—clefts, chasms in mountains.

caves—underground places of shelter and concealment. Les. 9, 'cave;' 12, 'tents;' and 49, 'in the cave.'

strong holds—natural clefts in the rocks almost inaccessible.

Elimelech—'my God;' he was of the tribe of Judah, a native of Bethlehem.

Naomi—'beautiful;' on her return home, after the death of her husband and sons, she wished to be called Marah, which means 'bitter,' (Les. 21) rather than her proper name.

Ruth—'beauty;' while she lived with her mother-in-law in Moab she became a convert to the worship of Jehovah; and from the affection and attachment displayed by Ruth towards her, it is evident that Naomi was her instructress. In their widowhood one spoke of God, and the other learned to adore him.

whither thou,&c.—such ardent, grateful affection was honourable to Ruth, and it brought its own reward.

thy people—she had resolved on becoming one with the people of Israel; probably her deceased husband was remembered by her with reverence.

thy God—she thoroughly renounced the idolatry of her own people and thus professed herself a worshipper of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

buried—the desire of being buried with one's kindred is so strong in eastern countries that no higher proof could Ruth give of her sincerity; in renouncing her idolatrous nation and kindred.

barley-harvest—commenced in March and closed in April.

gleaned—gathered up the ears that fell from the binders, or that were left standing by the reapers. The Lord commanded that in the time of harvest —that season of joyfulness to the husbandmen—the poor & the strangers

should not be forgotten. Lev. xix. 9.10, Deut. xxiv. 19-22.

fields—patches of cultivated land, not enclosed as fields are in this country.

Boaz—'strength;' he was not only rich, but he was also a man of upright and conscientious principles, who would not try to evade obedience to the laws of God, from any inconvenience likely to attach to such obedience.

married—marriages at this period, and for some time after were usually performed in the open air; the bridegroom surrounded by his companions and friends, having arrived, was conducted under a canopy or bower, into which the bride was led closely veiled. The contract was then read to which both parties assented, and then the blessing was pronounced; the blessing in Ruth's case, was spoken by the elders and all the people assembled—it ran thus, "The Lord make the woman that is come into thine house like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel." Feasting and mirth succeeded the ceremony, and if the bridegroom was wealthy continued some days.

Obed—'raising;' beautifully indicative of the elevation to which their family should yet attain.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

MIDIANITES—these wandering warrior herdsmen moved from place to place impoverishing and crushing the Israelites whom God left helpless in their power. Les. 28, 'all.'

RUTH TO HER MOTHER.

"INTREAT ME NOT TO LEAVE THEE, NOR TO RETURN FROM FOLLOWING THEE," &c.

I will not, cannot leave thee, every hope to me is dead,
But the hope to smooth the pillow for an aged parent's head;
Oh! bid me not depart from thee;—to wander by thy side
Is now my only joy and wish,—my pleasure and my pride.

Bid me not seek another lord, another land, or home;
I am the staff unto thy feet, wherever they may roam;
The scanty meal, the houseless head, no terrors have for me;
So I may watch and hunger, my mother dear, by thee.

I would not leave thee for the wealth of fortune's richest smile;
Such lot were pain and grief to me, if thou wert poor the while;
I would not leave thee, tho' the cloud that broods upon thy brow
Were of a deeper, deadlier gloom than I behold it now.

Thou say'st that thou art childless now,—thou hast no other son
To be a link of love to us, to bind our souls in one!
Oh! who would smile with Chilion's smile, or speak with Chilion's tone,
But her whose grief for Chilion was as bitter as thine own?

By the joy we both remember, by the loss we both lament,
Bid me not serve my people's gods, nor seek my father's tent,
I am an alien at their hearth, a stranger at their shrine;
I have no kindred now but thee, I know no God but thine!

And He will still be with us, in our smiles and in our tears;
In the weakness of my youth, and in the sadness of thy years;
To cheer the darkness of our doom, how dark soe'er it be,
And bless the grateful love with which my spirit clings to thee!

POETICAL STAR.

37. GIDEON DELIVERS ISRAEL.

Judges vi. 7-viii. 28.

At this time, when the Israelites were mourning for their sins against God, an angel appeared unto ·Gideon, at *Ophrah*, as he ·threshed wheat by the ·winepress, to ·hide it from the Midianites. Gideon was the son of Joash, a descendant of ·Abiezer, of the tribe of Manasseh. The angel said to Gideon, "The Lord is with thee thou ·mighty man of valour; go, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites." And Gideon said unto him, "Oh my Lord, ·wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house." And the Lord said unto him, "Surely ·I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man." Gideon was commanded to ·throw down an altar which ·his father had dedicated to Baal, and ·to build an altar to the Lord. The Lord gave him ·signs to shew that he would save Israel by his hand. Thirty-two-thousand men ·joined Gideon beside the *Well of Harod*. When those who were ·fearful had returned home there were 10,000 left. Of the 10,000, only ·three-hundred were chosen to deliver Israel. Every man had a trumpet, and also a ·pitcher with a ·lamp in it. The camp of the Midianites was ·attacked by night, when ·every man of the three hundred shouted, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon," and brake his pitcher, to shew his lamp. The Midianites were terrified and confused, so they set every man's sword ·against his fellow; and then fled. And the men of Naphtali, Asher, Manasseh, and Ephraim gathered themselves together, and pursued the Midianites. The Ephraimites took two princes of Midian, ·Oreb and ·Zeeb, and slew them and brought their ·heads to Gideon.

And the ·men of Ephraim came to Gideon and said, "Why hast thou served us thus, that thou calledst us not, when thou wentest to fight with the Midianites?" and they did chide with him sharply. And he said unto them, "What have I done now in comparison of you? ·Is not the ·gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the ·vintage of Abiezer? God hath delivered into your hands the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb: and what was I able to do in comparison of you?" Then their anger was abated toward him, when he had said

that. Gideon and his men then pursued the kings of Midian. The people of *Succoth* refused him and his men bread. The people of *Penuel* also refused him refreshment. He threatened to punish them, and fulfilled his threat on his return, when he had taken Zebah and Zalmunna. He slew these two kings because they had slain his brethren. The people of Israel wished Gideon to be their ruler, but he refused, saying, "The Lord shall rule over you." He afterwards made an ephod of the golden earrings that had been taken with the spoil, and thus unwittingly caused idolatry.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

Gideon—'breaker.'

threshed—beat out of the straw. Gideon used the flail, which shows that the quantity was small; the usual mode of threshing was by means of rollers set in a sledge, and drawn over it by oxen, or simply by the driving of oxen over it, to tread out the grain.

wine-press—a place the least likely to excite the suspicion of the rapacious Midianites. Wine-presses were cavities in the ground lined with masonry. Lesson 50, 'wine.'

hide it—threshing-floors were generally on eminences, and thus exposed to public view; had Gideon threshed his wheat on one of them the oppressors would have soon discovered it, and plundered him of the fruits of his toil. Had he employed oxen to tread it out, their lowing would doubtless have led to the discovery of that he wished to hide.

Abiezer—'father of help.'

mighty man, &c.—a man of physical vigour, and of a daring spirit. The language of the angel showed what he might become rather than what he actually was.

wherewith—by what means?

I will be with thee—if the Lord be with us who shall be against us?

throw down—we must clear our hands of all participation in sin, before we can expect God to bless our undertakings. Ps. xxvi. 6; lxvi. 18. When Gideon's fellow-citizens heard of the indignity done to Baal they demanded that he should be slain; but his father said of Baal, "If he be god, let him plead for himself." Wherefore they called Gideon Jerubbaal, 'let Baal plead.'

his father—here we have the source of Israel's troubles—they built altars unto Baal and worshipped him.

to build—it would appear that Gideon was in heart a worshipper of God.

signs—Gideon was at first afraid to go according to the Lord's command, but the Lord granted him three signs, at his own request, to satisfy him that he was the chosen instrument of salvation to Israel. *First*, the angel touched with his rod a repast which Gideon had provided, and immediately fire issued from the rock and consumed it; *second*, God caused the dew at night to fall only on a fleece of wool which Gideon spread, and not on the earth around it; *third*, God caused the dew the next night to water the earth around the fleece, while the fleece itself remained dry.

joined—came to him on hearing the call to action, which his messengers proclaimed at the sound of the trumpet, throughout the tribes of Manasseh, Asher, Zebulon, and Naphtali.

fearful—this was according to God's command. Deuteronomy xx. 8.

three-hundred—the 10,000 were led to the water to drink, when those only were chosen who lapped as a dog.

pitcher—an earthen vessel for holding water.

lamp—the country abounded with olives, so that the quantity of oil for all these lamps was easily obtained. Lesson 4, 'olive.'

attacked—they simply appeared round the enemy's camp.

every man—the sounding of so many trumpets would lead the Midianites to imagine that they had an immense number of assailants.

against his fellow—this was the work of God; he caused the wildness of terror, and the madness of rage to seize upon them. Les. 45, 'salvation.'

Oreb and Zeeb—Oreb, 'crow;' Zeeb, 'wolf.'

heads—this practice was common in the East; the heads were considered as trophies of war. We read that in some cases the skulls of distinguished enemies slain in war were made into drinking vessels for the special use of the victors.

men of Ephraim—hearing of the discomfiture of the Midianites, they rose up to the pursuit; but they felt angry that they had not been called at the first. Gideon's soft answer turned away their wrath.

Is not, &c.—this beautiful metaphor implied that their services at the end had been greater than his at the beginning.

gleaning—the remnants gathered by the poor after the harvest.

vintage—the harvest of the vineyard.

ephod—God instructed him to build an altar, therefore that was not a sin; but God did not instruct him to make a priestly ephod, and his doing so proved that he judged incorrectly when he supposed the command to do one thing authorized him to do another.

earrings—an ornament much used in eastern countries. The calf made by Aaron was partly composed of golden earrings which the women had contributed. Lesson 23.

unwittingly—unintentionally; not with the design of establishing idolatry.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

OPHRAH—a town in eastern Manasseh, also called Ephrah, chiefly mentioned in the history of Gideon.

WELL OF HAROD—situated at the foot of Mount Gilboa.

SUCCOTH—a place in Gilead, and in the territory of Gad. Lesson 13.

PENIEL OR PENUEL—'the face of God.' Lesson 13.

CONFIDENCE IN GOD.

"SURELY I WILL BE WITH THEE."

God is my strong salvation;
What foe have I to fear?
In darkness and temptation,
My light, my help is near.

Though hosts encamp around me,
Firm to the fight I stand:
What terror can confound me,
With God at my right hand?

Place on the Lord reliance,
My soul with courage wait;
His truth be thy affiance,
When faint and desolate:

His might thine heart shall strengthen,
His love thy joy increase,
Mercy thy days shall lengthen;
The Lord will give thee peace.

J. MONTGOMERY.

38. ABIMELECH MADE KING. OF JEPHTHAH.

Judges viii. 29-xii. 8.

Gideon left many sons. Abimelech was a son of Gideon, but not a lawful son. He slew all Gideon's lawful sons except one. Jotham only escaped. After a time the men of Shechem gathered themselves together, and made Abimelech their king; Jotham came to Mount Gerizim, and by the following parable ridiculed the choice of the men of Shechem, and the pretensions of Abimelech; "The trees went forth on a time to anoint a king over them; and they said unto the olive tree, reign thou over us. But the olive tree said unto them, should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honour God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees? And the trees said to the fig tree, come thou, and reign over us. But the fig tree said unto them should I forsake my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to be promoted over the trees? Then said the trees unto the vine, come thou, and reign over us. And the vine said unto them, should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees? Then said all the trees unto the bramble, come thou, and reign over us. And the bramble said unto the trees, if in truth ye anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust in my shadow; and if not, let fire come out of the bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon." He then told the men of Shechem of all that his father had done for them, and of their ingratitude, and fled to *Beer*. Soon afterwards Gaal conspired against Abimelech. The Shechemites were also dissatisfied with him. He was slain by a stone from a fortress, which a woman cast upon his head.

Tola was of the tribe of Issachar, and he dwelt in Mount Ephraim. He judged Israel twenty-three years. Jair was judge over Israel after Tola. He was a Gileadite, of the tribe of Manasseh; he owned thirty villages. During most of his reign the Israelites were oppressed by the Ammonites.

The Israelites began to serve the gods of *Sidon*, *Syria*, and Moab, and God suffered the Ammonites and Philistines to prevail against them. They cried unto the Lord, and he reminded them of their many deliverances, but that they still forsook him. While they were confessing their sins the Ammonites came against them. God then raised up Jephthah

to deliver them. Jephthah made a rash vow to God before he went to battle; to fulfil which he had to sacrifice his daughter, after he had conquered the Ammonites. The Ephraimites quarrelled with Jephthah because he had gone against the Ammonites without them. They said also, "Ye Gileadites are fugitives of Ephraim." The Gileadites then took the passages of Jordan before the Ephraimites, and when the Ephraimites said, "Let me go over," the men of Gilead said unto him, "Art thou an Ephraimite?" If he said, "Nay," then said they unto him, "Say now Shibboleth," and he said, "Sibboleth;" for he could not frame to pronounce it right. Then they took him and slew him at the passages of Jordan; and there fell at that time of the Ephraimites forty-and-two-thousand.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

slew—transactions of this kind have long been common in eastern courts; this is the first we read of. It afterwards became a practice for a new king to put his brothers to death lest their ambition should render his position as sovereign insecure. In Persia, banishment and loss of sight were till recently substituted for death. Lessons 41, 'put out, &c.' 96, 'destroyed.'

all—Gideon had seventy sons.

Jotham—'perfection of Jehovah.'

king—this first attempt to establish kingly authority in Israel proved unsuccessful; it had not the divine approval, as in the case of Saul. Lessons 43 and 44.

parable—a simple narration in which instruction is conveyed on one thing by speaking of other things; in this case the men of Shechem were spoken of as 'trees choosing a king.' The natives of the East are very fond of stories, and are accustomed to the easy process of reasoning by analogy.

ridiculed—made the subject of contemptuous laughter.

pretensions—conceited notions; assumption of greatness & power. Those who aspire to authority or knowledge without possessing any claim to them are pretenders.

anoint—the ceremony by which kings and priests were set apart for their respective offices.

the olive—the selection of the olive was not for its size, but for its invaluable properties—its oil being one of the chief sources of wealth, comfort and luxury to the people of Canaan. Les. 4, 'olive,' Lesson 23, 'candlestick.'

fatness—referring to its unctuous fruit, and rich luxuriant foliage.

honour God—by its being used in sacrifices, and in other services, of the tabernacle.

promoted—raised to greater distinction.

fig-tree—almost every family in Palestine cultivated the fig-tree; its leaves are large, affording a pleasant shade in summer; Less. 71, 'under;' its fruit is soft, sweet, & nutritious. Les. 50, 'figs.'

vine—one of the largest of the climbing plants; vines were common in Canaan, and were esteemed for their fruits which were eaten both fresh and dried, & also made into wine. Les. 50, 'wine.'

cheereth God—speaking after the manner of men, God is here represented as being gratified with the drink-offerings of wine presented by sincere worshippers.

bramble—the meanest of all the trees, aptly resembling Abimelech; by some authorities it is supposed a species of buck-thorn is intended by the bramble.

my shadow—a boast—the bramble being both small and mean.

fire—referring to its combustible nature. In this country the common whin, even in its state of greenness, full of sap, and blossom, is one of the most combustible of substances.

devour—swallow up by consuming.

ingratitude—in assisting Abimelech to slay Gideon's sons; they were, however, severely punished, for the wicked Abimelech was made the instrument of slaying thousands of them when they revolted against him.

Gaal—this man acted from selfish ambition not from any patriotic desire to rid the country of Abimelech.

fortress—a strong tower in the city Thebez to which all the people fled when Abimelech besieged the place.

Jephthah—'he will open;' like Abimelech he was not a lawful son; his brethren banished him; but in this time of danger they sent for him, and he became a captain, a deliverer, and a judge.

rash—hasty; ill-consider d.

vow—a religious promise. Vows were common in early times; they were voluntary. Promises are not vows. Les. 39, 'vowed.'

sacrifice—some suppose that her sacrifice consisted in perfect seclusion from the world, and from the advantages of married life; others believe that Jephthah really offered his daughter on an altar at Ophrah, for it is well known that such a sacrifice would not be permitted on the Lord's altar at Shiloh.

quarrelled—the Ephraimites were a haughty tribe, they had quarrelled with Gideon and now with Jephthah. They crossed the Jordan, and came into Gilead with the intention of wreaking their vengeance on Jephthah and his friends.

shibboleth—'water-brooks;' this test is curious as shewing that differences in speech had arisen, by which particular tribes could be distinguished.

passages—fordable places.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

BEER—'a well;' the place to whic Jotham fled is supposed to be Beeroth, an ancient city of the Gibeonites, in the tribe of Benjamin, about seven miles from Jerusalem.

SIDON—the most ancient city of Phœnicia, much older than Tyre; said to have been founded by Sidon, a grandson of Ham; it was in the tribe of Asher, but it was never subdued by the Israelites.

SYRIA—a large country of Asia, between the Euphrates and Arabia on the east and south, with Mount Taurus on the north, and the Mediterranean Sea, and Canaan on the west. Damascus and Hamath were its principal cities. The ruins of Baalbec and Tadmor are still to be seen in its wilderness.

SONG OF JEPHTHAH'S DAUGHTER.

"AND JEPHTHAH VOWED A VOW UNTO THE LORD," &c.

Since our Country, our God—Oh my sire!
Demand that thy daughter expire;
Since thy triumph was bought by thy vow—
Strike the bosom that's bare'd for thee now!

And the voice of my mourning is o'er,
And the mountains behold me no more;
If the hand that I love lay me low,
There cannot be pain in the blow!

And of this, oh my father! be sure—
That the blood of thy child is as pure
As the blessing I beg ere it flow,
And the last thought that soothes me below.

Though the virgins of Salem lament,
Be the judge and the hero unbent!
I have won the great battle for thee,
And my father and country are free!

When this blood of thy giving hath gush'd,
When the voice that thou lovest is hush'd,
Let my memory still be thy pride,
And forget not I smile'd as I died!

BYRON.

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39. OF SAMSON, ELI, AND SAMUEL.

Judges xii. 8-xiii. 25 & 1 Sam. i-iii.

After the death of Jephthah, Ibzan judged Israel. He was succeeded by Elon, after whom Abdon was judge. Ibzan, Elah, and Abdon governed Israel twenty-five years. The Israelites again forsook God and he delivered them into the hands of the Philistines who oppressed them for the space of forty years.

·The coming of ·Samson was made known to his mother, before it took place. She was the wife of Manoah, of the tribe of Dan. An angel told her that her son should begin to deliver Israel from the Philistines and that he must never be shaven, but brought up a ·Nazarite from his birth. Manoah and his wife promised to obey the ·injunctions of the angel, and in ·due time Samson was born.

When ·Eli was ·judge and priest of Israel, a woman named ·Hannah, one of the two wives of ·Elkanah, prayed for a son. Elkanah comforted Hannah, saying "Why weepest thou? and why eatest thou not? and why is thy heart grieved? am not I better to thee than ten sons?" Hannah ·vowed, if the Lord answered her prayer to ·dedicate her son to the Lord all his life. As she was praying, Eli watched her; she spake in her heart, only her lips moved, and her voice was not heard; therefore Eli thought she was drunken. He said unto her, "How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee."

And Hannah answered, "No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit; I have drunken neither wine, nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord." Eli then said, "Go in peace; and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him." Then her countenance was no more sad.

The Lord heard Hannah's prayer, and gave her a son whom she called Samuel. After the child was weaned, she brought him to the house of the Lord in Shiloh. And she said to Eli, "Oh, my lord, as thy soul liveth, I am the woman that stood by thee here praying unto the Lord. For this child I prayed, and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked him; therefore also I have lent him to the Lord—as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord." She also sung a song of thanksgiving to the Lord, in which she praised his power, and wisdom, and goodness.

Eli had two wicked sons, Hophni and Phinehas. He reproved them, but they would not hearken to their father. They did evil, and he did not restrain them. A prophet came to Eli, and spake of the approaching downfall of his house. He said that Eli's two sons should die in one day;—that God would raise up a faithful priest in Eli's place;—and that Eli's seed should come to poverty and dishonour.

The child Samuel ministered to the Lord before Eli. The Lord called on Samuel as he lay asleep. He thought Eli had called him; but Eli knew the call was from the Lord, and told Samuel how to answer. The Lord revealed to Samuel his judgment on Eli's house, which Samuel made known to Eli the next morning.

All Israel knew that Samuel was appointed to be a prophet of the Lord.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

the coming—his birth; and that his life would be devoted to the deliverance of his people from the Philistine yoke.

Samson—'sun;' as long as he continued a Nazarite his physical strength was prodigious; the mental powers of Samson were not of a high order, nor were his moral perceptions correct. He was a man of strong passions, of patriotism, and of devotion.

Nazarite—'one devoted;' 'one separated'—as for some especial purpose. The Nazarite's vow included abstinence from wine, and all intoxicating liquors; he was to avoid everything polluted; he was not to enter a house where a dead

body lay, nor to suffer the hair of his head to be shaven off. The Nazarites' vow might be taken by men or women; it generally lasted eight days, but in some instances during life.

injunctions—instructions; commands.

due—proper; full; complete.

Eli—'exalted;' he was descended from Ithamar, the fourth son of Aaron; he was a good man, but deficient in paternal discipline, which led to the ruin of his two sons, and his own unhappy end

judge and priest—this union of distinct offices was admissible under the Mosaic dispensation; for the nation was governed by unchangeable laws directly communicated by God, who also made known his will in answer to devout enquiries through the high priest. In all other countries the laws are based on the will of the Sovereign, or the will of a governing body, or according to the will of the people at large; they are consequently imperfect, and sometimes unjust, which is not the case with the laws of God.

Hannah—'graciousness;' though more beloved than Peninnah, the other wife of Elkanah, she was not so highly favoured with children. Lesson 13, 'Rachel,' 'Leah.'

Elkanah—'God the jealous;' a Levite, residing at Ramah. Les. 43, 'Ramah.'

vowed—no one was obliged to make a vow, but once made there was no excuse for its non-performance. But in the case of children and women, their vows might be forbidden by their fathers or husbands, provided they did so as soon as they became acquainted with them. Numbers xxx. 3-8.

dedicate—as a Levite, her son would have to attend to the temple service; but this vow of Hannah was that his service should begin very early in life, and that he should be a Nazarite. Lesson 38, 'Nazarite.'

poured out—a beautiful emblem of prayer—the unreserved outpouring of the heart's desires to God.

Go in peace—an intimation that her prayer would be granted.

no more sad—Hannah believed that Eli's words amounted to an assurance that her prayer would be heard; and she recognized the will of God in the blessing of Eli.

Samuel—'asked of God;' or 'heard of God;' at the time of his birth Israel was in a state of declension from the paths of pure religion; profanity had spread among all classes, not excepting the ministers of the Tabernacle.

lent—the recognition of maternal controul over the early training of the child is here indicated. God has given parents this right, but they are responsible for its proper exercise.

evil—they were licentious; and they made use of that influence and authority which their office in the tabernacle gave them, to act with tyranny and rapacity—depriving those who offered Peace-offerings of their share of the sacrifices.

not restrain—he did not keep them in check by the strong exercise of paternal and priestly authority; he barely reproved them.

seed—children; descendants; this prophecy was fulfilled in the degradation of Abiathar, many years after. Les. 66.

ministered—served; performed such acts as his youth permitted.

revealed—made known; told him.

prophet—a guide and judge in national matters; one to whom the will of God was made known; an expounder of the laws which concern religious worship.

THE BOY SAMUEL.

"AND ALL ISRAEL KNEW THAT SAMUEL WAS ESTABLISHED TO BE A PROPHET."

The child was young—a tender thing
About a mother's neck to cling,
Upon a mother's hearth to bound,
And scatter joy like sunshine round

O blessed child! O mother blest!
What joy and glory on you rest!
In sorrow did she ask, and lo!
God's mercies stream and overflow.

Already, in the midnight hour,
The Spirit of Eternal Power,
From heaven descending, deigns to pour
On that sweet child its Prophet lore.

And soon, on his advancing youth,
The tribes shall lean in love and truth;
Wide, wider shall his fame expand,—
Judge, prophet, father of the land.

40. THE ACTS OF SAMSON.

Judges xiv. xv.

When Samson grew up, he went to *Timnath*, where he saw a woman of the Philistines who pleased him. He told his father and mother to get her for him to wife, but his parents did not wish it, for they knew not that it was of the Lord. The Philistines at that time had dominion over Israel. As he was going to Timnath, he slew a lion. On his return there was a swarm of bees in the carcase of the lion, and he took some of the honey, and did eat. He afterwards proposed a riddle to the Philistines, at a feast which he made, saying, "If ye find it out and declare it to me within seven days, then I will give you thirty sheets, and thirty changes of garments; but if ye cannot declare it to me, ye shall give me thirty sheets and thirty changes of garments." Then he put forth the riddle, "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness." But they could not declare it. They told his wife to entice her husband to tell her its meaning, that she might tell them, and that they might answer Samson. She did so, and they answered him on the seventh day, "What is sweeter than honey, and what is stronger than a lion?" Then he knew that his wife had revealed it to them.

The father of Samson's wife gave her to his companion. Samson then caught three-hundred foxes, and put firebrands to their tails, and let them go into the standing corn of the Philistines, which was burnt up. The Philistines were angry,

and burnt Samson's wife and her father with fire. He afterwards smote a great many Philistines, near the rock, *Etam*. The men of Judah were angry with Samson, for the Philistines were rulers over them; they came to the rock Etam to bind him, that they might deliver him to the Philistines; and they bound him with two new cords, and brought him to *Lehi*. The Philistines shouted against him, and the spirit of the Lord came mightily on him; the cords became as burnt flax, and his hands were loosed; he found a new jaw-bone of an ass, which he took, and slew a thousand men therewith. After this slaughter he nearly died of thirst, but God clave the jaw-bone, and water came out, which he drank and was refreshed.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

of the Lord—the Lord overruled the weak desires of Samson to make him a scourge to the Philistines.

dominion—worship; rule.

Israel—chiefly over the tribes of Judah, Dan, and Simeon.

lion—owing to the unsettled condition of the country these animals increased; as cultivation extends and population increases in any country infested with beasts of prey, they gradually diminish in number till they become extinct. Deut. vii. 22; Lesson 108, 'lions.'

swarm—the lion's carcase was speedily reduced to a skeleton by beasts and birds of prey, and in so arid a country it soon became dried, so as to form a convenient *hive* for the bees. Lesson 63, 'birds.'

he took—it appears that no one had discovered the lion's carcase while Samson was at Timnath, which proves that the country was thinly inhabited, and that intercourse between towns was abridged, owing to the oppression and cruel domination of the Philistines.

riddle—propounding riddles was a very ancient and common source of amusement at eastern feasts, indeed the practice prevails in most countries, but in the East more especially.

a feast—the marriage feast; he had been betrothed, or engaged to marry, at his first visit, this second visit was therefore for the purpose of fulfilling his agreement or contract; at such times feasts were made on a grand and costly scale.

sheets—more properly shirts.

changes—suits; dresses.

entice—this was very improper on their part, but the threat of burning her and her father's house, if she did not obtain the secret and disclose it to them, proved that they were destitute of honor, humanity, and justice, and that they were men of depraved and wicked hearts, and ready for deeds of blood.

companion—he was the bridegroom's man—his assistant at the marriage; his confidant; he had the charge of all matters connected with the feast. His facilities for becoming personally acquainted with the bride, were, in the case of Samson, shamefully abused, for he acted the part of a traitor.

caught—probably not by himself, but with the assistance of many who were glad of a stealthy opportunity to harass the Philistines.

foxes—the jackall or wolf-fox is no doubt the animal referred to. Jackalls abounded in Palestine, and being gregarious in their habits were more easily procured than the shy and cunning fox, which is not gregarious.

firebrands—composed probably of dried brushwood.

tails—each two had one firebrand attached; this union prevented them from running away too fast, so that the

destruction of the corn might be rendered more certain.

standing—uncut; it was about the time of reaping.

burnt—this was the result of a popular outbreak, led by those whose corn had been burnt.

angry—their independence was gone; they feared to offend their Philistine masters.

bind him—Samson allowed them to bind him upon their promising to do nothing more than deliver him up to the Philistines.

shouted—they rejoiced thinking they had their enemy in their power.

spirit of the Lord—a phrase used to denote a powerful emotion of the mind, or peculiar ability to act in a time of emergency.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

TIMNATH—an ancient city of the Canaanites, first assigned to the tribe of Judah, and afterwards to Dan; it long remained in the possession of the Philistines; it is chiefly noticed in the history of Samson.

ETAM—a town and a rock in Judah, near Bethlehem.

LEHI—'the jaw-bone;' the place at which Samson slew a thousand Philistines with a jaw-bone; its exact situation is unknown; a fountain sprung up at this place in answer to his prayer.

THE DECEITFULNESS OF EARTHLY PLEASURE.

The branch is stooping to thy hand,
And pleasant to behold;
Yet gather not, although its fruit
Be streak'd with hues of gold.

The cup is dancing to thy lip,
And fragrant is the wine;
Yet dash the untasted goblet down,
Though lusciously it shine.

For bitter ashes lurk conceal'd
Beneath that golden skin;
And though the coat be smooth, there lies
But rottenness within.

Though wings of pleasure fan the bowl,
And bid it overflow;
Yet drugged with poison are its lees,
And death is found below.

SMEDLEY.

41. FURTHER ACTS, AND DEATH OF SAMSON.

Judges xvi.

Samson came to *Gaza*, and the Gazites closed the gates and compassed him in the city and lay in wait for him all the night, saying, "In the morning, when it is day, we will kill him." At midnight Samson arose, took the gates of the city from their hinges, and carried them away to the top of a hill, before Hebron.

Samson loved a woman named Delilah. The Philistines bribed her with a large sum of money, to entice Samson to tell her the secret of his strength, that she might betray him to them. He deceived her several times; at length he revealed to her, that he was a Nazarite, and if he were shaven he should be weak like other men.

While he slept she called a man and caused him to shave Samson's head. The Lord departed from him, and his strength left him. The Philistines then took him, put out his eyes, bound him with fetters, and made him grind in prison. Samson's hair began to grow in prison, and his strength returned to him.

The Philistines gathered together to make a great sacrifice to Dagon their god, and to rejoice; for they said, "Our god hath delivered Samson our enemy, and the destroyer of many of us into our hand." And when their hearts were merry, the Philistines brought Samson into the temple of Dagon to make sport while they were feasting. They set him between the pillars of the temple. And Samson said unto the lad that held him by the hand, "Suffer me that I may feel the pillars whereupon the house standeth, that I may lean upon them." Now the house was full of men and women; and all the lords of the Philistines were there: and there were upon the roof about three-thousand men and women, that beheld while Samson made sport. And Samson called unto the Lord, and said, "O Lord God, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes." And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood, and on which it was borne up, of the one with his right hand, and of the other with his left. And Samson said, "Let me die with the Philistines." And he bowed himself with all his might; and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all who were therein. So the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life. Samson judged Israel in the days of the Philistines twenty years.

gates—it was a walled city, as were nearly all towns and cities of importance in early times.

in wait—lying in concealed places, from which they could observe his progress.

arose—he judged that they would try to ensnare him in order to effect his death.

to the top—that this was a work of prodigious labour is certain from the fact that the Gazites were never able to fetch them down, a much easier task than that of carrying them up.

bribed—the sum which the lords of the Philistines offered was about £600. in our money; and this shows how greatly Samson was dreaded by them; for the sum was immense for the time and the country.

deceived—in a playful manner; evasively.

revealed—he told her all he knew and thus ruined himself.

slept—she caused him to sleep with his head resting on her lap, as they both sat on the carpeted floor.

shave—oriental barbers are exceedingly clever in their art, owing to their extensive practice in shaving heads.

departed—the condition that he should be a Nazarite was now broken and his strength left him.

put out—a very cruel mode of torture frequently inflicted previous to capital punishment. Samson's case is the first that is recorded; it afterwards became a common punishment in the East, especially in Persia. Lesson 38, 'slew.'

fetters—they were made of brass, iron, not being then in common use.

grind—to turn round the upper millstone; this being considered a woman's employment, it was therefore appointed to Samson for his greater degradation. A mill consisted of two stones; the under one was hollowed out for the reception of the wheat, and the upper stone was turned by a handle at the top.

Dagon—'fish-god;' he was represented with the head, face, and hands of a man, and the body of a fish. The country of the Philistines lay upon the sea-coast, which accounts for this form of their idol.

merry—the drunkenness and debauchery of pagan festivities were, on this occasion, indulged beyond measure.

sport—in early times the practice of compelling enemies, captured in war, to contribute to the amusement of their conquerors generally prevailed. The same customs are found among the North American Indians, and other barbarous nations at this day.

pillars—some of the temples of the ancients consisted of large square buildings, the flat roofs of which were sustained in the middle by pillars, the two centre ones being the most important; the forcing these from their position would bring down the edifice.

judged—it does not appear that Samson displayed those qualities essential in a judge, properly so called; nor was he at any time recognized as a leader or governor. By his mighty personal strength and dauntless courage he kept the Philistines in continual fear of him; consequently during his life the people of Israel had comparative freedom from oppression.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

GAZA—a strong city and principality of the Philistines, situated near the coast. Here was the temple of Dagon which Samson pulled down.

MYSTERIES OF PROVIDENCE.

God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform;
He plants his footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never-failing skill,
He treasures up his bright designs,
And works his sovereign will.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;
The clouds ye so much dread,
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessing on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust him for his grace:
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.

His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.

Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan his work in vain;
God is his own interpreter,
And he will make it plain.

COWPER.

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42. THE ARK TAKEN. HOPHNI AND PHINEHAS.

1 Samuel iv.-vii. 2.

The people of Israel went out against the Philistines to battle, and pitched beside *Ebenezer*, and the Philistines pitched in *Aphek*; and when they joined battle Israel was smitten, and about 4,000 men were slain. Hophni and Phinehas were with the ark at Shiloh. And the elders of Israel said, "Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of Shiloh unto us, that, when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies." So the people sent to Shiloh, that the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, might bring there the ark of the covenant of God. And when the ark came into the camp, all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth rang again. And the Philistines said, "What meaneth the noise of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews?" And when they understood that the ark was

come into the camp they said, "Woe unto us! Who shall deliver us out of the hand of these mighty gods? these are the gods that smote the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderness. Be strong, and quit yourselves like men, O ye Philistines, that ye be not servants unto the Hebrews, as they have been to you." And the Philistines fought, and Israel was smitten with a very great slaughter; for there fell of Israel thirty-thousand footmen. And the ark of God was taken; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were slain. A man of Benjamin ran to Shiloh, and told Eli of the capture of the ark; Eli was sitting by the way side, watching; his heart trembled for the ark of God. When Eli was told that Israel had fled, that his sons were slain, and that the ark was taken by the Philistines, he fell backward, and died. He had judged Israel forty years.

The Philistines took the ark to *Ashdod*, and carried it into the house of Dagon. On the morrow Dagon was fallen on his face before the ark. They set Dagon up, and on the next morrow he was fallen again; God greatly afflicted the men of Ashdod, and they sent the ark to *Ekron*. A deadly destruction came on the city; the Philistines called for diviners, to know what to do with the ark. At last they made a new cart, and put two milch-kine in it, and they laid the ark upon the cart, and jewels, and other offerings with it. They left the kine to take their way, and they went straight to *Bethshemesh*. The Bethshemites were reaping their wheat harvest; they were glad to see the ark thus brought back, and they clave the wood of the cart, and offered the kine for a burnt-offering unto the Lord.

The men of Bethshemesh looked into the ark of the Lord, and a great number were smitten and died. The people of Bethshemesh said, "Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?" And they sent messengers to the inhabitants of *Kirjath-jearim* who came and fetched the ark from Bethshemesh, brought it to the house of Abinadab, who sanctified his son Eleazar, to keep it. The ark remained in the house of Abinadab twenty years. And all the people of Israel lamented after the Lord.

battle—the battles we read of in early times were exceedingly murderous; the victors were destitute of all feeling of kindness or pity towards the vanquished, and their treatment of them was marked by extreme cruelty. The weapons in use were swords, spears, lances, arrows, javelins, slings, and battle-axes; the body was protected by a shield; and armour was sometimes worn, consisting of a helmet, a coat of mail, and greaves, or leg-armour. The result of war is visible in the desolation which follows, "The land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness."

joined—most battles in early times consisted of close fighting, fire-arms and powder being unknown; the result mainly depended on superior numbers and physical strength.

it may save us—this confidence in the ark showed how greatly perverted were the people and princes of Israel from that simple trust in God which they ought to have exercised; they looked on the ark as an object of idolatrous veneration, and therefore they followed the practice of the Canaanites who brought their gods into the camp to give them success.

shouted—they uttered the 'war-cry;' this custom has prevailed among the warriors of all nations.

rang again—the hills echoed the martial shouts of the warriors.

mighty gods—this expression leads to the conclusion that the two figures on the lid of the ark were regarded as gods; and that the great deliverances which the Lord had effected for the Israelites were ascribed by the Philistines to the power of these supposed deities. Lesson 23, 'cherubim.'

footmen—the people of Israel were so far behind other nations, in the arts and means of war, that they had no horse soldiers nor chariots of fighting men.

capture—the taking it away by the enemy.

sitting—not cross-legged on a mat—the most common position in the East, but on an elevated seat.

trembled—being fully aware of the iniquities of his sons, and indeed of all Israel, he feared that God would abandon them to ruin, and suffer the ark to be polluted and destroyed.

diviners—men who pretended to discover future events by various absurd and wicked methods.

milch-kine—cows giving milk.

jewels—precious stones; ornaments of gold.

with it—in order, as they supposed, to purchase the favour of the offended gods of the Hebrews.

looked—this was contrary to the will of God, who commanded that none should touch the ark but the priests.

Abinadab—'father of willingness.'

the Lord—probably the *Shechinah*, or divine cloud, had disappeared from the ark and tabernacle.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

EBENEZER—'stone of help;' the place at which the Israelites were first defeated by the Philistines with great loss, and, twenty years after, conquered them; on the latter occasion Samuel set up a stone between Mizpeh and Shen which he called Ebenezer.

APHER—'a stream;' a city of Judah at which the Philistines encamped against Israel when the ark was taken in battle.

ASHDOD—'leaning;' a city of Philistia in the tribe of Dan, near Gaza, where there was a celebrated temple to Dagon. The ark was placed in this temple, and the idol was twice found fallen to the ground before it.

EKRON—'barrenness;' was a city and government of the Philistines, the people of which were very powerful.

BETHSHEMESH—'house of the sun;' a city of Judah to which the ark of God was taken by the kine, when the Philistines returned it to the land of Israel. There were three cities of this name; one in Egypt (Lesson 15, 'On'); one in the tribe of Naphtali, and this, which was situated in the borders of Dan, about 30 miles south-west of Jerusalem.

KIRJATH-JEARIM—called also Kirjath-Baal; a city of the Gibeonites, afterwards in Judah, and about nine miles from Jerusalem.

"AND THE WORD OF THE LORD WAS PRECIOUS IN THOSE DAYS."

Not only in the spring-tide hour,
Or Summer's bright and fervid power,
Does nature live:—her hidden life
Lives on through winter's stormy strife.

Though perish'd bud and flower, and fruit,
If deep below survive the root,
When spring shall re-assume her reign,
The sap shall re-ascend again.

Nor had the Lord his people left,
Though Eli's age of strength was reft;
Although his sons their God forgot,
And he their sire restrain'd them not.

Though even near His hallow'd ark
The lamp of God seem'd growing dark,
Though there no open vision told
The glories of the days of old;

Yet still *His word was precious;* still
There were who sought to know his will,
Who look'd unto that ark, though dim,
With hopes and prayers that turn'd to Him.

Those hopes and prayers an answer found
When night seem'd gathering darkly round;
Though he, the guardian of the shrine,
At first knew not the voice divine.

Nor is his church now left by Him,
Though many an Eli's eyes wax dim;
Nor is the Christian's hopeless night,
Though God awhile, may veil his light.

If precious to his church his word,
Its voice by them shall yet be heard;
Christian, if veil'd that light from thee,
Hidden, but hoped for, may it be.

BARTON.

43. THE PEOPLE REPENT. THEY ASK FOR A KING.

1 Samuel vii. 3.-viii.

Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, "If ye do return unto the Lord with all your hearts, and ·put away strange gods, and Ashtaroth, from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the Lord and serve him only, he will deliver you out of the hands of the Philistines." Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served the Lord only. And Samuel gathered all Israel at *Mizpeh*, and there he prayed unto the Lord for them; they also fasted and confessed their sin. And as Samuel was offering a lamb for a burnt-offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel: but the Lord thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel. Samuel set up a stone, in remembrance, and called it Ebenezer. The Philistines were subdued, and Samuel went from place to place, and judged Israel. When he became old, he made his sons, Joel and Abiah, judges in *Beersheba*. They walked not in the ways of their father, but they took bribes, and did not judge justly.

The elders of Israel assembled at *Ramah* and ·asked for a ·king. God told Samuel to hearken to them, as they had ·rejected HIM for their king. Samuel told them all that a king would do, saying, "This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you. He will ·take your sons, and appoint them over his ·chariots and his horsemen, and some shall ·run before his chariots; and he will take your ·daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers, and he will ·take your fields, and your vineyards, and your olive-yards. He will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work; he will take the ·tenth of your sheep, and ye shall be his servants. And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the Lord will not hear you in that day." Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, "Nay; but we will have a king over us, that we also may be ·like all the nations; and that our king ·may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles." And Samuel heard all the

words of the people, and he rehearsed them in the ears of the Lord. And the Lord said to Samuel, "Hearken unto their voice, and make them a king." And Samuel said unto the men of Israel, "Go ye every man unto his city."

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

put away—similar advice was given to Jacob. Lesson 14, 'household.'

asked—they did not ask for a king for each tribe, but one under whom all should be united; thus recognising their common origin and brotherly relationship; they showed no desire to take the appointment into their own hands; God was still to be their recognised ruler.

king—though the Israelites erred in this request, there was no unbecoming spirit of rivalry exhibited as to which of the tribes should have the honour of supplying the first king.

rejected—notwithstanding the many provocations of Israel, this was their most decided act of rebellion, for it was against the government of Jehovah, their almighty guide and protector.

take—eastern princes require the services of any of their subjects at their pleasure. Those who are not called upon for personal service have to pay a tax instead. This being known to the Israelites ought to have deterred them from rejecting the Lord as their captain and king.

chariots, &c.—a military establishment would form a necessary appendage to the pomp of a king; previous to this time there had been no national army, every man became a soldier, not for pay, but from a personal interest in the deliverance of his country from foes, and from a desire for its internal peace and prosperity.

run—it was an ancient practice, and one that still exists in the East, for trained runners to go before and on each side of distinguished persons when riding out, whether in chariots or on horseback.

daughters, &c.—the duties alluded to are very arduous in eastern courts on account of the great number who daily receive their food from the royal kitchens. The women so employed are generally taken against their will, and contrary to their interests. An idea may be formed of the vastness of the culinary preparations in eastern courts by reference to 1 Kings iv. 22,23.

take your fields—though the lands of the Israelites were inalienable, yet one consequence of their adoption of the heathen mode of national government, would be, that of rendering the possessions of those who might rebel against their king, liable to confiscation.

tenth—not the tenth or tithe appointed by God to be paid to the Levites in lieu of their interest in the land (Lesson 32, 'forty-eight'); but an additional tithe for the support of their king.

like, &c.—this desire was at the root of nearly all their offences.

may judge—a visible for an invisible judge, or ruler, was more in accordance with their worldly feelings.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

MIZPEH—a city in Benjamin at which Saul was anointed king of Israel. Another city of the same name, in Gilead, was so called by Laban, and is mentioned as the residence of Jephthah; at this place Gedaliah was made governor of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, and slain by Johanan. A third Mizpeh was in Moab, and it was one of the places to which David fled from Saul; his parents joined him there, but the prophet Gad caused him to return into Judah. A district near Mount Hermon was also called Mizpeh.

BEERSHEBA—was at first included in the division of Judah; it was afterwards transferred to that of Simeon. Les. 9.

RAMAH—'eminence;' the place of Samuel's residence, but it is uncertain whether it was in Ephraim or Benjamin.

"WE HAVE SINNED AGAINST THE LORD."

O Lord, turn not Thy face away from them that lowly lie,
Lamenting sore their sinful life with tears and bitter cry!
Thy mercy-gates are open wide to them that mourn their sin;
Oh shut them not against us, Lord, but let us enter in!

We need not to confess our fault, for surely, Thou can'st tell;
What we have done, and what we are, Thou knowest very well:
Wherefore, to beg and to entreat with tears we come to Thee,
As children that have done amiss fall at their father's knee.

And need we then, oh Lord! repeat the blessing which we crave!
When Thou dost know, before we speak, the thing that we would have,
Mercy! oh Lord,—mercy we seek: this is the total sum!
For mercy, Lord! is all our prayer,—oh, let Thy mercy come!

STERNHOLD.

PERIOD V.

FROM THE ANOINTING OF SAUL TO THE DEATH OF SOLOMON.

B.C. 1095—B.C. 975. 120 years.

44. SAUL IS ANOINTED KING.

1 Samuel ix-xii.

There was a man of ·Benjamin whose name was Kish, and he had a son, whose name was ·Saul, a choice young man, and a goodly; and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he, from his shoulders upward he was higher than any of the people. The asses of Kish were lost, and Saul was sent, with one of his father's servants, to seek them. God had told Samuel the day before, that he was about to send to him the man whom he had chosen to be king over Israel; and he now informed Samuel that Saul was the man. Samuel met Saul, and told him that the asses were found, and that on him was the ·desire of ·all Israel. Saul abode with Samuel that day. And Samuel took a ·vial of ·oil, and ·poured it on Saul's head, saying, "·The Lord hath ·anointed thee to be ·captain over his inheritance." He then told Saul that when he left him he would be met by ·a company of prophets, and that the Spirit of God would come on him, and that he should prophesy.

Samuel assembled the people together at Mizpeh, and said, "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all kingdoms, and of them that oppressed you; and ye have this day rejected your God, who himself saved you out of all your adversities and your tribulations; and ye have said unto him, Nay, but set a king over us. Now therefore present yourselves before the Lord by your tribes, and by your thousands." And when Samuel had caused all the tribes of Israel to come near, the tribe of Benjamin was taken. When he had caused the tribe of

Benjamin to come near by their families, the family of Matri was taken, and Saul the son of Kish was taken. When Saul stood among the people, he was higher than any of them from his shoulders upward, and when the people saw him, they shouted: "God save the king." Samuel wrote the laws of the kingdom in a book, and sent the people away. Saul went home to Gibeah, and a band of men with him, whose hearts God had touched. But the children of Belial despised Saul.

The Ammonites made war against Jabesh-Gilead; but Saul raised a large army of Israelites, and went against them and conquered them. The people went with Samuel to Gilgal, and they made Saul king before the Lord.

When Samuel was old and grey-headed, he said to all Israel, "Behold, here I am: witness against me before the Lord, and before his anointed: whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it you." And they said, "Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken aught of any man's hand." Afterwards, to show the people their wickedness in asking for a king, he called unto the Lord, and the Lord sent thunder and rain that day: and all the people greatly feared the Lord and Samuel.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

Benjamin—this tribe was the smallest of the twelve, owing to the circumstances narrated in Lesson 34; but the Benjamites were very warlike and valiant.

Saul—'asked.'

desire—that he was the man whom the Lord had chosen according to the desire of all Israel.

all—the wish was unanimous; they thought that one supreme magistrate would be the means of consolidating and preserving the interests of all. The advantages they sought were, however, amply provided for in that form of national worship which God had given them.

vial—probably a censer, for we find that this utensil was sometimes called a spoon. Num. vii. 14; also a vial, Rev. v. 8.

oil—whether this was common olive-oil or the holy anointing oil does not appear.

poured—indicating that God had endued him with the qualifications requisite for his office.

the Lord, &c.—the authority and will of God in the selection of a king are here fully recognized.

anointed—put for chosen; the anointing by Samuel was to be considered as the act of God, for his selection preceded Samuel's anointing. This was a private anointing. Lesson 95, 'told them.'

captain—a martial leader.

a company—the prophets lived together in small communities secluded from the busy world, and having for their president the senior prophet. Les. 90, 'sitting before.'

It is probable that schools of the prophets existed at Ramah, Bethel, Jericho, Gilgal, and Mount Carmel; the pupils were not boys but grown men. Lesson 92, 'sons of the prophets.' The meeting of the prophets by Saul, and his own immediate inspiration, were signs to him that Samuel had acted under divine direction in anointing him king.

higher—in the selection of a man of great stature the prejudices of the people were considered; for they associated the ideas of dignity and bravery with largeness of person, muscular strength, and accomplished manners.

God save the king—preserve; give prosperity unto. The peculiar force and beauty of this ejaculatory prayer of the people for their king are found in the fact that he was to be their martial leader—that he was to go before them in their wars with the Philistines and others who had so recently oppressed them; and consequently that he would be exposed to danger, though *safe* if under the protection of Jehovah.

touched—inspired; they were filled with a patriotic desire to serve their country and their king, in being the defenders of both. We admire the gracious condescension of God in yielding to the weakness of his people by giving them a king according to their desire, and then operating upon the minds of suitable persons so as to cause them of their own accord to offer themselves as servants of the state. We have to remember also that the people did not rashly proceed to elect a king themselves, but left the choice to God.

Belial—'worthlessness;' profane, disreputable, scornful persons. Saul might well feel honoured, in his new and important position, when none but persons of this class refused to acknowledge him.

made Saul—he was now publicly proclaimed and accepted by the people.

his anointed—henceforth the term 'Lord's anointed,' came to be used when speaking of the king.

thunder—the season for thunder and rain had passed, the immediate answer to Samuel's call was therefore the more alarming.

SAMUEL'S JUSTIFICATION.

The earth is thine, Jehovah!—thine
Its peopled realms, and wealthy stores,
Built on the flood, by power divine,
The waves are ramparts to the shores.

But who shall reach thine holy place!
Or who, O Lord, ascend thine hill!
The pure in heart shall see thy face,
The perfect man that doth thy will.

He who to bribes hath close'd his hand,
To idols never bent the knee,
Nor sworn in falsehood,—he shall stand
Redeemed and owned, and kept by Thee.

J. MONTGOMERY.

45. SAUL IS REPROVED. DAVID IS ANOINTED.

1 Samuel xiii.-xvi.

Saul gathered the people together at *Gilgal*, and when Samuel came not, at the end of ·seven days, ·he offered a burnt-offering to God. It was not lawful for Saul to do this, and when Samuel came he reproved him, and said, "Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the Lord have ·established thy kingdom upon Israel ·for ever. But now thy kingdom shall not continue; the Lord ·hath sought him a man ·after his own heart, and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the Lord commanded thee." The Philistines at this time ·overran the country. ·Jonathan and his ·armour-bearer went into their ·garrison, and slew twenty men; the Philistines were ·alarmed, slew each other, and many fled. Saul had ·adjured the people to ·eat nothing that day. Jonathan had not heard his father's ·curse, and had eaten. When Saul found that Jonathan had ·tasted food, he would have put him to death, to ·fulfil his oath: but the people ·rescued Jonathan who had that day wrought a great ·salvation for Israel.

Samuel commanded Saul to go and destroy the Amalekites utterly. Saul allowed the Kenites to depart, because they had shewn kindness to the Israelites. He then smote the Amalekites, but he spared ·Agag the king, and the best of the sheep, and oxen. When Samuel came to Saul he reproved him for his disobedience. Saul said he had saved the best of the cattle for burnt-offerings. Samuel replied, "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king." Samuel commanded Agag to be brought to him. Agag came ·delicately, and said, "Surely the ·bitterness of death is past." Samuel ·then slew Agag, after reproaching him with his many ·cruelties.

Samuel mourned for Saul's disobedience. God told him he would send him to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for he had chosen one of his sons to be king. ·Jesse had eight sons. When

Eliab, the eldest, passed before Samuel, he thought the Lord had chosen him, but the Lord told Samuel he had not. Abinadab, Shammah, and the rest of Jesse's sons, except the youngest, passed before Samuel, but the Lord had not chosen any of them. At Samuel's command, Jesse sent for David, who was with the sheep. When Samuel saw him, the Lord told him to arise and anoint him. Samuel anointed him there, and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

seven days—the time appointed by Samuel, for his coming to Gilgal, when he would have offered the sacrifice, and directed Saul as to what he should do. Samuel came to Gilgal before the seven days had expired, but Saul had already transgressed.

he offered—the priests did so at his command, but the sin was his.

established—made it hereditary to Saul's latest posterity.

for ever—throughout his generations.

hath sought—had already made provision for supplying his place, thus implying that his successor should not be of his own family.

after his own heart—Saul corresponded in size, appearance, and manner with the Israelites' notion of a king; but his successor would be a man whose heart should be right, though his outward appearance might not be that of a man of war.

overran—extended their predatory inroads into the heart of the country.

Jonathan—one of Saul's sons; a man distinguished for valour, and for a strong sense of justice.

armour-bearer—one who carried the leader's armour, and stood by him to convey his orders to the different sections of the army. The officers selected them from among the bravest of their followers.

garrison—a company of soldiers stationed in a fort to guard it; the one here spoken of was a Philistine military station.

alarmed—one of the means employed by the Lord to effect deliverances for his people. Lesson 37, 'against.'

adjured—charged by an oath.

eat nothing—lest the delay should be an advantage to the enemy; this was an unwise command, for what the men gained in time they lost in strength.

curse—that the violator of the oath should be put to death.

tasted—in passing through a wood he saw wild honey dropping from the trees, so he reached a honey-comb with his rod, of which he ate, and was refreshed.

fulfil—Less. 38, 'vow,' & 'sacrifice.'

rescued—delivered; would not leave Jonathan in his father's power.

salvation—deliverance; by beginning the attack, and thus encouraging the people to follow it up to victory.

destroy the Amalekites—sentence had gone forth against Amalek long before. Lesson 21, 'utterly.'

Agag—he was a powerful prince, probably the greatest at that time. Saul spared him, no doubt, as a trophy of his victory, for the overthrow of the army of so powerful a chief was a matter of great importance; and so long as Agag remained in captivity in Israel, he would be a living evidence of the prowess of Saul and his followers.

hath the Lord, &c.—God is more glorified by obedience than by sacrifice. It is much easier to bring a bullock or a lamb to the altar, than to bring our thoughts into subjection to God.

delicately—softly, courtly; in a submissive and pleasing manner.

bitterness—having been spared by the king, he had dismissed all apprehensions of being put to death.

then slew—he probably commanded Agag to be slain; compare note 'caught' Less. 40. The conduct of Samuel proves that, in all matters of great importance, his authority was admitted to be superior to that of Saul.

cruelties—being the chief of a lawless, unsettled, predatory horde, he was the author of much mischief; the cruelties referred to are supposed to be of that nature which lawless freebooters and robbers feel a wanton pleasure in committing. Lesson 33, 'requited.'

Jesse—he was the son of Obed, and grandson of Ruth; Less. 36, 'Obed.' Isaiah styles him the root of David. Isaiah xi. 1-10.

thought—on account of his manly form, and maturity of age.

he had not—the Lord's words to Samuel prove that he was still under the impression referred to in Less. 44, 'higher.' God said, 'Look not on his countenance, nor on the height of his stature; for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." See previous note, 'after his own heart.'

David—'beloved;' he was only fifteen years old at this time.

anointed—though this was done in private, it had the effect of directing David's thoughts and engagements into those channels which would qualify him for his future position. With so early an assurance of the dignity to which he was chosen all must admire the wisdom, patience, fidelity, and unostentatiousness which characterized his after life.

OBEDIENCE BETTER THAN SACRIFICE.

"TO OBEY IS BETTER THAN SACRIFICE"

Thus saith the Lord, 'The spacious fields,
'And flocks and herds are mine;
'O'er all the cattle of the hills
'I claim a right divine.

'I ask no sheep for sacrifice,
'Nor bullocks burnt with fire;
'Love and obedience, prayer and praise,
'Are all that I require.

'Call upon me when trouble's near
'My hand shall set thee free;
'Then shall thy thankful lips declare
'The honour due to me.

'The man that offers humble praise
'He glorifies me best;
'And those that tread my holy ways;
'Shall my salvation taste.'

WATTS.

46. GOLIATH DEFIES ISRAEL.

1 Samuel xvii.

The Philistines gathered their armies to battle, and pitched between *Shochoh* and *Azekah*. Saul and his army were in the valley of *Elah*. The champion of the Philistines was Goliath, a giant of *Gath*, whose height was six cubits and a span. And he had a helmet of brass upon his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail; and the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of brass. And he had greaves of brass upon his legs, and a target of brass between his shoulders. And the staff of his spear was like a weaver's beam; and his spear's head weighed six hundred shekels of iron; and one bearing a shield went before him. And he stood and cried unto the armies of Israel, and said unto them, "Why are ye come out to set your battle in array? am not I a Philistine, and ye servants to Saul? choose you a man for you, and let him come down to me. If he be able to fight with me, and to kill me, then will we be your servants: but if I prevail against him, and kill him, then shall ye be our servants, and serve us." And the Philistine said, "I defy the armies of Israel this day; give me a man, that we may fight together."

Jesse sent David to the camp with provisions for his brethren. David heard Goliath defy the armies of Israel; and also that Saul had promised to give his daughter in marriage, and to enrich and honour the man who should slay this Philistine. Eliab saw David, and reproved him for leaving his sheep in the wilderness.

David came to Saul and said, "Let no man's heart fail; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine." And Saul said to David, "Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth." And David said unto Saul, "Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock; and I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth; and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God." David said moreover, "The Lord that delivered me out of the paw

of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine." And Saul said unto David, "Go, and the Lord be with thee."

Saul then armed David with his armour; but David put off the armour, and took five smooth stones out of the brook, and his sling in his hand. When Goliath arose, David ran to meet him, and slang a stone, which smote the Philistine, and sunk into his forehead, so that he fell with his face to the earth. David took the sword of Goliath, and cut off his head. The Philistines fled, and the men of Israel and Judah pursued them to the gates of Ekron. Saul afterwards asked David whose son he was? David told him he was the son of Jesse the Bethlehemite.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

pitched—halted to arrange their mode of attack.

champion—a challenger; a defender; one who undertakes the cause of others.

Goliath—supposed to be one of the race of the Anakim, of whom remnants were left in Gaza, in *Gath*, and in Ashdod. Josh. xi. 22.

six cubits, &c.—about ten feet high.

helmet—a defence for the head.

coat of mail—it was formed of small pieces of metal, like scales or leaves, so arranged that one row overlapped the ends of another row, thus allowing of the free movements of the body. This kind of armour was called, "scale armour."

weight—about 157lbs. avoirdupois.

greaves—leg-armour; they reached from the ancle to the top of the knee in front, but sloped behind so as to give freedom to the leg in walking, climbing, or running. Many of them were made of bull's hide.

target—a large shield which covered the entire surface of the body; it was thrown over the back during a march.

weaver's beam—a thick cylinder of wood, on which weavers wind the warp before weaving; the same name is given to the cylinder on which the fabric is rolled as it is woven.

one bearing, &c.—his armour-bearer or adjutant; he walked before to ward off the missiles that might be flung at the champion.

array—proper military order.

a Philistine—a native of Gath, though probably a descendant of Anak.

fight with me—single combat was much practised in former times, and in many instances the result of such combat, in presence of the two opposing armies, decided the quarrel.

I defy—no response having been made to his challenge, he now proceeds to vaunting and insulting language, in order to provoke an adversary; this was the course invariably adopted by champions on such occasions.

provisions—in these national struggles with a common foe, or oppressor, all the men of Israel were expected to take a part, their friends taking care that they should have supplies of food, clothing, weapons, &c.

promised—as did Caleb when he wished to have Kirjath-sepher dispossessed of the Canaanites; Less. 33, 'promised.' In these cases the accustomed dowry—or sum paid by the bridegroom to the father of the bride—was dispensed with.

enrich—load with presents.

honour—by exempting him from the

payment of any tax; this was making his house free in Israel.

reproved—because he overheard David ask what reward should be given to the conqueror of Goliath.

a lion and a bear—not at the same time, for these animals never associate.

him—referring to each separately; each took a lamb, and each was dispossessed of it in the same manner.

beard—literally correct of the lion; but used for the chin of the bear.

uncircumcised—a reproachful term, used by the Israelites to all who were not received into the covenant made with Abraham by circumcision.

living God—a beautiful allusion to the self-existent Jehovah, in opposition to the lifeless, non-existent idols of the heathen.

delivered—David acknowledges that all "Success is from the Lord."

put off—he had never been accustomed to military armour, therefore he felt Saul's armour cumbersome.

sling—this simple instrument of warfare was of very early origin; the tribe of Benjamin, to which Saul belonged, were famous for their dexterity in the use of the sling; it was said of them, in the time of the judges, that every one of 700 chosen men could sling stones, left-handed, at a hair-breadth, and not miss. The Hebrew shepherds were early trained to the use of this instrument, and it is highly probable that the husbandmen protected their grounds, and the shepherds their flocks from wild animals by the use of the sling.

he fell—the force of the stone probably deprived Goliath of his senses. David afterwards slew Goliath with his own sword.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

SHOCHOH—the place in Judah, between which and Azekah, the Philistines were assembled when Goliath defied the Israelites.

AZEKAH—'strength of walls;' a town in Judah, about twelve miles north of Jerusalem. At this place the kings of the Amorites were defeated by Joshua, and their army totally destroyed; many being slain by the Israelites, but more by an extraordinary shower of hail-stones. Josh. x. 10,11.

ELAH—a valley south-west of Jerusalem, and three miles from Bethlehem.

GATH—'a press;' one of the five principal cities of the Philistines, and the birth-place of their champion, Goliath; it was about thirty-two miles west of Jerusalem. Gath was the most southern, as Ekron was the most northern city of the Philistines.

PROVED ARMOUR.

"I CANNOT GO WITH THESE FOR I HAVE NOT PROVED THEM."

The shepherd youth, although array'd
In helm and mail of Israel's king,
Felt in those royal arms afraid,
Though fearless with his stone and sling.

His limbs, though deck'd in martial pride,
With no elastic vigour mov'd,
He put the cumb'rous pomp aside,
And took the weapons he had prov'd.

Lord! when we seek to serve thy cause,
In every conflict we may dare,
Like David may we wisely pause,
And try our arms with watchful care.

In armour prov'd, with weapons tried,
Be thou our Captain in the field;
Be all our arms by thee supplied,
And, with them, strength and skill to wield.

Not in our wisdom, or our might,
Or aught of our's be trust repos'd;
They who beneath thy banners fight
Must look for aid by thee disclos'd.

The humblest weapon given by thee
Is render'd mighty through thy name;
All else, though splendid it may be,
Can bring us but defeat and shame.

BARTON.

47. FRIENDSHIP OF DAVID AND JONATHAN.

1 Samuel xviii.-xx.

Jonathan loved David exceedingly, and made a covenant of friendship with him. He put his own robe on David and gave him his sword, and his bow, and his girdle. When David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, the women came out of the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of musick. And the women answered one another as they played, and said, "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands." And Saul was very wroth, and the saying displeased him. The next day an evil spirit came upon Saul, and he attempted to slay David with a javelin that was in his hand; but David avoided the blow, and endeavoured to soothe Saul's troubled mind by playing with his hand upon his harp. Saul became afraid of David because the Lord was with him. David behaved himself wisely in all things, and all Israel and Judah loved him.

Saul had promised to give David his eldest daughter, Merab, for his wife, but he gave her to another. Michal, his younger daughter, loved David, and Saul promised her in marriage to David, when he should have slain a hundred Philistines. David went with his men, and slew two-hundred; and Saul gave him his daughter Michal. Jonathan told his father of David's goodness, but he sought to smite David.

David fled, and escaped to his house that night. Saul sent messengers to take him, but Michal let him down through a window; put an image in his bed; and told Saul's messengers that David was sick. David fled to Ramah, and told Samuel all that Saul had done; and he and Samuel went and dwelt at *Naioth*. Saul sent messengers thrice to take David at Naioth, but the Spirit of God came on them and they prophesied. He went himself, and the Spirit of God came on him, and he also prophesied. David then fled from Naioth and came to Jonathan, and said, "What have I done? what is mine iniquity? and what is my sin before thy father that he seeketh my life?" Jonathan assured David that if evil was determined against him by his father, he would tell him of it. They renewed their covenant of friendship, after which Jonathan devised a plan by which he should acquaint David of his father's intentions. It was soon discovered that Saul intended to slay David, so Jonathan caused him to flee for safety.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

robe—a truly eastern mode of showing respect, and conferring honour upon a man; the dignity of him who presents always augments the favour conferred. Lesson 130, 'clothed.'

sword—the sword employed by the Hebrews was short and two edged; it resembled a dagger, and was carried, as swords now are, in a sheath suspended from the girdle.

bow—bows were made of strong elastic wood; the string was of leather or horsehair, and in many instances of the sinews of animals.

girdle—a band of cloth or leather tightly drawn round the waist, for the purpose of keeping the long-flowing robes of eastern costume from impeding the activity of the wearer. In it weapons, money, and other things were carried.

tabret—an instrument of music of the drum kind, not very dissimilar to the tambourine.

instruments—besides the tabret, just mentioned, the harp, the reed-pipe, the flute, the cymbals, &c. were in use.

answered—they sang in tunes or parts; one party proposed, and the other answered. Some of the Psalms afford beautiful examples of this metrical arrangement. Psalms xxiv. & cxxxvi.

evil spirit—a jealous, envious, and malignant state of mind.

javelin—a short spear which was used in close warfare, but more commonly for throwing at objects at a short distance; in war the javelin was generally carried in the quiver with the arrows.

endeavoured—he showed no resentment; nor did he conduct himself haughtily, conscious as he was that he should be Saul's successor.

soothe—music tranquilizes the perturbed spirit, and drowns the weight of care in sweet forgetfulness of the causes of anxiety.

afraid—a man of bad, or weak principle, always fears and envies the person who exhibits a refined and noble heart.

wisely—cautiously; prudently. We should be "wise as serpents and harmless as doves," in all our transactions.

he gave, &c.—this was an act of wickedness which met its own reward some years afterward. Lesson 63, 'Merab;' compare Lesson 40, 'companion,' 'burnt.'

when—he hoped that David would fall by the hand of the Philistines, and in this way he should rid himself of one whose superior moral worth he could not endure to contemplate.

a hundred—this was the dowry he demanded for Michal, in direct violation of his promise to give Merab to David. Lesson 33, 'promised.'

devised—contrived; arranged.

plan—method; mode; course of action.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

NAIOTH—'the meadows;' a place in or near Ramah, where Samuel sometimes abode; it was a school of the prophets. Less. 90, 'sitting before,' and 92, 'sons of the prophets.' David retired to this place from the persecutions of Saul.

THE HARP OF DAVID.

"THE EVIL SPIRIT FROM THE LORD WAS UPON SAUL...AND DAVID PLAYED WITH HIS HAND."

Oh! for the harp that David swept,
At whose divine, entrancing sound,
The evil spirit distance kept,
While holier visions hover'd round:
Oh, for such harp, in these our days,
To speak our God and Saviour's praise.

Then e'en on earth might song outpour
That sweet, that full, triumphant strain,
Whose grateful notes should heavenward soar.
And there a gracious audience gain;
While here below its hallow'd power
Should aid devotion's happiest hour.

Christian, wouldst thou such harp possess?
May grace anoint thine eye to see,
And on thy mind this truth impress,
The Heart that instrument may be:
For never harp nor lyre reveal'd
Such music as the heart can yield.

Not in its unregenerate state,
Canst thou expect those strains to hear;
By sin unstrung, its accents grate
In discord on a heaven-touched ear;
Renew'd by grace, and tune'd by love,
Its harmony ascends above.

Oh! then with melody it seems
To vibrate from each trembling string;
Each kindling thought and feeling teems
With songs as sweet as seraphs sing;
And music art could never frame,
Is breathed to its Redeemer's name.

BARTON.

48. DAVID AT NOB—ESCAPES TO ADULLAM.

1 Sam. xxi-xxii. 1 Chron. xii. 16-18.

David then fled with his young men to ·Ahimelech, the priest, at *Nob*. He asked for five ·loaves of bread. The priest had none but ·hallowed bread and ·he gave him some. One of Saul's servants, ·Doeg the Edomite, who was chief of Saul's herdsmen, was at Nob that day. David said unto Ahimelech, "Is there not here under thine hand spear or sword? for I have neither brought my sword nor my weapons with me because the ·king's business required haste." And the priest said, "The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom thou slewest in the valley of Elah, behold, ·it is here wrapped in ·a cloth behind the ephod: if thou wilt, take it; for there is ·no other save that here." And David said, "·There is none like that: give it me." David then went to Achish, the king of Gath. The servants of Achish knew him, and said, "Is not this David, the ·king of the land? Did they not sing one to another of him in dances, saying, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands?" And David was afraid, and ·feigned himself ·mad that he might be sent away.

He then escaped to the cave of *Adullam*, where he was soon ·joined by his brethren and his kinsmen, and ·many also who were in distress, and in debt, and discontented came to him; and he became a captain over about four-hundred men. Some valiant Gadites also joined him, and some of the children of Benjamin and Judah; and David went out to meet them, and said unto them, "If ye be come peaceably unto me to help me, mine heart shall be ·knit unto you: but if ye be come to betray me to mine enemies seeing there is ·no wrong in mine hands, the God of our fathers look thereon, and ·rebuke it." Then Amasai, who was chief of the captains, said, "Thine are we, David, and on thy side, thou son of Jesse: peace, peace be unto thee, and peace be to thine helpers; for thy God helpeth thee." Then David received them, and made them captains of the ·band.

At this time the garrison of the Philistines was in Bethlehem; and David ·longed to drink of the water of the well that was at the gate of Bethlehem. ·Three of his mighty men brake through the host of the Philistines ·to fetch it. When they brought it, David ·would not drink it, but ·poured it out

before the Lord, saying, " Be it far from me, O Lord, that I should do this; is not this the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives?" therefore he would not drink it. David then went to Moab, and asked the king to let his father and mother remain there. But the prophet Gad advised David to return to Judah.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

Ahimelech—'brother of the king;' so named probably because the office of high-priest was scarcely inferior to the regal office.

loaves—they were in form like large cakes, and nearly an inch thick.

hallowed bread—holy bread, called 'shew-bread,' because it was laid on the golden table before the face of God. Lesson 23, 'table'. The hallowed bread was made of an oblong shape, and was arranged in two rows of six loaves each. It was a rule that none but the priests should eat of it, which they generally did in the sanctuary.

he gave—this was contrary to established usage, but necessity justified it, as it did when, in the time of our Saviour, the disciples plucked the ears of corn on the sabbath day. Nothing justifies an omission of moral duty; but in extreme cases, such as those just mentioned, ceremonial obedience may be set aside when it would interfere with the "weightier matters of the law."

Doeg—was general overseer of Saul's herdsmen; for by this time Saul had added considerably to his possessions in flocks and herds. Doeg was a proselyte to the true religion; he was nevertheless, a man of a treacherous and bloody heart. Lesson 49, 'slew.'

king's business—David affected to be in haste to execute some important commission for Saul; and as he was known to be the king's son-in-law, Ahimelech did not hesitate to attend to his requests. Saul's hatred of David and his various attempts upon his life, must have been known but to few persons. Ahimelech could not have known that David was fleeing from Saul's rage.

it is here—after the manner of warriors in ancient and modern times in heathen and christian countries, David dedicated to the Lord the sword of Goliath, as the first-fruits of his military career.

a cloth—a rich ornamented covering.

no other—the priests had no need, generally, to be provided with instruments of warfare, for not only was their office one of peace, but the tabernacle, and its valuable furniture, were esteemed inviolable; sacrilege was not then of frequent occurrence.

there is, &c.—the possession of this sword would keep vividly in his memory the first of his martial exploits, and thus have the effect of strengthening his faith and hope in God, and preserving him from impatience and despondency.

king, &c.—his fame had extended hither—not as one whose victories had entitled him to a captain's honour, but as the future king of Israel.

feigned—affected; pretended.

mad—he allowed his spittle to fall upon his beard, a thing so detested by the people of the east, that no stronger proof of imbecility was needed than this personal defilement.

joined by—Saul's cruel and malicious treatment of David led his brethren to sympathise with him; moreover, it is certain that Saul's bitter hostility towards David extended to his family and kinsmen. See 'asked,' below.

many also—not being able to retain their former respectability, comfort, and independence, they left their homes to become adventurers with David.

knit—united; joined as one.

no wrong—conscious rectitude of heart and life sustained him under his serious trials.

rebuke—by causing the design to fail.

band—his company of four hundred men.

longed—his harassed mind turned with pleasing contemplation to the home of his youth, and remembering how often he had slaked his thirst at this well while engaged in his pastoral pursuits, he gave utterance to this ardent wish, perhaps imagining that with the draught his former associations would return to him.

three—Abishai, David's nephew, and Joab's brother, was the chief of these three mighty men. Les. 51, 'sons,' and 55, 'Abishai.'

to fetch it—their attachment to David was strong and honourable to both parties, or they would not have dared to go on so hazardous an expedition.

would not—he felt that the gratification of his wish had been obtained at too great a risk.

poured—as an oblation, or drink-offering to the Lord.

blood—because it was obtained at the risk of their lives.

jeopardy—danger; risk.

asked—his aged parents and brethren having become objects of Saul's distrust, had abandoned their homes to share with David his wanderings and privations. Some of the Jewish writers say that the king of Moab treacherously and cruelly murdered the parents and brethren of David, except one brother, who fled to Nahash, king of the Ammonites, from whom he received protection. Lesson 58, 'Nahash.'

Gad—he was a friend of David, and is called David's seer.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

NOB—a Levitical city of Benjamin, in the vicinity of Jerusalem, at which the tabernacle was stationed in the time of Saul.

ADULLAM—a city of Judah whose king was slain by Joshua; it is supposed that the cave of Adullam, which afforded shelter to David and his men, was in the western part of Judah, near the Dead Sea. Lesson 49, 'cave.'

A PSALM OF DAVID.

"PLEAD MY CAUSE, O LORD, WITH THEM THAT STRIVE AGAINST ME."

Plead Thou, oh plead my cause!
  Each self-excusing plea
My trembling soul withdraws,
  And flies to thee.
Where justice rears her throne,
Ah who, save thee alone,
May stand, oh Spotless One!
  Plead Thou my cause!

Ah! plead not aught of mine
  Before thine altar thrown;
Fragments—when all is thine—
  All, all thy own!
Thou seest what stains they bear;
Oh, since each tear, each prayer
Hath need of pardon there,
  Plead Thou my cause!

With lips that, dying, breathed
Blessing, for words of scorn;
With brow where I had wreathed
The piercing thorn;
With breast, to whose pure tide
He did the weapon guide,
Who had no home beside,
Plead Thou my cause!

Plead—when the tempter's art,
To each fond hope of mine,
Denies this faithless heart
Can e'er be thine.
If slander whisper too
The sin I never knew,
Thou, who couldest urge the true,
Plead Thou my cause!

Oh plead my cause above!
Plead thine within my breast;
Till there thy peaceful Dove
Shall build her nest.
Thou know'st, this will—how frail,
Thou know'st, though language fail,
My soul's mysterious tale,—
Plead Thou my cause!

WARING.

49. THE PRIESTS SLAIN. DAVID ESCAPES.

1 Samuel xxii. 6-xxv. 1.

Now Saul was at Gibeah; and as he stood under a tree in Ramah, he said unto his servants who stood around him, "Hear now, ye Benjamites; will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields and vineyards, and make you all captains of thousands, and captains of hundreds; that all of you have conspired against me, and there is none that sheweth me that my son hath made a league with the son of Jesse, and there is none of you is sorry for me, or sheweth unto me that my son hath stirred up my servant against me, to lie in wait, as at this day?" Doeg the Edomite then told Saul of David's visit to the city of Nob; he also spoke falsely of Ahimelech the priest. Saul sent for Ahimelech and all the priests that were at Nob: when they came he charged them with conspiring against

him. Ahimelech answered Saul ·meekly, but Saul said they should surely die. Saul commanded his ·footmen to turn and slay the priests of the Lord, but they ·would not. Then said the king to Doeg, " Fall thou upon the priests ;" and Doeg turned and ·slew that day eighty-five persons that were priests. Saul also sent Doeg to Nob to slay all the priests there, with their families, and their cattle. *In this slaughter many of the Gibeonites who were the ·servants of the tabernacle were slain, contrary to the ·league of the Israelites with them.*

·Abiathar, one of the sons of Ahimelech, escaped to David, who promised him protection. Shortly after, David was commanded to go to *Keilah*, and smite the Philistines ; he did so, and saved the inhabitants. David heard that Saul was coming to take him at Keilah, and he departed, with his six-hundred men, to the *Wilderness of Ziph*. Jonathan went into the wilderness to see David, and there they ·renewed their covenant of friendship with each other. The Ziphites told Saul where David was hiding ; but when they went with Saul to take him, he was gone to the *Wilderness of Maon*. Saul followed him thither, but he left purusing David to go against the Philistines. From thence David went to *Engedi*. Saul followed, and went into a ·cave at Engedi to ·sleep. David and some of his men were in the cave, and David ·cut off a part of Saul's robe.

On Saul's departure David told him how he might have slain him, but that he would not put forth his hand against the ·Lord's anointed. And Saul lifted up his voice, and ·wept. And he said to David," Thou art more righteous than I : for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil. And thou hast shewed this day how that thou hast dealt well with me : forasmuch as when the Lord had delivered me into thine hand, thou killedst me not. And now, behold, ·I know well that thou shalt surely be king, and the kingdom of Israel shall be ·established in thine hand." David left the cave of Engedi and went to the Wilderness of Paran.

Samuel died ; all Israel ·lamented him, and buried him at Ramah.

stood—Saul was probably seated, with his chief officers around him, but he rose up to give more effect to his address.

tree—said to be a tamarisk tree; no palace or building as yet existed for the king and his attendants. Saul's frequent campaigns obliged him sometimes to hold his courts in the open air.

Benjamites—Saul was a Benjamite, and therefore his body-guard was selected from his own tribe, and comprised many relatives and friends.

conspired—plotted; laid plans secretly.

league—covenant; agreement.

lie in wait—he spoke under the influence of a disordered mind; jealousy, distrust, and animosity had rendered him unable to form a correct, and honourable opinion of either his son or son-in-law.

falsely—he knew that Ahimelech was innocent of any blame.

meekly—his answer showed the integrity of his heart. 1 Sam. xxii. 14,15.

footmen—those who stood nearest him, and acted as his messengers, or as executioners of his regal will; they, however, saw his wild injustice and refused.

would not—the priests of the Lord were held in great reverence by the people.

slew—he was probably an idolater at heart, and therefore hated the service of the Lord, hence his readiness to destroy the priests of the sanctuary.

servants—Lesson 31, 'hewers.'

league—Lesson 31, 'covenant;' 63, 'slain.'

Abiathar—a son of Ahimelech; he remained faithful to David through all his reverses of fortune till the time of Adonijah's conspiracy; when the prophecy against Eli's house was fulfilled—for he was banished.

renewed—repeated; made again.

sleep—while Saul slept, his men, who ought to have kept watch, were so overcome by the fatigue of pursuing David that they also fell asleep.

cave—many of the caves in Arabia Petrea are very extensive, some of them consisting of many apartments leading into each other. The cave at Engedi must have been of large dimensions, for in the sides and further parts of it David and his followers seem to have had sufficient room, as they lay concealed from the eye of Saul and his guards who occupied its entrance.

cut off—as David stood over his unprotected and implacable enemy, some of his men suggested that now God had delivered him into his hand to slay him; but David's mind revolted at the idea of taking personal revenge—he waited patiently, feeling assured that the Lord would overrule all these evils for good. He, however, cut off Saul's skirt, to convince him that he owed his personal safety to his forbearance.

Lord's anointed—David scrupulously regarded every intimation of the Lord's will, hence he respected Saul as the man chosen of God to be ruler over Israel.

wept—a sudden and transitory feeling of shame, self-reproach, and gratitude overcame him.

I know—how different his conduct to that of David! one vainly and wickedly attempted to thwart God's purpose, the other "waited patiently for the Lord." Herod endeavoured to destroy Jesus from a conviction similar to that which operated on Saul's mind. Matt. ii. 8-16.

established—in him and his posterity; he felt that his own hopes of future honour, and dignity to his family and descendants were for ever blighted.

lamented—Samuel had been universally respected, loved, and feared as a prophet of the Lord, therefore his death was the subject of general lamentation. The Israelites, like other eastern people, gave the freest vent to their grief—they cried bitterly, rent their garments, cut or tore off their hair, fasted, prostrated themselves upon the ground, went barefoot, smote their breasts, &c. Women were employed to weep at funerals; and the relatives of the deceased clothed themselves in sackcloth. The period of mourning generally lasted seven days, but in certain cases a much longer time was observed. The mourners were

deemed unclean, and they continued *sitting* in their houses, and ate off the ground till the days of their mourning were ended. The people mourned for Moses thirty days. Lesson 29.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

KEILAH—a town in Judah, south-west of Jerusalem. David was commissioned to smite the Philistines here when it was besieged by them; he afterwards escaped, or the ungrateful inhabitants would have delivered him into the hands of Saul.

WILDERNESS OF ZIPH—the town of Ziph, and a wilderness near it, were situated in the east of Judah.

WILDERNESS OF MAON—there was a place of this name at which Nabal, the churl, resided, whose chief possessions were at Carmel in that vicinity; all these places were in the east of Judah.

ENGEDI—a city in the south-east of Judah near the Dead Sea; it was noted for palm-trees and vineyards. It was probably in a wilderness near, of the same name, that the cave was situated in which David found shelter from Saul.

THE OLD MAN'S FUNERAL.

I saw an aged man upon his bier,
His hair was thin and white, and on his brow
A record of the cares of many a year;—
Cares that were ended and forgotten now.
And there was sadness round, and faces bow'd,
And woman's tears fell fast, and children wail'd aloud.

Then rose another hoary man and said,
In faultering accents, to that weeping train,
Why mourn ye that our aged friend is dead?
Ye are not sad to see the gather'd grain,
Nor when their mellow fruit the orchards cast,
Nor when the yellow woods shake down the ripen'd mast.

Ye sigh not when the sun, his course fulfill'd,
His glorious course, rejoicing earth and sky,
In the soft evening, when the winds are still'd,
Sinks where his islands of refreshment lie,
And leaves the smile of his departure, spread
O'er the warm-coloured heaven and ruddy mountain head.

Why weep ye then for him, who, having won
The bound of man's appointed years, at last,
Life's blessings all enjoyed, life's labours done,
Serenely to his final rest has pass'd;
While the soft memory of his virtues, yet
Lingers like twilight hues, when the bright sun is set.

His youth was innocent; his riper age,
Mark'd with some act of kindness every day;
And watch'd by eyes that lov'd him, calm and sage,
Faded his late declining years away.
Cheerful he gave his being up, and went
To share the holy rest that waits a life well spent.

That life was happy; every day he gave
Thanks for the fair existence that was his;
For a sick fancy made him not her slave,
To mock him with her phantom miseries.
No chronic tortures rack'd his aged limb,
For luxury and sloth had nourish'd none for him.

And I am glad, that he has liv'd thus long,
And glad that he has gone to his reward;
Nor deem, that kindly nature did him wrong,
Softly to disengage the vital cord
When his weak hand grew palsied, and his eye
Dark with the mists of age, it was his time to die.

BRYANT.

50. OF NABAL AND ABIGAIL.

Samuel xxv. 2-35

There was a man in Maon named Nabal who had large possessions in *Carmel*. His wife was named Abigail; she was a woman of good understanding, and of a beautiful countenance: but the man was churlish, and evil in his doings. David heard in the wilderness that Nabal did shear his sheep, and was making a great feast for his shearers. David sent some of his men to him to ask for refreshment, telling him how they had protected his flocks in Carmel; but Nabal was churlish to them, and refused. David's messengers returned, and told him of Nabal's sayings, and he said to them, "Gird on every man his sword." And they girded on every man his sword: and there went up after David about four-hundred men: and two-hundred abode by the stuff. But one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, saying, "Behold, David sent messengers out of the wilderness to salute our master; and he railed on them. But the men were very good unto us, and we were not hurt, neither missed we anything, as long as we were conversant with them, when we were in the fields: they were a wall unto us both by night and day, all the while we were with them keeping the sheep. Now therefore know and consider what thou wilt do; for evil is determined against our master, and against his household: for he is such a man of Belial, that a man cannot speak to him."

Then Abigail made haste, and got ready a large present for David, of ·loaves, and ·wine, and ·sheep ready dressed, ·parched corn, ·raisins, and·figs, and sent her servants on before her, and went to meet David. She acknowledged the ·iniquity of her husband, but said she wished ·to prevent David avenging himself by shedding blood, that this might be no grief to him when he became ruler over Israel. David ·accepted her present, and said, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me: and blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou, which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and avenging myself with mine own hand." So David received of her hand that which she had brought him, and said unto her, "Go up in peace to thine house; see I have hearkened to thy voice, and have accepted thy person."

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

Nabal—'fool.'

Abigail—'father of joy.'

churlish—selfish; greedy; of an unsocial disposition.

evil—besotted; given to wine and other indulgences, while the claims of the poor and needy were utterly disregarded.

ask—this he did in the most courteous manner, not making a demand, which most men in his circumstances would have done. 1 Sam. xxv. 6.

protected—Nabal's flocks being numerous were much exposed in this open and unappropriated territory; David not only forbad his own men from committing depredations upon them, but kept off others who might have made them a prey. For such protection, David and his men were justly entitled to a liberal acknowledgement.

raited on—abused; insulted; 1 Sam. xxv. 10,11.

very good—this was the effect of good leadership; these men were not *better* than others, but the influence and example of David swayed them to act uprightly.

hurt — power — so often wantonly abused, was gentle in David's hands.

missed—nothing was stolen; notwithstanding the large number of persons of different characters, and all in needy circumstances.

loaves—they were very large, and the number, two hundred, was great.

wine—this liquor was expressed from the grapes by being put into a large trough having bars at the bottom, and then trampled upon by two or more persons. As the vine grew abundantly in Canaan, so was wine much used. Abigail's present included two bottles of wine; each of these bottles was made of the entire skin of an animal, consequently the quantity sent was considerable.

sheep—these animals constituted the chief wealth of the patriarchs, and many of the Israelites in Canaan. To dress an entire sheep, when its entrails and skin were removed was of frequent occurrence in these primitive times. Five sheep thus prepared were included in Abigail's present.

parched corn—this was considered an agreeable repast, and consisted, it is supposed, of new corn, roasted and eaten in its unripe and juicy state. The Israelites partook of corn thus prepared at Gilgal when the manna had ceased

falling. Lesson 30, 'corn.' Five measures, or one hundred pints were supplied to David by Abigail.

raisins—dried grapes; the villagers hang the grapes in clusters on the sides of their houses, or spread them on blankets on the roofs to dry. They were much used in cookery. Abigail brought David two-hundred clusters.

figs—the fig-tree abounded in Canaan; its branches rose high and wide, and its leaves were broad. The fig-tree bore fruit three times a year. The early fig in June, which falls as soon as it is ripe; the summer fig, in August, which is the early fig in a state of maturity; and the winter fig in October; these last were the largest. They were dried in masses and compressed, to form large cakes; two-hundred of these cakes of figs were presented by Abigail to David.

iniquity—his injustice and demerit.

to prevent—her prudence and foresight are here pre-eminent, as well as her desire to protect her husband from David's anger.

accepted—not only was he won upon by her beauty, but he also admired her prudence, and felt thankful, for being thus prevented from acting revengefully; in accepting her presents he praised God for his gracious interposition. 1 Sam. xxv. 32.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

CARMEL—a small town or village in the northern mountains of Judah.

THE VAIN HOPES OF THE WICKED.

The rush may rise where waters flow,
And flags beside the stream;
But soon their verdure fades and dies
Before the scorching beam.

So is the sinner's hope cut off;
Or if it transient rise,
'Tis like the spider's airy web,
From every breath that flies.

Fix'd on his house, he leans; his house,
And all its props decay;
He holds it fast; but while he holds,
The tottering frame gives way.

Fair in his garden to the sun
His boughs with verdure smile;
And, deeply fix'd, his spreading roots
Unshaken stand awhile.

But forth the sentence flies from heaven,
That sweeps him from his place;
Which then denies him for its lord,
Nor owns it knew his face.

Lo! this the joy of wicked men,
Who heaven's high laws despise;
They quickly fall; and in their room,
As quickly others rise.

51. DAVID MARRIES ABIGAIL—SPARES SAUL.

1 Samuel xxv. 36-xxviii. 2.

When Abigail returned home Nabal was ·feasting in his house, and he was very drunken; wherefore she told him nothing of David's anger, and his determination to slay Nabal, till the morning. But in the morning when Nabal was sober, his wife told him all that had occurred, on hearing which ·his heart died within him, and he became as a stone. In about ten days after, he died. When David heard that he was dead, he sent messengers to Abigail to commune with her, and afterwards he took her to wife. Saul had given Michal to another. The Ziphites again discovered David to Saul; and Saul went with three thousand ·chosen men of Israel, to seek David in the Wilderness of Ziph. When David knew in very deed that Saul had come into the wilderness, he sent out spies to watch him. And David went down at night and saw the place where Saul lay and those that were with him; so he returned to his men and said, "Who will go with me to Saul's ·camp?" And ·Abishai consented to go down. They went down and ·found Saul sleeping, and his guards sleeping round him. Abishai then said to David, "God hath delivered thine enemy into thy hand this day, now therefore ·let me smite him, I pray thee, with the spear even to the earth at once, and ·I will not smite him the second time;" but David forbade him, saying, "Destroy him not, for who can stretch forth his hand against the Lord's anointed, and be ·guiltless." David told him to ·take away the ·spear and the ·cruse of water from Saul's bolster.

David then went to the ·top of a hill afar off, and reproved ·Abner for not keeping a better ·watch over the king's life; he said, "As the Lord liveth, ·ye are worthy to die, because ye have not ·kept your master, the Lord's anointed." He also shewed him the king's spear and the cruse of water. Saul confessed his sin against David, saying, "I have sinned; ·return my son David: for I will no more do thee harm, because my ·soul was ·precious in thine eyes this day." And David answered and said, "Behold the king's spear! and let one of the young men come over and fetch it. The Lord ·render to every man his ·righteousness and his faithfulness: for the Lord delivered thee into my hand to-day, but I would not stretch forth mine hand against the Lord's anointed. And

behold, as thy life was much set by this day in mine eyes, so let my life be much set by in the eyes of the Lord, and let him deliver me out of all tribulation." Then Saul said to David, "Blessed be thou, my son David: thou shalt both do great things, and also shalt still prevail."

David then fled with his six-hundred men to Achish, the king of Gath. When this was told Saul he sought David no more. Achish gave David *Ziklag* to dwell in, and David dwelt there a year and four months. David invaded many enemies of Israel while he abode at Ziklag, but he told Achish that he had invaded enemies of the Philistines. Achish thought David had thus made Israel to abhor him. At this time the Philistines made preparations for war against Israel; and Achish engaged David to go with the Philistine army to fight against Israel.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

feasting—the ingathering of the harvest, which lasted about six weeks, was a season of great festivity; but Nabal far exceeded the bounds of moderation, for he drank himself into a state of brutish insensibility.

his heart died—though the danger had passed, his imbecile mind sunk under the idea that he had so narrowly escaped destruction.

chosen—so determined was Saul on David's ruin that he selected men well-qualified for scouring the wilderness in search of him; the number seemed more than enough for such an expedition, but Saul provided against every human possibility of David's escape.

camp—the military camps in eastern countries, as well as those of merchants, are generally arranged in the circular form. The outer circle is formed by the aid of cords fastened to stakes driven in the ground, to which the camels, asses, and other animals are tied; within this circle the baggage is piled, forming a shelter or rampart to the whole party, who bivouac within, leaving a large space in the centre for the tent, and other conveniences of the chief.

Abishai—'father of gifts;' he was David's nephew, and one of the chief of his mighty men.

found—though it was night, the well-understood mode of arranging camps for the night enabled David and Abishai quickly to discover the spot where Saul lay.

let me—on a former occasion (Lesson 49) David's men urged him to slay Saul, but he refused, saying, "I will not put forth my hand against my lord;" now Abishai solicits permission of David to perpetrate the deed himself, but the "man after God's own heart" rejected the request with firmness.

I will not, &c.—lest that should be esteemed dishonourable and revengeful.

guiltless—those who endeavour to free themselves from tyrannical rule by the assassination of their oppressors, draw down upon themselves and their cause the guilt of blood, which always brings its own retribution. David therefore restrained himself from unjustifiable acts, believing, that as long as it was God's will to permit the cruel and ungrateful Saul to reign over Israel, it would be an act of rebellion against God to endeavour to bring that reign to a close by violent measures.

take away—it was and is still a custom in the East to fix a spear beside a great man when reposing, and also when merely resting on a journey.

spear—this weapon was generally of considerable length; the spears now used by the Arabs are about fifteen feet long; some of the Grecian spears were much longer. To one end of the spear a stout iron spike, sometimes barbed, was attached, the other end was shod with metal, that it might not be injured when stuck into the ground.

cruse—in oriental countries it is a common practice when retiring to rest to place at hand a small vessel containing water to drink during the night.

top of a hill—it was no doubt sufficiently distant, and probably not easy of access, so that Saul's best pursuers would find it impossible to overtake David; this is evident from the fact that no attempt was made to capture him.

Abner—'father of light;' he was the son of Ner, and a near relative of Saul; he was a general in Saul's army and served him faithfully.

watch—the responsibility of making proper arrangements for Saul's protection lay upon Abner; but the subordinate officers should not have neglected their important duty to watch.

ye—including all those in command.

kept—preserved from the approach of others.

return—David feared to take Saul at his word; he knew full well that his goodness was like the early dew that passes away.

soul—life.

precious—of value; esteemed.

render—David's prayer is for a blessed reward to the faithful, not a prayer for punishment on his persecutor.

righteousness—David does not utter maledictions upon Saul; he only presents a prayer that God would reward him for his righteousness in refusing to take advantage of his enemy, and for his faithfulness in still firmly adhering to Saul's interest—not setting up counter claims to the kingdom, in doing which many would be found to support him.

set by—respected; valued; prized.

of the Lord—his confidence was alone in God; Saul's promise of ceasing to do him harm was not thought of by David.

let him—while David trusted in the Lord for deliverance, he did not presumptuously rush into danger; he avoided his pursuers as best he could.

prevail—succeed; rise above all opposition.

fled—this was the result of an overwhelming fit of despondency, when he exclaimed, "I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul."

Achish—it is supposed by some that this is not the Achish before whom he feigned himself mad; Lesson 48, 'feigned;' it has been conjectured too that Achish hearing of the enmity of Saul towards David, who was every where talked of as the future king of Israel, deemed it a matter of policy to afford him protection, so as to alienate him from his country.

he sought, &c.—implying that he would have sought for him had he remained in his dominions.

many enemies—they were chiefly Amalekites, against whom God's denunciation had long before been pronounced. Lesson 21, 'utterly.'

engaged—the answer of David to the proposal of Achish was equivocal. 1 Sam. xxviii. 1,2. From David's well-known devotion to his own people, and from his conduct while at Ziklag, he might have brought some signal dishonour on himself had not the Philistine princes caused him to return; for it cannot be supposed that David would have fought against the Israelites.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

ZIKLAG—a city of the Philistines in Simeon, which Achish gave to David as a place of refuge from Saul; from this city David invaded the Philistines.

THE DRUNKARD.

Who hath brawlings? who hath sorrows?
Who hath deep remorse of soul?
He that frenzied pleasure borrows
From the intoxicating bowl:
Though a moment's joy it bring him,
It shall be delusive joy;
It shall like an adder sting him,
Like a serpent shall destroy.

He shall wake from dreams of gladness,
Dreams as false as they are fair,
With a burning heart of madness,
That its anguish cannot bear:
He shall rush in terror from it,
Like a moth into the fire,
Like a dog unto its vomit;
Like a swine into the mire.

Till his worldly wealth shall fly him,
Like a bird upon the wing;
Till his nearest kin deny him,
As a vile and noxious thing;
Till his shivering body pineth
To a gaunt and ghastly shade;
Till his wretched head reclineth
Where unhallow'd bones are laid.

W. KNOX.

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52. SAUL CONSULTS A WITCH AT ENDOR.

1 Samuel xxviii. 3-25.

And Saul gathered all Israel together, to go to fight against the Philistines; but when he saw the great host of the Philistines which was assembled against him he was afraid and his heart trembled. The Philistines encamped in *Shunem* and the Israelites in *Mount Gilboa*. Now Samuel, the prophet, was dead; the priests had been slain by Saul's own command, at Nob; Saul had no vision from God to instruct him; no priest to ask counsel of God for him; no prophets to guide him; so in his terror and perplexity of mind, he went at night, and in disguise, to consult a witch, who lived at *Endor*. She told him that Saul had forbidden divination. He pro-

mised that no punishment should visit her. She asked him whom she should bring up. He desired her to bring up Samuel. She then knew Saul, and cried aloud from her fear, when she saw an old man before her. She described his appearance to Saul, who said it was Samuel; and Saul stooped, with his face to the ground, and bowed himself. And Samuel said unto Saul, "Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up?" And Saul answered, "I am sore distressed, for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams, therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do?" Then said Samuel, "Wherefore then dost thou ask of me, seeing the Lord is departed from thee, and is become thine enemy? And the Lord hath done as he spake by me: for the Lord hath rent the kingdom out of thine hand, and given it to thy neighbour, even to David: because thou obeyedst not the voice of the Lord, nor executedst his fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore hath the Lord done this thing unto thee this day. Moreover the Lord will also deliver Israel with thee into the hand of the Philistines: and to morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me: the Lord also shall deliver the host of Israel into the hand of the Philistines." Then Saul fell straightway all along on the earth, and was sore afraid, because of the words of Samuel: and there was no strength in him; for he had eaten no bread all the day, nor all the night. And the woman, seeing that Saul was sore troubled, came and said unto him, "Behold, thine handmaid hath obeyed thy voice, and I have put my life in my hand, and have hearkened unto thy words which thou spakest unto me. Now therefore, I pray thee, hearken thou also unto the voice of thine handmaid, and let me set a morsel of bread before thee; and eat, that thou mayest have strength, when thou goest on thy way." But he refused; however his servants with the woman compelled him to arise and to sit upon the bed. The woman also hasted to kill and dress a fat calf, which she had, and to make unleavened cakes; when Saul and his men had eaten, they arose and departed that night.

host—army.

his heart trembled—this phrase is beautifully descriptive of the terror which had fallen on a man endowed with great natural courage.

Samuel—Lesson 49, 'lamented.'

the priests—Lesson 49, 'slew.'

vision—Lesson 7, 'vision.'

perplexity—confusion; bewilderment; not knowing what to do.

disguise—he changed his clothing, and concealed his features.

consult—ask counsel of; the asking counsel of one who had a familiar spirit is assigned as one of the reasons for Saul's untimely end. 1 Chron. x. 13. Thus Saul's crime was the instrument of his punishment.

witch—a woman who pretended to supernatural power; as a necromancer she professed to obtain, for those who consulted her, answers from their deceased friends and relatives. Witchcraft included other pretensions, as the curing of diseases, driving away evil spirits, and foretelling future events. Men who practised these arts were called wizards. The sin of witchcraft is severely denounced in the scriptures of the old and new Testaments; and those who countenance such pretenders partake in their wickedness. Exod. xxii. 18; Lev. xx. 6; Gal. v. 20.

forbidden—in his better days he had not only forbidden the practice of witchcraft, but he had put to death those who followed it, so that the practice of the art was dangerous.

divination—absurd arts resorted to by deceivers who led the people to believe that they possessed a mysterious and superhuman knowledge of future events. Such arts are frequently denounced in the new Testament; they have been practised in all ages and among all nations, barbarous and civilized, more especially among the heathens. Some relics of these arts have descended to our own times, and are practised by fortune-tellers, astrologers, and 'wise men,' who pretend to discover lost or stolen property. Wherever, or by whomsoever practised, the word of God explicitly and awfully condemns them. Deut. xviii. 9-14; Jer. xiv. 14.

then—she either guessed who he was because he asked for Samuel, or she received some intimation from God to that effect.

when she saw, &c.—the appearance was real and unexpected by the woman. She knew that she had no power over the invisible world, and that she had never held communication with departed spirits; her arts were those of fraud & deception, while she led her foolish inquirers to believe that she saw and spoke to those they called for. How terrified then must she have been to find, that God had really vouchsafed a vision of Samuel to announce to Saul his impending doom.

stooped—bowed—bent his body and his knees. Saul paid him reverence as if he actually saw him.

Samuel said—God had sent Samuel to bear his message of wrath to Saul, but not by means of the necromancer; she had nothing to do in bringing to pass this solemn vision.

disquieted—Samuel grieved for Saul when he dwelt on earth, he would therefore feel disquietude at having to return as the bearer of such a fearful sentence. There can be no doubt that, notwithstanding the perfection of bliss into which the spirits of good men enter after this life, if they were sent back with messages of woe their spirits would be disquieted.

bring me up—not that Samuel's body was actually raised, the vision is presented in accordance with the expectation of Saul.

neither by prophets—here God permitted the vision of a departed prophet to come to confirm what he had spoken on earth.

nor executedst—his first act of disobedience, though to human judgment almost excusable, is that to which Samuel attributes Saul's present disastrous condition. We should beware of the first incitements to sin.

fierce wrath—how hideous must be the character and conduct of that people,

when God, 'whose tender mercies are over all his works,' required their complete extinction as the only way of appeasing the fierceness of his wrath.

with me—in the world of spirits, while his body would lie on the exposed ground a mangled spectacle to his victorious enemies.

no strength, &c.—he had fasted—he had felt extreme anxiety, but without repentance—he had been in the presence of a messenger from the invisible world—he had heard his doom and that of his sons pronounced—he was bereft of his self-possession, and his physical powers failed him.

put my life—a phrase denoting the extreme risk she had encountered, when she admitted to Saul that she practised those fraudulent arts which the law condemned, and which he had severely punished.

compelled—forced him by pressing appeals, and personal assistance.

sit—against the sides of eastern houses benches about a foot or a foot and a half high, and three feet wide, are raised, upon which coarse mattresses are spread for sleeping upon; these benches are also used for seats.

kill—probably she commanded an attendant to do it.

dress—to dress an entire animal was not uncommon. Lesson 50, 'sheep.'

unleavened—without yeast; they were cakes of flour and water only, baked before the fire, or upon hot embers.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

SHUNEM—a town of Issachar, near Jezreel, which was frequently visited by the prophet Elisha.

GILBOA—'projecting heap;' a ridge of mountains in Issachar, and near Jezreel; celebrated as the scene of Saul's last battle with the Philistines.

ENDOR—a town of western Manasseh, a few miles south of Mount Tabor.

SAMUEL APPEARING TO SAUL.

"THEN SAID THE WOMAN, WHOM SHALL I BRING UP UNTO THEE? AND HE SAID, BRING ME UP SAMUEL."

She spake, when lo! before their wondering eyes,
The aged prophet stood in reverend guise,
Such as when once the chosen land he sway'd,
And Israel's sons his well-known voice obey'd,
His drooping head with hoary locks was crowned;
And a large mantle fell his limbs around;
And yet that shining brow was not of man,
And all unearthly thus the accents ran:—

"Why hast thou disquieted me!
"Art thou come my help to crave?
"The Lord himself thy enemy,
"Who thy guilty head shall save?"
Fallen pomp, and glories all,
Fallen is thy throne, O Saul!

"Knew'st thou not the Lord's command,
"Cruel Amalek to slay?
"Another spoils thy sceptred land,
"Another bears thy crown away."
Fallen pomp, and glories all,
Fallen is thy throne, O Saul!

"Tomorrow, and the work is done,
"Tomorrow, Israel's host will flee;
"Tomorrow, must thy course be run;
"Thou and thy sons shall be with me!"
Fallen pomp, and glories all,
Fallen is thy throne, O Saul.

REV. E. D. JACKSON.

53. DAVID SPOILS THE AMALEKITES.

1 Samuel xxix-xxxi.

The army of the Philistines assembled at *Aphek*, while the Israelites pitched by a fountain in Jezreel. And the lords of the Philistines passed on by hundreds and thousands, but David and his men marched in the rereward with Achish. When the lords of the Philistines saw David and his men, they were displeased with Achish, and they said unto him, "Make this fellow return to his place, which thou hast appointed him, and let him not go down with us to battle, lest he be an adversary to us." Then Achish commended David, but told him that the lords favoured him not. David and his men departed early in the morning to Ziklag, and the army of the Philistines went up to Jezreel. When David came to Ziklag, he found that the Amalekites had plundered and burned the city. He first inquired of the Lord, and then pursued them with his six-hundred men. Two-hundred of them became faint at the brook *Besor* and abode there. An Egyptian who had been a servant to an Amalekite, brought David and his men to the camp. David smote them all, save four-hundred young men who escaped on camels; he also recovered the women and children, and all the spoil of Ziklag. And when they came to the 200 men who staid from faintness at the brook Besor, some among the 400 refused to share the spoil with them; but David said it should not be so, but all should partake alike. And David sent presents of the spoil taken from the Amalekites to his friends in the land of Israel.

The Philistines fought against Israel at Gilboa; the Israelites fled, and many were slain in the Mount of Gilboa. Among the slain were Jonathan, Abinadab, and Melchi-shua, Saul's sons, and Saul was sorely wounded. Saul wanted his

·armour-bearer to. ·thrust his sword through his body, but he was sore afraid and would not. Saul then took a sword, and ·fell upon it. His armour-bearer also fell upon his sword, and died with Saul.

And when the men of Israel that were on the other side of the valley, and they that were on the other side Jordan, saw that the men of Israel fled, and that Saul and his sons were dead, they forsook their cities, and fled; and the Philistines came and dwelt in them. And on the morrow, when the Philistines came to ·strip the slain, they ·found the bodies of Saul and his three sons on Mount Gilboa. And they ·cut off his head, and stripped off his ·armour, and sent into the land of the Philistines round about, to publish it in the house of their idols, and among the people. And they put his armour in the house of Ashtaroth: and they ·fastened his body to the wall of *Bethshan*.

When the ·inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead heard of that which the Philistines had done to Saul; all the valiant men arose, and went all night, and took the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Bethshan, and came to Jabesh, and ·burnt them there. And they took their bones, and buried them ·under a tree at Jabesh, and ·fasted seven days.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

rereward—behind the rest; David and his men formed the last of the companies under the command of Achish.

this fellow—a contemptuous and offensive epithet. David exposed himself to temptation and to insult when he hastily renounced the protection of God in the wilderness of Engedi for that of Achish, the Philistine king.

adversary—an opponent.

commended—praised; applauded.

had plundered—they took advantage of his absence to retaliate, by plundering and burning Ziklag, and taking captives all the women and children.

inquired—the error of David in rushing into these circumstances of temptation and trial, in the land of the Philistines, resulted no doubt from a hastily formed decision, without having first inquired of the Lord; now he feels himself in such trouble that Divine counsel and aid can alone avail. Abiathar, the priest, the son of Ahimelech, was with him.

faint—weak; unable to proceed, because of their march from Ziklag to Aphek, and their rapid return.

servant—he was a slave, a captive of one of this Amalekite horde; in the hasty retreat of the Amalekites with the spoils of Ziklag, this slave had fallen sick, and was unable to keep up with the party, so he was left, either to perish, or to do what best he could for himself. This inhuman act of the Amalekite, was speedily visited with an overwhelming retribution.

smote—he found them in a state of disorder and quite unprepared for an attack;

he therefore speedily routed them, slaying with the sword as many as did not escape. Lesson 21, 'utterly.'

recovered—got back; it was not usual in their wars to destroy women and children but to retain them as slaves.

spoil—goods taken from an opposing party; the despoiling of one party is the enriching of another. David recovered not only the goods which they had taken from Ziklag, but much additional booty belonging to the Amalekites themselves.

share—David's natural love of justice prevailed over the injustice which some of his rude soldiers would have willingly committed.

presents—the presents sent by David prove that his heart was with his own people, and also that the spoils obtained from the Amalekites were very great.

armour-bearer—his faithful follower, whose name is not recorded. Jewish traditions say he was Doeg, the Edomite.

thrust—a similar request was made by Abimelech at Thebez, when he found that a stone cast upon him by a woman would inevitably cause his death. Lesson 38, 'fortress.'

fell upon it—suicide in eastern countries is of such race occurrence that it becomes a proof in Saul's case of his mental and moral imbecility. Doubtless his mind shrunk from the grievous indignities which the Philistines would inflict on him if they found him alive.

strip the slain—clothing being costly, and not so easily procurable as in our day, the spoils of the dead and wounded after a battle were of considerable importance to the victors.

found—they were distinguishable by their size and their clothing; their personal appearance must also have been known to many of the Philistines.

cut off—a common trophy of war; David cut off Goliath's head. Lesson 46.

armour—this was dedicated to their idol as an expression of gratitude for their victory, and of devotion to their goddess. Lesson 33, 'Ashtaroth.' The practice of depositing banners and standards obtained from an enemy in time of war in churches, has come down to our own times.

fastened—by large hooks upon which criminals were hanged, according to eastern customs.

inhabitants, &c.—this is a pleasing instance of the gratitude which the men of Jabesh-gilead, felt towards their deliverer.

burnt—the practise of burning the dead which prevailed among many of the nations of antiquity, was not common among the Hebrews. The men of Jabesh resorted to it, no doubt, in order to secure the remains of those unhappy princes from further exposure and insult. This is the first mention we have of the practice in Israel, but afterwards it became somewhat general till the time of the return from the Babylonish Captivity.

under a tree—that is that their graves might be afterwards recognized.

fasted—in season of affliction it was a religious duty in Israel to abstain from food. These fasts were strictly observed, and during their continuance every species of gratification and pleasure was avoided.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

APHEK—the place at which the Philistines encamped in the valley of Jezreel.

BESOR—a brook which falls into the Mediterranean Sea south of Gaza.

BETHSHAN—'house of rest;' a city in Western Manasseh, not far from the Jordan, also called Scythopolis.

THE FIELD OF GILBOA.

"THEY FOUND SAUL AND HIS THREE SONS FALLEN IN MOUNT GILBOA."

The sun of the morning look'd forth from his throne,
And beam'd on the face of the dead and the dying;
For the yell of the strife, like the thunder had flown,
And red on Gilboa the carnage was lying.

And there lay the husband that lately was prest
To the beautiful cheek that was tearless and ruddy;
But the claws of the eagle were fix'd in his breast,
And the beak of the vulture was busy and bloody.

And there lay the son of the widow'd and sad,
Who yesterday went from her dwelling for ever;
Now the wolf of the hills a sweet carnival had,
On the delicate limb that had ceas'd not to quiver!

And there came the daughter, the delicate child,
To hold up the head that was breathless and hoary;
And there came the maiden, all frantic and wild,
To kiss the lov'd lips that were gasping and gory.

And there came the consort that struggled in vain
To stem the red tide, of a spouse that bereft her;
And there came the mother that sunk mid the slain,
To weep o'er the last human stay that was left her!

Oh! bloody Gilboa! a curse ever lie
Where the king and his people were slaughter'd together;
May the dew and the rain leave thy herbage to die,
Thy flocks to decay, and thy forests to wither!

W. KNOX.

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54. DAVID'S LAMENT. HE IS ANOINTED KING.

2 Samuel i-ii. 7.

Two days after David had recovered the spoil of Ziklag, a man came to him out of the camp of Saul and informed him of Saul's death, and that of Jonathan. As David questioned him, he ·acknowledged that, at Saul's desire, he had slain him after he had fallen; and he ·brought Saul's ·crown and ·bracelet to David. Then David mourned and wept, and fasted till even. David again questioned the young man, and said, "How! wast thou not afraid to stretch forth thine hand to destroy the Lord's anointed?" And he told one of his young men to fall on him, and slay him. The man was an Amalekite.

David then lamented greatly for Saul and Jonathan, saying, "The ·beauty of Israel is slain upon thy ·high places: how are the ·mighty fallen! Tell it not in *Gath*, ·publish it not in the streets of *Askelon;* lest the ·daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised ·triumph. Ye mountains of Gilboa, ·let there be no dew,

neither let there be rain upon you, nor fields of offerings; for there the shield of the mighty is vilely cast away, the shield of Saul, as though he had not been anointed with oil. Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided." He said of Jonathan, "How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle! O Jonathan, thou wast slain in thine high places. I am distressed for thee my brother Jonathan; very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women. How are the mighty fallen!"

David inquired of the Lord, saying, "Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah?" And the Lord said unto him, "Go up." And David said, "Whither shall I go up?" And he said, "Unto Hebron." So David went up thither, and his men that were with him, every man with his household: and they dwelt in the cities of Hebron. And the men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah. And they told David that the men of Jabesh-gilead were they that buried Saul. And David sent messengers unto the men of Jabesh-gilead, and said unto them, "Blessed be ye of the Lord, that ye have shewed this kindness unto your lord, even unto Saul, and have buried him. And now the Lord shew kindness and truth unto you; and I also will requite you this kindness, because ye have done this thing. Therefore now let your hands be strengthened, and be ye valiant: for your master Saul is dead, and also the house of Judah have anointed me king over them."

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

acknowledged—thinking that he would be rewarded by David for his tidings, he accused himself of a crime of which he had not been guilty.

brought—he had been among the first to discover the bodies of Saul and his sons, and finding the jewels upon the slain, he brought them to David, having previously concocted the story he related.

crown—probably a metallic band studded with gold and jewels, worn round the lower part of Saul's helmet. Many of the war-crowns in ancient times were no more than bands bearing marks denoting the dignity of the wearer.

bracelet—bracelets were generally worn above the elbow, and were recognised as badges of royalty; they were richly embroidered and jewelled; those worn by the present king of Persia are valued at nearly a million of British money.

beauty of Israel—referring to the moral beauty of Jonathan's character, whose tenderness, fidelity, and magnanimity of soul rendered him an object of admiration to all Israel.

high places—Mount Gilboa; mountains of Israel; "O Jonathan, thou wast slain upon thine own mountains."

mighty—Lesson 45 records one of Jonathan's mighty exploits.

publish—to make a thing known by public announcement.

daughters—it was the practice for the young women in times of successful war to assemble in companies, and chant the praises of their victorious friends, and the downfal of their enemies. Lessen 47, 'answered.'

triumph—rejoice, shout with joy.

let—no dew, &c.—a striking malediction, expressive of the poignancy of David's grief. The fruitfulness of the earth depends upon heaven. The worst thing David could wish to the mountains of Gilboa was barrenness.

fields of offerings—The fruitfulness of earth must be devoted to heaven—neither by pasture, nor cultivation, should Gilboa yield the offerings prescribed by the law.

shield, &c.—as if he had not been a king, but a common soldier.

thy love to me, &c.—at this time Michal was married to another, while Jonathan's love to David only ended with his life.

inquired—before taking any important step, David endeavoured to ascertain his course by asking counsel of God.

house of Judah—the tribe of Judah had become so numerous and powerful, that the distinction between it and the other tribes, which took place at the commencement of Rehoboam's reign, began now to appear.

men of—Saul's reign commenced with an expedition for their succour, when Nahash, the Ammonite, besieged them; this assistance they never forgot. Lesson 44.

buried—to remain unburied was esteemed a calamity of no ordinary kind, as well as highly dishonouring. The natural feelings of respect for the remains of a deceased friend suggest the propriety of decent and solemn attention to the offices of burial, For a body to remain exposed to the beasts and birds of prey, who would in a few hours reduce it to a skeleton, would be quite ignominious; hence when David replied to Goliath's challenge he said, "I will smite thee and take thine head from thee, and I will give the carcases of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth." Less. 63, 'tenderly,' 85, 'dogs.'

I will—what a noble spirit of forgiveness and forgetfulness of injuries is here exemplified by David! He promises to reward the men of Jabesh for their respectful and dutiful regard to the remains of his greatest enemy. Lesson 53, 'inhabitants.'

king—the tribe to which David belonged—Judah, was the first to raise him to that dignity to which he was appointed; Less. 45, 'anointed.' There were now two rival claims to the kingdom of Israel, the house of David and that of Saul.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

GATH AND ASKELON—two of the most famed cities of the Philistines; Gath is frequently mentioned in the wars of the Israelites against the Philistines; Askelon was a maritime city, on the shores of the Mediterranean.

DAVID'S LAMENT OVER SAUL AND JONATHAN.

"THE BEAUTY OF ISRAEL IS SLAIN...HOW ARE THE MIGHTY FALLEN."

Weep for thine offspring, childless Israel, weep;
Slain on their mountains, strength and beauty lie;
Fallen are the mighty, to her native steep
As turns the wounded antelope to die.

Oh, let not Ascalon our grief proclaim,
Nor Gath the burden of our sorrow know;
Lest their proud daughters glory in our shame,
And misbelieving triumph mock our woe.

No sheaves of offering in thy valleys swell,
No dews, Gilboa, fertilize thy field!
Parch'd be thy summit, where the mighty fell,
Where hands anointed cast away their shield!

From Saul how keenly flash'd the lifted blade!
How strong the bow from Jonathan recoil'd!
Their arms the warrior's boldest breast dismay'd,
The proud discomfited, the wealthy spoil'd.

One in their lives where fame and friendship led,
One undivided couch in death they find,
Foil'd by their prowess, cowering lions fled,
And toil-worn eagles flagg'd their speed behind.

Weep ye for Saul, whose bounteous hand, and brave,
On beauty lavish'd spoils which valour gain'd,
Daughters of Israel, weep for him who gave
Gold wrought with jewels, vests with purple stain'd!

Fall'n are the mighty! war has rear'd their tomb;
On his own mountains Jonathan is slain:
What pangs, my brother, waken at thy doom!
Thine heart, how loving, how belov'd again!

For me thy friendship burn'd with purer flame,
Than glows the bridal bosom for her lord!—
Fallen are the mighty! Israel mourn thy shame;
War's spear is shatter'd—blunted is his sword!

SMEDLEY.

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55. ISHBOSHETH PROCLAIMED KING.

2 Samuel ii. 8-iv.

Abner, the captain of Saul's host, took ·Ishbosheth, the remaining son of Saul, and brought him to Mahanaim in Gilead; and there proclaimed him king over Gilead, and over all Israel; but the house of Judah followed David. Soon after, the ·servants of Ishbosheth and the servants of David met together at the ·pool of Gibeon. ·Twelve of each party arose to fight at Abner's ·desire; and they caught every one his fellow by the ·head, and thrust his sword in his fellow's side; so they fell down together: wherefore that place was called Helkath-Hazzurim. And there was a very ·sore battle that day: and Abner and the men of Israel were beaten before the servants of David. Three sons of ·Zeruiah were there—·Joab,

·Abishai, and ·Asahel; and Asahel was as light of foot as a ·wild roe. Asahel pursued Abner that day, and he would not leave following him, then Abner smote him with the ·hinder end of his spear and slew him.

There was war between Ishbosheth and David, and the ·house of David ·waxed greater, but that of Saul became weaker. Abner ·quarrelled with Ishbosheth, and soon after ·revolted to David. At this time David sent messengers to Ishbosheth, requiring that his wife Michal, Saul's daughter, should be given up to him. Ishbosheth took her from ·Phaltiel, her husband, and sent her. Phaltiel followed her weeping, but ·Abner told him to return. Abner found that the elders of Israel were willing to join David. But Joab was jealous of Abner, and told David that he came to deceive him; and as Abner departed from David, Joab went after him, took him aside to speak to him quietly, and ·slew him; Abishai, Joab's brother, was also present. So Joab ·and Abishai slew Abner, because he had slain their brother Asahel at Gibeon in the battle. David mourned exceedingly for the death of Abner; he said to his servants, "Know ye not that there is a ·prince and a ·great man fallen this day in Israel?" Of Joab and Abishai he said, "The Lord shall reward the doer of evil according to his wickedness."

When Ishbosheth heard that Abner was dead, he and all his people were troubled. Two of his captains, ·Rechab and Baanah, went into the house of Ishbosheth, smote him, and beheaded him. They took his head to David, saying they had brought him the head of his enemy. And David answered Rechab and Baanah his brother, and said unto them, "As the Lord liveth, who hath redeemed my soul out of all adversity, when one told me, saying, Behold, Saul is dead, (thinking he had brought me good tidings, and that I would have given him a reward) ·I took hold of him and slew him in Ziklag, how much more, when wicked men have slain a righteous person in his own house upon his ·bed? shall I not therefore now require his blood of your hand, and take you away from the earth?" He then commanded his young men to ·slay them. The head of Ishbosheth was buried in the ·sepulchre of Abner in Hebron.

Ishbosheth—'man of shame;' following the natural order of hereditary succession—Abner proclaimed Ishbosheth king; but God had previously announced Saul's successor. Less. 45.

servants—the army of each party.

pool—so extensive was this sheet of water that Jeremiah writes of it as 'the great waters.' Chapter xli. 12.

Twelve—in those semi-barbarous times it was not uncommon for a few men out of two contending armies to stand forth and fight, for the amusement and stimulation of the main body on either side.

desire—the first to propose this brutal sport was the first to flee—Abner's party having been routed and defeated by Joab and his men.

head—either the beard or the hair of the head; it does not appear that the Hebrews had adopted the practice of shaving off the beards and cropping the heads of their fighting-men, which afterwards prevailed in other countries where the beard was equally venerated. The length of the beard and poll afforded a convenient hold to an enemy in battle, hence the desirableness of soldiers dispensing with long hair.

sore—deadly; destructive.

Zeruiah—the sister of David, and the mother of Joab, Abishai, and Asahel.

Joab—'Jehovah father;' he was a valiant man, and very faithful to David till the time of Adonijah's conspiracy; (Lesson 66); in disposition he was revengeful and ferocious; he was the general of David's army for a long period.

Abishai—was also a mighty man, and one of David's chief captains. Less. 48, 'three,' and 51, 'Abishai.'

Asahel—'creature of God;' his close pursuit of Abner, in despite of Abner's warning entreaty to turn aside, led to his own death, and the perpetration of other bloody deeds in retaliation.

wild roe—the gazelle is the animal supposed to be referred to; its graceful form and motions, its agility, and the beauty of its eyes, are celebrated in eastern poetry.

hinder-end—he thrust his spear backward as he continued running before his pursuer; the lower end of the spear being armed with iron or brass; Les. 51, 'spear.'

house—family interest; his prospects.

waxed—increased; grew.

quarrelled—it originated in a false charge made by Ishbosheth, the nature of which implied that Abner had the design of assuming the government. Abner was very indignant, and threatened to transfer his allegiance to David.

revolted—turned from Ishbosheth with disgust; he knew that Ishbosheth's confidence in him was gone, and at the same time he contemned the weakness of his character. Acting under feelings of pride and rage, Abner allied himself to David's interest.

Phaltiel—during David's exile Saul gave Michal to Phaltiel to wife—an act both unjustifiable and iniquitous. Her consenting to this act of tyranny showed want of affection and fidelity to David. Michal had lived seven years with Phaltiel when David sent to Ishbosheth to demand her return to him. David had a perfect right to make this demand; it was also prudential that he should reclaim her, as it would give satisfaction to those who were attached to the family of Saul.

Abner told—it was one of the conditions imposed upon Abner by David, that he should cause Michal to return before he would receive him as a general of his army.

slew him—the laws regulating blood-revenge did not apply to Joab, so that he was by no means justified in acting the part of 'avenger of blood.' Asahel fell in war, being slain by Abner reluctantly and in self-defence; moreover, Joab met Abner, not as an avenger of blood, but as a friend, while speaking peaceably to him, he smote him in a treacherous and dastardly manner, thus shedding "the blood of war in peace." Less. 65.

and—Abisbai assisted in the murder after Joab had thrust his sword into Abner's side.

prince—the conduct and bearing of Abner during the progress of that friendly negociation, between David

and the elders of Israel, had most favourably impressed David's mind as to his uprightness and ability.

Rechab and Baanah—these two men were Benjamites, of the same tribe with Saul, and consequently ought to have been the more faithful and honest to Saul's family.

I took—meaning, I commanded that he should be taken and slain; this is according to the practice of ascribing to the ruling power the deeds of those who act under his instructions.

bed—it was at noon when the heat was oppressive and Ishbosheth was at rest, (Lesson 52, 'sit') that these wicked men, pretending that they wanted to pass through the house for some wheat, came upon their master and slew him.

slay them—after they were slain, their hands and feet were cut off, the latter for having dared to enter their master's room with a bloody intent, and the former as the more immediate instruments of the murder.

sepulchre of, &c.—the Hebrews had both public and private burial places; the former were in retired places generally without the walls of cities, while the latter were in private gardens, enclosed fields, within cities, and even within houses. Caves were sometimes used as burying places. Less. 9, 'cave.'

REMORSE.

"THE LORD SHALL REWARD THE DOER OF EVIL ACCORDING TO HIS WICKEDNESS."

Woe! woe to him whose heart is black,
With evil deeds that sting and stain;
And blasted like the lightning's track,
That stretches o'er the summer plain!
To him for all it doth contain,
Its sun and sky, its flowers and streams,
The earth is but a dark domain;
All swarming with terrific dreams!

His waking thoughts are like a flame
That burns within him—fierce, though dim!
Like fever in his wasting frame,
That thrills through every quaking limb:
His dreams of rest—no rest to him—
Are filled with phantoms of affright;
Phantoms of happy days that swim
Around him on the clouds of night.

His life is an oppressive load,
That hangs upon him like a curse;
For all the pleasure-thoughts that glowed,
Are now extinguished by Remorse!
And death—oh, death! 'tis worse! 'tis worse!
How dreadful in the grave to lie,
Yet sleep not!—evermore to nurse
The worm that will not, cannot die!

W. KNOX.

56. DAVID AGAIN ANOINTED.

2 Samuel v. vi.

After the death of Ishbosheth all the tribes came to Hebron and they anointed David king over Israel. At this time David said the ark of God should be brought up from *Kirjath-jearim*. Jerusalem was then inhabited by the *Jebusites*. David said that whosoever smote the Jebusites first should be chief and captain. So Joab went up and became chief. Then David dwelt in the castle, and they called it the City of David. David greatly improved Jerusalem, and Hiram, king of *Tyre*, sent messengers to him with presents, and the workmen of Tyre built David a house. And David perceived that the Lord had established him king over Israel, and that he had exalted his kingdom for his people Israel's sake. When the Philistines heard that David was king, they came against him in the valley of *Rephaim*. David asked counsel of God, if he should go against them. God said he should go, and he smote them there, and burned their idols. Again they came against him, and after David had inquired of God, he smote them from *Geba* to *Gazer*.

David gathered together 30,000 of his chosen men to bring up the ark of God to Jerusalem. It was placed on a new cart, and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drave the cart, and David and all the house of Israel played before the Lord on all manner of instruments—on harps, psalteries, timbrels, cornets, and on cymbals. And when they came to Nachon's threshing floor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah; and he slew him there for his error; for the Levites were not permitted to touch the holy things. And David was displeased, because the Lord had made a breach upon Uzzah; and he called the name of the place Perez-Uzzah, to this day. And David was afraid of the Lord that day, and said, "How shall the ark of the Lord come to me?" So David would not remove the ark of the Lord unto him into the city of David; but David carried it aside into the house of Obed-edom, the Gittite, where it remained for three months. It was afterwards told David that the Lord had blessed Obed-edom, and all that he had; so David went and brought up the ark to

Jerusalem with gladness. And David ·danced before the Lord with all his might. And as the ark was brought into the city, Michal saw David dancing before it, and she ·despised him. So they brought the ark of God, and set it in the midst of the ·tent that David had pitched for it; and they offered burnt-sacrifices and peace-offerings before God. And when David had made an end of offering the burnt-offerings and the peace-offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the Lord. And he dealt to every one of Israel, both man and woman, to every one a loaf of bread, and a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine. And he appointed certain of the Levites to ·minister before the ark of the Lord, and to ·record, and to thank and praise the Lord God of Israel. Then David returned to ·bless his household; and Michal came to meet him, saying, "·How glorious was the king of Israel to-day, who danced before the handmaids of his servants as one of the ·vain fellows." And David said unto Michal, "·It was before the Lord which chose me before thy father, and ·before all his house, to appoint me ruler over Israel; therefore will I ·play before the Lord."

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

all—they plainly saw that God had appointed David to be their king, the last of Saul's sons being now no more.

anointed—he had reigned seven years and six months over Judah, in Hebron; now his reign commenced over Israel. Thus David was anointed three times; *first*, by Samuel, as the Lord's chosen successor to Saul; *second*, by the men of Judah, as their king, and in anticipation of a more widely extended kingdom; *third*, by all, and over all Israel.

king—at the time of his installation he entered into a covenant with the people, pledging himself to the faithful discharge of certain duties, while the people, through their elders, did the same. A covenant similar to this was entered into at Saul's inauguration in the presence of Samuel.

ark—David's proposal was conveyed in language characteristic of his piety and candour; he said to the heads of the people and to all the congregation, "let us bring again the ark of our God, for *we* inquired not at it in the days of Saul." In proposing the re establishment of the service of the tabernacle, he accuses not Saul alone for the long and shameful neglect of the Lord's ordinances, but includes the entire nation in the guilty omission.

chief and captain—the reward of the conqueror's bravery should be the chief command. The length of time the Jebusites held possession of the stronghold, in despite of the efforts of the Israelites to subdue it, made them arrogant; they imagined in their conceit and self confidence, that if but the blind and the lame of their people were to man the battlements, David's host could not subdue it. Joab obtained access by means of underground passages.

called it—because captured by his men and at his suggestion; it was also called the strong-hold of Mount Zion.

Hiram—was a personal friend of both

David and Solomon; under his wise and happy reign Tyre increased in wealth and magnificence to a degree previously unknown.

workmen—the Israelites were behind many other nations in their knowledge of the arts; the Tyrians, on the other hand, were justly famed as skilled artificers. The bondage of the Hebrews in Egypt, and their comparatively recent settlement in Canaan, will account for their backwardness in the arts and luxuries of older countries.

house—a palace corresponding to his dignity, and the predicted greatness of his kingdom.

perceived—being a man who piously watched the indications of God's will in the events of life, David inferred from the successes of his army, the removal of all claim to the sovereignty on the part of Saul's family, his acknowledgment by all the tribes, and the friendly conduct of Hiram, that the Lord God had firmly seated him on the throne.

exalted—lifted up; made great in the esteem of other nations.

his people—David viewed his elevation as Joseph looked upon his, when Pharaoh exalted him—not for his personal honour or family aggrandisement, but for the benefit of the people over whom the Lord had made him ruler.

burned—by God's command, "Ye shall burn their graven images with fire—the graven images of their gods shall ye burn with fire." Deut. vii. 5,25.

counsel—instruction; advice; the true secret of success, known to all good men, is that of asking counsel of God.

gathered—this immense array was chosen out of all the tribes, so that all the people should feel interested in the re-establishment of the Lord's service.

cart—they should not have done this, the command being, "that *the Kohathites should bear it upon their shoulders.*" The Philistines placed the ark on a new cart, (Less. 42), but they were ignorant of the laws relating to its removal, and besides, the Levites were not present.

Uzzah—'strength;' he and his brother Ahio were signally punished for a thoughtless disregard of the instructions given to the Levites.

harp—a well-known instrument of music with strings, it was much used among the Hebrews both in religious services and in entertainments.

psaltery—a stringed instrument, somewhat like the harp, principally used in the religious services of the Hebrews.

timbrel—a musical instrument similar to the tabret. Lesson 47, 'tabret.'

cornet—a wind instrument; a kind of horn more or less curved.

cymbals—metallic plates held in each hand, which, when struck together, produced a shrill ringing sound.

threshing-floor—Less. 37, 'threshed;' 'hide it.'

took hold—did they forget this prohibition, "the sons of Kohath shall not touch any holy thing, lest they die?" Numbers iv. 15.

error—transgression; rashness.

displeased—dismayed; terrified; grieved and disappointed.

Obed-edom—'serving Edom;' he was a Levite of Gath-hepher.

three months—during which time the blessing of Jehovah rested on the house in which the ark remained.

brought up—on this occasion the former improprieties were avoided; David laid aside his robes and appeared as one of the Levites. It is supposed that Psalm lxviii. was composed by David and sung at this time.

danced—moving in time with the solemn music. Less. 23, 'dancing.'

despised—thought that he debased himself by setting aside his dignity and the externals of a king.

tent—a new tabernacle; not that erected by Moses, which was at Gibeon, but a temporary one set up by David.

minister—to serve according to the ordinances of the law.

record—to recite the wondrous acts of Jehovah.

bless—after David had blessed the congregation, & diffused among them a feeling of holy contentment, he returned

home to promote the same spirit in his own household.

how glorious—the daughter of Saul said this in haughty ridicule, for David made himself too popular for her ideas of kingly reserve.

vain fellows—low persons who were ready to act any sort of buffoonery.

It was, &c.—this was David's justification; he danced before the Lord, in whose eyes all men are alike, and not before, nor for the gratification of, a fellow-creature.

before—instead of Saul and his house.

play—express my joy in an audible and active manner.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

KIRJATH-JEARIM—'city of forests;' a town of the Gibeonites, in Judah; it was also called Kirjath-Baal.

JEBUSITES — these warlike people maintained possession of a strong-hold, which stood on one of the hills forming the site of Jerusalem, from the time of Joshua to the reign of David—a period of four-hundred years. They also occupied other portions of the city in conjunction with the Israelites. Lesson 32, 'Jebusites;' 'Jerusalem.'

TYRE—'rock;' a celebrated city of Phœnicia, in the division of Asher; it was probably founded by the Sidonians, from whose city it was distant about thirty miles south-west. In the time of Joshua it was a flourishing and fortified place, and called "the strong city of Tyre." Its distance from Jerusalem was about ninety miles. The wealth, commerce, luxury, and might of this magnificent city, now in ruins, were celebrated for ages and known in all countries. Lesson 123, 'Tyre.'

REPHAIM—the city of Rephaim, near Jerusalem, was so called from the race of giants who inhabited it. It is supposed that Og, king of Bashan, was one of them.

GEBA and GAZER—Geba was in the north of Benjamin; the situation of Gazer is uncertain.

CHRISTIAN WORSHIP.

O Thou to whom, in ancient time,
The lyre of Hebrew bards was strung,
Whom kings ador'd in songs sublime,
And prophets prais'd with glowing tongue.

Not now on Zion's height alone,
Thy favour'd worshipper may dwell,
Nor where, at sultry noon, thy Son
Sat weary, by the patriarch's well.

From every place below the skies,
The grateful song, the fervent prayer,—
The incense of the heart,—may rise
To heaven, and find acceptance there.

To Thee shall age with snowy hair,
And strength and beauty bend the knee,
And childhood lisp, with reverent air
Its praises and its prayers to Thee!

O Thou, to whom, in ancient time,
The lyre of prophet bards was strung,
To Thee, at last, in every clime
Shall temples rise, and praise be sung.

PIERPOINT.

57. DAVID RESOLVES TO BUILD A TEMPLE.

2 Samuel vii.-ix.

When David had rest from his enemies, he resolved to build a ·temple to the Lord, for the ark of God to be placed in; but the Lord sent the prophet ·Nathan unto him to say, "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, I took thee from the ·sheepcote, from ·following the sheep, to be ·ruler over my people, over Israel: and I was with thee whithersoever thou wentest, and have cut off all thine enemies out of thy sight, and have made thee a great name, like unto the name of the great men that are in the earth. And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt ·sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will ·chasten him with the ·rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: but my mercy shall not depart away from him, ·as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thine ·house and thy kingdom shall be established ·for ever." Then went king David in and ·sat before the Lord; and he said, "Who am I, O Lord God? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? And this was yet ·a small thing in thy sight, O Lord God; but thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come: and is this the ·manner of man, O Lord God? Thou art great, O Lord God: for there is none like thee, neither is there any God besides thee, according to all that we have heard with our ears. And what one nation in the earth is like thy people, even like Israel, whom God went to ·redeem for ·a people to himself, and to ·make him a name, and to do for you great things, and terrible, for thy land, before thy people, which thou redeemest to thee from Egypt, from the nations and their gods? For thou hast confirmed to thyself thy people Israel to be a people unto thee for ever: and thou, Lord, art become ·their God. And now, O Lord God, thou art God, and thy words be true, and thou hast promised this goodness unto thy servant. Therefore now let it please thee to bless the house of thy servant, that it may continue for ever before thee: for thou, O Lord God, hast spoken it: and with thy blessing let the house of thy servant be blessed for ever."

David subdued the Philistines, and the Moabites became his servants. He also smote ·Hadadezer, king of *Zobah*, and the Syrians who came to help Hadadezer. He put garrisons in *Damascus:* and the Syrians became his servants. And the Lord preserved David whithersoever he went. ·Toi, king of *Hamath*, sent his son to David with vessels of gold, of silver, and of brass: and David dedicated them unto the Lord, with all the gold, and silver, and brass which he obtained from the conquered nations. David also ·conquered Edom. He governed his people with justice and kindness.

David inquired if any of Saul's house were left. He wished to shew kindness to them, ·for Jonathan's sake. ·Ziba, a servant of Saul, told David of ·Mephibosheth, a son of Jonathan, who was ·lame of his feet. Mephibosheth was at *Lo-debar*. David sent for him, and told him that he would restore to him all the ·land of Saul, and that he should ·eat at his table. He then appointed Ziba to be ·steward to Mephibosheth.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

temple—a place for the worship of God, in which the rites of the national religion would be performed.

Nathan—'given;' he was a prophet in whom David had confidence; his character was that of a firm friend and yet a faithful reprover.

sheep-cote—an uncovered enclosure into which the sheep were gathered at night, or in times of danger, or for the purpose of shearing.

ruler—to perform the office of shepherd to his people. Kings are figuratively called shepherds in the scriptures. Ezek. xxxiv. 10, 23.

sleep—death is frequently called sleep in the scriptures.

chasten—correct; punish; subdue his rebellious spirit.

rod of men, &c.—some of his fellow-men should be made the instruments of punishment.

as I took—Lesson 45, 'hath sought;' 49, 'I know.'

house—family; descendants.

for ever—since the overthrow of Jerusalem by the Romans, and the consequent dissolution of the kingdom of Judah, Jesus Christ, the son of David, and anti-type of Solomon, continues to reign over all the spiritual seed of Israel, "for he must reign till he shall have put all enemies under his feet."

sat—sitting on the heels is a respectful posture in the estimation of orientals, among whom it is common.

a small thing—the blessings already conferred upon his family were small compared with those now promised them for a great while to come.

manner of man—if those of our fellow-men who are indebted to us for favours exhibit an unthankful spirit we generally forsake them; it is not so with God, he remains faithful to his promises.

redeem—he purchased their liberty from the bondage of Egypt at the price of Egypt's first-born. "I gave Egypt for thy ransom, I have redeemed thee." Isaiah xliii. 3.

a people—they should be distinct from all other people, and be to him a peculiar treasure.

make—that the knowledge of his existence, power, dominion, & holiness should be preserved amid the universal idolatry of mankind.

their God—in a peculiar manner; by giving them a form of national worship and civil government which should keep them from the idolatrous practices of the heathen.

Hadadezer—David routed Hadadezer three times; in one battle he took 1000 chariots with their horses; nine out of ten of the horses were destroyed, as the Israelites were forbidden to use them in war lest their reliance on God should be diminished. Deut. xvii. 16; Josh. xi. 6. They did not employ horses either in travelling or in agriculture, and if they had sold them, they would have come into the possession of their neighbouring enemies. Probably David kept a tenth of the horses for show and state.

Toi—he had a quarrel with Hadadezer, and was much gratified with David's successes.

conquered—David placed garrisons of soldiers in various parts of Edom, after defeating the army of the Edomites, thus bringing them in subjection; and fulfilling the promise of the Lord to Rebekah, "the elder shall serve the younger." It was also in agreement with Isaac's blessings on his sons which secured to Jacob lordship over his brethren. Lesson 12.

for Jonathan's sake—not only did David's love for Jonathan impel him to act thus kindly to his son, but the 'covenant of peace' established between them bound him to do so. Less. 47, and 49.

Ziba—'stature.'

Mephibosheth—also called Meribbaal.

lame—when but five years old he fell from his nurse's arms, as she was hastily fleeing, when tidings came of the death of Saul and Jonathan.

land—Saul's private patrimony; thus shewing that David was a man of justice and equity.

eat at his table—when the descendants of kings, however poor, sit at the royal tables in the East they are always treated with great respect. Mephibosheth would be thus treated at David's table.

steward—manager and care-taker of his property; he proved a faithless servant. Les. 60, 'slandered.'

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

ZOBAH—the chief city of Syria before the time of David; during his reign Damascus became the capital of Assyria.

DAMASCUS—a city of Syria of great antiquity; it lies eastward of the mountains called Anti-libanus; its chief rivers were called Abana and Pharpar. The principal river of Damascus is now called the Barrada, which has several tributary streams. The rivers of Damascus render it a very fertile locality, though on the edge of the desert. It is about 136 miles from Jerusalem.

HAMATH—the capital of the kingdom of the same name in Syria, which was situated beyond Mount Hermon. Hamath was included in the land promised to Abraham which extended northward to the Euphrates; but it was not possessed by the Israelites till the time of Solomon, who built store-cities in Hamath.

LO-DEBAR—a city of Gilead in which Mephibosheth, the lame son of Jonathan, was brought up.

THE DIVINE SUPREMACY.

"THOU ART GREAT, O LORD GOD, FOR THERE IS NONE LIKE THEE."

Who is like to thee, O Lord!
Among gods by man ador'd?
Who like thee can save and bless,
Glorious still in holiness?

Fearful yet in praises found,
Doing wonders all around,
Gods that have been, or shall be,
Never can be named with Thee.

Thou alone for ever ART,
Thou alone discern'st the heart;
Thou alone the thoughts dost try,
Thou alone canst grace supply.

In thy providence we see
Daily, hourly marks of Thee;
All that charms our sense or sight
Owns thy rule, and pleads thy right.

But thy richest crown we trace
In the myst'ries of thy grace;
In redemption's matchless scheme
Own thy love, thy power SUPREME!

There thou risest to our view
As our God and Saviour too;
There we hear thy Spirit's call,
There we find Thee all in all.

BARTON.

58. RABBAH BESIEGED. DAVID'S SIN.

2 Samuel x.-xii.

After the death of Nahash, king of *Ammon*, his son Hanun reigned. David wished to shew kindness to him, and sent messengers to comfort him. The princes of Ammon persuaded Hanun that David's messengers were spies. Then Hanun took the messengers, cut off half their beards, and half their garments, and sent them away. David then sent Joab, and his mighty men against Ammon, and the Ammonites hired the Syrians to help them. Joab led part of the army against the Syrians, and Abishai led the other part against the Ammonites; and the Syrians and Ammonites fled. Then Hadadezer, king of the Syrians, gathered a great army to fight against David, who assembled all the mighty men of Israel, and passed over Jordan, and came to *Helam* where he met the Syrians. The Syrians were routed and fled, and David slew the men of seven-hundred chariots of the Syrians and forty-thousand horsemen, and smote Shobach, the captain of the host. Then all the

kings that were ·servants of Hadadezer made peace with Israel, and ·served them. So the Syrians feared to help the children of Ammon any more.

The next year David sent Joab to besiege *Rabbah*, and to destroy the Ammonites. While he was away, David took Bathsheba, the wife of ·Uriah, one of the captains of the army, into his house: and he wrote a letter to Joab, telling him to place Uriah in the forefront of the battle, so that he might be slain. Joab obeyed this letter. Uriah was slain, and his wife mourned for him. After her mourning was past, Bathsheba became David's wife. The thing that David had done displeased the Lord, and he sent Nathan the prophet, to reprove him. And he came unto him, ·and said unto him, "There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor. The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds; but the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. And there came a ·traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the ·wayfaring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him." And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, "As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die: and he shall restore the lamb ·fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity." And Nathan said to David, "Thou art the man. Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, ·I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul; wherefore hast thou ·despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight? ·thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. Now therefore the ·sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife." David ·acknowledged his sin, but Nathan told him that the

child of Bathsheba should surely die. The word of the Lord was soon fulfilled.

Rabbah was taken by Joab, and he sent messengers to David to tell him that he had taken the city. David then went to Rabbah; the city was entered, the king's crown was set on David's head, and there was spoil in great abundance. The people in the city were put to cruel deaths; under saws, under harrows of iron, and under axes of iron, and they were made to pass through the brick-kiln. Thus did David unto all the cities of the Ammonites. Soon after the taking of Rabbah Solomon was born.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

Nahash—the father of Hanun had shown kindness to David, or to some of his friends, probably from a dislike of Saul; his defeat by him at Jabesh-gilead being a subject of angry remembrance. Lesson 48, 'asked.'

cut off—a greater indignity could not have been perpetrated towards David and his messengers, for the beard is held in high respect in the East, and the possessor considers it as his greatest ornament. The beard is the badge of freedom and manhood, while a shaven face is a mark of servitude or reproach.

sent them—they did not return to Jerusalem, for David, hearing of the transaction, sent messengers to meet them, saying, "Tarry at Jericho till your beards be grown." The men were greatly ashamed.

against—not, however, till he heard that Hanun had mustered his forces in large numbers for battle.

hired—paid wages for their military service; the Syrians would not be averse to this engagement, hoping to have the satisfaction of wreaking their vengeance on Israel. Lesson 57, 'Hadadezer.'

routed—thrown into confusion, their lines of battle being quite broken.

servants—he had subdued many smaller states to his sway, extorting from them tribute and obedience.

served—instead of being servants by compulsion to Hadadezer, they became willing allies and tributaries of David.

Uriah—'fire of the Lord.'

and said—this is another example of the practice so general in the east of conveying instruction by means of parables. Less. 38, 'parable.' The story related by Nathan is strikingly applicable to the circumstances of David's transgression, and its design was to obtain from David a sentence which would condemn himself. Less. 59, 'a story.'

traveller—orientals feel it a duty to treat strangers with hospitality.

wayfaring—travelling; journeying.

four-fold—this was according to the law which decreed that whoever killed or stole a sheep should make restitution four-fold. Exodus xxii. 1.

I anointed—referring to Samuel's anointing of David; Less. 45, 'anointed.'

despised—treated with contempt; David had disregarded the commandments of the Lord in yielding first to the suggestions of unholy desire, and then in adding murder to hide his sin.

thou hast—the death of Uriah was planned by David, and executed by Joab, acting under David's instructions. David was therefore the principal in this wicked plot.

sword—no sin goes unpunished even in this life, and every sin has its corresponding punishment. Les. 33, 'requited;'

Lesson 99, 'shed.' This awful declaration of the prophet began soon to be fulfilled; Les. 59, 'Smite Amnon;' 61, 'slew Absalom;' 66, 'put him to death.'

acknowledged—he confessed his sin in a penitent spirit.

to tell him—Joab, always faithful to the honour of his uncle, declined receiving the submission of the king and inhabitants of Rabbah, but sent for David that he might have that honour.

king's crown—David was formally invested with the crown of Rabbah, as a token of its complete subjugation to his rule. This crown and the precious stones in it were valued at a talent of gold—about £6000.

saws—this is the first mention of saws in the bible; the particular modes of punishment referred to cannot be exactly determined; it is supposed by some commentators that the more rebellious inhabitants were put to various kinds of drudgery and kept in a state of slavery.

Solomon—'peaceable;' the son of David and Bathsheba; he was David's tenth son, and a child of much promise, for the Lord intimated to his father that Solomon should build the temple of the Lord, and that in his days peace and prosperity should be vouchsafed unto Israel. Lesson 57.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

AMMON—the country of the Ammonites, descendants of Lot.

HELAM—the place at which the Syrian army encamped, probably on the south-eastern frontier of Syria.

RABBAH—called 'the city of waters;'—the chief city of Ammon; it was near the source of the Jabbok, and had been the residence of Og, king of Bashan.

THE FALL OF DAVID.

"THERE WERE TWO MEN IN ONE CITY; THE ONE RICH AND THE OTHER POOR," &c.

Dear child, to thee the tale is told
Of him who robb'd the poor man's fold,
Thou listenest, and with scorn and ire
Thy quivering brow is all on fire.
Thou thinkest; never sure on me
So foul a blot shall angels see.
For joy thou hold'st thine eager breath
To hear him doomed—he dies the death.

But mark, young David was as thou,
A generous boy with open brow:
With heart as pure as mountain air
He caroll'd to his fleecy care:
With motion free as mountain cloud
He trode where mists the moorland shroud;
From bear and lion tore the prey,
Nor deem'd he e'er should rend as they.

Such was his dawn; but O! how grieve
Good angels o'er his noon and eve!
He that with oil of joy began
In sackcloth ends, a fallen man.
Then wherefore trust youth's eager thought?
Wait till thine arm all day hath wrought,
Wait humbly till thy matin psalm
Due cadence find in evening calm.

59. OF DAVID'S SONS. AMNON'S WICKEDNESS.

2 Samuel xiii.-xv. 12.

·Absalom, the son of David, had a fair sister named Tamar. ·Amnon, the son of David, loved her. A ·subtle friend of Amnon, named Jonadab, told him how to obtain her. Amnon followed his advice, took her, and afterwards hated her. David was very ·wroth when he heard these things ; Absalom ·hated Amnon though he spake to him neither good nor bad. Soon after, Absalom made a great feast for his sheep-shearers at *Baal-hazor*. Amnon was invited to the feast, for Absalom was determined to avenge ·his sister. He told his servants to watch when Amnon's heart was ·merry with wine, and when he said to them, "·Smite Amnon," they were to kill him. And the ·servants of Absalom did unto Amnon as Absalom had commanded : then all the king's sons arose, and every man gat him up upon his ·mule, and fled. After this Absalom fled to Talmai, his grandfather, the king of *Geshur*, and abode there three years without seeing his father.

Joab perceived that the king ·felt kindly towards Absalom. He sent for a wise woman of *Tekoah*, who told ·a story to the king ; she said her two sons strove together in the field, that one slew the other, and that her family ·wanted to put her remaining son to death, and she prayed the king not to suffer it. When the king answered her favourably, she alluded to the banishment of Absalom ; which ·led the king to think that Joab had sent her to him. He then told Joab to bring Absalom again to Jerusalem, but not before the king's face. Absalom dwelt two years in Jerusalem without seeing the king ; he then sent for Joab that he might bring him to the king. Joab ·refused twice ; ·at last he came to Absalom, who desired him to say unto the king, " Wherefore am I come from Geshur ? it had been good for me to have been there still : now therefore let me see the king's face ; and ·if there be any iniquity in me, let him kill me." So Joab came to the king, and told him : and when he had called for Absalom, he came to the king, and bowed himself on his face to the ground before the king ; and the king ·kissed Absalom, and was ·reconciled to him.

The manners of Absalom were ·pleasing to the people, and when any man that had a ·controversy came to the king for

judgment, then Absalom ·called to him, and said, "Of what city art thou?" And he said, "Thy servant is of one of the tribes of Israel." And Absalom said unto him, "See, thy matters are good and right; but there is no man ·deputed of the king to hear thee." Absalom said moreover, "Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and ·I would do him justice!" And it was so, that when any man came nigh to him to do him ·obeisance, he put forth his hand, and took him, and kissed him. And on this manner did Absalom to all Israel that came to the king for judgment; so Absalom ·stole the hearts of the men of Israel. After he had proceeded in this manner for a long time, he asked permission of David to go to Hebron to fulfil a vow; and he sent spies throughout all Israel, who, when they heard his trumpet, were to say, "Absalom reigneth in Hebron." He also sent for ·Ahithophel, one of his father's counsellors, who joined him.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

Absalom—'father of peace;' his mother's name was Maacah, daughter of Talmai, king of Geshur. His sister Tamar, like himself, was beautiful in person, and graceful in manners.

Amnon—was David's eldest son; he ought to have been the hope and support of his father, and the guide and protector of the younger members of the family; instead of which, he acted cruelly towards his sister, and was the means of introducing into his father's house many crimes.

subtle—sly; crafty.

wroth—though justly displeased, he did not inflict any punishment upon the wicked Amnon; his grief probably overpowered his anger; this omission of parental duty had probably the effect of suggesting to Absalom the thought of personal revenge.

hated—"whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer." 1 John iii. 15.

his sister—Tamar looked to her brother Absalom for protection rather than to her father. One of the consequences of polygamy is to diminish a child's natural feeling of confidence in its father; the children of each mother look on those of another with coldness and jealousy, while the father is not esteemed by his daughters as their proper protector—that duty is left to their own brothers. Wherever polygamy prevails we see a number of separate families in a house, instead of mutual love, harmony, and peace.

merry—his crime sat lightly upon his seared conscience, in spite of the misery he had introduced into his father's house.

Smite Amnon—thus the judgments of God fell, one after another, on David. Lesson 58, 'sword.'

servants—Absalom was thus guilty of wilful murder; there was no city of refuge for him in his own country, he therefore fled out of the kingdom to his mother's father.

mule—the mule was at this time much used by persons of distinction in the East, even by those who had horses at command; its gracefulness, swiftness, strength, and sureness of foot are well-known.

felt kindly—his feelings as a parent were in conflict with his conscientious convictions of public duty; he wished his son back, but knew not how he could recall him consistently with the claims of justice.

a story—Less. 38, 'parable;' 58, 'and said;' the object of this story was to obtain a favourable judgment for Absalom, and to reconcile to David's own sense of justice his desire for the young man's return.

wanted—the next male relation became the avenger of blood. This law of blood for blood, and life for life, was so deep-rooted in the minds of the Israelites that the king expressed no surprise at the demand made by the family, although the mother was the most injured of all the relatives.

led—the king saw that Joab had the entire direction of this stratagem to bring Absalom from banishment.

refused—doubtless Joab felt that having reconciled David's feelings towards Absalom's return, he had done as much as was prudent for him to do.

at last—Absalom, to compel Joab to call upon him, desired his servants to set fire to Joab's field of standing-corn; immediately Joab repaired to Absalom to demand the reason for the outrage.

if there be—suggesting that the revenge taken on Amnon was not criminal.

pleasing—he was a vain young man—of great beauty, and of winning manners. Lesson 45, 'he had not.'

controversy—quarrel; complaint.

called to him—Absalom stood at the gate of his father's palace or hall of judgment, and interrogated the people as they entered.

deputed—appointed; chosen; suggesting that a public officer for this department was needed.

I would—the majority of the people would, by this mode of operating upon their minds, be ensnared into the belief that Absalom was the fittest man for the office.

obeisance—to bow before him with that reverence to which, as the king's son, he was entitled.

stole—he withdrew the affections of the people from his father—to whom they owed allegiance—to himself.

Ahithophel—'brother of foolishness;' he was both a friend and counsellor of David. Psalm lv. 12-14.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

BAAL-HAZOR—the place at which Absalom kept his sheep; it is supposed to have been near a small town called Ephraim, situated in Benjamin, about eight miles from Jerusalem.

GESHUR—a city and petty kingdom in Eastern Manasseh, north of Bashan, and near to Mount Hermon. The Geshurites were among the people that remained of the original inhabitants of Canaan, whom the Israelites drove not out. Another, and probably a more powerful tribe of the same people, inhabited a country on the south of Israel towards Egypt.

TEKOAH—a city of Judah near which there was a wilderness of the same name. Amos the prophet was a herdsman of Tekoah.

GENTLE REPROOF.

Deal gently with the erring one—
  You may not know the power
With which the first temptation came,
  In some unguarded hour.
You may not know how earnestly
  He struggled, or how well,
Until the hour of weakness came,
  And sadly thus he fell.

Speak gently to the erring one;
Oh do not thou forget
However deeply stained by sin,
He is thy brother yet.—
Heir of the self-same heritage,
Child of the self-same God,
He hath but stumbled in the path
Thou hast in weakness trod.

Speak gently to the erring one,
For is it not enough
That peace and innocence are gone,
Without thy censure rough?
Oh sure it is a weary lot
That sin-crushed heart to bear,
And they who have a happier lot,
May well their chidings spare.

Speak gently to the erring one,
And thou may'st lead him back,
With holy words and looks of love,
From misery's thorny track.
Forget not too that thou hast sinn'd,
And sinful yet may be:
Deal gently with the erring one,
As God has dealt with thee.

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60. DAVID FLEES FROM JERUSALEM.

2 Samuel xv. 13.-xvi. 15.

A messenger came to David, saying, "The hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom." And David said unto all his servants that were with him at Jerusalem, "Arise, and let us flee; for we shall not else escape from Absalom; make speed to depart." The king went forth, and all his household after him. And all his servants passed on beside him; and all the Cherethites, and all the Pelethites, and all the Gittites, six-hundred men which came after him from Gath, passed on before the king. David tried to persuade Ittai, the captain of the Gittites, to remain at Jerusalem; but Ittai said he would be with David, whether in life or death.

All the people ·wept as David left Jerusalem and passed over the brook *Kidron*. And ·Zadok and all the Levites were with him, bearing the ark of the covenant of God: and Abiathar went up, until all the people had done passing out of the city. And the king said unto Zadok, "·Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and shew me both it, and ·his habitation: but if he thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, here am I, ·let him do to me as seemeth good unto him." Zadok therefore and Abiathar carried the ark of God again to Jerusalem: and they tarried there. And as David went up by the ·ascent of *Mount Olivet* he wept, and had his head ·covered, and he went barefoot: and all the people that was with him covered every man his head, and they went up weeping. And one told David, saying, "Ahithophel is among the ·conspirators with Absalom." And David said, "O Lord, I pray thee, ·turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness." And when David was come to the top of the mount, where he ·worshipped God, behold, ·Hushai his friend came to meet him with his coat ·rent, and ·earth upon his head: unto whom David said, "Return thou to the city, and then mayest thou for me defeat the counsel of Ahithophel."

When David had passed the top of the hill, Ziba, the servant of Mephibosheth, met him with bread, raisins, fruits, and wine. The king enquired for Mephibosheth, and Ziba said he abode at Jerusalem. He also ·slandered Mephibosheth by telling David that he said, "To-day shall the house of Israel restore me the kingdom of my father." Then David said to Ziba, "Behold, thine are all that pertained unto Mephibosheth. At *Bahurim*, one of the family of Saul, named ·Shimei, cursed David, and cast stones at him. Abishai wanted to slay him, but David reproved him, and said, "Behold my son seeketh my life: how much more now may this Benjamite do it? let him alone, and let him curse, for the Lord hath ·bidden him. It may be that the Lord will look on my affliction, and that the Lord will requite me good for his cursing this day."

let us flee—David must have felt assured that the conspiracy had spread among his army, as well as among the inhabitants of Jerusalem, or he would not have fled from a city so well fortified.

not else escape—so wide-spread was the defection that none were faithful to David but his immediate attendants, composed chiefly of those who had shared his privations when an exile, and two companies of foreign guardsmen.

Cherethites, &c.—it is doubtful whether these men were Israelites or Philistines who had become attached to David; they were, however, his body guard; they were also trained warriors. It is supposed that their arms were bows, arrows, and slings.

Ittai—the argument employed by David to induce Ittai to return, proves that the Gittites, or Gathites, were not Israelites. 2 Samuel xv. 19,20.

wept—not only those with David, but such of the inhabitants of Jerusalem as remained faithful to him.

Zadok—'just;' he was a descendant of Eleazar, the third son of Aaron; his father's name was Ahitub. Saul slew the priests of Ithamar's line at Nob, but Abiathar escaped. David and his wandering army had looked to Abiathar as the high-priest during their exile; but on David's accession to the throne, he found that the people were accustomed to regard Zadok as the high-priest. Zadok had doubtless discharged the duties of the priesthood at the tabernacle in Gibeon, which Abiathar had never had an opportunity of doing. On this account, when both are mentioned, Zadok is placed first. Les. 65, 'priest.'

Carry—Zadok had the direction of the Levites who bare the ark.

his habitation—the tabernacle, or perhaps the capacious tent which he erected for the reception of the ark when he brought it up from the house of Obed-edom. Lesson 56, 'tent.'

let him do—to David's humility of heart, and ready submission to the Lord's will, his speedy restoration to his kingdom is to be traced.

ascent—the path towards the summit of the mountain.

covered—barefoot—an acknowledgment that he was in the presence of God, and acting in submission to his decrees. The Jews in imitation of the ancient Israelites worship with their heads covered. The High Priest entered the Holy of Holies with his head covered, and barefoot. Exod. ii. 5. Walking with the head and part of the face covered was significant of distress.

conspirators—the plotters of David's ruin; the instigators of the rebellion.

turn—"God taketh the crafty in his own devices."

worshipped—amid his troubles David's piety shines forth with greater brilliancy.

Hushai—he is called 'the Archite,' being a native of a town in Ephraim, between Bethel and Beth-horon, named Archi.

rent—rending the garments was, and still continues to be, an eastern mode of expressing grief, indignation, &c.

earth—Lesson 11, 'dust and ashes;' 49, 'lamented.'

slandered—spoke evil of him; represented him falsely.

Shimei—'hearer;' though guilty of these outrages, he was forgiven by David after Absalom's revolt was quelled. Lesson 62, 'fell down.'

bidden—a strong form of conveying the idea that God had permitted, as a punishment, those painful circumstances, which thus afforded Shimei the opportunity of behaving insolently.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

KIDRON—a brook, near Jerusalem, which flows through the valley of Jehoshaphat. It is but a winter-stream; it flows for about four months of the year through a deep and narrow channel, during the other three months it is nearly dry.

MT. OLIVET—a celebrated mountain near Jerusalem, once famous for olives; it is separated from the city by the valley of Jehoshaphat.

BAHURIM—a village of Benjamin, noted for several events connected with the history of David.

PRAISE FOR AFFLICTIONS.

"O LORD, I KNOW THAT IN VERY FAITHFULNESS THOU HAST AFFLICTED ME."

For what shall I praise thee, my God and my King?
For what blessings the tribute of gratitude bring?
Shall I praise thee for pleasure, for health, and for ease,
For the spring of delight, and the sunshine of peace?

Shall I praise thee for flowers that bloom'd on my breast,
For joys in perspective, and pleasures possess'd?
For the spirits that heighten'd my day of delight,
And the slumbers that sat on my pillow by night?

For this should I praise thee! but if only for this,
I should leave half-untold the donation of bliss;
I thank thee for sickness, for sorrow, for care,
For the thorns I have gather'd, the anguish I bear;

For nights of anxiety, watchings, and tears,
A present of pain, a perspective of fears;
I praise thee, I bless thee, my King and my God,
For the good and the evil thy hand hath bestow'd.

The flowers were sweet, but their fragrance is flown,
They yielded no fruits, they are wither'd and gone;
The thorn it was poignant, but precious to me,—
'Twas the message of mercy,—it led me to thee.

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61. THE COUNCIL AT JERUSALEM. THE BATTLE.

2 Samuel xvi. 15-xviii.

Absalom entered Jerusalem soon after his father had escaped; Hushai came to him on his arrival in the city, and said he would counsel him, as he had counselled his father. Then Absalom asked Ahithophel to give his counsel. Ahithophel counselled the immediate pursuit of David; but Hushai advised that an army should be first assembled from all Israel and that Absalom should lead them to battle. Absalom and all his friends thought Hushai's counsel was the best. Hushai then sent word to David of the counsel that had been given by himself and Ahithophel. His messengers were Jonathan and Ahimaaz, the sons of Zadok and Abiathar. They conveyed the message to David, who then passed over the Jordan. Ahithophel went home to his house at *Giloh*, and hanged himself, when he saw that his counsel was not followed.

David came to Mahanaim, where ·Barzillai, the Gileadite, and others were very hospitable to him; for they brought beds, wine, wheat, honey, butter, sheep, and cheese for him and his people. And David ·numbered the people that were with him, and set captains of hundreds over them. And David sent forth a third part of the people under the hand of Joab, and a third part under the hand of Abishai, the son of Zeruiah, Joab's brother, and a third part under the hand of Ittai, the Gittite. And the king said unto the people, "I will surely go forth with you myself also." But the people answered, "Thou shalt not go forth: for if we flee away, they will not care for us; neither if half of us die, will they care for us; but thou art worth ten thousand of us: therefore now it is better that thou ·succour us out of the city." And the king said unto them, "What seemeth you best I will do." And the king stood by the ·gate-side, and all the people came out by hundreds and by thousands. And the king commanded Joab, and Abishai, and Ittai, saying, "·Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom." And all the people heard when the king gave all the captains charge concerning Absalom. The battle between the followers of David and those of Absalom, was fought in the *Wood of Ephraim;* the ·head of Absalom caught in the boughs of an oak in the wood, and his mule went from under him. A man who saw it told Joab, who went with ten of his young men and slew Absalom. ·Then the army of Israel fled. A messenger, named Cushi, was sent to tell David of Absalom's death. And when he came he said, "Tidings, my lord the king: for the Lord hath avenged thee this day of all them that rose up against thee." And the king said unto Cushi, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" And Cushi answered, "The enemies of my lord, the king, and all that rise against thee to do thee hurt, be as that young man is." And the king was much ·moved, and went up to the ·chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went, thus he said, "O my son Absalom! my son Absalom! my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

Absalom—being the eldest son of David, after Amnon, he felt that the throne was his by right of seniority; but perceiving that his father intended to give it to his young brother, Solomon, he resolved upon making an effort to baffle that design.

pursuit—the immediate pursuit of David, and his small body of adherents, by such an overwhelming force as that at Absalom's command would have soon terminated his reign.

first assembled—the object of this advice was to gain time for David; and, to induce Absalom to adopt it, Hushai represented the indignation of David to be like that of a bear when cruelly robbed of her whelps.

lead—this advice was flattering to the pride of Absalom, but intended for his overthrow, Hushai being well aware that he possessed neither the experience nor the other necessary qualifications for a military leader.

hanged—mortified because his advice was not followed, and conscious that the rebellion would prove abortive; since Absalom was resolved to follow Hushai's counsel, he violently terminated his existence.

Barzillai—'iron-made;' the name was characteristic of the man, for his attachment to David was strong and unbending.

numbered, &c.—these important military preparations could not have been made, had Ahithophel's counsel been adopted.

succour—the best aid he could give them was to see them go out of the city, but himself to remain within it, thus leaving them free of all anxiety respecting him.

gate-side—probably at the entrance of the guard-room in the side of the gateway of Mahanaim; the city was walled and fortified. Lesson 13 and 55, 'Mahanaim.'

Deal gently—this extraordinary instance of mercy is to be attributed to his fatherly fondness, and to his benignity of character.

head—while riding in the wood he was caught by his chin in two divided boughs of an oak-tree; the violence of the shock perhaps stunned him for a time.

Then—the death of Absalom deprived the rebels of their leader, and also of every reasonable excuse for prolonging the battle. His cause died with himself, for he had no heir to sustain his pretensions.

moved—his firmness was overcome, and he poured forth a piteous lament for his rebellious son.

chamber—such as those which may be seen over the gateways of castles or cities in our own country. This chamber was used, according to circumstances, as a court of justice, a watch-tower, a state-room, or a refreshment room.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

GILOH—a city of Judah of which Ahithophel was a native.

WOOD OF EPHRAIM—an extensive forest on the East of the Jordan.

DAVID'S LAMENT FOR ABSALOM.

"WOULD GOD I HAD DIED FOR THEE, O ABSALOM, MY SON, MY SON."

The king stood still
Till the last echo died: then throwing off
The sackcloth from his brow, and laying back
The pall from the still features of his child,
He bow'd his head upon him, and broke forth
In the resistless eloquence of woe.

"Alas," my noble boy! that thou should'st die!
Thou, who wert made so beautifully fair!
That death should settle in thy glorious eye,
And leave his stillness in this clustering hair.
How could he mark thee for the silent tomb,
My proud boy, Absalom!

"Cold is thy brow, my son! and I am chill,
As to my bosom I have tried to press thee;
How was I wont to feel my pulses thrill;
Like a rich harp-string, yearning to caress thee,
And hear thy sweet "my father" from these dumb
And cold lips, Absalom!

"The grave hath won thee, I shall hear the gush
Of music, and the voices of the young:
And life will pass me in the mantling blush,
And the dark tresses to the soft winds flung;
But thou no more, with thy sweet voice, shall come
To meet me, Absalom!

"And, oh! when I am stricken, and my heart,
Like a bruis'd reed, is waiting to be broken,
How will its love for thee, as I depart,
Yearn for thine ear to drink its last deep token!
It were so sweet, amid death's gathering gloom,
To see thee, Absalom!

"And now, farewell! 'Tis hard to give thee up,
With death so like a gentle slumber on thee:—
And thy dark sin!—Oh! I could drink the cup,
If from this woe, its bitterness had won thee;
May God have called thee, like a wanderer, home
My erring Absalom!"

He covered up his face, and bowed himself
A moment on his child; then, giving him
A look of melting tenderness, he clasped
His hands convulsively, as if in prayer;
And, as a strength were given him of God,
He rose up calmly, and composed the pall
Firmly and decently, and left him there,
As if his rest had been a breathing sleep.

WILLIS.

62. DAVID'S RETURN TO JERUSALEM.

2 Samuel xix. xx.

David mourned so ·bitterly for Absalom that the victory that day was turned into mourning unto all the people; for they heard how the king was grieved for his son. And Joab went to him and told him that the people were displeased with his grief; David then arose, and went forth, and the people came round him. And all the people were ·at strife, saying, "The king saved us out of the hand of our enemies, and he delivered us out of the hand of the Philistines; and now he is fled out of the land for Absalom. And Absalom whom we anointed over us, is dead in battle: now therefore ·why speak ye not a word of bringing the king back?" And king David sent to Zadok and to Abiathar the priests, saying, "·Speak unto the elders of Judah, saying, Why are ye the last to bring the king back to his house? seeing the speech of all Israel is come to the king, even to his house. Ye are my brethren, ye are my bones and my flesh: wherefore then are ye the last to bring back the king?" He also sent a message to ·Amasa who was Absalom's general, and Amasa ·bowed the heart of all the men of Judah, even as the heart of one man; so that they sent this word unto the king, "Return thou, and all thy servants." So the king returned, and came to Jordan. And the people of Judah came to Gilgal to meet the king, to conduct him over Jordan. And Shimei came, and ·fell down before David and confessed his sin. David forgave him. Mephibosheth also came, and ·told the king of Ziba's slander and deceit. Barzillai ·went over Jordan, and the king asked him to go to Jerusalem. He ·excused himself, but wished his son ·Chimham to go with the king.

At the king's return the men of Judah and the men of Israel began to be ·jealous of each other. David had made Amasa captain of the host, in place of Joab. A ·revolt followed, which was led by Sheba. David called Amasa to assemble the men of Judah in three days. Amasa was longer in doing this than David had appointed; wherefore the king commanded Abishai to assemble the people. Now when the army was assembled at Gibeon, Amasa arrived, and went before them; Joab being jealous of the honour conferred upon Amasa went up to him, and ·treacherously slew him. Joab then pursued Sheba, who

had taken refuge in *Abel-beth-maacha.* He was about to besiege the city, when a wise woman stopped him, saying, "I am one of them that are peaceable and faithful in Israel: thou seekest to destroy a city; why wilt thou swallow up the inheritance of the Lord?" And Joab answered and said, "Far be it, far be it from me, that I should swallow up or destroy. The matter is not so: but a man of Mount Ephraim, Sheba by name, hath lifted up his hand against the king, even against David: deliver him only, and I will depart from the city." And the woman said unto Joab, "Behold his head shall be thrown to thee over the wall." Then the woman went unto all the people; and they cut off the head of Sheba, the son of Bichri, and cast it out to Joab. And he blew a trumpet, and they retired from the city, every man to his tent. And Joab returned to Jerusalem unto the king, and he was again captain over David's army.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

bitterly—the grief of David damped the joy of his adherents for the victory they had gained.

at strife—they strove who should be most forward to bring back the king, blaming one another's slackness in this duty.

why speak ye not—the people were now anxious to have their rebellion overlooked, and wished one of their leaders to speak of bringing the king back that they might at once agree to it, to cover their treason.

Speak unto, &c.—David, being now victorious, might have punished his rebel army, instead of which he sends kind messages to them by the mouth of the priests and Amasa.

Amasa—he was a relative of David, who, perceiving his influence with the men of Judah, was most favourably impressed towards him; he appointed him captain over the host instead of Joab.

bowed—in their rebellion they proudly denied David's legitimate and divine claims on their allegiance; his persuasive message, sent by Amasa, bends them into a cheerful and hearty return to duty.

fell down—meanness and cowardice were now as visible in Shimei's conduct as cruelty and insult had previously been. David knew that his submission was only to prevent the punishment he deserved. Lesson 60, 'Shimei;' 67, 'to slay him.'

told the king—from the day that David had left Jerusalem to the time of his return, Mephibosheth had not dressed his feet, for he was lame, nor trimmed his beard—the neglect of which bespoke the bitterness of his grief for David's troubles. On the day that David fled, Mephibosheth intended to have rode out of Jerusalem with him, but Ziba had anticipated him, leaving him without the means of removal, for he took with him Mephibosheth's ass.

went over—most of the people forded the Jordan, but the king, with his household and baggage, crossed over in a ferry-boat.

excused—he pleaded that because of his age, which was then four-score years, he should prove but a burden in

the king's palace. The aged should withdraw themselves from the pleasures of youth.

Chimham—he received a kind requital from David for his father's hospitality. David probably made over to him a small portion of his own patrimony of land, near to the gate of Bethlehem, upon which Chimham resided.

jealous—the men of Israel were displeased that the tribes of Judah had brought back David without giving them a share in the honour; but the Judahites replied that he was near of kin to them; the Israelites rejoined that they had a tenfold interest in the king, which the men of Judah denied. David took no part in this controversy. Sheba, a Benjamite, sounded the note of revolt—scornfully turning the denial of Israel's right in the king, to a denial of his claims on their allegiance.

revolt—Sheba shouted the watch-word, "To your tents, O Israel;" eleven tribes then turned away from David and followed Sheba.

treacherously—the mode was probably thus;—as he approached Amasa he let fall his sword from his girdle, which he lifted with his left hand, so as not to excite the suspicion of Amasa; coming towards him with a friendly countenance, he reached forth his right hand to touch Amasa's beard, in a respectful and friendly manner, and then he perpetrated the dastardly and bloody deed, by thrusting him through with the sword that was in his left hand. Abishai assisted in this horrid murder, as he had done in that of Abner. Les. *55* 'slew him.'

a wise woman—a discreet or prudent woman; perhaps one accustomed to advise in civil matters; her wisdom was very evident in desiring peace rather than war. A great deal of mischief, sorrow, and bloodshed would be avoided if contending parties would try to understand each other.

cut off—it was not an uncommon occurrence in eastern countries for the inhabitants of a house, city, or fortress, to consult their own safety by delivering up any obnoxious persons who might have taken refuge among them.

tent—down to this late period we find that tents were common in Israel.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

ABEL-BETH-MAACHA—a city of Naphtali, sometimes called Abel-maim; in this city the rebel, Sheba, was besieged by Joab.

GRATITUDE FOR PAST MERCIES.

When all thy mercies, O my God,
My rising soul surveys,
Transported with the view, I'm lost
In wonder, love, and praise.

O how shall words with equal warmth
The gratitude declare,
That glows within my ravish'd heart!
But Thou canst read it there.

To all my weak complaints and cries,
Thy mercy lent an ear,
Ere yet my feeble thoughts had learn'd
To form themselves in prayer.

When in the slippery paths of youth,
With heedless steps I ran,
Thine arm unseen convey'd me safe,
And led me up to man.

Through hidden dangers, toils, and deaths,
It gently clear'd my way,
And through the pleasing snares of vice,
More to be fear'd than they.

When worn with sickness, oft hast Thou
With health renew'd my face:
And when in sins and sorrows sunk,
Revive'd my soul with grace.

Ten thousand thousand precious gifts,
My daily thanks employ;
Nor is the least a cheerful heart,
That tastes those gifts with joy.

Through every period of my life,
Thy goodness I'll pursue;
And after death, in distant worlds,
The glorious theme renew.

Through all eternity to Thee
A joyful song I'll raise;
For O! Eternity's too short
To utter all thy praise.

ADDISON.

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63. RIZPAH. DAVID NUMBERS THE PEOPLE.

2 Samuel xxi.-xxiv.

There was a famine in the land of Israel during three years. David inquired of the Lord the cause of the famine. The Lord answered that it was for Saul having slain the Gibeonites, with whom the Israelites had made a covenant of peace. The Gibeonites required that seven persons of Saul's house should be given up to them. The king gave up the two sons of Rizpah, a concubine of Saul, and five sons of Merab, but he spared Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, because of his covenant with Jonathan. The Gibeonites hanged them. Rizpah tenderly watched the bodies of her two sons, and the five grandsons of Saul thus slain, suffering neither the birds of the air to rest on them by day, nor the beasts of the field by night. When David heard what Rizpah had done, he went and took the bones of Saul and the bones

of Jonathan his son from the men of Jabesh-gilead, and they gathered the ·bones of them that were hanged; and the bones of Saul and Jonathan buried they in the country of Benjamin in Zelah, in the sepulchre of Kish his father. And ·after that God was ·intreated for the land.

There were still several wars between Israel and the Philistines. In one of these a giant named Ishbibenob would have slain David, but Abishai succoured David, and slew the giant. After this, the men of David said, "Thou shalt go no more out with us to battle, that thou quench not the ·light of Israel." ·Three other giants were at this time slain.

David again sinned against the Lord in ·numbering the people, and the Lord's anger was kindled against him. Afterwards, David's heart reproached him, and he confessed his sin to the Lord. The word of the Lord came unto the prophet Gad, ·David's seer, saying, "Go and say unto David, Thus saith the Lord, I offer thee three things: choose thee one of them, that I may do it unto thee. Shall seven years of famine come unto thee in thy land? or wilt thou flee three months before thine enemies, while they pursue thee? or that there be three days' pestilence in thy land?" And David said unto Gad, "I am in a great ·strait; let us fall now into the hand of the Lord, (for his mercies are great,) and let me not fall into the hand of man." So the Lord sent a pestilence upon Israel, from the morning even to the ·time appointed; and there died of the people, from Dan even to Beersheba, seventy thousand men. And when the ·angel stretched out his hand upon Jerusalem to destroy it, David spake unto the Lord, and said, "Lo, ·I have sinned, and I have done wickedly: but these sheep, what have they done? ·Let thine hand, I pray thee, be against me, and against my father's house." At the command of God, David reared up an altar unto the Lord in the ·threshing-floor of ·Ornan, the Jebusite; there the king offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, and the plague was stayed. The Tabernacle of the Lord, which Moses made in the wilderness, and the altar of the burnt-offering, were then at Gibeon.

slain—at the time when Doeg destroyed the inhabitants of Nob. Lesson 49, 'slew,' 'league;' Lesson 31, 'covenant.'

Saul's house—of his family, or descendants.

five—Merab—the eldest daughter of Saul, who had been promised to David as his reward for slaying Goliath, but who was given to Adriel. Merab, who had no power over her father's decisions, was spared the pain of seeing all her sons hanged together, for she died while they were young. Michal, who had adopted and brought them up for Adriel, was greatly afflicted by their untimely end. Had Adriel acted uprightly, by declining the honour of becoming the king's son-in-law, knowing that Merab had been promised to David, he would have escaped this severe affliction. Lesson 47, 'he gave.'

tenderly—the fond, maternal feelings of Rizpah dictated her long vigil; it was told David what she had done, and he gave honourable burial to the remains.

birds—beasts—had Rizpah not watched the bodies of her sons and relatives they would have become the prey of vultures, or been devoured by jackals, and other voracious animals, who would soon have reduced them to skeletons. It is supposed that this affectionate woman was occupied in her task from March till October.

bones—the bodies thus exposed would be deprived of all moisture during the season of drought in the arid atmosphere of Canaan. Lesson 53, 'burnt,' 'bones.'

after that—after Saul's entire family, with very few exceptions, had been gathered into one common grave.

intreated—God answered the prayers of his people, now that atonement was made for Saul's massacre of the Gibeonites, by sending down genial showers upon the parched land.

light—a truly eastern figure, representing the life of the king as the sun of his people's happiness. Several of the Egyptian monarchs were called Pharaoh, or 'The Sun.' In David's reign the light of prosperity shone upon the nation with a splendour previously unknown.

Three other—the first was Saph, slain by Sibbechai, at a battle in Gob, a plain near Gezer; the second was Lahmi, slain by Elhanan, at another battle, in the same place; and the third was a giant, having on each hand six fingers, and on each foot six toes, who was slain by Jonathan, the son of Shimeah, David's brother, at Gath.

numbering—David's successes in war suggested to him the thought of raising a standing army, probably with the view of extending his conquests. This design was opposed to the will of God. Joab, a man of great hardihood, was so far instructed in the law as to know that David's design was wrong; his reply to David is deserving attention; 2 Sam. xxiv. 3. He complied with the command of David, but ceased before he had completed his task, "for the king's word was abominable to Joab."

strait—difficulty.

time appointed—three days.

angel—David had a vision of an angel with a sword in his hand stretched over Jerusalem.

I have sinned—this was a prompt and humble confession of sin which the conscience-stricken king made before the Lord.

Let thine hand—this was not the hasty ejaculation of a man who had the awful temerity to dare God's judgments, as the Jews did in the time of Christ, when they cried out, "his blood be on us and on our children;" but it was the voluntary surrender of himself, as the transgressor, for the people, whom he considered guiltless.

threshing-floor—it was on the summit of Mount Moriah. Lesson 37, 'hide.'

Ornan—called also Araunah; when the king informed him that he wished to purchase the site of the threshing-floor for the erection of an altar, to offer burnt-offerings and peace-offerings upon, Ornan refused payment; but David would not accept his proffered gift; he therefore purchased the threshing-floor, and the implements of husbandry as fuel for the sacrifice, for 600 shekels of gold; and for the oxen to be offered in sacrifice, he gave 50 shekels. The altar was erected, the sacrifices were slain, and God accepted them as "a sweet smelling savour." It was on this mountain (Moriah) that Abraham offered up Isaac. Lesson 9.

"THEY WERE PUT TO DEATH...IN THE BEGINNING OF BARLEY HARVEST."

Hear what the desolate Rizpah said
As on Gibeah's rocks she watch'd the dead!
The sons of Merab before her lay,
And her own fair children, dearer than they:
By a death of shame they all had died,
And were stretch'd on the bare rock, side by side;
And Rizpah, once the loveliest of all
That bloom'd and smil'd in the court of Saul,
All wasted with watching and famine now,
And scorch'd by the sun her haggard brow,
Sat mournfully guarding their corpses there,
And murmur'd a strange and solemn air,
The low, heart-broken, wailing strain
Of a mother that mourns her children slain.

I have made the crags my home and spread
On their desert backs my sackcloth bed:
I have eaten the bitter herb of the rocks
And drunk the midnight dew in my locks;
I have wept till I could not weep, and the pain
Of my burning eyeballs went to my brain.
Seven blacken'd corpses before me lie,
In the blaze of the sun, and the winds of the sky.
I have watch'd them through the burning day,
And driven the vulture and raven away;
And the cormorant wheel'd in circles round,
Yet fear'd to alight on the guarded ground.
And, when the shadows of twilight came,
I have seen the hyena's eyes of flame,
And heard at my side his stealthy tread,
But aye at my shout the savage fled:
And I threw the lighted brand to fright
The jackal and wolf that yell'd in the night.

Ye were foully murdered, my hapless sons,
By the hands of wicked and cruel ones;
Ye fell, in your fresh and blooming prime,
All innocent, for your father's crime;
He sinn'd—but he paid the price of his guilt,
When his blood by a nameless hand was spilt,
When he strove with the heathen host in vain,
And fell with the flower of his people slain,
And his sceptre his children's hand should sway
From his injured lineage passed away.

The barley-harvest was nodding white,
When my children died on the rocky height,
And the reapers were singing on hill and plain,
When I came to my task of sorrow and pain.
But now the season of rain is nigh,
The sun is dim in the thickening sky,
And the clouds in sullen darkness rest
Where he hides his light at the doors of the west.
I hear the howl of the wind that brings
The long drear storm on its heavy wings;
But the howling wind, and the driving rain
Will beat on my houseless head in vain;
I shall stay, from my murder'd sons to scare
The beasts of the desert, and fowls of the air.

BRYANT.

64. CHARGE TO SOLOMON.

1 Chron. xxii. & 1 Kings ii. 1-5; i. 5-53.

And David said, "Solomon my son is young and ·tender, and the house that is to be builded for the Lord must be exceeding ·magnifical, ·of fame and ·of glory throughout all countries: I will therefore now make preparation for it." So David ·prepared abundantly before his death: he set masons to hew ·stones; he prepared ·iron in abundance, for the nails, for the doors of the gates, and for the joinings; and ·brass, and ·cedar trees in abundance. He then called Solomon, and charged him to build a house for the Lord. He told him that because he had ·shed blood abundantly, and made great wars, the Lord would not permit him to build his house, but he had promised that Solomon should build it. He then said, "Now, my son, the Lord be with thee; and prosper thou, and build the house of the Lord thy God, as he hath said of thee. Only the Lord give thee wisdom and understanding, and give thee charge concerning Israel, that thou mayest keep the law of the Lord thy God. Then shalt thou prosper, if thou takest heed to fulfil the ·statutes and judgments which the Lord charged Moses with concerning Israel: ·be strong, and of good courage; ·dread not, nor be ·dismayed." He also told Solomon of ·all that he had prepared for the house of the Lord; and he commanded the princes of Israel to help Solomon, saying, "Is not the Lord your God with you? and hath he not given you

rest on every side? for he hath given the inhabitants of the land into mine hand: and the land is subdued before the Lord and before his people. Now set your heart and your soul to seek the Lord your God; arise, therefore, and build ye the sanctuary of the Lord God, to bring the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and the holy vessels of God, into the house that is to be built to the name of the Lord."

·Adonijah was the eldest living son of David. He was a goodly man, and had many servants. He made ·Joab and Abiathar his friends, and he said he would be king. Nathan informed Bathsheba of all that Adonijah ·had done, and sent her to make it known to the king. Nathan also confirmed her tidings. David said to Bathsheba, "·Assuredly Solomon, thy son, shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne." He then sent for Zadok, the priest, Nathan, the prophet, ·Benaiah, and his own guards, and told them to take Solomon and ·anoint him king at Gihon. Jonathan, the son of Abiathar, carried these tidings to Adonijah and his friends, who became ·afraid, rose up, and went away. Adonijah feared, and ran to the ·altar. Solomon said, "If he will shew himself a worthy man, there shall not a hair of him fall to the earth, but if ·wickedness shall be found in him he shall die." Solomon then sent to fetch Adonijah from the altar, and when he came he ·bowed himself before king Solomon; and Solomon said to him, "Go to thine house."

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

tender—inexperienced.

magnifical—extensive; superb; grand.

of fame—to be spoken of admiringly far and near.

of glory—illustrious; resplendent.

prepared—at that time monarchs and other great personages who contemplated expensive undertakings, were obliged to amass treasures for years previous to commencing their expenditure: these treasures were often the spoil taken in wars.

stones—these were easily obtained; indeed so abundant was stone throughout Palestine, that houses of stone were common.

iron—iron ore was plentiful in the hills and mountains of Israel; Deut. viii. v. The possession of Asher was rich in this most useful of minerals.

brass—more properly copper, which was dug out of the hills of Canaan without much labour. Little is at present known of the mineral treasures of Palestine, for they have not been sought after.

cedar-trees—the cedar is one of the most majestic of trees, its wood has an agreeable smell, is of a reddish colour, and is bitter to the taste. The cedar of Lebanon grows to the height of eighty feet, and its branches, which are thick and long, shoot out horizontally from the

massive trunk. There are several varieties; the red, or pencil-cedar is sometimes used for cabinet-work. Comparatively few cedars are at present growing on Mount Lebanon. Les. 29, 'Lebanon.'

shed blood—we may conclude that God is a God of peace and does not delight in blood; and that even just and necessary wars are a great evil.

statutes-judgments—Les. 29, 'repeated.'

be strong—possess yourselves with vigour and determination of mind for the due performance of this noble undertaking.

dread not—apprehend no opposition.

dismayed—shrink not from the work under a sense of its vastness.

all that—this subject was one of great interest in David's mind from the time the idea first struck him of building a temple to the Lord, as his earnestness in accumulating materials for its erection sufficiently testifies. The value of the materials thus prepared was immense.

Adonijah—'Jehovah is my Lord;' he was David's fourth son, and was at this time about thirty-four years of age.

Joab and Abiathar—their criminality was pardoned on this occasion; though it appears that they continued to cherish treasonable designs.

had done—he prepared chariots and horses, and engaged the assistance of a few of the chief men of the kingdom, and having invited the king's younger sons (except Solomon), and other distinguished persons to the feast which he had prepared, near a fountain, on the eastern side of the city, he there caused himself to be proclaimed king. The fountain is supposed to be that afterwards known as the pool of Siloam.

Assuredly—David spoke with confidence and authority, because God had made known to him that Solomon was to be his successor. David had, no doubt, informed his sons, and the leading men of this appointment; the wickedness therefore of Absalom and Adonijah is apparent.

Benaiah—he was distinguished for great bravery on several occasions; after Joab's death, he succeeded to the command of the army.

anoint him—the right of eastern monarchs to nominate their successors was exercised by David, not from caprice, or want of affection to his other sons, but in accordance with the Lord's will. Solomon's nomination took place near a fountain on the western side of Jerusalem, amid great shoutings, and blowing of trumpets.

afraid—it does not appear that Adonijah had made arrangements for securing the throne, similar to those of Absalom, else the proclamation of Solomon would not have smitten him and his friends with terror.

altar—in pagan countries protection was afforded to the worst of criminals, who, by fleeing to a temple, placed themselves under the protection of the priesthood; but this is the first recorded instance of it in the history of the Hebrews, although its occurrence was anticipated and provided for in the law of Moses. Exod. xxi. 14.

wickedness—he was justly suspected of still harbouring plans in his bosom for his own elevation to the kingdom, and the overthrow of Solomon's claims.

bowed—made due acknowledgment of submission.

THE FESTAL MORN.

"NOW SET YOUR HEART AND YOUR SOUL TO SEEK THE LORD YOUR GOD;...AND BUILD YE THE SANCTUARY."

The festal morn, my God, is come,
That calls me to thy honour'd dome,
Thy presence to adore,
My feet the summons shall attend,
With willing steps thy courts ascend,
And tread the hallow'd floor.

E'en now to our transported eyes,
Fair Sion's towers in prospect rise,
  Within her gates we stand,
And, lost in wonder and delight,
Behold her happy sons unite,
  In friendship's firmest band.

Hither from Judah's utmost end
The Heav'n protected tribes ascend;
  Their off'rings hither bring;
Here, eager to attest their joy,
In hymns of praise their tongues employ,
  And hail th' immortal king.

Be peace by each implor'd on thee,
O Salem, while with bended knee
  To Jacob's God we pray:
How blest who calls himself thy friend!
Success his labours shall attend,
  And safety guard his way.

MERRICK.

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65. PREPARATIONS FOR THE TEMPLE.

1 Chron. xxviii. 9-21; xxix.; 1 Kings ii. 1-12.

David assembled the princes of the tribes, and all his officers, and mighty men, and told them that God had appointed Solomon to build a house for God. He said to Solomon, "And thou, my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart, and a willing mind... if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever. Take heed now; for the Lord hath chosen thee to build a house for the sanctuary; be strong, and do it." David then appointed three divisions of the Levites, and stated their occupations: twenty-four divisions of priests, the number of the singers, the porters, the gatekeepers, the treasurers, and all the other officers required for the temple. He gave to Solomon the patterns of the different parts of the temple, and of the vessels to be made. At a second assembly David asked the princes, "Who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord." Then the chief of the fathers, and the princes gave much gold, and silver, and brass, and iron, and precious stones. They gave

willingly, and the people and David rejoiced with great joy. Then David blessed the Lord for his goodness, and prayed for the people, and for Solomon, his son. And the whole congregation blessed the Lord God and worshipped: they also offered great sacrifices in abundance for all Israel; and they did eat and drink before the Lord on that day with great gladness: and they made Solomon king the ·second time, and anointed him unto the Lord to be ·the chief governor, and Zadok to be ·priest.

When David was about to die, he again ·admonished Solomon to keep the commandments of the Lord. He warned him of Joab, who had "shed the blood of war in peace," ·by slaying Abner and Amasa. He also warned him of Shimei, who had ·cursed him; but he enjoined him to shew kindness to the ·sons of Barzillai. Now these be the last words of David. "David the son of Jesse said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet ·psalmist of Israel, said, the Spirit of the Lord ·spake by me, and his word was in my tongue. The God of Israel said, the ·Rock of Israel spake to me, ·He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be as the light of the morning, ·when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; ·as the tender grass ·springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain. Although my house be ·not so with God; yet he hath made with me an ·everlasting covenant ·ordered in all things, and sure."

David reigned seven years in Hebron, and thirty-three in Jerusalem; he died in a good old age, full of days, riches, and honour. He was ·buried in the city of David.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

appointed—when he first announced that Solomon should build the temple. Less. 57.

perfect—sincere; not half-hearted. Less. 8, 'walk before."

seek—Isaiah xlv. 19; Jeremiah xxix. 13.

sanctuary—the ark; this term, which denotes the holy or sanctified place is also applied to the apartment in which the ark was placed; Lev. iv. 6; also to the outer room where the golden candlestick, the altar of incense, &c. stood; 2 Chron. xxvi. 18; and also to the entire superstructure of the tabernacle or temple. Josh. xxiv. 26; 2 Chron. xx 8.

Levites—their numbers had so greatly increased since God appointed them to the service of the sanctuary, instead of the first born, (Lesson 24, 'instead'), that a distribution, and organization of them with reference to their duties was necessary. They now numbered 38,000 men from 30

years old and upward; whereas the number taken by Moses from one month old and upward amounted only to 22,273.

occupations—30,000 of them were assistants to the priests—of whom 6,000 were officers and judges; 4,000 were porters, and another 4,000 were musicians.

priests—they were divided into twenty-four courses, every one of which ministered at the altar weekly in rotation. The courses were distinguished by the name of the most eminent member of the family from which the course was taken.

treasurers—those to whom the charge of the king's possessions and revenues were committed.

patterns—David was divinely instructed in all matters relating to the extent, plan, furniture, and service of the Temple, so that Solomon's youth (for he was now only 20 years of age) might not present any obstacle to the thorough execution of this magnificent national sanctuary.

second time—he was first anointed by the direction of his father in the midst of a small and select assembly; this confirmatory act is before the nation, who accept him as their future king.

priest—after the slaughter of the priests at Nob, (Less. 49) the priesthood reverted to the family of Eleazar, the third son of Aaron, to whose seed it was originally promised because of the fidelity of Phinehas, (Less. 28, 'great blessings') but from whom it was transferred to the family of Ithamar during the time of the judges; Lesson 39, 'Eli.' Abiathar, the only remaining son of Ahimelech, remained under the protection of David, (Less. 49) till his accession to the throne of Israel. From the time of Zadok the office continued in the proper line. Less. 60, 'Zadok;' 66, 'banished.'

admonished—affectionately instructed.

by slaying—Lesson 55, 'slew him;' 62, 'treacherously;' 66, 'slain there.'

cursed—Lesson 60, 'Shimei;' 67, 'slay him.'

sons of—Lesson 62, 'excused.'

psalmist—David composed a large number of sacred songs to commemorate important events in his own history, and in that of his nation; he also collected many others which were known to the people before his reign; all these he arranged, and set to music, and appointed to be sung, in order in the tabernacle, and subsequently in the temple.

spake by me—in the sacred compositions referred to—the book of Psalms.

Rock—David views Israel, metaphorically, as a holy superstructure, having for its immoveable Rock of ages the immutable and eternal Jehovah.

He that—God—every man occupying the station of a Ruler, whether independent of other rulers or subordinate to them, should keep this injunction constantly before him; knowing that he is responsible to God for the faithful discharge of his duties.

when, &c—those who rule in the fear of God will find that the clouds raised by men, to darken or mislead them, will speedily vanish.

as the—the justice and benevolence of an upright ruler, shall render his name refreshing and grateful in the affections of his people.

springing—the grass springs with amazing quickness in eastern climes after the descent of fertilizing showers.

not so—David here refers to the irreligious conduct of some members of his family, as well as to his own sin; and reflecting on these acts, he takes occasion to admire the condescension of God in adhering to his promises to him and his seed.

everlasting—Lesson 57, 'house;' 'for ever.'

ordered—the covenant was properly and accurately drawn up. Lesson 57; Psalm lxxxix. 19-37.

buried—the sepulchre of the kings, in Jerusalem, was cut through the solid rock, and consisted of several chambers with niches in the sides where the coffins were laid. Travellers mention these sepulchres as interesting objects to visit. Less. 55, 'sepulchre.'

"THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD SPAKE BY ME, AND HIS WORD WAS IN MY TONGUE."

Thus hath the son of Jesse said,
When Israel's God had raised his head
To high imperial sway,
Struck with his last poetic fire,
Zion's sweet psalmist tun'd his lyre
To this harmonious lay.

Thus dictates Israel's sacred rock;
Thus hath the God of Jacob spoke
By my responsive tongue:
Behold the just One over men
Commencing his religious reign
Great subject of my song;

So gently shines the genial ray,
The cloudless lamp of rising day,
And cheers the tender flow'rs,
When midnight's soft diffusive rain
Hath bless'd the gardens and the plain
With kind refreshing showers.

Shall not my house this honour boast?
My soul th' eternal cov'nant trust,
Well order'd still and sure?
There all my hopes and wishes meet:
In death I call its blessing sweet,
And feel its bond secure. DODDRIDGE.

66. SOLOMON'S SACRIFICES, VISION, &c.

1 Kings ii. 13-iii.

Solomon and the congregation of Israel went to Gibeon. There he offered a thousand burnt offerings to God. God appeared to him in a dream by night, and said, "Ask what I shall give thee." And Solomon said, "Thou hast shewed unto thy servant David my father great mercy, according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee; and thou hast kept for him this great kindness, that thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day. And now, O Lord my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father: and I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in. And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted

for multitude. Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?" And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing. And God said unto him, "Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies: but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment; Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any rise like unto thee. And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches and honour: so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days. And if thou wilt walk in my ways, to keep my statutes, as thy father David did walk, then I will lengthen thy days."

Two women came to Solomon for judgment. They lived in one house and they both had infants. One of the infants died in the night. The woman to whom it belonged took the other woman's child, and put her dead child by the side of the mother of the living child. In the morning the mother of the living child knew that the dead child was not hers, and that the children had been exchanged. So they came before Solomon, and made their complaint. Solomon then said, "Bring me a sword and divide the living child in two, and give half to the one and half to the other?" But the mother of the living child cried out, "Give her the living child, and in no wise slay it." The other woman said, "Nay, but divide it." Then Solomon knew which was the real mother of the living child, and he commanded it to be given to her.

Adonijah again conspired against Solomon, and he sent Benaiah to put him to death. Abiathar and Joab had joined in his conspiracy. Solomon banished Abiathar to *Anathoth;* he would not put him to death because he had been much with David in his afflictions. Abiathar was a descendant of Eli, and the prophecy against Eli's seed was thus fulfilled. Joab fled to the tabernacle, and was slain there, by Benaiah. At this time Solomon sent for Shimei, and said if he left Jerusalem, he should surely die.

dream—Lesson 7, 'vision.'

according—the measure of our blessings will not be according to our merit, but the continuance of God's mercies will be regulated by the obedience or disobedience of our lives, and by the sincerity or deceitfulness of our hearts.

thou hast—God's children trace all their prosperity to him who putteth down one and setteth up another; who gives or withholds his blessings as seemeth him good.

a little child—he felt that the office to which he in his tender youth, was elevated, was of such dignity and responsibility that his experience and qualifications were disproportionate to the task of fulfilling its duties; and he gave utterance to the language of becoming humility.

as—not substituting the rashness of Saul (Less. 45, 'seven days') for faithful obedience to the Lord's will; nor setting up the gods of the heathen, or any representation of Jehovah, as objects of religious adoration. Lesson 71, 'turned.'

lengthen—the promise of long life to those who honoured their parents, (Less. 22) should be fulfilled in Solomon's history, if he honoured his father's instruction and example by adhering faithfully to the Lord's service. The prolonging of his dynasty is also included in this promise. Less. 57, 'for ever.'

said—the exercise of such a prerogative as this, which gave Solomon the power of deciding a question of life and death in so summary a manner, would not be tolerated in European countries; but in the East, where authority is arbitrary and despotic, this prerogative is admitted as the sovereign's right. The despotism, however, of the kings of Israel was kept in check by the equitable laws of Moses, and by the benign influence of the established religion.

a sword—his object was to ascertain which of the women loved the child the best.

conspired—he asked that a wife should be given him from the royal household of David, hoping that by such a marriage, he might create a strong party in support of his claims.

put him to death—treason against the king's life is in every country esteemed a crime deserving of death; so was it in Israel. The request of Adonijah included the design of dethroning Solomon and putting him to death, the very attempt to accomplish which, would cause a fearful commotion in Israel.

joined—this is the second time they gave evidence of their hatred of him whom God had chosen to rule his people. Lesson 64.

banished—confined to his city Anathoth, and excluded from all participation in the public service of the Sanctuary. Lesson 39, 'seed;' 49, 'Abiathar.'

slain there—the privileges of God's altar extended not to the protection of a murderer and a twice-convicted conspirator; justice is paramount to all civil or religious prerogatives. Les. 65, 'by slaying.'

Shimei—Lesson 67, 'slay him.'

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

ANATHOTH—a levitical city, and a city of refuge in the tribe of Benjamin. Jeremiah the prophet was a native of this place, and he purchased a field in it of Hanameel, his uncle's son.

SOLOMON'S CHOICE.

"GIVE THY SERVANT AN UNDERSTANDING HEART TO JUDGE THY PEOPLE."

Almighty God, in humble prayer,
To Thee our souls we lift,
Do Thou our waiting minds prepare
For thy most needful gift.

We ask not golden streams of wealth
  Along our path to flow;
We ask not undecaying health,
  Nor length of years below.

We ask not honours which an hour
  May bring and take away;
We ask not pleasure, pomp, and power,
  Lest we should go astray.

We ask for wisdom:—Lord, impart
  The knowledge how to live;
A wise and understanding heart
  To all before Thee give.

For we, like children, born in sin,
  Know not, till Thou hast taught,
How to go out, or how come in,
  By word, or deed, or thought.

The young remember Thee in youth,
  Before the evil days!
The old be guided by thy truth
  In wisdom's pleasant ways!

J. MONTGOMERY.

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67. THE COVENANT WITH HIRAM. SHIMEI SLAIN.

1 Kings iii. 1; 2 Chron. ii; 1 Kings v; 1 Kings ii. 39-46.

Solomon married the ·daughter of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and brought her unto the ·city of David, until he had made an end of building his own house, and the house of the Lord, and the ·wall of Jerusalem round about. And Solomon ·reigned over all kingdoms ·from the river unto the land of the Philistines, and unto the border of Egypt. And he had a thousand and four hundred chariots, and twelve thousand ·horsemen, which he placed in the ·chariot cities and at Jerusalem.

He sent to ·Hiram, king of Tyre, who was ever a lover of David, desiring that he would command his servants to hew him ·cedar-trees and ·fir-trees out of Lebanon. Hiram was pleased with this, and ·said, "Because the Lord hath loved his people, he hath made thee king over them. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, that made heaven and earth, who hath given to David, the king, a wise son, endued with prudence

and understanding, that might build a house for the Lord, and a house for his kingdom." He said moreover, "I will do all thy desire concerning timber of cedar and timber of fir; my servants shall bring them down from Lebanon unto the sea; and I will convey them by sea in floats, unto the place that thou shalt appoint me, and will cause them to be discharged there, and thou shalt receive them; and thou shalt accomplish my desire in giving food for my household." And Solomon gave Hiram twenty-thousand measures of wheat, for food to his household, and twenty measures of pure oil; thus gave Solomon to Hiram year by year. Solomon appointed three-score-and-ten-thousand men to bear burdens; four-score-thousand to hew in the mountains; and three-thousand-and-six-hundred to oversee them. Solomon also desired Hiram to send him a skilful man to work in gold, silver, brass, and iron; in purple, and crimson, and blue. King Hiram sent Hiram, a widow's son; the widow was of the tribe of Dan, but her deceased husband was a man of Tyre. And the Lord gave Solomon wisdom, as he promised him; and there was peace between Hiram and Solomon; and they two made a league together.

After three years, two of the servants of Shimei ran away to Gath. Shimei went after them, and brought them to Jerusalem. It was told Solomon that Shimei had been at Gath, and was returned. Solomon sent for Shimei, and told him of the oath he had sworn not to leave Jerusalem. He also reminded him of his wickedness towards David, his father, and then commanded Benaiah to slay him.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

daughter of—Egypt was at this time governed by a prince of great power and influence. From the time of Moses till now no mention is made of Egypt in the history of Israel. The fact that Solomon formed an alliance with so powerful a nation—whose ancestors had kept the Israelites in bondage—shews the importance into which the Hebrew kingdom had risen. Les. 70, 'my wife.'

city of David—Les. 56, 'called it.'

wall—he extended, raised, and fortified the wall.

reigned—the influence of his piety and wisdom, and the knowledge of his wealth and power, brought the neighbouring nations to a voluntary acknowledgment of his greatness, so that his royal sway was not confined to the tribes of Israel.

from the river—from the Euphrates to the Mediterranean Sea.

horsemen—Solomon's affinity with the king of Egypt produced results contrary to God's express injunction; Deut. xvii. 16. Cavalry formed an important feature in his standing army; moreover he maintained this great army in a time of national peace and great prosperity. Les. 57, 'Hadadezer;' 63, 'numbering.'

chariot cities—cities used as magazines for military armaments and stores.

Hiram—Les. 56, 'Hiram.'

cedar-trees—Les. 64, 'cedar-trees.'

fir-trees—they grew abundantly on Mount Lebanon and in other parts of Palestine and Syria; they rose to a great height, and their timber was much esteemed, and applied in building, in various arts, and for instruments of different kinds.

said—this congratulatory message proves that Hiram was a worshipper of the True God.

I will do, &c.—if Hiram had not acceded to Solomon's desire, the design of building the temple could scarcely have been carried out. Solomon might have obtained all he wanted for the work, except timber, from Egypt, but Egypt wanted timber more than any other nation. At this time Solomon had not yet established maritime commerce. Les. 70, 'navy.'

unto the sea—Tyre was on the sea-coast; being flanked on the west by the towering heights of Lebanon; the Tyrians could easily command its vast resources of cedars and firs. Launching the spars at Tyre they formed them into floats or rafts, and coasted them to Japho (Joppa), the chief maritime port of Judea, from whence they were conveyed to Jerusalem.

food—the want of money, or a national current coin, obliged Solomon to pay for the timber in goods; this mode of business is called barter. Tyre supplied Israel with craftsmen, and Israel supplied Tyre with corn and oil.

20,000 *measures*—namely 400,000 pints of wheat.

20 *measures*—or four-hundred pints.

to slay—in eastern courts executioners form a necessary appendage to regal establishments; for the kings or emperors, being armed with despotic powers, find it prudent sometimes to command the immediate decapitation of offenders. Shimei's life was spared on the condition recorded in Lesson 62, which he now violated, and thus brought ruin upon himself.

BLESSING.

"BLESSED BE THE LORD GOD OF ISRAEL."

Blessed be thy name for ever,
Thou of life the guard and giver;
Thou canst guard thy creatures sleeping;
Heal the heart long broke with weeping.
God of stillness and of motion,
Of the desert and the ocean,
Of the mountain, rock, and river,
Blessed be thy name for ever.

Thou who slumberest not, nor sleepest,
Blest are they thou kindly keepest;
God of evening's parting ray,
Of midnight's gloom and dawning day
That rises from the azure sea,
Like breathings of eternity;
God of life! that fade shall never,
Blessed be thy name for ever.

HOGG.

68. THE TEMPLE BUILT.

1 Kings vi. vii. 2 Chronicles iv.

The ·Temple was built at Jerusalem on ·*Mount Moriah*. Here stood the ·threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite, where David had erected an altar to the Lord. It was commenced in the fourth year of Solomon's reign. Within, it was overlaid with fine gold, and garnished with precious stones. It was built of ·stone, which was made ready before it was brought thither, so that there was neither hammer, nor ax, nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was building. And the length of the house which king Solomon built for the Lord, was ·threescore cubits, and the breadth ·twenty cubits, and the height ·thirty cubits. And the porch before the temple of the house, twenty cubits was the length thereof, according to the breadth of the house; and ten cubits was the breadth thereof before the house. And he made the most holy house, the length whereof was according to the breadth of the house twenty cubits, and the breadth thereof twenty cubits; and he overlaid it with fine gold, amounting to six-hundred talents.

And Hiram made a ·molten sea: it measured ten cubits from the one brim to the other; it was round all about, and its height was five cubits, and a line of thirty cubits did compass it round about. It stood upon twelve oxen, three looking towards the north, and three looking towards the west, and three looking towards the south, and three looking towards the east, and the sea was set above upon them, and all their hinder parts were inward. And Solomon made all the vessels that pertained unto the house of the Lord; the ·altar of gold, and the table of gold, whereupon the shewbread was, and the candlesticks of pure gold, five on the right side, and five on the left, before the oracle, with the flowers, and the lamps, and the tongs of gold, and the bowls, and the snuffers, and the basons, and the spoons, and the censers of pure gold; and the hinges of gold, both for the doors of the inner house, the most holy place, and for the doors of the house, to wit of the temple. So was ended all the work that king Solomon made for the house of the Lord. And Solomon brought in the things which David his father had dedicated; even the silver, and the vessels, did he put among the treasures of the house of the Lord. The ark, ·from *Mount Zion*, and all the ·holy vessels

were brought into the temple by the Levites. There was nothing in the ark save the two tables of stone, which Moses put therein at Horeb. Solomon was seven years in building the temple. And the word of the Lord came to Solomon, saying, "Concerning the house which thou art building, if thou wilt walk in my statutes, and execute my judgments, and keep all my commandments to walk in them; then will I perform my word with thee which I spake unto David thy father: and I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will not forsake my people Israel." So Solomon built the house and finished it.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

Temple—Lesson 57, 'temple;' this magnificent edifice—the glory of Jerusalem, and the admiration of surrounding nations and succeeding ages, formed the permanent place of ritual worship for the Jewish nation, during a period of four-hundred-and-twenty years. Less. 122. The inner apartments were similar in plan to the two divisions of the tabernacle, & served a similar purpose; Les. 23, 'tabernacle;' '65, 'sanctuary.' The front of the temple, like that of the tabernacle, looked towards the east, so that the worshippers, on entering the house of the Lord, had their backs turned upon the sun—that great object of pagan idolatry. The splendid porch extended across the entire front of the building, supported by two massive pillars of brass, or rather copper, called Jachin and Boaz, which mean, "it shall stand" "in strength." On each side of the Temple, and in the rear, there were erected three stories of chambers, which were connected with the main building by means of a gallery that surrounded the house. Two courts, or areas, called the inner and the outer courts, formed the entrances.

Mount Moriah—the summit of this hill did not afford space sufficiently large for the foundation; it had to be levelled, and portions of the valley on either side had to be filled up before the building could be commenced.

threshing-floor—L. 63, 'threshing-floor.'

stone—the stones used were of extraordinary dimensions, some measuring fourteen feet long by four feet high.

three-score cubits—nearly 100 feet.

twenty cubits—thirty feet.

thirty cubits—forty-five feet.

molten sea—an immense basin of brass, used for the same purposes as the laver of the tabernacle. Lesson 23.

altar of—for burning the incense upon.

from Mount Zion—Lesson 56.

holy vessels—Lesson 23.

two tables—Lessons 22, 'ten commandments;' 23, 'threw down,' 'ark;' 26, 'testimony.'

if thou wilt—hence we see that the peculiar and distinguishing privileges of the Mosaic dispensation were conditionally conferred upon the people of Israel. Solomon was not to presume upon the duration of the covenant unless he and the people of Israel continued in obedience.

finished it—in the eleventh year of his reign.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

MOUNT MORIAH—the name of a mountain on the north-east of Jerusalem; it was at first without the city, but David purchased it from Araunah the Jebusite, and erected on it an altar to God; it was afterwards chosen as the situation for the Temple which Solomon built, when it was included within the walls of the city.

MOUNT ZION—the strong hold, or the hill on which was the fort so called; forming the south-western portion of the ground, on which, at a later period Jerusalem stood.

PSALM.

"ALL NATIONS SHALL SERVE HIM."

Fall down ye nations and adore
Jehovah on the mercy seat;
Like prostrate seas on every shore,
That cast their billows at your feet.

Let hallelujahs to the skies,
With ocean's everlasting sound—
The voice of many waters rise
Day without night, as time goes round.

Come from the East—with gifts, ye kings
Bring gold, and frankincense and myrrh;
Where'er the morning spreads her wings
Let man to God his vows prefer.

Come from the West,—the bond, the free,
His easy service make your choice;
Ye isles of the Pacific sea
Like halcyon-nests; in God rejoice.

Come from the South;—through desert-sands
A highway for the Lord prepare;
Let Ethiopia stretch her hands,
And Lybia pour her soul in prayer.

Come from the North; let Europe raise
In all her languages one song;
Give God the glory, power, and praise,
That to his holy name belong.

J. MONTGOMERY.

69. THE TEMPLE DEDICATED AND ACCEPTED.

1 Kings viii.-ix. 9; 2 Chron. v.-vii.

When Solomon dedicated the Temple to God he assembled the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes at Jerusalem. All the priests were sanctified; and when they came out of the holy place, the singers and trumpeters were praising the Lord, saying, "For he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever." Then the house of the Lord was filled with a cloud, for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of God.

Great sacrifices were then offered by the king and all the people. The king kneeled down before all the congregation

of Israel, and spread forth his hands towards heaven, and prayed for them—that if evils should be sent upon his people for their sins, God would hear their prayer, and forgive them when they returned to him, and acknowledged their sins. Solomon then blessed the whole congregation; and when he had made an end of praying, fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt-offerings and the sacrifices, and the glory of the Lord filled the house. The people bowed upon the pavement, and worshipped, and praised the Lord. The feast was kept seven days, and the people returned home glad and merry in heart for the goodness of the Lord.

The Lord appeared to Solomon by night and said to him, "I have heard thy prayer, and have chosen this place to myself for a house of sacrifice. If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people; if my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land. And as for thee, if thou wilt walk before me, as David thy father walked, and do according to all that I have commanded thee, and shalt observe my statutes and my judgments; then will I establish the throne of thy kingdom, according as I have covenanted with David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man to be ruler in Israel. But if ye turn away and forsake my statutes and my commandments, which I have set before you, and shall go and serve other gods and worship them; then will I pluck them up by the roots out of my land which I have given them; and this house, which I have sanctified for my name will I cast out of my sight, and will make it to be a proverb and a byword among all nations. And this house, which is high, shall be an astonishment to every one that passeth by it; so that he shall say, Why hath the Lord done thus unto this land, and unto this house? and it shall be answered, Because they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, which brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, and laid hold on other gods; and worshipped them, and served them; therefore hath he brought all this evil upon them."

dedicated—eleven months after its completion the temple was set apart for its proper use, by a special religious service.

sanctified—cleansed, and rendered qualified to serve by obedience to the many laws given for their personal observance.

glory—Lesson 23, 'glory.'

Great sacrifices—120,000 sheep, and 220,000 oxen; the festival lasted fourteen days; the multitudes present were immense, among whom the flesh of the peace-offerings was distributed. Independently of the religious character of the festival, extensive preparations of food were necessary for the sustenance of the people.

kneeled—upon a raised platform in the court of the temple.

prayed for—he prayed that in case God's judgments should fall on Israel for their sins, he would forgive them when they returned to him, repented, and confessed his name. Solomon knew that all misery is caused by sin, and that the forgiveness of sin prepares the way for the removal of every evil.

fire—Less. 2, 'accepted;' 24 and 81, 'fire;' and 37, 'signs.'

pavement—it was of marble, overlaid with planks of fir.

by night—Lesson 66, 'a dream.'

shut up—prevent the rain from falling, thus causing a drought throughout the land, with its concomitant evils of famine and thirst. Less. 80, 'dew nor rain;' 81, 'great rain.'

locusts—Less. 18, '8th plague.'

pestilence—the Lord sent this fearful scourge upon the Israelites in the wilderness on account of their sin in making the golden calf, Lesson 23; when they proposed to return to Egypt; when they rose up to justify the rebellion of Korah, Less. 26; when they fell into idolatry at Shittim, Less. 28; and when David numbered the people, Lesson 63.

called by my name—Less. 13, 'Israel.'

serve—Less. 13, 'images;' 23, 'calf;' 32, 'former;' 33, 'league, &c.' 34, 'I had, &c.;' 35, 'served;' 37, 'threw down, &c.;' 75, 'forsook;' 78, 'worshipped Baal;' &c.

a proverb and a by-word—spoken of with contempt; Deut. xxviii. 37; 1 Kings ix. 7; the Jews were to be thus alluded to as an awful instance of divine punishment if they forsook God.

out of—Lesson 108 and 118, 'taken captive.'

laid hold—embraced with the affection of a devotee.

SOLOMON'S TEMPLE.

"THE GLORY OF THE LORD FILLED THE HOUSE OF THE LORD."

With what magnificence sublime
To outward sense in ancient time
  Thy temple, Lord! appeal'd;
When thus, descending from on high,
The glory of thy majesty
  Was veil'd—and yet reveal'd.

Well may some moods of thought be known
When to that pomp, for ever flown,
  We turn our mental gaze,
And mourn the splendour of the past
Should now no sun-like glory cast
  On these degenerate days!

The thought forbid;—teach us to see
A temple, Lord! more worthy thee,
Which thou would'st now prepare
Within the heart by grace divine;
Oh! guide us to that inner shrine,
That we may worship there.

Not all the skill, not all the cost,
Nor rites of Levi's sacred host
Which then adorn'd thy fane,
Could more availing power impart
Than the poor, contrite humble heart,
May now from Jesus gain.

On Sinai's consecrated hill,
As in that pile,—dark clouds, were still
Around thy presence bright;
But in the temple of the soul,
The broken heart, by thee made whole,
Shall worship thee IN LIGHT!

BARTON.

70. TADMOR BUILT. THE QUEEN OF SHEBA.

2 Chron. viii. & 1 Kings ix. 10-x.

And it came to pass at the end of twenty years, wherein *Solomon* had built the house of the Lord, and his own house, that he built *Tadmor* in the wilderness, and several store cities in Hamath, and in other parts of his dominions. And all the Canaanites who were left in the land Solomon made tributary to him. And Solomon brought up the daughter of Pharaoh out of the city of David unto the house that he had built for her; for he said, "My wife shall not dwell in the house of David, king of Israel, because the places are holy, whereunto the ark of the Lord hath come." The city of *Gezer* was presented by Pharaoh to Solomon's wife.

Solomon made a navy of ships at *Ezion-geber*, and king Hiram sent in the navy his servants, shipmen that had knowledge of the sea, and they went to *Ophir*, and brought gold from thence to king Solomon. Solomon had also a navy at *Tharshish*, and once in three years, the ships brought him gold, and silver, ivory, and apes, and peacocks. So king

Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth for ·riches and for wisdom. And all the earth sought to Solomon, to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart. And they brought every man his present, vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and garments, and armour, spices, horses, and mules, a rate year by year. And the king made silver to be in Jerusalem as stones, and cedars made he to be as the ·sycamore trees that are in the vale, for abundance.

And when the queen of *Sheba* heard of the fame of Solomon, she came to prove him with ·hard questions at Jerusalem, with a very great company, and camels that bare spices, and gold in abundance, and precious stones: and when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart. And Solomon told her all her questions: and there was nothing hid from Solomon which he told her not. And when the queen of Sheba had seen the wisdom of Solomon, and the house that he had built, and all things belonging to his household; and his ·ascent by which he went up into the house of the Lord; there was no more ·spirit in her. And she said to the king, "It was a true report which I heard in mine own land of thine acts, and of thy wisdom: howbeit I believed not their words, until I came and mine eyes had seen it: and, behold, the one half of the greatness of thy wisdom was not told me: for thou exceedest the fame that I heard. Happy are thy men, and happy are these thy servants which stand continually before thee, and hear thy wisdom. Blessed be the Lord thy God, which delighteth in thee to set thee on his throne, to be king for the Lord thy God: ·because thy God loved Israel, to establish them for ever, therefore made he thee king over them, to do judgment and justice." And she gave the king a hundred-and-twenty talents of gold, and of spices great abundance, and precious stones: neither was there any such spice as the queen of Sheba gave king Solomon. And king Solomon gave to the queen of Sheba all her desire, ·whatsoever she asked, beside that which she had brought unto the king. So she turned, and went away to her own land, she and her servants.

tributary—Less 33, 'tributaries.'

my wife—Pharaoh's daughter was Solomon's principal wife (compare Les. 31, 'concubine.') The Hebrews were permitted to marry women of other nations—except those of the seven nations of the Canaanites—provided such wives embraced the religion of the Hebrews. At this early time of his life Solomon would not be likely to neglect the law of Moses, it is therefore generally considered that Pharaoh's daughter forsook idolatry, and it is not stated in any part of the Scripture that Solomon set up the idols of Egypt in the latter part of his life, when his idolatrous wives seduced him to commit this and other sins. Lesson 67, 'daughter of.'

the places are holy—a tabernacle had been made for the ark in David's house. Solomon feared lest his wife, a stranger, and a proselyte to the religion of the Hebrews, might, from ignorance, defile a place rendered sacred by the symbol of the Divine presence.

navy—a fleet; a large number of sailing vessels.

they went—it is generally supposed that the profitable trade which Solomon thus carried on extended to the coasts of Africa and India; the Phœnicians were the earliest navigators, but having no compass, by which to direct their course, they were compelled to keep within a short distance of the coast, consequently a voyage which would now be quickly performed, then occupied much time.

gold—gold did not occupy the chief place in the estimation of the Israelites—'pure brass' being considered the most valuable metal.

silver—was the principal medium of trade—not coined, but used by weight. Many of the great men of Israel had their domestic establishments enriched with vessels made of these precious metals.

ivory—tusks and teeth of the elephant and hippopotamus.

apes—these animals, which bear so striking a resemblance to the human form, were among the objects of Egyptian idolatry, and are still worshipped in parts of India.

peacocks—the peacock being a bird of singular beauty was, and is still, desired by the wealthy, as an ornament to their grounds; the word is supposed by some authorities to mean parrots.

riches and wisdom—a desire for knowledge was pre-eminent in Solomon; and his agents would doubtless be instructed to bring with them from the different countries they visited, all things that were useful, curious, or beautiful—productions of those countries.

sycamore—this tree, which was common in Canaan, Egypt, and other eastern countries was much used in building. Egyptian coffins formed of it, have been found in a sound state after the lapse of nearly 3,000 years. It yielded a fruit, which resembled figs. Lesson 103, 'gatherer.'

hard questions—riddles; Lesson 40, 'riddle;' puzzling propositions, and probably questions on religion, natural history, astronomy, &c.

ascent—the solemn and majestic procession of his household to the Temple—not an ostentatious display, but a procession of devout and highly favoured worshippers, led by the wisest of men.

spirit—conceit of her own greatness; his wisdom was more surprising to her than his wealth and grandeur.

because—compare Les. 56, 'his people.'

whatsoever she asked—it is probable that she asked for costly presents; this practice in the East is not considered degrading, rapacious, or mean.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

TADMOR—'a palm tree;' a city situated in the desert of Syria, called "Tadmor in the wilderness;" it was built by Solomon, and was afterwards called Palmyra. Tadmor was probably built by Solomon as a depot for merchandise, a resting place for the large caravans of merchants which traversed the desert, and a watering place for camels. The caravan traffic of the East engaged Solomon's attention as well as maritime traffic. Tadmor was well situated for the business of those merchants who traded between the Mediterranean Sea, across the Syrian desert to the Euphrates.

GEZER—a city of Canaan the inhabitants of which were not expelled by the Israelites, though their king, Hormah, was overthrown with his mighty army by Joshua. Many years after, Pharaoh, king of Egypt, destroyed its inhabitants, and gave the city, as a present, to his daughter, Solomon's wife.

EZION-GEBER—one of the encampments of the Israelites in the wilderness; it was on the coast of the Red Sea. It was the place where Solomon built his ships wherewith to trade to distant countries; and also the place at which Jehoshaphat and Ahaziah built ships to trade to Tarshish.

OPHIR—a country to which Solomon and Hiram, king of Tyre, traded by ships for gold, almug-trees, and precious stones; thought by some to be in India, by others in Arabia, and by others in Africa.

THARSHISH—a country, the situation of which is unknown; to which Solomon traded for "gold, and silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks." The ships of Tharshish were large merchant ships, so framed as to be enabled to take long voyages. Wherever Tharshish was situated, it appears to have been called after one of the sons of Javan, whose descendants were doubtless settled there.

SHEBA—called also Saba, a district in the northern part of Arabia, lying between the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean; Lesson 11, 'Sabeans.' Whether Solomon's royal visitor, the Queen of Sheba, came from this country or from Abyssinia must remain matter of doubt. The Abyssinians ascribe to a visit of their queen to Solomon, the introduction of the Jewish religion into their country; and we read that a chief motive for her journey was that "she had heard of the fame of Solomon, concerning the name of the Lord."

TADMOR.

"AND SOLOMON BUILT TADMOR IN THE WILDERNESS."

The past—the past—the hoary past—
It rises in its youth again!
O'er Syria's desert, void and vast,
I see the Lord of Israel reign!
From the green land of palms around
The roofs of ancient Tadmor rise;
And Syria's breezes waft the sound
Of Zion's holy melodies!
Behold the bearded Hebrew bend
Tow'rd the far land Jehovah gave,
While strains from Israel's harps ascend
First heard by Siloa's distant wave!
See the pale maids of Judah dancing
In many a long and palmy bower,
Their glorious eyes with dark fire glancing,
Beneath their own rich sunset's hour!
It fades—it fades—the dream is o'er,
I see grey Tadmor's roofs no more.

Again—again!—in other years,
On Tadmor's site behold arise
The young Palmyra; bright she rears,
Her marble crown in eastern skies!

71. SOLOMON'S WISDOM. HIS OFFENCES.

1 Kings iv. & xi. 1-25.

God gave Solomon exceeding much wisdom, and understanding, and ·largeness of heart. His wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the ·east country, and all the wisdom ·of Egypt. His fame was in all nations. He spake of all kinds of trees, from the ·cedar-tree that is in Lebanon, even unto the ·hyssop that springeth out of the wall; he spake also of beasts, of fowls, of creeping things, and of fishes. And he spake three-thousand ·proverbs and one thousand-and-five songs. He had twelve officers over all Israel to provide victuals for his household. And Solomon's provision for one day was thirty measures of fine flour, and threescore measures of meal; ten fat oxen, and twenty oxen out of the pastures, and a hundred sheep, besides ·harts, and ·roe-bucks, and ·fallow-deer, and fatted fowls. Judah and Israel were many ·as the sand which is by the sea in multitude, eating and drinking, and making merry; for they all dwelt safely, every man ·under his vine and under his fig-tree, from *Dan* even to *Beersheba* all the days of Solomon. Solomon's dominions were very large, as God had ·covenanted to Abraham; he reigned over all kingdoms, ·from the river unto the land of the Philistines, and ·unto the border of Egypt: they brought presents, and served Solomon all the days of his life; and he had peace on all sides round about.

When Solomon grew older he offended God; he took ·a great many wives from ·strange nations, and his heart was ·not perfect with the Lord, as was the heart of David his father. He served the idols of the ·Zidonians, and the ·Ammonites, and the ·Moabites, and he burned incense and sacrificed to them. Then the Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart was ·turned from the Lord God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice; and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he kept not that which the Lord commanded. Wherefore the Lord said unto Solomon, "Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely ·rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy ·servant. Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it for David thy father's sake: but I will rend it out of the

hand of thy son. Howbeit I will not rend away all the kingdom; but will give one tribe to thy son for David my servant's sake and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen." God also stirred up against Solomon—Hadad, who had fled from Edom into Egypt, in the days of David, and Rezon of Damascus. And Jeroboam, whom Solomon had made a ruler, also lifted up his hand against Solomon.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

largeness, &c.—a generous disposition, and a liberal mind.

east country—alluding to the Chaldeans, who were celebrated for their astronomical knowledge.

of Egypt—this country had long been renowned for its learning, and its knowledge of the arts. Lesson 17, 'Moses;' 30, 'book of the law.'

cedar-tree—Lesson 29, 'Lebanon;' 67, 'cedar-trees.'

hyssop—the precise plant referred to cannot be determined; the idea intended to be conveyed is, that he spoke, or rather *wrote*, of all kinds of plants, from the most majestic to the smallest. Solomon made every plant and animal that came under his observation a subject of study. His writings on natural history were numerous, but they are lost.

proverbs—wise sentences; of these proverbs all that are remaining are preserved in the Books of Proverbs, and of Ecclesiastes.

hart—a clean animal, according to the law; it is a graceful and beautiful species of deer, extremely swift, but soon overcome by hunger and thirst.

roe-buck—the gazelle of Judea; like the hart, this animal is remarkable for its agility, and its symmetrical figure.

fallow-deer—a larger species of deer than either of the above.

as the sand—a hyperbolic expression denoting the countless multitudes of Judah and Israel.

under his own, &c.—a beautiful figurative expression implying the domestic happiness of the people, their peace, and security; the allusion informs us of the habit of planting and training vines and fig-trees near to their habitations, under which they commonly took their repasts; Les. 38, 'fig-tree,' 'vine;' 50, 'wine,' 'figs.' This striking figure is applied by the prophets Micah and Zechariah to the times of millennial peace and happiness; Micah iv. 4; Zechariah iii. 10.

covenanted—Lesson 8.

from the river—the extreme eastern point of Solomon's dominions was Tiphsah, on the Euphrates, where was a celebrated ford, which enhanced the character of the place as a trading station—being the point of intercourse between the nations east and west of the river.

unto—Azzah, which means Gaza, is given as the western extremity of Solomon's dominions; it was on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea as far south as Egypt. Lesson 41, 'Gaza.'

a great many—Solomon foolishly imitated the grandeur of eastern monarchs, who regard extensive harems as necessary appendages to the pomp of royalty. He also sinned against the law in multiplying wives, and in marrying idolaters who retained their idolatrous customs.

strange—they were strangers to the national covenant with Israel, and to the holy religion communicated to Moses by Jehovah. Les. 32, 'come not;' 35, 'took their daughters.'

not perfect—he first tolerated their idolatries, then he joined the worship of idols with the worship of Jehovah.

Zidonians—Lesson 33, 'Ashtaroth.' 79, 'Zidonians.'

Ammonites—they worshipped Moloch by the horrid devotion of human sacrifices. The Jewish Rabbins tell us that this idol was made of brass, seated on a throne; the throne and image being hollow, were made red hot by fires within; the victims were then thrown into the arms of the idol, and almost immediately burned to death. The cries of the sufferers were drowned by drums and timbrels. Deut. xii. 31; Jer. vii. 31. Moloch means 'king.'

Moabites—their chief deity was Chemosh, or Baal-peor; the rites connected with its worship were abominably impure and revolting. Lesson 28, 'advice;' 33, 'Baal.'

turned—Lessons 35, 'took their daughters;' 66, 'as thy father;' 68, 'if thou wilt;' 69, 'laid hold.'

rend—tear it away; the division of the kingdom would not be effected without violence.

servant—Jeroboam; Lesson 73. He was an Ephraimite, and having shewn ability and diligence, he was employed by Solomon to collect certain revenues from the tribes of Ephraim & Manasseh.

one tribe—the Benjamites, who would remain subject to David's house, along with David's own tribe—Judah.

for David's sake—Lesson 57.

Hadad—when David overran Edom, (Lesson 57, 'conquered') Hadad, who was then but a child, was carried into Egypt, where he was received by Pharaoh; when he grew up, he married the queen's sister. After David's death, he returned to Edom, and towards the close of Solomon's reign he became his adversary.

Rezon—at the head of a company of lawless soldiers he made several incursions on the Syrian territory of Solomon, and at length established a kingdom of which Damascus was the capital. He had originally been a commander in Hadadezer's army. Less. 57, 'Hadadezer.'

Jeroboam—'people increasing.' Les. 72.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

DAN TO BEERSHEBA—Dan was a city in the north of Canaan; Lesson 34, 'Laish.' Beersheba was a celebrated place in the south of Canaan. The expression "from Dan to Beersheba" is often used in the Old Testament to designate the extent of Canaan from north to south.

ALL IS VANITY.

'Tis vain, with eager heart, to grasp
At earthly joy, or earthly treasure;
For fate shall still the hand unclasp,
And dash away thy cup of pleasure.

Honour is vain—the voice of fame,
Is changeful as the changeful breezes;
Now fans thy glowing heart to flame,
And now thy stream of comfort freezes.

And wealth is vain—the evening gale,
Oft strips the bough that bloomed at morning,
As quickly may thy riches fail,
And plausive lips be turned to scorning.

Friendship is vain—the human heart,
Like wave and wind, no power can bind it;
Today may say—"We never part!"
Tomorrow—and where shalt thou find it?

And love is vain—for she, so fair,
So full of joy, so free from sorrow,
So fond, so sweet—thy bliss, thy care—
May leave thee for the grave tomorrow.

Yet while, through each deceitful thing,
Time bears thee like a rapid river,
Oh! to the Rock of Ages cling—
It stands for ever and for ever.

W. KNOX.

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72. SOLOMON'S ENEMIES. HIS REPENTANCE.

1 Kings xi. 26-43. Proverbs.

·Ahijah, the prophet, ·declared God's purposes against Solomon to Jeroboam, saying that God would take ·the kingdom out of Solomon's son's hand and give ten tribes to him. Ahijah also declared that ·if Jeroboam did right, and kept God's commandments, God would ·build him a sure house and give Israel to him. God also said he would ·afflict the seed of David, but not for ever. Solomon ·sought to kill Jeroboam, but he fled unto ·Shishak, king of Egypt, and was there till the death of Solomon.

Solomon is supposed to have written the book of ·Ecclesiastes just before his death, after he had ·repented of his sins. He said, "One ·generation passeth away, and another generation cometh; but the earth abideth ·for ever. ·The sun also ariseth and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to the place where he arose. ·The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits. All ·the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again. All things are ·full of labour; man cannot utter it; the eye is ·not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. I ·communed with mine own heart, saying, Lo, I am come to a great ·estate, and

have gotten more wisdom than all they that have been before *me* in Jerusalem; yea, my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge. And I gave my heart to know wisdom and to know ·madness and folly; I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit. I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and behold ·all is vanity and ·vexation of spirit. ·Better is a poor and wise child, than an old and foolish king, who will no more be ·admonished. Because ·sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men ·is fully set in them to do evil. ·Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy ·might; for there is no work nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest. ·Remember now thy Creator in the days of Thy youth, while the ·evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them." Solomon finishes all his instructions by saying, "Let us hear the ·conclusion of the whole matter; ·Fear God and ·keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man; for God shall bring every work into ·judgment with every ·secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." Solomon reigned over all Israel ·forty years, and was buried in the city of David.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

Ahijah—he lived at Shiloh. Less. 76.

declared—Ahijah met Jeroboam, and *seizing* his mantle he rent it *into twelve* pieces, of which he gave him *ten*. He then proceeded to explain this significant action. Symbolical actions are much used in the East; this is the first we read of in any prophet, though they afterwards became frequent. See Job xxix. 9; Prov. vi. 13; xi. 21; Matt. vi. 3.

the kingdom—Lesson 71, 'rend.'

if—build—the promise was conditional, and required the obedience of Jeroboam and his race, in which case God would give him an illustrious line of descendants to the latest period of Israel's history.

afflict,—but not for ever—the descendants of David should reign only over *two* out of the *twelve* tribes; nevertheless, there should be a constant sucession of kings of this royal line, for the kingly power should not depart from the tribe of Judah till the Messiah should come, who should be of the house and lineage of David. Gen. xlix. 10; Luke i. 26; ii. 4.

sought—Ahijah's communication to Jeroboam becoming known, Solomon's jealousy was excited.

Shishak—it appears that Solomon had not been on very friendly terms with Shishak, since he afforded protection to Jeroboam when he fled into Egypt.

Ecclesiastes—'The preacher.'

repented—expressed sorrow for his offences, and proved his sincerity by returning to the worship of the true God.

generation—race of human beings; all the grown up people living on the earth at the same time. There are three generations in every century.

for ever—it still continues the same, notwithstanding the fluctuations and vicissitudes of human life.

The sun—there is more stability and regularity in the sun's rising and setting than in human affairs. Less. 31, 'stood still.'

The wind—we cannot tell "whence it cometh nor whither it goeth," yet, it is governed by certain natural laws and it is less unstable than things that are governed by man. In Palestine the north wind and the south-west wind brought fair weather; the south wind produced heat; and the hot east wind withered vegetation, and was dangerous to mariners.

the rivers—the waters of the sea are carried into the clouds by evaporation, and liberated in showers upon the land, especially upon mountains, from whence streams descend; these uniting, form rivers, which again flow into the sea. A particle of water rises from the sea, fulfils its services in the atmosphere, on the earth, in the rivers, and then returns to the sea.

full of labour—every creature made by God fulfils the design of its creation.

not satisfied—there is no point of human knowledge at which the inquiring mind would be willing to stop; the intelligent investigation of the laws of nature leads from one subject to another, as Solomon had experienced during his researches.

communed with—spoke to himself mentally; reasoned with himself.

estate—condition of life. Solomon had come to the summit of human greatness, and his wisdom was universally acknowledged.

madness and folly—this is a confession of his rashness and his fall; he gave himself up voluntarily to act from passion, forgetting God, and renouncing the dictates of conscience and reason.

all is vanity—every thing changes and perishes.

vexation—the comfort which the world and its pleasures yield is transitory and unsatisfying.

Better—poverty, wisdom, and the teachableness of a child form a happier combination of character than kingly riches, foolishness, and the self-sufficiency of age.

admonished—warned; instructed.

sentence—threatened punishment.

is fully set—they abuse God's forbearance to their own ruin.

Whatsoever—that which is right in itself to be done, and which is also in your power to do—*do it.*

might—with that earnestness of purpose which they should feel who know not how soon they may descend into the grave.

Remember—the impressions made on the young mind are lasting, and are often brought to our thoughts by circumstances which occur in our maturer age; if these impressions are good, they serve to guard and to guide us in our conduct, when we are too much engaged in other pursuits to acquire them.

evil days—days of old age; old age without the consolations of religion.

conclusion—final decision; the great end and object of life.

fear—fear to offend God, because of his fatherly goodness; fear to forsake him because of his power and wrath.

keep—observe to do—from the inward principle of filial, holy fear.

judgment—not necessarily at the 'last day,' but in the day of retribution, which comes to every man in this life.

secret—praiseworthy and unostentatious conduct shall be rewarded, and secret transgression shall meet with becoming exposure. Luke xii. 3.

forty—his reign was of equal duration with his father's (Lesson 65.) but not his life; sin shortened his days. He lost the great privilege of long life which God promised conditionally—if he kept the statutes and commandments of Jehovah. Lesson 66, 'lengthen.'

"REMEMBER THY CREATOR IN THE DAYS OF THY YOUTH."

"THEY THAT SEEK ME EARLY SHALL FIND ME."

O man! while youthful vigour warms
Thy life stream on its bounding road,
While hope delights, and pleasure charms,
Remember thy Creator God;
While sun and moon and stars abroad,
The blessings of their light impart,
And rain showers nourish from the clod,
The fruits for thy rejoicing heart.

Before the evil days draw near,
In which no pleasure shines for thee;
When nerveless hands, decay'd and sear,
Become like helpless infancy;
When faded eyes no longer see
Through age's twilight shadows dim;
And quivering lips, at length, shall be,
Unfit to chant their wonted hymn.

Before thy bent and palsied head,
Bloom like the almond in the grove;
When trembling limbs that wont to tread
The paths of joy, refuse to move;
When each desire—ambition, love—
Is quenched like an extinguished flame;
And even the grasshopper shall prove,
A burden on that feeble frame:

Before the silver cords shall part,
That bind thee to this world below;
When the dried cistern of the heart,
Is broken—never more to flow;
When through the streets the mourners go,
To weep o'er man's sepulchral sod;
And to its state of bliss or woe,
The parted soul returns to God.

KNOX

PERIOD VI.

THE KINGS OF JUDAH AND ISRAEL.

B.C. 975—B.C. 606. 369 years.

73. REVOLT OF TEN TRIBES.

1 Kings xii. 1-20; xiv. 21.

·Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, was forty-and-one years old when he began to reign, and all Israel ·went to Shechem to make him king. Jeroboam returned from Egypt when he heard of Solomon's death. And Jeroboam and all the congregation complained to Rehoboam of their ·heavy burdens under his father, and desired him to make their burdens lighter, and they would serve him. Rehoboam consulted with the old men, ·his father's officers, and they advised him to speak good words to the people, and to lighten their burdens; he next consulted with ·his young men, who advised him to make the burdens of the people heavier. On the third day Jeroboam and all the people came to him again, and the king answered them roughly, for he forsook the counsel of the old men, and followed the counsel of the young men, saying, "My father made your ·yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke; my father chastised you with ·whips, and I will chastise you with ·scorpions." So the king hearkened not unto the people; for the cause was ·from the Lord, that he might perform his saying, which the Lord spake by Ahijah the Shilonite unto Jeroboam the son of Nebat.

On hearing Rehoboam's answer the people answered the king, saying, "What portion have we in David? neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse; ·to your tents, O Israel; now see to thine own house, David." The king sent ·Adoram the treasurer to them, and they ·stoned him that he died; and Rehoboam made speed to get into his chariot and flee to Jerusalem. The tribes of Israel sent for Jeroboam, and made him ·over all *Israel;* Rehoboam reigning over *Judah* only.

Rehoboam assembled the tribes of Judah and Benjamin at Jerusalem, 180,000 men who were warriors, to fight against the the tribes of Israel. But Shemaiah, the man of God, was instructed to go and tell Rehoboam, and the people of Judah and Benjamin, that they should not go to fight against their brethren, the people of Israel, but return every man to his house. They hearkened therefore to the word of the Lord, and departed.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

Rehoboam—'enlarger of the people,'—or, 'he who sets the people at liberty.'

went to Shechem—distant forty miles from Jerusalem; probably because it was more central than Jerusalem.

heavy burdens—to sustain the magnificence of Solomon's rule it was necessary to levy taxes upon the nation. The people expressed their dissatisfaction in loud complaints; and occasion was taken of Rehoboam's accession to effect a disunion of the kingdom. In the midst of their great glory and prosperity as a nation, the people were made to feel the truth of Samuel's prediction, (Less. 43), "and ye shall cry out in that day because of the king which ye shall have chosen you; and the Lord will not hear you in that day."

his father's officers—though Solomon excelled all the living men of his day in wisdom, he did not slight the counsel of men of understanding; those officers were state counsellors.

his young men—rashness and love of domination characterize young and inexperienced persons; Rehoboam consulted those of his own age, with whom he had been brought up—but they were certainly old enough to have given him wiser advice.

yoke—subjection; oppressive rule. A yoke was an instrument of husbandry, it was laid across the necks of two animals, side by side, to whom it was fastened by thongs, the plough-beam being attached to it in the centre.

whips—scourges made of leather or small cords, each having three thongs; thirteen strokes were considered equal to thirty-nine lashes, being one less than the number allowed by law. Deut. xxv. 1-3.

scorpions—whips having knots enclosing points of iron or sharp stones, the strokes of which inflicted severe pain and lacerated the body. The scorpion is a venomous insect, about two inches long, but much larger in tropical countries. Its sting is attended with excruciating pain. Scorpions are commonly found under stones and among old walls. One species resembles an egg, when found with its claws and tail coiled underneath its body; Luke xi. 12.

from the Lord—God overruled the folly of Rehoboam, and the wickedness of his rebellious people, for the punishment of both.

to your tents—the same watch-word, or cry of revolt, which Sheba used. Lesson 62. This was tantamount to a declaration of war.

Adoram—supposed to be the same person who had charge over the taxes under Solomon; 1 Kings v. 14. In the exercise of his authority he might have been oppressive; but whether or not, it was imprudent to send a man whose duties rendered him obnoxious to the people.

stoned—a rebellion commenced by acts of murder, will surely end in confusion and ruin. Less. 51, 'guiltless.' The stoning of Adoram was not according to law; Less. 24, 'stoned.'

over all Israel—the separation of the descendants of Jacob into two distinct kingdoms now took place.

to fight—another example of Rehoboam's imprudence, but God forbade the war between brethren.

Shemaiah—there never was wanting a succession of prophets during the existence of the kingdoms of Judah and Israel.

hearkened—the first instance of wisdom manifested by this foolish king. Solomon came to the throne wise, though a young man; Rehoboam was foolish although he was forty years old.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

ISRAEL—the kingdom of the ten tribes which revolted from Rehoboam, and chose Jeroboam to be their king. Its capital was at first Shechem and afterwards Samaria. The kings of Israel and their people fell into gross idolatry, and disregarded the warnings of the prophets whom God sent to them.

JUDAH—the kingdom of Judah was separated from that of Israel after the death of Solomon; its metropolis was Jerusalem, its first king Rehoboam. It embraced the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, and parts of those of Simeon and Dan. Many of the kings of Judah adhered to the true worship of God, while others fell into gross idolatry. The people of Judah never so totally forsook God as the people of Israel.

INSTRUCTION.

Let children hear the mighty deeds
Which God perform'd of old;
Which in our younger years we saw
And which our fathers told.

He bids us make his glories known,
His works of power and grace;
And we 'll convey his wonders down
Through every rising race.

Our lips shall tell them to our sons,
And they again to theirs,
That generations yet unborn
May teach them to their heirs.

Thus shall they learn in God alone
Their hope securely stands,
That they may ne'er forget his works,
But practise his commands.

WATTS.

74. JEROBOAM'S IDOLATRY.

1 Kings xii. 25; xiii.

Jeroboam built Shechem in Mount Ephraim and dwelt therein; and Jeroboam said in his heart, "Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David: if this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even unto

Rehoboam, king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam, king of Judah." Whereupon the king took counsel and made two calves of gold, and said unto the people, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan. And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan. And he made a house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi; and he offered sacrifice upon the altar which he had made at Bethel. Now as Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense, there came a man of God out of Judah, and he cried against the altar in the word of the Lord, and said, "O altar, altar, thus saith the Lord; Behold a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name; and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall be burned upon thee." And he gave a sign the same day, saying, "This is the sign which the Lord hath spoken; Behold the altar shall be rent, and the ashes that are upon it shall be poured out."

When Jeroboam heard the words of the prophet he stretched forth his hand to lay hold on him, and his hand dried up so that he could not pull it to him again. The altar was also rent, and the ashes poured out. The king asked the man of God to pray that his hand might be restored; and he besought the Lord, and the king's hand became as it was before. Jeroboam asked the man of God to go home with him and refresh himself, but he refused, saying, "If thou wilt give me half thine house, I will not go in with thee, neither will I eat bread, nor drink water in this place: for so was it charged me by the word of the Lord, saying, Eat no bread, nor drink water, nor turn again by the same way that thou camest." So he went another way, and returned not by the way that he came to Bethel.

There dwelt an old prophet at Bethel, and his sons went and told him all that the man of God had done that day in Bethel. The old prophet of Bethel rode after him, and told him he also was a prophet, and that an angel of the Lord had

told him to bring him back, that he might eat bread and drink water. The man of God did as the old prophet desired him. And as they sat at table, the word of the Lord came to the man of God from Judah, saying, "Forasmuch as thou hast disobeyed the mouth of the Lord, and hast not kept the commandment which the Lord thy God commanded thee, but camest back, and hast eaten bread and drunk water in the place, of the which the Lord did say to thee, Eat no bread, and drink no water; thy carcase shall not come unto the sepulchre of thy fathers." As he was afterwards returning home from Bethel, a lion slew him by the way. And the old prophet of Bethel had his carcase laid in his own grave, and charged his sons to lay his bones by the side of the bones of the man of God, saying that his word against Bethel should surely come to pass. After this Jeroboam returned not from his evil way.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

built Shechem—he enlarged and beautified the old town (Judges ix. 35), so as to render it a city becoming the residence of a king. He also built or fortified Penuel, so that he had a strong city on the west, and another on the east of his kingdom. On the hills between which Shechem lay—Gerizim and Ebal—the blessings for obedience and the cursings for disobedience were pronounced. Les. 31. Here was both encouragement and warning for Jeroboam and his people.

return—Jeroboam first distrusted God's promises (Les. 72), and then adopted a line of conduct which resulted in the defection of the entire nation from the worship and service of Jehovah.

their lord—an admission that the sovereign rule did not belong to him.

took counsel—his accomplices concurred in the suggestion.

two calves—by some supposed to be in imitation of the idolatrous worship of the Egyptians, among whom he had lived; by others that the idols were in imitation of the cherubim on the mercy seat. 'Les. 23, 'calf;' 'cherubim.'

like—Aaron used the same expression when he made the calf in the wilderness; Exod. xxxii. 4. Les. 23.

worship—Les. 23, 'worshipped.'

high places—mountains or elevated situations were held sacred by the people of the east, because of their comparative nearness to the visible heavens; hence they were generally appropriated to religious worship—sometimes that of the true God, but generally to the worship of idols; Gen. xii. 7,8; xxii. 2; 2 Kings xvii. 9-11. Before the erection of the temple the people of Israel sacrificed to the Lord upon high places; 1 Sam. ix. 12,19,25; 1 Chron. xvi. 39; but it was an abomination to do so afterwards; 2 Chron. vi. 5.

priests—the Levites maintained their fidelity to God, refusing to countenance the impiety of Jeroboam; he punished them by depriving them of their possessions; 2 Chron. xi. 14. To supply their place he selected men from all parts of the country, and out of every tribe and family, to perform the duties of the priesthood upon the high places. Until the introduction of the worship of Baal, Ashtaroth, and other false deities, the office of these priests consisted only in the offering of sacrifice.

stood by—it appears that he combined the office of chief sacrificer, if not of high-priest, with that of king. The formation of the ten tribes into a separate kingdom was characterized not only by murder, but also by idolatry; and from this period to the time of the captivity—about 400 years, the sin of Jeroboam—of setting up the golden calves in order to withdraw the people from the worship of God in Jerusalem, was followed by all the kings of Israel.

Josiah—'Jehovah's fire;' he was born 330 years after this prediction.

eat no bread—his compliance with this eastern custom would have signified his friendship towards him, and thus compromised the solemn message he had just delivered. Les. 31, 'covenant.'

old prophet—there is no intimation given as to who he was, but it is evident he was not wholly on the Lord's side, for his sons were among the worshippers at Bethel, and he himself was guilty of uttering a gross falsehood in the name of the Lord.

did as—the prophet of Judah was taken in a snare; the old prophet's motive does not appear, but probably a feeling of kindness suggested the plan for bringing back the prophet of Judah.

shall not come—Lesson 54, 'buried.'

slew him—the awful punishment inflicted on the disobedient prophet, and the fact that the lion did not mangle the dead body, nor kill the prophet's ass, would soon counteract any doubt that might arise as to the divine message which he had delivered.

should surely—Lesson 113, 'fulfilled.'

THE DISOBEDIENT PROPHET.

"IT IS THE MAN OF GOD WHO WAS DISOBEDIENT UNTO THE WORD OF THE LORD."

Prophet of God, arise and take
With thee the words of wrath divine,
The scourge of Heaven, to shake
O'er yon apostate shrine.

Go, with thy voice the altar rend,
Scatter the ashes, be the arm,
That idols would befriend,
Shrunk at thy withering charm.

Then turn thee, for thy time is short,
But trace not o'er the former way,
Lest idol pleasures court
Thy heedless soul astray.

Thou know'st how hard to hurry by,
Where on the lonely woodland road
Beneath the moonlight sky
The festal warblings flow'd;

Where maidens to the Queen of Heaven
Wove the gay dance round oak or palm,
Or breath'd their vows at even
In hymns as soft as balm.

Trust not the dangerous path again—
O froward step and lingering will!
O lov'd and warn'd in vain!
And wilt thou perish still?

Thy message given, thine home in sight,
To the forbidden feast return?
Yield to the false delight
Thy better soul could spurn?

Alas, my brother! round thy tomb
In sorrow kneeling, and in fear,
We read the Pastor's doom
Who speaks and will not hear.

KEBLE.

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75. REHOBOAM'S SIN. SHISHAK'S INVASION.

1 Kings xiv. 21-3 & 2 Chronicles xi. 5-xii.

Rehoboam dwelt in Jerusalem, and he built cities for defence in Judah, and fortified the strong places and stored them with victuals, and put captains in them, and in every several city he put shields and spears, and made them exceeding strong, having Judah and Benjamin on his side. The priests and Levites out of Israel resorted to him, for Jeroboam had cast them off from executing the priest's office: and out of all the tribes of Israel such came as set their hearts to seek the Lord God of Israel. All these strengthened the kingdom of Judah, and for three years Rehoboam walked after the ways of David and Solomon. After this Rehoboam forsook the law of the Lord, and the people of Judah provoked God, and committed greater sins than their fathers had done. For they built them high places, and images, and groves, on every high hill, and under every green tree; and they did according to all the abomination of the nations which the Lord cast out before the children of Israel.

God permitted Shishak to invade Judah, for the sins of Rehoboam. Shemaiah announced to Rehoboam and the princes that, because they had forsaken God, he had delivered them into the hands of Shishak. Whereupon the princes of Israel and the king humbled themselves; and they said, "The

Lord is righteous." And when the Lord saw that they humbled themselves, the word of the Lord came to Shemaiah, saying, "They have humbled themselves; therefore I will not destroy them, but I will grant them some deliverance; and my wrath shall not be poured out upon Jerusalem by the hand of Shishak. Nevertheless they shall be his servants; that they may know my service, and the service of the kingdoms of the countries." So Shishak, king of Egypt, came up against Jerusalem, and took away the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king's house: he took all; he carried away also the shields of gold which Solomon had made. Instead of which king Rehoboam made shields of brass, and committed them to the hands of the chief of the guard, that kept the entrance of the king's house. And when he humbled himself the wrath of the Lord turned from him, that he would not destroy him altogether, and also in Judah things went well. Rehoboam reigned seventeen years, and was succeeded by his son Abijah.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

shields, &c.—it appears that Rehoboam had a depot for arms in every fortified city of Judah and Benjamin.

resorted—came; gathered; those whom Jeroboam had deprived of their lands, to make room for his new priesthood.

cast them off—Lesson 74, 'priests.'

strengthened—not only by their numbers, but chiefly by their religious zeal and example.

David and Solomon—this honourable mention of Solomon's name in connexion with David's, leads to the conclusion that he had repented of his sins of idolatry, as David did of his transgressions.

forsook—as Rehoboam's mother was an Ammonitess (Naamah 'beautiful,') he had probably been brought up with a feeling of indifference to the religion of the Hebrews.

high places—altars on eminences; Lesson 74, 'high places.'

images—statues; figures to represent their ideas of divinities, which they set up in groves, high places, private residences, and places of religious assembly.

groves—as places of worship, groves were used from very early times, their sombre and secluded character favouring those feelings of meditative awe and contrition which mark the devotions of every true worshipper; Genesis xxi. 33. In process of time they became the haunts of heathen priests, bards, and prophets, whose mystic and corrupt teachings were rendered more impressive in the gloom of such retreats. Thus places, unexceptionable in themselves, and calculated to induce thoughtful and devout emotions, became so identified with the foolish superstitions and the gross impurities of heathenism, that their use was forbidden to the worshippers of the True God; Deut. xvi. 21.

high hill—Lesson 74, 'high places.'

green tree—the idea that departed spirits, as well as the spirits of the gods, delighted to hover amid the boughs of fine-spreading trees was encouraged by

the practice of burying the dead at their roots; hence the reverence with which such trees were regarded.

cast out—Lesson 30, 'give.'

invade—Shishak marched into Judea to support his recent guest against Rehoboam; this record of Shishak's invasion of Judah, is corroborated by an inscription on one of the decorated colonnades of the temple of Karnac in Egypt; another inscription contains the names of the cities taken from Rehoboam by the king of Egypt. These hieroglyphic memorials are 2,700 years old. The empire of Shishak extended beyond the bounds of Egypt into southern and western Africa; the natives of which countries swelled the ranks of his army.

my service, and, &c.—that they may feel the difference between being under my protection, and being abandoned by Me, and condemned to serve tyrants.

took away—Josephus says that Rehoboam, without offering any resistance to Shishak's army, delivered up all to his power.

INSPIRATION OF PROPHECY.

'Twas by an order from the Lord
The ancient prophets spoke his word;
His Spirit did their tongues inspire,
And warm'd their hearts with heavenly fire.

The works and wonders which they wrought
Confirm'd the messages they brought;
The prophet's pen succeeds his breath,
To save the holy words from death.

Great God! mine eyes with pleasure look
On the dear volume of thy book;
There my Redeemer's face I see,
And read his name who died for me.

Let the false raptures of the mind
Be lost and vanish in the wind,
Here I can fix my hope secure;
This is thy word, and must endure.

WATTS.

76. ABIJAH'S SUCCESS. ASA DESTROYS IDOLATRY.

1 Kings xiv. 1-20; xv. 1-15; 25-28; 2 Chronicles xiii.

Now Abijah with four-hundred-thousand warriors went to fight with Jeroboam and his army of eight-hundred-thousand men. And Abijah stood upon Mount Ephraim, and spake to Jeroboam about the multitude of Israel, and about their idolatries, and said, "But as for us, the Lord is our God, and we have not forsaken him; for we have kept the charge of the Lord

our God; but ye have forsaken him. Behold God himself is with us for our captain. O children of Israel, fight ye not against the Lord God of your fathers; for ye shall not prosper." During the battle which followed, God smote Jeroboam and the army of Israel, so that they fled, and the children of Judah prevailed against them, because they relied upon the Lord God of their fathers. Nevertheless Abijah walked in all the sins of his father. He reigned three years, and was succeeded by his son Asa. In his days the land was quiet ten years, and he did that which was good and right. He took away the altars, and removed all the idols that his fathers had made; he also removed the queen from the government, and burnt her idol by the brook Kidron. Asa's heart was perfect with the Lord all his days; though all the idolatrous places were not destroyed.

Abijah, the son of Jeroboam, fell sick. Jeroboam sent his wife, in disguise, to Ahijah, the prophet at Shiloh, to inquire if he should recover. She went. Ahijah could not see, for he was very old. The Lord told Ahijah that the wife of Jeroboam was about to come to him, as another woman. When he heard the sound of her feet he said, "Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam; why feignest thou thyself to be another? for I am sent to thee with heavy tidings. Go, tell Jeroboam, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Forasmuch as I exalted thee from among the people, and made thee prince over my people Israel, and rent the kingdom away from the house of David, and gave it thee: and yet thou hast not been as my servant David, who kept my commandments, and who followed me with all his heart, to do that only which was right; but hast done evil above all that were before thee: for thou hast made thee other gods, and molten images, to provoke me to anger, therefore, behold, I will bring evil upon the house of Jeroboam, and will cut off his posterity, and will take away the remnant of the house of Jeroboam. Him that dieth of Jeroboam in the city shall the dogs eat; and him that dieth in the fields shall the fowls of the air eat: for the Lord hath spoken it. Arise thou therefore, get thee to thine own house and when thy feet enter into the city, the child shall die

And all Israel shall mourn for him, and bury him: for he only of Jeroboam shall come to the grave, because in him there is found some good thing toward the Lord God of Israel in the house of Jeroboam. Moreover the Lord shall raise him up a king over Israel, who shall cut off the house of Jeroboam. For the Lord shall smite Israel, and he shall root up Israel out of this good land, and shall scatter them beyond the river, because they have made their groves, provoking the Lord to anger. And he shall give Israel up because of the sins of Jeroboam, who did sin, and who made Israel to sin." When she returned to *Tirzah* Abijah died, and all Israel mourned for him. Jeroboam reigned twenty-two years.

Nadab, the son of Jeroboam, succeeded his father and reigned over Israel two years. He did evil in the sight of the Lord, and followed the sins of his father. Baasha, the son of Ahijah, of the tribe of Issachar, conspired against Nadab, and slew him at *Gibbethon*. Baasha then became king. He smote all the house of Jeroboam, according to the saying of the Lord, which he spake by Ahijah.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

Abijah—'my father;' his mother's name was Maachah, or Michaiah, the daughter of Uriel, and granddaughter of Absalom; (called Abishalom in 1 Kings xv. 2); compare 2 Chron. xi. 21; xiii. 2; and 1 Kings xv. 2.

spake—Abijah accused the Israelites of rebellion against David's posterity, to whom, he said, God had given the kingdom by a covenant of salt—an incorruptible and everlasting covenant, not to be revoked; he also charged them with the sin of idolatry, with casting out the priests of the Lord, and appointing men to the priesthood who belonged not to the tribe of Levi.

the charge—the offering of sacrifices in the place which God had chosen—Jerusalem; the preservation to all the tribe of Levi of their priestly distinction, revenues, and privileges, and the maintenance of the family of David as the rightful inheritors of the throne.

against the Lord—the war between Israel and Judah was both civil and religious; the questions at issue were—the lawfulness of erecting a new kingdom, and the authority for establishing a mode of worship which God had expressly prohibited.

God smote—by means of an ambushment Jeroboam had the army of Judah apparently in his power—his army taking them both in front and rear; but the Lord sent confusion among the men of Israel, so that they fled when the men of Judah shouted, and the priests of the Lord sounded with the trumpets. Thus the promise of Moses was fulfilled. Num. x. 9; Lesson 30, 'trumpets.'

Asa—'physician;' he was brought up, it appears, by his grandmother, Maachah, who on that account is called his mother; 2 Chron. xiv. 2. She encouraged idolatry, but Asa exercised his authority as God's vicegerent to prevent her baneful influence.

queen—the queen-mother; in this case Asa's grandmother; the mother of the

king had great authority in the affairs of the kingdom; she was always one of the royal counsellors.

burnt—Lesson 56, 'burned.'

perfect—he was a sincere worshipper of God; always loyal—though there were imperfections in his conduct, as in that of all men.

though all—the tendency to idolatrous practices was so deeply-rooted in the people that the king's example and authority could not wholly eradicate it.

disguise—she assumed the name, appearance, and manners of another.

Ahijah—Lesson 72, 'Ahijah.'

I am sent—the idea that prophets are messengers sent to those to whom they spoke is sustained by Ahijah's address, though Jeroboam's wife came to him.

above all—king Saul was not so bad as Jeroboam, nor Solomon; for though they were drawn into evil, yet they did not study to make the people idolaters.

other gods—Jeroboam superadded to the idolatry which had been formerly practised in Israel, by the introduction of the two golden calves.

dogs—dogs are very numerous in eastern cities; they are not kept in houses, but wander about prowling for whatever food they can get, which renders them savage, dangerous, and disgusting. They prey on all sorts of carrion and offal, and in time of war follow the camp to lick the blood, and feed on the corpses of the slain. Lesson 86, 'licked;' 95, 'had eaten.' Dogs were regarded with contempt, (Lesson 94, 'dog,') nevertheless the Egyptians included them among their objects of worship.

fowls—Lesson 63, 'birds.'

come to—be buried honourably.

some good thing—the Jewish writers say that he disapproved of the golden calves, and tried to dissuade his father from establishing guards on the frontier of his kingdom to prevent the people from going up to Jerusalem to worship.

root up—Lesson 108, 'taken captive.'

Nadab—'a gift;' he was assassinated while prosecuting the siege of Gibbethon.

smote all—acting according to the savage policy of the times (Lesson 38, 'slew,') he destroyed all the family of the former king, lest his own reign should be rendered insecure by their claims upon the throne; he thus unwittingly fulfilled the denunciation of Ahijah.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

TIRZAH—a city of Ephraim, and a royal residence of the kings of Israel from Jeroboam to Omri, who built Samaria. Its situation is spoken of as pleasant.

GIBBETHON—a city in the district of Dan which was re-possessed by the Philistines.

GOD THE HEARER OF PRAYER.

"THE LORD IS OUR GOD, AND WE HAVE NOT FORSAKEN HIM."

When morn awakes our hearts
To form the early prayer;
When toil-worn day departs,
And gives a pause to care
When those our soul loves best
Kneel with us in thy fear,
To ask thy peace and rest—
Our God, our Father, hear!

When worldly snares without,
And evil thoughts within,
Of grace would raise a doubt,
Or lure us back to sin;
When human strength proves frail,
And will but half sincere,
When faith begins to fail—
Our God, our Father, hear!

When in our cup of mirth
The drop of trembling falls,
And the frail props of earth
Are crumbling round our walls
When back we gaze with grief,
And forward glance with fear
When faileth man's relief
Our God, our Father, hear!

And when death's awful hand
Unbars the gates of time,
Eternity's dim land
Disclosing, dread, sublime;
When flesh and spirit quake
Before Thee to appear—
O then, for Jesus' sake,
Our God, our Father, hear!

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77. ASA'S GOVERNMENT.

1 Kings xv. 12-22; 2 Chron. xiv-xvi. 10.

Asa commanded all Judah to seek the God of their fathers, and to obey the law, and the commandments. He built fenced cities, and strengthened them during the years of rest. Zerah, the Ethiopian, came against him with a million of men and three hundred chariots at *Mareshah*, in the valley of Zephathah. And Asa cried unto the Lord his God, and said, "Lord, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power; help us, O Lord our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude. O Lord, thou art our God; let not man prevail against thee." So the Lord smote the Ethiopians before Asa, and before Judah: and the Ethiopians fled. Asa then smote all the cities about Gerar, and returned to Jerusalem with

much spoil. The prophet ·Azariah, the son of ·Oded, came to counsel Asa. He said, "The Lord is with you ·while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you." Asa then took courage, and put away the abominable idols out of all Judah and Benjamin. And ·many came to him out of Ephraim, and Manasseh, and Simeon, when they saw that God was with him. And they offered unto the Lord seven-hundred oxen, and seven-thousand sheep; and they entered into a covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers, and whosoever would not do so should be ·put to death.

There were many wars between Asa and Baasha, and Asa ·sent the silver and gold that were left in the treasury of the temple to Benhadad, the king of Syria, at Damascus, to hire him to come and ·assist him against Baasha. At that time Hanani, the seer, came and reproved Asa, because he had relied on the king of Syria, and not on God; he said, "Were not the Ethiopians and the *Lubims* a huge host, with very many ·chariots and horsemen? yet, because thou didst rely on the Lord, ·he delivered them into thine hand. For ·the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards him. Herein thou hast done foolishly: therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars." Asa was wroth with Hanani, and put him in prison; he also oppressed some of the people the same time.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

Zerah—'rising;' the Ethiopians or Cushites, of whom this Zerah was the leader, were, according to some, Arabians; while others maintain that they were Africans. It has also been conjectured that most of this immense army had come up with Shishak, (Less. 75, 'invade'), for it is said the people who came with him "were without number," and that, instead of going back to their own country when Shishak returned home, they remained as nomades, or wandering shepherds, in that extensive territory which lay between Egypt and Palestine. Here their numbers rapidly increased by the addition of other tribes of the same families, which suggested the design of an invasion of Judea, with the hope that their success would not be less certain than that of Shishak.

against thee—every nation fought, professedly, under the auspices of some presiding deity, hence the honour of the gods was at stake as well as the lives of the warriors, and the independence of their respective nations; the Jews (Judah) fought in the name of Jehovah, the success of their enemies, therefore, would be represented as the victory of an idol over the True God. Lesson 31, 'name.'

Azariah—"helped of Jehovah."

Obed—"serving."

abide—Lesson 25, "remember."

many—Lesson 21, "left."

put to death—idolatry was a capital offence in Israel because it was positive rebellion against God their King, against his government and laws, and against the solemn covenants.

rest—in cases of danger it was always held lawful to employ sacred treasures in defence of the country, but in this case there was no such necessity. God had already assisted Asa, and promised him further protection.

assist—Baasha being determined to cut off all intercourse between Israel and Judah, began to build fortifications at Ramah, a border town situated on a hill about six miles north of Jerusalem, and overlooking the high road leading from his dominions to the "city of God;" but hearing of the invasion of the northern parts of his kingdom by Benhadad, he abandoned his project at Ramah, and went to fight with the Syrians. As soon as he left, Asa's people took away the stones and timber brought by Baasha, and with them built Geba and Mizpah.

chariots—these wild, unsettled, and barbarous nomades delighted in war, hence they had every known convenience for success. It is said that the Greeks borrowed from them the custom of harnessing four horses to their chariots: Less. 20, "chariots."

he answered—Benhadad was on terms of political friendship with Baasha, Asa the wrong, therefore in offering a bribe to cause him to violate his pledges; but he did worse in placing reliance on human aid, and not on the arm of God. Had he trusted in God, he would have made him victorious over Baasha as he had done over the Ethiopians and Lubims.

the eyes of—this beautiful expression shows us that God continues his favours only to those who serve him with an upright and sincere heart; it is of no consequence to begin well if we do not persevere.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

Mareshah—a city of Judah in the valley of Zephathah; of this city the prophet Micah was probably a native.

Lubims—inhabitants of Lybia, a country of Africa, west of Egypt, and extending to the gulf of Syrtis. They consisted of different nomade tribes wandering in wild independence over their deserts. Swarms of them went up with Zerah's army against Judah.

SEEKING GOD.

"IF YE SEEK HIM HE WILL BE FOUND OF YOU."

O Source of Good! around me spread
Ten thousand thousand blessings lie;
By night thy mercy guards my head,
By day I feel Thee ever nigh.

Yet if to taste thy gifts were all
Thy bounteous hand bestow'd on me,
No leave upon thy name to call,
Nor in my prayer approach to Thee;

How would my spirit sorrowing,
'Mid all those gifts have sigh'd to feel—
It knew not the refreshing spring
That ceaseless flows to soothe and heal!

No chain to bind the wondering soul,
No link cementing earth and heaven,
No Father's pitying kind control,
No child, repenting and forgiven!

But God reveals his mercy-seat,
And beams of light the gloom dispel:
He gives,—from Him the gift is sweet;
He takes away,—and all is well.

The voice of prayer in heaven is heard!
Let strength depart and comforts flee,
If man may act upon that word—
"Seek and He shall be found of thee."

E. TAYLOR.

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78. OF BAASHA, ELAH, ZIMRI, OMRI, AND AHAB.

1 Kings xvi.

Then the word of the Lord came to Jehu, the son of Hanani, against Baasha, saying, "Forasmuch as I exalted thee out of the dust, and made thee prince over my people Israel, and thou hast walked in the way of Jeroboam, and hast made my people Israel to sin, to provoke me to anger with their sins; behold, I will take away the posterity of Baasha, and the posterity of his house: and will make thy house like the house of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat." Baasha died after he had reigned over Israel twenty-four years. His son Elah then became king; he reigned only two years, and was slain by Zimri, the captain of half his chariots, as he was drinking himself drunk in the house of his steward. Zimri then slew all the house of Baasha, and the word of the Lord, which Jehu the prophet had spoken against the posterity of Baasha, was fulfilled. The Israelites were then at war with the Philistines at Gibbethon.

When Elah was slain, the Israelites at Gibbethon made Omri, the captain of the host, king over Israel. Omri went and besieged Tirzah. When Zimri saw that the city was taken, he set fire to the palace, and destroyed himself. Half the people then made Tibni king, but Omri prevailed against him, and Tibni was slain. Omri bought the hill of Samaria,

of Shemer, and built on it a city which he called *Samaria*, This city was the capital of the kingdom of Israel so long as the kingdom existed. Omri reigned over Israel twelve years, and followed the sins of Jeroboam.

Ahab was the son and successor of Omri. He took to wife Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the *Zidonians*. He not only followed the sin of Jeroboam but he also worshipped Baal. He did evil in the sight of the Lord above all who reigned before him. He reared up an altar for Baal in a temple of Baal, which he built in Samaria. In his days Jericho was rebuilt by Hiel, the Bethelite, whose first-born son died when he laid the foundations, and whose youngest son died when he set up the gates of the city. Thus was the curse of Joshua fulfilled, who had said, "Cursed be the man before the Lord that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho; he shall lay the foundation thereof in his first-born, and in his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it."

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

Jehu—'he that is.'

I exalted—the wicked designs of men can only succeed by the permission of God, either to execute his judgments, or for other wise purposes; Baasha's exaltation was *apparently* obtained by cruelty and treachery.

out of the dust—from one of the humblest and most insignificant families in the kingdom.

in the way—followed the very same line of policy, by trying to consolidate his kingdom under a form of religion contrary to that which had been ordained by Jehovah.

hast made—how awful was his responsibility and guiltiness.

like the house—this threat was remarkably executed; Nadab, the son of Jeroboam, had reigned but two years when he was slain by the conspirator, Baasha; and Elah, the son of Baasha, was slain by Zimri, another conspirator, after he had reigned but two years.

Zimri—a sanguinary policy marked his accession to the throne, for he slew all the kinsfolk of Elah as well as those more immediately related to him, so that there might not be one 'avenger' left; but the speedy and signal punishment with which he was visited showed that there is a God who judgeth in the earth. The ruin that overwhelmed him became proverbial, and we find the wicked Jezebel referring to it in these words, "Had Zimri peace who slew his master?" Lesson 95.

Omri—'sheaf;' having besieged one rival, he next had to contend with another, whom many of the people preferred to himself.

bought—he gave Shemer two talents (£684) for the hill; the destruction of the royal palace at Tirzah was the occasion of this purchase.

so long—Lesson 108, 'took Samaria.'

the sins of—the infamy of Jeroboam was attached to his name and memory, while his idolatry continued to prevail.

Ahab—'father's brother;' he was the seventh king who sat upon the throne of Israel during the reign of Asa over Judah, who had seen six kings of Israel die in ignominy or vice, or destroyed with

their families by usurpers, in recompense for their ingratitude to God, and disobedience of his laws.

Jezebel—'not dwelt in;' being educated in the idolatries of her native country, she soon introduced the worship of Baal and Ashtaroth into Israel; she maintained 400 priests at her own expense, and her husband Ahab sustained 450 more. The wickedness of Jezebel became proverbial; Less. 82 & 85.

above all—Jeroboam's crimes were little in comparison with those of this monster of iniquity, who openly set up the worst kinds of idolatry.

Hiel—'God giveth;' five hundred years before his day, Joshua pronounced a curse upon the man who should rebuild Jericho. Hiel being an inhabitant of Bethel, lived in the very seat of idolatry; the law being but little read, he either did not know the judgments denounced against the rebuilder of Jericho, or he impiously disregarded them. He soon experienced the truth of the Divine threatenings; his first born died when he commenced the building, and his other children died during the progress of the work—the youngest expiring as soon as the city was finished.

Cursed—the curse implied that the city was devoted to God as the first fruits of Israel's conquests in Canaan; Less. 30, 'curse;' 31, 'took.'

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

SAMARIA—the capital of the kingdom of Israel, about thirty-four miles north of Jerusalem, was built by Omri, who bought the hill Samaria of Shemer, and called the city after his name. The hill is large and insulated, surrounded by a deep, broad valley, environed by four hills, one on each side; the site possessed many natural advantages in a military point of view, and was in other respects advantageous.

ZIDONIANS—a commercial people of Zidon or Sidon who were worshippers of Baal; their god was Melkart, a representative of the Sun, to whose guidance they attributed their success; he was the god of the Phœnicians universally, and his worship, by means of the maritime enterprise of that active people, was introduced into many countries. The fire was kept constantly burning upon his altar, and his worship was accompanied with many disgusting rites. Melkart means the king of the earth—the heat and animating influence of the sun being diffused over all creation.

FOLLY OF SELF DEPENDENCE.

The swift not always in the race
Shall seize the crowning prize;
Not always wealth and honour grace
The labour of the wise.

Fond mortals but themselves beguile
When on themselves they rest;
Blind is their wisdom, weak their toil,
By thee, O Lord, unbless'd.

Evil and good before Thee stand,
Thy missions to perform;
The blessing comes at thy command,
At thy command the storm.

O Lord, in all our ways we'll own
Thy providential power,
Intrusting to thy care alone
The lot of every hour.

79. ASA'S DEATH. JEHOSHAPHAT'S PROSPERITY.

2 Chron. xvi. 11-xviii. 1; 1 Kings xxii. 41-44

After Asa had reigned thirty-eight years he began to be troubled with a disease in his feet, yet he sought not to the Lord, but to the ·physicians. He died in the forty-first year of his reign, and was buried in his own sepulchre in the city of David. His son ·Jehoshaphat succeeded him, and he walked in the ways of his father, and did that which was right, ·though the people still offered incense on the high places. Jehoshaphat ·made peace with the king of Israel. There was then no king in Edom.

The Lord was with Jehoshaphat because he walked in the ·first ways of David, and sought not to Baalim; but sought to the Lord God of his father, and walked in his commandments, and ·not after the doings of Israel. Therefore the Lord stablished the kingdom in his hand; and all Judah ·brought to Jehoshaphat presents; and he had riches and honour in abundance. And his heart was ·lifted up in the ways of the Lord: moreover he took away the high places and groves out of Judah. Also in the third year of his reign he sent to his ·princes, to teach in the cities of Judah. And with them he sent Levites, and priests. And they taught in Judah, and ·had the book of the law of the Lord with them, and went about throughout all the cities of Judah, and taught the people. And the ·fear of the Lord fell upon all the kingdoms of the lands that were round about Judah, so that they made no war against Jehoshaphat. Also some of the Philistines brought Jehoshaphat presents, and tribute of silver; and the Arabians brought him flocks, seven-thousand-and-seven-hundred rams, and seven-thousand-and-seven-hundred he-goats. And Jehoshaphat waxed great exceedingly; and he built in Judah ·castles, and cities of store. And he had much ·business in the cities of Judah: and the ·men of war, mighty men of valour, were in Jerusalem. But Jehoshaphat joined ·affinity with Ahab, by allowing his son, Jehoram, to marry ·Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel. Much evil afterwards resulted from this marriage.

physicians—this is the first mention of physicians as a distinct class among the Israelites; the simple and healthy mode of life common to all classes, rendered them comparatively free from bodily ailments; the disease to which the Israelites were most liable—the leprosy, was cured by the priest only, according to the directions given by Moses; as a consequence the estimation of the priests' healing power would be enhanced, and lead to their being consulted in other distempers. There was no evil in Asa consulting physicians respecting his disease, his sin was in trusting to their skill rather than to the goodness of God.

Jehoshaphat—'Jehovah's judgment.'

though—Lesson 75, 'high places.'

made peace—he did not compromise the true religion which he was bound to uphold, nor his own independence as a sovereign, but he acted from kind feelings of brotherhood towards the people of Israel, as well as from the conviction that national prosperity would be retarded by harassing wars.

first ways—serving the Lord in simplicity and godly sincerity.

not after—his covenant with Israel did not diminish his zeal for the true worship of Jehovah.

brought—***presents***—his people loved him; "the more there is of true religion among a people, the more will there be of conscientious loyalty."

lifted up—he was not elated with human pride because he was prosperous, but stimulated to more active and cheerful obedience.

princes—there was no mysterious or dubious language in the precepts and teachings of Moses; they were written for the personal study and guidance of every individual in the nation. The union of priests and princes in this religious tour had a most happy effect not only on the people, but on the minds of the princes, creating in them a practical interest in the religious prosperity of the people.

had the book—it appears that copies of the law were not then numerous, which accounts for the many lapses of the nation into idolatry.

fear—true religion, exemplified in a life of practical obedience to the Lord's precepts, and a zeal for the glory of God produces a feeling of awe and reverence even in the minds of the irreligious, while the profession without the practice of religion causes it and its false professors to be contemned.

castles—he took prudent and lawful measures for the defence of his kingdom, in the event of troubles arising from without.

business—he encouraged trade, and promptly engaged in whatever would tend to increase the wealth and prosperity of his people.

men of war—according to the numbers stated he had a much larger army than David; 2 Chron. xvii. 14-19.

affinity—became connected, by the marriage of his son with Ahab's daughter.

Athaliah—'remembered of Jehovah.'

HAVE MERCY, LORD!

Lord! have mercy when we strive
To save through Thee, our souls alive!
When the pamper'd flesh is strong,
When the strife is fierce and long;
When our wakening thoughts begin
First to loathe their cherish'd sin,
And our weary spirits fail,
And our aching brows are pale,
Oh then have mercy! Lord!

Lord! have mercy when we lie
On the restless bed and sigh,
Sigh for death, yet fear it still,
From the thought of former ill;
When all other hope is gone;
When our course is almost done;
When the dim advancing gloom
Tells us that our hour is come,
Oh then have mercy! Lord!

Lord! have mercy when we know
First how vain this world below:
When the earliest gleam is given
Of Thy bright but distant Heaven!
When our darker thoughts oppress,
Doubts perplex and fears distress,
And our sadden'd spirits dwell
On the open gates of Hell;
Oh then have mercy! Lord!

MILLMAN.

80. ELIJAH'S MISSION TO AHAB.

1 Kings xvii.-xviii. 18.

Now ·Elijah, the ·Tishbite, who was an inhabitant of Gilead, came unto Ahab, and said, "As the Lord God of Israel liveth, ·before whom I stand, there shall not be ·dew nor rain these years, but according to my word." And the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, "Get thee hence, and hide thyself by the brook *Cherith*, that is ·before Jordan. Thou shalt drink of the brook, and I have commanded the ·ravens to feed thee there." So he went, and did according unto the word of the Lord: and the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook. And ·after a while, the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land.

According to the word of the Lord, Elijah went thence to *Zarephath*, at which place God had commanded a ·widow woman to sustain him. Elijah found her gathering sticks at the gate of the city. He asked her to fetch a little water, and to bring a morsel of bread in her hand. She said she had no bread, but only a handful of meal in a barrel, and a little ·oil in a cruse, which she was about to dress for herself and her

son that they might eat it and die. Elijah said unto her, "Fear not; make me a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and thy son. For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth." The word of the Lord was fulfilled. After these things her son fell sick and died. The widow thought Elijah had been sent to cause his death; but Elijah stretched himself upon the child and prayed to God to restore him to life, and the soul of the child came into him again. Elijah delivered him to his mother: whereupon the widow said, "Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth."

After many days Elijah was commanded to shew himself to Ahab, and God promised to send rain upon the earth. There was a sore famine in Samaria, and Obadiah, the governor of Ahab's house, and Ahab, went through the land in separate directions to all the fountains and brooks, to find grass to save the horses and mules. Now Obadiah feared the Lord greatly; for it was so, when Jezebel cut off the prophets of the Lord, that Obadiah took an hundred prophets, and hid them by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water. Obadiah met Elijah and knew him. Elijah told him to go to Ahab, and say, "Behold, Elijah is here." Obadiah feared to go and tell Ahab, lest the Spirit of the Lord should take Elijah away, and Ahab should slay him. He told Elijah that Ahab had sent to seek him in all nations, and kingdoms. Elijah said, "As the Lord of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, I will surely shew myself unto him to-day." So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him; and Ahab went to meet Elijah.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

Elijah—'the strong Lord;' we have no information concerning his lineage or early life. He was a strenuous vindicator of the worship of the true God in opposition to the idolatrous kings under whom he lived.

Tishbite—it is uncertain whether he came from Thisbe, a town of Galilee, or from Tishbe in Gilead.

before whom I stand—as God's ambassador ready to bear his messages to men; Lesson 8, 'angels.' The phrase also implies the prophet's belief in the Omnipresence of Jehovah.

dew nor rain—the importance of dew in such a country as Palestine cannot be over estimated, for the heat and dryness of the atmosphere parch the ground

and wither the plants; the dews at night are so ample as to moisten the earth like a heavy shower, and thus in a great measure supply the want of rain. The seasonal falls of rain in the East render the earth prolific, while their absence has often caused famine.

before—that is on the east of Jordan, for the word, as a topographical indication, usually means on the eastern side.

ravens—the raven is a bird that resembles the crow in colour and shape, but it is larger and more powerful; it is sagacious and courageous, and has very little dread of larger birds of prey; in some of its habits it is like the eagle, for it resorts to inaccessible ledges of rocks to construct its nest; it feeds upon carrion and grain, but it will also attack young lambs and poultry. The strength of the raven was therefore quite sufficient to enable it to carry supplies of food to the prophet. Some commentators are of opinion that a haunt for these birds was near to the prophet's retreat, and that Elijah was daily supplied from the food which they brought to their nests. Lesson 4, 'raven.'

after a while—Elijah probably remained at the brook Cherith from eight to twelve months.

oil—liquor expressed from the olive; it is used instead of butter in preparations of food. Lesson 38, 'the olive.'

fulfilled—for two years the widow's store continued to afford sustenance for herself, her son, and Elijah.

Obadiah—'servant of Jehovah.'

knew him—when he saw him he fell on his face and said, "Art thou that my Lord, Elijah?"

lest—he did not doubt the sincerity of Elijah's intention, but he knew that as the Lord's messenger, Elijah had not the direction of his own movements; he feared therefore to tell Ahab that he had seen him.

slay him—the despotic power of eastern kings is illustrated by the apprehensions of Obadiah. Lesson 66, 'said.'

seek him—Ahab wanted to kill Elijah, believing that he was the cause of the drought. The judgments of God only rendered this wicked man and his wife more and more hardened.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

CHERITH—a brook near the Jordan where Elijah was commanded to conceal himself from Ahab. The brook was no doubt on the east of Jordan where he would be further from Ahab's reach than if he continued on the western side.

ZAREPHATH—a city of Phœnicia, situated between Tyre and Sidon.

THE PROPHET AND WIDOW.

"THE BARREL OF MEAL SHALL NOT WASTE, NEITHER SHALL THE CRUSE OF OIL FAIL."

By the poor widow's oil and meal,
Elijah was sustain'd;
Though small the stock, it lasted well,
For God the store maintain'd.

It seem'd as if, from day to day,
They were to eat and die;
But still, though in a secret way,
He sent a fresh supply.

Thus to his poor he still will give
Just for the present hour;
But for to-morrow they must live
Upon his word and pow'r.

Then let not doubts your mind assail,
Remember God has said,
"The cruse and barrel shall not fail,
"My people shall be fed."

Though in ourselves we have no stock,
The Lord is nigh to save,
His door flies open, when we knock,
And 'tis but ask and have.

NEWTON.

81. THE SACRIFICE ON CARMEL.

1 Kings xviii. 17-46.

And when Ahab saw Elijah, he said unto him, "Art thou he that ·troubleth Israel?" And Elijah answered, "I have not troubled Israel: ·but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim. Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel unto *Mount Carmel*, and the prophets of ·Baal four-hundred-and-fifty, and the prophets of the ·groves four-hundred which eat at Jezebel's table." So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the ·prophets together unto Mount Carmel. Elijah came unto them and said, "How long ·halt ye between ·two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him, but if Baal, then follow him." The people answered not a word. Elijah then said, "I even I only, remain a prophet of the Lord; but Baal's prophets are four-hundred-and-fifty men. Let them give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood and put no fire under. And I will dress the other bullock, and put no fire under; and call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the Lord, and the God that answereth ·by fire, ·let him be God." And all the people said, "It is well spoken." The prophets of Baal took their bullock and dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from ·morning till noon, saying, "O Baal hear us." But there was no voice that answered. At noon Elijah ·mocked them and said, "Cry aloud for ·he is a god; ·either he is talking, or he is pursuing. or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked." ·They called on Baal till the time of the evening

sacrifice, but there was no answer. Elijah then built an altar in the name of the Lord, and made a trench round it; and he cut the bullock in pieces, and laid him on the wood on the altar. He said, "Fill four barrels with water, and pour it on the sacrifice, and on the wood." And when this had been done three times he came near and said, "Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant." Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice. The people saw it, and fell on their faces, saying, "The Lord he is the God, The Lord he is the God."

The people, according to Elijah's command, took the prophets of Baal to the brook Kishon and slew them there. And Elijah said unto Ahab "Get thee up, eat and drink: for there is a sound of abundance of rain." So Ahab went up to eat and to drink, and Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees; and said to his servant, "Go up, now, look toward the sea." And he went up, and looked, and said, "There is nothing." And he said, "Go again seven times." And it came to pass at the seventh time, that he said, "Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand." And he said, "Go up, say unto Ahab, Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not." And it came to pass in the mean while, that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. And Ahab rode, and went to Jezreel. And the hand of the Lord was on Elijah; and he girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

troubleth—Ahab regarded Elijah as the cause of the famine, from the superstitious idea that the priests and prophets of the gods influenced their decrees. Les. 28, 'curse.'

but thou—the prophet, nothing daunted by the intimation of danger conveyed in Ahab's address, boldly accused the wicked sovereign and his family, as the cause of Israel's sin and punishment.

Baal—Lesson 33, "Baal.'

groves—Less. 75, 'groves;' probably the prophets of Ashtaroth; Less. 78, 'Zidonians.'

prophets—the prophets of Baal; it does not appear that the prophets of the groves, who ate at Jezebel's table, were present.

halt—hesitate; act dubiously; Lesson 22, 'jealous.'

two opinions—they mingled the worship of God with the worship of Baal.

by fire—they worshipped the great source of heat; the prophet's proposal was therefore perfectly fair.

let him—the test proposed by Elijah could not be objected to by the priests of Baal, even though they were apprehensive of a failure, for Elijah submitted it to the whole assembly, who at once concurred in the reasonableness of the proposal.

morning till noon—from the rising of the sun in eastern splendour to its meridian heat, did those deluded men cry 'O Baal hear us;' but the glorious orb—the creature of God's hand, passed on diffusing its light and vivifying influence over the earth, regardless of the cries of its worshippers.

mocked—he did this in order to expose before all the assembly the utter helplessness of the gods they worshipped, and the folly of placing reliance on them. The presence of a nation of idolaters was no check upon Elijah's courage—"The righteous are bold as a lion."

he is a god—their idolatry was to Elijah an object of secret indignation and disdain; he then upbraided them with their folly, & derided their efforts to obtain an answer.

either—the taunts and scorn of Elijah appear most appropriate and forcible when we consider that the heathen attributed to their gods the imperfections, feelings, passions, and many of the occupations common to human beings.

They called—they cried vociferously, danced, ran and leaped about their altar, in a furious, raving, and distracted manner; and cut themselves with knives and lancets to make themselves acceptable to their idol, and to propitiate his favour.

built—having waited till the time of the evening sacrifice for Baal's prophets to obtain an answer—the servant of Jehovah stands forth to vindicate the divinity of Israel's God. Taking twelve stones—emblematic of the oneness of the tribes of Israel, he erects an altar and prepares his sacrifice.

poor it—this large quantity of water so saturated the wood that its instantaneous combustion was impossible by the ordinary means of ignition.

Lord God, &c.—he addressed the God of Israel's fathers, with whom the ancient covenant had been made, and pleaded the glory of God and the recovery of the people from idolatry as objects to be attained by the manifestation he anticipated.

fire—fell—this signal attestation of the Lord's existence and power had its immediate effect, for the people fell upon their faces, and acknowledged the True God. Fire in ancient times was frequently connected with other manifestations of Deity; Less. 24, 'fire;' Less. 26, 'the earth.'

slew—by the law idolaters were to be slain; Elijah herein asserted the amenableness of the entire nation to the laws of Moses. Deuteronomy xiii. 5; xviii. 20.

went up—the one to his tent to refresh himself, the other to the mountain-top to pray.

seven times—Lesson 30, 'seven.'

little cloud—a sure and familiar prognostic of rain in all countries east of the Levant. Luke xii. 54.

stop—rain usually descends in such torrents in the East that travelling is rendered impossible during its continuance.

great rain—to compensate the parched earth for its lack of moisture during three years. Lesson 69, 'shut up.'

hand of the Lord—he acted by divine impulse. The flowing robes of easterns require to be tightly *girded* when extraordinary bodily exertion is required.

ran before—Lesson 43, 'run.'

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

Mount Carmel—a mountainous ridge which overlooks the bay of Acre, on which the prophets Elijah and Elisha occasionally resided. There are many caves in this mountain range, the largest of which is called the School of Elijah; it is supposed the prophet stood on the summit facing the sea, when he prayed for rain; and that he offered his sacrifice on the side overlooking the Kishon and the plain of Esdraelon, which from its commanding position enabled the thousands assembled to witness his proceedings.

"SEND, AND GATHER TO ME ALL ISRAEL UNTO MOUNT CARMEL, &c."

Thus when Elijah mark'd from Carmel's brow
In bright expanse the briny flood below;
Roll'd his red eyes amid the scorching air,
Smote his firm breast, and breathe'd his ardent prayer;
High in the midst a massy altar stood,
And slaughter'd offerings press'd the piles of wood;
While Israel's chiefs the sacred hill surround,
And famish'd armies crowd the dusty ground;
While proud Idolatry was leagu'd with dearth,
And wither'd Famine swept the desert earth,—
"Oh mighty Lord: thy woe-worn servant hear,
Who calls thy name in agony of prayer;
Thy fanes dishonour'd and thy prophets slain,
Lo! I alone survive of all thy train!—
Oh send from heaven thy sacred fire,—and pour
O'er the parch'd land the salutary shower,—
So shall thy priest thy erring flock recall—
And speak in thunder, thou art Lord of all."

He cried, and kneeling on the mountain sands,
Stretch'd high in air his supplicating hands.

Descending flames the dusky shrine illume,
Fire the wet wood, the sacred bull consume!
Wing'd from the sea the gathering mists arise,
And floating waters darken all the skies;
The king with shifted reins his chariot bends,
And wide o'er earth the airy flood descends;
With mingling cries dispersing hosts applaud,
And shouting nations own the living God.

DARWIN.

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82. ELIJAH'S GRIEF AT HOREB.

2 Kings xix.

Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had slain the prophets of Baal. Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah to tell him that she would put him to death. When Elijah heard that, he arose, and went to Beersheba, in Judah; there he left his servant, but he went himself a day's journey into the wilderness, and sat down under a juniper tree, and he requested for himself that he might die. As he lay and slept under the juniper tree, an angel touched him, and said to him, "Arise and eat." He looked and there was a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. He ate and

drank, and laid him down again. And the angel came again, and said, "Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee." And he arose and did eat, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights, unto *Horeb*, the mount of God.

Elijah came to a cave in Ḥoreb, and lodged there; and the word of the Lord came to him and said, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" Elijah said, "I have been very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword, and I only am left, and they seek my life, to take it away." And Elijah stood on the mount before the Lord. And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice. And when Elijah heard it he wrapped his face in his mantle. And there came a voice to him, and said, "What doest thou here, Elijah." Elijah answered as he had before. And the Lord said, "Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus, and when thou comest, anoint Hazael to be king over Syria; Jehu, the son of Nimshi, to be king over Israel; and Elisha, the son of Shaphat, to be prophet in thy room." God then assured Elijah that there were left seven-thousand in Israel, which had not bowed the knee to Baal.

Elijah departed thence, and found Elisha, the son of Shaphat, who was ploughing at *Abel-meholah* with twelve yoke of oxen before him. Elijah passed by him, and cast his mantle upon him. He knew from this that Elijah had called him, and he left the oxen, & said, "Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee." And Elijah said unto him, "Go back again, for what have I done to thee." And he returned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen, and slew them, and boiled their flesh with the instruments of the oxen, and gave unto the people, and they did eat. Then he arose, and went after Elijah, and ministered unto him.

she would—if any favourable impression had been made on Ahab's mind by the extraordinary circumstances he had witnessed, the recital of them to his wife had excited within her stronger feelings of hostility to Elijah.

he arose—he who had boldly faced an enraged and wicked monarch, four hundred and fifty false prophets, and a nation of idolaters, quails before the threat of this abandoned woman. Without any divine intimation of danger the prophet fled for his life.

went—the exact route is not specified, but he must have passed through Jehoshaphat's dominions.

juniper-tree—supposed to be a species of broom which grows thickly in the valleys and water-courses of this desert. This tree is a shelter to the Arabs from wind and the scorching rays of the sun.

requested—his fortitude having forsaken him, he felt life burdensome, and wished to be relieved of its cares and duties.

an angel—a messenger of mercy comes to his relief in the very desert where Hagar, many years before, experienced the watchful care of her Almighty Father. Lesson 9.

too great—the distance to Horeb was about five days' journey.

forty days—he wandered, as did the Israelites, in this dreary region, he had deserted his post, where he might have been usefully occupied in bringing idolaters to honour God, and he is now left alone in the wilderness to be disciplined for further employment in God's service.

mount of God—Lesson 17 and 21, 'Horeb.'

cave—Lesson 49, 'cave.'

What, &c.—the question conveyed a strong reproof, for it implied that Elijah was not in the path of duty.

forsaken—Lesson 74, 'two calves.'

thrown down—altars in Israel that had been built by the patriarchs and holy men before the temple was founded. We read of such altars at Ed, Ramah, Mizpeh, Gilgal, Carmel, &c.

I only—so scattered and obscure were the worshippers of the Lord in Israel, that Elijah was ignorant of them.

they seek—the apprehension of being put to a cruel death still harassed his mind.

the Lord passed by—he "maketh the winds his messengers, and flaming fire his ministers;" his awe and reverence were raised to the highest pitch when he heard the voice which had previously spoken, and he went and stood at the entrance of the cave.

mantle—an oblong piece of cloth, three yards long and two yards wide, s now worn by the Arabs; they wrap t round them as a protection from the weather. Such was probably Elijah's mantle.

anoint—implying that he was to give special instructions to his successor to perform this duty, for it does not appear that Elijah did it himself.

Hazael—'vision of God.' Less. 94. As king of Syria, he should afflict the people & punish them for their idolatry.

Jehu—'he that is.' Lesson 95. As king of Israel, he should destroy the house of Ahab.

Elisha—'God's salvation;' he was to strengthen Elijah in his work, and to carry it on after his removal.

left—this was most gratifying information to the repining and downcast prophet. The people of God are sometimes unknown to the world, for when persecution rages against the truth, the timid followers of the Lord endeavour to conceal their opinions from observation. Less. 77, 'many.'

oxen—oxen are generally used in the East for ploughing, threshing, & other occupations of husbandry. It was customary among the Hebrews, and other nations of antiquity for persons of wealth and condition to employ themselves in agricultural concerns.

cast—an act significant of his appointment as successor of himself. Lesson 72, 'declared.'

kiss—give them a parting embrace while he received their benediction.

gave unto—probably a parting feast with his workmen, relatives, and friends.

ministered—as the chosen successor of the prophet, he would require to be constantly with him, as his personal assistant, confidant, and pupil. Joshua, who succeeded Moses, was for several years his 'minister.'

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

HOREB—Lesson 17.

ABEL-MEHOLAH—a town in western Manasseh, to which the army of the Midianites went when put to flight by Gideon. This town was the birth-place of the prophet Elisha.

THE STILL SMALL VOICE.

"AND BEHOLD THERE CAME A VOICE UNTO HIM, AND SAID, WHAT DOEST THOU HERE, ELIJAH?"

He cometh, He cometh, the Lord passeth by;
The mountains are rending, the tempest is nigh;
The wind is tumultuous, the rocks are o'ercast;
But the Lord of the Prophet is not in the blast.

He cometh, He cometh, the Lord, He is near,
The earth it is reeling, all nature's in fear;
The earthquake's approaching, with terrible form;
But the Lord of Sabaoth is not in the storm.

He cometh, He cometh, the Lord is in ire;
The smoke is ascending, the mount is on fire;
O say, is Jehovah revealing his name?
He is near, but Jehovah is not in the flame.

He cometh, He cometh, the tempest is o'er,
He is come, neither tempest nor storm shall be more,
All nature reposes, earth, ocean, and sky,
Are still as the voice that descends from on high.

O had I the wings of a dove, I would fly,
And mount on the pinions of faith to the sky,
Where the still and small breathing to earth that was given,
Shall be changed to the anthem and chorus of heaven.

M'COMB.

83. BENHADAD BESIEGES SAMARIA.

1 Kings xx. 1-25.

And Benhadad, the king of Syria, gathered all his host together: and there were thirty-and-two kings with him, and horses, and chariots: and he went up and besieged Samaria. And he sent messengers into the city, to king Ahab, saying, "Thus saith Benhadad, thy silver and thy gold is mine; thy

·wives also and thy ·children, even the goodliest, are mine." And the king of Israel answered, "My lord, O king, according to thy saying, ·I am thine, and all that I have." And the messengers came again, and said, "Thus speaketh Benhadad, saying, Although I have sent unto thee, saying, Thou shalt deliver me thy silver, and thy gold, and thy wives, and thy children; yet I will send my servants unto thee to-morrow, and they shall ·search thine house, and the houses of thy servants: and it shall be, that whatsoever is pleasant in thine eyes, they shall take it, and carry it away." Then Ahab said to the elders of the land, "·Mark, I pray you, and see how this man seeketh mischief: for he sent unto me for my wives, and for my children, and for my silver, and for my gold; and I denied him not." And all the elders and all the people said unto him, "·Hearken not unto him, nor consent." Wherefore he said unto the messengers of Benhadad, "Tell my lord the king, All that thou didst send for thy servant at the first I will do; but this thing ·I may not do." And the messengers departed, and brought him word again. And Benhadad sent unto him, and said, "The gods do so unto me, and more also, ·if the dust of Samaria shall suffice for handfuls for all the people that follow me." And Ahab answered, "Tell him, ·Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off." And when Benhadad heard this message, as he was drinking, he and the kings in the ·pavilions, that he said unto his army, "·Set yourselves in array." And they set themselves in array against the city.

Then there came a prophet to Ahab and said, "Thus saith the Lord, Hast thou seen all this great multitude? behold, I will deliver it into thine hand this day; and ·thou shalt know that I am the Lord." And Ahab said, "By whom?" And he said, "By the ·young men of the princes of the provinces." Then Ahab asked, "Who shall order the battle?" And he answered, "Thou." So Ahab numbered the princes and the people; and they went out at noon. Benhadad was then drinking himself drunk, he and the thirty-two kings that helped him. The young men of the princes went out of the city first. The army followed them, and they slew every one his

man; the Syrians fled, and the king escaped on a horse with the horsemen. A prophet then came to Ahab, and told him to strengthen himself, for Benhadad would return in a year. The servants of Benhadad said of the Israelites, "Their gods are gods of the hills: therefore they are stronger than we, but let us fight against them in the plain, and surely we shall be stronger than they. Number thee an army like the army that thou hast lost, and we will fight against them." And he hearkened unto their voice, and did so.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

Benhadad—probably the son of that Hadad who became the adversary of Solomon. Lesson 71, 'Hadad.'

thirty-and-two—petty princes, allies and tributaries to Benhadad; they were bound to assist him with their armies whenever he was engaged in war. Less. 31, 'many.'

wives—it is a custom in eastern courts for a newly appointed king to assume the control of the harem of his predecessor, if he is not of the same family; and in times of war the most valued trophy of victory is the harem of the conquered monarch. Both ideas are included in Benhadad's message.

children—it was a practice to select from captives taken in war, the sons of the princes and the nobles, to have them trained to wait upon the victors. In some cases these young captives grew into favour and rose to situations of high trust and honour in the countries to which they were taken as slaves. The history of Daniel and his friends illustrates this observation.

I am thine—Ahab consented to become his tributary, and to surrender his wives and children as hostages and servants.

search—Benhadad sends a second and more insulting message, nothing less than that Ahab should give up his people to military plunder and abuse.

Mark—Ahab still possessed some public virtue, for though he had consented to give up his own family and private goods, yet he paused on receiving this aggravated insult.

Hearken not—his people were as little disposed to submit as himself.

I may not—he could not contemplate the subjection of the inhabitants of Samaria to the insults and barbarity of Benhadad's soldiery.

if the dust, &c.—an expressive mode of declaring how vast an army he would bring against Samaria.

Let not him, &c.—the meaning is—"Let not Benhadad boast of a victory before he had obtained it."

pavilions—tents.

Set yourselves—make every preparation.

thou shalt know—the predicted deliverance would be another testimony of the watchfulness of God over apostate Israel.

young men—either the young princes themselves, or their body guards, probably both were included.

gods of the hills—the heathen had gods many, and lords many; every country was, by their superstition, under the care of its peculiar deity; every city, town, and village had its god; every class, family, and individual had a deity; all nature, and every portion of nature was supposed to be under the protection and control of gods! Hence Canaan, being a hilly country, was consigned to the superintendence of gods of the hills; the plural term being suggested probably by the *two* calves. Thus Israel gave occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme.

FOR SUCCOUR AGAINST FOES.

Great God of hosts, our ears have heard,
Our fathers oft have told,
What wonders thou hast done for them ;—
Thy glorious deeds of old.

Not by their might was safety wrought,
Nor vict'ry by their sword;
But thou didst guard the chosen race,
Who thy great name ador'd.

Great God of hosts ! their God, and ours;
Our only Lord and King ;
Let that right arm which fought for them
To us salvation bring.

To thee the glory we'll ascribe,
By whom the conquest came ;
And in triumphant songs of praise
Will celebrate thy name.

84. BENHADAD RETURNS.

1 Kings xx. 26-43.

Benhadad returned as the prophet had predicted at the end of the year, and went up to *Aphek* to fight against Israel. And the army of the children of Israel were like two little flocks of kids ; but the Syrians filled the country. A man of God came and said to Ahab, "Thus saith the Lord, Because the Syrians have said the Lord is God of the hills, but he is not God of the valleys, therefore will I deliver this great multitude into thine hand, and ye shall know that I am the Lord." And they encamped over against each other for seven days ; and on the seventh day the two armies joined in battle ; the Israelites slew of the Syrians 100,000 footmen that day ; the rest fled into Aphek, and there a wall fell upon 27,000 of the men who were left. Benhadad fled, and hid himself in an inner chamber in the city.

The servants of Benhadad said unto him, "Behold now, we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings : let us, I pray thee, put sackcloth on our loins, and ropes upon our heads, and go out to the king of Israel :

peradventure he will save thy life." So they girded sackcloth on their loins, and put ropes on their heads, and came to the king of Israel, and said, "Thy servant Benhadad saith, I pray thee, let me live." And he said, "Is he yet alive? he is my brother." Now the men did diligently observe whether any thing would come from him, and did hastily catch it: and they said, "Thy brother Benhadad." Then he said, "Go ye, bring him." Then Benhadad came forth to him; and he caused him to come up into the chariot. And Benhadad said unto him, "The cities, which my father took from thy father, I will restore; and thou shalt make streets for thee in Damascus, as my father made in Samaria." Then said Ahab, "I will send thee away with this covenant." So he made a covenant with him, and sent him away. One of the sons of the prophets met Ahab and by a parable, shewed him his sin He then denounced Ahab, for letting Benhadad escape, saying, "Thus saith the Lord, Because thou hast let go out of thy hand a man whom I appointed to utter destruction, therefore thy life shall go for his life, and thy people for his people." And the king of Israel came to Samaria, and went to his house heavy and displeased.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

Because, &c.—though Ahab was an idolatrous and wicked king, God twice granted him victory over the Syrians, because they had unjustly attacked the Israelites, and blasphemed the God of Israel.

inner chamber—a chamber within another chamber, a secret or private room.

sackcloth—worn as a sign of repentance or as a token of mourning. In the East sacks are generally made of black goat's hair, hence when sackcloth is spoken of in scripture, cloth of hair is to be understood. Lesson 88, 'the king knew.'

ropes—tied round their necks to express their voluntary subjection to his will, whether for death or bondage. Among the sculptures of Egypt and Pers a captives are represented with ropes tied round their necks, and passing from one to another; in this way they were led before the victorious chief to receive their sentence.

brother—this term is used in various and extensive senses; it is applied to those of the same family, tribe, nation, religion, pursuit, and condition of life. As kings, Ahab and Benhadad stood on a similar footing; besides this, as the son of Hadad the Edomite, (Lesson 71, 'Hadad;' 83, 'Benhadad'), he and Ahab had Jacob for their common ancestor; Lesson 12, 'Esau;' 27, 'then journeyed.'

hastily—the ambassadors of Benhadad quickly took advantage of this admission on the part of Ahab, correcting, "thy servant," into "thy brother."

restore—we thus learn that the father of Benhadad had in former years taken some of the cities of Israel; Benhadad proposes to return them to Israel, and withdraw his soldiers from them.

streets—in eastern cities people of different nations, trades, or religions occupy separate localities. At the present day, the Jews in Damascus, and indeed in every considerable city of Western Asia, have their own proper quarter; and in Constantinople, Alexandria, Cairo, &c. there is a Frank quarter (for Europeans) as well as the Jews' quarters. Benhadad proposed to devote a certain district in Damascus for the Israelites, over which Ahab should have jurisdiction; this was a profession of utter submission, and an abandonment of all hostile intentions.

as—this is the only intimation we have that Benhadad's father had exercised such a jurisdiction in Samaria.

parable—an obscure prophet speaking to a powerful king, impatient of reproof, has to clothe his rebukes in a parable, as Nathan reproved David, Lesson 58; he said that during the battle a man delivered a captive into his care, on this condition, that if he were missing his life should be forfeited; the captive escaped. Ahab decided that the judgment should be according to the condition imposed; whereupon the prophet removed the ashes from his face, with which he was disguised as a criminal and a suppliant, and plainly denounced Ahab, for letting Benhadad escape; the king then saw that he was a prophet.

shall go—Lesson 86, 'smote.'

heavy and displeased—not truly penitent, but enraged at the prophet, exasperated against God, vexed at himself, and out of humour, notwithstanding his victory.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

APHEK—there are several cities of this name mentioned in the bible; Aphek in Syria was one of the chief cities in the kingdom of Benhadad.

TRIUMPH.

Zion's King shall reign victorious,
All the earth shall own his sway,
He will make his kingdom glorious,
He will reign through endless day:
What though none on earth assist him,
God requires not help from man;
What, though all the earth resist him,
God will realize his plan.

Nations now from God estranged,
Then shall see a glorious light,
Night to day shall then be changed,
Heaven shall triumph in the sight;
See the ancient idols falling—
Worshipp'd once, but now abhorr'd;
Men on Zion's King are calling,
Zion's King by all ador'd.

Mighty King, thine arm revealing,
Now thy glorious cause maintain,
Bring the nations help and healing,
Make them subject to thy reign;
Angels in their lofty station
Praise thy name, Thou only wise;
Oh, let earth with emulation
Join the triumph of the skies.

KELLY.

85. AHAB COVETS NABOTH'S VINEYARD.

1 Kings xxi.

Near Ahab's palace in *Jezreel*, a man named Naboth had a vineyard. Ahab wanted it for a garden of herbs, so he offered Naboth a better vineyard for it, or its worth in money. Naboth refused to sell it, because it was the inheritance of his fathers; so Ahab came to his house heavy and displeased; and he laid him down upon his bed, and would eat no bread. But Jezebel, when she knew the cause of Ahab's grief, promised to procure him the vineyard. She wrote letters to the elders of the city, saying, "Proclaim a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people: and set two men sons of Belial to bear witness against him, saying, Thou didst blaspheme God and the king. And then carry him out, and stone him that he may die." And the elders and the nobles did as Jezebel had sent unto them; they proclaimed a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people. And there came in two men, children of Belial, and sat before him: and they witnessed against Naboth, in the presence of the people, saying, "Naboth did blaspheme God and the king." Then they carried him forth out of the city, and stoned him with stones, that he died. The elders and nobles then sent to Jezebel, saying, "Naboth is stoned, and is dead." When Jezebel heard this she said unto Ahab, "Arise, and take possession of the vineyard." Elijah was then commanded to meet Ahab in the vineyard, and to make known to him that dogs should lick his blood, as they had licked the blood of Naboth—that the dogs should eat Jezebel, by the wall of Jezreel—and that his whole family should perish. When Ahab saw Elijah he said, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" And he answered, "I have found thee; because thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the Lord." He then declared the sentence which the Lord had passed on him: "Him that dieth of Ahab in the city the dogs shall eat; and him that dieth in the fields shall the fowls of the air eat." When Ahab heard this sentence he rent his clothes, put on sackcloth, fasted, and went softly. When God saw that he humbled himself, he said unto Elijah, "Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? Because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days; but in his son's days will I bring the evil upon his house."

Naboth—'fruit.'

because—the Hebrews could not sell their lands; God had expressly commanded that they should remain in the tribes and families to which they had been allotted; if their owners were in need they might alienate them for a time—till the year of jubilee, but not longer. As therefore the only permanent right to land was by heritage, Naboth had not the power to dispose of the 'inheritance of his fathers.' Lev. xxv. 25-28; Num. xxxvi. 7.

bed—the poorer people spread skins upon the floor upon which they lay; others used coarse mattresses; and the more affluent had carpets, richly ornamented. Less. 52, 'sit upon;' carpets originated in the East.

letters—she sealed these letters with the king's signet otherwise they would not have received attention.

a fast—as if some grievous crime had been committed, or some great calamity fallen upon the kingdom which required a show of repentance—here was hypocrisy.

on high—let there be the *appearance* at least of justice and impartiality by performing this wicked deed openly.

bear witness—the witnesses must swear to the truth of the false accusation to be made against Naboth; therefore they must be 'sons of Belial.' Less. 44, 'Belial.' Here was perjury.

blaspheme—by the law of Moses it was death to blaspheme God, but if the man charged with this crime was found guilty, his property went to his heirs; while if a man was executed for treason against the king, his property went to the king—Jezebel therefore had Naboth accused of both these crimes.

the elders, &c.—every principle of right and justice was set at defiance by these willing slaves of Jezebel, and their sentence of death was immediately executed. Here was murder.

stoned—Lesson 24, 'stoned;' we learn also that the sons of Naboth were stoned with him, that there might be none left to avenge his death, nor to prevent the forfeiture of the estate to the king 2 Kings ix. 26.

then sent—Micah vi. 16; vii. 2-4.

take possession—how easy for a wicked king with such wicked instruments as Jezebel, false witnesses, and corrupt magistrates, thus to possess himself of the estates of his subjects. Practices of this kind prevail to the present day in many countries of the East.

lick—Less. 76, 'dogs;' 86, 'licked up.'

should eat—Less. 95, 'had eaten.'

whole family—Less. 95, 'slew all.'

found me, &c.—as Ahab had neither seen Elijah nor heard of him, from the time when he fled from Samaria to the present moment, (Less. 82, 'he arose') his present appearance must have greatly suprised him.

enemy—wicked men hate those that faithfully warn and reprove them, and consider them as enemies to their happiness.

sold—he voluntarily surrendered himself as a slave to sin in its most abominable forms; his life was a continuous course of wickedness.

fowls—Less. 40, 'swarm;' 63, 'birds.'

rent—an eastern mode of testifying great sorrow or grief; Lesson 49, 'lamented.'

sack-cloth—Less. 84, 'sackcloth.'

fasted—Less. 53, 'fasted;' Isa. lviii. 6.

softly—he went with a slow pace, humbled mien, and noiseless step.

I will not—the temporary and external humiliation, and penitence of Ahab, obtained for him a temporary mercy—God promised to spare him the affliction of seeing his family cut off by the sword. Lesson 95.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

JEZREEL—a celebrated city in the valley of Jezreel in the tribe of Issachar. Ahab had a residence there which was near Naboth's vineyard. The valley of Jezreel was also called the plain of Esdraelon; a portion of it was called the valley of Megiddo.

"HAST THOU FOUND ME, O MINE ENEMY? AND HE ANSWERED, I HAVE FOUND THEE.'

The tears are in King Ahab's eyes,
His brow is dark with care,
Because the poor man's vineyard lies
So near his garden fair;
He flings his purple mantle by,
Falls on his silken bed,
The queen and all her dames draw nigh,—
He turns away his head.

Not pomp, nor wealth, nor high degree,
True happiness impart;
She dwells with peace and charity
Within the holy heart.
There's envy in King Ahab's breast;
He's lord of hill and plain,
He cannot sleep, he cannot rest,
For Naboth's poor domain.

And so, at that bad woman's word,
The just man's blood is shed,
"Arise; possess his land, my lord;
The Jezreelite is dead."
He rides with pompous equipage,
The crown upon his brow,
To seize the poor man's heritage;
Is Ahab happy now?

Oh! no, that spot of envied ground
God's prophet stands within;
Behold, his enemy hath found
The slayer in his sin:
He speaks the bitter doom of heaven;
Where now the monarch's pride?
He turns away, his robe is riven,
His gems are cast aside.

Joy came not when the Jewish king
His blood-won prize had bought;
It never comes from earthly thing
Too hotly, wrongly, sought.
Then tread we our appointed path,
Pleased with what God has sent;
Not envying what another hath,
Still holy, still content.

86. BATTLE AT RAMOTH-GILEAD.

2 Chron xviii. 1 Kings xxii. 1-40.

And the king of Israel said unto his servants, "Know ye that *Ramoth* in *Gilead* is ours, and we be still, and take it not out of the hand of the king of Syria?" Now for three years there was no war between Syria and Israel. And in the third year, Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, came down to the king of Israel. Now Jehoshaphat had riches and honour in abundance, and joined affinity with Ahab. And Ahab killed sheep and oxen for him in abundance, and for the people that he had with him. And Ahab said unto Jehoshaphat, "Wilt thou go with me to Ramoth-gilead?" And he answered him, "I am as thou art, and my people as thy people: and we will be with thee in the war." The prophets were consulted, and they said, "Go up, for the Lord will deliver it into the hand of the king." Jehoshaphat then enquired for a prophet of the Lord; and Ahab answered that there was none but Micaiah, and he always prophesied evil of him. When he came he answered in the words of the prophets of Ahab. The king saw that Micaiah's answer was contrary to his knowledge, and adjured him to say nothing but what was true. Micaiah then foretold Ahab's death, saying, "I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills as sheep that have not a shepherd...let them return every man to his house in peace." And Ahab said unto Jehoshaphat, "Did I not tell thee that he would prophesy no good concerning me, but evil?" And he said, "Hear thou therefore the word of the Lord: I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left. And the Lord said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner. And there came forth a spirit and stood before the Lord, and said, I will persuade him. And the Lord said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth, and do so. Now therefore behold, the Lord hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the Lord hath spoken evil concerning thee." But Zedekiah, the son of Chenaanah, went near and smote Micaiah on the cheek, and said, "Which way

went the Spirit of the Lord from me to speak unto thee?" And Micaiah said, "Behold, thou shalt see in that day, when thou shalt go into an inner chamber to hide thyself." Ahab ordered Micaiah into prison, there to be fed with bread of affliction and water of affliction till his return in peace. Micaiah said, "If thou return at all in peace, the Lord hath not spoken by me."

The kings of Israel and Judah went up against Ramoth-gilead. Ahab disguised himself, but Jehoshaphat was in his robes. During the battle a certain man drew a bow at a venture, and smote Ahab, who commanded the driver of his chariot to take him out from the battle. His blood flowed into his chariot, and he died. His chariot was washed in the pool of Samaria. The dogs licked up his blood and the prediction of Elijah was thus fulfilled.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

affinity—Less. 79, 'affinity;' probably from a mistaken idea that by this connexion the allegiance of the ten tribes would be restored to his posterity; Les. 36, 'took their daughters;' 87, 'wrath.'

we will—his ready acquiescence with Ahab's desire arose, probably, as much from the expectation alluded to above, as from the friendship subsisting between them.

prophets—the number of them was four hundred; they were probably the prophets of the groves who escaped the destruction which overwhelmed the priests of Baal at Carmel. Lesson 81, 'prophets.'

Go up—the omission of the word 'it,' which is not in the original, together with the construction of the whole sentence, illustrate the ambiguous mode of speech adopted by the heathen oracles and prophets; they guardedly avoided saying *what* should be delivered, and into *which* king's hand the victory would be given. Thus they would be right whether the Syrians or the Israelites conquered.

Lord—'Jehovah;' the false prophets used the word Lord, probably by Ahab's direction, in order to allure Jehoshaphat.

a prophet—Jehoshaphat suspected the prophets of Ahab, and without accusing them of hypocrisy, asked for a prophet of the Lord besides.

Micaiah—'who is Jehovah.'

evil—Ahab accounted him his enemy as well as Elijah.

words of—he said, as they had done, "Go up, and prosper;" meaning thy prophets have already assured thee this, 'go up,' as they have bidden thee; but he said it in ridicule of the false prophets.

foretold—he spoke parabolically of Ahab's death, comparing his people to sheep and Ahab to a shepherd.

shepherd—Lesson 57, 'ruler.'

prophesy—evil—was it evil towards Ahab to forewarn him that his expedition would prove fatal?

I saw the Lord—Micaiah then declared that it was made known to him that God had doomed Ahab to fall at Ramoth-gilead.

hath put—it must be borne in mind that it is common in the Scriptures to call that the Lord's doing which he only permits to be done, because he has the supreme direction of all things and controls events.

a lying spirit—he permitted Ahab's prophets to mislead him to his own destruction.

spoken evil—decreed his destruction.

Zedekiah—'Jehovah's justice;' apparently one of the chief of Ahab's prophets.

in that day—in answer to the false prophet's scornful question, Micaiah declares that when the battle is over, he shall conceal himself, from fear of being put to death, as a false prophet and a betrayer of his king and country.

inner-chamber—Lesson 84, 'inner chamber.'

If thou return—on being ordered into prison Micaiah gave a final warning to Ahab, accompanied by an appeal to the people, "Hearken, O people, every one of you;" hoping the confirmation of the event he had predicted would lead them to reverence Jehovah.

kings—Jehoshaphat connived at the rigorous treatment of Micaiah, and still shewed a criminal willingness to go with Ahab.

went up—either Jehoshaphat must have been deceived by the false prophets, or he had not the courage to refuse proceeding to the war.

disguised—his heart misgave him, although the flattering predictions of *his* prophets were sounding in his ears.

in his robes—as a king; he rejected the infidel notion of chance, and showed that he believed his safety or danger depended on the will of the Supreme.

venture—with no certain aim; with a design to strike somebody no matter whom.

smote—Ahab had concealed himself from the knowledge of men, but not from the eye of God.

died—he however lived long enough to see part of Micaiah's prophecy fulfilled. He who had wickedly murdered Naboth, and not only spared Benhadad but sent him away in friendship, (Less. 84), was slain by an unknown hand in Benhadad's army; and the words of the disguised prophet were fulfilled. Less. 84, 'parable.'

licked up—Less. 85, 'lick;' also Less. 76, 'dogs.'

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

RAMOTH-GILEAD—a celebrated city in the mountains of Gilead, belonging to the tribe of Gad, built near Galeed, and sometimes called Ramoth-Mizpeh. During the reigns of the kings of Israel, it was the scene of several wars. It was one of the cities of refuge.

TIME MISEMPLOYED.

As o'er the past my memory strays,
  Why heaves the sacred sigh?
'Tis that I mourn departed days,
  Still unprepared to die.

The world and worldly things beloved,
  My anxious thoughts employed;
When time unhallowed, unimproved,
  Presents a fearful void.

Yet, holy Father, wild despair
  Chase from this labouring breast;
Thy grace it is which prompts the prayer,
  That grace can do the rest.

My life's best remnant all be thine;
  And when thy sure decree
Bids me this fleeting breath resign—
  Oh speed my soul to thee.

BP. MIDDLETON.

87. JEHOSHAPHAT REPROVED.

2 Chron. xix,xx ; 1 Kings xxii. 51-53.

And Jehoshaphat returned to his house in peace to Jerusalem. Jehu the prophet went out to meet him, and said, "Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the Lord. Nevertheless there are good things found in thee, in that thou hast taken away the groves out of the land, and hast prepared thine heart to seek God." Jehoshaphat again went through his kingdom from Beersheba to Mount Ephraim. And he set judges in the land throughout all the fenced cities of Judah, and said to them, "Take heed what ye do ; for ye judge not for man, but for the Lord, who is with you in the judgment. Wherefore now let the fear of the Lord be upon you ; for there is no iniquity with the Lord our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts." Moreover in Jerusalem did Jehoshaphat set of the Levites, and of the priests, and of the chief of the fathers of Israel ; and charged them, saying, "Thus shall ye do in the fear of the Lord, faithfully, and with a perfect heart ; and what cause soever shall come to you of your brethren that dwell in their cities, ye shall even warn them that they trespass not against the Lord, and so wrath come upon you, and upon your brethren. Deal courageously, and the Lord shall be with the good."

Ahaziah began to reign in conjunction with his father Ahab, before his death. He served Baal, and provoked the Lord to anger, as his father had done.

The Moabites and Ammonites invaded Judah ; and Jehoshaphat and his people set themselves to seek the Lord. The king proclaimed a fast throughout his kingdom. The congregation assembled, and the king offered up a solemn prayer to God for help. Jahaziel then said to all Judah, by the spirit of the Lord, "Be not afraid, nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude : for the battle is not yours but God's. Ye shall not need to fight in this battle ; stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord with you, O Judah and Jerusalem." And Jehoshaphat bowed his head to the ground : and all Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell before the Lord, worshipping the Lord. In the morning they went forth to the wilderness of Tekoah, and as they went Jehoshaphat

said to them, "Hear me, O Judah and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem; believe in the Lord, your God, so shall ye be established, believe his prophets so shall ye prosper." He also appointed singers who should praise the beauty of holiness, and say, "Praise the Lord; for his mercy endureth for ever." When they began to sing, the children of Moab and Ammon rose up against those of Mount Seir; and afterwards they helped to destroy one another.

After this Jehoshaphat joined himself with Ahaziah to make ships to go to Tarshish: and they made the ships in Ezion-gaber. Then Eliezer prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, "Because thou hast joined thyself with Ahaziah, the Lord hath broken thy works." And the ships were broken that they were not able to go to Tarshish. Then said Ahaziah unto Jehoshaphat, "Let my servants go with thy servants in the ships;" but Jehoshaphat would not.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

in peace—or in safety; during the battle the captains of the Syrian army, attracted by Jehoshaphat's royal apparel, turned to assail him, thinking that he was Ahab; but perceiving their mistake they turned from him. Ben-hadad had given them instructions to fight with no one, neither small nor great, but with the king of Israel. An estimate of the unfaithfulness and cruelty of this man's character can be formed from this circumstance.

wrath—he had formed an unholy, a forbidden connexion, therefore his punishment is to be looked for in the destruction of the fruit of that alliance; Lesson 93, 'slew;' 95, 'smite him also.' But the immediate effect of God's wrath is seen in the invasion of Judah by the Moabites and Ammonites.

judges—the judicial arrangements of David had, it is supposed, fallen into disuse. Jehoshaphat not only restored the original order for the administration of justice, but he modified it to suit the altered state of the kingdom.

Take heed, &c.—Lesson 65, 'He that.'

nor respect—neither the greatness, nor learning, nor affluence of a man is regarded by the Lord; he has respect only to those who love and serve him. Compare Lesson 2, 'not respect;' 'If thou doest well;' 45, 'he had not.'

gifts—the practice of making presents so common in the East, as tokens of affection, respect, or submission, could with great facility be made to subserve the corrupt designs of bribery, and pervert judgment.

warn—it seems to have been the practice of the judges, before hearing a case of complaint, to warn the parties concerned that the one prefer not a false charge, nor the other make a dishonest defence. 2 Samuel xv. 3.

courageously—not to yield to the intimidation of powerful and wicked men; nor the temptations of those who might offer bribes; nor to the feelings of partiality for a friend, whose case might nevertheless, be bad.

Ahaziah—'Jehovah sustains.'

conjunction—in partnership.

seek the Lord—to solicit his forgiveness for their national transgressions, and to supplicate his favour, protection, and deliverance.

a fast—to humble themselves lest God should allow the enemy to rule over them as a punishment for their neglect of his precepts and ordinances.

solemn prayer—2 Chron. xx. 5-12.

not yours—Les. 83, 'gods of the hills.

not need—Lesson 30, 'shall fall.'

sing—Lesson 30, 'long blast.'

against—it is supposed that the soldiers of both nations placed in ambush, attacked each other in ignorance, at first, which caused disorder, and was followed by a general battle. The spoils left upon the scene of carnage were so immense that the people of Judah were three days in removing them. Lesson 37, 'against his fellow.'

ships—large barges, or coasting boats propelled by oars, and assisted by a sail. Lesson 70, 'navy.'

PRAISE TO THE LORD.

"PRAISE THE LORD, FOR HIS MERCY ENDURETH FOR EVER."

O praise the Lord in that blest place,
From whence his goodness largely flows;
Praise him in heaven, where he his face
Unveil'd in perfect glory shows:
Praise him for all the mighty acts
Which he in our behalf hath done;
His kindness this return exacts,
With which our praise should equal run.

To praise awake each tuneful string;
Harmonious let the concert rise;
And to the solemn organ sing,
That swells your rapture to the skies;
Let all that vital breath enjoy—
The breath he does to them afford,—
In just returns of praise employ;—
Let ev'ry creature praise the Lord.

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88. AHAZIAH'S IMPIETY. ELIJAH'S TRANSLATION. 2 Kings i,-ii. 12.

After the death of Ahab, the people of Moab rebelled against Israel. At this time king Ahaziah fell through a lattice in his upper chamber, and received much injury. He sent messengers to Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, to know if he should recover. Elijah was commanded to meet the messengers, to reprove the king for his impiety, and to say, "Is it not because there is not a god in Israel, that ye go to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron? Now therefore thus saith the Lord, Thou shalt not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die." The mes-

sengers returned and told Ahaziah the message of Elijah. On enquiring what kind of man he was, the king knew that he was Elijah. He sent a captain of fifty to take Elijah. Elijah called for fire from heaven to consume him and his fifty men. The king sent another captain of fifty to take him. Elijah again called down fire from heaven to consume them. The king sent a third captain of fifty, and he prayed to Elijah that he might not be consumed. An angel of God told Elijah to go himself to the king, and declare his approaching end. And Elijah went, and said unto Ahaziah, "Thus saith the Lord, Forasmuch as thou has sent messengers to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron; therefore thou shalt not come down off that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die." So he died, and Joram reigned in his stead. And Joram walked in the sins of Jeroboam.

When Elijah was about to be taken to heaven Elisha went with him to Gilgal. Elijah told him to tarry at Gilgal, for the Lord had sent him to Bethel. Elisha would not leave him. The sons of the prophets at Bethel said unto Elisha, "Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master today." Elisha answered, "Yea, I know it." Elijah told Elisha to tarry at Bethel, for the Lord had sent him to Jericho. Elisha said he would not leave him. So they went together to Jericho. At Jericho Elijah told Elisha to tarry there for the Lord had sent him to Jordan. Elisha would not leave Elijah; and they went on together and stood by the Jordan. And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went and stood to view afar off; and they two stood by Jordan. Elijah wrapped his mantle together, and smote the waters; they divided, and the two prophets went over on dry ground. When they were gone over, Elijah asked Elisha what he should do for him. Elisha said, "I pray thee let a double portion of thy spirit rest upon me." Elijah said, "Thou hast asked a hard thing; nevertheless, if thou seest me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so." As they still went on, a chariot of fire parted them, and Elijah went up by a whirlwind to heaven. Elisha saw it and exclaimed, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof." And Elisha saw Elijah no more.

rebelled—since their subjugation by David (Less. 57) they had continued to be tributaries—first to Solomon, and subsequently to the kings of Israel.

lattice—the roofs of eastern houses being flat are surrounded by a parapet; Deut. xxii. 8; it is probable that Ahaziah fell over this parapet.

upper chamber—it was common to retire to the upper story, or sleeping room built on the flat terrace, at certain seasons, frequently for repose; it is supposed that Ahaziah fell from such a chamber.

Baal-zebub—'god of the flies;' it is not easy to determine the origin of this title, but it is generally supposed that Ekron and its vicinity had been infested with a species of mosquito, to remove which the inhabitants imagined the existence of a god who had power over them; to this imaginary deity, they prayed to be delivered from their continual scourge. But as Ekron was a place of great power and wealth, the god of Ekron became famous in the estimation of his worshippers, over other afflictions, and over the destiny of other places.

the king knew—sackcloth or haircloth was not only worn by those in affliction or grief, but it was the general clothing of the prophets—especially in seasons of national defection from God; hence when the appearance of Elijah was described by Ahaziah's messengers, he knew at once who he was. Lesson 84, 'sackcloth;' 92, 'sons of the prophets.'

take—as prisoner, for the purpose of inflicting some heavy punishment upon him. Elijah spoke not from feelings of personal resentment, but from direct revelation. The captain jeered Elijah, saying, "O thou man of God, come down."

consume—to burn them up; probably the men approached the prophet with irreverent feelings. Less. 24, 'devoured.'

sent—the hardened Ahaziah, nothing appalled by this manifestation of the divine displeasure, added to his former criminality by sending a second company of fifty men to take Elijah.

again called—Elijah, who remained sitting in the same place, was accosted by the second captain, as by the former; his audacious impiety was similarly punished.

a third captain—he came reverently to Elijah.

he prayed—the judgments on his predecessors alarmed him, which, however, his different course of conduct averted.

down—some of the eastern beds were laid on platforms so elevated that steps were required for ascending and descending.

Joram—'high.'

tarry—the motive of Elijah in making these requests is not very evident; it might be to ascertain the strength of Elisha's attachment to him.

I know it—not only had Elijah a preintimation of his translation, but Elisha and the company of prophets residing at Bethel were similarly favoured.

sons—Less. 92, 'sons of the prophets.'

divided—about the same place where the Israelites crossed under the command of Joshua; Less. 30, 'divided;' 'Jordan,' &c.

double portion—the ardency of Elisha's character was thus evinced; as it had been at his first call; Les. 82. He now felt a becoming desire to be endowed with all the gifts and graces requisite to render his ministrations effective.

if thou seest—the reward of his faithfulness in following his master to the end should be the granting of his hard, but pious request.

fire—the prophet whose whole life glowed with zeal for the honour of God, and whose ministry was mainly directed against the idolatry of the source of fire, was himself conveyed to heaven in a fiery chariot.

whirlwind—that which in tropical countries spreads ruin, devastation, and death, is made the messenger of mercy and glorious deliverance from the cares of earth and the pains of death to the faithful Elijah. An eastern whirlwind roots up trees, and even houses, and with sand, and everything loose within its range, forms moving pillars between the earth and the sky, while it leaves fearful traces of destruction behind.

no more—the translation of Elijah was a public attestation of the doctrine of a future state.

"MY FATHER, MY FATHER, THE CHARIOT OF ISRAEL AND THE HORSEMEN THEREOF."

By Judah's vales and olive glades,
Where Eastern fruits entwine;
Her bowers of rose and palm-tree shades,
Her fields of corn and wine;
ELIJAH and ELISHA pass'd
And well they knew, it was the last,
The last dear hour to friendship given,
Before the fire-car and the blast
Should bear the prophet up to heaven.

How fondly then ELISHA hung
On all his aged master spoke;
How dear each word, that from his tongue,
Like dying farewell broke!

They went along, and o'er their head
High in the fields of air;
Appeared a beauteous cloud of red,
And fast against the breeze it fled,
It seemed a SERAPH fair;
One of those Spirits who assume,
The lucid flame in all its forms,
To guard, to punish, to consume,
To wield the lightning sword of storms.

To earth it came
That beauteous flame,
The friends who dearly lov'd it parted,
Its mantle round
The prophet wound,
Then back to its own heaven it darted;
And oh! ELISHA's wilder'd eyes,
Followed his master to the skies,
As we to day
Perceive the ray
Of glory, when a christian dies!
Sweet parting this—but not for us
To pass to those bright regions thus;
We must go through the cold dark stream,
But—ah!—if Faith's celestial beam
Shine over, all will then be bright,
And we scarce need wish for the car of light,
So fair will the waters seem!

EDMESTON.

89. ELISHA SUCCEEDS ELIJAH.

2 Kings ii. 13-25 ; iii. 4-27.

As Elijah went up his ·mantle fell from him ; and Elisha took it up, and with it he smote the waters saying, " Where is the Lord God of Elijah ?" The waters parted, and he went over. When the ·sons of the prophets at Jericho saw him they said, " The spirit of Elijah doth rest upon Elisha ;" and they ·bowed themselves before him. They sent fifty men ·to search for the body of Elijah : at first Elisha would not consent, but at length ·he consented, and they sought three days but found it not. The men of Jericho complained to Elisha of the badness of the water ; Elisha then went forth unto the ·spring of the waters, and cast in ·salt, and said, " Thus saith the Lord, I have healed these waters ; there shall not be from thence any more ·death or barren land." So the waters were healed, according to the saying of Elisha. As he went from thence to Bethel there came forth ·children out of the ·city and mocked him, saying, " ·Go up thou ·bald head ;" and there came two ·she-bears out of a wood, and ·destroyed forty-two of them. From Bethel he went to Carmel, and thence he returned to Samaria.

The king of Moab ·rebelled against Israel, and Joram asked Jehoshaphat to go with him against Moab to battle. Jehoshaphat ·consented. The ·king of Edom also joined them. They were in want of water for the army and for the cattle in the wilderness ; and Jehoshaphat asked for a prophet of the Lord, that he might enquire of the Lord by him. One told them that Elisha was present ; so the three kings ·went down to him. And Elisha said unto the king of Israel, " What have I do with thee ? get thee to the ·prophets of thy father and to the prophets of thy mother. As the Lord of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, surely, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, ·I would not see thee. But now bring me a ·minstrel." And when the minstrel played, the hand of the Lord came upon Elisha. And he said, " Thus saith the Lord, Make this valley ·full of ditches. For ye shall ·not see wind, neither shall ye see rain ; yet that valley shall be filled with water, that ye may drink, both ye, and your cattle, and your beasts, and the Lord will deliver the Moabites also into your hand." In the morning at the time of the meat-

offering the country was filled with water. When the Moabites came, the sun shone on the water, so they thought it was ·blood, and they said, "The kings have smitten one another." But when they came to the camp of Israel, the Israelites rose up and smote them: they also beat down the cities, and ·marred the good land with stones, and ·stopped up the wells, and ·felled every tree. The king of Moab then took his ·eldest son and offered him for a burnt-offering, and the Israelites returned to their own land.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

mantle—Less. 82, 'cast;' the mantle of a deceased *saint* is highly valued among the fanatical sect of Sooffees in Persia. The older and more patched the mantle is, the more valuable it is considered, because denoting its longer use by the deceased.

sons—Less. 92, 'sons of the prophets.'

bowed—acknowledging him as their master.

to search—they imagined that his soul had been taken to glory, and that his body had fallen to earth when the whirlwind had spent itself.

he consented—as the only way of convincing them of the folly of their proposal.

spring—near Jericho, there is a spring called Elisha's fountain; whether it is that which the prophet rendered sweet is uncertain; its waters issue from a small pool in streams, fertilizing the neighbouring fields.

salt—Jewish commentators say this was a miracle within a miracle, for salt makes water less potable, and ground more barren.

death—unwholesome water is one of the causes of disease and death. The waters of Elisha's fountain are not only pure, but agreeable, warm, wholesome, and medicinal.

children—this word also signifies young persons; Isaac is called a lad when twenty-five years old. & Solomon was twenty when he considered himself but a little child.

city—a school of the prophets existed here, rendering the idolatry and wickedness of the place less excusable; at Bethel stood one of the golden calves. Lesson 74.

Go up—a rumour had spread that Elijah had been snatched up by a whirlwind; the inhabitants of Bethel rejoiced at being rid of the chief reprover of their idolatry. The young people ridiculed Elisha's belief in the translation of Elijah to heaven, and called on him with mockery to follow his master.

bald head—baldness on the back of the head was esteemed an infirmity, and a subject for mockery. Personal defects excite expressions of mirth and mockery among ignorant and unfeeling young persons among us, which ought to be reproved.

she-bears—the ferocity of these animals is proverbial.

destroyed—this was a fearful judgment on them and their ungodly parents, for the rejection of the prophet's instructions.

rebelled—he refused to pay his accustomed tribute of 100,000 lambs, and 100,000 rams with their wool.

consented—the recent invasion of his kingdom by the Moabites was fresh in Jehoshaphat's mind. Joram had previously put away the public worship of Baal.

king of Edom—probably the viceroy appointed by the king of Judah.

went down—the three kings thus shewed their respect to Elisha, not sending for him but going down to him.

prophets—mother—the prophets of wicked Ahab and Jezebel. Lesson 81, 'Baal,' 'groves.'

I would not—the general feeling of respect for those who sustained the offices of prophets and priests secured for them many privileges, of which that of speaking freely to royal and noble personages was one.

minstrel—probably a levite accustomed to play on the harp and psaltery—to soothe his mind, which had been disturbed by Joram's visit. Lesson 47, 'soothe.'

full of ditches—to receive the supply of water that would be sent, and also as an exercise of their faith in the promised relief.

not see wind—it is common in eastern countries for a squall of wind to precede rain. Less. 81, 'little cloud.' Such a wind in the desert on this occasion would have raised clouds of sand, and proved a severe infliction on the assembled armies.

blood—the water was discoloured from the redness of the soil.

marred the land—a common mode of annoying an enemy in the East; it also is considered as interdicting the enemy from tilling the land.

stopped—wells—this is also a customary annoyance to the enemy in times of war between nations, or variance between tribes.

felled every tree—the enemy in war destroys the corn, fells the olive-trees, carries off the sheep—"The land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness."

eldest son—on extraordinary occasions the heathens would sacrifice to their gods whatever was most dear to them.

THE WATERS HEALED.

"THE SITUATION OF THIS CITY IS PLEASANT...BUT THE WATER IS NAUGHT, AND THE GROUND BARREN."

Though Jericho pleasantly stood,
And look'd like a promising soil,
The harvest produc'd little food,
To answer the husbandman's toil.

The water some property had,
Which poisonous prov'd to the ground;
The springs were corrupted and bad,
The streams spread a barrenness round.

But soon by the cruse and the salt,
Prepar'd by Elisha's command,
The water was cur'd of its fault,
And plenty enriched the land:

An emblem is this of the grace
On fruitless dead sinners bestow'd;
For Man is in Jericho's case,
Till cur'd by the mercy of God.

How noble a creature he seems!
What knowledge, invention, and skill!
How large and extensive his schemes!
How much can he do if he will!

Yet still he is barren of good;
In vain are his talents and art;
For sin has infected his blood,
And poison'd the streams of his heart.

But grace, like the salt in the cruse,
When cast in the spring of the soul,
A wonderful change will produce,
Diffusing new life through the whole:

The wilderness blooms like a rose,
The heart which was vile and abhorr'd,
Now fruitful and beautiful grows,
The garden and joy of the Lord.

NEWTON.

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90. MIRACLES OF ELISHA.

2 Kings iv.

A poor widow came to Elisha, and complained that her creditor was about to take her sons as bondmen, because she could not pay her debt. She said, she had nothing in the house but a pot of oil. Elisha told her to borrow a large number of empty vessels of her friends, and to pour out the oil, and set the vessels aside as she filled them with the oil. So she borrowed the vessels, and did as she was told; and when the vessels were full, she said unto her son, "Bring me yet a vessel." And he said unto her, "There is not a vessel more." And the oil stayed. Then she came and told the man of God, and he said, "Go, sell the oil, and pay the debt, and live thou and thy children of the rest."

And it fell on a day, that Elisha passed to *Shunem*, where was a great woman: and she constrained him to eat bread. And so it was, that as oft as he passed by, he turned in thither to eat bread. And she said unto her husband, "Behold now, I perceive that this is a holy man of God, which passeth by us continually. Let us make a little chamber, I pray thee; and let us set for him there a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick: and it shall be, when he cometh to us, that he shall turn in thither." Soon after this, Elisha came to Shunem, and he turned into the chamber which had been provided. And he called Gehazi and directed him to say

unto the Shunamite, "Behold thou hast been careful for us with all this care; what is to be done for thee? wouldest thou be spoken for to the king, or to the captain of the host?" When the woman declined, Gehazi said unto Elisha, "Verily she hath no child." Elisha then promised her a son, and his word was fulfilled at the proper season. One day when the child was grown, he went out to his father to the reapers, he was taken ill, and died. His mother fetched Elisha from Mount Carmel, and he restored the child to life.

Elisha came to Gilgal when there was a dearth in the land, and the sons of the prophets were sitting before him; and he said unto his servant, set on the great pot and seethe pottage for the sons of the prophets. And one went out into the field to gather herbs, and found a wild vine, and gathered thereof wild gourds, his lap full, and came and shred them into the pot of pottage: for they knew them not. So they poured out for the men to eat. And it came to pass, as they were eating of the pottage, that they cried out, and said, "O thou, man of God, there is death in the pot." And they could not eat thereof. But he said, "Then bring meal." And he cast it into the pot; and he said, "Pour out for the people, that they may eat;" and there was no harm in the pot. He also fed a hundred persons with twenty loaves, which a man from *Baal-shalisha* brought to him as a present.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

widow—Josephus imagines that she had been Obadiah's wife, and that the debts were incurred by her husband to support the hundred prophets whom he concealed in a cave during Ahab's persecution. Less. 80.

bondmen—imprisonment for debt was not recognized by the law of Moses; but it gave a creditor power over the inheritance of a debtor, and over his personal service to the year of Jubilee; the creditor had also the power of taking the children of his debtor as bond-servants till the claim was cancelled, or till the year of Jubilee.

continually—Shunem lay in Elisha's route between Bethel, and Carmel, and other places, where were schools of the prophets which he visited.

make—prepare, get ready.

little chamber—it might have been placed against the wall, over the porch, or on the roof (Les. 88, 'upper chamber') the access in any case being by steps from the outside.

Gehazi—he was Elisha's hired servant; not his companion, pupil, friend, and chosen successor, as Elisha had been to Elijah.

taken ill—exposure to the sun in hot climates is sometimes attended with sudden illness and death; in the East such complaints are said to be caused by a "sun-stroke."

fetched—according to the custom of the East, she rode on an ass to fetch the prophet, and her servant ran behind or beside her to urge the animal forward.

sitting before—these little communities lived together, apart from society; they ate at the same table, having for their president the senior member, or the inspired teacher of the school.

seethe pottage—prepare; boil; their food was simple, consisting chiefly of pottage of herbs, with such presents of flour, &c. as the people who respected their office thought proper to send them.

herbs—to give flavour to the pottage.

wild vine—supposed to be a plant similar to the vine in its growth, which is at this day used medicinally.

shred—cut into small pieces.

death—poison; that which would produce death.

meal—there was no virtue in the meal to deprive the pottage of any unpleasant or poisonous qualities. God miraculously destroyed the unwholesome properties of the herbage.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

SHUNEM—a city in the border of Issachar, which Elisha frequently visited; it was about five miles from Mount Tabor.

BAAL-SHALISHA—a town in that part of Ephraim called the land of Shalisha. Saul passed through the land of Shalisha when he was seeking his father's asses.

"IS IT WELL WITH THEE?"

"AND SHE ANSWERED, IT IS WELL."

All yet is well, the mother said,
Who left her only offspring dead,
While she the holy Prophet sought,
And deeply felt the news she brought.

Faith in the Prophet's God most high,
Upheld her hope, reliev'd her sigh;
And while the tear maternal fell,
She calmly answer'd, 'Yes, 'tis well.'

Thus faith in God could soften grief,
And bring the afflicted mind relief,
Ere yet eternal life reveal'd
Was by our rising Saviour seal'd.

Then let his word support the soul,
And every pain and grief control
And faith each rising passion tell,
That God, our God, doth all things well.

91. NAAMAN'S LEPROSY CURED.

2 Kings v.

Naaman was captain of the host of the king of Syria, he was a mighty man in valour, and honourable, but he was a leper. A little captive Hebrew maid who waited on his wife, said unto her mistress, "O that my lord were with the prophet

that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy." This was told to Naaman, whereupon the king of Syria wrote a letter to the king of Israel requiring that he would cure Naaman of his leprosy. Naaman took with him many changes of raiment, and much gold and silver. The king of Israel rent his clothes when he read the letter, and said, "Am I God to kill and make alive?" Elisha heard of it, and sent to the king that Naaman should go to him, saying, "And he shall know there is a prophet in Israel." Naaman came with his horses and chariot and stood before the door of the house of Elisha; and Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thou shalt be clean." Naaman was wroth, and went away, saying, "Are not *Abana* and *Pharpar*, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?" The servants of Naaman came to him, and said, "My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then when he saith to thee, Wash and be clean?" Then Naaman went and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, and his flesh came again, like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean. He returned to Elisha, and said, "Behold now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel: now therefore, I pray thee take a blessing of thy servant." Elisha refused; then said Naaman, "Thy servant will henceforth offer neither burnt-offering nor sacrifice unto other gods, but unto the Lord. In this thing the Lord pardon thy servant, that when my master goeth into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leaneth on my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, the Lord pardon thy servant in this thing." And Elisha said unto him, "Go in peace." So he departed from him a little way. When Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, saw Naaman depart, he followed him and said, "My master hath sent me, saying, Behold, even now there be come to me from Mount Ephraim, two young men of the sons of the prophets: give them, I pray thee, a talent of silver, and two changes of garments." And Naaman said, "Be content, take two talents." And he bound two talents of silver in two bags, with two changes of garments, and laid them upon two of his

servants; and they bare them before him to his house. When Gehazi went in and stood before Elisha, he said unto him, "Whence comest thou?" And he said, "Thy servant went no whither." And Elisha said, "Went not mine heart with thee, when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee? Is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and oliveyards, and vineyards, and sheep, oxen, and menservants, and maidservants? The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and thy seed for ever." And he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

leper—Less. 25, 'leprosy;' in Syria, where the laws of Moses were not in force, leprosy did not exclude the afflicted party from society.

captive—she had been captured in one of the expeditions made by the Syrians upon the borders of Israel.

said—the importance of making children acquainted with the religious advantages of their times is here shown. Elisha must have been the means of curing others of which she had heard.

a letter—a note explaining to Joram the object of his visit.

took with him—the present was a princely one; it was at the lowest estimation about £5000 of our money, besides the ten changes of raiment.

rent—Less. 85, 'rent;' Joram thought this was a stratagem of the Syrian king to provoke a quarrel; he forgot that there was a prophet in Israel whose power he had once witnessed.

heard of it—it was doubtless rumoured as likely to lead to war.

go to him—the prophet had received a divine intimation that he would be made the instrument of Naaman's cure, which would be a practical attestation of the power of Israel's God.

sent—to shew his contempt of the pageantry of his visitor; teaching him that the God of Israel and his faithful ministers regarded not the station of men if destitute of humility.

seven—Less. 30, 'seven.'

wroth—Naaman thought that the prophet would have waited on him and effected the cure by the sanctified touch of his hand. Superstitious ideas of this kind still prevail in the East, and even in our own country the *touch* of the sovereign was for a long time considered an infallible cure for scrofula.

Are not, &c.—the mistake of Naaman lay in his supposition that the water was designed as a means of his cure.

My father—the head of an eastern establishment is thus recognised by all the persons composing it.

now I know—he was at once cured of his leprosy and of his want of faith in God; he was now too wise to think the water had effected his cure.

a blessing—a present; not as a remuneration for the prophet's services, for he had already acknowledged his faith in Jehovah by whom he was healed, but as a token of his esteem for and gratitude to the prophet.

refused—Elisha sought not to enrich himself, but to promote the glory of God, whom he would not compromise in the eyes of the Syrians, among whom the miracle would become known.

Rimmon—a house of idolatry connected with sun-worship.

I bow myself—he did not immediately see the inconsistency of continuing his attendance when his master went to the house of Rimmon.

Go in peace—the prophet neither forbade his attendance on his master nor

gave permission, he dismissed him with a blessing, leaving the true faith to operate on his mind.

there be come, &c.—a circumstantial story, having a semblance of truth, in which, however, covetousness, lying, and hypocrisy were manifested.

Went not—couldst thou expect to deceive a prophet of the Most High?

Is it a time—when I had refused his gifts, that the benevolence and power of Jehovah might be exalted—was that a time for you to seek to obtain them? When war seems impending over our nation, is it a time to mar the glory of our independence by receiving payment for what was beyond all price?

The leprosy—in whatever form leprosy appeared it was regarded as a judgment from God; even at this day, it is designated throughout Syria, where it prevails, "the stroke" or wound of the Lord! The white leprosy was the most inveterate. Lesson 25, 'leprosy;' 79, 'physicians.'

white as snow—he was punished with the worst kind of leprosy, which was, moreover, to be hereditary in his family.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

ABANA—one of the chief rivers of Damascus; it descended from Mount Hermon, flowed through the city, and divided it into two parts.

PHARPAR—another river of Damascus.

GEHAZI REPROVED.

"IS THIS A TIME TO RECEIVE MONEY, AND TO RECEIVE GARMENTS, &c."

Is this a time to plant and build,
Add house to house, and field to field,
When round our walls the battle lowers,
When mines are hid beneath our towers,
And watchful foes are stealing round
To search and spoil the holy ground?

Is this a time for moonlight dreams
Of love and home by mazy streams,
For fancy with her shadowy toys,
Aerial hopes and pensive joys,
While souls are wandering far and wide,
And curses swarm on every side?

No rather steel thy melting heart
To act the martyr's sternest part,
To watch with firm unshrinking eye,
Thy darling visions as they die,
Till all bright hopes, and hues of day
Have faded into twilight grey.

Yes—let them pass without a sigh,
And if the world seem dull and dry,
If long and sad thy lonely hours,
And winds have rent thy sheltering bowers,
Bethink thee what thou art and where,
A sinner in a life of care.

KEBLE.

92. THE MESSENGERS FROM SYRIA.

2 Kings vi. 1-23.

The sons of the prophets wished to remove their dwelling to a larger place. Elisha went with them to Jordan. As one was felling a tree the axe head fell into the water, and he was grieved because it was borrowed. Elisha cast in a stick there; the iron swam, and the man took it out. At this time the king of Syria warred against Israel, and took counsel with his servants, saying, "In such and such a place shall be my camp." And the man of God sent unto the king of Israel, saying, "Beware that thou pass not such a place; for thither the Syrians are come down." And the king of Israel sent to the place which the man of God told him, and warned him of, and saved himself there, not once, nor twice. The king of Syria thought that one of his own people informed the king of Israel, and enquired who it was; and one of his servants said, "None, my lord, O king: but Elisha the prophet that is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber." And he said, "Go and spy where he is, that I may send and fetch him." It was told him, saying, "Behold, he is in *Dothan*." The king of Syria then sent horses and chariots to Dothan to take Elisha; and they came by night and compassed the city about. Elisha's servant was afraid when he saw them; but Elisha said to him, "Fear not; for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." Elisha then prayed to the Lord, and they were smitten with blindness. Elisha led them to Samaria, and prayed that their sight might be restored. And the Lord opened their eyes and they saw; and behold they were in the midst of Samaria. And the king of Israel said unto Elisha when he saw them, "My father, shall I smite them? shall I smite them." And he answered, "Thou shalt not smite them; wouldest thou smite those whom thou hast taken captive with thy sword and with thy bow? Set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink, and go to their master." And when they had eaten and drunk he sent them away. So the bands of Syria came no more unto the land of Israel.

sons of the prophets—pupils or students in the schools of the prophets; these schools or colleges had their origin, probably with Samuel, who established one at Naioth, near Ramah, over which he presided; Lesson 47, 'Naioth.' Elijah presided over one or more of these establishments, as did also his successor Elisha, in whose day they appear to have been numerous, for we read of them at Bethel, Jericho, Carmel, Gilgal, and other places. In these schools the pupils studied the divine law, referring their difficulties or doubts to their president, whom they called "father;" they also acquired and greatly practised the art of music, vocal and instrumental. When the messengers sent by Saul to take David had arrived at Ramah they met a company of Samuel's pupils engaged in singing or chanting sacred compositions, and so powerful was the effect produced upon them, that they, too, began to sing, and eventually returned home without accomplishing the object for which they had been sent; Saul then went to Ramah to take David, but meeting with a company of the same sacred choristers he too was subdued, and in an ecstacy of poetic devotion he gave himself up to the sweet influence of music, and at length returned home without David. It appears that the prophets in their ordinary modes of prophesying had their minds calmed, sweetened, and elevated by music; Less. 89, 'minstrel.' The pupils in these schools executed important missions for the prophets; Les. 95, 'sent;' they were employed in communicating religious instruction to the people. These schools were of the utmost importance in Israel, for in Judah the people had the Levites, priests, and temple service, while in Israel idolatry prevailed. To these colleges the devout of Israel repaired at the appointed feasts and other solemn seasons, to pray before the Lord and to hear his will expounded, for they were forbidden by the false policy of their kings to go up to Jerusalem to worship; 2 Kings iv. 23. The sons of the prophets being generally poor had to resort at times to manual labour, and they depended chiefly upon the bounty of those to whom they imparted instruction for their daily sustenance.

remove—their residence was too small for their increasing numbers.

to Jordan—it is hence inferred that the former college was at Gilgal, distant from the Jordan about five miles.

borrowed—good men desire that none should suffer by their kindness to them; this man was probably too poor to replace the borrowed axe, which made him the more anxious.

warned—Less. 91, 'Is it a time.' Elisha must have had a pre-intimation of the danger impending over his country.

the man of God—Elisha.

but Elisha—the prophet's fame spread throughout Syria when Naaman returned home cleansed of his leprosy; knowing of this and his other miraculous works, the counsellors of Benhadad might readily conclude that he was able to discover their king's plans and movements to Joram, king of Israel.

they that be with us—Elisha having prayed that God would shew his servant the mighty defence they had from him, his eyes were opened, and he saw horses of fire and chariots of fire round about Elisha.

blindness—not absolute blindness but an indistinctness of vision; their faculties too were beclouded so that they could not act with their ordinary discretion and judgment.

My father—a reverential title given to men eminent for piety.

Thou shalt not—their blood could not have been shed without cruelty.

captive—those taken as prisoners in war were reduced to the condition of bondmen, if not exchanged for captives taken by the opposing party.

Set bread, &c.—the Syrians who came to destroy Elisha were thus treated hospitably, by his desire; he thus returned good for evil.

bands—marauding scouts; Less. 91, 'captive.' Benhadad abandoned this mode of harassing the frontiers of Israel; but he soon after assembled a great army to invade the land.

"FEAR NOT; FOR THEY THAT BE WITH US ARE MORE THAN THEY THAT BE WITH THEM."

When Syria's proud monarch in vain
The armies of Israel oppos'd,
He saw, with vexation and pain,
His plots by Elisha disclos'd;
And threat'ning with insolent boast,
The prophet in Dothan he found;
And came in the night with a host,
To compass the city around.

Elisha's weak servant, afraid,
When morning display'd them to view,
Exclaim'd at their numbers dismay'd,
"My master, ah, what shall we do?"
"O be not thus vainly distrest!"
The prophet of Israel replied;
"For now, to await my behest,
"Are myriads arrang'd on my side."

And he pray'd that the Author of light,
In mercy would open his eyes,
And give him a ravishing sight
Of all the celestial allies;
Then wrapt in the visions of God,
His servants obtain'd the desire;
And lo! on the mountain abroad,
Were horses and chariots of fire.

And now, as the Syrians came nigh,
Their hated opposer to find,
Commission'd with strength from on high,
He struck the whole multitude blind;
Thus wand'ring in utter distress,
Surrounded with darkness and woe,
Their terrors what words can express,
When found in the camp of a foe?

E'en so will the Lord interfere
For those who delight in his name:
For God is continually near,—
Omnipotence ever the same!
And blest by his presence divine,
Our foes we shall boldly withstand;
Nor heed though the universe join,
If righteousness dwells in the land.

93. JEHORAM'S WICKED REIGN.

2 Chron. xxi. 1-17.

After Jehoshaphat's death, his son Jehoram reigned in Judah. Now Jehoshaphat had given all his sons great gifts of silver, and of gold, and of precious things, with ·fenced cities in Judah; but the kingdom gave he to Jehoram, because he was the first-born. And when Jehoram was risen up to the·kingdom of his father, he strengthened himself, and ·slew all his brethren with the sword, and divers also of the princes of Israel. And he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, ·like as did the house of Ahab; for he had the daughter of Ahab to wife: and he wrought that which was evil in the eyes of the Lord. Howbeit the Lord would not destroy the house of David, because of the ·covenant that he had made with David, and as he promised to give ·a light to him and to his sons for ever. Jehoram made high places in the mountains of Judah, and ·compelled the inhabitants of Jerusalem and of Judah to commit idolatry. And there came ·a writing to him from Elijah the prophet, saying, "Thus saith the Lord Gŏd of David thy father, Because thou hast not walked in the ways of Jehoshaphat thy father, nor in the ways of Asa, king of Judah, but hast walked in the ways of the king of Israel, and hast made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to follow the idolatries of Ahab, and also hath slain thy brethren of thy father's house, which were ·better than thyself; behold with a great plague will the Lord smite thy people and thy children, and thy wives, and all thy goods: and thou shalt have great sickness by disease of thy bowels; until thy bowels fall out by reason of the sickness day by day." In his days Edom ·revolted from Judah, and made themselves a king. *Libnah* ·also revolted because Jehoram had forsaken the God of his fathers. The ·Philistines, ·Arabians, and ·Ethiopians also came against Judah, and carried away the king's ·treasures, his ·wives, and his ·sons, except ·Jehoahaz the youngest.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

fenced cities—he made them governors of provinces or viceroys; that the government might vest as far as possible in the reigning family, and thus keep in control the influence of the many powerful families of Judah. A similar arrangement prevails at the present day in several eastern countries; a son or grandson of a mighty monarch being the nominal ruler of a province, who is generally assisted by an experienced minister of state.

slew—he "strengthened himself" that he might act without danger: then he slew his brethren [lest they should contest the throne with him. Jehoshaphat had before established Jehoram's claim to the throne by associating him with himself in the government.

like—the house of Ahab—The consequence of Jehoshaphat's alliance with the impious Ahab and wicked Jezebel were just what might have been anticipated; their daughter, Athaliah, the wife of Jehoram became renowned like her mother for wickedness.

covenant—Lesson 57, 'for ever.'

a light—an amount of dominion sufficient to keep up the royal line of David.

compelled—he exceeded Jeroboam in his idolatrous practices; it does not appear that Jeroboam used compulsion to secure the general adoption of forms of worship which he established.

a writing—Elijah's translation had occurred seven years before this; it is therefore evident that this writing was the result of a divine communication made to him respecting Jehoram's future wickedness, and miserable death. It had been committed to the care of one of the sons of the prophets to be forwarded to the depraved prince when the more hideous traits of his character became developed. No one knew better than Elijah the tendency of the instruction and training which Jehoram had received under the care of his mother-in-law Jezebel, and the corrupting influence of Athaliah.

better—the partiality of Jehoshaphat to the son-in-law of Ahab, was highly culpable; possessing, as he did, the privilege of appointing his successor (Less. 64, 'anoint') he was bound to select the one whose moral character gave the best evidence of his fitness to govern the people with equity, and sustain the worship of God in integrity and purity.

revolted—this was predicted by Isaac, Gen. xxvii. 40; Less. 12. Edom had been tributary to Judah since the time of David, a period of 150 years. Less. 57, 'conquered.'

also—the inhabitants of Libnah being chiefly levites, refused to submit to the idolatrous dictation of Jehoram; they were instructed in the law of the Lord, they loved the ordinances of his house, and they felt that Jehoram's establishment of idolatry invalidated his claim upon their allegiance; hence they spurned his authority and refused to acknowledge his rule.

Philistines—Less. 35, 'Philistines.'

Arabians—Lesson 5, 'Arabia;' 77, 'Zerah.'

Ethiopians—Less. 25, 'Ethiopia.'

treasures—Less. 75, 'took away.'

wives, sons—Less. 83, 'wives,' 'children.'

Jehoahaz—'possession of Jehovah.'

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

LIBNAH—a Levitical city of Judah about twelve miles south-west of Jerusalem; its inhabitants revolted from Jehoram, when he had forsaken the God of his fathers.

THE LAND OF THE BIBLE.

The winter is over and past,
The singing of birds is at hand,
The hedges are blossoming fast,
And the cuckoo is heard in the land;
The meadows are covered with flowers,
Reviving and sweet is the air,
And dear is this country of ours,
O England, so green and so fair!

My bosom—with gladness is gay,
How kind is my Maker to me!
My love and my life should I pay,
Yet poor such a present would be;
I might, O I might have been born
Where Him I should never have known,
A heathen, untaught and forlorn,
And worshipping idols of stone!

Though there in abundance were spread
Flowers glorious as eyes could behold,
The palm waving over my head,
The river sands shining with gold;
Yet what were its beauty to me,
If left a poor heathen to pine!
O England! my home is in thee;
The land of the Bible is mine!

94. SIEGE OF SAMARIA.

2 Kings vi. 24, vii; viii. 7-15 & 2 Chron xxi. 18-xxii. 6.

·Benhadad and all his host went up and ·besieged Samaria, and there was a great ·famine. The most ·loathsome food was eaten, and ·women killed and ate their children. The king wore sackcloth next his skin for grief. He wickedly ·resolved to kill Elisha, and immediately sent an executioner, while he ·followed after. Before the messenger of death arrived at Elisha's residence, Elisha said to the ·elders, "See ye how this ·son of a murderer hath sent to take away mine head? Look, when the messenger cometh, ·shut the door, and hold him fast at the door: is not the ·sound of his master's feet behind him?" When the king came up Elisha announced that the next day provisions should be abundant and ·cheap in Samaria. A lord on whom the king leaned expressed his ·disbelief of it. Elisha said to him, "Behold thou shalt see it...but ·shalt not eat thereof." ·Four lepers who sat ·at the gate of the city, pressed with hunger, ·went to the Syrian camp; but when they came they found no man there. The Lord had made the Syrians to hear a noise of chariots, and horses, and they fled in the twilight, ·leaving their tents, horses, and asses. The lepers first hid some of the spoil for themselves,

and then went, and told in the city that the Syrians had fled. The people went to the camp and carried away the spoil of the Syrians to Samaria; and the prophecy of Elisha was fulfilled, for there was abundance of food. The lord who had disbelieved the prophecy, was appointed to have charge of the gate of the city, where he was trodden to death by the people. Thus he saw the abundance but did not eat thereof, as Elisha had foretold.

According to the prediction of Elijah, Jehoram was smitten with an incurable disease in his bowels. He died of this disease after having reigned eight years. His son Ahaziah succeeded him. Elisha visited Damascus when Benhadad, the king of Syria was sick. Benhadad sent Hazael with forty camels' burden, of every good thing in Damascus, as a present to Elisha; and he was to inquire of him, if he should recover of his disease. Elisha told Hazael to say, "Thou mayest certainly recover, howbeit the Lord hath shewed me that he shall surely die." Then the man of God wept. And Hazael said, "Why weepest my lord." And he answered, "Because I know the evil that thou wilt do unto the children of Israel: their strongholds wilt thou set on fire, and their young men wilt thou slay with the sword." And Hazael said, "But what! is thy servant a dog, that he shall do this great thing?" And Elisha answered, "The Lord hath shewed me that thou shalt be king over Syria." When Hazael came to his master he said that Elisha had told him that he should surely recover. On the morrow, Hazael took a thick cloth, and dipped it in water, and spread it on Benhadad's face, so that he died: and Hazael reigned in his stead.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

Benhadad—this name became common to the kings of Syria, as Pharaoh was to the Egyptian kings.

besieged—an ungrateful return for the forbearance and kindness so recently shown to some of that nation. From the observation made by Elisha to Gehazi (Less. 91, 'Is it a time') it would seem that he had received a divine intimation of this approaching calamity.

famine—it appears that their stores were exhausted, which might have been from the recent dearth; this attack of the Syrians was evidently unexpected by Israel.

loathsome—the flesh of asses was eagerly purchased at a high price; meat which was unclean according to the law, was allowed to be eaten in times of famine. Other kinds of refuse were also purchased for food.

women killed—to what a horrible

extremity were they reduced by war; *the* dearest feelings of affection were sacrificed to sustain life. This shocking deed was perpetrated in Jerusalem when that city was besieged by Nebuchadnezzar, and again during its siege by the Romans under Titus. Moses foretold its occurrence. Deut. xxviii. 53-57.

resolved to kill—from feelings similar to those which led Ahab to seek Elijah's death; Lesson 80, 'slay him;' 81, 'troubleth.'

followed—it is generally supposed that Joram having sent off his executioner in a moment of anger, immediately followed to prevent him fulfilling the command he had given him.

elders—the senior members of the school of the prophets by whom he was surrounded.

son of a murderer—he was a son of Ahab.

shut the door—the time occupied by the executioner in trying to open the door would be sufficient for the arrival of Joram who would then revoke his order.

sound of—the prophetical foresight of Elisha not only saw the executioner coming, but the king following to stay the blow.

cheap—a peck of fine flour for a shekel—about two shillings and four pence—and two pecks of barley for a similar sum.

disbelief—he said, "Behold if the Lord would make windows in heaven might this thing be."

shalt not eat—the unbelieving, and probably idolatrous lord, scoffed at the promise given by Elisha, who was known to be a prophet of Jehovah, and who now spake in the name of the Lord; the necessity of making of him a public example of the wickedness of rejecting the Lord's message is evident.

four lepers—Jewish commentators say they were Gehazi & his three sons.

at the gate—leprous persons being excluded from the city. Less. 25, and 91, 'leprosy.'

went—the Syrians did not exclude from their camp persons afflicted with leprosy. Less. 91, 'leper.'

leaving—so sudden and terrible was the panic which fell upon them that they would not stay to unloose the halters of their horses and asses which formed the outer circle of their camp. Lesson 51, 'camp.'

told in the city—they made known their discovery to the porter of the city gate; the king at first believed it was a stratagem to withdraw the hungry inhabitants from the protection of the city; but the news was soon confirmed by parties sent to the Syrian camp.

charge—to regulate the access of the people, lest the gateway should be choked & personal injury result to many.

trodden—the stream of human beings rushed through with such ravenous haste that the unfortunate lord yielded to the pressure and was trampled to death.

incurable disease—Les. 93, 'a writing.'

Ahaziah—'the Lord sustains,' called also Azariah; he began to reign in Jerusalem in the twenty-second year of his age.

Hazael—'vision of God;' he was probably the highest officer in Benhadad's court.

forty camels' burden—an immense present, showing the anxiety of the king to know his destiny.

mayest certainly—the disease is not mortal, nevertheless he shall die.

wept—in the presence of Hazael he prophetically contemplated the extremities to which Hazael would reduce them; Lesson 97, 'afflict.'

is thy servant, &c.—a figurative expression, meaning "Am I really so deserving of contempt?" Lesson 76, 'dogs.'

thou shalt be, &c.—thus was he appointed king of Syria, in fulfilment of the instructions given to Elijah; Less. 82. 'anoint;' to be a scourge to the Israelites for their idolatries.

spread—he suffocated his sick and helpless master. What may be expected from the reign of Hazael thus commenced? One day he shudders at the idea of committing abominable cruelties; the next he begins his execrable career by murdering his king & master.

THANKSGIVING FOR PLENTY AFTER FAMINE.

"AND THERE WAS A GREAT FAMINE IN SAMARIA."

Great God! when famine threaten'd late
To scourge our guilty land,
O did we learn from that dark fate
To dread thy mighty hand?

Did then our sins to memory rise?
Or own'd we God was just?
Or rais'd we penitential cries?
Or bow'd we in the dust?

Did we forsake our evil path?
Was any sin abhorr'd?
Or did we deprecate thy wrath,
And turn us to the Lord?

'Tis true, we fail'd not to repine,
But did we too repent!
Or own the chastisement divine,
In awful judgment sent?

But God who in his strict decrees,
Remembers mercy still,
Can, in a moment if he please,
Our hearts with comfort fill.

He when he brings his children low,
Has blessings still in store;
And when he strikes the heaviest blow,
He loves us but the more.

And while his gracious name we praise
For bread so kindly given;
Let us beseech him all our days,
To give the bread of heaven.

H. More.

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95. JEHU ANOINTED KING.

2 Kings ix. x.

Elisha sent one of the sons of the prophets to Ramoth-gilead to anoint Jehu, the son of Nimshi, to be king. When he came all the captains of the host were sitting together, and he said to Jehu, "I have an errand to thee, O captain." And Jehu arose, and went into the house; and he poured the oil on his head,

and said unto him, "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I have anointed thee king over the people of the Lord, even over Israel. And ·thou shalt smite the house of Ahab, thy master, that I may ·avenge the ·blood of my servants, the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of the Lord, at the hand of Jezebel. For the whole house of Ahab shall perish; and I will make the house of Ahab ·like the house of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha, the son of Ahijah. And the dogs shall eat Jezebel in the portion of Jezreel, and there shall be none to ·bury her." Then the young man opened the door, and fled. When Jehu returned to the captains he ·told them what the young man had said; then they took every man his garment, and ·put it under him on the ·top of the stairs, and blew with trumpets, saying, "Jehu is king." Jehu immediately drove to Jezreel; and Joram sent ·messengers to meet Jehu, but Jehu did not allow them to return. ·Joram and Ahaziah went forth, each in his chariot, to meet Jehu, and they met him in the ·portion of Naboth, the Jezreelite. Then Joram said, "Is it peace, Jehu?" Jehu answered by reminding him of the wickedness of his mother Jezebel; whereupon Joram turned to flee, saying, "There is treachery, O Ahaziah." Then Jehu drew a bow, and smote Joram between his arms; the arrow went out at his heart, and Joram sunk down in his chariot. Then said Jehu to Bidkar his captain, "Take and cast him in the portion of the field of Naboth, the Jezreelite; for remember how the Lord said, "Surely I have seen the blood of ·Naboth, and the blood of his sons, and I will requite thee in this ·plat, saith the Lord." As Ahaziah fled, Jehu followed, saying, "·Smite him also in the chariot." And they did so: and he fled to *Megiddo* and died there. When Jehu came to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it; and she ·painted her face and ·tired her head, and looked out at a window, and said to Jehu, "·Had Zimri peace who slew his master?" Jehu looked up to her, and told her servants to throw her down. She was thrown down and trodden under foot. After Jehu had eaten and drank, he sent people to bury her; but they found only her skull, and feet and the palms of her hands, for the ·dogs had eaten her

flesh. Wherefore they came and told him; and he said, "This is the word of the Lord, which he spake by his servant Elijah, saying, In the portion of Jezreel shall dogs eat the flesh of Jezebel. Soon after, Jehu caused the rulers of the city to slay Ahab's seventy sons. On his way to Samaria he met the brethren of Ahaziah, and ordered them to be slain.

Jehu afterwards met Jehonadab, the son of Rechab, and he took him up into his chariot, saying, "Come with me, and see my zeal for the Lord." When he came to Samaria he slew all that remained of the house of Ahab. He then proclaimed a solemn assembly to Baal, and he put vestments on the worshippers of Baal; and when he offered the burnt-offering, he sent in the guard and captains to slay them all. They brought forth the images and brake down the house of Baal. Thus Jehu destroyed Baal out of Israel.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

one—those of the sons of the prophets who gave promise of future distinction in the Lord's service were employed by the presiding prophets in executing important commissions. Less. 92, 'sons of the prophets.'

anoint—Elijah received instructions at Horeb to perform this act; Less 82, 'Jehu;' perhaps the reprieve granted to Ahab caused its postponement; Less. 85, 'I will not; the obligation was transferred to Elisha; Less. 82, 'anoint,' 'Elisha.'

house—it would appear that Joram's army had taken Ramoth-gilead, and were in possession of it, for the captains were not encamped, but lodging in a house.

poured—Less. 44, 'poured.'

thou shalt smite—Less. 97, 'Because.'

avenge—the shedding of the blood of the Lord's saints and prophets is a crime of such magnitude that a certain retribution quickly succeeds. Ps. xciv. 1-7, 23.

blood of—Less. 80, 'seek him;' 82, 'she would;' 85, 'Naboth,' &c.

like the house—Less. 76, 'smote all;' 78, 'like the house.'

bury—Less. 54, 'buried.'

told them—the ceremony was performed in private, as was Saul's and David's anointing by Samuel. Less. 44, & 45, 'anointed.' Jehu's statement to the captains was readily believed, for they knew the messenger.

put under him—an ancient practice of testifying allegiance; it was not confined to eastern countries; rich cloths and carpetings are commonly laid down for the feet of royalty; but on occasions like the present, the outer garments of those in attendance were made to answer the purpose.

top of the stairs—they were assembled on the roof of the house, probably the state room over the city gate; Lesson 61, 'chamber.' Jehu would here stand in view of the townspeople and the military garrison.

messengers—Joram saw at a distance a large body of soldiers, and feeling apprehensive that the Syrians had again obtained possession of Ramoth-gilead, he sent forward some attendants to inquire and return with an answer.

Joram and Ahaziah—the latter engaged in the war against Hazael as Joram's ally, as Jehoshaphat had done when Ahab sought to recover the same city from Benhadad. Lesson 86.

Naboth and his sons—Les. 85, 'stoned.'

plat—plantation.

Smite him also—Ahaziah was nephew to Joram and grandson of Ahab. Les. 79, 'affinity;' 'Athaliah;' 87, 'wrath;' 93, 'slew.'

painted—tinted her eyebrows; the practice of darkening the eyebrows is universal among eastern women.

tired—put on her head-dress, &c.

Had Zimri—an intimation that Zimri's punishment should befal him also. Les. 70, 'Zimri.'

dogs had eaten—the fearful prediction of Elijah was thus fulfilled; Lesson 85, 'should eat;' compare Les. 76, 'dogs.'

seventy sons—they were being brought up in the families of the great men of the city; this was, and is, customary in the East. The polygamy of the times accounts for the large number of Ahab's sons or rather grandsons.

brethren—see 'smite him also,' above. Being related to Ahab's house through Athaliah, Jehu considered his commission extended also to them.

Jehonadab—a descendant of Rechab, a Kenite; he was a man of exemplary piety, abstemiousness, and self-denial. In order to preserve his race distinct and independent, he established a rule that his descendants should not possess lands or houses, nor drink wine nor strong drink.

took him up—probably to allay any fears that the quiet and devout portion of the inhabitants might feel as to the ulterior designs of Jehu.

zeal for the Lord—in opposition to Baal and Ashtaroth; the worship of the golden calves was not considered idolatrous by the mistaken Israelites; hence we find that though Jehu destroyed the worship of Baal out of Israel, he maintained the worship of the calves.

slew all—Less. 85, 'whole family.'

solemn assembly—he practised dissimulation to accomplish the overthrow of Baal's worship.

vestments—to distinguish them from the worshippers of the Lord—or of the calves.

INCONSTANCY LAMENTED.

The wandering star, and fleeting wind,
Are emblems of the fickle mind;
The morning cloud and early dew
Bring our inconstancy to view.

But cloud and wind, and dew and star,
Only a faint resemblance bear;
Nor can there aught in nature be
So changeable and frail as we.

Our outward walk and inward frame,
Are scarcely through an hour the same;
We vow, and straight our vows forget,
And then those very vows repeat.

We sin forsake, to sin return;
Are hot, then cold, now freeze, now burn;
Now sink to hell, in dark despair.
Then soar to heaven, and triumph there.

With flowing tears, Lord, we confess
Our folly and unsteadfastness;
When shall these hearts more stable be,
Fix'd by thy grace alone on Thee!

BEDDOME

96. ATHALIAH'S REIGN. JOASH PROCLAIMED.

2 Chron. xxii. 10, xxiii. 2 Kings xi. xii. 4-16.

When Ahaziah, king of Judah, was dead, his mother, Athaliah, ·destroyed all the ·seed-royal of Judah, except ·Joash, the infant-son of Ahaziah, who was saved by his aunt, Jehoshabeath, the wife of ·Jehoiada, the priest. She stole him from among the king's sons that were slain, and put him and his nurse in a bed chamber, and she hid him in the ·house of God six years, while Athaliah ·reigned over the land. In the seventh year of Athaliah's reign Jehoiada resolved to proclaim Joash king. He ·strengthened himself, and appointed captains who went about in Judah, and gathered the ·Levites out of all the cities of Judah, and the chief of the fathers of Israel, and they came to Jerusalem. And all the congregation made a ·covenant with the king in the house of God. And Jehoiada said unto them, "Behold the king's son shall reign as the Lord hath said of the sons of David." He told the captains and the Levites how to guard the king: and then he and his sons ·brought out the king's son, and put upon him the ·crown, and gave him the ·testimony, and made him king. And Jehoiada and his sons ·anointed him, and said, "·God save the king." Athaliah hearing the noise, came into the house of the Lord, and when she saw that all the people of the land rejoiced, she rent her clothes, and said, "Treason." Jehoiada would not have her ·slain in the house of the Lord, but she was slain at the entering of the horse-gate, by the king's house. Jehoiada governed the kingdom for Joash while the king was young, during which time the kingdom prospered. The people covenanted to serve God. They ·brake down the house of Baal, and ·slew Mattan, the priest of Baal. And the king sent for Jehoiada and the other priests, and required of them that the temple should be repaired; for the sons of Athaliah had broken up the house of God, and they had bestowed the dedicated things on Baalim; and Jehoiada the priest took a chest, and bored a hole in the lid of it, and set it beside the altar, on the right side as one cometh into the house of the Lord: and the priests that kept the door put therein all the money that was brought into the house of the Lord. So the work-

men wrought, and the work was perfected by them, and they set the house of God in its state, and strengthened it. And when they had finished it, they brought the rest of the money before the king and Jehoiada, whereof were made vessels of silver and of gold for the house of the Lord. And they offered burnt-offerings in the house of the Lord continually all the days of Jehoiada.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

destroyed—she was aware of the awful denunciations of God against the house of Ahab; and when she heard of their fulfilment she determined to extirpate the family of Jehoshaphat in her rage against the God of the Jews.

seed-royal—the brethren of Jehoram were destroyed by his order; Less. 93, 'slew;' Jehoram's sons were slain by the Philistines and Arabians; Less. 93, 'Arabians;' their children were put to death by Jehu; Less. 95, 'brethren;' and now Athaliah destroys her own grand-children; compare Less. 58, 'sword,' and 87, 'wrath.' Athaliah thought all David's line was now extinct, but God had reserved one infant child to preserve the honour of that illustrious servant of God. Less. 93, 'light.'

Joash—'Jehovah-given.'

Jehoiada—'the Lord knows.'

house of God—probably in one of the chambers occupied by the high priest. Less. 68, 'Temple.'

reigned—during that period she used all her power and influence to establish idolatry.

strengthened—gathered around him men of influence and authority who desired to see Athaliah's reign brought to an end; they were not thus guilty of rebellion, for Athaliah had no claim to the throne, Joash was the rightful heir.

Levites—though in seasons of general corruption, many of them fell into sin, yet they were, as a tribe, ever distinguished for their forward zeal in the Lord's cause; Less. 50, 'reached;' 75, 'resorted,' 'strengthened.'

covenant—Less. 56, 'king.'

brought out—a platform had been erected, and on it was placed a low pillar, against which the young king stood in sight of the people.

crown—this is the first intimation we have of a coronation.

testimony—some think this means the sceptre or other emblem of royalty, others believe it was a copy of the Law. Less. 30, 'meditate,' &c.

anointed—Les. 44, 'poured,' 'anointed.'

God save, &c.—the common shout of loyal respect and affection used in all countries and ages. Less. 44, 'God save, &c.' The solemn ceremonies of the coronation being over, the people hailed their king with acclamations, and prayed for his prosperity.

slain—she was the only remaining member of the doomed house of Ahab.

brake down—Less. 33, & 37, 'throw down.'

slew Mattan—Less. 81, 'slew.'

the king and Jehoiada—the good priest virtually reigned; for with the watchful care of a parent, and the zeal of a priest of the Lord, he counselled the young prince in all matters concerning his duty. His intimate acquaintance with the books of Moses rendered him an invaluable guide to the king and protector of the national worship and honour.

all the days—his active and zealous care for the maintenance of true religion relaxed not even when he became old.

HYMN OF THE PERSECUTED.

Hear, Father, hear thy faint afflicted flock
Cry to thee from the desert and the rock;
While those who seek to slay thy children hold
Blasphemous worship under roofs of gold;
And the broad goodly lands, with pleasant airs,
That nurse the grape and wave the grain are theirs.

Yet better were this mountain wilderness,
And this wild life of suffering and distress—
Watchings by night, and dangerous flight by day,
And meetings in the depths of earth to pray:
Better, far better, than to kneel with them,
And pay the impious rite thy laws condemn.

Soon, mighty God! soon shall thy frown look forth
Unveil'd, and terribly shall shake the earth.
Then the foul power of Antichrist and all
His long upheld idolatries shall fall;
Thou shalt raise up the trampled and opprest,
And thy deliver'd saints shall dwell in rest.

BRYANT.

97. REIGNS OF JEHU, JEHOAHAZ, & JEHOASH.

2 Kings x. 29-36, xiii.

After Jehu had destroyed Baal out of Israel, the Lord said unto him, "Because thou hast done well in executing my judgments on the house of Ahab according to all that was in mine heart, thy children of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel." But Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel with all his heart: for he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, by causing the people to worship the golden calves at Bethel and at Dan. Jehu died after a reign of twenty-eight years, and was buried in Samaria.

His son Jehoahaz reigned after him, during whose reign God suffered Hazael, king of Syria, to afflict Israel very greatly. So grievous was the oppression that there were left to Jehoahaz but fifty horsemen, and ten chariots and ten thousand footmen; for the king of Syria had destroyed them. And Jehoahaz besought the Lord, and the Lord hearkened unto him: for he saw the oppression of Israel, because the king of

Syria oppressed them. And the Lord ·delivered Israel from under the hand of the Syrians: and the children of Israel dwelt in their ·tents, as beforetime. But the kingdom was much weakened by the oppressions of Hazael, who had taken many of the cities round the borders of Israel. Nevertheless the people departed not from the sins of the house of Jeroboam, but walked therein; and there remained also the ·grove in Samaria.

Jehoahaz died in the thirty-seventh year of the reign of Joash king of Judah, and was succeeded by his son ·Jehoash. When Elisha was on his death-bed, Jehoash, the king of Israel, visited him, and ·wept over him. And Elisha said unto him, "Take bow and arrows." And ·he took unto him bow and arrows. And he said to the king of Israel, "Put thine hand upon the bow." And ·he put his hand upon it: and ·Elisha put his hands upon the king's hands. And he said, "Open the window ·eastward." And he opened it. Then Elisha said, "Shoot." And ·he shot. And he said, "The arrow of the Lord's deliverance, and the arrow of deliverance from Syria; for thou shalt ·smite the Syrians in Aphek, till thou have consumed them." And he said, "Take the arrows." And he took them. And he said unto the king of Israel, "Smite upon the ground." And he smote thrice, and stayed. And the man of God was wroth with him, and said, "Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times: then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed it: whereas now thou shalt smite Syria but thrice."

Elisha ·died, and they buried him. Now at the coming in of the year the Moabites invaded the land: and as the Israelites were burying a man they spied a band of the Moabites coming, and they cast the dead man into the ·sepulchre of Elisha; and when he was ·let down and touched ·the bones of Elisha he ·revived.

Hazael, the king of Syria, oppressed Israel all the days of Jehoahaz. Then the Lord was gracious to Israel, and had compassion on them because of his ·covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and he ·would not destroy them. Benhadad succeeded Hazael, and Jehoash took from Benhadad the cities which Hazael had taken from Jehoahaz. Three times did Jehoash beat him, and the prophecy of Elisha was fulfilled.

shall sit—though Jehu followed the sin of Jeroboam, yet God gave him this reward for his service against Ahab and Baal.

Jehoahaz—'possession of Jehovah.'

afflict—oppress; Lesson 94, 'wept.'

besought—he was brought low by his aggravated wickedness; in his distress however, he turns to God whose wrath he had provoked, and whose mercy he had slighted, and God graciously answers his prayer.

delivered—by the instrumentality of Jehoash, the king's son.

tents—these slender and easily removed dwellings had not yet been completely supplanted by more enduring residences. There was a return of that conscious feeling of security which stimulated the agricultural portion of the community to resume their labours with earnestness.

grove—Lesson 75, 'groves.'

Jehoash—'fire of Jehovah.'

wept—the natives of the East do not deem it effeminate for a man to express his grief by tears; Less. 94, 'wept.'

he took—preparation for war was symbolized by this act.

he put—shewing that an active campaign would soon commence.

Elisha put—indicating the Lord's favour towards Israel by sanctioning their cause.

eastward—the cardinal position is put for the north-east, in which direction Syria lay.

he shot—a battle should be gained.

smite—the Greeks and Romans affirmed their declarations of war by throwing a javelin, or shooting an arrow, after their herald had proclaimed the causes of the quarrel.

died—having served his day and generation about seventy years after the translation of Elijah.

sepulchre—probably a cave, having a large stone at its mouth; this stone could be easily removed and the body speedily deposited.

let down—coffins were not much used in Israel, nor are they general in the East at the present day; the body is tightly swathed, and the head is enveloped in a napkin; it is then placed on a bier to be borne to the grave, whither it is conveyed a few hours after death.

the bones—when the men had let down the body into Elisha's grave there was nothing except the swathing bands, to prevent the two bodies from coming into close contact.

revived—a most remarkable miracle in attestation of Elisha's mission. In addition to the translation of Elijah this miracle was calculated to confirm the truths taught by these two eminent servants of God.

covenant—Less. 6, 'a great nation;' 'in thee;' 'this land;' 8, 'covenant.'

would not—Deut. xxxii. 26,27.

DEATH OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

Who shall weep when the righteous die?
Who shall mourn when the good depart?
When the soul of the godly away shall fly,
Who shall lay the loss to heart?

He has gone into peace; he has laid him down
To sleep till the dawn of a brighter day;
And he shall wake on that holy morn
When sorrowing and sighing shall flee away.

But ye, who worship in sin and shame
Your idol gods whate'er they be—
Who scoff in your pride at your Maker's name,
By the pebbly stream and the shady tree.

Hope in your mountains, and hope in your streams,
Bow down in their worship and loudly pray:
Trust in your strength, and believe in your dreams,
But the wind shall carry them all away.

There's one who drank at a purer fountain,
One who has wash'd in a purer flood:
He shall inherit a holier mountain,
He shall worship a holier God.

But the sinner shall utterly fall and die,
Whelm'd in the waves of a troubled sea;
And God, from his throne of light on high!
Shall say, "There is no peace for thee."

98. IDOLATRY AND INGRATITUDE OF JOASH.

2 Chron. xxiv. 15-24. 2 Kings xii. 17, 18.

Now Jehoiada waxed old, and was full of days when he died: an hundred and thirty years old was he when he died. And they ·buried him in the city of David among the kings, because he had done good in Israel, both toward God, and toward his house.

Now after the death of Jehoiada came the ·princes of Judah, and made obeisance to the king requesting permission to establish idolatry. Then the king ·hearkened unto them. And they left the house of the Lord God of their fathers, and served ·groves and ·idols; and ·wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this their trespass. ·Yet the Lord sent prophets to them, to bring them again to worship and serve him, and the prophets testified against their idolatry: but they would not give ear. Then the spirit of God came upon ·Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada the priest, and he said unto the people, "Thus saith God, Why trangress ye the commandments of the Lord, that ye cannot prosper? ·because ye have forsaken the Lord, he also hath forsaken you." And ·they conspired against him, and ·stoned him with stones at the ·commandment of the king in the ·court of the house of the Lord. Thus Joash the king remembered not the kindness which Jehoiada his father had done to him, but slew his son. And when Zechariah died, he said, "The Lord look upon it, and ·require it."

·Then Hazael, king of Syria, went up and fought against

Gath and took it; and Hazael set his face to go up to Jerusalem, and came to Judah and Jerusalem, and destroyed all the princes of the people from among the people, and sent all the spoil of them unto the king of Damascus. For the army of the Syrians came with a small company of men, and the Lord delivered a very great host into their hand, because they had forsaken the Lord God of their fathers. So they executed judgment against Joash, and the princes and the Lord's people of Judah, because they had again established idolatry. And Joash, king of Judah, took all the hallowed things that Jehoshaphat, Jehoram, and Ahaziah, his fathers, kings of Judah, had dedicated, and his own hallowed things, and all the gold that was found in the treasures of the house of the Lord, and in the king's house, and sent it to Hazael, king of Syria: and he went away from Jerusalem.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

buried—an honourable testimony to a faithful servant of God. He had ruled Israel through Joash, and therefore he was deemed worthy the burial of a king. Less. 65, 'buried;' 96, 'the king and Jehoiada.'

princes—during the long and prosperous administration of Jehoiada they cherished secretly in their hearts the corrupt practices connected with that idolatry which had taken root during the reigns of Jehoram, Ahaziah, and Athaliah.

hearkened—he was a man of weak and unsound principles; from this concession his downward course was rapid.

groves—Lesson 75, 'groves.'

idols—Lesson 35, 'served their gods;' 74, 'high places.'

wrath—the condition upon which the people of Israel obtained possession of Canaan was that they should preserve themselves free from idolatry—hence the severity with which God visited them for their abandonment of his worship.

Yet—the warnings, remonstrances, and invitations of the God of mercy were mingled with his chastisements.

Zechariah—'remembered of the Lord.'

because—Lesson 77, 'the eyes of.'

they conspired—the princes brought a false charge against this man of God. Lesson 85, 'bear witness.'

stoned—Less. 24, & 85, 'stoned.'

commandment—here was an instance of base ingratitude—he whose life had been preserved from the murderous Athaliah, by the maternal care of Jehoshabeath, commands her offspring to be slain for prophesying to him in the name of the Lord; he who owed his crown and kingdom to the righteous Jehoiada, murders his faithful and inspired son.

court of, &c.—he was slain within the precincts of the temple of Jehovah; thus were all the circumstances connected with the murder of Zechariah of the most aggravated character.

require it—Less. 33, 'requited;' 58, 'sword;' 72, 'judgment.'

Then Hazael—Zechariah's dying declaration is soon fulfilled; the princes who introduced idolatry and procured the death of Zechariah are swept off by the king of Syria, and their property, and that of the royal house taken away.

hallowed—Less. 77, 'sent.'

THE APPOINTED END.

"OUR FATHERS, WHERE ARE THEY?"

How swift the torrent rolls,
That hastens to the sea;
How strong the tide that bears our souls
On—to eternity!

Our fathers where are they?
With all they call'd their own;
Their joys and griefs, and hopes and cares,
And wealth and honour, gone!

There where the fathers lie,
Must all the children dwell;
Nor other heritage possess,
But such a gloomy cell.

God of our fathers, hear,
Thou everlasting Friend,
While we on life's extremest verge,
Our souls to Thee commend.

Of all the pious dead
May we the footsteps trace,
Till with them in the land of light,
We dwell before thy face.

DODDRIDGE.

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99. JOASH IS SLAIN. AMAZIAH REIGNS.

2 Chron. xxiv. 25-27; xxv. 1-24; 2 Kings. xiv. 5-16.

When the Syrians had departed from Judah, Joash was afflicted with great diseases, and two of his own servants conspired against him, and slew him on his bed in the house of *Millo*, and they buried him in the city of David. This punishment was brought on Joash for having shed the blood of Zacharias, the son of Jehoiada, the priest. Zabad, the son of Shimeath, an Ammonitess, and Jehozabad, the son of Shimrith, a Moabitess, were the men who conspired against Joash and slew him. As soon as Amaziah succeeded Joash, he slew the two men who killed his father: but he slew not

their children, for he observed the law in the book of Moses, where the Lord commanded, saying, "The fathers shall not die for the children, neither shall the children die for the fathers, but every man shall die for his own sin"

Now Amaziah gathered all Judah together and found three-hundred-thousand mighty men able to go forth to war. He hired also a hundred-thousand mighty men out of Israel for a hundred talents of silver. But a man of God came to him, saying, "O king, let not the army of Israel go with thee; for the Lord is not with all the children of Ephraim. But if thou wilt go, God shall make thee fall before the enemy: for God hath power to help, and to cast down." And Amaziah said, "But what shall we do for the hundred talents which I have given to the army of Israel?" And the man of God answered, "The Lord is able to give thee much more than this." Then Amaziah separated the army of Ephraim, to go home again; wherefore their anger was greatly kindled against Judah, and they returned home in great anger. Then Amaziah led his own army forth and conquered the Edomites in the *Valley of Salt*. After this conquest Amaziah worshipped idols, which he had brought from Seir; for which he was reproved by a prophet.

Amaziah sent messengers to Jehoash, king of Israel, saying, "Come, let us look one another in the face." Jehoash returned answer to Amaziah; "The thistle that was in Lebanon, sent to the cedar that was in Lebanon, saying, Give thy daughter to my son to wife; and there passed by a wild beast that was in Lebanon, and trode down the thistle. Lo, thou hast smitten the Edomites, and thine heart lifteth thee up to boast; abide now at home; why shouldest thou meddle to thine hurt, that thou shouldest fall, even thou, and Judah with thee." But Amaziah would not hear. The kings and their armies met at Bethshemesh; the army of Judah was put to flight, and Jehoash took Amaziah prisoner, and came to Jerusalem, whence he took the treasures of the temple.

Jehoash departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, the king of Israel. He died, and was buried in Samaria, and his son, Jeroboam II. reigned in his stead.

great diseases—Deut. xxviii. 15, 20-22, 35.

conspired—not to vindicate outraged justice for the murder of Zechariah, but from feelings of private malice and revenge. Forsaken by God Joash falls into the hands of wicked men.

shed—like the blood of Abel which cried unto heaven for vengeance, (Less. 2), so does the blood of every murdered individual demand the vindication of divine justice. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. We must however remember that vengeance is not ours; it belongs to God, who never fails to make inquisition for blood; and to bring down upon every transgressor of his laws that meed of punishment which is his due. Compare the references under 'require' in Less. 98. Gen. ix. 5,6; Psalm lv. 23; lviii. 11; Rom. xii. 19-21; Heb. x. 28-31.

the men—it is worthy of remark that the mothers of the regicides were foreigners and idolaters. In every country and among every people, the maternal parent exercises the greatest influence over the future conduct of the child; this is especially true in the East, for the entire care of the children devolves upon the mother, the father giving but little attention to the education and training, even of his sons, till they are old enough for the pursuits of war or the chase.

Amaziah—'strength of Jehovah;' he had reigned three years in conjunction with his father before the occurrence of the distressing event which rendered him sole king; he was the eighth king of Judah.

the law—Deut. xxiv. 16.

a hundred talents—or about eight shillings a man; this sum was probably for the cost of equipments.

not with all—a form of expression implying that some of them were not idolatrous.

if thou will go—a warning against self-will and defiance of the Lord's authority. It is better to suffer from obedience than from disobedience.

is able—that which a man gives up for God shall be repaid him.

separated—Amaziah should not have engaged the services of men whose mode of worship was offensive to God; but having done so it would have been madness had he persevered in retaining them. Less. 31, 'discomfited.'

reproved—blamed; reproached; Amaziah, instead of humbling himself for his sin, became wrath with the prophet, and threatened to smite or kill him if he did not forbear; then the prophet forbore, but said, "I know that God hath determined to destroy thee, because thou hast done this, and hast not hearkened unto my counsel."

Come—without any provocation Amaaziah challenges Jehoash to battle; thereby displaying his vanity, presumption and disregard of human life.

The thistle—by this parable Jehoash meant to say that Israel was as far superior in power to Judah, as the cedar of Lebanon is to the thistle.

Give—an instance of consummate conceit in the meanest of weeds.

trode down—while giving utterance to his pride, he is crushed by the inadvertent step of a passing beast.

lifteth—"pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall."

boast—ascribing his success to the prowess of his own arms, and not to God, who alone giveth the victory, he rushes boastingly and wickedly into another unnecessary strife.

put to flight—God, who resisteth the proud, chastised and humbled the vain-boasting king of Judah by giving him into the hand of his adversary.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

MILLO—a prominent portion of the fortress erected, or extended and strengthened, by David, on the hill of Zion.

VALLEY OF SALT—the valley of Salt was an extensive plain at least fourteen miles across, which lay between the boundaries of Judah and Edom. It was the scene of many battles between these two nations.

THOUGHT AND DEED.

"THY SIN SHALL FIND THEE OUT."

Full many a light thought man may cherish,
Full many an idle deed may do;
Yet not a deed or thought may perish—
Not one but he shall bless or rue.

When by the wind the tree is shaken,
There's not a bough or leaf can fall,
But of its falling heed is taken—
By One that sees and governs all.

The tree may fall and be forgotten
And buried in the earth remain;
Yet from its juices rank and rotten
Springs vegetating life again.

The world is with creation teeming,
And nothing ever wholly dies;
And things that are destroyed in seeming,
In other shapes and forms arise.

And Nature still unfolds the tissue
Of unseen works by Spirit wrought;
And not a work but has its issue
With blessing or with evil fraught.

And thou may'st seem to leave behind thee
All memory of the sinful past;
Yet oh! be sure thy sin shall find thee,
And thou shalt know its fruits at last.

KENNEDY.

100. UZZIAH'S REIGN AND WARS.

2 Chron. xxv. 25,28; xxvi. 1-15. 2 Kings xiv. 17-xv. 4.

Notwithstanding the wickedness of Jeroboam, king of Israel, God granted him some success against his enemies. He restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain, according to the word of the Lord God of Israel, which he spake by his servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet, which was of *Gath-hepher*. For the Lord saw the affliction of Israel, that it was very bitter: for there was not any helper for Israel. And because the Lord

would not ·blot out the name of Israel from under heaven; he saved them by the hand of Jeroboam, the son of Jehoash.

Amaziah reigned in Judah fifteen years after the death of Jehoash, king of Israel. ·When he turned from following the Lord, a conspiracy was formed against him in Jerusalem, and he fled to *Lachish*, and was slain there. ·Uzziah, also called Azariah, was sixteen years old when his father Amaziah was slain, and all the people of Judah made him king. He built *Eloth*, and restored it to Judah. He sought God in the days of ·Zechariah, who had understanding in the ·visions of God; and ·as long as he sought the Lord, God made him to prosper. Uzziah warred against the Philistines, and brake down the wall of Gath, and the wall of Jabneh, and the wall of Ashdod, and built cities about Ashdod, and among the Philistines, and God helped him against them, and the Arabians, and the *Mehunims*. The *Ammonites* brought him gifts, and he strengthened himself exceedingly. He built ·towers in Jerusalem and in the desert, and ·digged wells, for he had much cattle both in the low country and in the plains; husbandmen also, and vine-dressers in the mountains and in Carmel: for he loved ·husbandry. Moreover Uzziah had a host of ·fighting men, that went out to war by bands, and an army of three-hundred-and-seven-thousand-and-five-hundred that made war with mighty power to help the king against the enemy. And he prepared for them shields, and spears, and helmets, and bows, and slings to cast stones. And he made in Jerusalem ·engines invented by cunning men, to be on the towers and upon the bulwarks to shoot arrows and great stones. And his name spread far abroad; for he was marvellously helped till he was strong.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

restored—all the country along the northern and eastern borders to the sea of the plain; this included the northern boundary of Asher and Naphtali, and the eastern line of the tribes of Reuben, and Gad, and half-Manasseh. Less. 32, 'divisions of Canaan.'

coast—frontier; the utmost extremity of country; boundary.

Jonah—'a dove;' the prophet who was sent to proclaim the doom of Nineveh.

blot out—Less. 23, 'blot out.'

When he turned, &c.—his subjects turned from serving him, after he had forsaken the Lord's service. So had it been with Solomon; Lesson 71.

Uzziah—'strength of Jehovah;' called also Azariah, 'helped of Jehovah.'

Zechariah—probably a son of the prophet Zechariah who was slain by Joash.

visions—like Joseph (Less. 15) he could interpret dreams having a divine origin; Less. 7, 'vision;' 9 & 15, 'dream;' he was also skilled in expounding the law.

as long—Less. 66, 'according.'

towers—watch-towers; those in Jerusalem were for defence, being built for the engines of war which he had invented; those in the desert, or uncultivated regions, were partly for war-purposes, but also for the use of shepherds who led their flocks over the wildernesses.

digged wells—for the accommodation of his shepherds and travellers; these wells were great public benefits. At the present day much attention is given to the protection and preservation of wells for travellers in Arabia, Egypt, and Palestine. Less. 10, 'draw;' 13, 'a well;' 89, 'stopped.'

husbandry—the cultivation of the earth; all the Israelites, except the Levites, were agriculturists or shepherds; it is not surprising therefore that this, their chief source of national prosperity, should engage the attention of a king who devoted himself to the internal improvement and security of his kingdom so assiduously as did Uzziah.

fighting men—the children of Israel, notwithstanding their agricultural pursuits, were essentially a warlike people; from their entrance into Canaan to their removal into captivity, their history, with but brief intervals, is one of war—offensive and defensive.

engines—this is the earliest intimation we have in history of a contrivance for the propulsion of stones, arrows, and other missiles; the invention of them by Uzziah's skilful workmen was sufficient to spread his fame abroad. They were, no doubt, similar in principle to the catapultæ and balistæ of the Greeks and Romans, the origin of which was attributed to Syria or Palestine.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

GATH-HEPHER—a town which was the birth-place of the prophet Jonah; and which is believed to be the same as Gittah-hepher, in the tribe of Zebulun.

LACHISH—a noted city of Judah which was about twenty miles south-west of Jerusalem. It was one of the cities which Rehoboam made exceeding strong, and the one to which Amaziah fled when his servants conspired against him. It was the first city in Judah to imitate the idolatries of Israel, and it was denounced by the prophet Micah.

ELOTH or ELATH—was an Idumean port on the eastern shore of the Red Sea, (Less. 20), and near to Ezion-geber. It was a place of importance during the reigns of David and Solomon, by the former of whom it was taken from the Edomites, it was a source of great wealth to Israel as a trading station. After the division of the kingdom (Less. 73) it remained under the dominion of Judah, till the revolt of the Edomites in the reign of Joram, (Less. 93, 'revolted'), in whose possession it continued till the reign of Uzziah. It was lost to Judah in the reign of Ahaz; Less. 106, 'drove.' At the present day it is a heap of ruins, but a small garrison belonging to the pasha of Egypt occupies a fortress on its site, for the purpose of keeping in check the neighbouring tribes of Arabs. Less. 11, 'Idumea;' 13, 'Mount Seir;' 27, 'Edom.'

MEHUNIMS—a tribe who inhabited part of the territory south of Judah; they are called Maonites in Judges x. 12.

AMMONITES—descendants of Ammon, one of the sons of Lot; they dwelt on the east of the Jordan; they were enemies of the Israelites, and were defeated by Jephthah, (Less. 38), and by Saul; Less. 44. It was Nahash, the king of the Ammonites, who required the men of Jabesh-gilead to shew their obedience to him by allowing him to thrust out all their right eyes. Hanun, the son of Nahash, abused the messengers whom David sent to condole with him on the death of his father; for which David sent Joab with an army against him; Less. 58. The Ammonites were made tributary to Uzziah. Their chief city was Rabbah.

SUBMISSION.

O thou! who hast at thy command,
The hearts of all men in thy hand!
Our wayward, erring hearts incline
To have no other will but thine.

Our wishes, our desires, control;
Mould every purpose of the soul;
O'er all may we victorious be,
That stands between ourselves and Thee.

O may we, feeble, weak, and frail,
Against our mightiest foes prevail;
Thy word, our safety from alarm,
Our strength, thine everlasting arm.

And while we to thy glory live,
May we to Thee all glory give,
Until the joyful summons come,
That calls thy willing servants home.

COTTERILL.

101. PROPHECIES OF HOSEA, AMOS, AND JOEL.

Hosea. Amos. Joel.

At this time ·Hosea, ·Amos, and ·Joel prophesied in Israel and Judah. Hosea's prophecies are chiefly directed against Israel; he declared that God had a ·controversy with the inhabitants of the land because of their transgression. He exposed their idolatry in worshipping the golden calves, saying, "My people ask counsel at their ·stocks, and their staff declareth unto them, they sacrifice upon the ·tops of the mountains, and burn ·incense upon the hills, ·under oaks and poplars and elms." The punishment for their ungodliness is thus described, "I will change their glory into shame, mine anger is kindled against them...they shall not dwell in the Lord's land;...Samaria shall become ·desolate for she hath rebelled against her God; the people shall fall by the sword: their infants shall be dashed to pieces ..the high places of *Aven* shall be destroyed; the thorn and the thistle shall come up on their altars; and they shalt say to the mountains, Cover us; and to the hills, Fall on us." Notwithstanding the transgressions of Israel, and the severe displeasure of the Lord against the people, the prophet

invites them to turn unto God, "Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord; his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth." Hosea also predicted the restoration of Israel, "For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice. Afterwards shall they return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days." God further said, "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him. I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive-tree, and his smell as Lebanon." Then shall Israel be ashamed of their idolatry, saying to the Lord, "Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously,...and we will not say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods, for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy."

Amos was a herdsmen of Tekoa; he lived in the days of Uzziah, king of Judah, and Jeroboam, king of Israel. He declared God's judgments against Damascus, and spoke of the captivity of the Syrians at *Kir*. He also uttered God's judgments against Gaza, Tyre, Edom, Ammon, Moab, Judah, and Israel, and predicted the captivity of the Israelites beyond Damascus. He exhorted them to repentance, saying, "Seek good and not evil that ye may live. Hate the evil and love the good...it may be that the Lord will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph."

The prophet Joel wrote chiefly against Judah, he warned the people of danger, saying, "Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the Lord cometh." He also called the priests and people of Jerusalem to repentance, "Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: and rend your heart, and not your garments, and

turn unto the Lord your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil. Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly: gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?" He spoke also of the descent of the Spirit upon all people and said, "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered." He predicted the return of the Jews from captivity, and their final restoration to God in Jerusalem. Of Egypt he said, "It shall be a desolation," and Edom, "a desolate wilderness for the violence against the children of Judah."

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

Hosea—'saving;' he was the son of Beeri and lived in Samaria; his frequent allusions to the customs, habits, proverbs, and opinions of his time render the interpretation of much of what he has written extremely difficult at the present day.

Amos—'a burden;' Less. 103, 'gatherer;' he was a herdsman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit; his writings abound with natural descriptions derived from scenes with which he was familiar.

Joel—'the Lord is my God;' we are told that he was the son of Pethuel, but we know nothing certain concerning him. The judgments which were to fall upon the kingdom of Judah form the chief subjects of his prophecy.

controversy—a cause for dissatisfaction; for censure; for punishment.

stocks—staff—a contemptuous reference to their stupid practice of consulting idols on important questions.

tops—Less. 74, 'high places.'

incense—Lesson 23, 'incense.'

under—Less. 75, 'groves;' 'green-tree.'

desolate—as a disconsolate widow suddenly and unexpectedly deprived of her husband. It is common to personify a nation by the figure of a woman.

torn—by suffering intestine commotion to disorganize society, and rend asunder the sacred ties of consanguinity, friendship, and civil union; and by sending his messengers of wrath, famine, pestilence, and war, to scourge and afflict them. The allusion is to a wild and furious beast suddenly darting upon his prey, and then tearing it between his teeth and claws.

prepared—already determined; as the sun increases in light and heat from its rise to its meridian glory, so shall the peace, comfort, & prosperity of returning backsliders increase, if they "follow on to know the Lord." Compare Less. 33, 'I will not;' 66, 'according.'

rain—Less. 80, 'dew nor rain;' the 'latter rain' falls in April to perfect the fruits of the earth before the harvest, and the 'former rain' comes down in October to prepare the ground for cultivation.

heal—to heal the injuries which resulted from their *going back* from God.

freely—without reserve; heartily.

as the dew—to invigorate & strengthen the nation, as the dew acts on plants.

lily—a beautiful and well-known flower; it grows to exquisite perfection in the East.

roots—either as the extended roots of the cedar, or the widely spread foundations of the mountain-range of Lebanon. Less. 29, 'Lebanon;' 64, 'cedar trees.'

olive-tree—Less. 4, 'olive.'

smell—perhaps alluding to the agreeable smell of the wood of the cedar.

beyond—Less. 108, 'placed them.'

remnant—the comparative few who should escape captivity.

Joseph—the numerous and powerful tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh are often put for the ten tribes. Less. 16, 'in thee;' 32, 'tribes.'

holy mountain—Jerusalem.

day of the Lord—day of retribution.

repenteth—Less. 23, & 28, 'repented.'

heritage—the people whom God had chosen.

Of Egypt—Less. 123, 'while.'

desolate wilderness—it is so at the present day.

violence—Less. 27, 'then journeyed.'

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

AVEN—'wickedness;' Bethel is referred to; it is sometimes called Bethaven, or house of wickedness.

KIR—a district which was under the dominion of Assyria, through which the river Kir flows; this river falls into the Caspian Sea.

THE FRAILTY OF MAN'S GOODNESS.

"YOUR GOODNESS IS AS THE MORNING CLOUD, AND AS THE EARLY DEW IT GOETH AWAY."

Such the transient influence now
Of too many a fervent vow;
Such in spirit and in span,
Goodness deem'd innate in man.

Like a morning cloud it flies,
Like the early dew drop—dries,
Brief as bright, and frail as brief,
Like the changing Cistus leaf.

Clouds which bear the welcome shower
Wait not on man's fancied power;
Dews that nourish where they fall
Come not when he deigns to call.

Morning clouds though bright their dyes,
Fade before our thirsty eyes;
Dews which early pass away
Leave our hearts to drought a prey.

Give us darker clouds, whose gloom
Bears rich blessings in its womb;
Heavier dews which fall at eve,
Whence Thy seed may life receive.

BARTON.

102. JONAH'S MISSION TO NINEVEH.

Book of Jonah.

Jonah, the prophet, was commanded to go to *Nineveh* to cry against it, for the wickedness of the inhabitants. Instead of doing so, he rose up ·to flee unto *Tarshish*, from the presence of the Lord; he went down to *Joppa*, where he found a ship going to Tarshish, and he went in it. But the Lord sent a great storm, and there was a mighty tempest in the ·sea, so that the ship was like to be broken. The mariners being afraid, cried every man to his ·god; but Jonah was ·in the ship asleep. The shipmaster awoke him, and told him to call upon his God. Then they ·cast lots, that they might know ·who had caused the evil to come on them. And the lot fell upon Jonah. Then said they unto him, "Tell us, thou for whose cause this evil is upon us: what is thine occupation? and whence comest thou? what is thy country? and of what people art thou?" And he said unto them, "I am a Hebrew; and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land." And when he told them that he had fled from the presence of the Lord they were exceedingly ·afraid, and said, "·Why hast thou done this?" They then asked what they should do that the sea might be calm; and Jonah ·told them to cast him into the sea, and it would be calm. Before the mariners would consent to do this they rowed hard to bring the ship to land, but they could not. Wherefore they ·cried unto the Lord, and said, "We beseech thee, O Lord, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us ·innocent blood: for thou, O Lord, hast done as it pleased thee." So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging. ·Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the Lord, and made ·vows. Now the Lord had prepared ·a great fish to swallow up Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish ·three days and three nights. Then Jonah ·prayed unto the Lord out of the belly of the fish, and the Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land. Jonah then obeyed the word of the Lord, and went to Nineveh, which was an ·exceeding great city; as he walked through the city, he cried and said, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh ·shall be overthrown." So the people of Nineveh

believed God, and the king proclaimed a fast, and commanded the people to cry mightily unto God, and turn from their evil ways. And when God saw their repentance he spared them and would not overthrow the city.

When Jonah saw that his prophecy was not fulfilled he became exceedingly angry, and wished to die, lest the people should think that he was a false prophet. He made himself a booth on the east of the city, to see what would become of the city. He also wished to die, because a gourd which God had made to grow up, and shade him from the heat of the sun, was suddenly withered; a worm which God had prepared having smitten it. God shewed him that he ought not to be angry, for as Jonah had pitied the gourd for which he had not laboured, nor made it to grow, so should God spare Nineveh, containing six-score-thousand persons, that could not discern between their right hand and their left hand.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

to flee—the utter folly of this act proves that he took a fretful and gloomy view of the important commission he had received.

sea—the Mediterranean Sea.

god—Less. 83, 'gods of the hills:' the mariners were idolaters, probably Phœnicians; Less. 70, 'they went.'

in the ship—"he went down into the sides of the ship," shewing that the ships were provided with berths much like those of the present day.

cast lots—a very ancient mode of decision in doubtful cases; the act was generally performed with deep solemnity, and with the belief that the Disposer of all human events would "give a perfect lot," or, lead to a right decision; Less. 31, 'discovery.'

who had caused—according to the notion of the ancient mariners that unseasonal storms were caused by the indignation of the gods against some guilty person in the ship.

afraid—of the power and holy indignation of the God of Israel.

Why, &c.—a severe rebuke from idolaters.

told them—preferring death to the possibility of being again sent to Nineveh.

cried unto—they prayed unto Jehovah, the Lord of heaven and earth; thus God overruled Jonah's perversity to their conversion.

innocent blood—though they believed they were about to act according to God's will, they shuddered lest they should be in error.

Then—they had now the fullest evidence of the truth of Jonah's assertion of the almighty power of the Only True God—the disposer of all things in earth, sea, and sky; every doubt being removed they now worship and sacrifice unto Him alone.

vows—self-dedicatory resolutions to worship God and renounce idols.

a great fish—an entire human body has been occasionally found in the stomach of a shark.

three—probably one entire day and night, a portion of the day when he was cast into the sea, and a portion of the day of his deliverance.

prayed—Jonah's prayer is rather a thanksgiving for his deliverance.

exceeding great—it was three days' journey, or a circuit of about 60 miles.

shall be—subject to a respite, or a reversal of the Lord's decree, if the inhabitants repented; though this was not a part of Jonah's commission.

believed God—the fame of the God of Israel had been so widely extended that the Ninevites did not refuse to listen to Jonah; faith and repentance were the happy results.

fast—they abstained altogether from food till evening, according to the eastern custom. The Ninevites extended the fast to their domestic animals also.

cry unto God—not unto their gods, but unto Jehovah.

spared—see Less. 85, 'I will not;' Jonah's denunciation was absolute, but the idea that God might spare the city on their repentance, occurred to the king, and he resolved upon the trial.

angry—he felt that his veracity was impugned, and his fretfulness returning he peevishly wished to die.

booth—a tent; boughs interwoven.

gourd—whatever the plant was which shaded Jonah, we may justly attribute to it a miraculous growth.

could not—children are here referred to; if these were one-fifth of the inhabitants, Nineveh must have contained 600,000 persons. All ancient cities of note covered a vast extent of ground.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

TARSHISH—Tartessus, in Spain, was probably the place to which the ship was bound.

NINEVEH—the metropolis of Assyria; it was founded by Asshur, and situated on the river Tigris. It became a vast city, and in the time of Jonah it was three days' journey around it, its inhabitants having been computed at 600,000. Nahum and Zephaniah prophesied its utter ruin, and their predictions have been fulfilled. The remains of Nineveh have recently been discovered.

JOPPA—also called Japho, the chief sea-port and harbour of the Israelites; it was about thirty-two miles north-west of Jerusalem, and was situated in the territory of Dan. On the west of the town was the Mediterranean Sea, by which the cedars of Lebanon were brought in ships for the building of the temple.

USELESS FLIGHT.

"BUT JONAH ROSE UP TO FLEE...FROM THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD."

And couldst thou fancy, then,
Tarshish beyond the ken
Of Him whose presence fills unbounded space?
Who from the heavens on high,
With sleepless searching eye,
Even the depths of hell itself can trace?

Weak though the thought might be,
There are who censure thee,
Who would no less God's holy presence shun;
Weakness surpassing thine,
Whose mission, though divine,
Might hope to win belief from few or none.

Such, when they feel within
His power convict of sin,
Turn from the witness for His righteous will;
In earth's delusive joys,
In business, strife, and noise,
Striving to drown the voice they cannot still.

As well to Tarshish flee
As hope to 'scape from Thee,
God omnipresent, and omnipotent!
Closing with coward fear
That inward eye and ear,
Whose powers for nobler purposes were lent.

BARTON.

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103. OF AMOS AND HOSEA. INTERREGNUM.

Amos vii-ix. 2 Kings xiv. 28, 29.

Towards the close of the reign of Jeroboam, king of Israel, the prophet Amos had a vision which he declared in the hearing of the people. He said, "Thus hath the Lord shewed me; and, behold, the Lord stood upon a wall made by a ·plumb-line, with a plumb-line in his hand." And the Lord said unto me, "Amos, ·what seest thou?" And I said, "A plumb-line." Then said the Lord, "Behold I will set a plumb-line in the midst of my people Israel: I will ·not again pass by them any more. And the high places ·of Isaac shall be desolate, and the ·sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste; and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword." Then ·Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent to Jeroboam, saying, "Amos hath conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel: the land is ·not able to bear all his words. For thus Amos saith, Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of their own land." Also Amaziah said unto Amos, "O thou ·seer, go, ·flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there: but prophesy not again any more at Bethel: for it is the king's chapel, and it is the king's court." Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah, "·I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son: but I was an herdman, and a ·gatherer of sycamore fruit: and

the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel." He then spoke of the miserable end of Amaziah and his family, and repeated the prophecy of the captivity of Israel. He also prophesied of the future prosperity of Israel, and their return to their own land, saying, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt. And I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel; and they shall build the waste cities and inhabit them, and they shall plant vineyards and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens and eat the fruit of them. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God."

Hosea prophesied in the reign of Jeroboam II. He declared that the sins of the people were swearing, lying, killing, stealing, and committing adultery, and there was no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land.

Eleven years after the death of Jeroboam, (during which time there was no king) Zechariah his son began to reign.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

a plumb-line—a well-known instrument used by builders for ascertaining the perpendicularity of a wall.

What seest thou?—this is said to excite the prophet's attention.

not again pass—not suffer them any longer to escape punishment; as carpenters and builders try and examine their work by the line and level, so would he examine the Israelites by his holy law.

of Isaac—the altar and grove at Beersheba, which had been abused by idolatrous rites. Amos v. 5.

sanctuaries—chief seats of idolatrous worship; Isa. xvi. 12.

Amaziah—he was the king's priest, and officiated in the worship of the golden calf.

not able—so plain, forcible, and poignant were the prophet's denunciations of their sins that the people could not bear to hear them.

seer—he probably addressed him thus disdainfully.

flee thee—the idolatrous priest here pays a just tribute to true religion; in Judah the worship of God prospered under the fostering care of Uzziah; in Israel idolatry prevailed, therefore Amos would be safe in Judah, while he was exposed to danger in Israel.

I was no prophet—he had not been set apart to this important office in his early life; nor educated at the schools of the prophets. Les. 92, 'sons of the prophets.'

gatherer—the fruit of the sycamore-fig tree is much esteemed by most of the people of the East. Its fruit is inferior to real figs; in its green state it is bitter and not eatable; the fruit,

like some others, has to be wounded or pierced before it becomes matured. This is done by a man who ascends the tree for the purpose, and it was probably a part of the employment of Amos to do this as well as to gather the figs; Less. 70, 'sycamore.'

the flock—he acted occasionally as a shepherd.

miserable end—his wife would desert him, his sons and daughters be slain, his inheritance given to others, and himself removed as a captive to a foreign country where he should die.

overtake—a poetic and glowing description of the future copiousness and long continuance of the harvest and vintage.

mountains—the vine is usually cultivated on the sunny slopes of the hills and mountains, artificial terraces being formed for them one above another.

pulled up—this expression indicates the violence which should attend their removal into captivity, and the stability of their condition when they should be restored to their country.

THE FAMINE OF THE WORD.

"NOT A FAMINE OF BREAD, NOR A THIRST FOR WATER, BUT OF HEARING THE WORDS OF THE LORD."

O Lord, avert from us this day
Of famine's fiercest strife;
And take not from our souls the stay
And staff of endless life.

Though we too often have preferr'd
Time's transitory things
Before thy pure and precious word
Which sure salvation brings;

Yet suffer not our souls to know
This famine, worst of all;
Lest victims to its wasting woe,
We miserably fall.

O rather since the power is thine,
While yet thy word is near,
Compel us by thy voice divine
To lend a wakeful ear.

Though justly stern its tones may sound,
These thou canst teach to bear;
Far better judgment reign around
Than silence and despair.

Oh, teach us most that death to fear,
By inward famine slain,
Which dying, thirsts thy voice to hear,
Yet thirsts, alas, in vain.

BARTON.

104. KINGS OF ISRAEL. UZZIAH'S TRANSGRESSION.

2 Kings xv. 10-26; & 2 Chron. xxvi. 16-21.

Zechariah, the son of Jeroboam, reigned but six months in Israel: for ·Shallum conspired against him, and slew him before the people, and reigned in his stead. ·This was the word of the Lord which he spake unto Jehu, saying, "Thy sons shall· sit on the throne of Israel unto the fourth generation." And so it came to pass. Shallum reigned in Samaria but one month, for Menahem went up from Tirzah, and came to Samaria, and ·smote Shallum in Samaria, and slew him and reigned in his stead. Then Menahem smote *Tiphsah*, and all that were therein, and the coasts thereof from Tirzah because they ·opened not to him. Menahem reigned ten years in Samaria, and he did that which was ·evil by walking in the sins of Jeroboam. In his reign ·Pul, the king of Assyria, came against the land, and Menahem gave Pul ·tribute,—a thousand talents of silver, which he exacted from the mighty men of wealth; so the king of Assyria ·turned back to his own land. Menahem was succeeded by his son Pekahiah, who reigned two years and did evil. He was slain by Pekah, one of his captains, who usurped the throne.

Uzziah ·transgressed against God by going into the temple to burn incense. Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him fourscore priests of the Lord that were valiant men; and they ·withstood Uzziah the king, and said unto him, "It appertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the Lord, ·but unto the priests, the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense; go out of the sanctuary for thou hast ·trespassed; neither shall it be for thine honour from the Lord God." Then Uzziah was wroth, and had a ·censer in his hand to burn incense: and while he was wroth with the priests, the ·leprosy even rose up in his forehead before the priests in the house of the Lord, from beside the incense altar. And Azariah the chief priest, and all the priests looked upon him, and behold, he was leprous in his forehead, and they thrust him out from thence; yea himself hasted also to go out, because the Lord had smitten him. And Uzziah the king was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a ·separate house, being a leper; for he was cut off from the house of the Lord: and Jotham his son was over the king's house, judging the people of the land.

Shallum—he was a daring rebel of desperate character.

This was—Less. 97; the most prosperous period of the kingdom of Israel was during the supremacy of the house of Jehu.

opened not—they refused to acknowledge him as king.

evil—his reign was characterized by gross cruelty as well as idolatry.

Pul—he is considered to have been the son of the Assyrian king who repented at the preaching of Jonah; Les. 102. This was the first invasion of Israel by the kings of Assyria.

tribute—about £375,000 of our money, which was raised by a tax on his wealthy subjects.

turned back—it is thought that he took many captives with him.

transgressed—his prosperity unduly elated him, so that he aspired to exercising the functions of the priesthood; in this he imitated many of the neighbouring kings, who by virtue of their office had this privilege; Lesson 74, 'stood by.'

withstood—Lesson 30, 'reached; 74, 'priests;' 75, 'strengthened;' 93, 'also revolted;' 96, 'Levites.'

but unto—Less. 20 & 23, 'sanctify;' 24, 'instead.'

trespassed—Less. 26, 'Korah;' 'Dathan;' 'the earth;' 'burn incense;' 'rod.'

censer—Less. 24, 'censer.'

leprosy—Less. 25 & 91, 'leprosy.'

separate house—probably outside the city; (Less. 94, 'at the gate'); as a leper he was incapable of reigning. He invaded the dignity of the priesthood to which he had no right; and was deprived of the royal dignity to which he had a right.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

TIPHSAH—a city of Ephraim about six miles from Samaria. Another Tiphsah was seated on the Euphrates.

ASSYRIA—an ancient kingdom of Asia, south of Armenia; its great city was Nineveh, which was built by Asshur. The kingdom of Assyria was conquered by Nebuchadnezzar, and annexed to the empire of Babylon.

DOOM OF THE LEPER.

"BEHOLD HE WAS LEPROUS...BECAUSE THE LORD HAD SMITTEN HIM."

Depart! depart, O child
Of Israel, from the temple of thy God;
For He has smote thee with his chastening rod,
And to the desert wild,
From all thou lov'st, away thy feet must flee,
That from thy plague His people may be free.

Depart! and come not near
The busy mart, the crowded city more:
Nor set thy foot a human threshold o'er.
And stay thou not to hear
Voices that call thee in the way; and fly
From all who in the wilderness pass by.

Wet not thy burning lip
In streams that to a human dwelling glide;
Nor rest thee where the covert fountains hide;
Nor kneel thee down to dip
The water where the pilgrim bends to drink,
By desert well, or river's grassy brink.

And pass not thou between
The weary traveller and the cooling breeze,
And lie not down to sleep beneath the trees
Where human tracks are seen;
Nor milk the goat that browseth on the plain,
Nor pluck the standing corn, or yellow grain.

And now depart! and when
Thy heart is heavy, and thine eyes are dim,
Lift up thy prayer beseechingly to Him
Who, from the tribes of men,
Selected thee to feel his chastening rod.
Depart, O leper! and forget not God!

And he went forth—alone; not one of all
The many whom he loved, nor she whose name
Was woven in the fibres of the heart
Breaking within him now, to come and speak
Comfort unto him. Yea, he went his way,
Sick and heart-broken, and alone, to die. WILLIS.

105. REIGNS OF JOTHAM AND AHAZ.

2 Chron. xxvi. 22,23; xxvii. 2 Kings xv. 6,7,35-xvi. 1-6. Isaiah vii-ix.

Uzziah died in the second year of Pekah's reign. Jotham was then twenty-five years old, and he did that which was right. Howbeit the high places were not removed: the people sacrificed and burned incense still in the high places. He built the higher gate of the house of the Lord. He built cities in the mountains, and castles, and towers in the forests. He prevailed against the Ammonites, so that they paid tribute to him. He became mighty because he prepared his ways before the Lord his God. Isaiah began to prophesy at the beginning of his reign. Jotham reigned sixteen years. Ahaz succeeded Jotham as king of Judah; he not only followed the idolatries of the kings of Israel, but he followed other idolatries and abominations of the heathen nations. Micah prophesied in this reign: he reproved the princes and prophets of Judah and Israel, and said, "Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest." Rezin, king of Syria, and Pekah, king of Israel, invaded

Jerusalem, and besieged Ahaz; they could not overcome him, but Ahaz was afraid when he heard that they were leagued together against him. Isaiah was commissioned to say unto him, "Take heed, and be quiet; fear not, neither be faint-hearted, because Rezin and Pekah have taken evil counsel against thee, saying, "Let us go up against Judah, and vex it, and let us make a breach therein for us, and set a king in the midst of it. Thus saith the Lord God, It shall not stand neither shall it come to pass." Isaiah also predicted, that within three-score-and-five years Israel should not be a people.

Isaiah foretold the coming of Christ, saying, "Behold a virgin shall bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel;" the people of Zebulun and Naphtali were to see the great light shine—the light of the Gospel, or the beginning of the kingdom of Christ. He thus describes the blessed effects of Christ's ministry in Israel,—"The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. Thou hast multiplied the nation, wilt thou not increase the joy? they joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian." Isaiah also predicted the future glorious reign of the Saviour, saying, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this."

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

Ahaz—'possessor;' he began to reign when he was twenty years old.

Micah—'humble;' he was a native of Mareshah, a small town in the south of Judah. His prophecy is most remarkable for the clearness with which it predicted the birth-place and personal characteristics of the Messiah.

plowed—it was the practice of ancient conquerors to cause a ploughshare to be drawn over a conquered and ruined city, to denote, insultingly, that it should be no more

built upon, but be devoted to agriculture. There is no record of this having been done by the Babylonians, but after the overthrow of Jerusalem by the Romans, a plough was passed over the consecrated ground as a sign of perpetual interdiction. At the present time the hill of Zion is cultivated in several spots.

invaded—they did this in concert, having for their object the utter extinction of the house of David, and the establishment of a new dynasty; but God confounded their purpose, and delivered Jerusalem because of his promise to his servant David. Less. 57. The allied kings were speedily overtaken in their own devices; Lesson 106, 'slew,' 'conspired.'

within—before the expiration of that time; it was only from fifty-five to sixty years from this time to the colonization of Israel by the tribes introduced by Esarhaddon; Less. 108, 'brought men.'

Isaiah—'salvation of Jehovah;' he was the son of Amoz, whom the Jews say was brother to king Amaziah; he lived during the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah. His prophecies are esteemed as the most sublime of the prophetic writings. Isaiah is called the "Evangelical prophet" on account of his numerous prophecies concerning Christ and the Gospel dispensation.

Immanuel—'God with us.'

great light—John i. 4,5,9; 2 Tim. i. 10; Titus ii. 13. Jesus Christ is the great source of spiritual light and knowledge.

Gospel—good words; pardon, peace, and salvation for repentant sinners who believe in Jesus.

kingdom—the moral reign of Christ; the spiritual dominion which faith in the gospel exercises over man.

walked in darkness—owing to their intercourse with the nations on which they bordered the people of these tribes became lax in religious duties and given to idolatry.

shadow of death—the neighbouring nations rejoiced in the idolatry of the sun; but, instead of imparting spiritual light, this degrading worship was the source of the moral darkness or shadow which overspread the territory of Zebulun & Naphtali.

spoil—Less. 53, 'spoil,' 'share,' 'presents.'

yoke—Less. 73, 'yoke.'

day of—Less. 37, 'against his fellow'; the deliverance was effected by God himself, and not by the bow, sword, nor the battle.

shoulder—he shall bear all the responsibility, as well as sustain the entire dignity of undivided rule.

increase—the extension of Christ's dominion is also the extension of peace; it is a mark therefore of gross ignorance of the religion of the Gospel to glory in the successes of military enterprises as a means of propagating Christianity.

PROPHECIES OF THE MESSIAH.

"THE PEOPLE THAT WALKED IN DARKNESS HAVE SEEN A GREAT LIGHT."

Hark! a glad voice the lonely desert cheers:
Prepare the way! a God, a God appears:
A God, a God! the vocal hills reply,
The rocks proclaim th' approaching Deity.

Lo, earth receives him from the bending skies!
Sink down, ye mountains! and ye valleys rise!
With heads declin'd, ye cedars, homage pay;
Be smooth, ye rocks; ye rapid floods, give way.

The Saviour comes! by ancient bards foretold;
Hear him, ye deaf; and all ye blind, behold!
He from thick films shall purge the visual ray,
And on the sightless eyeball pour the day.

'Tis he th' obstructed paths of sound shall clear,
And bid new music charm th' unfolding ear;
The dumb shall sing, the lame his crutch forego,
And leap exulting, like the bounding roe.

No sigh, no murmur, the wide world shall hear,
From every face he wipes off every tear;
In adamantine chains shall death be bound,
And hell's grim tyrant feel th' eternal wound.

106. WICKEDNESS AND CAPTIVITY OF AHAZ.

2 Chron. xxviii. 3-15; 24,25. 2 Kings xv. 29; xvi.-xvii. 2.

It is said of the idolatry of Ahaz that he sacrificed and burnt incense in the ·high places, and on the hills, and under every ·green tree. Therefore the Lord delivered him into the hand of the king of Syria, and he and a great multitude of his people were taken captive to Damascus. Ahaz was also delivered for his ·sins into the hand of Pekah, the king of Israel, who slew in Judah 120,000 valiant men in one day, and carried away captive 200,000 persons and brought the spoil to Samaria. But a prophet of the Lord was there named ·Oded; and he went out before the host that came to Samaria and said unto them, "Behold, because the Lord God of your fathers was wrath with Judah, he hath delivered them into your hand, and ye have slain them in a rage that reacheth up unto heaven. And now ye purpose to keep under the children of Judah and Jerusalem for bondmen and bondwomen unto you: but are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God? Now, hear me, therefore, and deliver the captives again which ye have taken captive of your brethren; for the fierce wrath of the Lord is upon you." Then certain of the heads of the children of Ephraim stood up and said unto them that came from the war, "Ye shall not bring in the captives hither." So the armed men set them at liberty before the princes of Israel, who clothed them, and fed them, and put the feeble on asses, and brought them to Jericho ·to their brethren. ·Obadiah prophesied of the destruction of Edom, for her ·pride, and for her wrongs,

and violence to Jacob, saying, "There shall not be any remaining of the house of Esau, for the Lord hath spoken it."

Rezin, king of Syria, recovered Elath to Syria; he ·drove the Jews from Elath and the Syrians came and dwelt there. Ahaz then sent messengers to ·Tiglath-pileser, asking assistance against Rezin. Ahaz sent the ·treasures of the temple, and of the king's house to Tiglath-pileser; and the king of Assyria went up against Damascus, and took it. He carried the people captive to Kir, and ·slew Rezin. Tiglath-pileser also invaded Israel; he conquered the ·northern parts of Canaan, and carried away the inhabitants captive into Assyria. The prophecy of Isaiah against Syria and Israel was then fulfilled, for the riches of Damascus, and the spoil of Samaria were taken away by the king of Assyria. Hoshea ·conspired against Pekah, and slew him.

·While Ahaz was at Damascus he saw an altar, the ·pattern of which he sent to Urijah, that he might make an altar of the same kind. Upon this altar, when he returned from Damascus, he ·offered sacrifice. Ahaz entirely forsook God; he defaced the vessels of the temple, and made altars in ·every corner of Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, on which he burnt incense to false gods.

After Pekah's death there were wars and disturbances in Israel for nine years, when ·Hoshea began to reign. He did evil in the sight of the Lord. Shalmaneser, the king of Assyria, came against him, and compelled him to pay him tribute.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

high places—Less. 74, 'high places.'

green tree—Less. 75, 'groves,' 'green tree.'

sins—he proceeded so far in wickedness as to burn his children in the fire. Less. 71, 'Ammonites.'

Oded—there was a prophet of this name in Judah, in the reign of Asa. Less. 77.

to their brethren—a parallel to this act of kindness can scarcely be found in the history of those wars which human beings have prosecuted against each other.

Obadiah—'servant of Jehovah;' nothing is known of the history of this prophet; he speaks of the pride and cruelty of the Edomites and their destruction, and of the future restoration and prosperity of the Jews.

pride—they gloried in the strength and security of their rocky fastnesses; Less. 11, 'Idumea,' 13, 'Mount Seir.

drove—by the loss of this highly important port, which had been fortified by Uzziah, the kingdom of Judah was deprived of the chief source of their foreign wealth, for by it they had

traffic with Arabia, Persia, India, and the eastern coast of Africa. Less. 100, 'Eloth.'

Tiglath-pileser—'lord of the Tigris;' Less. 102, 'Nineveh;' 104, 'Assyria;' he was probably, the son of Pul; Less. 104, 'Pul.'

treasures—being renewed from time to time by spoils taken in war, they were generally sufficient, as well as available, for the purpose of bribing off an assailant or hiring the aid of a foreign power.

slew—he who had plotted the death of Ahaz is now slain, and his kingdom absorbed in the rapidly increasing dominion of Assyria.

northern parts—including the land of Naphtali, and parts of Asher, Gad, and Manasseh.

conspired—he who conspired to overthrow the purpose of God respecting the family of David becomes the victim of a conspiracy in his own kingdom.

while—Ahaz went to Damascus to meet his powerful ally, to congratulate him on his successes. Ahaz received no advantage from the purchased assistance of Tiglath-pileser, for the loss of the treasures sent him impoverished the kingdom, and the conquest of parts of Israel—which lay between Judah and Assyria, prepared the way for the invasion of Judah by the Babylonians which occurred some time after. Lesson 118, 'taken.'

pattern—he seems to have been a refined as well as an abandoned idolater.

offered—no doubt to propitiate the gods of Syria, who, as he supposed, were indignant with him for purchasing the aid of Tiglath-pileser against Syria. This was a heathen practice. Less. 77, 'against thee.'

every corner—Less. 83, 'gods of the hills.'

Hoshea—'salvation;' he was the son of Elah, and the last of the kings of Israel.

THE JUDGMENTS OF GOD.

Behold the Lord, adore his name,
And bow with humble dread;
His awful judgments walk our streets,
And strike our comforts dead.

Our pastures mourn beneath his stroke,
Our cattle languish round;
O'er their untasted food they fall
Expiring on the ground.

Our towns he visits with his scourge,
And sweeps our strength away;
Foul spots soft beauty's form deface,
And youthful charms decay.

Our foes against our boasted forts
With haughty scorn prevail;
Through gates of brass they burst their way,
And all our bulwarks fail.

Oh! that the nation thus chastis'd,
Thy Righteousness might learn,
And, humbled by thy mighty hand,
To him that smites them turn. DODDRIDGE.

107. HEZEKIAH'S REFORMS.

2 Chron. xxviii. 26-xxx ; 2 Kings xviii. 1-6.

After the death of Ahaz, his son ·Hezekiah began to reign. He did that which was right as his father David did. He destroyed all kinds of idolatry, and he brake the ·brazen serpent that Moses had made in the wilderness ; for the people in those days ·burnt incense to it. He trusted in the Lord God of Israel, so there was none like him among the kings of Judah, before nor after him. He restored the temple service, and sent priests into the temple to cleanse it, as well as all the holy vessels and altars. The temple was afterwards ·sanctified by burnt-offerings, and by the worship of the king and all the congregation. And the people sang praises to the Lord with gladness in the words of David.

Hezekiah then commanded the people to bring their sacrifices and burnt-offerings into the house of the Lord, and keep the ·passover ; and he sent ·posts throughout his kingdom bearing letters from himself, saying, "Ye children of Israel, ·turn again unto the Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, and he will return to the remnant of you that are escaped out of the hand of the ·kings of Assyria. And be not ye like your fathers, and like your brethren, which trespassed against the Lord God of their fathers, who therefore gave them up to desolation, as ye see. Now, be ye not stiff-necked, as your fathers were, but yield yourselves unto the Lord, and enter into his ·sanctuary, which he hath sanctified for ever ; and serve the Lord your God, that the fierceness of his wrath may turn away from you. For if ye turn again unto the Lord, your brethren and your children shall find compassion before them that lead them captive, so that they shall come again into this land : for the Lord your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away his face from you, if ye return unto him." Some of the inhabitants in Ephraim, Manasseh, and Zebulun, mocked the messengers, but ·others came to Jerusalem.

Some of those who came to this feast of the passover were ·not sanctified according to the law of Moses. But Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, "The good Lord pardon every one that prepareth his heart to seek the Lord God of his fathers." They kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with great gladness. Then they took counsel to keep it other seven

days: and all the congregation of Judah, and the congregation that came out of the land of Israel, and the strangers also rejoiced, for since the time of Solomon there was not the like in Jerusalem. Then the priests and the Levites blessed the people, and their voice was heard, and their prayer came up to God's holy dwelling place, even to heaven. When all this was finished, all Israel that were present went out to the cities of Judah, and utterly destroyed all images and altars in Judah, Benjamin, Ephraim, and Manasseh; after which they returned, every man to his inheritance.

Then Hezekiah commanded the people that dwelt in Jerusalem to give the portion of the priests and the Levites, that they might be encouraged in the law of the Lord. And as soon as the commandment came abroad, the children of Israel brought in abundance the firstfruits of corn, wine, and oil, and honey, and of all the increase of the field; and the tithe of all things brought they in abundantly. Hezekiah wrought that which was good, and right, and truth, before the Lord his God; and in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the commandments, he prospered, because he did it with all his heart.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

Hezekiah—'strength of Jehovah;' he was the twelfth king of Judah; he ascended the throne in the twenty-fifth year of his age.

brazen—Less. 27, 'brazen,' 'looked,' 'healed.'

burnt—the worship of the serpent prevailed in many ancient countries, especially in Egypt; it exists in India at the present day; its origin is supposed to be deprecatory, suggested by a traditionary fear of his power to inflict injury. The serpent was the symbol of power, wisdom, and the healing art; under all the modifications of its worship it was made the representative of something good or beneficent. The worship of the Brazen Serpent by the Israelites was probably induced by the serpent worship of neighbouring nations; and strengthened by the consideration of the fact that in the wilderness their wounded ancestors looked upon it and were healed. Hezekiah boldly trampled on this venerable and interesting relic, and upon those feelings of regard with which he as well as others naturally viewed it, when he perceived the idolatrous tendencies of the people. He called it *Nehushtan*, because he valued it only as 'a piece of brass.' It had stood 726 years, a monument of God's mercy to their fathers in the wilderness.

sanctified—Lesson 20, 'sanctify.'

passover—this seems to have been the first attempt made by any of the kings of Judah to call back the subjects of the kingdom of Israel to the observance of the passover in Jerusalem; it is but reasonable to suppose that Hoshea's permission had been obtained to allow Hezekiah's messengers to pass through his country; Less. 19, 'passover.' 'every year;' 20, 'further instructions.'

posts—king's messengers, men who were light of foot and confidential.

turn—he does not ask them to turn unto him as their rightful sovereign, but unto the pure worship of Jehovah.

kings—Less. 104, 'Pul,' tribute;' 106, 'northern parts.

sanctuary—'sanctified;' Less. 69.

others came—there is no mention of any worshippers having come out of the tribe of Ephraim; that powerful tribe, characterised from an early date for its haughtiness, sustained the idolatry of the calves in proud opposition to the temple-service. Those who came to Jerusalem were from the northern parts, (Less. 106) where the ravages of Tiglath-pileser had been experienced.

not sanctified—not ceremonially clean; the commandment was urgent, for the passover was near. In order to allow the fullest time for the people to prepare, the passover was deferred from the first to the second month, beyond which it could not be postponed.

since the time—because the Ten Tribes had been separated from the worship of God.

dwelt in Jerusalem—they had in the reign of Ahaz withholden the dues from the levites and priests; it was right that they should set the example of resuming the payment of them, for, living near the temple, they were at no expense in attending its services, while they profited by the great influx of people from all parts of the country.

first fruits—Less. 32, 'forty-eight.'

SECRET PRAYER.

Go when the morning shineth—
Go when the moon is bright—
Go when the eve declineth—
Go in the hush of night—
Go with pure mind and feeling,
Fling earthly thought away,
And in thy chamber kneeling,
To God, in secret, pray!

Remember all who love thee—
All who are loved by thee—
Pray, too, for those who hate thee,
If any such there be!
Then for thyself in meekness
A blessing humbly claim,
And join with each petition
Thy great Redeemer's name!

Or if 'tis here denied thee,
In solitude to pray;
Let holy thoughts come o'er thee,
When friends are round thy way!
E'en then the silent breathing
Of thy spirit raised above,
Will reach his throne of glory,
Who is mercy, truth, and love.

O! not a joy or blessing,
With this can we compare!
The power that he hath given us
To pour our souls in prayer!
Whene'er thou pine'st in sadness,
Before his footstool fall,
And remember, in thy gladness,
His grace who gave thee all! MRS. FOLLEN.

108. PROPHECIES OF MICAH.

Micah iv. 1-5; v. 2; 2 Kings xvii; xviii. 9-12.

Micah also prophesied in the days of Hezekiah, king of Judah. He spoke of the peace, glory, and prosperity of the future kingdom of Christ in this glowing language, "In the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills: and the people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob: and he will teach us of his ways, and we shall walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig-tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it. For all people will walk every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever. In that day, saith the Lord, will I assemble her that halteth, and I will gather her that is driven out, and her that I have afflicted; and I will make her that halted a remnant, and her that was cast far off a strong nation: and the Lord shall reign over them in mount Zion from henceforth, even for ever." He spoke of the ignorance of the people of their duties, and of God's requirements, saying, "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a

year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my first-born for my trangression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" He fore-told the birth of Christ at Bethlehem, saying, "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."

Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, found Hoshea conspiring with So, king of Egypt, to throw off his yoke; for he brought no tribute as he had done year by year. Therefore the king of Assyria shut him up and bound him in prison, in the sixth year of his reign over Israel. Hosea, the prophet, then called on the people to trust in the Lord; he said, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself: but in me is thine help. I will be thy king; where is any other that may save thee in all thy cities? and thy judges of whom thou saidst, Give me a king and princes? I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath." But the people would not repent, wherefore the Lord sent Shalmaneser against them, and he besieged Samaria three years. In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Israel, Shalmaneser took Samaria, and carried the people of Israel away and placed them in Assyria, and in the cities of the Medes. God suffered them to be thus taken captive for their sins against him; they had forsaken God, served idols, and rejected his prophets. The king of Assyria brought men from Babylon to dwell in the cities of Samaria, who feared not the Lord. God sent lions among them which slew some of them. Then the king sent one of the priests of the land into Samaria, to teach the people.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

last days—the times of the Gospel Dispensation.

mountain—Moriah; used figuratively of the exaltation, stability, enlargement, and glory of the Christian church.

in the top—above all rival claims upon the holy sympathies of mankind.

let us go—the Turkish power stands in the way of the literal accomplishment of this prophecy; but it is generally

considered that the removal of that barrier is near at hand.

shall judge—at present injustice prevails over the principles of truth; a change is however at hand. The full completion of this prophecy will take place when the last of the four great monarchies is destroyed; Lesson 125, 'successive kingdoms.'

beat—universal peace shall characterize the reign of the Prince of Peace; this accomplishment must be future, for nations have not yet submitted to his rule; there is, however, a general misgiving as to the utility of war to produce peace.

sit—in harmony, happiness, security, and industry; Less. 38, 'fig-tree;' 71, 'under his own.'

halteth—those that deviate from the ways of God, and walk not according to his word.

gather—a prediction of the return of the Jews from their dispersions to Jerusalem.

reign—some authorities interpret this literally, and maintain that Christ shall reign personally in Jerusalem, while others believe that the prophecy is figurative, and means only that Jesus shall reign by his word and Spirit in his ordinances.

shall I come—Lesson 45, 'hath the Lord.'

shall I give—though this would be a sacrifice at once revolting to humanity and abominable to God, yet the heathens were guilty of such sacrifices. Less. 38, 'sacrifice;' 89, 'eldest son.'

foretold—the Scribes and Pharisees understood this prophecy of the birth of the Messiah, as appears from Matthew ii. 5,6.

little—Both the city and family of David were in a mean condition at the time of Christ's birth; but God honoured their 'low estate.'

Shalmaneser—he succeeded Tiglath-pileser, and was probably his son.

So—he is also called Sabacon; he was an Ethiopian adventurer who invaded Egypt, and took possession of the throne.

thy king—God graciously offers to supply the place of Hoshea for the good of his oppressed though still offending people. Less. 43, 'rejected;' 44, 'all.'

gave—took—referring to Saul and Hoshea. I gave you Saul, though I was displeased with you, I will take away Hoshea, and end your kingdom.

placed them—the great body of the captives were transported to the borders of the Caspian Sea, the remotest district in the north of Media. On the smooth perpendicular surface of a mountain between Babylon and Hamadan, the ancient capital of Media, there is a sculpture representing a king, attended by his generals, receiving the homage of ten captives, supposed to represent the ten tribes; the first of the ten is prostrate, upon whom the king rests his feet; the others are tied by a rope passing from neck to neck. Less. 84, 'ropes.'

taken captive—foretold by Moses; Less. 29, 'foretold.'

brought men—thus was the prediction of Isaiah fully verified; Less. 105, 'within;' for not only were the original inhabitants far removed from their country, but their inheritance was given to others.

lions—the disturbances which had so long prevailed in Israel gave a check to agriculture, and spots formerly under cultivation became desert, hence the natural cause for the increase of wild animals. Lions do not now exist in Palestine. Less. 40, 'lion.'

to teach—that the God of the Hebrews was a true God the heathen nations did not doubt, but they limited his power and influence to his country; Less. 83, 'gods of the hills.' The new inhabitants of Samaria, believing that the worship of their native gods was an offence to the God of Israel, as a punishment for which the lions had been sent among them, sent for one of the priests (of the calves) to teach them the worship of Jehovah.

GOSPEL PROMISES.

"COME AND LET US GO UP TO THE MOUNTAIN OF THE LORD."

Behold the mountain of the Lord
In latter days shall rise,
Shall tower above the meaner hills,
And draw the wondering eyes.

To this the joyful nations round,
All tribes and tongues shall flow:
"Ascend the hill of God,"—they say,
"And to his temple go!"

The beam that shines on Sion's hill
Shall lighten every land,
The king that reigns in Sion's towers
Shall all the world command.

No strife shall vex Messiah's reign,
Or mar the peaceful years;
To ploughshares shall they beat their swords,
To pruning hooks their spears.

No longer host encountering host
Their millions slain deplore;
They hang the useless helm on high,
And study war no more.

Come then, oh come from every land,
To worship at his shrine;
And walking in the light of God,
With holy beauty shine.

LOGAN.

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109. HEZEKIAH RESISTS ASSYRIA; HIS ILLNESS.

2 Kings xviii. 7,8,13-16 & 2 Chron. xxxii. 1-8.

The Lord was with Hezekiah in all things and prospered him whithersoever he went forth. He rebelled against the king of Assyria, and he smote the Philistines even to Gaza. At this time Nahum prophesied of the ruin and desolation of Nineveh, and denounced its crimes of lying and robbery. Isaiah prophesied against Tyre, "the mart of nations," which should be destroyed, and also against *Babylon*, "the glory of kingdoms," which he said should be swept "with the besom of destruction."

In the fourteenth year of Hezekiah's reign Sennacherib, king

of Assyria, came against the ·fenced cities of Judah and took them. Hezekiah strengthened Jerusalem for a siege, and built up walls and towers, and encouraged the people, saying, "With him is an arm of flesh, but with us is the Lord our God, to help us, and to fight our battles." ·Afterwards, he acknowledged to Sennacherib that he had offended, and offered to pay him tribute. Sennacherib appointed him ·to pay three-hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold. And Hezekiah gave him the treasures from the house of the Lord, and from the king's house and he cut off the gold from the doors, and the pillars of the temple, and gave it to him. In those days Hezekiah was sick unto death. The prophet Isaiah came to him, and announced this message from the Lord, "Set thine house in order, for ·thou shalt die, and not live." Hezekiah turned his face to the ·wall and ·wept, and prayed to the Lord, saying, "I beseech thee, O Lord, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth, with a perfect heart, and have done that which was good in thy sight." Isaiah departed, but was commissioned to return, and tell him that God had heard his prayer, and seen his tears, and he would heal him, and on the third day he should go up to the house of the Lord. He was also to announce to him that God would add ·fifteen years to his life, and deliver him from the king of Assyria. Isaiah directed that a ·lump of figs should be laid upon the boil. Hezekiah asked for a sign that he should recover. Isaiah inquired if he would have the shadow on the ·dial to go forward ten degrees, or backward ten degrees. Hezekiah said, let the shadow return backward ten degrees. Isaiah cried unto the Lord, and he ·brought the shadow ten degrees backward, by which it had gone down in the dial of Ahaz.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

rebelled—not against any treaties made by himself, but against the bondage to which his father had submitted, and which operated against Hezekiah's independence. Lesson 106.

smote—like David and Uzziah (Less. 56 and 100) he assailed such of them as had taken possession of parts of his kingdom, and dislodged them.

Nahum—'comforter;' he was a native of Elkosh, a village in Galilee. His prophecy against Nineveh, and of the future downfall of the Assyrian empire, would console the brethren of the captives in Judea, and afford them a prospect of their ultimate liberation.

mart—market; Less. 56 and 123, 'Tyre.'

destruction—the researches of modern travellers corroborate the truth of this prediction; the site of Babylon has for many years been forsaken by man; all its gorgeous palaces and temples lie in ruins, and are the resort of wild beasts; the holes and caverns formed by the ruins are the dens of lions, jackals, hyænas, lizards, bats, owls, and other wild animals.

Sennacherib—he was the son of Shalmaneser; he reigned but four years.

fenced—defended by fortresses.

Afterwards—after many of the fortified towns of Judah had been taken; Hezekiah probably feared that for some sin God was about to deliver him into the hand of the king of Assyria.

to pay—about £248,000. of our money.

thou shalt die—intimating that his disease was mortal.

wall—his bed or sofa was probably in the corner, the place of honour according to eastern notions; a person so placed is separated from the company present, and shielded by the wall on two sides. Less. 52, 'sit;' 85, 'bed;' 88, 'down.'

wept—Lesson 97, 'wept.'

fifteen years—to no other man was it ever granted to view the approach of death with certain knowledge. The prolongation of his life was desirable in a political view, for at that time there was no direct heir to the crown.

lump of figs—plasters of moist figs, compounded with other substances, were commonly used for healing boils; but the ulcer of Hezekiah was esteemed deadly, and a lump of dry figs was substituted for the usual plaster; the cure being suddenly effected, it was evident that it was miraculous and not natural.

dial—a sun-dial; probably a pillar erected in the centre of an open area, upon the pavement of which lines and figures indicated the progress of the sun's shadow.

brought—backward—it is not said whether the motion of the earth was arrested so as to cause the shadow to turn back, or whether the sun's rays were so disposed as to produce the effect. The phenomenon was observed at Babylon and in Egypt, and the heathen were thus instructed that their great idol was but a creature in Jehovah's hand, and under his control.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

BABYLON—the great city which was the metropolis of the Babylonian empire; it was situated on the river Euphrates, and was celebrated both for its extent and its magnificent buildings. Terrible denunciations against Babylon were uttered by the prophets, especially Isaiah; and their predictions have been fulfilled.

THE SIGN OF THE DIAL.

"SO THE SUN RETURNED TEN DEGREES, BY WHICH DEGREES IT WAS GONE DOWN."

'Tis true, of old th' unchanging sun
His daily course refus'd to run,
The pale moon hurrying to the west
Paus'd at a mortal's call, to aid
Th' avenging storm of war, that laid
Seven guilty realms at once on earth's defiled breast.

But can it be, one suppliant tear
Should stay the ever-moving sphere?
A sick man's lowly-breathed sigh,
When from the world he turns away,
And hides his weary eyes to pray,
Should change your mystic dance, ye wanderers of the sky?

Father and Lover of our souls!
Though darkly round thine anger rolls,
Thy sunshine smiles beneath the gloom,
Thou seek'st to warn us, not confound,
Thy showers would pierce the harden'd ground,
And win it to give out its brightness and perfume.

Thou smil'st on us in wrath, and we,
Even in remorse, would smile on Thee;
The tears that bathe our offer'd hearts,
We would not have them stain'd and dim,
But dropp'd from wings of seraphim,
All glowing with the light accepted Love imparts.

KEBLE.

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110. SENNACHERIB'S INVASION.

2 Kings xix. 35-37; xx. 12-19.

Berodach-baladan, the son of the king of Babylon, heard that Hezekiah had been sick, and he sent letters, and a present to Hezekiah. Hezekiah shewed the messengers all his precious things: his silver, gold, spices, armour, and every thing he had. Isaiah came and inquired of Hezekiah whence the messengers came; and what they wanted? Hezekiah told him, and also that he had shown them all his treasures. Isaiah then said unto Hezekiah, "Hear the word of the Lord: behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store unto this day, shall be carried into Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the Lord. And thy sons shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon." Hezekiah said, "Good is the word of the Lord which thou hast spoken...Is it not good if peace and truth be in my days?"

Sennacherib again invaded Judah. He sent his servants to Jerusalem, but he himself laid siege to Lachish. His captains —Tartan, Rabsaris, and Rabshakeh, boasted of Sennacherib's victories over other nations. They said their gods were not able to deliver them from his power, and they railed against the God of Jerusalem, as against the gods of the people of the earth, which were the work of the hands of man. Hezekiah was comforted by this message from Isaiah, "Be not afraid of the words which thou hast heard, with which the servants of

the king of Assyria have blasphemed me, Behold I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumour, and shall return to his own land, and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land." And Hezekiah prayed before the Lord, and said, "O Lord God of Israel, which dwellest between the cherubims, thou art the God, even thou hast made heaven and earth. Lord, bow down thine ear, and hear: open, Lord, thine eyes, and see: and hear the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent him to reproach the living God. Of a truth, Lord, the kings of Assyria have destroyed the nations and their lands, and have cast their gods into the fire: for they were no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone: therefore they have destroyed them. Now therefore, O Lord our God, I beseech thee, save thou us out of his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the Lord God even thou only." In answer to this prayer, Isaiah was to say concerning the king of Assyria, "He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shield, nor cast a bank against it." And the angel of the Lord went forth and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a-hundred-and-fourscore-and-five-thousand; in the morning this vast number was found to be all dead corpses. Sennacherib returned to Nineveh, and as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god he was slain by two of his sons.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

Berodach-baladan, or Merodach-baladan; a name compounded of the names of two of the gods worshipped in Babylon, namely Merodach and Bel, to which is added adan or Lord. It was usual for the Babylonian kings to take their names and titles from the idols they worshipped. This is the first king of Babylon we read of, his predecessors having been viceroys to the kings of Assyria. He and the prefects of Media and Armenia, and other nations tributary to Assyria, threw off their yoke simultaneously.

had been sick—the miracle of the shadow of the dial, which had accompanied Hezekiah's recovery, must have been of great interest to a scientific people like the Babylonians.

shewed—he was highly flattered by an embassy from so celebrated and distant a place as Babylon, and he shewed the messengers every respect and attention; he was also glad to receive the friendly recognition of a sovereign who, like himself, had renounced the Assyrian yoke.

sons—grand-children are also included; Lesson 83, 'children.'

eunuchs—state servants; attendants in the palaces and harems of eastern kings and princes; thus was Hezekiah's pride and ostentatious display of his riches and honour to be punished.

Good—my days—an interesting exemplification of oriental submission.

again—supposed to have been about three years later than the expedition mentioned in the last lesson.

gods—Lesson 83, 'gods of the hills.'

a blast—the hot suffocating south-wind, called the Simoom of the desert, was made additionally destructive to effect the Lord's will.

rumour—he heard that Tirhakah, the Ethiopian king of Upper Egypt, was marching against him with an immense army.

to fall—to be slain.

between—Lea. 23, 'mercy-seat,' 'cherubim.'

bank—a mound of earth, bricks, &c. thrown up for the defence of soldiers while besieging a city.

angel—the 'messenger' of Jehovah's indignation was the pestilential wind referred to above—'a blast.'

he was slain—exasperated by the loss of his army, he behaved with great severity to the captive Israelites. His career was soon closed, for his tyrannical conduct excited his wicked sons to become parricides. They slew him, and the prophecy of Isaiah was accomplished in every point.

DESTRUCTION OF SENNACHERIB.

"I WILL SEND A BLAST UPON HIM."

The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold,
And his cohorts were gleaming with purple and gold,
And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea,
When the blue waves roll nightly on deep Galilee.

Like the leaves of the forest when summer is green,
That host with their banners at sunset were seen;
Like the leaves of the forest when autumn hath blown,
That host on the morrow lay wither'd and strown.

For the angel of death spread his wings on the blast,
And breathe'd on the face of the foe as he pass'd,
And the eyes of the sleepers wax'd deadly and chill,
And their hearts but once heav'd, and for ever grew still!

And there lay the steed with his nostril all wide,
But through it there roll'd not the breath of his pride;
And the foam of his gasping lay white on the turf,
And cold as the spray of the rock-beating surf.

And there lay the rider distorted and pale,
With the dew on his brow and the rust on his mail,
And the tents were all silent, the banners alone,
The lances unlifted, the trumpet unblown.

And the widows of Ashur are loud in their wail,
And the idols are broke in the temple of Baal;
And the might of the Gentile, unsmote by the sword,
Hath melted like snow in the glance of the Lord.

BYRON.

111. PROPHECIES. HEZEKIAH'S DEATH.

Isaiah xl, xlii, xliv, liii, lx-xlv. 2 Chron. xxxii. 27-33.

Isaiah prophesied of many things that were to come to pass in the Jewish nation. Some of the events he predicted were then near at hand, others were very distant. He spoke of the coming of John the Baptist as the ·forerunner of Christ, in these words, "The voice of him that ·crieth in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." Of the Redeemer he said, "Behold, the Lord God will come with ·strong hand, and ·his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. He shall ·feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall ·gather the lambs with his arm, and ·carry them in his bosom, and shall gently ·lead those that are with young." He said that Christ would be the ·light of the ·Gentiles, to open their eyes, and to bring them out of the ·prison-house of ignorance and sin. He thus spoke of the sufferings of the Saviour, "He is ·despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we ·hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath ·borne our griefs, and ·carried our sorrows: yet we did ·esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the ·chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath ·laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he ·opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and ·who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the trangression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the ·wicked, and with the ·rich in his death; ·because he had done no violence, neither

was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it ·pleased the Lord to bruise him: he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall ·see his seed, he shall ·prolong his days, and the ·pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the ·travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many: for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him ·a portion with the great, and he shall divide the ·spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of ·many, and made ·intercession for the transgressors." Isaiah also spoke of the messengers of the gospel of Christ, saying, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth." He predicted the coming of ·Cyrus to perform ·God's pleasure; who would cause Jerusalem, and the temple, to be rebuilt. He invites all to look to the Lord and be saved, because, "He is God, and there is none else."

He also foretold the great extension of the Gospel in the latter days, when the abundance of the nations, and the power and glory of their kings, shall be devoted to the Lord. Then Jerusalem shall be called the city of the Lord, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel. Then violence shall no more be heard, nor wasting and destruction be in the land. The days of mourning shall be ended; for the people shall all be righteous, and shall inherit the land for ever. He that is appointed to bring all this happiness upon the earth is Christ, who shall comfort all who mourn, tread down the enemies of his saints, redeem his people, and bring in the ·glorious year of the Lord.

Hezekiah had exceeding much riches and honour, he made himself treasuries for silver, and gold, and precious stones: storehouses for the increase of corn and wine and oil, and stalls for all manner of beasts and flocks. He made a ·water-course to the city of David; and God prospered him in all his works. When he died he was buried in the chief of the ·sepulchres of the sons of David, and Judah and Jerusalem did him honour at his death.

forerunner—one who goes before another to make ready for him and to prepare others for his coming.

crieth in the wilderness—when eastern monarchs were about to commence an important expedition, they sent harbingers before them, especially through desert regions, to open passes, level roads, and to proclaim their approach.

strong hand—an exhibition of mighty power and majesty.

his arm—he shall rule for himself, not delegating his authority to others. Less. 57, 'ruler.'

feed—the word means to tend, guide, and protect from danger, as well as to provide pasture and drink.

gather—carry—lead—the greatest skill, vigilance, and tenderness are required and exercised by eastern shepherds in the management of the large flocks confided to their care; their flocks roam over extensive wastes all day long, the shepherds have to accompany them, leading them to green pastures and fountains of water, choosing convenient places of shelter for them at noon, *gathering* them near their tents as night approaches, and if danger is apprehended, enclosing them in a fold. Constant removals to new pastures are requisite, and it is interesting to see the shepherds *carrying* such of the lambs as are exhausted in their arms, and gently *leading* those that are with young.

light—Lesson 105, 'great light.'

Gentiles—all the nations that were not Israelites; this prophecy predicted the breaking up of the Mosaic dispensation, and the extension of the blessings of the gospel to all people irrespective of their language, geographical situation, or social condition.

prison-house—as those imprisoned are debarred from the exercise of liberty, so those whose minds are beclouded with ignorance and sin cannot enjoy the liberty of the sons of God.

despised and rejected—a general description of our Lord's rejection and condition during his abode on earth.

hid—turned from him with aversion and contempt.

borne—as one bears the load which oppresses another. 1 Peter ii. 24.

carried—like the scape-goat carrying the sins of the nation into a solitary land. Lev. xvi. 20-22.

esteem—thought; this was the error committed by Job's friends. Lesson 11, 'aggravated.'

chastisement—the punishment necessary to procure peace for us and in us.

laid—caused to meet; on him all the sins of mankind converged, and their punishment also. Alluding to the custom, in making atonement, of laying hands on the sacrifice; illustrated in the law of the scape-goat. Lev. xvi. 20-22.

opened not—neither to complain *of* God because of his severe inflictions, nor *to* God because of his ill-treatment by man.

who shall declare—he was of such high and unspeakable dignity, that neither men nor angels can declare his generation.

wicked—crucified malefactors were buried near the places of execution; this was designed by his enemies for our Saviour.

rich—the intention of his enemies was overruled, and, by a special privilege, his body was laid in the tomb of a rich man.

because—though.

pleased—it was according to God's will; we say of afflictions that it *pleased* the Lord to send them. Lam. iii. 33.

see—in the moment of excruciating agony he saw that his sufferings and death would save myriads, who should afterwards acknowledge him as their Saviour. Psalm xxii. 30.

prolong—the days of the Messiah's reign shall far outnumber the years of all the princes that ever ruled on earth.

pleasure—that is the redemption of man from sin and condemnation. Ezek. xxxiii. 11; 2 Pet. iii. 9.

travail—pain, suffering.

satisfied—because the reward shall be glorious and perpetual.

a portion—the multitudes of the nations are given him for his inheritance and rule.

spoil—the strong and powerful despoil the poor and weak; but Christ shall take his share from those mighty oppressors.

many—used for all mankind.

intercession—prayers, supplication for others.

Cyrus—foretold by name one-hundred years before his birth.

God's pleasure—the redemption of his people from captivity in Babylon.

glorious year—commonly called the millennial day of glory.

water-course—a new aqueduct to supply Jerusalem with water.

sepulchres—Less. 55, 'sepulchre;' 65, 'buried;' 97, 'let down.'

THE MAN OF SORROWS.

"HE IS DESPISED AND REJECTED OF MEN."

Despised is the Man of Grief,
Rejected, and denied belief,
By them whose sorrows He hath borne,
For whose transgression He is torn,
Whose mortal weakness He hath worn.

The mighty One the Son of God,
Hath humbly kiss'd affliction's rod,
That by His stripes we might be heal'd,
Our pardon by His blood be seal'd,
And boundless mercy stand revealed.

We all, like sheep, have gone astray,
And turn'd aside from wisdom's way,
But He hath saved us from our sin;
Our God the ransom-Lamb hath been,
Our God hath saved us from our sin!

Oh let us cast each vice away,
Which thus the Son of God could slay!
With contrite heart and weeping eye
Behold the Saviour's cross on high,
And every sin and folly fly!

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112. MANASSEH'S IDOLATRY AND REPENTANCE.

2 Kings xxi. 1-18; 2 Chron. xxxiii.

Manasseh succeeded Hezekiah at the early age of twelve years. He walked not in the good ways of his father, Hezekiah, for he restored all kinds of idolatry: he built an altar

for ·Baal, made a ·grove, worshipped the ·host of heaven, and built altars for the host of heaven in the ·courts of the temple. He set a graven image in the house of which the Lord had spoken to David and Solomon, saying, "In this house, and in Jerusalem which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, will I put my name for ever." Manasseh seduced Judah to do more evil than the nations whom the Lord destroyed before the children of Israel; and he filled Jerusalem with ·innocent blood. ·God spake to Manasseh and his people and they would not hearken. Then God said he would deliver them into the hands of their enemies; and that they should become a ·prey and a ·spoil to all their enemies. So he brought upon them the host of the ·king of Assyria, and they drew Manasseh through ·thorns, bound him in fetters, and carried him ·to Babylon.

When Manasseh was in affliction he humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and ·prayed unto him. The Lord heard his supplication, and ·again brought him to his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord, he was God. He repaired Jerusalem, took away the strange gods, and the idol out of the house of the Lord, and all the altars that he had built, and cast them out of the city. And he repaired the altar of the Lord, and sacrificed thereon peace-offerings and thank-offerings, and ·commanded Judah to serve the God of Israel. Still the people sacrificed in the high places, but only unto the Lord their God. After a reign of fifty years, Manasseh died and was buried in the ·garden of his own house, in the garden of Uzza: and ·Amon his son reigned in his stead. Amon was two-and-twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned two years in Jerusalem. He did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, as did Manasseh his father: for Amon sacrificed unto all the carved images which Manasseh his father had made, and served them; and humbled not himself before the Lord; but Amon trespassed more and more. And his servants ·conspired against him, and ·slew him in his own house. But the people of the land slew all them that had conspired against Amon; and they made Josiah his son king in his stead.

Manasseh—'forgetting;' he must have been born the third year after Hezekiah's illness; owing to his youth he was probably led astray by the princes, many of whom still adhered to the idolatries practised in the reign of Ahaz; Less. 98, 'princes.'

Baal—Less. 33, 'Baal.'

grove—Less. 75, 'groves.'

host of heaven—Less. 33, 'Ashtaroth;' 78, 'Zidonians.'

courts—Less. 68, 'temple.'

innocent blood—Less. 98, 'require it;' it is believed that the prophet Isaiah was among those slain by Manasseh, and that he was sawn asunder; but there is no sacred record of this. Heb. xi. 37.

God spake—by his servants the prophets.

prey—Less. 101, 'torn.'

spoil—Less. 53 & 105, 'spoil.'

king—this was Esarhaddon, called Asnapper in Ezra iv. 10, by whom the colonists from Samaria were brought over; Less. 108, 'brought.' The royal family in Babylon having become extinct, the Assyrian king again brought that city under his yoke; there he heard of all the treasures which had been seen in Jerusalem (Less. 110) which induced him to come up and besiege it.

thorns—some suppose that he had hidden himself in a thicket when he was captured; some that he was scourged with thorns, a common mode of torture in the East; while others believe that the word rendered 'thorns' only means that he was taken alive.

to Babylon—Isaiah's prediction (Les. 110) began to be fulfilled.

prayed—Less. 69, 'prayed for;' the prayer of Manasseh, which is in the apocryphal books of the Old Testament, expresses in the strongest possible terms the greatness of his guilt, misery, and repentance.

again brought—twelve years after his removal from Jerusalem.

commanded—he endeavoured to bring his people back to the service of God, whom he himself had misled to the service of idols.

garden—Less. 55, 'sepulchre.'

Amon—'mechanic.'

conspired—Less. 99, 'conspired;' 100, 'When he turned.'

slew—Less. 99, 'the law.'

FERVENT VOWS AND PETITIONS.

In darkness willingly I strayed;
I sought Thee, yet from Thee I rov'd;
For wide my wandering thoughts were spread
Thy creatures more than Thee I lov'd:
And now, if more at length I see,
'Tis through thy light, and comes from Thee.

Give to my eyes refreshing tears,
Give to my heart chaste hallow'd fires;
Give to my soul, with filial fears,
The love that all heaven's host inspires;
That all my powers, with all their might,
In thy sole glory may unite.

Thee will I love, my Joy, my Crown!
Thee will I love, my Lord, my God!
Thee will I love, though all may frown,
And thorns and briers perplex my road
Yea, when my flesh and heart decay,
Thee shall I love in endless day.

113. JOSIAH'S GOOD REIGN.

2 Chron. xxxiv. 2 Kings xxii-xxiii. 23.

·Josiah began to reign at eight years old. He walked in all the ways of David his father, while he was yet young, for in the ·eighth year of his reign, he began to seek after the God of David his father; and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from every kind of idolatry. And the people brake down the altars of Baalim in his presence; and the images were cut down; and the groves, and the ·carved images, and the molten images, he brake in pieces, and made dust of them, and ·strewed it upon the graves of them that had sacrificed unto them. And he burnt the ·bones of the priests upon their altars, and cleansed Judah and Jerusalem. And so did he in the ·cities of Manasseh, and Ephraim, and Simeon, even unto Naphtali; he then returned to Jerusalem. In the eighteenth year of his reign Josiah sent three of the chief men of the city to repair the house of the Lord. The king's messengers obtained the money that was brought into the house of God, which the Levites that kept the doors had gathered, and they delivered it into the hand of the workmen; and the men did the work ·faithfully. A book of the law of the Lord given by Moses was ·found by Hilkiah, in the temple, and it was carried to the king, and read to him by Shaphan the scribe. When the king heard it he rent his clothes for grief, because the fathers of Judah had not kept the word of the Lord. He sent unto Huldah the prophetess to know the Lord's will respecting Judah and Jerusalem; and Huldah returned this answer, "Tell ye the man that sent you unto me, Thus saith the Lord, Behold ·I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the ·curses that are written in the book which they have read before the king of Judah: because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense to other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore my wrath shall be poured upon this place, and shall not be quenched. And as for the king of Judah who sent you to enquire of the Lord, so shall ye say unto him, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Because thine heart was ·tender, and thou didst humble

thyself before God, when thou heardest his words against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, and didst rend thy clothes, and weep before me; I have even heard thee also, saith the Lord. Behold, I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace, neither shall thine eyes see all the evil that I will bring upon this place, and upon the inhabitants of the same." Josiah then assembled all the elders of Judah in the temple, and the words of the book were read to them; and the king and the people made a covenant to walk after the Lord, and to keep his commandments. The king then destroyed every place, altar, and custom of idolatry throughout the land. He brake down the altar at Bethel, and thus fulfilled the prophecy of the man of God of Judah, to whose bones he shewed respect. He slew all the idolatrous priests, and he kept a greater feast of the passover than had been kept since the days of Samuel.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

Josiah—foretold by name 330 years before his birth; Less. 74, 'Josiah.' He was the fifteenth king of Judah.

eighth—the young people of the East are much more precocious than those of the west; at sixteen, boys are considered competent for many of the duties of manhood.

carved—molten—Less. 84, 'graven,' 'molten.'

strewed—thereby defiling or dishonouring them.

bones—they were easily discovered by the inscriptions upon the tomb-stones; or perhaps a separate sepulchre had been allotted for the interment of the priests.

cities of—he went throughout Samaria also, to the very extremity of the land of Israel; putting down idolatry even among the nations who now colonized that country, though they were not of the children of Israel.

faithfully—they were men of such approved honesty, that "there was no reckoning made" of the money that was delivered into their hands.

found—this copy had probably been in use in the temple service, and was, in the time of Manasseh's persecution and idolatry, either thrust aside by the ruthless idolaters who ravaged the house of God, or concealed by one of the priests who afterwards fell a victim. It is not to be supposed that it was the only book of the law then extant, but that it was an ancient and authentic copy, if not the *original* written by Moses. From the time of Moses to that of Josiah was much less than 1000 years, and there are manuscripts in existence of this age.

I will bring evil—having framed themselves to a more holy course of conduct, the people promise themselves peace, but the prophetess foretells their approaching ruin.

curses—written in Deut. xxviii. 15-68.

tender—meek, penitent; he humbled himself, rent his clothes and wept; these were inward and outward tokens of his penitence.

in peace—though he was slain in battle (Less. 115) yet he saw none of the calamities which God brought on Jerusalem.

fulfilled—Less. 74.

respect—when engaged in superintending the removal of the bones of the idolatrous priests at Bethel he espied the epitaph of the man of God who came from Judah; these and the bones of the old prophet who brought him back, Josiah would not allow to be disinterred.

slew—Less. 81, 'slew.'

greater feast—all the outward observances were performed with solemnity and exactness, according to the law; and upon that account, there was none like it since Samuel's time. The sacrifices were expensive, but on this occasion, the king, the princes, and the chief of the priests and Levites gave liberally.

PRAYER OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

To thee, O God, my prayer ascends,
But not for golden stores;
Nor covet I The brightest gems
On the rich eastern shores:

Nor that deluding empty joy
Men call a mighty name;
Nor greatness, with its pride and state,
My restless thoughts inflame:

Nor pleasure's fascinating charms,
My fond desires allure:
But nobler things than these from thee,
My wishes would secure.

The faith and hope of things unseen
My best affections move;
Thy light, thy favour, and thy smiles,
Thine everlasting love:

These are the blessings I desire;
Lord, be these blessings mine—
And all the glories of the world
I cheerfully resign.

ROWE.

114. PROPHECIES OF ZEPHANIAH & JEREMIAH.

Zephaniah i. Jeremiah i. ii.

In the reign of Josiah, the prophet Zephaniah uttered many severe denunciations against the inhabitants of Judah because of their idolatry. He said, "I will utterly consume all things from off the land, saith the Lord. I will consume man and beast: I will consume the fowls of the heaven, and the fishes of the sea, and the stumblingblocks with the wicked; and I will cut off man from off the land, saith the Lord. I will

also stretch out mine hand upon Judah, and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and I will cut off the remnant of Baal from this place, and the name of the Chemarims with the priests: and them that worship the host of heaven upon the housetops; and them that worship and that swear by the Lord, and that swear by Malcham; and them that are turned back from the Lord; and those that have not sought the Lord, nor inquired for him; and I will punish the princes, and the king's children, and all such as are clothed with strange apparel." He also declared God's judgments against the Philistines, Moabites, Ammonites, Ethiopians, and Assyrians. He foretold the captivity of Judah, but exhorted them to await their restoration, and to rejoice in their salvation—"Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all thy heart, O daughter of Jerusalem. The Lord hath taken away thy judgments, he hath cast out thine enemy: the king of Israel, even the Lord, is in the midst of thee; thou shalt not see evil any more. I will bring you again, even in the time that I gather you: for I will make you a name and a praise among all people when I turn back your captivity before your eyes."

Jeremiah was the son of Hilkiah, a priest of Anathoth; he lived during the reigns of Josiah and the succeeding kings of Judah. The word of the Lord came to him, saying, "Before thou wast born I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations;" Jeremiah answered, "Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child." But the Lord said unto him, "Say not, I am a child; for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord. Thou therefore gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee: be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them. For, behold, I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brasen walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land. And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with

thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee." He was then commissioned to reprove the Jews for their idolatries,—to tell them of the certain punishments which awaited them—and to exhort them to repentance. He spoke of the desolations which should come on Judah from the north, and of the ingratitude of the people to God, in defiling with idolatry, the good and plentiful land he had given them.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

Zephaniah—'defended of the Lord;' it is supposed that he was of the tribe of Simeon, but of this, and of the place of his nativity there is no certain information.

beast—God's judgments should extend to the inferior animals as in the land of Egypt. Less. 18, '5th,6th,7th plagues.'

fowls—fishes—even the birds and the fishes were to be involved in the desolation, so that man should be deprived both of their direct and indirect benefits to him.

stumbling-blocks—idols; with the wicked I will destroy those idols which have been stumbling-blocks to them.

remnant—the idolatry of Baal which Ahaz had introduced was removed by Josiah, but the secret desires of many for its restoration was known to Him whose words inspired the prophet; Lesson 98, 'princes.'

Chemarim—a name given to the idolatrous priests of Baal.

house-tops—Less. 88, 'lattice;' where altars were raised for the worship of the heavenly hosts in their brightness; the view of the heavens would be there uninterrupted.

by the Lord—and, &c.—Lesson 81, 'halt,' 'two opinions.'

Malcham—or Moloch; Lesson 71, 'Ammonites;' 106, 'sins;' the people continued to offer their children to Moloch notwithstanding the reformation of Josiah.

strange apparel—the habiliments of idolatry; there were peculiar vestments belonging to the worship of each idol.

daughter of Zion—it is a common custom to represent places by the figure of a woman; Less. 101, 'desolate.' The people collectively of a place are also thus spoken of—as daughter of Jerusalem for people of Jerusalem.

even the Lord—Less. 43, 'rejected.'

name—Less. 3, 'Shem;' 5, 'name.'

Jeremiah—'exalted of the Lord;' he was very young when called to the prophetic office, on which account he felt extremely diffident in accepting the call of Jehovah. He was of the family of Aaron, and lived at Anathoth, one of the cities of the priests.

Before—See Acts xv. 18; Gal. i. 15,16.

cannot speak—a similar plea was urged by Moses; Exod. iv. 9-13.

a child—not strictly within the years of childhood but young; Less. 66, 'a little child.'

gird—Less. 47, 'girdle;' 81, 'hand of the Lord.'

against—the opposition, hatred and persecution of all classes should be directed against him, but God's protection and care would be more than sufficient to preserve him from them all.

reprove—the idolatries were so increased that, like neighbouring nations, they had a tutelary deity for every city of Judah.

defiling—Less. 30, 'give.'

LIGHT IN DARKNESS.

Rejoice not over me, my foe,
Though fall'n, I am not slain;
In mightier power than thou canst know
I shall arise again.

Think not, though clouds may gather round,
That mine is starless night;
Even amid that gloom profound
The Lord will be my light.

Such is their language, Lord, whose hearts
All confidence disown,
Save what Thy word of truth imparts,
And crave Thy power alone.

Thou art to them in darkest hour
Their comfort, hope, and stay;
Well knowing that thy arm of power
Can make their darkness day.

These meekly strive to bear thy rod
With patient, reverend awe,
Conscious that they, O righteous God,
Have disobey'd thy law.

BARTON.

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115. JOSIAH IS SLAIN.

2 Chron. xxxv. 20-24; 2 Kings xxiii. 29-35.

When Josiah had completed the repairs of the temple, Necho, king of Egypt, came up to fight against *Carchemish*, by the *Euphrates*, and Josiah went out against him. But Necho sent ambassadors to him, saying, "What have I to do with thee, thou king of Judah? I come not against thee this day, but against the house wherewith I have war; forbear thee from meddling with God, who is with me, that he destroy thee not." Nevertheless Josiah would not turn his face from him, but disguised himself, and came to fight in the valley of Megiddo. And the archers shot at king Josiah; and the king said to his servants, "Have me away; for I am sore wounded." His servants therefore took him to Jerusalem, where he died. All Judah and Jerusalem mourned for him: for there was no king before him nor after him that turned to the Lord with

all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, as he did, according to the law of Moses.

The people made ·Jehoahaz, a younger son of Josiah, king after his father; he reigned ouly three months, and did evil. Pharaoh-Necho ·deposed and imprisoned him; he also ·exacted tribute of one-hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold from the kingdom; he made ·Eliakim king, and changed his name to Jehoiakim. The king procured the tribute from the people, and paid it to Pharaoh-Necho.

At this time ·Habakkuk prophesied; he lamented the iniquity of the land; after which he described the Chaldeans as a ·bitter and hasty nation, which should march through the breadth of the land to possess the dwelling-places that were not theirs. The prophet then humbly prayed that God would look upon Judah while under the debasing tyranny of the Chaldeans; he foretold the overthrow of the Babylonish kingdom; prayed that the Lord would revive his work in the midst of the years, and in wrath remember mercy. He also thus expressed his own confidence in God, "Although the ·fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; ·yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

went out—Josiah was an ally of the king of Babylon, and he was bound by treaty to assist the Babylonians against their enemies. The government of all the land of Israel had been restored to Manasseh his grandfather, when he was liberated from prison in Babylon; and it seems certain that Josiah ruled over the whole land, as David and Solomon ruled over it before the separation of the tribes.

forbear—this warning Josiah heeded not, because he questioned the pretensions of a heathen king to a divine commission. Sennacherib assumed the same authority when he invaded Judah in the days of Hezekiah, but he and his army were overthrown. Less. 110.

disguised—as did Ahab; Lesson 86, 'disguised.'

valley of—this battle with the king of Egypt, was fought at Megiddo, a town of the tribe of Manasseh, in the middle of the kingdom of Israel, where Josiah would have had no business, if he had not been king of that kingdom as well as of Judah.

mourned—Less. 49, 'lamented.'

Jehoahaz—'the Lord's possession;' he was also called Shallum; though he was the fourth son of Josiah, the people preferred him before the rightful heir, on what ground does not appear.

deposed—he was offended with the people for acting contrary to established usage. Necho was returning from

Carchemish to Egypt at this time; he took with him Jehoahaz as a captive, and the prophecy of Jeremiah (xxii. 10-12) respecting him was thus fulfilled.

exacted—the land of Israel was now tributary to Egypt; the sum amounted to £52,000, the smallness of which, some suppose, shows the depressed and impoverished condition of the Jews.

Eliakim—called also Jehoiakim—'the Lord confirms;' his new name was given him probably under the idea that God would confirm the appointment.

Habakkuk—'he who embraces;' we have no information concerning his birth-place, or the tribe to which he belonged; he foretold the destruction of Babylon, as did Nahum the overthrow of the Assyrian kingdom—the two nations by which Israel and Judah were carried away captive.

bitter and hasty—carrying destruction in their march, and rapid in the execution of their military enterprises.

fig-tree—the fig-tree has no visible blossom, the flower is within the fruit and comes to maturity in concealment. The budding of its leaves always indicates the approach of summer, and is thus referred to by the prophet as a figure of returning prosperity. Lesson 50, 'figs;' 103, 'gatherer.'

yet—his joy in God and confidence in his goodness would remain unshaken, notwithstanding these national calamities.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

CARCHEMISH—a town of Assyria on the Euphrates which Pharaoh-Necho took and fortified. His garrison was taken & destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar.

EUPHRATES—the great river of Asia which flowed through the garden of Eden; it rises in the mountains of Armenia, flows by Syria, Mesopotamia, and the ruins of the great city, Babylon, and falls into the Persian Gulf.

HABAKKUK'S RESOLVE.

"THOUGH THE FIG TREE SHALL NOT BLOSSOM—I WILL JOY IN THE GOD OF MY SALVATION."

Though the fig tree my bower that o'ershaded
Refuse what it scatter'd before;
Though the vine's wreathed curtain all faded,
Refresh with its clusters no more;—

Though the olive, lov'd symbol of heaven,
Be guarded and cherish'd in vain;
Though the field, for the blessing once given,
But the thorns and the thistle retain;—

Though the home where the herd is retreating
Its sweet-flowing stores should withhold;
Nor voice of the flock's tender bleating,
Be heard in the desolate fold;—

These joys are the moonbeam that waneth,
While the sun, whence it sprung, is the same;
Jehovah, my Saviour, remaineth,
And I will rejoice in his name.

Undried is that fountain of pleasure,
Whose drops mid this wilderness fall,
Still safe, still untouched is my treasure,
For mine is the Giver of all.

WARING.

116. PREDICTIONS OF JEREMIAH.

Jeremiah.

Jeremiah declared God's judgments against Judah for their sins; he mourned over the impenitence of the nation, and bewailed the punishments which God threatened to inflict upon them. He thus spoke, "Be astonished, ·O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, ·be ye very desolate, saith the Lord. For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the ·fountain of ·living waters, and hewed them out ·cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." Having pointed out some of their transgressions, he proceeded thus;—"Shall I not ·visit them for these things? saith the Lord: shall not my soul be ·avenged on such a nation as this? For the ·mountains will I take up a weeping and wailing, and for the ·habitations of the wilderness a lamentation, because they are ·burned up, so that none can pass through them; neither can men hear the voice of the cattle; both the fowl of the heavens and the beast are fled; they are ·gone. And I will make Jerusalem ·heaps, and a ·den of dragons; and I will make the cities desolate, without an inhabitant." Before delivering this prediction, Jeremiah felt deeply distressed for his countrymen, and he exclaimed, "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people?" The Lord commanded him to declare that the Jews should be ·utterly cast forth, and if they asked, "Whither?" he was to tell them, "Such as are for death, to death, and such as are for the sword, to the sword; and such as are for the famine, to the famine; and such as are for captivity, to the captivity." He also predicted the speedy captivity of the Jews, and the desolation of their country. ·Pashur smote Jeremiah, and put him in the ·stocks, when he heard that he prophesied these things. On the morrow, when he brought him forth, Jeremiah denounced him, and in the words of the Lord, said he should be a ·terror to himself, and his eyes should see Judah given to the king of Babylon, and the people taken captive. Of Jehoiakim he predicted, that the people should ·not lament for him, but

that he should be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem. He repeated the sentence of God against Jerusalem and the temple to the assembled people, and they said he should surely die. The princes then came from the king's house to the house of the Lord, and the priests and people accused Jeremiah to them of prophesying against the city. He called on them to repent, and said the Lord had sent him thus to prophesy. The princes said he was not worthy to die, and some of the elders asked if former prophets who had prophesied against Jerusalem had been put to death, and as they were not, they would not consent to the death of Jeremiah.

The Rechabites were descendants of Jonadab, the son of Rechab, who charged them and their children to drink no wine all their days, nor to build houses, nor to sow seeds, nor to plant vineyards, but to dwell in tents. When Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came against Judah they left their tents for fear of the Syrians, and came to dwell at Jerusalem. They were taken into one of the chambers in the house of the Lord, and wine was set before them, but they refused to drink, saying that Jonadab their father had commanded them to drink no wine. Jeremiah was then ordered to condemn the men of Judah for their disobedience to God, and to bless the Rechabites for their obedience to their father's injunction.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

O ye heavens—a poetic and sublime expression of surprise and abhorrence at the wickedness, folly, and ingratitude of the people.

be ye desolate—let your lights be obscured.

fountain—a spring or source of water; in the East perpetual fountains or springs of 'living' water are of incalculable value. God is the source of blessing to all his needy creatures.

living—always flowing.

cisterns—bowls, or larger receptacles for the retention of rain and other water; those to which the prophet alluded were the tanks so much in use in Jerusalem; the beauty and force of the figure hence appears.

visit—come to punish.

avenged—Less. 112, 'innocent.'

mountains—on which the vine and olive flourished. Less. 103, 'mountains.'

habitations—pastures for flocks.

burned up—by drought and the scorching rays of the sun.

gone—for want of sustenance.

heaps—this prophecy has been literally fulfilled.

den of dragons—a place of horror and desolation, inhabited by dangerous and unclean creatures, particularly beasts of prey, and reptiles.

utterly cast forth—after enumerating the evils of the pestilence, the sword, famine, and captivity, the prophet declares that the people shall be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth; being a repetition of the remarkable prophecy of Moses. Deut. xxviii. 25; and one which has been literally fulfilled.

Pashur—he was a priest and the head of his family, and he had authority in directing matters connected with the temple, and keeping good order there.

stocks—a machine in which the hands and feet of a prisoner are confined; this punishment was awarded to those who assumed the prophetic office without a proper call, or who being true prophets, had conducted themselves unbecomingly. The word here rendered 'stocks' is translated 'prison' in 2 Chron. xvi. 10, where the imprisonment of Hanani by Asa is recorded; Less. 77.

terror to himself—he should be his own tormentor.

not lament—the non-observance of this ancient and universal custom would show the dreadful extremities to which the inhabitants would be reduced, when the respectful usages and common feelings of humanity would be utterly disregarded. The cry raised in Eastern families on the death of a member is very appalling, and is continued at intervals till the interment of the body. Less. 49, 'lamented.'

burial of an ass—a most ignominious doom—to be cast forth to the beasts and birds of prey. Less. 54, 'buried.'

priests and people—their combination against Jeremiah indicated the general defection of the nation.

princes—their candour is deserving praise; the justice and humanity of the princes formed a favourable contrast with the wicked designs of the priests and people.

Rechabites—Less. 95, 'Jehonadab.'

was set—not to tempt them to violate their vow of abstemiousness, but to exhibit their fidelity to their ancestor's command in contrast with the infidelity of the Jews to the law of their God.

bless—a promise was given that the race of Jehonadab should never become extinct, and that some of its members should ever be included among the worshippers of the True God. A tribe of Rechabites was recently met with by an eastern traveller.

HEBREW MELODY.

From the hall of our fathers in anguish we fled,
Nor again will its marble re-echo our tread,
For the breath of the Siroc has blasted our name,
And the frown of Jehovah has crush'd us in shame.

His robe was the whirlwind, his voice was the thunder,
And earth, at his footstep, was riven asunder;
The mantle of midnight had shrouded the sky,
But we knew where He stood by the flash of His eye.

O Judah! how long must thy weary ones weep,
Far, far from the land where their forefathers sleep?
How long ere the glory that brighten'd the mountain
Will welcome the exile to Siloa's fountain.

MRS. J. G. BROOKS.

117. OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR AND JEHOIAKIM.

Jeremiah xxv. 11,12; xxxvi.; 2 Chron. xxxvi. 5-7.

Jeremiah was again sent to reprove the people of Judah for their idolatry and disobedience, and to say that God would bring Nebuchadnezzar against the land and its inhabitants, and against all the nations round about. He said, "The whole land shall be a desolation and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. But at the end of the seventy years God will punish the king of Babylon, and make the land of the Chaldeans perpetual desolations."

The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, saying, "Take thee a roll of a book, and write therein all the words that I have spoken unto thee against Israel, and against Judah, and against the nations, from the day I spake unto thee, from the days of Josiah, even unto this day. It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I purpose to do unto them; that they may return every man from his evil way; that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin." Then Jeremiah called Baruch, who wrote from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the Lord, which he had spoken unto him, upon a roll of a book. And Jeremiah commanded Baruch, saying, "I am shut up; I cannot go into the house of the Lord; therefore go thou, and read in the roll, which thou hast written from my mouth, the words of the Lord in the ears of the people in the Lord's house upon the fasting day; and also thou shalt read them in the ears of all Judah that come out of their cities. It may be they will present their supplication before the Lord, and will return every one from his evil way: for great is the anger and the fury that the Lord hath pronounced against this people." And Baruch did according to all that Jeremiah the prophet commanded him, reading in the book the words of the Lord in the Lord's house. Michaiah declared unto the princes of Judah all that he had heard Baruch read; and they sent for him, and commanded him to sit down and read it in their ears. The princes said they would inform the king of the words which he had read, and told

him and Jeremiah to go and hide themselves. The king sent Jehudi to fetch the roll, and he began to read it in the ears of the king and the princes. And when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, the king cut it with a pen-knife, and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed. Yet they were not afraid, nor rent their garments, neither the king, nor any of his servants that heard all these words. He sent men to take Jeremiah and Baruch, but the Lord hid them.

When Jehoiakim had reigned three years, Nebuchadnezzar came up to Jerusalem, and he bound Jehoiakim in fetters, to carry him to Babylon; he afterwards liberated him on his promising to pay tribute to Babylon, but he took captive many of the nobles and their children. He also took away the vessels of the house of the Lord, and put them in his temple at Babylon.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

Nebuchadnezzar—'Nebo chief of the gods;' he was the son & successor of Nabopolassar, in whose reign the Assyrian empire was overturned, and Nineveh reduced to a heap of ruins. Nebuchadnezzar was at this time engaged in waging war with several nations east of the Euphrates.

seventy—this remarkable prediction received its accomplishment when Cyrus, after the overthrow of the Babylonian empire, gave permission to the Jews to return to their own land. Less. 127, 'proclamation.'

roll—Lesson 30, 'book of the law.'

punish—Less. 126, 'included.'

Baruch—'blessed;' he was a man of distinguished family & of firm integrity, he was Jeremiah's personal friend, and acted as his secretary; it is supposed that he survived Jeremiah a few years, but the place of his death is unknown.

fasting-day—a day appointed for a national fast because of the evils which threatened the city; they hoped thereby to avert the wrath of God against them.

in the Lord's house—Baruch read the roll from the window of the room over the gateway (Less. 61, 'chamber') leading to the great court or area of the temple where all the men of Israel assembled to worship God. Lesson 68, 'Temple.'

Michaiah—he was the son of Gemariah, and grandson of Shaphan, a scribe of the temple. Having heard Baruch read the terrible predictions of Jeremiah in his father's official chamber, Michaiah very properly considered it to be his duty to report what he had heard to his father and the other scribes and councillors.

pen-knife—the pens were probably made of reeds.

the hearth—probably the fire was in a brazier, as now used in the East.

yet—they were all hardened and impenitent rejecters of the warnings and invitations of the Lord.

the Lord hid them—they were concealed in such a place that they were not discovered.

nobles—princes of the Jews, members of the royal family, heads of tribes; they were taken as hostages for the good faith of the king.

children—Lesson 110, 'eunuchs.'

JERUSALEM A WARNING TO THE GENTILES.

"IF GOD SPARED NOT THE NATURAL BRANCHES, TAKE HEED LEST HE ALSO SPARE NOT THEE."

Jerusalem, Jerusalem! enthroned once on high,
Thou favour'd home of God on earth, thou Heaven below the sky!
Now brought to bondage with thy sons, a curse and grief to see,
Jerusalem, Jerusalem! our tears shall flow for thee.

Oh! hadst thou known thy day of grace, and flock'd beneath the wing
Of Him who call'd thee lovingly, thine own anointed King,
Then had the tribes of all the world gone up thy pomp to see,
And glory dwelt within thy gates, and all thy sons been free!

"And who art thou that mournest me?" replied the ruin grey,
"And fear'st not rather that thyself may prove a castaway?
I am a dried and abject branch, my place is given to thee;
But woe to ev'ry barren graft of thy wild olive-tree!

"Our day of grace is sunk in night, our time of mercy spent,
For heavy was my children's crime, and strange their punishment;
Yet gaze not idly on our fall, but, sinner, warned be,
Who spared not His chosen seed may send His wrath on thee!

"Our day of grace is sunk in night, thy noon is in its prime;
Oh turn and seek thy Saviour's face in this accepted time!
So Gentile, may Jerusalem a lesson prove to thee,
And in the new Jerusalem thy home for ever be!"

HEBER.

PERIOD VII.

THE CAPTIVITY AND THE RETURN OF THE JEWS.

B.C. 606—B.C. 400. 206 years.

118. DANIEL AND HIS FRIENDS.

Daniel i; 2 Kings xxiv. 1-20.

Nebuchadnezzar directed ·Ashpenaz to ·select from among the captives brought from Judah, the ·noblest, the ·most beautiful, and the most skilful of the princes. Children in whom was no blemish, but well favoured, and skilful in all wisdom and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the ·learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans. And the king appointed them a daily provision of ·the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank: so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might ·stand before the king. Among them were ·Daniel, and his ·three friends, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Daniel purposed in his heart not to ·defile himself with the king's meat, and God gave him favour with Ashpenaz. Their portion of meat was taken away, and they were fed on ·pulse; and they were ·fairer than all those who ate of the king's meat. God blessed Daniel and his friends in their captivity, and gave them knowledge and ·skill in all learning and wisdom. And Daniel had understanding in all ·visions and dreams.

After ·Jehoiakim had served Nebuchadnezzar three years he rebelled against him. And the Lord sent against Judah, to destroy it, ·bands of the Chaldees, the Syrians, the Moabites, and of the children of Ammon. All this came upon Judah at the commandment of the Lord. Jehoiakim died, and his son ·Jehoiachin succeeded him. He reigned only three months and did evil; against him Jeremiah prophesied.

Soon after, Nebuchadnezzar again besieged Jerusalem, and the king and the princes were ·taken captive to Babylon. The ·treasures of the kings house and the temple were taken to

Babylon, and all the mighty men, and craftsmen, and smiths in the land. None were left in the land save the poorest of the people. Zedekiah was then made king over Judah and Jerusalem. He also did evil, and Jeremiah was commanded to declare God's judgments upon him and his people.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

Ashpenaz—the chief household officer of Nebuchadnezzar; he was himself a man of rank and eminence.

select—Lesson 83, 'children;' 110, 'eunuchs.'

noblest—the children of the princes.

most beautiful—a fine person has always been a recommendation for royal service, more especially in the East. Less. 44, 'higher.'

learning—the language, literature, and science of Chaldea; great pains were taken to naturalize captives of rank in foreign courts.

the king's meat—according to the practice of eastern courts they were to be supplied with such food and wine as were served at the king's table.

stand before—as acknowledged persons of wisdom, qualified to advise the king on important matters.

Daniel—'God's judge;' he was of the tribe of Judah, and of an illustrious family, if not of royal descent.

three friends—Less. 124, 'Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.'

defile—the flesh, wine, and other food brought to the king's table were consecrated to his idol, and eaten to its honour by the persons composing the court of Babylon. Less. 43, 'daughters.'

pulse—pease, beans, lentiles, &c. which composed the food of the laborers and poorer class of people.

fairer—God blessed their humble fare because of their scrupulous and tender concern to eat and drink only for his glory. They honoured God by their firm and pious refusal; but at the same time it is certain that abstinence from wine and rich food is no injury, but rather an improvement to the health of residents in the East.

skill in all, &c.—besides the knowledge they had previously gained, they were now instructed in all the learning of the Chaldeans, as Moses had been in all the wisdom of Egypt, and after a time they were found to be "ten times" better informed "in all matters of wisdom and understanding" than the wise men of Babylon.

visions and dreams—as Joseph was; not, however, in idle or casual dreams, but in such as were sent from heaven. Les. 15, 'dream;' 124, 'dreamed dreams;' 125, 'second dream,' 'vision.'

Jehoiakim—the eldest son of Josiah; it was in the fourth year of his reign that Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem.

bands—armies; but these nations and others were to be subjugated by Nebuchadnezzar, and they were to serve Babylon seventy years. Kings and princes are instruments of Providence in human affairs.

Jehoiachin—also called Coniah and Jeconiah; he was taken captive and remained in Babylon many years; the prophecy of Jeremiah against him was fulfilled.

taken captive—foretold by Moses, Les. 29, 'foretold;' by Isaiah, Les. 110; and by Jeremiah, Less. 117, 'seventy.'

treasures—some of these treasures were taken in Jehoiakim's reign, an additional quantity was taken on this occasion, together with the remnant of the wealthy and skilful of the people.

craftsmen—smiths—to prevent the possibility of future rebellion by depriving the Israelites of the means of making armour and weapons of war.

the poorest—the class of peasantry, and the less wealthy & skilful citizens.

Zedekiah—'the Lord's justice;' he was a son of Josiah; his name was at first Mattaniah, but it was changed by Nebuchadnezzar.

FALL OF JERUSALEM.

Fallen is thy throne, O Israel! silence is o'er thy plains,—
Thy dwellings all lie desolate, thy children weep in chains!
Where are the dews that fed thee on Etham's barren shore?
That fire from heav'n which led thee, now lights thy path no more!

Lord! thou didst love Jerusalem; once she was all thy own;
Her love thy fairest heritage, her power thy glory's throne.
Till evil came and blighted thy long lov'd olive tree:
And Salem's shrines were lighted for other gods than thee.

Then sank the star of Solyma, then pass'd her glory's day;
Like heath that in the wilderness the wild wind whirls away.
Silent and waste her bowers, where once the mighty trod,
And sunk those guilty towers where Baal reign'd as God.

"Go," said the Lord, "ye conquerors! steep in her blood your swords;
And raze to earth her battlements, for they are not the Lord's!
Tell Zion's mournful daughter, o'er kindred bones she'll tread;
And Hinnom's vale of slaughter shall hide but half her dead!

"But soon shall other pictur'd scenes in brighter vision rise,
When Zion's sun shall sevenfold shine on all her mourners' eyes;
And on her mountains, beauteous, stand the messengers of peace;
'Salvation by the Lord's right hand!' they shout, and never cease."

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119. JEREMIAH'S EXHORTATIONS.

Jeremiah xxix-xxxi.

Jeremiah wrote this letter to the elders of the Jews, to the priests, and to the prophets who were carried away into Babylon; "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, unto all that are carried away captives, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem unto Babylon; build ye houses, and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them...marry.. and seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace. For thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; let not your prophets and your diviners, that be in the midst of you, deceive you, neither hearken to your dreams which ye cause to be dreamed. For they prophesy falsely unto you in my

name: I have not sent them, saith the Lord. For thus saith the Lord, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place. For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. And I will be found of you, saith the Lord: and I will turn away your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you, saith the Lord; and I will bring you again into the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive." Jeremiah declared God's judgments against Ahab and Zedekiah, who prophesied falsely in the name of the Lord; also against Shemaiah who caused the captives in Babylon to trust in a lie, and to rebel against the Lord. He again spoke of the redemption of the Jews from the land of their captivity, and of the prosperity which should come upon their nation; and proceeded to say, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. They shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." Jeremiah also foretold the massacre of the infants at Bethlehem, and said of his own people, "Israel hath not been forsaken, nor Judah of his God...though their land was filled with sin against the Holy One of Israel." A false prophet named Hananiah said that within the space of two years the people should return from captivity. Jeremiah denounced him for making the people to trust in a lie, and said that he should die during that year, for teaching rebellion. So he died the same year in the seventh month.

letter—Jeremiah wrote in the name of "The Lord of hosts;" the purport of his letter was to assure them that their captivity would extend to seventy years, and that it was their duty to be reconciled to their condition, and not to expect a more speedy return, for that would make them restless and uneasy.

seek—every unworthy and criminal desire to promote disorder and to spread discontent in the Babylonian kingdom would be visited with God's displeasure; Lesson 51, 'guiltless.' While actively engaged in pursuits beneficial to others they would promote their own good.

pray—they were not only to endeavour by their acts to promote the prosperity of Babylon but they were to *pray* for its peace.

your prophets—listen not to those whom God disowns as his servants and ministers—who flatter you in your sinful desires.

diviners—men who practised foolish and wicked acts for the purpose of discovering future events, pretending to ascertain the mind and will of God. These practices were an abomination to God. Lesn. 52, 'divination.'

visit—in a good sense; to comfort you and restore you to your own land. His promise was fulfilled to very few then living, but it is common in scripture to speak of blessings bestowed on children as if they were made good to their progenitors.

expected end—what God had decreed would be accomplished in his appointed time; the termination of their captivity should not be left in doubt & obscurity.

falsely—these false prophets asserted the speedy downfall of the Babylonian kingdom, and the return of those in captivity to their brethren and homes in the land of Israel. They thus disquieted the captives, preventing them from obeying the Lord's directions to settle down contentedly in Babylon. These two men were also guilty of gross immorality, and Nebuchadnezzar put them to a cruel death.

a lie—the sentence against Shemaiah was that he should have no posterity, nor see the good that the Lord would do for his people.

new covenant—Jer. xxxi. 31-34; Heb. viii. 8-13.

Israel—Judah—the two kingdoms should be united under one government.

know the Lord—the Gospel, or new covenant, should possess a greater degree of light, and a clearer knowledge of Divine truth than had yet been proclaimed, or than the unassisted reason of man should be able to discover. God will, by his grace, make his people able and willing to receive and understand the Gospel dispensation.

THOUGHTS OF PEACE.

"THOUGHTS OF PEACE, AND NOT OF EVIL TOWARDS YOU."

Viler than dust, O Lord, are we;
And doth thine anger cease?
And doth thy gracious heart o'erflow
With purposes of peace?

And dost thou with delight reflect
On what thy grace shall do?
And with complacency of soul
Enjoy the distant view?

And can thy often injured love
So kind a message send,
That thou to all our lengthen'd woes
Wilt give a blessed end?

Why droop our hearts? why flow our eyes,
While such a voice we hear?
Why rise our sorrows and our fears,
While such a friend is near?

To all thy other favours add
A heart to trust thy word,
And death itself shall hear us sing
While resting on the Lord.

DODDRIDGE.

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120. JEREMIAH DENOUNCES THE PRINCES.

Jeremiah xxxiv. Ezekiel. .

God commanded Jeremiah to tell Zedekiah, that he would give the city to the king of Babylon, and it should be burned with fire, and that the king should be taken captive. Zedekiah made a covenant to proclaim liberty to all in the land who were bond-servants. Soon after the princes brought them again into subjection. Jeremiah condemned their conduct, and reminded them of God's merciful laws towards bondmen; he said, "Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel; I made a covenant with your fathers in the day that I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondmen, saying, At the end of seven years let ye go every man his brother an Hebrew, which hath been sold unto thee; and when he hath served thee six years, thou shalt let him go free from thee; but your fathers hearkened not unto me, neither inclined their ear. And ye were now turned, and had done right in my sight, in proclaiming liberty every man to his neighbour; and ye had made a covenant before me in the house which is called by my name: but ye turned and polluted my name, and caused every man his servant, and every man his handmaid, whom he had set at liberty to return, and to be unto you for servants and for handmaids. Therefore thus saith the Lord; ye have not hearkened unto me, in proclaiming liberty, every one to his brother, and every man to his neighbour: behold, I proclaim a liberty for you, saith the Lord, to the sword, to the pestilence, and the famine;

and I will make you to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth. And I will ·give the men that have transgressed my covenant into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of them that seek their life: and their dead bodies shall be ·for meat unto the fowls of the heaven, and to the beasts of the earth. And Zedekiah, king of Judah, and his princes will I give into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of them that seek their life, and into the hand of the king of Babylon's army, which are ·gone up from you. Behold, I will command, saith the Lord, and cause them to return to this city; and they shall fight against it, and take it, and burn it with fire: and ·I will make the cities of Judah a desolation."

Ezekiel prophesied to the captive Jews in the land of the Chaldeans by the river *Chebar*. He spoke of the judgments of God on Jerusalem, saying, "A third part of thee shall die with the pestilence, and with famine shall they be consumed in the midst of thee; and a third part shall fall by a sword round about thee; and I will scatter a third part into all the winds, and I will draw out a sword after them...So it shall be a ·reproach and a taunt, an instruction and an astonishment unto the nations that are round about thee, when I shall execute ·judgments in thee in anger and in fury and in furious rebukes. I the Lord have spoken it." He thus predicted the fate of Zedekiah; "and the prince that is among them shall bear upon his shoulder in the twilight, and shall go forth: ·they shall dig through the wall to carry out thereby: he shall cover his face, that he see not the ground with his eyes. My ·net also will I spread upon him, and he shall be taken in my ·snare: and I will bring him to Babylon to the land of the Chaldeans; yet shall he ·not see it, though he shall die there. And I will ·scatter toward every wind all that are about him to help him, and all his bands; and they shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall scatter them among the nations, and disperse them in the countries." He exhorted idolaters to repent for fear of God's judgments, but promised to remember his ·covenant, and to be merciful in the last days, when Judah should know the Lord.

proclaim liberty—the humane and benevolent enactment of Moses against the bondage of their brethren (Exod. xxi. 2) had no doubt been neglected, as well as other important laws, for the selfishness of the men of wealth and power are frequently condemned in the prophetic writings; but when they saw the mighty army brought before the city by Nebuchadnezzar, they felt a temporary impulse to act uprightly,—they probably required their aid also in defending the city.

Soon after—an Egyptian army having made a show of coming to the assistance of Jerusalem, the Chaldeans marched against them; and as soon as they had turned from before the city, the selfishness and injustice of the princes towards those whom they had released returned.

I made—Ex. xxi. 2; Deut. xv. 12-14.

you—this was the general sentence against all the people.

give the men—the special punishment of those who violated the covenant so recently made is here detailed.

for meat—Lesson 54, 'buried;' 63, 'birds—beasts;' 76, 'dogs.'

gone up—to meet the Egyptian army.

I will make—Less. 68, 'If thou wilt;' 98, 'wrath.'

reproach—Less. 69, 'a proverb.'

judgments—Less. 13, 'deceived;' 33, 'requited;' 58, 'sword;' 72, 'judgment;' 99, 'shed.'

they shall dig—the process of digging through walls was not very difficult, as they were often composed only of clay and sun-burnt bricks. The Jews say there was a subterranean passage which led from Mount Zion to the vicinity of the outer wall of the city, probably one of those constructed by the Jebusites (Less. 56, 'chief and captain'); through such a passage, stopped up, both at its place of entrance and egress, Zedekiah and those with him might have escaped.

net—snare—he should be entangled by his enemies; as birds are snared in a net when about to rise from the ground into liberty, so should Zedekiah be captured by the enemy when he emerged into the open country.

not see it—Jeremiah had foretold (chap. xxxiv. 3) that Zedekiah should *see* the king of Babylon, which was fulfilled when he stood before him at Riblah to receive his sentence; and this prediction of Ezekiel received its accomplishment also, for Nebuchadnezzar had Zedekiah's eyes put out previous to his being removed to Babylon as a captive, Less. 122. Josephus tells us that Zedekiah thought these two prophecies inconsistent with each other and therefore believed neither, but they both actually came to pass.

scatter—also foretold by Moses; Lesson 29, 'taken.'

covenant—Less. 6, 'a great nation;' 8, 'covenant;' 57, 'redeem, &c.'; 72, 'afflict;' 117, 'seventy,'

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

CHEBAR—a river of Mesopotamia, which falls into the Euphrates; it was the scene of one of Ezekiel's visions.

SONG OF A CAPTIVE JEW IN BABYLON.

"OUR HOUSE, OUR BEAUTIFUL HOUSE, WHERE OUR FATHERS WORSHIPPED, IS BURNED WITH FIRE."

Let the proud veil of darkness be roll'd from before thee,
O Lord! and descend on the wing of the storm:
Dispers'd or enslav'd, are the saints that adore thee,
And the rude hands of strangers thy temple deform:

And Salem, our Salem, lies low and degraded,
While far from her ruins in exile we pine;
Yet still is the hope of thy remnant unfaded—
The hand that implants it, Jehovah, is thine.

Alas! we were warn'd, but we reck'd not the warning,
Till our warriors grew weak in the day of despair:
And our glory was fled as the light cloud of morning,
That gleams for a moment, and melts into air.

As the proud heathens trampled o'er Zion's sad daughter,
She wept tears of blood o'er her guilt and her woe;
For the voice of her God had commission'd the slaughter,
The rod of his vengeance had pointed the blow.

Though foul are the sins, oh thou lost one! that stain thee,
The blood of atonement can wash them away;
Though galling and base are the bonds that enchain thee,
The God who impose'd them can lighten the sway.

For a star yet shall rise o'er the darkness of Judah,
A branch yet shall flourish on Jesse's proud stem!
And Zion shall triumph o'er those that subdued her,
Yea, triumph in giving a Saviour to them!

DALE.

121. ZEDEKIAH'S REBELLION.

2 Chron. xxxvi. 13-16; Jer. xxxii.

Zedekiah rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar and did not humble himself before Jeremiah when he spoke to him from the Lord. The priests and the people also transgressed, for they mocked the messengers of God, despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, and there was no remedy. Therefore God brought upon them the king of the Chaldees.

In the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign, Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem, and soon after Zedekiah shut up Jeremiah in prison for predicting the fall of Jerusalem and the captivity of Zedekiah. While in prison Jeremiah shewed his faith in God's promises of the return from Babylon, by buying from Hanameel, his uncle's son, a field in Anathoth. He then took witnesses of the purchase, to whom he expressed his belief in the word of the Lord, that the Jews should again possess houses, and fields, and vineyards in the land, though it was then given up to the Chaldeans. And he prayed to God, and said, "Ah, Lord God, behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there

is nothing too hard for thee: thou shewest lovingkindness unto thousands, and recompensest the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them: the great, the Mighty God, the Lord of hosts, is his name, great in counsel, and mighty in work: for thine eyes are open upon the ways of the sons of men: to give every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings: and hast brought forth thy people Israel out of the land of Egypt with signs, and with wonders, and with a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with great terror; and hast given them this land, which thou didst swear to their fathers to give them, a land flowing with milk and honey: and they came in and possessed it: but they obeyed not thy voice, neither walked in thy law; they have done nothing of all that thou commandedst them to do: therefore thou hast caused all this evil to come upon them; and what thou hast spoken is come to pass; and, behold, thou seest it. And thou hast said unto me, O Lord God, Buy thee the field for money, and take witnesses; for the city is given into the hand of the Chaldeans." God then comforted Jeremiah by again assuring him that he would gather the people out of all lands, and bring them again into their own land to dwell safely. "And they shall be my people, and I will be their God: and I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them: and I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me. Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart and with my whole soul. For thus saith the Lord, Like as I have brought all this great evil upon this people, so will I bring upon them all the good that I have promised them. And fields shall be bought in this land, whereof ye say, It is desolate without man or beast; it is given into the hand of the Chaldeans." The Chaldeans departed from Jerusalem when they heard that Pharaoh's army was come up out of Egypt against them.

mocked—an evidence of their utter disbelief of the threatenings of the Lord, and thorough recklessness of the consequences of their transgressions. God regards the injustice, cruelty, and even disrespect with which his servants and ministers may be treated as if done to himself.

no remedy—their impenitence and hardened acts of wickedness precluded the merciful interposition of God.

witnesses—the deed of sale was formally drawn up, and signed by the principals in the presence of witnesses who signed their names also; a copy was then taken for ordinary reference, and the original was sealed and carefully preserved as a record to be produced at a future time.

their children—those of them, who, having before their eyes the example of their parent's obstinacy, chose, in despite of God's warnings, exhortations, and chastisements, to pursue similar unholy courses, would receive a more severe infliction of God's wrath.

to give—Less. 72, 'judgments;' 'secret.'

with signs—Less 17, 'signs;' 18 & 19, 'the plagues.'

given—Less. 6, 'this land;' 30, 'give,'

possessed—Less. 32, 'divisions of Canaan.

for ever—the fulfilment of this promise is still remote, for at present the Jews are not of one mind, nor are they in possession of the land which God gave unto their fathers.

everlasting covenant—when this expression is applied to the Gospel dispensation there is a peculiar emphasis in it, implying that it should never be abolished nor give way to any other dispensation. Les. 72, 'if—build;' 98, 'wrath.'

THE CAPTIVE'S SONG.

"HOW CAN WE SING THE LORD'S SONG IN A STRANGE LAND."

We sat us down by Babel's streams,
And dreamed soul-saddening memory's dreams,
And dark thoughts o'er our spirits crept
Of Sion—and we wept, we wept!
Our harps upon the willows hung
Silent, and tuneless, and unstrung;
For they who wrought our pains and wrongs,
Asked us for Sion's pleasant songs.

How can we sing Jehovah's praise
To those who Baal's altars raise?
How warble Judah's freeborn hymns,
With Babel's fetters on our limbs?
How chant thy lays dear Fatherland
To strangers on a foreign strand?
Ah no! we 'll bear grief's keenest sting,
But dare not Sion's anthems sing.

Place us where Sharon's roses blow;
Place us where Siloe's waters flow;
Place us on Lebanon, that waves
Its cedars o'er our fathers' graves:
Place us upon that holy mount,
Where stands the temple, gleams the fount;
And love and joy shall loose our tongues,
To warble Sion's pleasant songs.

If I should e'er, earth's fairest gem,
Forget thee, O Jerusalem!
May my right hand forget its skill,
To wake the slumbering lyre at will!
If from my heart, e'en when most gay,
Thy memory e'er should fade away,
May my tongue rest within my head
Mute as the voices of the dead!

NEILE.

122. JEREMIAH IS IMPRISONED.

Jeremiah xxxvii. xxxviii. & lii.

After the Chaldeans had departed from Jerusalem Jeremiah intended to go into the land of Benjamin; but when he was in the gate, Irijah a captain of the ward, took him, saying, "Thou fallest away to the Chaldeans." Jeremiah said, "It is false." Irijah brought him to the princes, and they cast him into prison. He was afterwards put into a noisome dungeon for prophesying; Ebed-melech the Ethiopian spoke to the king in his favour, and he was taken out of the dungeon, and remained in the court of the prison. During all this time he tried to persuade the king to trust in the word of the Lord, and to deliver himself to the Chaldeans to save the city from destruction; but he could not prevail. Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison till the day the city was taken. Now the word of the Lord came unto Jeremiah, while he was shut up in the court of the prison, and he said to Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; behold I will bring my words upon this city for evil, and not for good; and they shall be accomplished in that day before thee. But I will deliver thee in that day, because thou hast put thy trust in me, saith the Lord."

When the city was besieged the famine was very sore; and in the ninth day of the fourth month of the eleventh year of Zedekiah's reign, the city was broken up and all the men of war fled, and went forth out of the city by night by the way of the gate between the two walls, which was by the king's garden; and they went by the way of the plain, for the Chaldeans were by the city round about. But the army of the

Chaldeans pursued after the king, and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho; and all his army was scattered from him. Then they took the king, and carried him up unto the king of Babylon to *Riblah* in the land of Hamath; where he gave judgment upon him. And the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes: he slew also all the princes of Judah in Riblah. Then he put out the eyes of Zedekiah; and the king of Babylon bound him in chains, and carried him to Babylon, and put him in prison till the day of his death.

The chief of the vessels of the temple, of brass, and gold, and of silver, were taken away to Babylon, and the house of the Lord, and the king's house, and all the houses of the great men were burned with fire, and the Chaldeans brake down all the walls of Jerusalem. Now Nebuchadnezzar had given charge concerning Jeremiah to Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard, saying, "Take him, and look well to him, and do him no harm; but do unto him even as he shall say unto thee." Nebuzar-adan and all the king of Babylon's princes sent, and took Jeremiah out of the court of the prison, and committed him to the care of Gedaliah.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

intended—not from any fear of danger from remaining, but in company with his own people to his native place.

prison—a room in the house of Jonathan, the scribe.

dungeon—probably a deep excavation in the court of Jonathan's house, which had previously been used as a cistern for containing water, but at this time having only a tenacious sediment or 'mire' at the bottom, it was a damp and noisome place of confinement.

Ebed-melech—'king's servant;' the chief of the attendants in the harem of an eastern prince is an important personage; possessing peculiar advantages of access to his royal master, he generally exercises considerable influence over him.

Ethiopian—Zedekiah imitated the practice of neighbouring kings by employing black slaves; they were esteemed costly luxuries and were only found in families of high rank. Such a slave was Ebed-melech, a heathen, but converted to the true religion. The prophet received more kindness from this stranger than from his own countrymen.

the court of the prison—Zedekiah had evidently a regard for Jeremiah, he not only released him from the dungeon, but fed him while the siege lasted and the famine prevailed; he listened to his exhortations, and wished to follow his advice, but his fear of the princes prevented him.

deliver himself—Nebuchadnezzar had made Zedekiah king in opposition to other claims; as Zedekiah was a tributary king to him, his rebellion was altogether unjustifiable.

deliver thee—God will reward every act of kindness done to his servants, as he thus promised to reward Ebed-melech.

put thy trust—it is therefore evident that this Ethiopian was a true worshipper of God.

broken up—referring probably to the opening of the subterraneous passage referred to in Lesson 120, 'they shall dig;' the term, 'city' meaning the fortress of Mount Zion. Lesson 56, called it.'

plains—Less. 30, 'Jericho.'

all the princes—Less. 120, 'give the men.'

put out—Less. 120, 'not see it.'

the house—Lesson 69, 'a proverb;' Josephus says that the temple was burned at noon on the very same day of the year on which it was afterwards burned by the Romans; and one of the Rabbins tells us that on both occasions the Levites were in their desks singing the same Psalm:—

"He shall bring upon them their own iniquity,
"And shall cut them off in their own wickedness;
"Yea the Lord our God shall cut them off." Psalm xciv. 23.

Nebuzar-adan—'Nebo is the lord.'

saying—Nebuchadnezzar had been informed of Jeremiah's exhortations to Zedekiah and the princes to submit themselves again to him; he had heard too of his sufferings, and feeling desirous to protect him from further violence he commanded his generals to take charge concerning him.

Gedaliah—Judea being now reduced to a province of Babylon, Gedaliah is made governor. He was a son of Ahikam, one of the four persons of distinction whom Josiah sent to consult Huldah, the prophetess.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

RIBLAH—a town of Syria, in Hamath, where Pharaoh-Necho halted on his return from Carchemish; he here deposed Jehoahaz, king of Judah, and placed Jehoiakim on the throne. Nebuchadnezzar remained at Riblah while his general Nebuzar-adan besieged Jerusalem; and after the city was taken Zedekiah was brought to Riblah with the other prisoners, and his eyes were put out.

THE COMING JUDGMENT.

The world is grown old, and her pleasures are past;
The world is grown old, and her form may not last;
The world is grown old, and trembles for fear;
For sorrows abound, and judgment is near!

The sun in the Heaven is languid and pale;
And feeble and few are the fruits of the vale;
And the hearts of the nations fail them for fear,
For the world is grown old, and judgment is near!

The king on his throne, the bride in her bower,
The children of pleasure all feel the sad hour;
The roses are faded, and tasteless the cheer,
For the world is grown old, and judgment is near!

The world is grown old!—but should we complain,
Who have tried her and known that her promise is vain?
Our heart is in Heaven, our home is not here.
And we look for our crown when judgment is near!

HEBER.

123. GEDALIAH'S GOVERNMENT. OF TYRE.

2 Kings xxv. 22; Jeremiah xl-xlii; Ezekiel xxvi-xxvii.

Before Jeremiah left Ramah Nebuchadnezzar said unto him, "·The Lord thy God hath pronounced this evil upon this place. Now the Lord hath done according as he hath said: because ye have sinned against the Lord, and have not obeyed his voice, therefore this thing is come unto you. And now, behold, I loose thee this day from the chains which were upon thine hand. ·If it seem good unto thee to come with me into Babylon, come; and I will look well unto thee: but if it seem ill unto thee to come with me into Babylon, forbear: behold all the land is before thee; whither it seemeth good and convenient for thee to go, thither go." Now while he was not yet gone back, he said, "Go back to Gedaliah whom the king of Babylon hath made ·governor over the cities of Judah, and dwell with him among the people: or go wheresoever it seemeth convenient unto thee to go." So the captain of the guard gave him victuals and a reward, and let him go. Then went Jeremiah unto Gedaliah to Mizpah; and dwelt with him among the people that were left in the land. And many of the Jews from Moab, Ammon, and Edom, ·returned to Judah and dwelt in the land.

Johanan informed Gedaliah that ·Baalis, the king of Ammon, had sent ·Ishmael to slay him. Gedaliah believed it not. Johanan wanted to go and slay Ishmael, but Gedaliah would not allow him, thinking he spoke falsely. Ishmael came to Gedaliah at Mizpah, and ·ate bread with him; he afterwards arose and ·slew him and many of his friends, and took away captive some of those who had remained with Gedaliah at Mizpah, and departed to go over to the Ammonites. When Johanan heard of all the evil Ishmael had done, he and the captains who were with him pursued Ishmael, and overtook him by the waters of Gibeon. The people were glad to see Johanan, and turned to him, but Ishmael escaped to the Ammonites with eight men. Johanan and the captains intended to remove into Egypt, but Jeremiah promised them many blessings if they remained in the land, and threatened that the sword, and famine, and pestilence should follow them ·if they went into Egypt. They obeyed not the voice of the Lord, but went into Egypt,

carrying Jeremiah with them. While Jeremiah was in Egypt the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, "Take great stones in thine hand, and hide them in the clay in the brick-kiln, which is at the entry of Pharaoh's house in *Tahpanhes*, in the sight of the men of Judah; and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, behold, I will send and take Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will set his throne upon these stones that I have hid: and he shall spread his royal pavilion over them. And he shall smite the land of Egypt and deliver such as are for death to death: and such as are for captivity to captivity; and such as are for the sword to the sword. And I will kindle a fire in the houses of the gods of Egypt; and he shall burn them, and carry them away captives: and he shall array himself with the land of Egypt, as a shepherd putteth on his garment; and he shall go forth from thence in peace."

The Tyrians rejoiced when Jerusalem was fallen, and said, "I shall be replenished now she is laid waste." *Tyre* was then a place of traffic for many isles; it was supplied with merchandise from many parts of the earth. Egypt supplied fine linen with broidered work; Tarshish supplied silver, iron, tin, and lead; Syria supplied emeralds, purple and broidered work, fine linen, coral, and agate; Judah and Israel supplied wheat, honey, oil, and balm; Sheba and Raamah supplied spices, precious stones, and gold. Men from all parts of the earth assembled at Tyre, some were mariners, others were pilots, others soldiers: her wares and her merchandise enriched kings of the earth, but God threatened to destroy her, to break down her towers, and make her like the top of a rock, a place for spreading nets upon, in the midst of the sea, that should be built no more.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

The Lord thy God—the heathen conqueror acknowledged the truth which the people of Israel were so slow to learn—that for their rebellion against the Lord all this evil was allowed to come upon them. The heathen admitted that the God of Israel was a tutelary deity; Less. 83, 'gods of the hills.'

If it seem good, &c.—the free choice was given him, either to go to Babylon, where doubtless he would have been treated with honour, or to remain with his own people. After having spent forty years of unrequited service in the welfare of his country, he still chose to remain with the remnant left in it.

governor—Less. 122, 'Gedaliah.'

returned—during the troubles of the previous years many of the inhabitants, including some of the army and the captains, had fled to neighbouring places for protection; on hearing of Gedaliah's appointment, they returned to Judah, and repaired to him at Mizpah.

Baalis—envious of the appearance of returning confidence and prosperity to the people that were left in Judah under the judicious government of Gedaliah, Baalis, the king of Ammon, plotted his destruction, using Ishmael as his tool in this abominable project.

Ishmael—he was of the royal blood, and he was accompanied in his murderous expedition by ten of the princes of the now desolate kingdom of Judah.

ate bread—Less. 31, 'covenant.'

slew him—not only was the unsuspecting and hospitable Gedaliah thus treacherously murdered in his own house, but also the Jews who were with him, and the Chaldean guard that constituted the newly formed government established at Mizpah, together with eighty men who were on their way to Jerusalem to weep over the ruins of the desolated temple.

if they went, &c.—there was every reason why the people should not go into Egypt—these reasons Jeremiah urged on them; many express commands had been given which were known to Jeremiah; Dent. xvii. 16; Levit. xviii. 3; Josh. xxiv. 14; Isaiah xxx. 2, &c.; besides which he knew that it was, in effect, refusing to submit themselves to the king of Babylon, to whom God had decreed the government of Judea.

While—Joel had already predicted that Egypt should become a desolation, (Less. 101, 'of Egypt'), and now Jeremiah announces its fulfilment as at hand, and the name of the conqueror who should effect it. Soon after the conquest of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar advanced upon Tyre, which he besieged for thirteen years; he then marched his army into Egypt, which, being in a state of disorder, offered him an easy conquest; he ravaged it, slew thousands of its inhabitants, among whom fell many of those Jews who had refused to submit to his rule in their own land; he returned home laden with the spoils of that rich and ancient country.

replenished—they hoped that most of the commerce of Judah would fall into their hands, thus adding to their wealth and commercial influence.

traffic—Ezek. xxvii. 5-25.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

TAHPANHES—a city of Egypt called Hanes by Isaiah, where was a palace of one of the Pharaohs. Thither Johanan removed the people from Jerusalem after Gedaliah was slain, and with them Jeremiah and Baruch. Jeremiah is supposed to have died at Tahpanhes.

TYRE—Less. 56, 'workmen,' 'Tyre;' 67, 'unto the sea.' Owing to its fine situation on the Mediterranean Sea, and its caravan trade, Tyre attained great commercial prosperity; the Tyrians were, however, a wicked and abandoned people, and their city was condemned to utter ruin. From the earliest period of its history Tyre was strongly fortified; it withstood a siege of five years under Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, and in a sea-fight twelve Tyrian galleys defeated sixty vessels which formed the Assyrian's fleet. After Nebuchadnezzar departed from Judah he laid siege to Tyre, which withstood his powerful armaments for thirteen years; the inhabitants foreseeing that success must ultimately attend the Babylonian arms, removed all their valuable property to the neighbouring island, so that when Nebuchadnezzar entered the city he found nothing to repay him for his labour and vast expense. The new city rose to an eminence of commercial greatness not inferior to its predecessor, but with its prosperity, vice, luxury, and idolatry increased till its iniquities rose to heaven, and drew down the judgments of God upon it. Its palaces are destroyed, and the waves of the sea roll over them; its quays are deserted and in ruins, and upon their walls a few poor fishermen hang their nets to dry, thus literally fulfilling the Lord's threatenings by his servants, Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

"THOU DIDST ENRICH THE KINGS OF THE EARTH WITH THE MULTITUDE OF THY RICHES AND OF THY MERCHANDISE."

Fair were thy ships, the stately cedar's boast,
Their broider'd sails adorned thy verdant coast;
Majestic surges rule'd their trackless course
And steer'd them lightly o'er the billows hoarse.
Amid thy huts the Persian bands display'd,
Their shields bright glittering, and their helmet's shade:
Quick to the mast, the neighbouring nations press'd
Beheld thy glory, and thy power confess'd.
Stern Tarshish came to spread her costly store,
Of massy ingots, and of glittering ore:
Slow move'd the ships of Javan o'er the waves,
Whose sails were heavy with the sigh of slaves;—
And there repair'd Togarmah's sons, who lead
The prancing courser, and the neighing steed;
There Dedan's train display'd with boastful air,
Dark, polish'd ebon mix'd with ivory rare;
Syria arriv'd with emeralds glittering bright,
And purple, streaming to the dazzled sight:—
Judea journey'd from her vallies calm,
With wheat, oil, honey, and the healing balm;
Wool, white as snow, the rich Damascus bore,
With wines and spices from a foreign shore;
Arabia's princes move'd with lofty mien,
And Sheba's merchants, 'mid the throng were seen;
These all, O Tyre! beheld, with wondering eye,
Thy countless wealth, and royal majesty.

MRS. SIGOURNEY.

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124. NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S VISION.

Daniel ii. iii.

In the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign he dreamed dreams wherewith his spirit was troubled, but which he could not call to remembrance when he awoke. He sent for his wise men, and commanded them to tell him the dreams, and the interpretation of them. The Chaldeans answered the king and said, "There is not a man upon the earth that can shew

the king's matter: therefore there is no king, lord, nor ruler, that asked such things at any magician, or astrologer, or Chaldean. And it is a rare thing that the king requireth, and there is none other that can shew it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh." Then the king was angry and very furious, and commanded to destroy all the wise men of Babylon. And the decree went forth that the wise men should be slain: and they sought Daniel and his fellows to be slain. But Daniel requested that time should be given them, and he went home and told his friends, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, to desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret. In a night vision God made known the dream and its interpretation unto Daniel, who praised and thanked God. Daniel first told the king the dream, and afterwards explained it to him. Four kingdoms were to succeed each other after Babylon; the fourth was to be the strongest, but during its decline, God would set up a kingdom which should stand for ever. When Daniel had made these things known to Nebuchadnezzar he acknowledged the greatness of God, and made Daniel ruler over the province of Babylon. Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, were also promoted to offices of honour, their names having been changed to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

Nebuchadnezzar set up an image of gold in the plain of Dura. He called together the princes, governors, captains, and other officers. A herald commanded them all, at the sound of the musical instruments, to fall down and worship the image; and whosoever fell not down and worshipped it, should be cast into a burning fiery furnace. Some Chaldeans came, and accused Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to the king of not obeying his decree. The king repeated his decree to them; they answered, that their God was able to deliver them from the burning fiery furnace; but if not, they would not serve Nebuchadnezzar's gods, nor worship his golden image. The king was full of fury at the boldness of these men, wherefore he commanded the furnace to be made seven times hotter. The three Jews were bound and cast into the midst of the furnace, and the flame of the furnace destroyed

the men who cast them in. Immediately the king was astonished to see four men in the furnace, walking about unhurt: and the form of the fourth was like the Son of God. He then called Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, to come forth. Not a hair of their head was singed, for the fire had no power on them. Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God. Therefore I make a decree, That every people, nation, and language, which speak anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill; because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort." Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in the province of Babylon.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

dreamed dreams—they made so deep an impression on his mind that he felt convinced they had a divine origin. In like manner Pharaoh had an impression of the great importance of his dreams, for he called in his wise men and magicians to interpret them; Less. 15. The agitation of Nebuchadnezzar was extreme, because nothing remained on his memory but an indistinct and painful impression that some important matters had been foreshadowed to him in his vision.

wise men—from very early times Babylon was distinguished as a seat of learning, where astronomical science was cultivated & literature encouraged; but there is reason to believe that whatever its wise men knew of the motions and order of the heavenly bodies resulted rather from their foolish and vain attempts to read the future in the stars, than from their study of the laws and phenomena of nature.

to tell him—he concluded that the same divine power which made known to them the interpretation of dreams could also communicate the dreams themselves; his demand therefore to have the dream told him first was a test of their ability to interpret it afterwards. The king seemed to feel assured that his dream referred to future important events, and he might reasonably enough conclude that their *professed* power of foretelling future events would avail them, if they were not impostors.

Chaldeans—it appears that the descendants of the ancient inhabitants of Babylon preserved themselves from amalgamation with those people who in succeeding ages were added to the population of this increasing city. They were divided into classes or *castes*, one of which was military, and another sacerdotal, which included the wise men and sages.

gods—Less. 83, 'gods of the hills.'

the dream—the king saw a majestic and brilliant figure of a man, whose head was of gold, his breast and arms of silver, his belly and thighs of brass, his legs of iron, and his feet partly iron and partly clay. As he beheld it with wondering awe, a stone, cut out of the mountain without hands smote it in the feet,

breaking them to pieces; the iron, clay, brass, silver, and gold composing it were reduced to powder and the wind wafted it away like chaff; the stone then became a great mountain which filled the whole earth. It was not uncommon then to represent kingdoms or cities by human figures (Lesson 114, 'daughter') and their condition by the materials of which they were composed.

Four kingdoms—the *first* was the Babylonian—"thou art that head of gold" said Daniel to Nebuchadnezzar; the *second* was the Persian, which commenced with the death of Belshazzar; the *third* was the Grecian, and the *fourth* was the Roman kingdom.

decline—corresponding with its decline the gospel of Christ has been extended.

God would—indicated by the stone miraculously produced from the mountain—no human instrumentality being employed to cut it out.

for ever—the kingdom of the Redeemer shall never perish, for Christ must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet; then he shall come to reign in glorious majesty.

greatness of God—he said that Daniel's God was a God of gods and a Lord of lords.

ruler—he was also appointed chief governor over all the wise men.

promoted—advanced to high positions in the civil affairs of the kingdom; this was done at the request of Daniel who thus showed that he was not so elated by his own honours as to be unmindful of his friends, to whose prayers, united with his own, he owed the divine communication made to him respecting Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

Shradach, &c.—their names were changed so that their foreign origin should be less apparent; this common practice in the East has been alluded to already. Daniel's name was changed to Belteshazzar. These Hebrews did not however abandon their religion, nor feel less sympathy with their fellow captives, nor did they acknowledge their Chaldean names among themselves.

set up—this event occurred when Nebuchadnezzar had returned from his victories over the Ninevites, Egyptians, Tyrians, and other nations. Ascribing his success to his god, he determined on erecting a majestic idol to his honour, and compelling the myriads of his people to worship it. Daniel was probably in some remote part of the kingdom at this time, for his name is not mentioned in the record of the event.

herald—a king's crier.

furnace—this immense receptacle for the sacred fire, kindled in honour of the god, stood before the golden image and glowed day and night with a perpetual blaze. The king's seat was so elevated that he commanded a view of the opening and interior of the furnace. Compare Less. 81, 'Baal;' 71, 'Ammonites.'

walking about—what an idea does this give of the vastness of the furnace! The fire consumed the ropes which bound the three Jews, but had no effect on themselves.

Son of God—the idea that the gods sent their sons to execute important commissions was held by the heathen; in this case the beauty in form and countenance of the fourth person, as well as his miraculous appearance in the furnace, satisfied the king that he was a messenger sent by the God of the Hebrews to rescue his faithful worshippers from the power of Baal's furnace.

changed—nullified the king's decree, so that henceforth it should not be compulsory on his subjects to worship his idol.

yielded—gave themselves up to entire reliance on Jehovah, with confidence that he would deliver them from the flames.

every people—his dominion extended over many nations diverse from each other in language, customs, and religious observances.

cut in pieces—this barbarous and brutal practice was not uncommon in ancient times, nor is it yet extinct in the East. Agag was so treated by command of Samuel; Lesson 45, 'then slew.'

THE FIERY FURNACE.

"LO, I SEE FOUR MEN LOOSE, WALKING IN THE MIDST OF THE FIRE, AND THEY HAVE NO HURT; AND THE FORM OF THE FOURTH IS LIKE THE SON OF GOD."

When persecution's torrent blaze
  Wraps the unshrinking Martyr's head;
When fade all earthly flowers and bays,
  When summer friends are gone and fled,
Is he alone in that dark hour
Who owns the Lord of love and power?

And when the wicked ones behold
  Thy favourites walking in thy light,
Just as, in fancied triumph bold,
  They deem'd them lost in deadly night,
Amaz'd they cry, "What spell is this,
"Which turns their sufferings all to bliss?

"How are they free whom we had bound,
  "Upright, whom in the gulf we cast?
"What wondrous helper have they found
  "To screen them from the scorching blast?
"Three were they—who hath made them four?
"And sure a form divine he wore.

"Even like the Son of God," so cried
  The Tyrant, when in one fierce flame
The martyrs liv'd, the murderers died:
  Yet knew he not what angel came
To make the rushing fire-flood seem
Like summer breeze by woodland stream.

KEBLE.

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125. NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S PRIDE.

Dan. iv.; Jer. lii. 31-34; Dan. vii-ix.

Nebuchadnezzar had a second dream which his wise men could not interpret. He therefore sent for Daniel, and told it to him. Daniel was troubled in his thoughts for an hour. He then declared the interpretation of the dream to Nebuchadnezzar. This dream was to shew the king that he should be driven from men, and eat grass as oxen. Daniel then advised the king to break off his sins by righteousness. About a year after, the king walked in his palace, and said, "Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of my king-

dom, by the might of my power, and the honour of my majesty?" While he thus spoke a voice came from heaven, saying, "The kingdom is departed from thee;"—his dream was fulfilled—he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagle's feathers, and his nails like bird's claws. At the end of seven years Nebuchadnezzar's reason was restored to him, and he made known to all nations the signs and wonders the High God had wrought toward him. He said, "I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion and his kingdom is from generation to generation: and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou? At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honour and brightness returned unto me; and my counsellers and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me. Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are the truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase."

When Jehoiachin had been in captivity thirty-seven years, Evil-merodach, the son and successor of Nebuchadnezzar, brought him out of prison, and spake kindly to him, and set him above the other kings that were in Babylon, and changed his prison garments, and shewed other kindness unto him.

Daniel had a vision of four great beasts, which were explained to him to mean successive kingdoms and powers of the earth. But Daniel saw in his vision that all these thrones and kingdoms came to ruin; then the ancient of days came and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the saints possessed the kingdom. Daniel had afterwards another vision, of a ram with two horns—the kings of *Media* and *Persia*—of a he-goat—the king of *Grecia*—and of a king of fierce countenance, whose power should destroy the mighty and the holy people.

second dream—the king thought he saw a lofty, fruitful, and majestic tree, beneath whose rich and extended foliage the birds of the air and beasts of the earth found shade and defence, and whose fruit sustained all mankind; while he admired it a 'watcher,' or messenger, commanded that it should be cut down to its roots, saying, "let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth; let his heart be changed, and let a beast's heart be given unto him, and let seven times pass over him."

palace—this magnificent building stood in the centre of an immense square; it was situated on the western side of the Euphrates, where stood the more modern part of the city—then the metropolis of the world.

I have built—not as its founder, for the ancient city had existed from the time of the building of the tower whence it derived its name; but as the enlarger and improver of it, and by whose fame and conquests it had become the chief city of the world.

while—in the moment of his self-exultation and pride, he was deprived of his reason, and given up to the infatuation of imagining himself an ox; acting under this idea he neglected his person, refused the luxurious accommodations of his palace, shunned the society of reasonable creatures, assumed the habits of these animals, and wandered day and night with them.

seven years—or seven 'times;' the word 'times' representing years in prophetic writings. Evil-merodach, his son reigned during this period; Less. 126, 'queen.'

the Most High—this affliction resulted in the conversion of Nebuchadnezzar to the worship of the Lord of Heaven and Earth.

reputed—valued; esteemed.

nothing—his pride and self-sufficiency were perfectly cured.

his will—he renounced his former boasting of the power of his god, and the irresponsibility of his own actions.

army—the spiritual inhabitants of heaven, and, in a subordinate sense, the planetary system.

Jehoiachin—the successor of Jehoiakim. Lesson 118, 'taken.'

Evil-merodach—the son of Nebuchadnezzar and the father of Belshazzar; his reign was short, for at the end of two years, he was slain in a battle with the Persians, or according to some he was assassinated by his brother-in-law. His brief reign was characterized with great cruelty. Compare Less. 110, 'he was slain.'

vision—he saw that the four great winds blew with violence upon the Mediterranean Sea, out of which four great beasts arose; the first was like a lion with eagle's wings, the second was like a bear, the third was like a leopard having four heads, and four wings of a fowl on its back, and the fourth was not like any animal of which he had knowledge, but it was dreadful and terrible, and exceeding strong, armed with iron teeth and ten horns.

successive kingdoms—kingdoms that arose one after another; the same as those represented by the great figure of Nebuchadnezzar's first dream. Less. 124, 'Four kingdoms.'

another vision—the same kingdoms still represented by different figures, illustrating further particulars respecting them.

kings—put for kingdoms or powers.

destroy—the overthrow of Jerusalem by the Romans is here predicted.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

MEDIA—an extensive country of Asia, south of the Caspian sea, and north of Persia, supposed to have been peopled by the descendants of Madai, third son of Japheth. Nebuchadnezzar went against Media and Persia after he had defeated Pharaoh-Necho, king of Egypt, & conquered Judah. Babylonia was afterwards taken from Belshazzar, the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar, by Dairus the Mede, the uncle of Cyrus. Soon after, Media was attached to the Persian Empire.

PERSIA—a vast and celebrated country of Asia, of which Elam formed a small part. The Persian kings took Babylon while the Jews were there in captivity. Cyrus, one of the Persian kings, decreed freedom to the Jews, as had been foretold by Isaiah.

GRECIA—the countries inhabited by the descendants of Javan, the fourth son of Japheth, and the father of the Grecians, and Ionians, and afterwards called Greeks. This country comprised much of Asia Minor and the principal islands in the Mediterranean Sea.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR.

"IS NOT THIS GREAT BABYLON THAT I HAVE BUILT...BY THE MIGHT OF MY POWER, AND FOR THE HONOUR OF MY MAJESTY?"

The monarch of Babylon strode through his hall,
And his bosom with impious joy was o'erflowing;
As he look'd on his mighty possessions—on all
The splendours that round him their radiance were throwing.

"Is this not"—he cried in the pride of his heart—
"The city I built for my honour and glory?
"The city from earth that shall never depart—
"That shall ever be bright with the light of my story?"

While the words of ambition were yet on his tongue,—
Like swift-shooting bolt from the thunder-cloud darted,—
A voice fell from Heaven—"The sceptre is wrung,
"Vain king! from thy hand, and thy glory departed."

That hour—from the presence of men he was driven,
And he brows'd upon grass like the oxen before him;
And his body was wet with the dew drops of heaven,
And the storm of the wild in its fury blew o'er him.

His heart by no human endearment was stirr'd;
His howlings went forth where the forest-gloom gathers;
Till the nails of his hands grew like claws of a bird,
And the hairs of his head like the wild eagle's feathers.

When seven long years of afflictions had passed,
He returned all renewed to the throne of his nation;
And he bowed him in trembling submission at last,
To the Monarch of monarchs—the Lord of Creation.

W. KNOX.

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126. BELSHAZZAR'S FEAST.

Daniel v.

Belshazzar, the last king of Babylon, was the grandson and successor of Nebuchadnezzar. He made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and he commanded the golden and silver vessels belonging to the temple of Jerusalem to be brought. He and his wives, and concubines, drank wine from them, and praised the gods of gold, and silver, brass, iron, wood, and stone. In that same hour a hand appeared writing on the wall of the palace. The king called for the wise men of Babylon, and said unto them, "Whosoever shall read this

writing, and shew me the interpretation thereof, shall be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about his neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom. But none of them could read the writing. The queen spoke of Daniel to the king. He was sent for, and the king asked him to interpret the writing, and promised him the rewards which he had offered to his wise men. Then Daniel answered the king, "Let thy gifts be to thyself and give thy rewards to another: yet I will read the writing unto the king, and make known to him the interpretation. O thou king, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom and majesty, and glory, and honour: and for the majesty that he gave him, all people, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him: whom he would he slew; and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he set up; and whom he would he put down. But his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him: and he was driven from the sons of men; and his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild asses: they fed him with grass like the oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven; till he knew that the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men, and that he appointeth over it whomsoever he will. And, thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this; but hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee, and thou, and thy lords, thy wives, and thy concubines, have drunk wine in them; and thou hast praised the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified." He then declared the interpretation of the writing; "*God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it.—Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting—thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.*" The king immediately exalted Daniel to great honour.

The Medes and the Persians had for two years besieged Babylon without being able to take the city. But this very night,

while the inhabitants of Babylon were revelling, the besieging army, under Cyrus, turned off the waters of the river into another channel, and then marched into the city through the bed of the river which was left dry. When they came to the palace they slew Belshazzar and many of his princes, made prisoners of his soldiers, and took possession of the city, which was then included in the kingdom of Darius the Mede.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

Belshazzar—the son of Evil-merodach and the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar; before his accession, and subsequent to the death of his father, two persons—one his uncle and the other his cousin reigned for a few years; Belshazzar's reign was very licentious.

wives—Lesson 71, 'a great many.'

concubines—Lesson 34, 'concubine.'

scarlet—this brilliant colour has always been highly valued for rich apparel and tapestry; hence it is used as an emblem of luxurious honour.

none could—because the inscription was in ancient Hebrew characters, which are very different to the Chaldean characters.

queen—she was doubtless the queen-mother, the widow of Evil-merodach, who must have been familiar with the wisdom and celebrity of Daniel during the seven years regency of her husband; Les. 125, 'seven years.' It is not improbable that the same practice was observed at the death of Nebuchadnezzar which still exists in Persia—to expel from the court all the physicians and wise men, the former for not preventing the king's death, and the latter for not having predicted it. This would account for Belshazzar's ignorance of the name and character of Daniel.

all people—Less. 124, 'every people.'

whom he would—compare Less. 66, 'said;' 67, 'to slay;' 124, 'cut in pieces.'

the writing—"MENE, MENE, TEKEL, PERES, UPHARSIN;" though in Hebrew characters the words were Chaldean; but it would be impossible to interpret them without divine instruction, as they do not alone contain an intelligible sentence, several intervening words requiring to be supplied.

numbered—the years of the Babylonish sovereignty had come to a close.

balances—Divine justice, under various characters, has been represented in ancient, as well as modern times, by a balance, as if weighing the merit or demerit of human actions. The figure is plain and forcible.

divided—between the Medes and Persians.

included—the denunciation of Jeremiah (Less. 117, 'punish') was now fully accomplished.

BELSHAZZAR.

"MENE, MENE, TEKEL, PERES, UPHARSIN."

Belshazzar is King! Belshazzar is Lord!
And a thousand dark nobles all bend at his board:
Fruits glisten, flow'rs blossom, meats steam, and a flood
Of the wine that man loveth runs redder than blood:
Wild dancers are here, and a riot of mirth,
And the beauty that maddens the passions of earth;
And the crowds all shout,
Till the vast roofs ring,—
"All praise to Belshazzar, Belshazzar the king!"

"Bring forth," cries the monarch, "the vessels of gold,
Which my father tore down from the temple of old;
Bring forth, and we'll drink, while the trumpets are blown,
To the gods of bright silver, of gold, and of stone:
Bring forth!"—and before him the vessels all shine,
And he bows unto Baal, and drinks the dark wine;
Whilst the trumpets bray,
And the cymbals ring,—
"Praise, praise to Belshazzar, Belshazzar the king!"

What cometh?—look, look! without menace, or call.
Who writes, with the lightning's bright hand, on the wall?
What pierceth the King, like the point of a dart?
What drives the cold blood from his cheek to his heart?
"Chaldeans! Magicians! the letters expound!"
They are read, and Belshazzar is dead on the ground;
Hark!—The Persian is come
On a conqueror's wing;
And a Mede's on the throne of Belshazzar the king!

PROCTOR.

127. DANIEL ACCUSED.

Daniel vi; ix. Ezra i.

Darius, king of the Medes and Persians, placed over his kingdom one-hundred-and-twenty princes; and over these he appointed three presidents, of whom he made Daniel the chief. The presidents and princes envied Daniel, but could find no error or fault in him of which to accuse him. Then said these men, "We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel except we find it against him concerning the law of his God:" so they got the king to sign a decree, that if for thirty days, any one should ask a petition of any God or man except the king, he should be cast into a den of lions. The decree was made and signed. Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime. Then these men assembled, and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God; wherefore they accused him to the king of doing contrary to the decree. The king was displeased with himself for having made the decree, and he set his heart to deliver Daniel till the going down of the sun, but the decree could not be

changed, because the decrees made by the kings of the Medes and Persians were unalterable. As the sun went down, the princes assembled, and required of the king to cast Daniel into the den of lions. The king was obliged to consent; but as they were about to cast him in, he said unto Daniel, "Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee." Daniel was then cast into the den of lions. The king passed the night in fasting, and slept not; and in the morning he arose early, went to the den, and called upon Daniel, who answered that his God had sent his angel, and shut the lions' mouths. Daniel was taken out of the den, and no hurt was found on him, because he believed God. His accusers were then cast into the den, and the lions destroyed them. Then Darius made a decree, which he sent into every part of his kingdom. He said, "I make a decree, that in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for he is the living God, and stedfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end. He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions."

Daniel knew that the time appointed for the captivity, according to the prophecy of Jeremiah, was nearly expired. He made confession of the sins of his people to God, and he prayed earnestly for their restoration to Jerusalem. While he was praying, the angel Gabriel appeared to Daniel, and informed him of many things that should happen in future years in Jerusalem and in Judea. In the first year of the reign of Cyrus, who succeeded Darius, he made a proclamation to the Jews throughout all his kingdom that they should return, and rebuild their city, and the house of God in Jerusalem. Thus the prophecy of Isaiah respecting Cyrus was fulfilled. Cyrus brought forth the vessels of the house of the Lord, and numbered them to Sheshbazzar, (Zerubbabel) the prince of Judah. All the vessels of gold and silver were five-thousand-and-four-hundred. Sheshbazzar brought them up to Jerusalem, together with the people who returned from the captivity. The whole congregation, together with their servants and maids, were about sixty-thousand.

Darius—it appears that he was uncle both to Cyrus and Belshazzar, one of his sisters having married the king of Persia, another the king of Babylon. Cyrus married the daughter of Darius (and in the absence of a male heir) became entitled to the throne of Media; in his person, therefore, the two kingdoms, Media and Persia, were united.

envied—they disliked him because of his religion, his nation, and his inflexible integrity; and they envied him because of the great favour shown to him by Darius.

this Daniel—they mentioned his name with contempt; it appears that at the overthrow of Babylon he renounced the public acknowledgment of his foreign name—Belteshazzar.

they got—Darius, who was now aged, was of a weak and pliable disposition, though of a cruel & revengeful temper; profane writers say that notwithstanding his sternness and rigour he was easily managed.

to sign, &c.—the king felt flattered, but did not see the object of their proposal.

a den, &c.—this is the first mention of such a punishment. From monuments and coins connected with Babylon we have evidence of the existence of this barbarous practice, fully corroborating the Scripture narratives.

toward—Less. 31, 'before.'

unalterable—the kings of Persia assumed that they were something higher than common humanity, & their people countenanced the assumption; hence their word was law, their decisions being esteemed infallible and irreversible.

Thy God—the power of the Lord of heaven and earth was admitted by the king, but only as the God of the Jews! Less. 83, 'gods of the hills.'

shut—one of the sculptures found at Babylon represents a man standing on two sphynxes, holding fast two wild animals by a fore-paw of each. It is thought by some that this is a distorted representation of Daniel's deliverance.

accusers—not only were they destroyed, but the cruel Darius outraged every feeling of humanity and justice by consigning their wives and children to the same dreadful death.

a decree—such a decree could only proceed from one who esteemed himself infallible; see 'unalterable,' above.

for he is—the wonderful deliverance of Daniel made an impression upon the mind of Darius favourable to the claims put forth and maintained by the "children of the captivity," that Jehovah, their God, was the only living and true God.

prophecy—Lesson 117, 'seventy.'

Gabriel—'the strength of God;' this highly favoured ministering angel was also sent with important communications at a later period to Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, and to Mary, the mother of Jesus.

proclamation—the preamble of which proves that Cyrus was familiar with the prophecy of Isaiah respecting him (Les. 111, 'Cyrus') and that he fully acknowledged the sovereignty of Jehovah in the affairs of men.

Zerubbabel—'born in Babylon;' this was probably his Jewish name, and Sheshbazzar his Babylonian name; he was of the royal line of David.

THE KING AND THE PROPHET.

"THY GOD WHOM THOU SERVEST CONTINUALLY, HE WILL DELIVER THEE."

Around the monarch's restless couch
To night the voice of song be mute;
No gentle maids, with soothing touch,
Draw music from the melting lute;
Nor fill the cup for royal feast;
Alone the Mede in sorrow lies,
And mourns the wrath, to famish'd beast
That gave the holy and the wise.

Could he have change'd the stern decree?
How slowly wears the night away!
The stars are fading silently;
Bright flashes in the eastern day;—
Behold the anxious monarch steal
To yonder den with slaughter dyed;
With trembling hand his signet seal
He breaks, and rolls the stone aside.

He sees the lions' large red eyes
Far gleaming through the darkness lone;
"Oh, Daniel! dost thou live?" he cries,
"And hath thy Lord God kept his own?"
He bends his head, he strains his ear;—
Lo! to his lamentable call
The Prophet's voice comes calm and clear,
As if he trod his palace-hall;

"O King, live ever in thy might!
God's holy angel hath been here;
He watch'd beside me all the night,
The famish'd lions drew not near
Thus ever doth the Lord God shroud
Who serve his name in innocence."
Now, joy to Media's monarch proud!
Now, draw the rescued Prophet thence.

Where now is Daniel's spirit high,
When trials wait on Christian deed?
When evil men stand scoffing by,
And mock our hope, and scorn our meed?
Where now when foes and fears are round,
The faith that hath no doubt, no care?
In vain for him the monarch frown'd,
And chid the oft-repeated prayer;

Still thrice a day the exile set
His face where western sun-beams fall;
And faithful memory wander'd yet
To Solomon's forsaken wall.
We turn back at a word, a jest,
We tremble at a comrade's sneer;
We know it right, we feel it best
To serve the Lord, and yet we fear.

128. REBUILDING OF THE TEMPLE.

Ezra iii-vi.

Zerubbabel, the governor, and Jeshua, the high-priest, forwarded the re-building of the temple; they engaged masons and carpenters to execute the work, they also gave meat, and drink and oil to the people of Zidon and Tyre to bring cedar trees from Lebanon to Joppa, as Cyrus had granted them. And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to praise the Lord, after the ordinance of David, king of Israel. And they sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the Lord; because he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid. But many of the priests and Levites and chief of the fathers, who were ancient men, that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice; and many shouted aloud for joy: so that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of weeping of the people: for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off.

The re-building of the temple was delayed fourteen years by the Samaritans, whom Esar-haddon had placed in Samaria. Zerubbabel and Jeshua said they had nothing to do with the people of Judah, whom Cyrus had commanded to build the temple. Then they strove to hinder them all the days of Cyrus. The prophet Haggai reproved the Jews for delaying the building; he also prophesied that the glory of the second temple should be greater than the glory of the first.

Tatnai, the governor of the province, saw the work on which the Jews were engaged, and he wrote to Darius to ascertain if Cyrus had made the decree of which the Jews informed him. The decree was found at *Achmetha*; and Darius wrote to Tatnai not to let the work be hindered, but to help them in money, bullocks, oil, rams, and lambs for their offerings. Tatnai obeyed this decree of the king. The temple was

finished; the priests and the Levites were appointed for its service; large offerings were made at its dedication; and the feast of the passover was held by all who had kept themselves from the idolatries of the heathens.

Some years after, while the Jews were employed in completing the city, the Samaritans conspired against them, and accused them to Ahasuerus, king of Persia, of being a rebellious people unwilling to pay tribute, for which cause the city had formerly been destroyed. This king sent commandment to the Jews to cease from building, and the Samaritans went up to Jerusalem and forced them to discontinue the work.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

re-building—Less. 64, 'stone,' 'iron,' 'brass,' 'cedar-trees.'

gave meat—Lesson 67, 'food.'

from—Lesson 67, 'unto the sea.'

builders—at this time the Jews were not so dependent upon the assistance of Tyrian workmen as their ancestors had been in the days of David and Solomon; Less. 56, 'workmen.' The edifices constructed under the direction of several of the kings of Judah sufficiently attest their mechanical skill,

apparel—Les. 23, 'ephod,' 'robe,' &c.

trumpets—Lesson 30, 'trumpets.'

cymbals—Lesson 56, 'cymbals.'

ordinance—appointment; Less. 65, 'Levites;' 'priests.'

all—the majority; those who had not seen the first temple.

loud voice—men as well as women, by the custom of the East, give utterance to grief with tears and loud lamentations.

fourteen years—Cyrus reigned seven years, his son Cambyses four years, a usurper, named Smerdis seven months; Darius Hystaspes then ascended the throne, and when he had reigned about two years, he issued a decree confirming to the Jews all the privileges and royal grants included in the original decree of Cyrus.

Samaritans—Less. 108, 'brought men,' 'to teach.'

Esar-haddon—Lesson 112, 'king,'

they had nothing, &c.—satisfactorily proving that the Jews did not regard the people of Samaria as consisting chiefly of returned Israelites, which some have maintained. Had the colonists brought in by Esarhaddon gradually returned home, and the Israelites from the Caspian sea succeeded in making their way back in small bodies, the Jews would have been aware of these circumstances, and instead of refusing their co-operation would have gladly availed themselves of their aid, and felt rejoiced at their return to the worship of the Lord in Jerusalem.

Haggai—'one who keeps holiday;' he was born during the captivity, and went up with Zerubbabel and the other captives, who returned to Jerusalem.

for delaying—during the time that the building ceased, they devoted themselves to the improvement of their own residences, which led the prophet to ask, "Is it a time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste? now therefore, consider your ways." He showed them that God withheld his blessing on their agricultural and other pursuits because of their selfish indifference to the house of God.

greater—the second temple had not the ark of the covenant with its interesting contents. Less. 23, 'ark;' 26, 'testimony;' nor the sacred fire upon the altar; Less. 69, 'fire;' nor Urim

and Thummim. Less. 23, 'breastplate;' nor the cloud of the Divine presence on the mercy-seat; Less. 20, 'went;' 22, 'glory;' in no sense therefore, however magnificent it might be as a building, could it be greater than Solomon's temple, but by the appearance of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and heir of all things—of him who was greater than the temple—within its walls.

Tatnai—he was the Persian governor of Syria; his jurisdiction also included Samaria and Judea.

saw—Tatnai came to Jerusalem to inquire as to the allegations preferred by the Samaritans against the Jews, who explained to him their authority for re-erecting the temple, which he communicated to Darius requesting at the same time to know his royal pleasure respecting the work.

finished—in the sixth year of the reign of Darius Hystaspes.

Ahasuerus—a royal title of some of the Persian kings. He is considered by some to be the Xerxes of profane history, by others he is said to be Artaxerxes Longimanus.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

ACHMETHA—the capital of Media; it was also called Ecbatana, and is now called Hamadan.

THE SECOND TEMPLE.

"THE GLORY OF THIS LATTER HOUSE SHALL BE GREATER THAN OF THE FORMER, SAITH THE LORD OF HOSTS; AND IN THIS PLACE WILL I GIVE PEACE, SAITH THE LORD OF HOSTS."

When on the second Temple's height
The Jew uprais'd his aged sight,
How sank his heart to see,
Robb'd of its ancient pomp and pride,
The house where deign'd on earth to abide
His God's own majesty!

No holy Urim there expressed
Heaven's purpose on the Prophet's breast:
There the lov'd ark no more
On mercy's seat, presented Him
Who dwelt between the Cherubim
In Israel's tents of yore.

The consecrated fire was gone:
The announcing light no longer shone
Around that Presence dread:
And oh! what prayer could now invoke
The high prophetic voice that spoke
To Judah's happier dead.

Thus deem'd the sorrowing Israelite:
Ye Christians answer, deemed he right?
Oh! for Seraphic power
To flash conviction on the Jew,
And bid his soul, exulting view
That Temple's holiest hour!

There shall the true oracular sound,
The Almighty voice of Christ, be found;
  There shall the gracious Ark,
Blest by the bleeding victim, grant
A higher, ampler covenant
  To worlds in error dark.

There shall the fire which darts from Heaven,
The Spirit's awful breath, be given:
  There in corporeal shrine
Shall, the unerring records tell,
The fulness of the Godhead dwell,
  The Father's glory shine.

Then murmuring unbelief, be dumb—
Hark! the great Prophet's accents come,
  The Spirit unconfine'd!
Yes, from the second Temple burst
Sounds of more love than fill'd the first,
  Sounds of redeem'd mankind!

CHILD'S CHRISTIAN YEAR.

129. VASHTI DEPOSED.

Esther i, ii; Ezra vii.

Ahasuerus, king of Persia, reigned over a hundred-and-twenty-seven provinces, from *India* even to *Ethiopia*. In the third year of his reign he made a great feast to all the people in *Shushan;* and his wife made a feast for the women of the royal house. On the seventh day of the feast, when his heart was merry with wine, he commanded the presence of Vashti, that she might show the people and the princes her beauty. She refused to go, and the king was very wroth. He consulted with his wise men, and Memucan advised that she should be deposed, lest the other ladies of Persia and Media should imitate her example. This advice pleased the king, and he published a decree, "that every man should bear rule in his own house." He afterwards married Esther, a Jewess, whose parents were dead. Esther had been brought up by Mordecai, a man of Benjamin, and she was his uncle's daughter.

Ezra, the scribe, was a Jewish officer in the court of Babylon; he obtained leave to go to Jerusalem. The king gave him silver and gold to expend for the temple, and the altar in Jerusalem; and the king commanded his treasurers

beyond the river, to supply him with silver, wheat, wine, and oil, that all might be diligently done for the house of God, that God had commanded. He commissioned him to appoint magistrates and judges in the law, and to teach them their duties according to the wisdom of God; and to let judgment be executed on those who disobeyed the law of God, and the law of the king. Then Ezra praised God, saying, "Blessed be the Lord God of our fathers, which hath put such a thing as this in the king's heart, to beautify the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem; and hath extended mercy unto me before the king and his counsellors, and before all the king's mighty princes." Ezra took with him above a thousand of the Jews, and assembled them near the river *Ahava*, where they abode three days, and where a solemn fast was held, to afflict their souls before God, and to seek his guidance and blessing in their journey. They then proceeded to Jerusalem, where Ezra delivered the treasures with which he had been entrusted for the service of the temple; he also delivered the king's commands to the governors beyond the river, and they furthered the people and the house of God.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

a great feast—all the princes, nobles, and rulers of provinces were assembled, and the feasting and revelry continued 180 days. One excellent rule was however strictly observed by the express direction of the king, namely, that none did compel others to drink, "for so the king had appointed to all the officers of his house, that they should do according to every man's pleasure."

for the women—in the East women feast apart from the men; Vashti gave her feast in the palace, while the king's was held in the court of the garden, where a vast tent with costly hangings of white, green, and blue was erected.

merry—he was drunk, and consequently reckless of the dishonour he proposed to inflict upon his queen.

she might show—had she complied with his absurd command she would have submitted, according to Eastern notions, to an ignominy worse than death.

refused—Vashti not only acted true to the customs and opinions of her time, but also under a strong sense of womanly propriety.

Esther—this was her Persian name; her Jewish name was Hadassah, which means 'myrtle.'

Mordecai—he was a descendant of Kish, the father of Saul; the nature of his office in the court of Ahasuerus is unknown.

Ezra—'helper;' he was of the family of Aaron, and a grandson of Seraiah, the last high-priest of the Jews before the captivity; 2 Kings xxv. 18-21. He possessed great influence over his countrymen, which he exercised for their good.

leave—the recent marriage of Ahasuerus and Esther had probably a favourable influence on the king towards the people to whom she belonged.

silver and gold—the money amounted to little short of £22,000.

abode—whenever long journeys are commenced in the East, the parties first assemble a short distance from the city they start from, at which place they make their final preparations, returning to the city for any thing that may have been forgotten.

guidance—their way was beset with dangers, for the descendants of Ishmael—the Bedouin Arabs, were then, as now, the terror of travellers in the wilderness. Les. 7, 'wild.'

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

INDIA—an extensive country of Eastern Asia, some portions of which only were known in the time of Ahasuerus.

ETHIOPIA—a name given to several countries of Asia and Africa, the people of which have black or dark complexions. The several countries of Africa are now barbarous and idolatrous, yet the time is to come when God will be favourable to them, and cause them to know and worship himself alone. "Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God."

SHUSHAN—the capital of that part of Persia anciently called Elam, and the winter residence of the kings of Persia. Daniel the prophet had one of his visions in the palace at Shushan. It was the scene of Vashti's deposition, Esther's promotion, Haman's downfall, & Mordecai's exaltation.

AHAVA—a small river of Babylon, the situation of which is not known.

EZRA'S MOURNING.

"HE MOURNED BECAUSE OF THE TRANSGRESSION OF THEM THAT HAD BEEN CARRIED AWAY."

Art thou of Ezra's seed,
Mourning, like him, transgressors led away?
Mourn on! thy holy creed
Foretells thy blessing in a future day.

What though thine eyes be dim
With tears for others who themselves shed none;
Thou yet mayest know, like him,
That joy which only can through grief be won.

Thy soul, in brighter days,
The oil of joy for mourning may possess;
And the glad garb of praise
For the dark vesture of thy heaviness.

Thine eye may see restored
Some for whose bondage thou hast sorrow'd long;
The halt, by thee deplored,
May walk again, the dumb break forth in song.

If no such aid appear,
Blessings rest on the path by mourners trod,
And not a single tear
Falls from their eyes unnotic'd by their God.

BARTON.

130. OF HAMAN AND MORDECAI.

Esther iii. vi.

Mordecai discovered a conspiracy against king Ahasuerus, and Esther made it known to the king. Inquisition was made, and Bigthan and Teresh two of the king's chamberlains were hanged for their crime. After these things Ahasuerus, promoted Haman, an Agagite, to be above all the other princes, and all the king's servants reverenced him. Mordecai alone bowed not to him. Haman was very wroth and resolved to obtain a decree from the king to destroy all the Jews in Persia. He spoke of the Jews to the king as a disloyal people, and obtained a decree against them. He then sent letters through all the provinces for the destruction of the Jews on a certain day. Then Mordecai rent his clothes, and there was among the Jews great mourning and fasting and wailing. Mordecai informed Esther of the king's decree, and that her own life was endangered by Haman's designs. The queen then went to Ahasuerus, and she made a request to him that he and Haman would come to a banquet, which she had prepared. Haman went forth joyful, but when he saw that Mordecai bowed not to him, he was full of indignation against him. When Haman came home, he boasted of the glory of his riches and the multitude of his children, and all the things wherein the king had promoted him; and that Esther the queen had invited him to the banquet that she had prepared. "Yet," said he, "all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate." Then said Zeresh his wife and all his friends unto him, "Let a gallows be made of fifty cubits high, and to-morrow speak thou unto the king that Mordecai may be hanged thereon; then go thou in merrily with the king unto the banquet." And he caused the gallows to he made. On that night the king could not sleep; and the chronicles of his kingdom were read to him, concerning the conspiracy of Bigthan and Teresh, which had been discovered by Mordecai. The king enquired, "What honour and dignity hath been done Mordecai for this?" His servants told him that nothing had been done for him. Haman then came to the king to speak to him about Mordecai, that he should be hanged on the gallows he had pre-

pared. The king asked him, "What shall be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour?" Haman thought only of himself, and suggested that such man should be clothed in royal apparel, and placed on the king's horse, that one of the most noble of the princes should go with such man through the city, and proclaim before him, "Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour." The king approved of this, and said to Haman, "Make haste, and take apparel and the horse, as thou hast said, and do even so to Mordecai the Jew, that sitteth at the king's gate: let nothing fail of all that thou hast spoken." Then took Haman the apparel and the horse, and arrayed Mordecai, and brought him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaimed before him, "Thus shall it be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour."

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

Haman—he was a man of irrepressible pride and arrogance, and rose by the perseverance with which he pursued the object of his ambition—to be prime minister in the court of Persia.

Agagite—as Agag was the common name of many of the kings of Amalek, it appears probable that Haman was of the royal line. Less. 21, 'utterly:' 45, 'Agag;' 53, 'smote."

bowed not—in refusing to pay reverence to Haman, Mordecai violated the king's commandment; it is probable that he and the other Jews in Shushan denied Haman this honour on account of the curse under which he lay as an Amalekite; or the reverence required might be a species of idolatry, which his conscientious feelings would not permit him to render, "for he had told them that he was a Jew."

to destroy all—the implacable hatred of his ancestors towards the Hebrews had descended to him; doubtless other Jews had offended him, and he therefore wished to destroy all the Jews throughout the wide-spread dominions of Persia. He offered to pay into the royal treasury, 10,000 talents of silver, a sum exceeding £2,000,000 of our money, to indemnify the king for the loss of the Jewish revenue consequent on their destruction. So great was the king's favour towards Haman that he did not require him to pay the large sum he offered, while he allowed him to do with the Jews as he thought proper.

a decree—Less. 127, 'unalterable."

sent letters—Cyrus established posts throughout the Persian dominions—men with horses were kept in readiness at stations at certain distances from each other. Neither snow, rain, heat, nor darkness interfered with these posts.

informed—by means of Hatach, one of the king's chamberlains, whom Esther had sent to inquire of Mordecai the cause of his mourning.

endangered—the king's decree would apply to her also, she being a Jewess; it does not appear that Ahasuerus was acquainted with her nation and religion. Mordecai shewed her, however, that her position enabled her to effect safety for her people, and that it was her duty to succour them.

Zeresh—'gold.'

chronicles—the Persian kings exercised the utmost care to register every occurence worthy of preservation chiefly, however, the events connected with the court. By a singular Providence—the king could not sleep—the chronicle was called for—and the reader turned to that part in which Mordecai's services were recorded—honour was decreed him—and Haman was to be the means of conferring it.

clothed—Less. 47, 'robe;' Haman's advice included the investiture of the king's favourite with the royal turban, as well as the royal robe. The privilege of wearing the royal robes was a dignity of a very exalted kind.

king's horse—this was another high mark of royal favour very rarely conferred. The people of the East, not excepting the Hebrews, esteemed it criminal for any one to use what had once been appropriated to royalty; but in Persia this exclusiveness was carried to its utmost limits, death being the punishment of the offender.

proclaimed—thus Haman was called on to proclaim Mordecai's honour, at the very instant when he came to petition for his destruction.

A KING'S SLEEPLESS NIGHT.

"ON THAT NIGHT COULD NOT THE KING SLEEP, AND HE COMMANDED TO BRING THE BOOK OF THE CHRONICLES; AND THEY WERE READ BEFORE THE KING."

Mordecai, though long forgot,
When the monarch slumber'd not,
For the service he had done
Proud and regal honours won.

Long was his reward delayed,
Long he sate in seeming shade,
While the sun shone fair and bright
On the haughty Agagite.

Yet in patient faith he sate
Watching on at Shushan's gate;
Humble-hearted, hopeful-eye'd,
Bowing not to Haman's pride.

Come at last the destin'd hour
When, by God's o'er-ruling power,
Sleep no soothing charm could fling
On the eye-lids of the King.

Then the Chronicles which told
Service done by him of old,
Gain'd him at the King's command,
Honours from proud Haman's hand.

Christian wait and watch like him,
Watch, though every hope seem dim;
Wait, without one murmuring word,
Though reward seems long deferr'd.

BARTON.

131. HAMAN ACCUSED AND HANGED.

Esther vii-ix. Nehemiah i. ii.

After Haman had shewed honour to Mordecai according to the king's command, he went to his house mourning, and told his friends what had befallen him. Then said his ·wise men and Zeresh his wife unto him, "If Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews before whom thou hast begun to fall, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shalt surely fall before him." And while they were yet talking with him, came the king's chamberlains, and hasted to bring Haman unto the banquet that Esther had prepared. There Esther accused him of having contrived the death of herself and her people, and Haman was ·hanged on the gallows which he had prepared for Mordecai. The king then issued another decree by which the Jews were allowed to defend themselves; for the first decree could not be altered; and the Jews slew many of their enemies in Shushan and in the provinces of Persia. Mordecai was promoted to great honour; he was next to the king, and great among the Jews, accepted of the multitude of his brethren, seeking the wealth of his people, and speaking peace to all his seed. The Feast of ·Purim was instituted by the Jews as a memorial of their deliverance from Haman, their adversary.

·Nehemiah was ·cupbearer to the king of Persia. He learned from ·Hanani that the brethren in Jerusalem were in great affliction, and that the walls of the city were broken down and the gates burned with fire. He mourned, and wept, and fasted certain days, and prayed to God for his people. When he ·offered wine to the king, he asked Nehemiah why he was so sad; and Nehemiah said, "Why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my ·fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste." Then the king said unto him, "For what dost thou make request?" So Nehemiah ·prayed to the God of heaven. And he said unto the king, "If it please the king, and if thy servant have found favour in thy sight, that thou wouldest send me unto Judah, unto the city of my ·fathers' sepulchres, that I may build it." And the king said unto him, "For how long shall thy journey be? and when wilt thou return?" So Nehemiah stated the time, and ·it pleased the king to send him. Moreover Nehemiah said unto ·the king, "If it please the king, let letters be given me to the

governors beyond the river, that they may convey me over till I come into Judah; and a letter unto Asaph, the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the palace which appertained to the house, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall enter into." And the king granted all his request. Then Nehemiah came to the governors beyond the river, and gave them the king's letters. Sanballat and the Samaritans were vexed when they heard of Nehemiah's arrival. Nehemiah went by night to view the walls, he told the elders of the king's words, but Sanballat and his friends laughed him to scorn and despised the Jews. Nehemiah answered them, "The God of heaven will prosper us, but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial in Jerusalem.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

wise men—Haman had no doubt a princely establishment, including physicians, wise men, servants, horses, &c. The large sum offered by him to indemnify the royal treasury for the loss of the Jewish tribute proves that he had immense wealth. Les. 130, 'to destroy.'

hanged—thus, within the compass of a day, Haman's fortune was completely reversed; it was no extraordinary manifestation of God's power, but it was a notable instance of retributive justice.

Purim—'lots;' lots had been cast before Haman for the determination of the month and day of the month which might be most favourable for the execution of his horrid design against the Jews; hence the title of this feast. The feast of Purim is still observed by the Jews in all parts of the world, and is usually a day of total rest from labour, of hilarity, and frequently of excess; in the synagogue the book of Esther is read, and whenever the reader utters the name of Haman the whole congregation—men, women, and children, rise up and clap with their hands, and stamp with their feet, exclaiming, "Let his name and his memory be blotted out;" when the reading is finished they all exclaim, "Cursed be Haman! Blessed be Mordecai! Cursed be Zeresh! Blessed be Esther! Cursed be all idolaters! Blessed be all Israelites! and blessed also be Harbonah, at whose instance Haman was hanged." At this feast alms are given to the poor; relations and friends send presents to each other, and all furnish their tables with such luxuries as they can command.

Nehemiah—'whom Jehovah comforts;' he commenced his career on behalf of his nation about thirteen years after the return of Ezra to the land of Israel. He was a man of genuine religion, attached to the laws and precepts of Moses, and a devoted servant of his own people.

cup-bearer—this was an honourable office, the cupbearer being the most highly-favoured of all the servants in the royal household. It was also a situation of great profit, which is proved by the fact that the expenses of Nehemiah's government in Jerusalem were defrayed from his own funds. The king's cupbearer was generally chosen for his comeliness of person, gracefulness of manners, and affability of temper; Less. 118, 'most beautiful.'

Hanani—he was Nehemiah's brother, and noted for deep piety and unswerving integrity; he had gone up to Jerusalem with some of the returned captives, but soon came back with a gloomy account of the state of affairs there.

offered wine—the cup was washed under the king's eye, and being filled was presented in a graceful manner; it was a part of the duty of the cup-bearer to taste the wine offered to the king, so as to assure him that it was free from poison.

prayed—silently; within himself; he offered an ejaculatory prayer. The book of Nehemiah abounds with instances of his zeal and piety.

father's sepulchres—Les. 16, 'charged; 20, 'took;' 36 & 65, 'buried.'

it pleased—the queen, Esther, was sitting by the king when Nehemiah made his request; her influence therefore would not be wanting to induce the king to comply with the request of his cup-bearer.

the king granted—the Persian kings did not discountenance the rebuilding of the temple at Jerusalem, recognising it as a duty they owed to their subjects of the Hebrew religion, to assist them in the celebration of their rites and ceremonies in a manner becoming the worship of Jehovah—the God of the Jews. The consent of the king to the rebuilding of the *walls* of the city must have been given from motives of state policy to attach the Jews more closely to the Persian interest.

no portion—Less. 128, 'Samaritans.'

PRIDE.

Room for the Proud—Ye sons of clay
From far his sweeping pomp survey,
Nor, rashly curious, clog the way
His chariot wheels before!

Lo! with what scorn his lofty eye
Glances o'er Age and Poverty,
And bids intruding Conscience fly
Far from his palace door!

Room for the Proud! but slow the feet
That bear his coffin down the street:
And dismal seems his winding-sheet
Who purple lately wore?

Ah! where must now his spirit fly
In naked, trembling agony?
Or how shall he for mercy cry,
Who shew'd it not before!

Room for the Proud! in ghastly state
The lords of Hell his coming wait,
And flinging wide the dreadful gate,
That shuts to ope no more.

"Lo here with us the seat," they cry,
"For him who mock'd at poverty,
And bade intruding Conscience fly
Far from his palace door!"

HEBER.

132. COMPLETION OF THE WALLS.

Nehemiah ii-x. & xiii. Malachi.

Sanballat, the governor of Samaria, and Tobiah, an Ammonite of much wealth and importance, derided the Jews in their labours, yet they were angry as the work proceeded. Nehemiah set men to guard those who builded, and some of them worked with one hand, and held a weapon in the other; the builders had every one his sword girded by his side, for their enemies practised craft, by rumours and false prophets, to terrify the Jews. When the wall was finished, their enemies were much cast down, and it was dedicated with gladness, and thanksgivings. About this time the poor Jews cried out against the bondage and oppressions of the rich. Nehemiah reproved the rich, and they promised to leave off usury, and restore to their brethren their lands, and vineyards, and olive-yards, and houses.

Nehemiah was recalled to Persia, and he placed his brother Hanani, and Hananiah, the ruler of the palace, in charge over Jerusalem. Ezra instructed the people in the law, and the people rejoiced to hear the words of the law read to them. They also kept the feast of Tabernacles seven days. On the twenty-fourth day of the same month they fasted in sackcloth, and separated themselves from strangers, and made confession of their own and their fathers' sins. They then made a solemn covenant to observe the commandments of the Lord, and not to forsake the house of their God. Nehemiah again came to Jerusalem, and testified against those who were unfaithful, particularly against the sabbath-breakers. He saw in those days in Judah some treading wine-presses on the sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and lading asses; also wine, grapes, and figs, and all manner of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the sabbath day: and he testified against them in the day wherein they sold victuals. Then he contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, "What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the sabbath day? did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the sabbath." He also testified against those that had married wives of Ashdod, of Ammon, and of Moab; and their children spake half in the speech of

Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jew's language but according to the language of each people. And he contended with them, saying, "Ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons, nor take their daughters unto your sons, or for yourselves."

Malachi was the last of the prophets whose writings are in the Old Testament. He foretold the conversion of the Gentiles; he spoke of Christ as the Sun of Righteousness; and of the coming of John the Baptist, in the spirit of Elijah, to prepare for the coming of Christ.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

to guard—it is not an uncommon occurrence to witness, even at the present day, similar scenes in eastern countries, bordering upon the wild countries of the Bedouins and Tartars; also in cases where quarrels exist between the different tribes or clans of one community. Men may also be seen following the peaceful occupations of agriculture, with guns or swords about them or within reach, to be ready for sudden attacks.

dedicated—consecrated to the defence of the people, the temple, and the holy worship of Jehovah. The heathen dedicated their city walls to the gods they worshipped.

bondage—Les. 120, 'proclaim liberty; 'I made.'

usury—lending money on interest; though this is quite allowable with us under the limitation of honourable trading, and though the Jews were permitted it in trading with foreigners, it was most rigidly forbidden them in their pecuniary transactions with each other. Exod. xxii. 25; Deut. xxiii. 19.

restore—the poor proprietors were compelled to mortgage their lands for money to pay the king's tribute, and for the support of their families.

Tabernacles—the feast of booths; instituted to commemorate the dwelling of their ancestors in tents during their journey through the wilderness. The men of Israel were strictly enjoined to appear before God in Jerusalem at the celebration of this feast, the feast of Passover, and the feast of Pentecost, or first fruits; on which occasions they were assured of the Divine Protection of their wives, children, & possessions. Less. 29, 'leave.'

from strangers—put away their idolatrous wives. Compare Less. 35, 'took their daughters,' and 37, 'throw down.'

treading—Less. 50, 'wine;' the trough or wine-press was either dug in the ground, and lined with masonry, or else built upon the ground. Lesson 37, 'wine-press.'

profane the sabbath—among the crimes charged upon the people of Israel that of sabbath-breaking was one of the most prominent; this sin so greatly provoked the Lord that he caused the land to enjoy its sabbaths by removing its cultivators into captivity for many years.

shall not—Lesson 32, 'come not.'

Malachi—'angel of the Lord;' nothing is known of his personal history; he prophesied about 400 years before the birth of Christ. He sealed up the volume of prophecy in the description of that Personage at whose appearance the Evangelists begin the Gospel History.

conversion—change of religious faith, and mode of life; they should turn from their degrading idolatry (Less. 35, 'served their gods') and from their wicked and licentious courses, to the pure and holy service of God.

Sun—the source of spiritual life and light. Less. 105, 'great light.'

Elijah—John the Baptist should possess the boldness and self-denial of that eminent servant of God.

prepare—Lesson 111, 'fore-runner,' 'crieth in the wilderness.'

THE RESTORATION OF SALEM.

Yes, Salem, thou shalt rise: thy Father's aid
Shall heal the wound his chastening hand has made;
Shall judge the proud oppressor's ruthless sway,
And burst his brazen bonds, and cast his cords away,
Then on your tops shall deathless verdure spring:
Break forth, ye mountains, and ye vallies sing!
No more your thirsty rocks shall frown forlorn,
The unbeliever's jest, the heathen's scorn;
The sultry sands shall tenfold harvests yield,
And a new Eden deck the thorny field.
E'en now, perhaps, wide waving o'er the land,
The mighty angel lifts his golden wand;
Courts the bright vision of descending power,
Tells every gate, and measures every tower,
And chides the tardy seals that yet detain
The Lion Judah, from his destined reign.
And who is He? the vast the awful form,
Girt with the whirlwind, sandal'd with the storm?
A western cloud around his limbs is spread,
His crown a rainbow, and a sun his head.
To highest heaven he lifts his kingly hand,
And treads at once the ocean and the land!
And hark! his voice amid the thunder's roar,
His dreadful voice that time shall be no more!
Lo! cherub hands the golden courts prepare,
Lo! thrones are set, and every saint is there;
Earth's utmost bounds confess their awful sway,
The mountains worship, and the isles obey;
Nor sun nor moon they need; nor day nor night,
God is their temple, and the Lamb their light,
And shall not Israel's sons exulting come,
Hail the glad beam and claim their ancient home?
On David's throne shall David's offspring reign,
And the dry bones be warmed with life again.
Hark! white-robed crowds their deep hosannahs raise,
And the hoarse flood repeats the sound of praise,
Ten thousand harps attune their mystic song,
Ten thousand thousand saints the strain prolong,
"Worthy the lamb! omnipotent to save,
Who died, who lives, triumphant o'er the grave!"

HEBER'S PALESTINE.

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